



Grace Notes December 2020

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





Illustration by Andrew Freshour

Table of Contents

Rector's Reflection: Embracing Advent	3
Praying for Oneself	4
Stewardship Talk - November 22, 2020	6
Waking Up White	9
Mitten Tree Outreach	11
Getting to Know You	11
The Plot Thickens	13
GEC Book Group Update	15
Drive By Communion	16
Crafting Love Matters	17
Zoom Diocesan Convention	18
News from the Southern Convocation - and Beyond	19
Diocesan Convention Choir	22
Thoughts and Reflections	23
A Note From Sandi+	24
Grace Around Town	25
Ataxia Virtual Walk Results	26
New semi-professional model/parishioner	26
Top Notch Knitter	27
Milestones	27
Vestry Meeting	28
Monthly Pledge Income Trend Graphs	32

Rector's Reflection: Embracing Advent

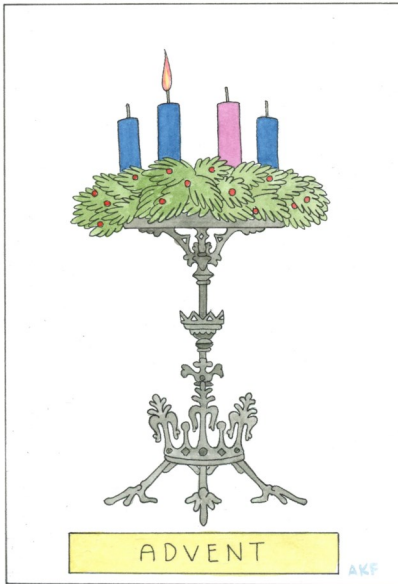
Four candles help us count the way each Sunday 'til it's Christmas Day. This is a rhyme I made up years ago to teach three and four year olds the tradition of the Advent wreath. As that is the role of the Advent wreath - counting down the weeks until

Christmas arrives. The tradition was invented over a hundred years ago by Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808 - 1881), a Protestant pastor, teacher, and urban missionary who served the poor in Germany. Wichern founded a mission school in Hamburg and at that school children often would ask daily if Christmas had arrived. To help his students keep track of how long it was until Christmas, Wichern took an old cartwheel and added small, red candles to be lit every weekday and Saturday during Advent and larger, white candles to be lit on Sundays. Though this ritual wasn't really popular until the 19th century, German immigrants brought the practice of lighting the Advent wreath with them to America in the 20th century.



As a child, I remember processing down the aisle of the church with my rector in a burgundy, velvet dress to help him light the Advent wreath. As a seminarian, I remember coaching acolytes to light the right number of candles on the Advent wreath before Sunday services began. As a day school chaplain, three days a week for the four weeks of Advent I stood on a chair to light candles on a massive Advent wreath suspended from the ceiling of our nave. (That was my least favorite Advent wreath as often as I tried to light the candles the wreath would spin, making lighting candles dangerous and treacherous work!) For every year of my life, I have always gone to church to help or watch an Advent wreath be lit. It is a ritual I have always loved and embraced.

This year we will be together, not in our beautiful sanctuary for Advent, but at home and gathered together in our Grace Church Zoom room. In that sacred room, various parish families have agreed to lead Advent wreath prayers and light candles at the start of each service. While we all wish we could be together in person, the Advent wreaths that will be in our prayer leaders' homes all match. Reminding us though we are apart, we are still bound together as one church and community in Christ.



(Illustration by Andrew Freshour)

If you can, please find, craft, or purchase an Advent wreath of your own and light the candles each week with us. Candles that represent hope, faith, joy, and peace. Gifts that all of us can share as we reach out to one another in new and creative ways as we continue to shelter in place and look towards the future when we can all gather together again to hug, sing, pray, feast, and serve.

Blessings and love,
Marjorie +

Praying for Oneself

A few months ago I wrote a piece about the Church's prayer ministry for those connected to our community and how it affects them especially when they know that they are the object of our prayers. Recently I got to thinking about the effects of prayer when we pray for ourselves. Also came the question of the mechanics, if you could call it that, through which God acts to grant to God's people the grace and healing balm that is sought. What arose was a personal recollection.



Many years ago, in fact before I became an Anglican, as a pastor in another denomination I was scheduled to conduct a service at a funeral home about a 10 minute drive from our house. Unlike my wife whose habit it is to be the first person present at any given event, even if it means standing around for a half hour or so, for me it feels good to arrive just on time. It came time for me to leave for the funeral. I gathered up my Bible and my notes and reached in my suit jacket for my car keys. They were not there! Nor were they on the kitchen counter, or my bedroom dresser, or the sofa, or anywhere else

that I could think of. I found myself in the heat of anxiety quickly crescendoing to near panic as I dashed about the house scanning every possible location. Now, as it was well past the time of departure, and my wife off somewhere else with the kids carrying the alternate set of car keys, I was up the creek without a paddle.

Not habitually given to beseeching the Almighty for help in such matters, I found myself deeply humbled. I sat down on the stairs, head in my hands, and said something like this, “Lord, you have called me to be your servant and I believe you want me to minister to this family in this time of their need. Please show me where the keys are hiding. I no sooner finished my “prayer” when I knew where to look. I walked out the front door to the space between the sidewalk and the roadside curb by the driveway, and looked down, and there were the keys lying in the grass. When I had arrived home the previous evening I had gone to the curbside to bring in the empty trash cans and when I had bent over to pick them up, they had slipped quietly out of the breast pocket of my shirt onto the soft grass, where they had lain overnight undisturbed. I arrived at the funeral with no seconds to spare.

