

# Grace Notes

December 2025

## It's Advent. What are You Waiting For?

Every year as we move beyond Thanksgiving, it seems like the mad rush is upon us. We can easily find ourselves swept up in the whirl of buying gifts, decorating the house, preparing food, and spending money – not to mention here at Grace Church – the St. Nicholas Bazaar, Adopt-a-Family, Advent Lessons and Carols, the Messiah Sing, Advent Suppers and Brunch. It can become overwhelming. The days are short and so is our time and maybe even our mood. Christmas is coming. Are we ready?

Going back to the early days of the faith, the Church has provided a time before Christmas for Christians to focus on the meaning of the coming of Christ – the Second Coming yet to be, as well as the First Coming two thousand years ago with the birth of Jesus. This is what Advent is about. Advent comes from the Latin, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” In the Roman Empire, an adventus involved a visit from the emperor to one’s hometown and the resulting preparations done to welcome his arrival. For Christians, Christmas is a celebration of the Incarnation – God’s arrival in our world through the birth of Jesus. From the Gospel of John, it’s the Word became flesh and dwells among us – literally God pitched God’s tent among us to join us and be one of us.

But God doesn’t wait for an invitation to join us. God may be patient, but God also barges in. In the words of the prophet Malachi: The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The philosopher and psychotherapist Carl Jung is said to have had a sign in his office with the inscription: Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit, which is Latin for “Bidden or unbidden God is present.” I believe that is true. God is everywhere, in all places and at all times, but that presence is meaningless or lost unless we are willing and able to attend to it.

Now in this season of Advent, when we seek to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, it’s the perfect time to discover the incarnation – to find God among us, to get closer to God, in the midst of all that’s whirling about and overwhelming us. We are close to God when we are mindful of how incomplete and unfulfilled we are without God. We’re close to God when we are humble, not pretending we have no need for God. We are close to God when we seek God in all things, when we look for God in others. We are close to God when we are merciful and forgiving, remembering our need always to be forgiven by God. And we are close to God when we strive for reconciliation, and for peace and justice for all of God’s creation.

In October when I was in New York, a wise person said, “I am too blessed to complain.” That’s a motto to live by; one that can help us prepare for the Coming of Christ. Let’s welcome Christ this season, focusing on our blessings. If necessary, start small, anything will do: opening one’s eyes first thing in the morning to a brand new day, a dog’s loyalty, a phone call – even a text, someone’s smile. Small steps can lead to big results. By appreciating our blessings, we start to discover that the God

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# Grace Notes "Notes"

were are waiting and preparing for is already here, and that's Good News.

Dear friends, let's welcome December and the season of Advent, and not be overwhelmed. Let's discover the nearness of God through the multitude of blessings in our lives. And may the Lord whom we seek make us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love.

And together may we have a Blessed Advent.

Tom +

## Palestinian Oil



Palestinian olive oil will be available for sale by the Episcopal Peace Fellowship in the Connector on the first Sunday of each month. It is first cold press organic and fair trade olive oil. The proceeds from the sale enable Grace to provide a scholarship for a student at the Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center in Ramallah.

## Iconography Workshop

An ongoing iconography workshop meets every Sunday afternoon, from noon to four in the Parish Hall. Previous artistic experience is not necessary, since icon writing is as much a contemplative process of an inner spiritual journey as it is an artistic discipline. Please contact Sandy Lillydahl at [slillydahl@library.umass.edu](mailto:slillydahl@library.umass.edu) for additional information.

## A Week at Grace

| Sunday          |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>8:00 am</b>  | <b>Holy Eucharist</b>                           |
| 9:00 am         | Coffee Hour                                     |
| 9:15 am         | Youth Choir Rehearsal                           |
| <b>10:30 am</b> | <b>Holy Eucharist</b>                           |
| 11:30 am        | Coffee Hour                                     |
| 7:30 pm         | AA  |
| Monday          |   |
| 10:00 am        | Staff Meeting                                   |
| 7:00 pm         | AA  |
| Tuesday         |   |
| 5:15 pm         | AA  |
| 7:00 pm         | Al-Anon   |
| Wednesday       |   |
| <b>12:10 pm</b> | <b>Rite I Holy Eucharist and Healing Prayer</b> |
| Thursday        |   |
| 7:30 pm         | Choir Rehearsal                                 |
| Friday          |   |
| 7:00 am         | Men's Group (alternate weeks)                   |
| <b>5:30 pm</b>  | <b>Evensong</b>                                 |
| Saturday        |   |
| 10:00 am        | Bible Study                                     |
| 5:00 pm         | AA  |
| 8:00 pm         | AA  |

# Grace Notes "Notes"

## Raising the Questions

Raising the Questions meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 9:30, in the Connector. We discuss liturgy and theology, faith and spirituality. We talk about books we have been reading and pass around articles, prayers, and bulletins from other churches we have visited. The meetings are always open, so come join us!



