

The Word of God is ancient, rooted in sacred Scripture and tradition, yet it blossoms forth in ever-fresh and surprising ways.

This spring we continue to explore how God is speaking to our minds and hearts. What new insights will be given to us as we discuss the basics of the Christian faith, ask questions, air doubts, and consider our received tradition with fresh eyes? How do we experience the divine in our struggles to offer and accept forgiveness? What is it like to encounter the Word of God when we practice wordless prayer? How does the divine Word come to us when we sing, when we dance, and when we write about the sacred journeys of our lives?

All our programs are open to the public. Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and require no advance registration. We invite you to come explore with us what the Book of Common Prayer calls God's "true and lively Word" (p. 329).

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

7:00-8:30 p.m. in the Connector (unless otherwise noted)

JANUARY 4, 11, 18, 25, FEBRUARY 1, 8, 15 "A Bold Vision and a Refreshed Wisdom": Conversations on the Basics of the Christian Faith"

Led by the Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld and the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

This seven-week series is intended for multiple audiences: those without any background in the Church or the Christian faith; those who would like a refresher on the foundations of the faith; and those who have a sense that Christianity just has to be about more than what we hear in the news. We'll start by asking the usual questions: are you saved, and from what? Is the Bible inerrant or is it true? What does it mean to be born again? To be baptized? What is prayer, and do I have one? Is that thing with the bread and the wine just hocus-pocus? What the heck would Jesus do if he were in my shoes? There will be some peculiarly Anglican/Episcopal responses to some of these questions, and we'll also ask: did Henry VIII start the Church of England? Do Protestants "do" confession? What's a bishop, a parish, a ministry, and why should I care?

Feel free to come, whether you are interested in joining the church, in becoming baptized, or in looking for a safe opportunity to ask some questions. You are welcome here.

FEBRUARY 29, MARCH 7, 14, 21, 28 "Lent: Practicing Forgiveness"

Led by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Veronica Chapman, and Anne Homme

Forgiveness looks simple when we read about it, and we may find it easy to discuss the theory of forgiveness. Yet how difficult it is to practice forgiveness when someone has deeply hurt us! Why is it so hard to seek or to grant forgiveness? Are there places in our lives where we are unreasonably demanding of someone? What about people who don't deserve to be forgiven? This five-week Lenten study and practice of forgiveness will use the exercises in Doris Donnelly's book, [Putting Forgiveness into Practice](#), as a springboard for personal exploration and discussion. Every class will include time for private reflection and small group sharing. This course would be especially helpful for those preparing to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. (The book is out of print, but available on-line; several copies, used and new, are available for sale in the church office. If possible, please bring a copy to class.)

Veronica Chapman and Anne Homme are mentors in the Education for Ministry program. Veronica is also a certified Veriditas Labyrinth facilitator.

APRIL 18, 25, MAY 2, 9, 16

"The Contemplative Way and Compassionate Action: Films and Conversation"

Led by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Dr. Robert A. Jonas, and Annie Scarff

One of the most exciting developments in contemporary Christianity is the renewal of the ancient practice of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer develops our capacity to relinquish our ordinary, dualistic way of thinking and to begin to see things whole.

Contemplation can lead us from a mind full of words to an awareness of the Word in whom all things hold together. We move beyond "belief" in God to direct experience of the divine, a transformation of consciousness that allows us to become peaceful instruments of change in the world.

This five-week series will offer videos by some of today's best speakers on contemplative prayer (Thomas Keating, Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, and James Finley), allowing time for discussion and practice. NOTE: This series will be held in the Parish Hall. Because some of the videos are fairly long, the evening will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m., ending by 9:00 p.m.

Robert A. Jonas, Ed.D., M.T.S., is the founder and director of The Empty Bell, a sanctuary for Christian contemplative prayer and Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Trained as a psychologist and theologian, Jonas is a retreat leader, musician, and video artist. His latest publication is [The Essential Henri Nouwen](#) (Shambhala Publications, 2009), and his books, articles, and Zen shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) music are available through iTunes and [www.emptybell.org](#).

Annie Scarff received a Master of Divinity degree from Weston Jesuit School of Theology (Cambridge, Mass.) in 1995. Until 2007 she worked as a board-certified chaplain in long-term care and hospice. She has meditated daily since 1976 and has practiced Centering Prayer since 1988. For the last two years she has been part of a book group focusing on the works of Cynthia Bourgeault.

