



# Grace Notes July & August 2020

***Our Mission Statement:***  
***To know Christ & make Christ known***  
**Grace Episcopal Church**  
106 Lowell St.  
Manchester, NH





*Illustration by Andrew Freshour*

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# Rector's Reflection: Creation In A Time of COVID

At the start of June I attended a week-long preaching event on Zoom. The preaching program, "Deep Calls To Deep," was supposed to be an in person event at the Virginia Theological Seminary. My children and I were set to return to Washington DC. We were excited to be going to the place where both were born, but COVID changed those original plans. At one lecture, the professor advised all of us on screen the only way to stay sane during this shelter in time was to strive to become a Creator. One who aspires to be like God. To be someone who makes and creates new things every day.



That preaching professor is right. Friends and parishioners who are doing well during this troubling time are doing creative things. You, faithful people, are called to own the God's honest truth. That you have been created, as the book of Genesis tells us, Bitzalom Elohim, "in the Image of God."

In this issue of our parish newsletter you will get to see and hear about what some parishioners have created, over the past month, during this stay at home time. For instance, forty-eight parishioners and friends of Grace Church created greater financial stability for our parish by stepping on to the NH Gives 24 hour "donation celebration" platform. With their help we raised over \$10,000 for our parish's operational expenses. Additionally, you will see how multiple parishioners are striving to create a city and a nation that cares about people of color by participating in Black Lives Matter events and attending online discussions about race. You'll hear about how artists of all kinds - bakers, painters, knitters, and sewers are keeping busy by creating beauty on a daily basis.



We are all of us creators, makers, artists. My daughter, Fiona, has become a gifted jewelry maker during the time of COVID. Self-taught (thanks to multiple YouTube videos) she has learned how to make elaborate wire earrings, with the goal of having her ears pierced when it is finally safe to return to a fuller interaction with our community at large. Even one of our youngest members, Aiden Tonnar, grandson of Susan and Bernie Tonnar, drew beautiful body art on



himself to stay active and creative (see picture) during this time of sheltering in place.

We, your leadership team, are working to create a plan to safely return to our sanctuary. Our goal is to return to our sanctuary on Sunday, October 4th for in person worship. Of course, we will continue to look to the power of three: leaders in our nation, our state, and our denomination for guidance. We hope to regather in person on the first Sunday in October to celebrate the Feast of Saint Michael, our parish's patron saint.

We chose this fall date as during the summer our sanctuary is very hot and it is not in our best interest that fans be used in our sanctuary. Why? To quote my favorite phrase: Your greatest strength is your greatest weakness. The greatest strength of a fan is that it moves air everywhere. The greatest weakness of a fan is it moves air everywhere. Jesus and germs are everywhere, so it is not advisable we worship in the heat of summer and turn on fans to circulate, not just air, but potential germs. To help you understand what church will be like in this time of COVID, please read the wisdom of my Lutheran colleague Reverend Erik Parker found in the article published in this month's newsletter.

Additionally, your parish staff have been encouraged by Bishop +Rob to take time off for our summer vacations. Thankfully, while Marlene, Emery, Amy Brumfield (our remarkable Zoom "tech deacon") and I are off our parish ministry will be in good hands. The Reverends Mike Andres and Nancy Strong (an Episcopal priest whose daughter, Katherine, was a member of our Vestry and parish for several years) will preside and preach at our Zoom worship for three Sundays in July. Then, for the first two weeks in August, we invite you to worship with Bishop +Rob. Worship services can be accessed on our diocesan website page located at <https://www.nhepiscopal.org/worship-liturgy> Take note the Reverends Mike Andres, Sandi Albom, Allan Knight, and Jane Van Zandt have all agreed to be on call while I am on vacation from July 6th to August 10th.

Finally, please keep Zachary, Fiona, and I in your prayers during vacation as we will be renovating a new home in Hooksett, moving to that home, and listing the home we have lived in for the past seven years. Moving from a too large house in Manchester to a smaller condo in Hooksett will allow us to embrace a smaller green footprint, a simpler life (no massive property for a single mom of two to manage), and locate us in a home that will allow Fiona and Zach (presently in middle school) eventually to attend the high school of their choice: Pinkerton Academy.

A friend of mine sent a note that arrived today. In it she wrote, "We are often thrown curve balls, but it is how you catch them that matters most." As we continue to navigate this curve ball called COVID, may we strive to stay

safe, sane, and spiritual by connecting with one another in helpful ways.

Blessings and love,  
Marjorie +

## Poetry During COVID

*Ghazal of Long-Distance Quarantine Longing*

Our love is fragrant like the June lilac bloom.  
I stoop out my window, sniff without touching

and travel in memory to the springtime we outed  
in fine art museums—admired without touching

the coarse-dappled Pollocks, sun-billowed  
O'Keeffes,  
Harlem Renaissance paintings that singed without touching

a single hair on us. Japanese bodhisattvas  
sat serenely on stone lotuses without touching

and stayed as the day whisked us off through the courtyard  
past ponds of white geese we observed without touching

out of fear they'd attack us the way an urge creeps  
on the peace of a shut-in. Tramples joy without touching.

Ants crawl on coronas of daffodil trumpets  
in the flower box riot that yearns without touching

as I shutter the window and crumple in bed.  
We open the chatbox and kiss without touching

through a screen black with star-crossed video apps.  
Gather blankets of next-times. Can we sleep without touching?

Matthew Richards



## Quilting during COVID

Cattitude. That's what my friend, Fay, has. You know, that laid back, too-cool-for-school attitude that will be so familiar to anyone with a cat. I met Fay fifteen years ago at a quilting class, and we are both still quilting friends. We have other things in common: we are both accountants, mothers, quilters, and we both used to be cat mothers.



Fay lives just outside of Boston. Every year, I have Fay as a houseguest during the week when the Machine Quilting Expo sets up at the Doubletree in Manchester, a fun week of quilting displays, vendors and classes. This is usually around the first part of April. Well, you can guess what happened this year: Covid put an end to the quilt show and we were all under stay-at-home orders. Fay was staying home and so was I.

