Dear Grace Church Friends and Family,

At the April Vestry meeting, the Vestry and I set Sunday, June 20, 2021 as the target date to resume in-person Sunday worship at Grace Church. I’m writing now to share with you the safety protocols that will be in place on that date as we commence in-person worship.

For the purpose of maintaining a safe, healthy environment in church during Sunday services, the following procedures will be practiced:

If you do not feel well, have a cold, coughing or sneezing or any other symptom that would indicate your health is in question, please do not come to church until you are feeling better. Your health and the health of everyone who attends a service at Grace Church is paramount. Let’s look out for one another, and to the best of our ability keep one another healthy and safe.

If you come to Grace Church on Sunday, June 20th for the 9:30am service:

- Everyone is expected to wear a mask, covering your nose and mouth during the service and while you are indoors at Grace Church. Masks will be available at the door, if you do not have one.

- The collection plate will be in the back of the church. Please put your contribution in the plate before you take your seat. There will be no collection during the service.

- Every other pew will be open for seating and diagonal spacing has been set out from the side to middle aisles. You may sit wherever you would like among the open pews. We are not limiting pews to single households, so you may sit with whomever you would like. Please be considerate of one another and please be advised pews may have to be shared.

- During the Peace, please remain in your pew and greet others from there. The peace can be exchanged without handshaking or hugging. Not everyone is ready to shake hands or hug, so please be mindful of one another.

- For those who wish to receive the Eucharist, please maintain social distance when standing in the communion line. Communion will be bread only and will be distributed from two bread stations at the center opening of our communion rails. The bread will be distributed from the center, and not along the communion rails. After the host is placed in your hands, please return to your seat and consume the host there. If you are unable to come forward to receive communion, we will come to you where you are seated at the end of Holy Communion.

- There will be one hymn at the end of the service, which all are welcome to sing while remaining masked.

- There will be a modified Coffee Hour following the service, consisting of cold water, lemonade, and/or ice tea. Masks are expected to be worn in the Connector. Weather permitting everyone is encouraged to gather outside in front of the church and on the North Common. Masks are not mandatory outdoors. You may wear a mask outside if you so choose, and you should wear a mask outside if you are not vaccinated.

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The bathrooms in the Old Rectory and on the lower level of the Connector will be open.

We have not worshiped together in-person for almost 15 months. These initial guidelines are meant to assist us in worshipping safely and will be adjusted appropriately as we go forward. Governor Baker has lifted the state mandates, however COVID is still here and may never fully go away. For a starting point, we are taking small cautious steps. This is a beginning and not the end. Please know Grace Church does not wish to cause you any anxiety or worry in this time of transition. No one should feel obligated to come to church, starting June 20th. We want you to come to church, when you are ready. It is our plan to share the in-person service via Zoom.

We will continue to monitor the health metrics for our area. With God’s help, if all remains stable and well, our services will evolve in the coming weeks, moving in the direction of resembling more closely the Sunday services we remember and love.

As for committee meetings and other gatherings at Grace Church, for now the campus will continue to remain closed. As we move into the summer, hopefully this too will change, with meetings initially limited to either the Connector or the Parish Hall. Again, this too is a work in progress.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, the Wardens, or anyone on the Vestry.

Dear friends, our journey continues. I hope and pray that you are well and that you are able to join us in the weeks ahead. Always remember whether we are together or apart, we remain the Body of Christ. Thanks be to God, and thanks be to you!

Grace and peace,

The Rev. Tom Synan+

Grace Church has been sending The Daily Prayer email every day since March 13, 2020, as well as other emails.

If you are not receiving these emails, please contact Terrie Korpita at tkorpita@gracechurchamherst.org to be added to our mailing list.