I told that story to an interim congregation I served just before I arrived at Grace Church, and in a post liturgy conversation with a very learned man, I quickly discovered that it was a stumbling block for him in all his rationality. He assumed that I thought God intervenes concretely into every human cry for help with either a yes or a no. God is praised if we get a yes, God is a meanie if we get a no. To believe in God in such a way is much too mechanical for my mind, an attempt to make God in our own image. I do believe that God is love. I do believe that love is at the center of the entire universe, and the more I live my life remembering and being grounded in that love, things eventually fall into place. For me that day even though I am not sure that I knew what I was doing, it was a matter of relaxing in God, of acknowledging the frailty and the limitations of my humanity and trusting that that great power beyond me would provide for my need. And so by trusting, rather than continuing to white-knuckle it, I found myself relaxed, my anxiety dissipated, my head cleared and cleansed, and my thought processes restored.

As I bring my writing to a close, I hear the wonderful aria from Mendelssohn’s “Elijah,” “O Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him, and he shall give thee thy heart’s desire.” Would that each one of us could hear that reassuring message from the Psalmist as we proceed along the path

of life in the face of the challenges we all face, especially in these anxious times.

Fr Allan +

Stewardship Talk - November 22, 2020

We are grateful that Ernesto Burden served as our first Stewardship preacher and teacher at our Zoom worship this past week. His talk was simply remarkable and we thought it appropriate it be re-printed here for you to read and reflect on.



Stewardship . . . As you all know, this has been a pretty heavy and intense year. The main thing which has affected us to a greater or lesser degree - and I'm sure has weighed heavily on everyone's mind and heart - is that I turned 50. There might have been a few other things going on too. But 50. Right?

I'm kidding. Mostly and sort of. But maybe there is a point in there that's worth pulling and elaborating on. It's easy to get into your own head when times are hard. And maybe get a little lost there or a lot lost there and lose perspective. These are stressful times and depressing times and anxious times. Times full of uncertainty and full of grief for everyone. And they can leave you feeling isolated and lost. You think, *"I'm having these troubles and they are really hard to cope with and I can't see past them."* Or maybe, and this is ironically brutal in its own way, *"Maybe I am having these troubles and they are creating anxiety or depression or fear, but they are not as bad as other people's troubles. So I am feeling guilty about my anxiety, depression, and fear."* Which is really darn depressing. And around you go again.

Now I figure since I am talking to people of faith it is evident, intellectually, to all of us that we are never truly alone with all these troubles. Never really alone in that sometimes splendid symphony and sometimes horrible, echo chamber of our own heads. **God is always there.** And God always hears us. But the challenge is we don't always hear God. At least not directly. Because God speaks in a still, small voice. And the modern world is a very noisy place. And sometimes our hearts are very noisy places. God is aware of this and has made accom-

modations. He has counseled us to be in community. When Jesus taught people how to pray he told them to say "*Our Father*," not "*My Father*." Our Father. We are oriented by that essential prayer to God by way of community in a family. And it's that community that God has put in place to resonate with his voice when it's hard to hear anything else. We can hear that still, small voice. Now echoing and amplified in the arches and spires of the communities God has built. We don't just sit in churches. We are the churches. And we are also the hands that God builds those churches with.

My kids and I are still pretty new to this community. And I think, like everyone, the pandemic made our connections feel disjointed. For me a big part of my religious experience is moving myself into a sacred space. Being in a physical space and a physical posture helps me to find that sacred room in my own head. Video meetings are what I do all day for work. So it's hard to find church on Zoom as fulfilling as being in the physical, sacred space. No matter how beautiful and moving Marjorie's sermons are across any medium. And I'm an introvert. And so even though I manage networking fairly fluently in my work while I am playing the role of an extrovert. I am not a natural when it comes to connecting with folks at Zoom coffee hours after a church service. Which is, I suppose, why you don't see me here every week on Zoom. Though I try to make it as often as I can. But, but true confession. Sometimes it makes me feel lonely.

However, I don't think that there has ever been a time when I needed community - whether I knew that's what I needed or not - that God didn't provide it. Once, when the older kids were little, and the youngest two hadn't even been born yet, we were all living up north in Vermont in an old farmhouse and going to church in a little northern city we were close to. And that church was not a great demographic fit. And by that I mean literally no one else had kids. And so even though our two were pretty well behaved for toddlers. Their mildest stirrings were like sirens going off in that still, meditative place. And whether it was real or just my imagination I suffered chronically under the approbation of scowls. And people thinking "*How awful. Can't they just keep those children quiet?*" It was bad enough that I considered, "*Maybe we just stop going. Pray privately until the kids were older. We don't belong here. God, tell me what you want me to do.*" I prayed. Because this is not working.

On what I thought was a whim, and perhaps it was more than that. About to make this big decision, we drove the other way out of the driveway one Sunday, And found this parish in Montpelier. And the sermon that the priest gave that very day was on children. And how they were always welcome. Their noise was not a distraction. But a proclamation of life. And we didn't quit going to church. And we stayed at that place until we moved.