During this home-alone time, with the disappointment of missing my friend and breaking our plans, I took to the sewing machine. It was also during this time when the weight of those who lost their lives to the virus and the difficulties of the front-line workers was so obvious that sadness was washing over me in waves.

I have been quilting for many years. It is the opposite of accounting, and was always an escape from a tough day at work. It fills the need for working with my hands to create a physical object. I can follow the rules, or make my own. The creative choices are mine alone. I have no deadlines, and only make things that are fun or beautiful. So, I made this wall hanging to memorialize Fay's two cats, Zachary and Puss, who both went to heaven within a couple of

months of each other last year.

While I was working on the little quilt, I used the time to think about Fay and how I value our friendship. And how much Fay loves the color purple and her angel kitties. The meditative time was also useful to think about those whose lives were lost and to work through the sadness. I don't think I will ever come to terms with the horror of the human toll this virus has visited upon us, but quilting calms my mind and brings me to a more peaceful place.

Gail Austin

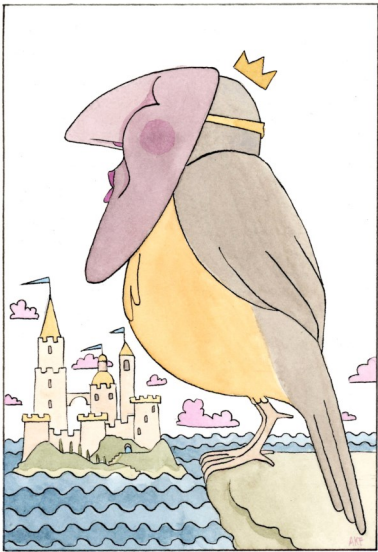


# Watercolor During COVID

When news reached my ears in March about the governor temporarily closing down non-essential businesses, I was suddenly allotted a myriad of free time. To make use of this unexpected opportunity, I thought it appropriate to get back into making art. In addition to that, I chose to start using watercolor again, which I had mostly neglected to use since my art school days. Thankfully, almost three months later, I've kept up with it, and have grown somewhat comfortable again with that medium. Sticking to my routine of making art every day has also kept me sane, motivated, and given me purpose under these most uncertain circumstances. Making art has always been a necessity in my life. Even though I'm not the best artist out there, I still keep at it, because it brings me such joy. Hopefully after a semblance of normality returns, and I make my way back to work, God willing, I'll keep at it!



Andrew Freshour



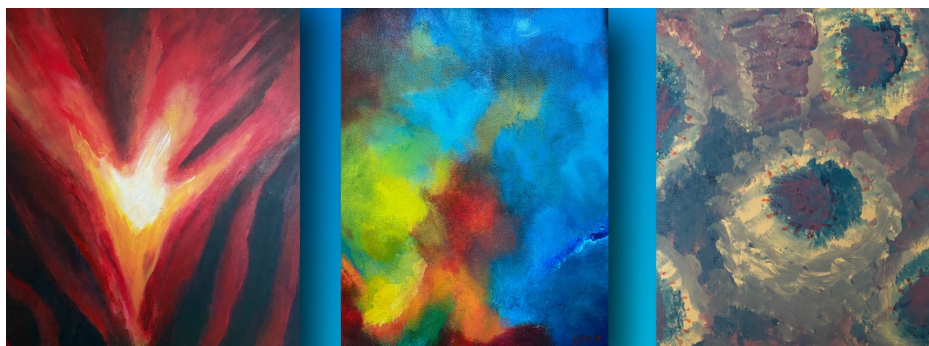
## Abstract Art During COVID

My foray into abstract art – the interplay of form, color, and composition in a non-representational way – started when I attended Wesleyan University, where I took art history and painting classes. I intuitively gravitated towards abstract expressionism. Afterwards, I did little painting until I enrolled in Linn Krikorian's acrylics class at the Currier Art Center. Without her guidance, I would not have evolved as an artist, and I will always be grateful for it.



I have included a few representations of my work: *Phoenix Rising, a study in scorching colors*; *Nebula, inspired by deep space photos*; and *Corona, done in cool colors to reflect the sadness of the pandemic*.

Dr. Ernie Marino



## Knitting During COVID

The time of COVID has been a very stressful one. As a person who suffers from anxiety, I can easily descend into a spiral of very unproductive worry - will Doug get sick? will I get sick? will Sam or his wife Suzanne, living in their tiny Brooklyn apartment, get sick? will Sarah or her husband Zac, who live in Los Angeles, get sick? WHEN WILL I SEE THEM IN PERSON AGAIN?

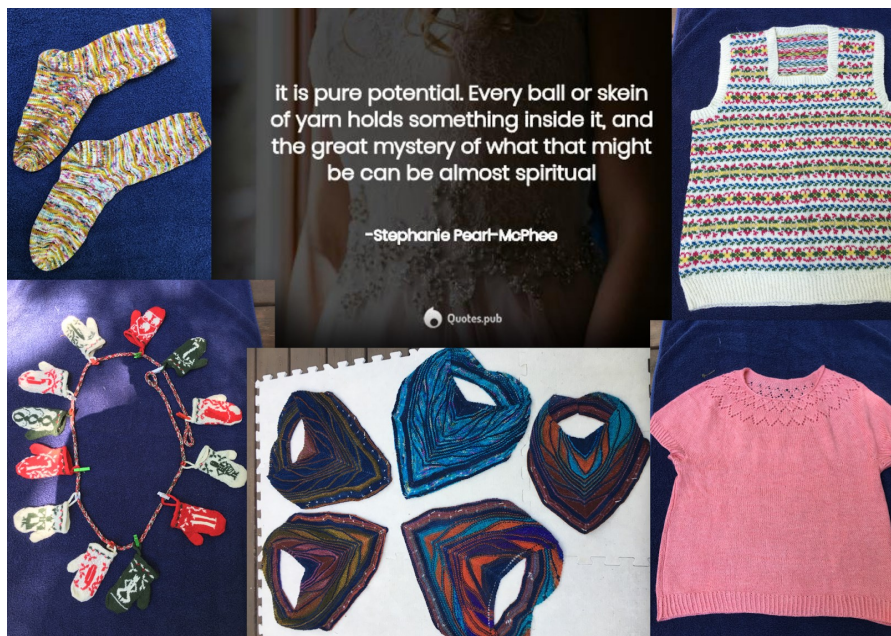




That is when I dip into my knitting bag and pull out whatever marvelous pattern some very smart designer has shared with the world and I just knit all my worries into that project. It sounds kind of silly. However, there is something about the wool, the smell of the sheep, the rhythm of the pattern that soothes me. My mind wanders to comforting thoughts of my grandmother and my mother, knitting through their own difficult times. I think of knitting with Sarah and actually going to a knitting event in Pasadena and being able to just hang out with her. I feel connected to all of them and I feel better.