We want to stay connected to you.
A Week with Grace

Sunday
9:30 Holy Eucharist in the Sanctuary
10:15 Coffee Hour
11:15 Online Service of the National Cathedral
See their YouTube Channel - Washington National Cathedral

Monday
Grace Church is closed

Tuesday
Grace Church is closed

Wednesday
8-9 am Church open for private prayer
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Church open for private prayer
7 pm Zoom Prayer Group

Thursday
8-9 am Church open for private prayer
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Church open for private prayer

Friday
7 am Men’s Group via Zoom
8-9 am Church open for private prayer
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Church open for private prayer
5:30 pm Evensong (Zoom)

Saturday
8-9 am Church open for private prayer
10:00 am Zoom Bible Study
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Church open for private prayer
4:00 pm Zoom Over 60s Gathering

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 to receive the connection.

Men's Group

The Men's Group, a very informal assemblage of guys, is open to men of any persuasion or age at 7 on Friday mornings for an hour and a half check-in and open discussion of whatever comes up. Contact Charlie Dickinson for information: lcd@polysci.umass.edu

Over 60s Gathering

This group meets via Zoom every Saturday at 4:00pm. If you'd like more information, or want to join us, email Rev. Adrian Stair at revadrian@comcast.net, and we'll send you an invitation.

Nursery update

Nursery services will not open up immediately during our in-person re-opening, since we need to work out the necessary guidelines and protocols and do some hiring of nursery staff. We hope you will feel comfortable, if you’re participating in-person, bringing your children along to worship with you! There will be an announcement when we are back to offering nursery care during the time of worship.

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**Outreach!**

**Our May Outreach Offering** brought in $1,310.00, which was collected for Save the Children: Yemen Children’s Relief Fund.

Generosity changes everything, starting with us.

Thank you for your generosity!

**Tea and Titles** is an informal reading group that meets every 3 weeks or so. Currently, Tea and Titles is functioning online, looking forward to a time when we can meet in person. I have been sending out a reminder once a month to our readers to send in the reports on what they've been reading. I then consolidate the list and send it out to the group.

It's not the same as meeting in person, and no tea or goodies, unless the readers provide their own for their reading of the report, but it's a way to share what we've been reading and our thoughts on it.

If you are interested in seeing a report or in sending in your own contribution, please contact me: judith.wobst@gmail.com

**Prayer Group**

**Discussion & Intercessory Prayer**

**Wednesdays over Zoom at 7 p.m.**

We continue to meet together weekly on Zoom, Wednesdays at 7 p.m., for roughly an hour - spending half of our time in discussion on topics related to prayer and spirituality and the other half of our time praying together for our own needs and the needs of our communities and world. All are invited. We also welcome ideas for types of prayer, prayer practices, or spirituality-related topics you’d like to discuss! Please email Megan at mmcedermott@gracechurchamherst.org to be added to our email list and begin receiving the Zoom link and reminders about this gathering.

**Junior Warden Report**

Our Spring clean-up day on May 15th went well, it actually covered a few days and thanks to Mary Hocken, Virginia Ramos, Sherry Wilson, Doug Adler, Tom Baker, Paul Bracciotti, Jeffrey DeSantis, Sandy Muspratt and yours truly the church campus is looking good. A special thanks to Paul Bracciotti for adding some plantings to the open soil areas along the top of the Garth bordering the town hall parking lot. Another special thanks to Sherry Wilson and Dave Ulen our sexton for new plants in the flower boxes in front of the Connector. And last but not least another special thanks to Mike and Jeanette Erard who have been busy sprucing up our Columbarium which always looks nice.

Your Junior Warden,
Tom Dougherty

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Children’s & Youth Ministry
Summer Update

We have just finished up an active program year of children’s & youth activities at Grace, despite the challenges of this pandemic! Throughout this school year, we held monthly short online worship services for children, gathered on Zoom for a kindergarten - 5th grade Sunday School class on the beatitudes, met biweekly over Zoom for a 6th - 12th grade youth group (that also had a special Lent Saturday series!), and a high school Confirmation class. Our children and youth also contributed to our worship through serving as readers and lectors, participating in a Christmas pageant that remains one of my highlights of online church, and more.