MAY 23 "The Sung Word"

Led by Patricia Appelbaum and Elizabeth Hart

The "lively word" is especially alive in hymn-singing. Throughout the life of the Church, hymns have celebrated the Word who is Christ, and have proclaimed, interpreted, reflected on, and prayed with the biblical Word. This session will begin with a short historical survey of hymnody. We will sing through a variety of hymns together and reflect on the ways we encounter the Word in sacred song.

Patricia Appelbaum, Ph.D., is a seminary graduate and a historian of American religion. Elizabeth Hart serves as Grace Church's Director of Music and Senior Choir

MAY 30 "The Dancing Word"

Led by Shirley Blancke

We are delighted to welcome Shirley Blancke of SKYLOOM for an evening of participatory circle dancing. The SKYLOOM sacred dance group was formed 30 years ago in the Greater Boston area to reclaim the tradition of dance, which is part of every religion. SKYLOOM has led circle dancing workshops throughout New England and nationally, bringing their devotion to sacred dance to seminaries, monasteries, retreat centers, the House of Bishops, and churches of many denominations, as well as to nursing homes and a prison. Woven into the dances are words from the Bible, the Christian mystics, and other wisdom traditions. The program will be loosely tied to three themes of the liturgical year: Welcoming the Christ Child; Lent and Forgiveness; and Christ as Savior. The dances are simple, and no partner or previous experience is required. Please wear comfortable clothes and light, flexible shoes. The workshop is intended mostly for adults, but children ages 10 and up are welcome.

JUNE 6, 13 "Spiritual Autobiography" *Led by Veronica Chapman and Nancy Rose*

Are you looking for an opportunity to find words for your own journey with God? These two writing workshops will equip participants to identify life-events that affected the development of their faith, to make connections between their own story and those of others in the group, and to explore the stories of the people of God as recorded in Christian tradition. The evening will include time for writing, and will introduce several techniques, including "Time Lines," "Steppingstones," and "Pictures."

(For a biography of Veronica Chapman, see Feb/March, "Lent: Practicing Forgiveness")

Nancy Rose teaches creative writing and leads writing workshops and retreats in Amherst and throughout the Northeast. She is an associate at Holy Cross Monastery (West Park, NY), a participant in the Pelham Pastorate, an Education For Ministry graduate, and has been a member of Grace Church since 1985.

SUNDAY FORUMS

12 noon-1:00 p.m. (after the 10:30 a.m. service) in the Parish Hall (unless otherwise noted)

JANUARY 22 "Through a Glass Darkly: The Translated Word" *Led by Patricia Appelbaum and William L. Holladay*

Translations of the Bible can differ in sound, cadence, idiom, degree of formality, and many other ways besides fidelity to the sources. This Forum will offer hands-on comparative study of texts from several different Bible translations, including the King James, the recently published Common English Bible, and the popular paraphrase, The Message. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each version? Does God seem to speak more clearly to you through one of them -- and if so, why?

Patricia Appelbaum, Ph.D., is a seminary graduate and a historian of American religion.

William L. Holladay is Lowry Professor of Old Testament, Emeritus, at Andover Newton Theological School. He served on the translation committee for the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and he has written extensively on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Psalms.

FEBRUARY 19 "Grace Church: The Windows" *Led by the Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld*

Many stained glass windows tell the stories of our faith by showing scenes and characters from the Bible or our tradition. Yet except for the window of St. Michael and the Dragon over the west door, the windows of Grace Church don't tell stories. Or do they? Looking more closely at the window above the Altar, and at some windows along the nave, we can piece together an interesting narrative about the history of our parish and how several local ancestors in the faith played a significant role in the history of the Episcopal Church, monasticism, and the movement to restore the unity of the Church. NOTE: this Forum will be held in the church.

MARCH 18 "Labyrinths, Forgiveness, and Inner Peace" *Led by Sister Lorraine Villemaire, SSJ*

Sister Lorraine Villemaire, a Sister of St. Joseph at Holyoke's Mont Marie convent, is the author of [The Labyrinth Experience](#) and the lead facilitator of a course on labyrinths at Hampshire Jail and House of Correction. After her 6-week class, the inmates received permission last fall to build an 80' x 80' labyrinth, and she dedicated the cornerstone. Carrying a portable labyrinth with her, Sister Lorraine also visits schools, hospitals, and nursing homes in her quest to share this powerful tool of transformation. Come hear Sister Lorraine speak about the power of labyrinths, and how this form of walking meditation can transform lives.