This year. In the midst of the pandemic. In the midst of great leadership challenges in my work. Carrying the psychological baggage that seems to attach itself to turning 50. (And see I got back to that!) With no physical, sacred space to go to and rest in each Sunday. No community to sit shoulder to shoulder with in quiet contemplation. I was feeling disconnected and dislocated and lonely. And when I say that I have to acknowledge the great blessing my kids are in my life. They give tremendous comfort and affection. But still the soul becomes lonely and demands restlessly. And can you believe grown-ups still ask questions like this but, *"Who am I and where am I going and where do I belong and who will go with me?"*

And once again God answers the question. So I come home from work one day. And I find a package in the mail. And inside are a batch of masks. And they are all beautifully made in colorful, fun patterns. Some are silly and perfect for children. And some are serious and ideal for adults. And, and some are whimsical. And in my case, just right for a childish adult. And there is this beautiful note from Greg Gagnon. And it's not the first time he and Hank, or other people from Grace have reached out. But it's so incredibly tangible this time. And the timing is so good. It just overwhelms me. And I stand there for a while. All choked up. With tears leaking down my face. And I recognize that again, like that time up in Vermont. And probably a thousand other subtler times that I was too distracted to recognize. I've had a direct interaction with God. He's reached out. Put his arm around my shoulder. And said, *"Come on. This way. It will be OK."*

And so, stewardship. We're the beams and the stones and the glass. And we're also the hands that build them into the spires and sanctuaries of this community. However our individual means allow, it's beyond worthwhile to support this community. Because each effort made or gift given, however great or small, God uses to speak directly to somebody who may be having a hard time hearing him.

I, Marjorie, pledge to return my form by the deadline. And I hope, in an anachronistic way, that my gift is the quarter God drops in that great cosmic pay phone and calls one of you when you need to hear from him the most. Thank you.

Ernesto Burden

Waking Up White

That's the title of a book by Debby Irving. It's on the reading list for Sacred Ground, the "Film-based Dialogue Series on Race & Faith". It is part of "Becoming Beloved Community, The Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice". There are ten of us in a cohort who are willing to face our racism head-on by joining this seminar.



Years ago, my seminary professor, Carter Heyward, gave two scenarios to our class. We had previously, individually and collectively, declared "we're not racist".

Suppose you're alone on the New York subway at 10 at night. Three young men get on. They are wearing jackets and ties, and are carrying books. They are White. What is your reaction? We all pretty much agreed that we would barely notice them. Now, suppose three young Black men get on, doo rags, boom box blaring, loudly talking. What is your reaction this time? Would we avoid eye contact, make sure our wallet was buried deep in a pocket, and contemplate getting off at the next stop, running as fast as we could? Can I outrun them? Will they follow me? And so on. What was the difference? Fact-based fear? Ingrained racism? Or something else?

I had never given my white privilege much thought. It had never occurred to me to wonder why there were only four Black girls in my entire school, grades 7 through 12. Girls' Latin School was an exam school in Boston, and girls who lived in poor neighborhoods, whose elementary schools were substandard, didn't stand much of a chance to make the cut. These four did graduate, but I never won-

dered what it was like for any one of them, to be the only Black girl in a given classroom, for example. Were they welcomed to sit with anyone in the lunchroom? Did they hang out together? Were they the last ones chosen in gym? I do remember that they were all quiet and shy. In retrospect, I can see why.

As I read *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson, which recounts how more than 5.5 million Black Americans abandoned the South, between WWI and 1970, I was amazed at how little I knew of the way these folks were treated. In my teens and twenties, I was clueless. Lynchings, neighborhoods burned to the ground, God-fearing people unable to eat in a restaurant or stay in a hotel. Was I unconscious?

I remember an incident when I was a small child, visiting Williamsburg with my parents. I had to go to the bathroom, and I spotted the door with the skirt on it. As I headed in, a White woman grabbed my arm hard, and said, “You can’t go in there!”. I shook off her grip, and kept right on going. Turns out I went into the “Colored Only” bathroom. I was a little girl on a mission, and it took years to figure out what I had done wrong, at least in her eyes.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964? I was 22, and the legislation, and the need for it, went right over my head. I’m 78 now, and I am just waking up to my continued complicity in the sin of racism. Of course, I celebrated Colin Kaepernick’s decision to take a knee during the national anthem at the start of football games. He was quietly protesting police brutality and racial inequality. But, I need to do more than just support him. And I am just now learning how much more.

Waking Up White is a hard read. It can bring tears to your eyes. It can make you squirm. You think, “But that’s not who I am”. Oh, but perhaps it is.

The Rev Jane W Van Zandt



Mitten Tree Outreach

Thanks to all of you, the Outreach Committee surpassed its goal and has purchased \$75 gift cards for 156 children at Hallsville, McDonough, and Wilson Schools. They will be delivered along with hats, mittens, and scarves. Your generosity is truly appreciated by our committee and the families who will receive these gifts.

Getting to Know You

This month's article features a member of our parish community who died from COVID after 100 years of love and faith - Ulla Linqvist Damon. Ulla was visited by members of our parish Outreach team over the past several years while she resided at Saint Teresa's Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Manchester, New Hampshire. We are grateful to her daughter Monika Kehas and son Tom Damon for their assistance in helping us get to know their mother better.



The beautiful needle-pointed cushions in our Saint Michael's chapel exist because of your mom's diligence. Was your mom always into doing and pursuing such beautiful handiwork? How did she decide to spearhead that project?