I thank all of you for your flexibility and understanding as we navigated this time. I know virtual programming was not a good fit for every child or teenager and that this year presented many challenges for families with children, so I particularly look forward to reconnecting with those I haven’t gotten a chance to connect with and better serving your family’s needs in the coming year.

For the summer, our regularly scheduled activities will take a break, but we will do sporadic & more informal events that will provide chances to gather together outside!

On Monday, June 28th at 6 p.m., youth going into grades 6-12, along with recent graduates, are invited to gather outside Grace Church. From there, we will head over to LimeRed, grab bubble tea, and enjoy it together outside, either on the Common or on the church property. This will just be a time to catch up with one another and with me, and see each other in person after a long time apart!

On July 31st, the youth group will be headed to Sheffield to help provide hospitality to hikers passing through on the Appalachian Trail. If you or your child is interested but have not already signed up with me, please email me as soon as possible at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org. If we have enough interest, we may need to sign up for a second date with the organizing churches in Sheffield, since they like to keep to a certain number of volunteers to not overwhelm the hikers!

I am also hoping to plan some events for younger children as well. Details will be forthcoming through my weekly email to parents. If you are not on that list but would like to be, please email me at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org so I can add you.

Parents, I’m also hoping to catch up and check in with you and how you’re doing after a year that I know was so overwhelming for many! If you’d like to meet up for lunch, coffee, tea, etc., this summer, please let me know; I would love to get you on my calendar.

-Rev. Megan

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VACCINATION INFORMATION

Walk-In Appointments in Amherst

The Town of Amherst vaccine clinic located at the Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk in Amherst, is now offering walk-in clinic times in addition to regularly available appointments for scheduling.

Walk-In Clinic Times:
Mondays - 3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M
Thursdays – 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Saturday, June 19th – 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M

For more information on this walk-in clinic, please check https://www.amherstcovid19.org/vaccine.

From the Office of Senator Jo Comerford

The Baker-Polito Administration has announced the timeline for all Massachusetts residents to be eligible for a vaccine, which can be viewed here. All residents can preregister to book an appointment at a mass vaccination site either online or by calling 2-1-1. More information about mass vaccination site preregistration is here: https://senatorjocomerford.org/constituent-guide-to-covid-19/

2021 Stewardship Update

The 2021 Stewardship Campaign continues grow. We now have 165 pledges totaling $458,586 towards our goal of $487,500 this is most encouraging considering the circumstances we have all been facing. If you need a pledge card or want to talk about your pledge, please contact me at thomasdougherty56@gmail.com

Stewardship Chairperson
Tom Dougherty

Volunteer at the Survival Center

The amount of need in our area has grown tremendously. Prior to COVID, the Survival Center provided between 85-100 meals a day. That number has ballooned to almost 250! The Survival Center is always in need of help. Volunteering there is easy, safe, and fun. Some jobs, such as distributing lunch or bags of produce from behind plexiglass, can be done sitting. Some light lifting may be required, but not more than 15-20 pounds. Teens and young adults are welcome, as are people of all ages.

Please consider volunteering at the Amherst Survival Center. For more information, go to their website https://amherstsurvival.org or speak with one of the Survival Center volunteers.

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Campus Ministry and Ministry to Young Adults

A number of events created with students and young adults in mind will be occurring over the summer, both virtually and in-person. I am also available to catch up with folks one-on-one over coffee, tea, lunch, etc., so please shoot me an email at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org to find a time to meet up!

Many events are also being scheduled this summer through the Western Mass. Young Adult Ministry Network, which is bringing together young adults from across the diocese. If you’d like to be a part of the network’s Discord group - which includes announcement about upcoming events as well as other ways to connect - please use this link: https://discord.gg/dnAh3v7x37

The Young Adult Network will be gathering a group to volunteer from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Sheffield on Thursday, July 8th. The project will be extending hospitality and kindness - and food! - to hikers on the Appalachian trail who come through Sheffield. A great chance to sit outside, in a shady tent, and enjoy time together while also serving others. If you’d like to be a part of our group, please email me at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org.