APRIL 15 "Hispanic Ministry 101" *Led by the Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld*

The fastest growing segment of the U.S. population is people with Latin American heritage. Many of our diocese's parish churches were formed when the Anglo population was dominant. Increasingly, our neighbors, even in Amherst, speak English as a second language. This forum will provide a basic introduction to the experience of our Hispanic Christian neighbors. We will welcome members of the Christ Church Cathedral Hispanic congregation who are eager to share their experience of being Christian and Hispanic in the U.S. How might we at Grace Church respond?

MAY 20 "Faith and Work: Public Service" *Led by Alex Kim, DeAnne Riddle, and John Stifler*

This spring we continue our popular "Faith and Work" series with three panelists who have served as volunteers in the Peace Corps or Americorps, offering public service in the U.S. or abroad.

After receiving his B.A., Alex Kim served from 2007 to 2009 in Newark, N.J., in Teach For America. Teach For America is a two-year teaching program partially funded through Ameri-corps. Alex is currently a student in the Smith College School for Social Work.

DeAnne Riddle served as a Peace Corps volunteer in El Kef, Tunisia from 1968 to 1970. She worked in family health education, focusing primarily on family planning outreach.

John Stifler served a short stint in the Peace Corps in 1968, teaching math, science, and English language in a village school in Nepal. He returned 30 years later to see Nepal afresh through the eyes of his nephew, a Peace Corps volunteer in the same area.

SATURDAY QUIET DAYS

9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon in the Parish Hall (unless otherwise noted)

FEBRUARY 11

“Epiphany: Resting in the Light”

Led by Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

The radiance of Christ’s glory is shining within our lives, but most of us barely perceive it. Usually our attention is focused on the outward noise and demands of the world, or on our own inner state of unrest. This retreat invites us to step away from the busyness of ordinary life and to rest awhile in the light of Christ. In shared meditation and in solitary prayer we will practice being alert to the present moment, exploring themes of abiding, rest, stillness, and strength.

MARCH 17

“Reconciliation: Putting a Burden Down”

Led by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

In every act of reconciliation, we connect again with the boundless love of God. Through brief presentations and conversation, as well as silent prayer and guided meditation, this Lenten retreat will give us space to explore and to pray about the places in our lives where God may be inviting us to let go of burdens of resentment, guilt, or shame. This retreat would be especially helpful for those preparing to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

APRIL 7

“Holy Saturday: Day of Transformation”

Led by Dr. Robert A. Jonas

Holy Saturday is a powerful day for Christians. Jesus has died and descended into the darkness, and the Risen Christ has not yet appeared. In one Orthodox icon, Jesus is pictured as standing in the depths, reaching down to raise up Adam and Eve. In this symbolic gesture he is touching everything in us that turns away from God; he is healing what is broken and lifting up what has fallen. On Holy Saturday we consciously open ourselves to the liberating power of God and take time to perceive where God in Christ - in powerful but sometimes hidden ways - is at work in our lives.

This morning retreat will include silent meditation, presentations on the psychological and spiritual meanings of Holy Saturday, scripture and poetry reading, music, chanting, conversation, and prayer. If you have a poem related to the themes of Holy Saturday, please bring it with you.

The retreat will begin in the Parish Hall immediately after a brief liturgy for Holy Saturday is held in the church at 9 a.m. Suggested donation: \$15

(For a biography of Dr. Jonas, see April/May, “The Contemplative Way and Compassionate Action”)

MAY 12

“Easter: Finding Christ in Creation”

Led by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

Our annual Easter retreat will once again be held in a natural setting about 45 minutes northwest of Amherst. Come for a silent walk on 220 acres along trails that meander beside beaver ponds and through woods and fields. Or just sit on the screened porch

and savor the view. Join us at 9:00 a.m. at the Ashfield home of the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and Robert A. Jonas for reflection and prayer, followed by ample time for solitude, silence, gazing, and walking, as we open ourselves to meet the Risen Christ. The retreat will end at noon, but if you would like to linger afterward, please bring your lunch. We encourage carpooling. Please tell Margaret by May 9 if you plan to come, and if you need or can offer a ride (margaretbj (at) aol.com). The retreat will be canceled if we have insufficient registrations.