## Tea and Titles

Tea & Titles meets once or twice a month at 2:30 pm in the Connector to share and discuss books recently read. For more information, please contact Jude Wobst at [judith.wobst@gmail.com](mailto:judith.wobst@gmail.com)

Our next meeting is December 11, 2025 at 2:30pm. All are welcome!

## Men's Group

The Men's Group is always looking for new members for general discussions and personal exchange. We meet on Friday mornings 7-8:30. We meet in person every other Friday of each month. (On the other Fridays we will be zooming to accommodate members who live away or are unable to attend for other reasons.) For further information contact Charlie Dickinson: [lcd@polysci.umass.edu](mailto:lcd@polysci.umass.edu)

## Bible Study

Join the Rector and others to study, and react to, the Gospel and Old Testament lesson for the following Sunday. We meet via Zoom Saturday mornings at 10am. Email Tom at [tsynan@gracechurchamherst.org](mailto:tsynan@gracechurchamherst.org) to receive the connection.



## Advent Lessons & Carols

**Sunday, December 14th at 4:00 pm.**

Join us for Advent Lessons and Carols, featuring the Grace Church Choir, area instrumentalists, and a brand-new piece called "Rejoice and Await", a commission written for the occasion by Arianne Abela, with text by Barbara Abela. Music by Noah Horn, Richard Horn, Charles Wood, Felix Mendelssohn, Handel, and more round out the beautiful candlelit service.

## Christmas Pageant

Grace's annual Christmas pageant takes place during our Christmas Eve 4 p.m. service!

Rehearsals are scheduled as follows:

November 23 Regular 9:15-10:15 rehearsal

November 30 **NO CHILDREN'S CHOIR/PAGEANT REHEARSAL TODAY**

December 7 Meet at 9:15 pageant rehearsal (kids sing in service)

December 14 9:15-10:30 pageant rehearsal

December 21 9:15-10:30 pageant rehearsal

**December 24** 2:00-3:15 rehearsal, break/snacks, and **CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AT 4pm**

Anyone who wants to join can email Arianne at [arianne.abela@gmail.com](mailto:arianne.abela@gmail.com)

# Grace Notes "Notes"



**The Bazaar is Dec. 6!**

***Come to the Bazaar***

**It's always a fun day, so please join us!**

If you didn't sign up to help yet, please contact Sarah Chadwick  
([snchadwick@verizon.net](mailto:snchadwick@verizon.net))

Your baked goods are also welcome for

***Divine Delights at the St. Nicholas Bazaar***

We need:

**Cookies!! Any kind, especially “Christmassy” ones!**

**Lemon squares**

**Brownies**

**Shortbread**

**Any kind of sweet bars**

**Small loaves of bread or cake (individually wrapped)**

Any quantity is welcome – it all adds up! Please bring cookies and bars in a **single container** (not pre-packaged) and include a **list of ingredients and your name**. Leave squares, brownies, etc. **uncut in pans**. Bring donations to the **Parish Hall** on Friday, **Dec. 5**. (“day of” goodies by 8:30, please!)

***Please hold all other donations for next year's bazaar.***

Thank you for all your support!

Contact Joan ([jobrien82@gmail.com](mailto:jobrien82@gmail.com)) with questions.

## **Grace Church Tree Trimming!**

Join the Rector in trimming our tree and spreading the Christmas spirit on Sunday, December 15th, during Coffee Hours in the Connector.



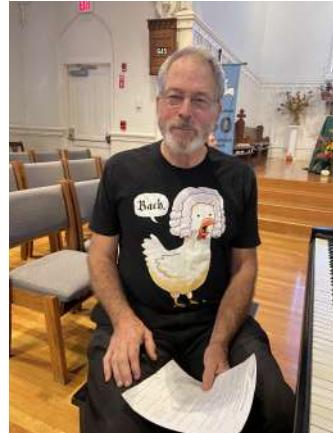
## **Adopt-A-Family For Christmas**

For many years Grace Church members have enjoyed buying or making gifts for a family that is struggling. Wish lists for some 40 families will be available on Sundays starting Nov 9th after both services. The deadline is Dec 14th. AFTER the St Nicholas Bazaar the gifts may be brought to the undercroft on Sunday mornings. If you are interested in adopting a family, please contact Mary Hocken, 413-537-0251, [melizhocken@gmail.com](mailto:melizhocken@gmail.com)

