

Grace Notes February 2021

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



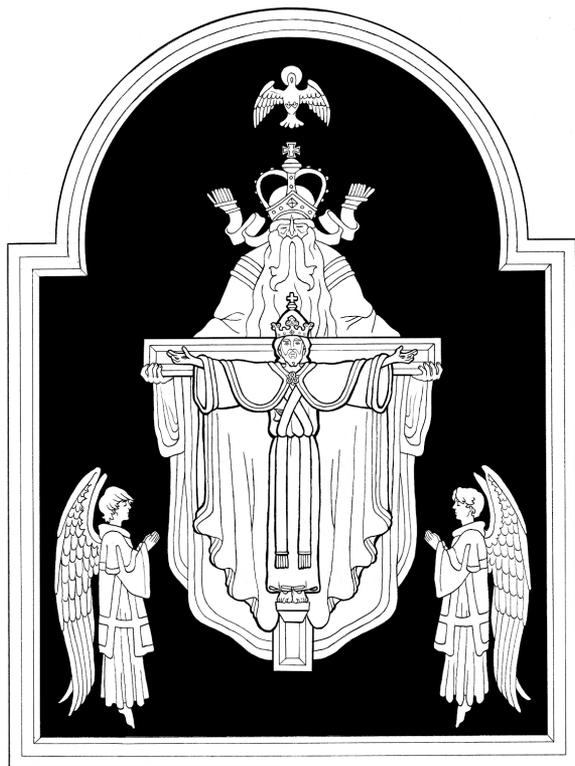


Illustration by Andrew Freshour

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Rector's Reflection

There is a British, modern day Anglican priest and poet named Malcom Guite. I admire him tremendously, as he writes a poem for every Sunday lectionary as well as for all the holy days we Episcopalians experience. Guite also is excellent at rhyming, something I try and often fail to do as well as he does. One Ash Wednesday poem of his ends this way: "*Hope could rise from ashes even now, beginning with this sign upon your brow.*"



At the time of Ash Wednesday 2020 we were still worshipping in our nave. That day I preached a sermon titled, "This Too Shall Pass." This past year the words I preached "way back when" have been quoted again and again from you back to me. This pandemic shall pass. This shelter in time will pass. This time of remote only learning will pass. Marjorie, this time of you still waiting to be officially divorced (COVID has really slowed down the court system!) will pass.

This Ash Wednesday of 2021 we will not gather in our nave to mark the start of Lent. Instead, all are invited to gather in our parish Zoom room at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, February 17th for worship. Prior to that virtual service, all are welcome to come to our church courtyard from 5:30 to 6:30 PM to be marked with an ash-en cross (clergy on hand will wear medical gloves – a new one for each parishioner - as they administer the sign of the cross). Parishioners can also, if they prefer, come to the courtyard and have ashes sprinkled on their foreheads. (The sprinkling of ashes on the penitent is how the tradition of ashes on one's head on Ash Wednesday began, occurring for the first time in the tenth century in Germany.) Or, if you prefer to stay home, consider spending some time writing down practices in your life that block you from being closer to God on a piece of paper, then burn that list (safely!) into ash that you can sprinkle on your head yourself.

Our *Book of Common Prayer* does not say a good Christian HAS to experience being sprinkled or marked with ashes for Lent. It says: *if ashes are to be imposed* (page 265, BCP). So truly, ashes are optional. What is important is we remember how our lives are gifts from God. Lent is a time to remember life as a gift and lift

ourselves ever higher to our Creator in prayers, words, and deed.

I began with the words of one poet. I will end with another, with the words of Mary Oliver, often called the adopted poet of the Episcopal Church: *Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?*

Much love,
Marjorie +

Serving God's People

When I worked on the AIDS Unit at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in the 90's, one of my patients asked me to take the clock off the wall in his room. He said that the constant ticking reminded him that his life was ticking away, and he was well aware of that, without the help of the clock.



This morning, as I was reheating my coffee, watching the seconds go by on the microwave, I was cognizant of the fact that my life is ticking away. Faster and faster, it seems, the older I get.