Yes, Ulla has always been interested in a variety of arts and crafts, particularly needlework, rug making, knitting, and weaving. I remember as a child there was always some kind of craft project going on in our house. Whether it was teaching Monika's Girl Scout troop how to knit or the neighborhood kids at our beach house how to macramé, Ulla was always involved in some kind of craft. During the summer she also conducted informal arts and crafts classes at our family cottage on Drakes Island, Wells, Maine. So, it was no surprise that she and the women's group at Grace Church decided to take on the kneeler project. Once it got started,

she wanted to see it completed, so that became her main focus for some time.

How did your mom end up becoming a member of Grace Church?

When our family moved from Nashua to Manchester in the 1950's, our parents looked for a new church to join. They liked the close-knit community of Grace Church and they quickly decided to become active members of the church.

How did your mom (Ulla) meet your dad?

When our mom was in her twenties, she came to the United States from Sweden and traveled the country on Greyhound buses. Ulla started in Illinois as that is where her sponsor lived. She went to Hollywood and worked in a Swedish restaurant. Then off to Palm Beach where my parents worked at the same hotel. After several months, she worked in New York City before going back home to Sweden. My parents corresponded for some time, before she came back to the United States and married my dad.

I know your mom was very service oriented. How did she volunteer and serve our community?

Our mom was a very generous and giving person. She spent much of her time helping friends and neighbors while volunteering in numerous local organizations such as The Salvation Army, International Club, Grace Episcopal Church, Elliot Hospital and served as a board member of the Manchester YWCA. For many years, she also provided support to international college students from various countries. She had foreign students come and live in her house and she became very close to many of them.

Also, before she had children for roughly four years our mom ran a Swedish craft shop named "Bit of Sweden" in downtown Manchester. She sold various items from Sweden there and also taught embroidery, needlepoint, rug making, and weaving.

What were Ulla's particular loves or hobbies?

Ulla had a lot of hobbies. She loved needlepointing and embroidery as well as weaving. She loved being outdoors and enjoyed hunting for blueberries and wild mushrooms. Ulla loved gardening and growing indoor house plants. (We nicknamed her home "The Rain Forest". She fed birds, crows, chipmunks and squirrels from her porch. She was also a superb skier, both downhill and cross-country skiing. In addition Ulla

loved beach walks, golden retrievers, backgammon, and watching golf and tennis on TV.

Tell us about Ulla's use of the English language, which I heard was quite unique.

Ulla had an innocent, yet wonderful way of twisting around the English vocabulary. It happened quite frequently so we called these "Ullieisms". For example; she would say a person would go forth and back instead of back and forth. Someone took the 6 PM shuffle (instead of shuttle). And when traffic was really bad, it was bumper-to-bummer traffic instead of bumper-to-bumper.

How did Ulla make you happy?

So many ways. But to name a few: listening to her stories about her childhood and growing up years in Sweden. Eating her delicious, homemade Swedish cookies and Swedish pancakes. Seeing her laugh. She was someone who was full of joy and she always shared that joy with others.

Do you have any specific memories that you treasure and shared with Ulla that exemplify who she was/is/always will be as a person?

We thankfully have many memories of our mother that we will always treasure. Ulla never liked large social gatherings. She would rather come to our house for dinner than go to a restaurant. She lived in a simple manner, appreciating everything that she had. When in the nursing home, she appreciated both the parish visits and visits from our own family and thanked us each time. During times of small family gatherings, her wonderful stories showed us her character, which was positive, strong, and loving. She shared with us that her faith in God became especially important to her in her final years at Saint Teresa's. She would often pray and lean on God for strength.

The Plot Thickens

This year has been a doozy in many regards with all the isolation and social distancing, being temporarily furloughed, not to mention not being able to worship together in person. (Lord, I miss swinging incense...) But, in a surprising turn of events the owners of the Framers Market in



Manchester have recently featured my artwork in their gallery.

Several months ago, I was there with Michael Duffy to get a piece of mine framed that he purchased. Jack Love, one of the new owners of the Framers Market saw the piece and asked to see some more. To my surprise, he liked what he saw and decided to take a chance on me. Thanks to him and his partner, I have a little show right now with four pieces framed and a slew of others for sale.

I'm exceedingly happy about this because I've always been somewhat shy when it comes to my work. So, this feels like a big step in my artistic journey. Hopefully this sparks some interest, and something wonderful comes of this! If you'd like to pay my pieces a visit the Framers Market is open Tuesday to Friday 9:30 to 5:30 and Saturday 9:30 to 3:30. Feel free to visit my website as well: www.andrewfreshour.com



GEC Book Group Update

Nine members of our parish came to our Zoom room, parish book group meeting this month to discuss the book *Green Dolphin Street* by Elizabeth Goudge, a British novelist born into the home of an Anglican priest and theologian. Though this book was published in 1944 and some of the language was dated, all of us were impressed by the way the book both developed and wove numerous characters together. At times the foreshadowing of the plot, as one reader commented, "hit us repeatedly over the head," we all enjoyed reading a book with impressive wordsmithing and reminded us how complex relationships can be.

Please consider joining us for our next Zoom parish book group meeting on December 15th at 12 noon. We will be discussing the book *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett. Ann Patchett, author of another *New York Times* Bestseller titled *Commonwealth*, authored this richly moving story that explores the indelible bond between two siblings, the house of their childhood, and a past that will not let them go. *People Magazine* dubbed this book, "Enchanting," and honored it as one of the Best Books of Fall, 2019. This book was also a *New York Times* Bestseller and was one of *Time Magazine's* 100 Must-Read Books of 2019.