# Grace Notes "Notes"

## Harvest Concert Celebration

Held in memory of virtuoso saxophonist and Grace Church member Lynn Klock, the Harvest Concert at 4 pm on Nov. 8th was attended by over 90 persons and raised over \$1,800 for the church's organ fund. Professional cellist Mark Fraser played solo as well as in a duet and quartet, and the Grace Church choir under the direction of Hanif Lawrence, concert pianist Estela Olevsky, the Silverwood Quartet, and our own amazing Dick Damon performed engaging music from a wide variety of styles and eras. Will this become an annual tradition? Maybe 2026 will tell!



## Outreach Commission

Every fourth Sunday, Grace Church members' offerings are donated to worthy organizations. Ever wonder how those recipients are chosen? Have other recipients you'd like to recommend? Then why not consider joining the Outreach Commission! We meet once a month via Zoom to discuss Grace's various missions, decide on the fourth Sunday recipient, and otherwise further Grace's outreach to the world. It's a fun, easy, and educational way of serving your church. Please contact Chris Hoffmann ([chris.hoffmann@umass.edu](mailto:chris.hoffmann@umass.edu)) for more information.

## Outreach!

Our November Outreach Offering brought in \$3425.00, which has been sent to UMass Student Care and Emergency Response Fund.

Generosity changes everything, starting with us.  
**Thank you for your generosity!**

## Vestry Meeting Minutes

Click [here](#) to read the minutes of the most recent Vestry meeting. If you wish to see past meeting minutes, please go to our website at <https://www.gracechurchamherst.org/our-church/parish-staff/>



# Grace Notes "Notes"

## Bell Ringing for Climate Change

Thursday, December 11th

Calling all ages to be part of the 11th Hour Bell Ringing for Climate Change Thursday December 11 at 10:45. Join friends and neighbors for prayer and meditation before the 11th hour ringing begins. No one is too young; no one is too old. Our church bell will be rung for 11 minutes on the 11th day of each month at 11 AM. After the bells ring, everyone will have a chance to make a joyful noise of resolve. Bring your cow bells, dinner bells, kazoos, and gongs, drums, cymbals, and noise makers of any kind. Signs and banners are encouraged. Who knows, maybe some folks passing by will stop and join in or at least catch the spirit of what committed people can do when joined together in faith.



### Climate Change Prayer

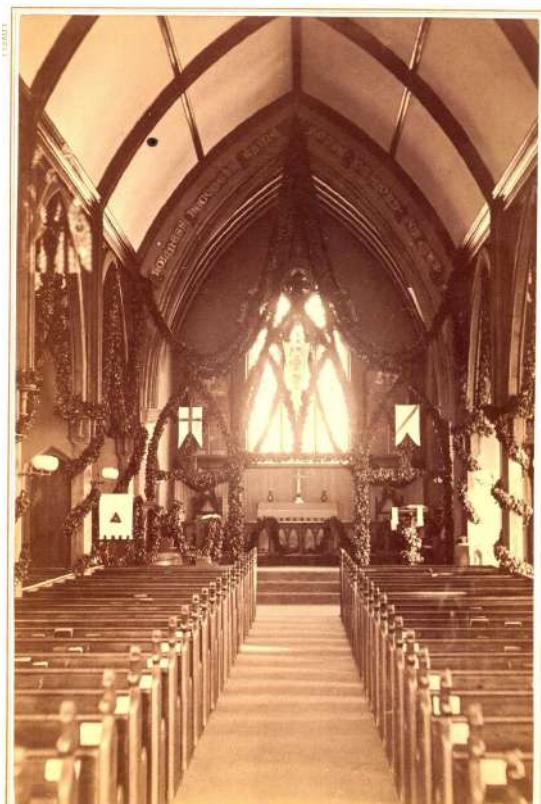
Holy God,  
earth and air and water are your creation,  
and every living thing belongs to you:  
have mercy on us  
as climate change confronts us.

Give us the will and the courage  
to simplify the way we live,  
to reduce the energy we use,  
to share the resources you provide,  
and to bear the cost of change.