On Monday I attended the local Zoom MLK celebration. Rabbi Beth, of Manchester's Temple Adath Yeshurun, quoted Rabbi Tarphon: "It is not incumbent on you to complete the work, but neither are you free to abstain from it". Rabbi Beth said that while we may not be able to personally bring an end to racial injustice and other forms of intolerance, prejudice, and hatred, we may not throw up our hands and walk away.

When I was running for a seat in the NH House, I was very clear that all children should have access to quality education. One's ancestry should not be the deciding factor in who has safe and affordable housing, or fair pay and just working conditions.

When my dear friend Kim died in August, my prayer was to try to be the kind of person Kim thought I was. It isn't easy.

Every day I struggle to discern how I can make a difference, especially in this time of COVID. And, every day I continue to be aware of the fact that what I say, and how I act, may have an impact on oth-

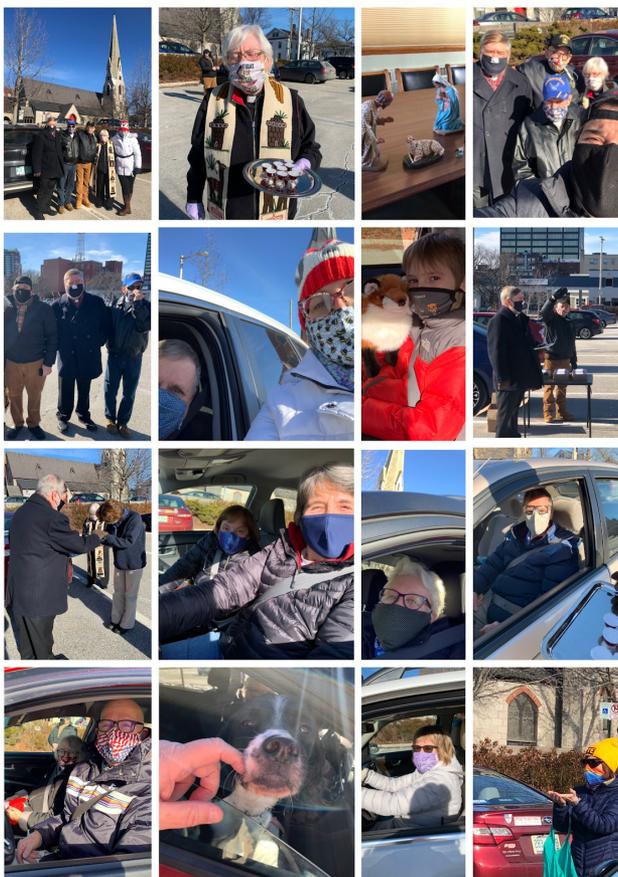
ers. I've decided to try to practice two things: to think before I act or speak, and to listen, really listen, to others. I will, with God's help.

Jane W Van Zandt+

Drive-By Eucharist

Kudos to the Reverends Jane Van Zandt, Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, and Mike Andres, as well as lay leaders Hank Gagnon, Greg Gagnon, and Christopher Messier for serving at our January 10th, 2021 Drive-By Eucharist on Epiphany. Fifty-five people were served and four pets were blessed!

Our next Drive By Eucharist will take place from 12 to 12:45 PM on the first Sunday of Lent, February 21st, 2021.



Grace Church Book Group 2020

Marjorie began the Book Group in 2012, and we have been meeting faithfully ever since. We have been meeting on Zoom since Covid-19 changed our lives. That has not slowed us down. In 2020 we read, and discussed:

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry by Rachel Joyce

The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

Becoming by Michele Obama

Not Your Average Travelers by Nancy-Ann Feren

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Educated by Tara Westover

Green Dolphin Street by Elizabeth Goudge

The Dutch House by Ann Patchett

Though the discussions focus on the book, a topic occasionally may lead us down a different path. Some folks have read the book, some haven't finished it, and still others haven't read it. We manage to have a lively



time, no matter where the individuals in the group are. All are welcome to join us at any time.