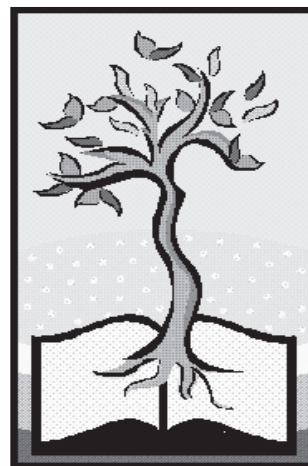
PRAYER GROUPS

PRAYERFUL BIBLE STUDY meets every Sunday in the Parker Room from 9:20-10:10 a.m. to read aloud and prayerfully discuss the morning’s Gospel passage. (Tom Williams, 413/269-1921)

RECTOR’S CONTEMPLATIVE BIBLE STUDY meets every Monday in the Parker Room from 5:30-6:30 p.m., offering a space for quiet meditation on the Gospel readings for the coming Sunday. We read the passage several times, allowing ample silence between readings so that we can enter into the world of the Gospel with all its questions and surprises, and, eventually, discover the peace that passes all understanding, which is promised to us by the Word made flesh.

BOOK GROUPS

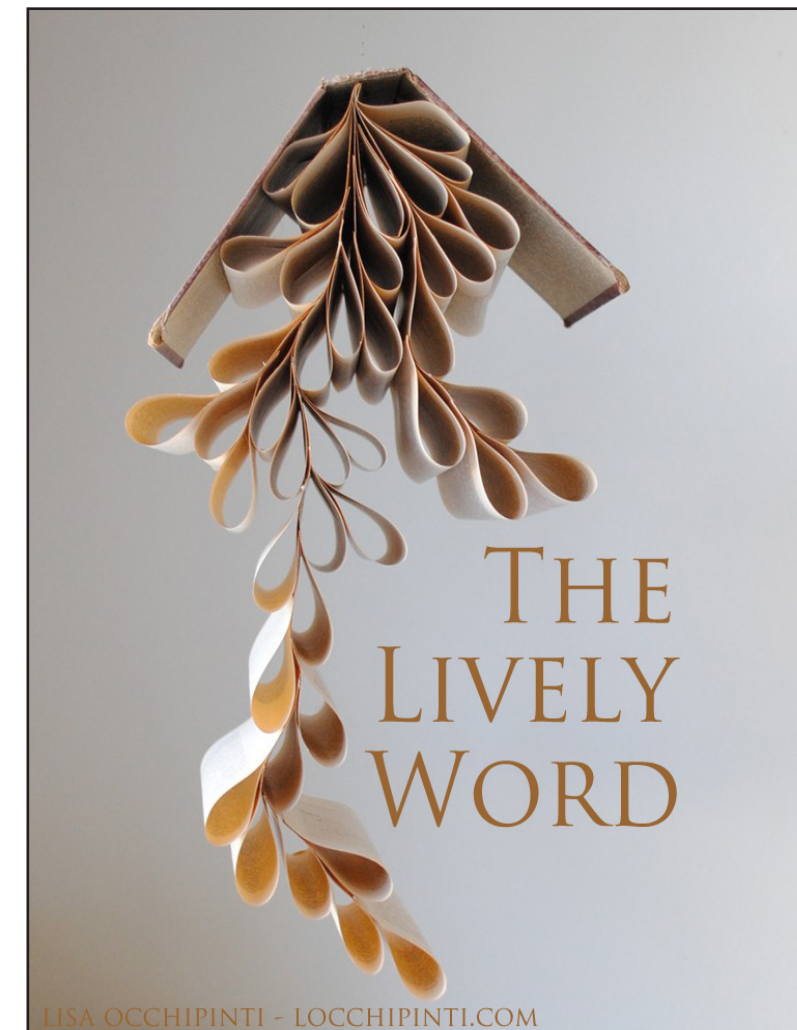
From time to time, small groups of parishioners get together to read and discuss a book of their choice. Parishioners who wish to form a new book group are welcome to propose a book and to provide their contact information to the Parish Administrator for inclusion in Sunday morning’s written announcements.



The Christian Formation and Education Commission seeks to support the People of God in living out our baptismal covenant and expressing our unique calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

We wish to thank Melinda Williams for her generous and skillful work in designing this brochure.

For suggestions and feedback about our CF&E program for adults, please contact the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (clergy liaison) at 413/256-6754 x 103 or email: margaretbj (at) aol.com.



CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND EDUCATION

ADULT PROGRAM
SPRING 2012

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
on the Town Common, Amherst, MA
www.gracechurchamherst.org / 413-256-6754

Sunday services: 8:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m.