I do not want to seem too dramatic. As I shared with last fall's knitting retreat, Virginia Woolf was a knitter. A friend once said of her, "I thought nothing of her writing but I considered her a beautiful little knitter." Virginia one time told her husband, Leonard Woolf, "Knitting is the saving of life." Ultimately as we know, that did not work for her. In my case though it has certainly made my life more productive and beautiful and contented.

Linda Chamberlain



## Creating Sacred Space At Home

In this time of fasting from public worship, we all miss the beautiful sacred space that is the Grace Church campus. Together we gather in it, contribute to it, care for it, and make it what it is with our prayers and presence. Still, even with our increasing understanding that the church is not a building but a way of being united to one another in the name of Christ, we may find ourselves missing a dedicated sacred space that focuses our spiritual practice as we live into this major shift in our lives.



This is a great time to reclaim an ancient tradition of creating sacred space at home! A home altar is a wonderful way to claim space that helps us focus on the divine. It's easy and joyful to do, it works for any size household, all ages, and best of all there's just no wrong way to do it!

If possible, choose a place that is outside the main flow of traffic in your home, but isn't so out of the way that you don't see it during the week. I have mine near the place where I sit for Zoom church, but choose a place that makes sense for you, and supports your own devotions.

Choose items for your home altar that are meaningful for you, and speak to your own spiritual journey. My own altar features various artifacts from the three most significant faith communities in my life, my seminary, Trinity Cathedral in San Jose (my spiritual home for more than twenty years), and of course, Grace Church and the great Diocese of New Hampshire! There is a bible, a prayer book, and a hymnal. I have been rotating items in and out since I first created my altar during Holy Week. This keeps it from being cluttered, and helps me think about the themes of the day or the season. Others like to keep it the same all the time. Either way is fine. If it's authentic for you, and your practice, it's perfect! As you collect your own items, think about what sparks joy, gratitude, connectedness, or anything else that evokes God's presence in your lives.

A home altar reminds us that the spiritual and the material are not so much separate things, but two sides of the same coin. We experience the spiritual in the material, and this is as it was intended by the great Creator God who brought all things into being and pronounced them very



good. The items we place on our altars remind us of our connection to one another no matter where we are, and remind us that our whole lives are our joyful sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the God who creates, redeems, and sustains us in good times and bad.

I hope that creating and using your home altars will be as meaningful for you as it has been for me.

Peace,  
Shelley

## Cooking During COVID

After picking 10 pounds of strawberries, I made a variety of strawberry recipes but this one is our favorite.

### Chilled Strawberry Soup

1 C apple juice  
1 C water, divided  
1/3 C sugar  
1/2 t ground cinnamon  
1/8 t ground cloves  
2 C fresh strawberries  
2 C strawberry yogurt

Combine apple juice, 3/4 C water sugar, cinnamon, and cloves in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat; cool. Place strawberries and remaining water in blender or food processor; cover and process until smooth. Pour into a large bowl. Add apple juice mixture and yogurt. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled.

Nancy-Ann Feren



## Thoughts and Reflections

### *Walking Trails*

Like most everyone else, Nancy-Ann and I have had our lives and schedules and usual activities changed because of Covid-19. Lately, we have been hiking on local paths and trails more often than we ever used to. It provides some get-away



and a nice dose of nature.

While we are walking, I often think about the people who first came to these areas, even before there were trails, and who then created their own trails. I'm particularly thinking of the coming of Native Americans. When they arrived and set up camps, they had to create their own trails for finding food and getting water. As they went back and forth, paths became worn and familiar. If they were comfortable living there, a camp would become a village. Over time more villages formed and villages began to communicate and trade with each other. Gradually, the routes became longer and passed through an increasing number of villages.

The example I most often think of is an old trade route for Native Americans that went from what is now Natchez, Mississippi to Nashville, Tennessee. It was started and used by Native Americans, and later also used by American settlers, traders, and military. It was originally a footpath for the first many hundreds of years of its use, but after European American settlers started using it, the traffic included horses, wagons, and eventually motor vehicles. Today it is approximated (memorialized?) by a driving road called the Natchez Trace Parkway, which is 444 miles long, and is part of the National Park System.

The Natchez Trace started as a simple Native American footpath and gradually became a trade route. European Americans expanded it and used it for trade and settlement. Over the years, it grew in strength and importance. It helps me realize how something that starts small could evolve into something strong and important.

One more thing that I often wonder about is changes during development. While we are walking, I sometimes see worn areas off to the side, or paths that look like they might go in a different direction, or paths on a side ridge parallel to the trail we are walking. Are the parallel paths an older version that got abandoned for the newer version? Are the worn areas and side routes possibilities for the future?

All of this can actually be related to the church, which started very small: just Christ and his disciples. It has since expanded and taken many paths, considering the many denominations. It is also safe to say that it is still evolving, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. We'll see where it goes.

Dick Feren

## "I Can't Breathe!" . . . . .

Last year I experienced a very bad reaction to a nerve block when I was about to have surgery. The block had depressed my diaphragm and affected my ability to breathe.

I had just been put on the operating room table and suddenly I felt my chest stop moving. I barely was able to whisper, "I can't breathe!" In that fraction of a second I felt like I was dying and then I blacked out. Fortunately, being in the hospital, a breathing tube was placed into my windpipe and I spent the night in the ICU attached to a ventilator.