Jane W Van Zandt+

Pledge Reminder

It took me many years to understand that giving back to the church is an act of worship: recognizing that all I have and all I am is a gift from God, and returning some of that back to God through the Church. The Stewardship Committee appreciates that many folks give generously and prefer not to officially pledge their support. Thank you to all who give. That said, it is helpful, from a planning standpoint, to be able to budget, which is where the pledging thing comes in. If you have sent in your 2021 pledge form, thank you. If you have not yet returned your 2021 pledge form, please prayerfully consider making a pledge for 2021. Your support helps keep Grace Church going - including maintaining our beautiful building until we can be back there together again. Your pledge also supports the inspiring staff who remind us regularly that we are called to be the face of Jesus in our world.

Christine Anderson

Getting to Know You: Michael Duffy, Part One!

Many thanks to Moe Egan Thomas for doing a wonderful job interviewing a long time, devoted and faithful parishioner, Michael Duffy. Moe's questions and Mike's answers brought about a lively, thoughtful discussion. We offer you part one of the interview in this month's newsletter. Look forward to part two in our March issue!



How long have you lived in Manchester and what brought you here (to NH)?

I came to Manchester in 1979 to attend Saint Anselm College as a second-year transfer student. As a senior, I had an archives internship in the library at the Manchester Historic Association. Pouring over the photo collection and listening to Mrs. Lessard's stories in the background made me fall in love with Manchester. After a year as a novice at Saint Anselm Abbey and a year back home in New Jersey, I came back to take a job with the Manchester Mental Health Center, a model of De-Institutionalization at the time. Also, like Sebastian in "Brideshead Re-

visited”, I felt at home neither inside the monastery nor outside, so I hung around the gates.

How did you find and how long have you been a member of Grace Church?

In the 1990’s, I was angry at the Roman Catholic Church for a variety of reasons, and swore I’d never go back. Before long, I’d made a habit of listening to the Sunday service from Marsh Chapel on WBUR and realized that I missed going to church. A college friend of mine, also angry at the church for her own reasons, told me that “recovering Catholics in Manchester go to Grace Episcopal Church.” We went to a Sunday service in 1994, heard Wes Wasdyke celebrate the service, and met George Iselin, who tried to recruit us to the choir. I immediately loved the old building and the music, especially the fact that everyone sang, and they sang ALL the verses! I appreciated the reliable consistency of the words of the service, after years of attempts to be casual, hip and innovative in Catholic masses.

What are some of the ways you’ve served at Grace Church?

I’ve been an usher and a Property Committee volunteer and member. I’ve written some well-received essays for the newsletter and been a pretty ineffective Sunday School youth leader. I’ve also made pancakes on every Shrove Tuesday, save one, for 20 years and hosted coffee hour with New Jersey crumb cake and sherry on Easter. I’ve been an acolyte, reader, and sacristan. Brian Guimond and I have set up and removed the Christmas trees for years. Finally, I was the Sexton for about 10 years, off and on.

Where did you learn to 'swing smoke'?

I was drafted into the Altar Guild by Dottie Koch. I’d been a sacristan at Saint Anselm, and an honorary member of the Altar Guild while I was Sexton. I learned how to “swing smoke” also at Saint A’s, from one of my confreres, who was from the Orthodox tradition, and really knew how to do it with style.

How did you and Stephen meet?

In the 1990’s, when I was militantly single and terribly lonesome, my sister told me I had two choices: have a baby or get a “dawg”. Since those weren’t going to work, I asked my Grandmother. She told me, “If you want to meet someone nice, go to church!” I met Stephen, who ignored me for a year or two, and then I followed him into a class for new Episcopalians. He was confirmed and I was received into the

church in 2001. We dated for a while, scandalously, as I was on the staff and he was a Vestryman at the time. We had a big, beautiful Grace Church wedding, which wasn't a wedding, in 2005. We later had a City Hall Civil Union, which became a legal marriage when the state caught up with us.