Forgive our past mistakes  
and send us your Spirit,  
with wisdom in present controversies  
and vision for the future to which you call us  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**Christmas Eve around 1871** when the Altar Cross was given by Walter Thompson. The quote on the arch in gold leaf says (I think) "Holiness Beconomest Thine House Oh Lord Forever". The arch around the window says " Holy Holy .....God of Hosts. The plaques on either side of the window are printed in gold leaf. The left is the Lord's Prayer; the right the Ten Commandments.



# *Grace Notes "Notes"*

## **Planned Giving – Your Will, Trust and Other Options for Beneficiary Designations**

There are many ways through your estate plans to provide future support for your loved ones and for organizations important to you, such as Grace Church. A periodic review is wise to take into consideration changing circumstances. Updating designations in your will or trust are common and warrant review with your lawyer, but minor updates for individual or institutional beneficiaries may also be achieved through:

1. a simple codicil to your will (with modest legal fees)
2. designating portions of a life insurance policy
3. designating portions of a retirement plan (most 401(k), 403(b), and IRAs) keeping in mind the designations already made in your will or trust

You are welcome to contact Planned Giving Committee members Doug Adler and Kent Faerber.

### **A visit from our friends and partners from Indian Head, MD**

Over the weekend of Nov 7th, 8th and 9th, the Haiti Ministry at Grace Church hosted our wonderfully generous and dependable partners from St. James Episcopal Church in Indian Head, MD. They have joined us in supporting the St. Matthieu elementary school in Bayonnais since 2016 and we were delighted to have them visit us this fall, as they have often done before. We had a formal meeting, wonderful and delicious dinners, an excursion to Art in the Orchard in Easthampton on a glorious Saturday fall afternoon, and we attended the Sunday service together. We said good bye, filled with new ideas for fund raising and, most importantly, a deep sense of friendships and fellowship around a shared mission.



# Grace Notes "Notes"



**Feast of Grace**  
November 23, 2025



# *Grace Notes "Notes"*

## **Garden Ministry**

**We are having our semi-annual plant sale on May 9th.**

Here are the dates for the Garden Ministry meetings through April. Please put these dates on your calendars!

Friday Jan. 16th

Friday Feb. 6th

Friday March 20th

All meetings will begin at 9am and take place in the Connector.

During April, we will have sorting, cleaning and pricing of donated items. Those dates will be sent to you at a later date. Watch the weekly bulletins and Grace Notes about plant and garden donations.

At the meeting in January, we will discuss the next garden projects for the spring and summer.

## **Pastoral Call for Volunteers**

Do you like to cook or drive? Would you like to help fellow parishioners? Pastoral Care is looking to develop a list of volunteers to be contacted as needed. Most likely a request for food or a ride would occur every other month or so. And being on the volunteer list does not obligate your assistance every time a request is made. If you are interested in this ministry, please see the sign up sheets at coffee hour, or email Gail Gnatke at [ggnatek@gmail.com](mailto:ggnatek@gmail.com).

## ***Prayer Circle* is still here!**

We are ready to pray for the needs of those in crisis who want a degree of anonymity. Names will be held in confidence by members of the Circle and will not be published outside Circle members. Names will remain on the list for a month, unless otherwise requested. If you would like to be prayed for in this way, or would like to make a request for a loved one, please contact MJ Fowler ([mjfowler3@comcast.net](mailto:mjfowler3@comcast.net)).

## **Flower Guild**

The Flower Guild at Grace is inviting new members. If you enjoy seeing flowers on the chancel, perhaps you would like to join our team.

We need you and you might like it! You can try it out by partnering with someone on the guild.

**EMAIL US:**

Maria Dye [dyemaria70@gmail.com](mailto:dyemaria70@gmail.com)

Lou Currin [louandcecil@currin.org](mailto:louandcecil@currin.org)

# *Grace Notes "Notes"*

## **A Litany for the Restoration of Peace in The Holy Land**

God of peace, we pray for the people of Palestine and Israel in these perilous and dangerous times.

For all who are fearful for the safety of their loved ones and themselves, we pray that

the assurance of unfailing love, even in the midst of danger, settles upon them.

Shelter them from despair and protect them from harm.

For all who are wounded, we pray they find healing.

For all who have died, we pray they find rest.

For all who grieve, we pray they find comfort.

For leaders on all sides, we pray for a renewed will to lay down arms, for the strength to put the grievances and wrongs suffered by their people to rest, and for the conviction to embrace a path of reconciliation and peace that preserves the rights and dignity of all of your children.

God of mercy, help us to remember there is no border that can separate us from your great love and protection, no stone that can sound the well of your deep mercy.

God of justice, we pray with hopeful hearts that your beloved children of the Holy

Land will be spared a future of sustained violence and unrest and that a recognition of the humanity of all people will prevail.