Drive By Communion

Thank you to all those who were instrumental in making our parish's first ever "Drive By Eucharist" so successful: Marlene Thompson, Emery Freethey, Christopher Messier, Amy Brumfield, Hank and Greg Gagnon, the Reverend Michael Andres, the Reverend Jane Van Zandt, and the Reverend Dr. Marjorie Ann Gerbracht-Stagnaro. 65 people drove by, while 2 parishioners walked from home, to receive Holy Communion for the first time since the pandemic began.

We will continue to host Drive By Eucharist once a month until the pandemic ends. We will remind you of upcoming dates at Zoom worship, using our parish Facebook page, and with parish wide e-mails, but take note of the next several dates scheduled for the coming months: **Sunday, December 20th; Sunday, January 10th (Epiphany), Sunday, February 21st (First Sunday in Lent), Sunday, March 28th (Passion/Palm Sunday) and Sunday, April 4th (Easter)**



Crafting Love Matters

One of the hardest things about pandemic time is finding and feeling a sense of accomplishment. Getting even the simplest of tasks completed takes more time than normal. At the end of a single day it is easy to think, "Did I actually mark anything off my to do list?"

As your rector I continue to give thanks for all those in our parish who reach out to others with simple acts of love though the simple use of their hands. I give thanks for our parish mask makers, note writers, knitters, bakers, and fiber artists who mail or drop off gifts that showcase the love of our community.

Our parish knitters and crochet artists have been prolific during this pandemic. We received this lovely note (dated 11/1/20) from the Project Linus organization which I wanted to share. It shows that prayers through words, fabric, yarn, baking, and stitching matter:

Dear Reverend Gerbracht-Stagnaro,

Thank you so much to you and your membership who have been generously knitting and crocheting away. I picked up your latest bag of beautiful infant and toddler blankets this past week. What a wonderful selection of patterns and color combinations! These will be going out soon to various hospitals, shelters, and social service agencies to provide warmth and security to little ones in stressful situations or in homes where an extra layer of warmth is needed as we approach the winter months.

Your generosity and talents are much appreciated.

*Robyn Manley
Chapter Coordinator
Project Linus Southwest New Hampshire Chapter*

Blessings to all of you who continue to share yourself in unique ways as we enter this season of giving.

Much love,
Marjorie +

Zoom Diocesan Convention

Thank you to our Southern Convocation parish leaders/diocesan delegates who attended the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire's first ever Zoom Diocesan Convention that took place on Friday, November 13th and Saturday, November 14th: Catie Bailey, Ed Doyle, Anne Hewins, Shelley Kesselman, and Julie Alig Scalia. Other Grace Episcopal Church familiar faces in attendance at this historic event were the Reverends Jane Van Zandt, Sandi Albom, Michael Andres, Maryan Davis, and Marjorie Ann Gerbracht-Stagnaro.

Our diocese celebrated the creative work of Episcopal churches across our state during the pandemic with a celebration video titled "New Paths of Discipleship" which can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6syzw6t>. The two slides below were how we were featured in the video for the diocesan convention:



News from the Southern Convocation - and Beyond *(Special Convention Edition)*



The Southern Convocation met virtually on October 27. First order of business was to elect a new Lay Co-Convener, and I was delighted to be elected to this position! Please pray for me, that I may fulfill my duties faithfully and well.

The next order of business, and the focal point for the evening, was reviewing the proposed diocesan budget in anticipation of the upcoming diocesan convention. As the result of sound stewardship of resources, we went into the COVID crisis in good financial shape, and while we cannot expand at this time, we are able to meet the needs of the moment, and to maintain the ministries we have in a solid fashion. It has been necessary for us to draw on reserves, but this is not a problem. We are in the very kind of situation for which we intend our reserves, and making use of them is appropriate. One particular change was the addition of a line item to increase benefits for the lay employees of the diocese in order to attain compensation parity with clergy employees. Both the budget and the proposed benefit increase for lay employees were well received by the convocation reps, and we adjourned in anticipation of the convention to follow. The Southern Convocation will reconvene in February.

Our Diocese hosted its first virtual convention via Zoom on November 13th and 14th. Friday evening consisted of checking in, while a virtual choir provided renditions of hymn favorites, to the delight of the attendees. (Props to Grace's own Dave and Ken Kjellander who contributed their voices to this collaborative effort with which the Convention was blessed - wonderful to see and hear you both!)

We began with worship, readings and music that framed the holy work before us. We were blessed by a magnificent sermon from The Rt. Reverend Shannon McVean-Brown, Bishop of Vermont. Bishop Shannon spoke powerfully of the importance of taking on difficult work in order to be more fully the beloved community that God calls us to be, and that avoiding the discomfort of doing this work only leads to more pain in the long run. Drawing on our diocesan symbol,

she reminded us that pruning the vine is never an easy business, but it is critical if the vine is to be healthy, and bear the fruit that it was created to bear. That pruning is actually a sign of God's love. Leaving unfinished business from the past only holds us back, and keeps us from bearing good fruit, but when we abide in Christ, pruning becomes something we can lean into, even as it disrupts the status quo. The God who is always doing a new thing meets us in the discomfort of disruption, grafting something new into the vine even as the old is pruned away.

After worship, we undertook the necessary parliamentary housekeeping in order to begin our work on Saturday, then called a recess for the evening.