Anything I didn't ask that you'd like to share?

I have not participated in online services, and I must admit that while I've missed seeing friends and singing Advent hymns, I didn't miss putting up the damn Christmas trees in the back of the nave. I look forward to things getting "back to normal", whatever that means at the end of 2020.



Stay tuned for Part II of this interview in March's *Grace Notes*.

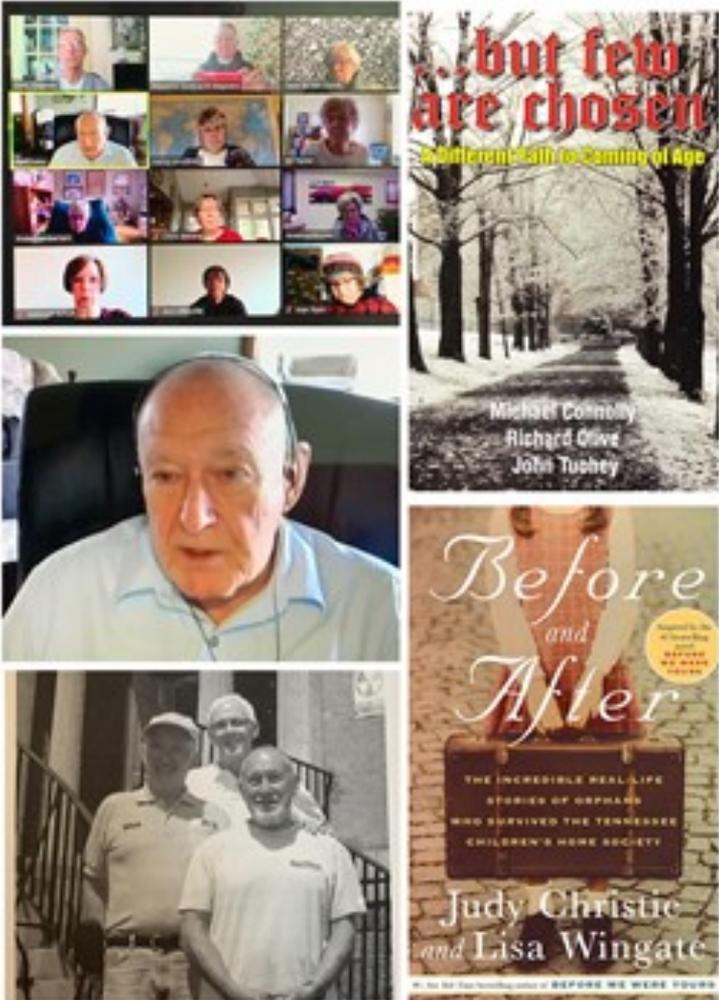
GEC Book Group Update

On Tuesday, January 19th our book group was honored to host in our Zoom chat room John Tuohey, who co-wrote the book we read: . . . *but few are chosen: A Different Path to Coming of Age*. Special thanks to Linda Chamberlain who knows John's wife and helped make such an amazing gathering happen! We welcomed and also thanked parishioner Greg Gagnon, who attended our GEC Book Group for the very first time.

The book we read was wonderful, telling the true story of three boys coming of age in the mid-1950's. The boys grew up in working Irish Catholic neighborhoods in the Northeastern United States and all were desperate to escape lives of loneliness, petty crime, and violence. So, at the age of thirteen, Mike, John, and Ollie entered seminary and began their journey together. A clergy mentor at the semi-

nary, Father Wilfrid Brennan, told them: “Some of you will leave us in time with the knowledge that priesthood was not your calling.” Such was the case of all three authors as one became a teacher and school principal, another a journalist, while John, the author we met with, became a nurse.

Eleven parishioners attended our gathering. Jane Van Zandt had crafted a solid list of questions to stir our discussion. However, we did not need to use them as our guest author is a gifted speaker who had much to share. John explained that while nine children entered seminary with him, only two ended up becoming Roman Catholic priests.