That phrase, "I can't breathe!" has now become associated with the death of African Americans under the hands of brutal excessive force by bad police officers.

I cannot tell you accurately enough how those fleeting seconds or minutes are like, not being able to breathe. For me, it was the most frightening moment of my life! What we saw on video, watching George Floyd die, was horrifying! I was in a hospital, safe, with skilled professionals at my side. He wasn't. Paramedics were too late to revive him. I watched George Floyd die under the brutal depraved indifference and intent of a police officer and heard George say in a desperate voice "I can't breathe!" followed by silence. I held my own breath for a second as it reawakened my own experience. I was sick to my stomach!



Now, when I hear or see signs that say "I can't breathe!" I see the faces of those men and women - victims of the toxicity of racism. Some of you may also have had an experience with the inability to breathe. Imagine if you were in George's place (a black person not white) . . . horrifying . . . so I say, "No more deaths". Let us work together now to stop this kind of brutality and not stop until we eradicate the scourge of racism in our times!

Linda Garrish Thomas





Illustration by Andrew Freshour



## Faith and Film Zoom Discussion

***Hosted by Saint Peter's Church: 13th - Sunday, July 12, 2020 from 4 to 5:30 PM***

Acknowledging and remembering the senseless murder of many people of color brothers and sisters within our own country, many Grace Church parishioners have showed their heartfelt support of racial justice in a number of ways over the past month. Several of us attended a local Black Live Matter March in Manchester, while others attended an evening Black Lives Matter Vigil that took place in Stark Park. Additionally, ten members of our congregation joined in on a Faith and Film Discussion about the film *Just Mercy* hosted by the Reverend Colin Chapman and members of Saint Peter's Episcopal Church in Londonderry, NH.

On Sunday, July 12th from 4 to 5:30 PM the Reverend Colin Chapman and Saint Peter's Church will host yet another Faith and Film discussion, this time on the remarkable film *13th*. Filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the history of racial inequality in the United States, focusing

on the fact that the nation's prisons are disproportionately filled with African Americans. The film begins with an alarming statistic: One out of four African-American males will serve prison time at one point or another in their lives.

Please watch this film in advance (available on Netflix) and join Reverend Chapman and Episcopalians from around the state in a Zoom discussion about this important documentary. Please register in advance for the discussion and you will receive the Zoom information and then also again the day before the event.

You must sign up for the event at the link below. After you do you will receive the Zoom Link and Password. The Zoom information will again be mailed to you the day before the event.  
<https://forms.gle/wpaiMfQgKD3u393q6>

## **White Privilege - What Is It All About?**

I have been thinking a great deal over the years about 'White Privilege' - my White Privilege. The following are my thoughts based upon my life's experiences, my faith, and my relationships and interactions with people of color.

We as white people, white women like myself, cannot ever know what it feels like to be a black person living in our country. It is good when we can see injustices but we have to come to grips with our privilege - our subliminal part in perpetuating institutional racism over the centuries. It is good when we acknowledge the often daily degradation of black and brown people out on the street, while shopping, while driving, in school, in business, in jobs, in voting, in neighborhoods (I could go on and on . . .). What are routine everyday activities of life for a white person may well be a nightmare for our black brothers and sisters. Living white in America is far different than living black in America. I cannot truly know the innate fear, anger, degradation and disenfranchisement that a black person lives with.

I cannot speak for black people . . . but can damn (excuse my honesty and directness) sure fight the injustices; stand up, speak out and acknowledge racism and the uniqueness of its roots in America. I can make sure that my black neighbors are seen and heard at the forefront, as leaders of any community effort to attack racism - at the tables of power. I can make sure school children's history books

identify the roots of racism honestly and its perpetuation over hundreds of years worth of institutionalization into the very fabric of American life, even in churches. I can acknowledge my white privilege as part of the wrongness of racism and remind myself of it often and help address it honestly and publicly. I can educate myself on the black experience in America as told by people of color. And I can NEVER ever try to speak for black people or people of color. We can reflect on our own humanity.

Early in our country's history a black person was counted as less than 1 - not a whole person. Did Jesus ever look upon any human being as less than whole? Should we treat POC as less than whole? Respect them less? We must ask ourselves how much that reality has changed over the centuries . . . and what we must do to create change starting with ourselves . . . . .

Linda Garrish Thomas

## Grace Bookgroup

On Tuesday, June 16th our Grace Episcopal Church book group gathered on Zoom (a total of ten people!) to discuss the heartbreaking and wonderful book, *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout. We spoke about a number of subjects - ranging from what makes a woman bossy to body imaging to how our parish book group challenges us to read outside the usual comfort zones/genres of books we as individuals tend to gravitate towards and read.



One of my favorite quotes about reading was penned by the theologian/author Clive Staples Lewis. He wrote: "You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me."



Grab a cup of tea (or as the weather warms a glass of iced tea) and join our next Grace Church Book Group via Zoom. All are invited to participate and even if you don't finish a particular book, please come and join us.

Please contact the church office if you are interested in participating. You will receive an invitation in your e-mail about the gathering and on how to join the Zoom meeting. Book discussions begin at noon on the dates indicated below. (Take note: we have reordered our list of books and added the text *Just Mercy* to read as a group in September because our nation and our world is hoping, talking, marching, and praying towards better ways and mindsets to embrace all people, including people of color.)

July 21st - *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele Richardson

August 18th - *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

September 15th - *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson

October 20th - *Educated* by Tara Westover

November 17th - *Green Dolphin Street* by Elizabeth Goudge

December 15th - *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett

Looking forward to seeing you on Zoom this summer.

Blessings and Love,  
Marjorie +

## Southern Convocation

Despite the shutdown, the Southern Convocation has been meeting virtually the past few months, and having important conversations about how we might do and be Church with integrity during these challenging days.