The virtual choir ushered us into our virtual meeting space on Saturday with more inspiring hymns. Bishop Rob's annual address acknowledged the trauma that we have been experiencing collectively and individually, and reminded us that even in trauma, the life of the Church goes on, and that important, holy conversations are going on, which are the new shoots springing up out of the trauma itself. Bishop Rob suggested that as we stand on the cusp of Advent, we reflect on the great "O antiphons" because they speak profoundly to where we are now as communities, and as individuals - exiled, wounded, longing for restoration, and falling short of what God wants for us, and crying for God to come to us, trusting that God will indeed come.

Moving from the Bishop's address to business, we discussed and passed the resolution for diocese-wide racial justice work, as discussed in last month's newsletter, by a solid majority vote. We unanimously approved the resolution for St. Mark's - Ashland, and Church of the Holy Spirit - Plymouth to come together as one united congregation in the Pemi-Baker Valley, which will be known as Emmanuel Church. We approved both the budget as presented in the October convocation meetings along with the proposed benefit increase for diocesan lay employees. (Details can be found on the diocesan website.)

These resolutions speak to the Gospel reading on the Parable of the talents which we heard the very next day. Each one of these resolutions involves a certain amount of risk. We come to each one of them with something of value that nobody wants to lose! And yet playing it safe is not what Jesus calls us to do! We are called to make investments of

our whole selves as individuals, and as a larger community as stewards of all that God has given us. We are called to risk the loss of the familiar, the safe, and the comfortable for the sake of the Reign of God with bold decisive, and creative action, always relying on the One who calls us to this work to guide us in it.

Overall, this virtual convention was a great success! We were able to do our business with care, accuracy, and marvelous efficiency. Logistically, it was the easiest convention I have ever attended in any diocese. Hearty huzzahs and alleluias to the planners from the diocese who outdid themselves in terms of making this uncharted territory user friendly, and cultivating a strong sense of community even when we could not be physically together. We were delighted by music provided by singers from all over the diocese who came together in prayerful song to give us something meaningful with which to bless our work. We had better attendance than we have had in other years, since travel was not an issue. I was more aware than ever of our affirmed notion of being “one church doing business in 48 different outposts throughout the state” as we were able to see the various spaces in which we are that one church.

And...at the same time, there were things I genuinely missed. I missed the companionable carpooling with my fellow delegates and bonding more deeply over the work ahead. I missed the sense of retreat I always feel with an in-person Convention, where I leave behind the everyday to fully focus on what our diocese is called to do in the year ahead. I missed seeing old friends and making new ones, and all the hugs, handshakes and laughter that such encounters entail. I missed the fellowship that is found in breaking bread together at mealtime, and I really missed the closing Eucharist where we celebrate our union with Christ and one another in our beloved great sacrament, and passing the Peace with hugs and smiles. To do that as representatives of our great diocese is something that never loses its power for me, and its absence was felt deeply. I will be honest - I am getting teary eyed as I write this. The rewards of this virtual convention did not in any way negate the special things about an in-person Convention that we had to forfeit this time.

Life in the vine, life in love is not always an easy thing. We often hold joy and sorrow in creative tension. This was definitely one of those times.

Still, in these strange and anxious days, the vine that is the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire continues to thrive, and manifest God’s reconciling love in every corner of the Granite State. In good times and bad, it is good to be us, and God meets us wherever we are.

For this, and for a good Convention let us give hearty thanks!

Shelley Kesselman

Diocesan Convention Choir

We give thanks for David and Ken Kjellander’s participation in our Diocesan Convention Choir that took place via Zoom on November 13th and 14th, 2020.



Thoughts and Reflections

Telstar

In last month's Reflection, I described a situation where someone got a clear but unexpected message from God. I can actually relate to it because of a personal experience I had.



Many, many years ago, before Nancy-Ann and I had met, my brother (Carl) was dating one of Nancy-Ann's best friends (Bonnie). Both Carl and Bonnie thought that it would be good if Nancy-Ann and I were also dating so we all could go out together. During the summer between our sophomore and junior years in high school, I remember Carl telling me that he thought I should meet Bonnie's friend.

We were all familiar with Livingston Pool because we all swam there, so that was the place they chose as the point of introduction. I remember telling my mother about their plan, and my uncertainty. The only thing I remember her saying was "Be nice."

The four of us went to Livingston and all swam to the deep end where we were introduced. Shortly after that, Nancy-Ann and I swam to shore and started to talk. Our conversation was awkward because the only thing we had in common was that we were both students at Central High School, and would both be starting our junior year in the fall. We had not been in any of the same classes together. I talked about chess, science, and math, while she talked about reading and music. After that, one of our first dates was to go bowling, which was something we could both do. On another date, Carl, Bonnie, and I all met at Nancy-Ann's house, and I showed them how to play chess.

Shortly after school began in the fall, I asked Nancy-Ann to go with me to our high school's November Dance. She accepted, and now things got interesting. During the first part of our junior year, I found myself attracted to another girl, although we never did anything together. After asking Nancy-Ann to the dance, I started questioning myself about whether I should have asked the other girl instead. As it got closer to the dance, I started having stronger doubts, and wondered what I should do. The uncertainty got resolved in a

very interesting way.

One evening, as I was doing homework, the instrumental song “Telstar” started playing on the radio in the background. As I listened to the music, I imagined I was on a satellite orbiting the earth, and next to me was Nancy-Ann. The other girl was nowhere to be seen. The message was pretty clear. From that point on, I no longer had any doubts about who I should be taking to the dance.

We haven’t yet orbited the earth in a satellite, but in our 52 years of marriage, we have travelled around the world.