Many reminisced about the 1950's and how Catholic kids were told not to play with Protestant children and vice versa. Parishioner Ann ORourke shared that she really enjoyed how the book was designed and laid out, in chronological order with all three boys (now men reminiscing) taking turns telling their stories. John shared that the idea for the format came from Richard (Ollie) Olive, the author with journalism experience. John never thought he would ever write a book and that it was Mike and Richard who navigated the path forward in getting the book published. To make the book come to life, Richard decided on and divided up subjects for the various chapters between his friends. And as John explained, "All I did was write stuff." John poignantly explained writing a book with friends is not easy. That, "what you write is part of you," and having someone you know rearrange your sentences and thoughts is a true test of friendship.

The book stirred up a remarkable discussion about the impact of our parents on our lives and sometimes careers. John shared it was his father who decided he was going to go to nursing school. He also honestly and thoughtfully shared what a challenging relationship he had with his own father, whom he both loved and hated all at once.

If you attended the book group and would like to write a thank you note to John, please contact Marjorie who will happily share his home address with you. (Since our newsletter is published online, we don't want to post personal addresses.)

Our next gathering will take place on Zoom on the third Tuesday of the month (February 16th) at 12 noon. We will be reading another book written by more than one author: *Before and After: The Incredible Real-Life Stories of Orphans Who Survived the Tennessee Children's Home Society*, written by Judy Christie and Lisa Wingate. All are welcome to join us!

OLLI Welcomes Nancy-Ann Feren!

Many of you are familiar with OLLI – Osher Lifelong Learning Institute – for folks 50+ who love to learn. Next Fall, Nancy-Ann, a first-time presenter, will be offering a class.

Now would be a good time to join OLLI at Granite State College. At 9 AM on February 8, we can register for classes being given in the Spring semester. There are 81 offerings, all on Zoom, meaning you don't

have to drive anywhere to take advantage of classes. And, you can dress in “Covid Casual”!

Jane W Van Zandt+

Thoughts and Reflections

Love the one you're with

The title I chose for this Reflection is also the title of a popular song from the 1970's written by Stephen Stills. The song contained the line “If you can't be with the one you love, then love the one you're with.” The song seems to have originally been written to describe a situation where a guy's girlfriend had moved on, but he was still enamored by her, and was having a hard time starting another relationship. The message was that he could move on and didn't need to be stuck in the past.



Another song with a similar/related theme is “Soak up the Sun” by Cheryl Crowe. In it are the following lines: “I don't have digital; I don't have diddly squat; It's not having what you want; It's wanting what you've got.” This song seemed to be less about a romance and more about one's life situation. I got the impression that there was an underlying theme of expressing gratitude.

As I pondered these ideas, I started thinking about other interpretations and situations. This could include people you know, people you work with, people you meet on Facebook, people with similar or different political perspectives, and more. To go deeper, I needed to look at the word “love,” which we all know has several meanings or interpretations. One refers to when people fall in love, and end up getting married. Another interpretation is when someone says “I love chocolate,” but it doesn't mean they are planning to marry some chocolate.

Sometimes, someone can go out of their way to help someone else. They are expressing a concern and love for the other person, but it is not the same as loving chocolate or getting married to someone you love. Instead, they are expressing love in a way inferred by the Greek word “agape,” which implies self giving.

By now, some of you are probably wondering how this might apply to political perspectives, which I had mentioned earlier. Let's see how it

might work. Suppose two people have very different orientations and favor very different candidates and policies. How does one show love in this kind of a situation? The simplest answer is to listen. If someone knows you are listening or are willing to listen to their viewpoint or reasons, they feel cared for and respected; essentially, they feel loved.

If we are all living in the same country, then whether we and they are next door, across the street, down the road, or 1000 miles away, we are with them. So, it is possible for all of us to “love the ones we are with.” Show them respect and try to learn more about who they are.