Bishop Rob has been consulting with experts in the field of communicable diseases and epidemiology, and hosted a Town Hall for the diocese with Dr. Peter Kilmars, and Dr. John Bassi to discuss how we might proceed in order to re-open safely. The important idea is that we do not rush out of a well intended but risky desire to return to normal. In the absence of a vaccine, “normal” will not be possible for quite some time, and that things must proceed very



gradually. Although New Hampshire seems to be faring better than the projected worst case scenario, this is because we did take appropriate precautions early on, and it will be important to maintain that as we go forward. The Diocese is committed to continuing that policy of choosing the side of caution, and will not do anything that does not at least meet the governor's criteria for re-opening. This is the case for our congregations, our camps, and our seasonal chapels, as well as community projects and fundraisers. We were reminded that southern New Hampshire is particularly vulnerable because of our proximity to Boston and the density of the population.

Communion and singing are two particularly issues that will prove challenging. Singing is a particularly risky activity because of the way of breathing we employ when singing amplifies the aerosolization of droplets which carry the virus, and masks are not a solution. The precautions necessary for communion would be so stringent that there is a very real possibility that the purpose would be lost and the experience of communion compromised. Everything we do will need to be considered in light of pastoral, theological, and medical wisdom as well as the governor's guidelines.

Bishop Rob reminded us that New Hampshire has the advantage of a long-standing understanding of the importance of community in times of crisis, and that the faith that binds us together as a community in good times and bad will see us through this crisis. He also reminded us that the Psalms in have much wisdom and strength to impart in this season of our life together. Every human emotion is there, and all are honored as we move through them with God's help. If we continue to let every decision be guided by two key questions: "What is life giving?" and "What does loving our neighbors look like?" given where we are at any given point, we can make wise, loving and holy decisions that enable the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire's work to continue. It will just look different for a while, and there will be ongoing uncertainty. The one sure thing is that the God who is always doing a new thing will meet us in it, and empower us to be co-Creators in bringing about something new.

Peace,  
Shelley

## A (Very) Senior Citizen Takes the Plunge

Yes, I did it! At the age of 78, I decided that I would run for office. Soon I will be campaigning for a seat in the NH House of Representatives. Just setting things in motion was a challenge. I now have my Employer Identification Number (EIN), a business bank account, an

ActBlue account (for donations), and proof that I am registered with the Secretary of State. My point in sharing this news with you is that, if elected, I will have a voice in our state government. And, therefore, so will you. I'll be representing Chester, Auburn, and Sandown, but I can listen to concerns from anyone. In addition to support and prayers, I'd like to hear from you, my fellow parishioners.



“Oh, that we might see better times...” (Psalm 4:6a). When I listen to the news each day, I am reminded of the promises we make each time we renew our baptismal vows. “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” To which we reply, “I will, with God’s help.” Those vows will continue to be my guide.

Jane W Van Zandt+

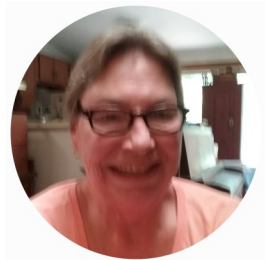
## A View from the Fence

Hello Friends,

I am the new fence surrounding the backyard at Grace House; or as I like to call it - The Secret Garden. It's nice back here... this year's group hung lights and used the area all year to barbecue and hang out.

I replaced a very old and decrepit fence that wasn't discouraging uninvited guests from visiting or camping out. I am higher for better security, and I have to say - much more attractive.

There's much going on inside the house as well. Anna V. is on her way to grad school to become a social worker. Lindsey, Healy and Anna T. are going to rent a place together in Manchester. They are all starting new jobs in the education or social services fields. Tom and Nicole have been more mysteri-



ous about their plans; time will tell.

According to Ann, I won't have to wait long for new adventures. Five new City Year Corps members have already committed to living at Grace House starting in August. We still have room for one more. We have people coming from Massachusetts, Minnesota and St Louis as well as two brave souls from Texas. Neither has ever seen snow! It should be an educational experience...

That's all for now but feel free to come and admire my dashing figure!

The Fence at Grace house  
(Edited by Ann Hewins)

## **So Your Church Is Opening Up After COVID-19 Closures? It Won't Be What You Are Hoping For.**

*Note: The author of this article is a Canadian, Lutheran pastor and blogger who gave Marjorie his personal blessing to reprint this after she and the Grace Church Vestry read it.*

Guidelines and public health orders for opening up churches are sometimes hard to follow as the long lists can make your mind go numb. The following is a way of trying to put the guidelines in narrative context, to help picture what “going back to church” might look like in these COVID-19 days.

It's been months of isolation, months of mostly staying home to stop the spread of COVID-19. But active cases are going down (or maybe not), and politicians and business leaders are worried about the economic impact of social distancing. And so, for a few weeks now, things have been opening up. Playgrounds and hair salons, dentists and restaurant patios are letting people come back.

And things seem to be going well enough, so the government announces the next phase of opening, which includes increased gathering sizes. And one of the places you have been missing the most, your church, sends out an email telling you that they are going to re-open for an in-person service on Sunday.

You heard from a friend that your pastor was against it, but enough folks were pressuring the council because of freedom of religion, people are getting tired of staying home and surely church should be a safe place right? Plus you are missing your friends, the folks you love to see on Sunday mornings, the other couples that you often go for brunch with following

worship.

Finally, the big day comes, you wake up excited to get back to this important part of your life, to something that feels a little bit like normal, seeing familiar faces, hearing familiar music, being in a familiar community.

You hop in the car with your spouse and make the well worn drive to church. You notice that the streets are even deader than usual for a Sunday morning. When you arrive at church there are few cars parked around the building. You go to your normal parking spot, just down a side street, half a block from the church. You start walking up to the building, but before you get too close, a masked volunteer stops you. They are standing on the sidewalk.