Dick Feren

A Note From Sandi+

Greetings Grace Church family,

As many of you have likely heard, I have been called to serve as interim rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in East Longmeadow, MA. It’s a bit-sweet blessing for me and Bob. We have so many good friends here in NH, lifelong connections and precious memories. At the same time, we are returning to a place where we lived for many years. Western MA holds a special place in our hearts and is similar to NH in many ways. The move also puts us closer to family. Just under an hour to my mom, still strong and healthy at 86, and a short drive to Bob’s family in CT.



St. Mark’s is the church that we belonged to in the 1990’s, and I look forward to being there in a different way, accompanying them in their journey as they begin the process of parish discernment. My own personal discernment has led me to pursue a calling to intentional interim ministry. My work in recovery ministry will continue as we look toward maximizing efforts, serving people seeking recovery from addiction across Province 1, the Episcopal Church in New England. I will be remaining canonically resident in NH for the foreseeable future. So, you see, I will not be so far away from my NH family after all :)

A piece of my heart will always abide with you at Grace Church, my

spiritual home. It was you all that urged, encouraged, supported and raised me up to accept the call to serve Christ in his Church. I'm always so happy to join you in worship when I can be on Zoom. It's been a special privilege to be invited to preach from time to time. (Thanks Marjorie+ !!) Hopefully I'll check in once in a while, and when conditions are safe for us to gather once again for a good Grace Church Corned Beef Dinner, count me and Bob in your number!

I will hold you all in my prayers for your health and well-being. May God's blessings be upon you, dear ones of Grace Church today and always.

Peace,
Sandi+

Grace Around Town

When you are out and about with your family or you happen to meet up with a Grace Church parishioner, please think about taking a picture and sending it our way so your "smize" can bring joy to others.



Ataxia Virtual Walk Results

A note of Thanksgiving for all of the support received from Grace Church and its parishioners for the National Ataxia Foundation's Virtual Walk n Roll event this fall. This event exceeded the national goal of \$400,000 and I raised \$4891.72 far exceeding my goal.

Many thanks to everyone for your support - without you this would not have been possible. You can view more here: <https://app.mobilecause.com/vf/NAFLIVE/JillPorter>

I received the following words of thanks from NAF in a personal video: "Jill, thank you so much for your efforts to increase awareness of Ataxia and raise funds during the Virtual Walk n' Roll! It is your hard work that made the event a success! Thank you."

As our journey continues we pray that everyone continues to stay well and be safe,

Jill Porter

New semi-professional model/parishioner

Congratulations to our own Gail Schumann for her recent modeling appearance where she walked the runway at a fashion show at the Mall of New Hampshire on Saturday, November 14th at Christopher and Banks.



Top Notch Knitter

Congratulations to Linda Chamberlain who was recently selected as one of three top notch knitters on the *Modern Daily Knitters* blog. Feel free to see the announcement of her award in person via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y3gzuqo3>



Knitters, make some noise for Linda AC, whose Mood Cardigan is also in **Rustic Fingering**, in the Lakeland shade.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to the following December birthdays celebrants!

3 Catie Bailey
Justin Posnanski
4 Ann O'Rourke
5 Cheryl Thomas
10 Charlie Woodbury
11 Caroline Stenbeck
13 Bernie Tomnar
14 Miclana Linares
Gray Chynoweth

15 Nancy Stantial
16 Michelle Garneau
21 Kathie-Ann Day
Nancy Girgus
23 Liz Jestude
25 Kelly Farragher-Paras
27 Carol Cote

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, page 830

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.

Other Milestones:

Deaths: Ulla Damon, November 10, 2020
Olivia Phipps, November 13, 2020

Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

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

Excused Absences: none

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

EMAIL VOTE: Prior to this meeting the vestry was sent the following items for consideration:

1. Renewal of the snow plow contract with Bruce's Yard Works for this coming winter. I am attaching a copy of it. You will note that shoveling the walkways and entrances went up \$25 (from \$100 to \$125); and shoveling the Grace House walkway went up \$5 (\$45 to \$50).
2. Renewal of Eucharistic Minister licenses: Dave Kjellander and Lyn Marino both of whom wish to have their licenses renewed by the diocese.

The Vestry voted by email to approve both items.

VOTE: A motion to accept the reports with a consent agenda vote was made by Gail S, seconded by Hank, and was carried. The reports included are Clerk's Report, Rector's Report (Sept/Oct), Planning and Finance Reports (Oct 14), Property Report (Oct 7), and Stewardship Report (Sept 20).

The Vestry had received the financial reports from Gail A., including the sheet reference/comment page. She highlighted the fact that our Pledge Income is unfavorable to budget; we have taken our \$30,000 draw from the endowment funds. There has been no spending on church maintenance other than a new washing machine for Grace House. The Operating Fund had a positive cash balance (thanks to the proceeds from the PPP loan). The Endowment Fund now reflects a value of \$4,864 K as of September 30, 2020. She further reported that the Emergency Fund had been increased by \$19.8K. Citizens Bank responded concerning PPP forgiveness. We are waiting to see if it is necessary to apply for forgiveness or if it will be automatically done for loans that are less than \$50K.

VOTE: A motion was made by Matt, seconded by Carole to approve the September Financial Report. The motion carried.

Gail A reported that the Grace House Property Manager budget has been exceeded; \$600 more is needed through the end of the year. Additional work has been required due to Covid.