Dick Feren

Parish Author Continues To Be Published On Manchester Ink

Don't forget to continue to check out Manchester Ink's website to see new articles posted regularly by our author in residence, Nancy-Ann Feren. Nancy-Ann and Dick Feren, as well as Linda and Doug Chamberlain, are using pandemic time wisely to visit local roadside markers and historic sites throughout our great state of New Hampshire.

One of Nancy-Ann's most recent articles can be found by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y3bcmmxu>

Milestones

Happy Birthday to the following February birthdays celebrants!

2 Elyse Goyette	14 Ed Doyle
Lillian Goyette	17 Lucy Rhodes
8 Maria Douglas	21 Karen Taylor Kimball
9 Rachel Otto	25 Rohan Cline
12 Christine Anderson	27 Theodore Lassonde
David Charlesworth	

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: Dr. Stewart Richmond – January 6, 2021

Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Present: Valerie Anderson, Gail Austin, Amy Brumfield, Carol Cote, Hank Gagnon, Reverend Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Ken Kjellander, Teddi McIntosh, Christopher Messier, David Roy, Gail Schumann, Chris Turner, Meghan White, Eileen Suckley

Excused: Matt Serge, Nancy Johnson

Reverend Marjorie opened with **prayer**.

Motion to approve Eileen Suckley as **Clerk Pro Temp** by Gail Schumann, seconded by Ken Kjellander

Reading of the Norms

Consent Agenda: Approval of reports from Clerk, Rector, Property, Planning and Finance

Motion of acceptance by Ken Kjellander, seconded by Teddi McIntosh

Highlights of Treasurer's Report:

- \$2.9K unfavorable to budget for November due to pledging shortage of \$8.5K
- Church maintenance costs at or near zero for the month
- No invoices submitted from Securitas. David Roy will follow up.
- Mitten Tree donations \$11.7K.
- 35 shares of Apple stock received as gift in October were sold for \$4.1K.

- Schedule 6 (Balance sheet for major funds): Cash for operations is positive of \$80K.
- \$138,580 currently held Capital Campaign and Emergency Fund (\$38K). The Emergency Fund will be \$58K after we receive the December draw.
- Endowment committee has requested updates on Emergency Fund balance.
- PPP – national diocese (if it gets forgiven) is counting it as a grant instead of a loan which means we would need to pay Fair Share. Local diocese is still considering the matter. Gail has contacted Citizen’s Bank. Inasmuch as our loan is for less than \$50K, we have a simplified form to complete. Gail has requested form. Once submitted, the bank has sixty days to say yes or no on forgiveness and 90 days to submit to federal government. Gail does not expect forgiveness until 2021 so Fair Share considerations are not an issue for the 2021 budget. Fair Share is calculated on the prior year’s actual revenues, so the PPP Loan MAY be considered for Fair Share in 2022. We will likely have clarity on this issue by then.

Motion to approve Gail asking for forgiveness for full amount of loan by Val Anderson, seconded by Gail Schumann

Motion to accept Financial Reports by Christopher Messier, seconded by Gail Schumann

Draft of Budget 2021

- Gail would like to add loan forgiveness (46.9) to 2021 planning
- Securitas – \$19.9K
- Pledge income at \$213,000 as of Dec 14. Budgeted \$230,000. Gail predicts we will be short of anticipated amount but suggests we keep the figure of \$230K for 2021, subject to final adjustment, if warranted after the books are closed for the year.
- Cola increases for staff at 1.5% to begin on February 1.
- Plan on \$2K for Parish Administrative Assistant to cover Marlene’s vacation weeks.
- Property Committee reviewed budgeted amounts for church maintenance and utilities and indicated these amounts are reasonable projections
- No amount budgeted for Wifi project. Reverend Marjorie indicates that this project may be funded by a separate donor or through a

grant.

- Gail will continue to perform bookkeeping duties through 2021. (-\$7K)
- Leave investment income at 4%.
- Current budget shortage of \$13.4. Added revenue of \$46.9K and expenses of about \$25.4K. This leaves us roughly at \$8.1K favorable.
- Gail will finalize numbers for review and vestry approval by the second week of January.