“Please stay there.” they stop you about 6 feet away from where they are standing. Okay... you think you know who this is, but they have a mask on their face and you aren’t totally sure. “Have you had any of the following symptoms recently: Cough, fever, body aches, difficulty breathing?” “No, not that I know of,” you say. “Are you over the age of 65 or have underlying health conditions?” “No,” you say. Technically, you and your spouse are 67 and you take blood pressure meds. But it’s no big deal. “Have you been travelling recently, or spent any time with someone who has travelled recently?” “No,” you answer again. You don’t mention the socially distanced backyard BBQ you had with your neighbors the other night, including one neighbor who is a long haul trucker. “Have you been in contact with anyone who has been exposed to COVID-19, such as health-care workers?” “I don’t think so,” you murmur. The babysitting you do for your son and daughter-in-law, who is a care-home nurse, doesn’t count. Family doesn’t count, right? “Please maintain social distance while you wait in line here.” The volunteer gestures ahead, where you see a few dozen folks lined up – all space out according to markers along the sidewalk.

Usually when you arrive at church, you come early to visit with folks before the service, but as you stand in line, people just whisper amongst households. Even though you can see many familiar faces ahead, you cannot help but feel suspicion and fear when you look at the others. You try to shake the feeling, but this pandemic world has affected you more than you want to admit.

Another couple lines up behind you and then you hear the masked volunteer turn another family away. “Sorry, we are at the max group size we are allowed. Maybe try again next week.”

The church stays closed right up until the time of the service. Then finally with 5 minutes to go, the door opens and households begin entering, one at a time. Another masked volunteer is letting people in.

Slowly, you shuffle up to the door. When it gets to your turn, the volunteer waves you in. There are two surgical masks and some hand sanitizer laid out

on a table. “Please clean your hands and then put these masks on.” You comply. “Please follow the taped line to pew number 23 and take your seat. Please don’t stop to talk to anyone, and please remain seated for the duration of the service.” You follow the taped line into the sanctuary, everyone is sitting down in space-out pews by household. The church is eerily quiet, kind of like a funeral with a masked pianist playing quietly. Finally when everyone is inside, the doors to the church are closed.

Instead of processing in from the back, where the pastor is usually visiting with people before church, the pastor slips in from the front of the church through a side door. The pastor then greets you from behind a mask... which makes them hard to understand. The pastor then explains that there will be no singing in worship, and no praying together or communal responses to the liturgy. You then notice there are no hymn books, offering envelopes, or welcome cards in the pews. They are just empty. You also didn’t get a bulletin on the way in.

Listening to the pastor, they don’t sound like their normal self... forced, stressed, tense? You can’t quite put your finger on it.

The pastor then goes and stands in front of a phone on a tripod at the front of the church and starts talking to it, welcoming all the people worshipping online. The pastor explains where the bulletin can be found on the Facebook page, how to share the peace and greet others also watching online. Then the pastor picks up the tripod, turns it around and asks you to wave at the phone... which feels pretty silly and weird. Worship begins.

The pianist plays the hymns, but no one can sing. So you just sit and listen. It felt awkward to sing along with the hymns at home, but this feels even more strange. The pastor then begins worship, and every time you want to say “And also with you” or “Amen” you have to stop yourself. Instead, there is just silence while the pastor imagines how long it would take the folks watching online to give the responses.

The first masked volunteer goes to a mic and music stand on the other side of chancel to read the lessons. You can’t say join in the psalm responsively, so again you just sit quietly and listen.

Finally it comes time for the sermon. The pastor preaches about Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, encouraging you (but mostly the folks at home) to keep the faith. The pastor says that the time will come when the spirit will send us out into the world – but that time isn’t quite yet. And that even though we are apart, the spirit ties us together into one. It doesn’t really feel like the pastor is preaching to you, but mostly to those still at home.

After listening to the hymn of the day, the creed and the prayers, it comes



time for the peace. The pastor offers the peace, but tells you that today it has to be virtual sharing only. The pastor uses their iPad to share with the folks online, and talks a bit to the phone again saying hello to people watching at home and commenting.

Then it comes time for communion. Something you have missed for months now. The pastor puts on a face shield and changes their mask before the Great Thanksgiving at the Table. You notice that they don't lift the bread or the wine. After the Lord's prayer, which you say along with the pastor in your head, one of the masked volunteers steps up to the mic to instruct you on how to receive communion.

And household by household you go forward. There is only bread to receive today. You have to hand sanitize again at the front. The pastor is using a set of kitchen tongs to put the wafers in the hands of each person. "The bread of Christ given for you." you hear from behind the mask and shield.

This is not like communion you have ever received before. You aren't allowed to eat until the pastor has moved away, and then after you put the wafer in your mouth, you have to hand sanitize again (also knowing that pulling off your mask has compromised it, because your daughter-in-law gave you a lecture in mask wearing).

The service concludes with another hymn that you listen to, a blessing and some announcements.

And then just like you came in, you have to follow the tape straight out of the building, one household at a time. The pastor isn't greeting people on the way out, in fact there is no one. Just the voice of the masked volunteer in the PA system announcing pew numbers. There are signs that tell you to leave the church straight away, no lingering.

You walk back to your car with your spouse. You get in for the drive home. You have no idea what you just experienced. You were at church, there were other people there, there were hymns and prayers, the pastor preached, you received communion (kind of)... but that wasn't church, and it certainly wasn't what you imagined when you thought of things opening back up again....

You drive home in silence... realizing that just maybe the world has changed more than you figured before now.