VOTE: Gail A made a motion that we approve to pay the Grace House Property Manager up to \$600 more to the end of the year. The motion was seconded by Gail S and was approved.

Gail A had prepared two budgets for fiscal year 2021; one with the church open and one with the church closed. Having done that, she noted that there was not much difference in the bottom line since open showed more income and more expenses and closed showed less income and less expenses. The budget(s) showed a significant shortfall. We are to review the proposed budget (open) and see how we can balance the budget. We will review it again in November. She would like to finalize the budget after December 30th.

As part of the Financial Review, Gail A had completed the Internal Controls document. She reported that we need to take physical inventory, have an insurance review, and get all I9's and timesheets for hourly employees on file. The Property Committee will be asked to head up the physical review; an Insurance agent will review all our current insurance needs.

Amy reported that we would not be able to open the church for any religious services by Nov. 1st because we had only 7 volunteers (where we need to have 14) and that Manchester is in a high infection transition zone. The Diocese has recommended that each church make their decisions on how to reopen based on their community risk.

The Vestry noted that many parishioners desired to see/be in the church building and had missed having communion; we discussed how to enhance our Zoom service to meet some of their needs. We discussed that we could pre-record the sermon given in church, music, etc. and add them to the service. Ken noted that he could do some of this work. We also discussed the ways and means that other churches were using to distribute communion. It was decided that we would have Rev. Marjorie pass out communion (which will be in a baggie) to parishioners in the parking lot across the street. She will have a couple of people helping her. The parishioners will come in and remain in their cars (with masks). This will happen on November 15th. The time will be decided and all the information will be sent to all the parishioners.

Gail S, Amy, and Rev. Marjorie will meet with a tech consultant to determine what is needed to have wifi in the church and to determine the costs involved. Rev. Marjorie stated that grant money was available from the Diocese. After we have the details we will apply for a grant.

The "Bylaws of the Rector, Wardens and Vestry of Grace Church in Manchester", was last reviewed and amended in January of 2011. We were tasked by the Diocese to review our bylaws and have them comply with the "Model Bylaws for Congregations" that the Diocese had revised in June of 2020. The Vestry had been sent the proposed updated bylaws document for review. The Vestry went over each of the additions/deletions/changes that were presented.

VOTE: A motion was made by Gail S, seconded by Valerie that the

“Bylaws of the Rector, Wardens and Vestry of Grace Church in Manchester” be accepted as updated by the Vestry. The motion carried.

Nancy will prepare a document to be sent to the parishioners prior to the Annual Meeting with the changes to the bylaws document for their review before the Annual Meeting. They will also be informed that they could request a copy of the entire document.

The Steeple Project will begin with the repair of the outside louvers. The rest of the repairs will probably have to happen in the spring. An update to the contract from Andover Organ is needed which reflects the added expense of \$800 necessary for work to be safely done.

VOTE: A motion was made by Meghann and seconded by Gail S to increase the payment to Andover Organ be increased from \$4,500 to \$5300 be approved. The motion carried.

Dwight and Rev. Marjorie are working on nominations that need approval at the Annual Meeting.

The Vestry discussed the huge problem we have with homeless “living” at the church. It has become a safety issue. The Property Committee had recommended that we use Security Patrol to clear the homeless from our premises during 9PM and 7AM. The Vestry would like to have the property, church and Grace House, gated but before that can be accomplished we would like to have the premises cleared. We discussed having the patrol come three times (\$324 per week) an evening until the end of the year. We could determine how successful they were at our next meeting.

VOTE: A motion to hire Security Patrol to come 3 times an evening on different times for a period of up to two months – where we would reconsider on keeping them on December 1st was made by Hank and seconded by Gail S and approved by the Vestry.

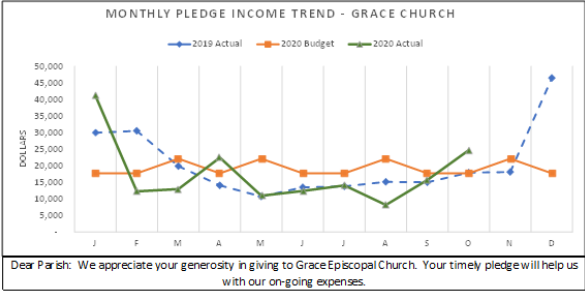
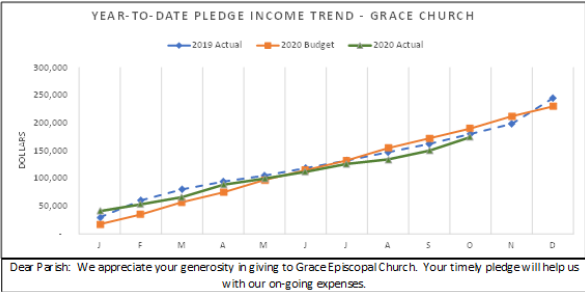
Rev. Marjorie reported that a Stewardship letter was going out to all the parishioners. She would like to have two people speak about stewardship. She has currently secured one person. The Stewardship

Campaign has been moved to November.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM.

The next Vestry meeting November 18th

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Johnson, Clerk



Grace Episcopal Church

106 Lowell Street
Manchester, NH 03101
Tel (603) 622-9813
Fax (603) 669-6044

gracechurchmanchesternh@gmail.com
www.gracechurchmanchester.org

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

Kersten Matera
gracechurchnewsletter@gmail.com

Cover Illustration

Andrew Freshour

Next Newsletter Deadline

December 28, 2020