There will also be an Evening Prayer service for young adults this summer over Zoom, at 7 p.m. on the third Saturdays - 6/19, 7/17, 8/21. Email me at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org or the Network Organizer Will Harron, william.harron@gmail.com, for the Zoom links or more information!

Zoom prayer group – Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

Megan continues to lead a prayer group over Zoom each week at 7 p.m. Typically, we spend the beginning of our meeting in conversation on a topic related to prayer and spirituality before moving into a time of prayer together, where we lift up the needs – and joys! – of our world, communities, and ourselves. Newcomers always welcome! Please email Megan at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org to be added to the email list.

Garden Ministry

The gardens at Grace have been mulched and composted thanks to Tom Dougherty and his crew plus Mary Hocken and Tom Baker. The Goodwin Garden is in good shape as is the Parish Hall Window garden, planted by Maria Dye. The Erards keep the Columbarium plantings looking lovely.

The Garden Ministry could use some help weeding, dead-heading, watering and generally maintaining the remaining gardening areas including the Parish Hall Walkway, planted through the inspiration of the late Sherry Johnston, and the Garth embankment as well as watering the Connector planters. This is ongoing work, perhaps every couple of weeks, though not onerous! If anyone would like to join us, please contact Sherry Wilson, 256-6955 or sherrywilson136@comcast.net. We welcome novices.

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BACK TO SCHOOL FOR HAITI STUDENTS

September will be here before we know it and the students at St. Matthew’s School in Haiti will be heading back to school. This year the Haiti Ministry will be helping the students prepare for a successful school year in two ways.

First as in past years, we will be sponsoring 200 students. A donation of $60 will cover the cost of one child’s uniform, textbooks and other basic school supplies.

Secondly, we are helping to fill the shelves of the school’s new library. An additional donation of $25 will enable the school to purchase a book or two that students will enjoy for years to come.

If you are able to help again this year, please make checks payable to “Grace Church” and write “Haiti School Uniforms” on the memo line. You may also give via the church website by clicking the “Give” button and then selecting “Haiti Ministry” in the “To” drop down box.

Donations in any amount will be gratefully accepted. Thank you.

Father Joseph Tancred Diegue, Grace’s amazing partner in Haiti, retires

Grace Church’s ministry on behalf of St. Matthew’s School in Bayonnais, Haiti, has been enjoying a “golden age” since 2015, when Father Joseph Tancred Diegue took over as priest in charge of St. Matthew’s Church and the associated school. In July he will enter upon a well-deserved retirement after 38 years of active ministry in Haiti that has included supervision of a wide range of Episcopal institutions all over the country. For details of his impressive career, please see our blog (graceinhaiti.org/blog).

Père Diegue’s dedication to the school and to the success of our partnership was evident from Day One. On August 1, 2015, he arrived at his new posting to the Parish of St.-Basile-le-Grand in Gonaives, Haiti’s third-largest city—a district that includes the church and school in Bayonnais. He and the departing priest had only been notified about the change in placements a short time before, and Père Diegue had planned to take a vacation with his wife before starting his new assignment. As it happened, though, he arrived on the first day of a summer camp that Grace had long since arranged, and our two student counselors and John Stifler had just gotten to town. When Père Diegue realized what was happening, he cancelled his vacation so that he could be on hand to make sure that the camp went smoothly and that the Grace delegation was welcomed and made comfortable.

From that auspicious beginning, Père Diegue has been a dedicated and visionary leader of the school. Within days, he and John viewed the foundations of the first classroom building, which had stalled under the previous priest. Père Diegue immediately began redesigning the structure on the back of an envelope, enlarging it to accommodate the growing student body. By week’s end, he had secured a revised cost estimate. The Haiti Ministry, inspired by his enthusiasm and energy, renewed its fund-raising, and Grace parishioners responded with their customary generosity.

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Slightly over a year later, a delegation from Amherst cut the ribbon on a graceful building with four generous classrooms. Even the optimist, Père Diegue had had the building wired for electricity (which still has not come to the village of Bayonnais) and had designed it so that it can eventually support a second story.