Reverend Erik Parker

# Milestones

Happy Birthday to the following July & August birthday celebrants

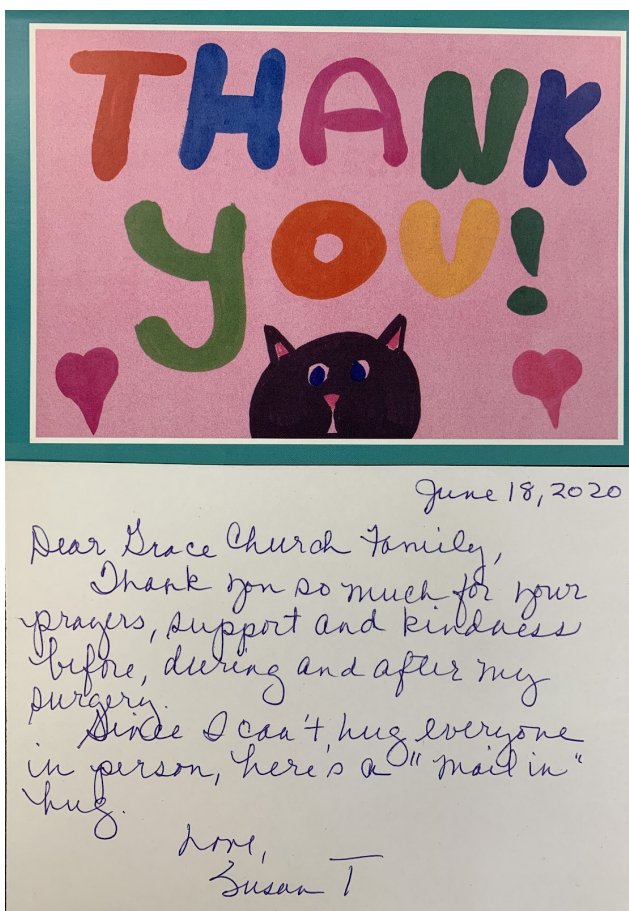
[If you don't see your birthday listed that means that we do not have it. Please call the office so that your special day can be acknowledged – or if we have it wrong, please let us know that also.]

July	August
3 Anne Harvey	3 Tom Suckley III
5 Stewart Richmond	6 Nicole Otto
6 Madeline Campbell	7 Ken Wyatt
7 Kenneth Fox	9 Katie Otto
Herb Perez-Ramos	10 Mary Baron
8 Susan Tonnar	12 Lauren Cline
11 Blake Leister	13 Linda Heath
Matthew Richards	14 Barbie Fox
12 Stanley Paras	19 Ernie Marino
Benjamin Thomas	22 Stephen Cornish
13 Ethan Cline	25 Sebastian Cline
17 Lyndsay Stenbeck	29 Micah Brumfield
Sam Leek	Dick Feren
Brian Guimond	Nancy Johnson
18 Betsy Staulcup	Andre Laurion
19 Marcus Forand	30 Jane Charlesworth
22 Kurt Wicks	
25 Linda Chamberlain	
28 Zachary Stagnaro	
29 Clare White	
31 Rick Maloney	

Watch over thy children, O Lord, as their days increase; bless and guide them wherever they may be. Strengthen them when they stand; comfort them when discouraged or sorrowful; raise them up if they fall; and in their hearts may thy peace which passeth understanding abide all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
*Book of Common Prayer, page 830*



**Happy Anniversary**—Nancy-Ann and Dick Feren's wedding day at Grace Church - 52 years ago



# **Vestry Meeting**

**Wednesday, May 20, 2020**

Present: Valerie Anderson, Gail Austin, Amy Brumfield, Carol Cote, Hank Gagnon, Nancy Johnson, Ken Kjellander, Teddi McIntosh, Christopher Messier, David Roy, Gail Schuman, Matthew Serge, the Reverend Dr. Marjorie Ann Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Chris Turner, Meghann White

This meeting was conducted via Zoom. Rev. Marjorie opened the meeting at 7:02 PM with an appropriate prayer. We continued with the reading of the Norms.

VOTE: A motion to accept the reports with a consent agenda vote was made by Teddi, seconded by Meghann, and was carried. The reports included are Clerk's Report, the Rector's Report. Planning and Finance Reports (4/2020 & 5/2020), Endowment Committee Report, Property Committee, and the Music Report.

The Grace House fence is being installed. The Fire Alarm system will be tested by the city tomorrow. City Year will be returning to Manchester next year. We will be cleaning and painting Grace House in July.

VOTE: A motion was made by Hank and seconded by Gail S. to have Grace House available for rental by City Year next year; a review of rent will be done at a later time. The motion carried.

Gail A wanted to point out just a few notable things in the Financial Statements. The revenue for April was flat to budget due to the fact that some parishioners had remitted their pledge for the year and we had been given a \$5000 bequest. We did not have our usual Easter revenue. Our expenses were less because of the \$5000 forgiveness for our Diocesan Fair Share and 2 weeks of employee's salary. She pointed out that on the balance sheet the cash at hand includes the following one time entries: \$47,000 (PPP), \$28,000 (reclassified), \$5000 (bequest). This will probably be sufficient to carry us through the summer.

VOTE: A motion was made by Gail S, seconded by Valerie to approve the April Financial Report. The motion carried.

Gail A reported that the current scheduled quarterly draw from the endowment fund is \$50,000. The Endowment Committee recommended that we take the \$50,000 draw in June. She suggested that we reevaluate at the August Vestry Meeting as to what we might want the draw to be in September. Rev. Marjorie will put that item on the August agenda.

We discussed when to begin the Steeple project. We would like to move forward with the project as soon as possible but would want the Property Committee to evaluate three bids to complete the scope of work required for the repair of the steeple. We would want to have a contract detailing the work to be done and a time schedule.

We had a discussion about Bishop Rob's document, "Following The Good Shepherd On the Path Ahead", which outlines how he would recommend the church opening up. Rev. Marjorie stated that we need to do what is appropriate for our faith family. She said that we must try to keep our goals simple because the more we try to accommodate, the more complicated it becomes and the more work it creates. Gail S said that what is safe and what is right is different for different people but we should regulate. Following the document seems good. For now we will continue with our on-line church services.

Brian Guimond will be asked if we can have wifi in the church.

Rev. Marjorie said that anyone wishing to come to the office must wear a mask and call ahead. It was noted that the office was not manned on the schedule that had been presented which makes it difficult to make any plans to come to the office. Rev. Marjorie will address the issue. She said that mail is being received through the mail slot and Emery is putting it in the office.

The knitting group is having a Zoom get together twice a month; the book club is also meeting via Zoom.

We discussed having Zoom Coffee Hour after the Sunday service via breakout rooms. The meeting would last for 15 minutes. Those who did not want to participate could leave the Zoom meeting right after the end of the service. Rev. Marjorie said that she would try this on Pentecost Sunday.