Review

We are required to do an annual audit for diocese. We did not do one for 2019.

In lieu of this review, the Diocese suggests that the treasurer report to the vestry the status of the 2020 internal control document and results as well as the status of the recommendations of the last financial review (2018) for review by the Vestry. This should be done at the January vestry meeting in order to include the vestry minutes in the Parochial Report.

Capital Campaign update:

David reports we are currently at \$92K and have until June 30 to reach 100K

Security:

Securitas is submitting full and detailed reports on nightly checks including photos of trespassers.

Housing Allowance:

Reverend Marjorie submitted a request for salary designation of her housing allowance in the amount of \$30K. Motion by Val Anderson, Seconded by Teddi McIntosh

Temporary adjustment to Zoom account:

Current account has one host and can have 100 individual links at a cost of \$15 monthly. Motion to increase to next level (500) for December at a cost of \$50 for the month, after which we return to the lower level. Motion by Gail Schumann, seconded by Christopher Messier.

Plexiglass:

Reverend Marjorie will turn the issue of plexiglass for windows at

ground level to Property Committee to investigate pricing and submit proposal.

Bishop Visitation:

Scheduled for Feb 7th . Reverend Marjorie recommends an open meeting at the conclusion of the service. Another option would enable him to visit with small groups during coffee hour segment. Reverend Marjorie will discuss further with Bishop Rob.

Wifi Update:

Gary York is conducting a series of tests in the sanctuary to assess receptivity. Our current modem is nine years old and badly in need of replacement. Gary and a colleague will make a recommendation as to whether we should purchase a new modem or rent through Comcast. Costs to be determined but they will include the cost of hard wiring due to thickness of walls. Various funding options discussed.

Christmas services:

- December 24th Children’s Service at 4:00 pm
- December 24th Lessons and Carols at 7:30 pm
- December 25th Morning prayer at 9:30am
- Sunday Dec. 27th Parishioners may attend diocesan service or National Cathedral

Insurance update:

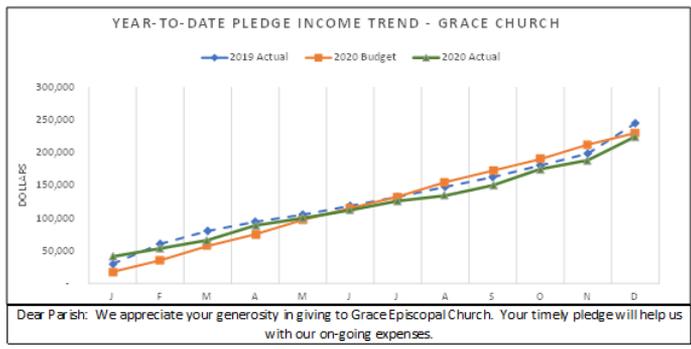
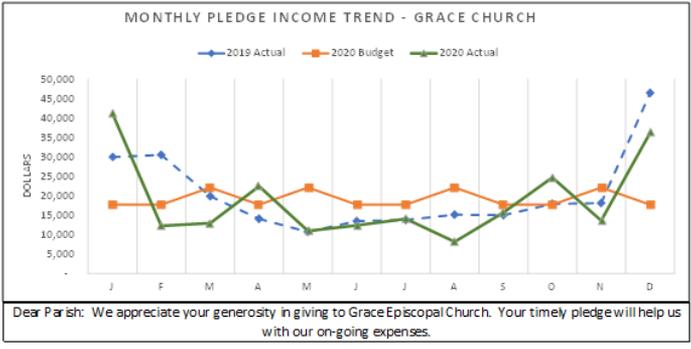
Bruce Thomas has agreed to compile a pictorial inventory. Planning and Finance will discuss list of improvements and acquisitions to be included.

Annual Meeting:

January 31, 2021. Nancy Johnson will write an article summarizing updates to bylaws for newsletter so that the material can be reviewed prior to the meeting. Voting will follow the homily. Bios and photos need to be submitted to Marlene ASAP.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Suckley
Assistant Clerk



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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

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