Père Diegue seems to enjoy overseeing construction projects. He brings a practiced design sense and careful attention to detail. In 2017, he directed the rebuilding of a derelict unfinished structure, used years before by a now-defunct goat project. It became the “little house” (petite maison), consisting of two smaller classrooms for the upper grades, an office, and a storeroom for the school lunch program. He used surplus funds to upgrade the lavatories nearby. During subsequent summer camps, the petite maison served as a dormitory for the counselors. The third building, completed in 2019, consists of two cheery large classrooms for the preschool and kindergarten classes. The bonus here was construction of a cistern in the basement, securing a ready supply of water for the school’s needs. And when Covid-19 threatened, Père Diegue quickly organized construction of a hand-washing station, arranged for masks and greater distancing in the classrooms, and made sure that students and their families were educated about safety measures (2020). The latest building, almost ready for its dedication, offers a library, lunch space, and kitchens.

The story is not all about building, however. Père Diegue has focused on improving the teaching staff by providing annual training workshops and by collaborating with Teach for Haiti to fill vacancies with well-prepared teachers. He has introduced music into the curriculum and laid the groundwork for a school band. He has seen to the formation of a parent committee and facilitated Grace’s program of scholarships to enable some promising students to attend grades 7 to 9 at another school. He has also gently pressed the Haiti ministry to consider whether St. Matthieu might eventually expand to include those grades itself.

Grace Church has been blessed to partner with such an experienced and thoughtful leader for the past six years. Our discussions have always been grounded in a shared commitment to doing what is best for the children. They proceed from mutual respect and have been characterized by frank and open dialogue. We will miss Père Diegue enormously, but we send our warmest good wishes for his retirement. While it may not be possible for us to attend any celebration in person, because of Covid restrictions and security concerns, we will be there in spirit.

As of this writing, we have no news about who will take his place as priest in charge of the school, but we know that Père Diegue has placed it on a sound foundation. We are also grateful to you and our partners at St. James’ Church in Indian Head, Maryland. Without your steadfast financial support, Père Diegue’s vision for the school would not have become the reality that it is today.

— Suzannah Fabing

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"At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in."
- Mother Teresa

**The Pastoral Care Commission**

Ephesians: 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”

Theologian Phillips Brooks captures the essence of Paul’s challenge to his readers by stating: “Do not pray for easy lives; pray for the tasks equal to your abilities. Then, the doing of this work shall be no miracle, but you shall be the miracle.”

The Pastoral Care Ministry of providing sustenance to those in need, due to sickness or any other adversity, has been quietly operating behind the scenes for many years. Several parishioners have been providing lite meals, soups, breads, etc., either homemade or store-bought to those who ask for our assistance. This has especially continued over this past year of the pandemic. A shout out to ALL who have faithfully participated.

Recognizing that we all are in and out of pandemic brain fog according to the statistics, I thought it right to ask those who have participated in this ministry if they STILL feel they are willing and able to participate. Of course, if you feel a prompting that you would like to volunteer to serve, that would be delightful. I WOULD like to hear from all of you. We walk in Christ’s love as he first loved us.

You can reach me either by e-mail: karen_desantis1969@yahoo.com or by telephone, 413-256-0690. Faithfully, Karen DeSantis

**Mutual Care Ministry**

We coordinate parishioners eager to help Grace Church members or their families during an illness or family crisis. Short-term help includes offering rides to church or to medical appointments, bringing meals to the door, shopping for groceries, picking up prescriptions, and visiting. Quarterly facilitators accept referrals from clergy, family or friends. Please contact the church office for more information.

**Prayer Circle** is still here through the pandemic!

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).

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Coffee hour follows Sunday morning services and provides an opportunity for fellowship and for welcoming and becoming acquainted with newcomers.
Grace is nothing else but a certain Beginning of glory in us.
--Thomas Aquinas

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.

Summer Worship Services
Sunday 9:30 am

See our website, www.gracechurchamherst.org for updates