We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

- American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

## **Climate Action @ Grace**

Climate Action at Grace (CA@G) has been pleased to host a discussion about ways to celebrate holidays that are lighter on the pocketbook, lighter on the planet, and in some cases with added fun and connecting. Thank you, Carol Dick, and to the several parishioners from Sts. James and Andrew who joined us.

The ideas will be shared at the St. Nicholas Bazaar (in itself an event that recycles and cuts down on waste and costs). We celebrate the young people's beautiful tree inspiring us in the sanctuary to connect with our natural world. We continue our effort to contact legislators, since this is a time of significant votes about climate bills in the state legislature.

Please contact Sandy Muspratt at [muspratts@gmail.com](mailto:muspratts@gmail.com) if you'd like to be on the email list. Our next meeting will be Sunday, December 14, at 12:15 in the Parker Room. Please come and join us with your questions and ideas and to help plan for 2026. Thank you.

# Grace Notes "Notes"

## December 2025 Events

| Date               | Time       | Event  | Location       |
|--------------------|------------|--|----------------|
| Monday, Dec. 1     | 2:00 PM    | Haiti Ministry Meeting                               | Connector      |
| Thursday, Dec. 4   | 9:30 AM    | Life Story Writing                                   | Parker Room    |
| Saturday, Dec. 6   | 9:00 AM    | St. Nicholas Bazaar                                  | multiple rooms |
| Tuesday, Dec. 9    | 9:30 AM    | Raising the Questions                                | Connector      |
| Thursday, Dec. 11  | 11:00 AM   | Bell Ringing for Climate Change                      | Lawn           |
| Thursday, Dec. 11  | 2:30 PM    | Tea & Titles   | Connector      |
| Thursday, Dec. 11  | 5:00 PM    | Executive Committee Meeting                          | Zoom           |
| Sunday, Dec. 14    | 12:15 PM   | Climate Action@Grace Meeting                         | Parker Room    |
| Sunday, Dec. 14    | 4:00 PM    | Advent Lessons & Carols                              | Church         |
| Tuesday, Dec. 16   | 4:30 PM    | Haiti Ministry Meeting                               | Connector      |
| Tuesday, Dec. 16   | 7:00 PM    | Vestry Meeting                                       | Zoom           |
| Saturday, Dec. 20  | 12:00 noon | Arcadia Players Concert                              | Church         |
| Sunday, Dec. 21    | 5:00 PM    | Messiah Sing-a-Long                                  | Church         |
| Wednesday, Dec. 24 | 4:00 PM    | Christmas Eve Service with Pageant                   | Church         |
| Wednesday, Dec. 24 | 8:00 PM    | Christmas Eve Service                                | Church         |
| Wednesday, Dec. 24 | 11:00 PM   | Christmas Eve Service                                | Church         |
| Thursday, Dec. 25  | 10:00 AM   | Christmas Day Service                                | Church         |
| Sunday, Dec. 28    | 9:30 AM    | Service of Christmas Lessons & Carols with Communion | Church         |

See the weekly schedule of services and standard events on page 2.



## Arcadia Players

**A German Holiday: Works for Advent and Christmas by Bach and Zelenka**  
**Saturday December 20 3pm**  
**Grace Episcopal Church, Amherst**

The showpiece of this concert will be the Missa Dei Filii (Mass for the Son of God) by Jan Dismas Zelenka, this distinctive and often overlooked composer's most ebullient choral work. Zelenka's music is original, distinctive, and offers dazzling rewards to the listener. Accompanying the Mass on the program are selections from the Cantatas for Advent and Christmas by Zelenka's admirer, Johann Sebastian Bach.

# Grace Notes

December 2025

## Return Service Requested

*"Grace is nothing else  
but a certain  
Beginning of  
glory in us.  
--Thomas Aquinas*

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Grace Episcopal Church, located on the Town Common of Amherst, is a community of prayer and action. If you want to connect with God or if you are seeking a deeper knowledge of God, and you would like to do this with a community that cares for you and honors you, then Grace Church is the place for you. Our doors are open to one and all, regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey.

*We love because God first loved us.* 1 John 4:19

Discover true life and true love at Grace Church.

### Service Schedule

Sunday 8:00 am and 10:30 am Holy Eucharist  
Wednesday 12:10 pm Rite I Holy Eucharist  
and Healing Prayer  
Friday 5:30 pm Evensong



See our website, [www.gracechurchamherst.org](http://www.gracechurchamherst.org) for updates