The next Vestry meeting June 17th.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Johnson, Clerk

## **Vestry Meeting**

### **Wednesday, June 17, 2020**

Present: Valerie Anderson, Gail Austin, Amy Brumfield, Carol Cote, Nancy Johnson, Ken Kjellander, Teddi McIntosh, Christopher Messier, Gail Schuman, Matthew Serge, the Reverend Dr. Marjorie Ann Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Chris Turner, Meghann White

Excused Absence: Hank Gagnon, David Roy

This meeting was conducted via Zoom. Rev. Marjorie opened the meeting at 7:02 PM with a prayer written by Bishop Rob. We continued with the reading of the Norms.

VOTE: A motion was made by Christopher and seconded by Gail S that the 7th norm be changed to read, "To invite God into our work/midst (through prayer, worship, and service)". The motion carried.

VOTE: A motion to accept the reports with a consent agenda vote was made by Ken, seconded by Valerie, and was carried. The reports included are Clerk's Report, the Rector's Report, Property Report, and the Planning and Finance Reports (June 2020).

The Grace House fence installation has begun; it should be completed around June 18th. Two tenants from Grace House have left. Ann Hewins has begun accepting applications for next year. Cleaning and repairs will be done when all the City Year tenants have left.

Gail A reported that the financials for May showed that we have ended with a strong cash position because of the donations, bequests, Fair Share forgiveness, and PPP.

VOTE: A motion was made by Gail S, seconded by Carol to approve the May Financial Report. The motion carried.



Gail A additionally reported that we had participated in NH Gives and had 45 donors. We will receive nearly \$10,000. Sunday the 21st is the end of our PPP loan –when we would have to apply for forgiveness. Citizens Bank will be sending a form for us to complete. Gail said that some of the rules had changed and she would look into that but could not apply for forgiveness until she had received the form from the bank. We have received our \$50,000 draw from the endowment fund (the fund showed some recovery). We now have to contribute our Fair Share of \$5100/month to the diocese.

VOTE: Chris made a motion that we approve the payment of \$3950 for the masonry repairs. The motion was seconded by Teddi and was passed.

We had a discussion about what some of the issues were regarding opening the church and adhering to the guidelines in Bishop Rob's document, "Following The Good Shepherd On the Path Ahead". Some of the issues and needs that we discussed are as follows:

- When to open
- Additional cleaning/etc.
- Who will/can/should attend
- Having contact tracing
- Must wear masks (provide them as well)
- Sign waivers of responsibility
- Have no choir
- Live feed the service
- Limit attendance
- How to have communion
- How to share the service with those who cannot attend in person

We need to have wifi in the church. Ken is going to try to contact Brian G. to see if he could help in that regard. Marlene had contacted Comcast to see if we could use our current system in the church – the upgrade that would be required (and might not work) was extremely expensive. Valerie suggested that we consult with a business representative from Comcast; we could get a separate non-secure wifi for the church (which should be less expensive).

The staff will be taking the following vacation time off.

- Emery will take two weeks in July and take the other two weeks in singular days.
- Marlene will take two weeks in July and the other two weeks in singular days.
- Rev. Marjorie will take the last three weeks in July, come back for a week and then take the next two weeks in August off.

A guest priest will lead our Zoom service for two weeks in July and our Deacon will lead the third week.

Hank Gagnon will be contracted to come in for one hour each morning for six days on the weeks that Emery is on vacation.

VOTE: A motion was made by Chris and seconded by Valerie that Rev. Marjorie be paid for the above specified weeks of vacation. The motion carried.

VOTE: Gail S. made a motion that we explore the possibility of reopening the church on October 4th. The motion was seconded by Teddi and was carried.

We had a brief discussion on systemic racism and what we might consider doing in our community.

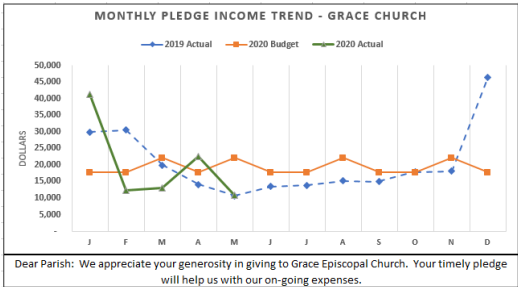
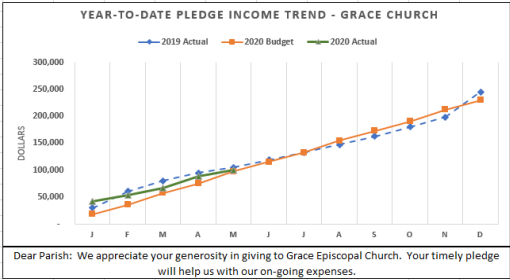
Ken Rhodes did not have any bids ready for the Steeple Project. The Property Committee will be notified that the Vestry is expecting to have three bids evaluated – or an explanation of why there are not three bids available for the project. We expect to have a presentation at the July Vestry meeting.

The Choir room floor needs to be replaced. The boards are too thin and cannot be sanded. The replacement of the floor will be considered at a later date.

The next Vestry meeting July 15th.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Johnson, Clerk



# **Grace Episcopal Church**

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## Clergy

The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Rector  
The Reverend Mike Andres, Deacon

## Vestry

Amy Brumfield, Warden  
Christopher Messier, Warden  
Nancy Johnson, Clerk  
Gail Austin, Treasurer  
David Roy, Assistant Treasurer

Valerie Anderson, Carol Cote, Hank Gagnon, Ken Kjellander,  
Teddi McIntosh, Matthew Serge, Gail Schuman,  
Chris Turner, Meghann White

## Staff

Mark Cleveland, Director of Music  
Ken Grinnell, Organist  
Carter Beck, Organist  
Marlene Thompson, Parish Administrator  
Lyn Marino, Assistant Parish Administrator  
Jill Porter, Bookkeeper  
Emery Freethey, Sexton  
Susan Senneville, Nursery Care Giver  
Ann Hewins, Grace House Manager

## Newsletter

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## Cover Illustration

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## Next Newsletter Deadline

August 22, 2020