Christmas 2021

Photos: 11pm Christmas Eve: Doug Moore
**Grace Notes "Notes"**

**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.

**Outreach!**

**Our December Outreach Offering**

brought in $4024.00, which was collected for the Craig's Doors and Catholic Charities- Afghanistan Refugee Relief.

Generosity changes everything, starting with us.

Thank you for your generosity!

**In-person Evensong is back!**

For over a year we have faithfully been offering a simple Service of Evensong by Zoom each Friday afternoon at 5:30. Thanks to a rotation of six officiants, we have continued our long-established practice of closing out the work week and entering the weekend with chanted prayer, readings, silence, and a hymn. Zoom was better than nothing, but we rejoice that as of October 1st, we can safely return to the church! We hope that you will be able to join us. No previous experience required. A service booklet will be provided at church. You are invited wherever you feel comfortable.

We will also continue to provide a live Zoom link for anyone who is unable to attend in person. The link is provided in the Friday E-Blast. For convenience, you might want to print out the booklet for your personal use.

We are excited to be able to come together and join our voices in thanksgiving and prayer!

- Heidi Frantz-Dale

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Pageant photos: Rev. Megan McDermott

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St. Nicholas Bazaar

A huge thank you to all who made the St. Nicholas Bazaar such a success. What a wonderful family we have at Grace Church! Please return lawn signs as soon as possible - thanks!

- Joan O'Brien
Iconography Workshop

An ongoing iconography workshop meets every other Sunday afternoon. Upcoming meetings are on January 2 and 16 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 for additional information.

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 on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month...and 5th Friday when that occurs. (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@polisci.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.

Tea and Titles

The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 13 at 3:30 pm in the Connector. Masks are required. For more information, please contact Jude Wobst at judith.wobst@gmail.com All are welcome!

A Week with Grace

Sunday
8:00 am  Holy Eucharist
9:00 am  Coffee Hour
9:15 am  Sunday School, K-5
10:30 am  Holy Eucharist
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  Alanon

Wednesday
12:10 pm  Rite I Holy Eucharist and Healing Prayer
7:00 pm  Zoom Prayer Group (biweekly)

Thursday
7:30 pm  Choir rehearsal

Friday
7:00 am  Men’s Group (2nd & 4th Weeks)
5:30 pm  Evensong

Saturday
10:00 am  Zoom Bible Study
4:00 pm  Zoom Over 60s Gathering
5:00 pm  AA
8:00 pm  AA

Note: Masks are required indoors per the town of Amherst.
FREE COVID-19 TESTING SITES

Amherst
UMass Amherst Public Health Promotion Center, 200 Commonwealth Ave. Email only: testing@umass.edu.
Hours vary, visit https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-testing.

Easthampton
Drive-thru testing: Millside Park, 2 Ferry St. Starting Jan. 4, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. By appointment only. Sign up at: https://book.curative.com/sites/34189.

Hadley
Hadley Senior Center, 46 Middle St. By appointment only. 413-586-4023, ext. 6.

Holyoke
Drive-thru testing: Transformative Healthcare-Holyoke Community College, (Lot M) 303 Homestead Ave. 413-322-5595. Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 8 a.m.-11 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday, 2-7 p.m.

Northampton
Drive-thru testing: Round House Parking Plaza, Old South Street behind 212 Main St. Starting Jan. 3, Monday, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Friday, noon-4 p.m. By appointment only. Sign up at: https://book.curative.com/sites/34274.
Walgreens, 225R King St. By appointment only. https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/covid19/testing?ban=covid_vanity_testing.

Ware
Walgreens, 171 West St. By appointment only. https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/covid19/testing?ban=covid_vanity_testing.

VACCINATION INFORMATION

For information on local vaccine clinics, please check https://www.amherstcovid19.org/vaccine.

Everyone age 16+ who lives, works, or studies in Massachusetts should get a COVID-19 booster.

16-17 year olds can get a Pfizer booster. People 18+ can get any booster.
People ages 5-17 can get the Pfizer vaccine.
People age 18+ can get any vaccine.

More information on COVID-19 vaccine boosters is here.
Individuals can book an appointment online, by calling 2-1-1, or by calling individual vaccination sites where phone options are available.
While there is one website Massachusetts residents can use to find public-facing vaccine locations in the state (vaxfinder.mass.gov), you may still need to click through multiple web pages to find more information about each site and to book an appointment.
Many locations are also offering walk-in appointments.

Nature photos by Doug Moore

Tom turkey
Red-tailed hawk

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Community conversation boards – join in on the conversation!

Earlier this year, we asked for suggestions on ways we could continue building community together, even through the challenges and limitations of this pandemic. Patty Appelbaum helpfully suggested that we have bulletin boards open to communal contributions as one way of sharing together.

In November, we had a saint-themed bulletin board inspired by the feast of All Saints’, where people shared their thoughts on sainthood as well as which saints are meaningful to them. Here is a picture of what the bulletin board looked like before we changed themes.

Saints (living and dead) named and honored by our community include: Hilda of Whitby, Theolene Dixon, San Martin de Porres, Dorothy Day, Mother Jones, Bishop Desmond Tutu, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Mother Teresa, St. John Paul, Bishop Doug, Margaret Bullit-Jonas, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, “my mother,” “my nana,” “my college religion professor/advisor,” St. Paul, St. Jerome, and St. Fiacre, patron saint of gardeners. Saintly qualities were listed as including “love in action,” “courage, compassion, mercy, loving kindness,” and “holiness, devotion to God, focus on God, continual attention;” dogs also received a shout-out!

For December, we had a board on the theme “Rethinking Christmas: Christmas, Creation, and Consumerism,” which asked our community to consider how we might better honor God & the earth, in light of climate emergency, during the Christmas season.

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Suggestions for better honoring the earth included using reusable gift bags, making a game of using “found” wrapping paper, buying in-person when possible instead of getting things shipped from afar, shopping local, using less plastic, spending less time in stores to cut down on consumerism, and eating more veggies and less meat. Other suggested ways to included turning down the heat at night, taking a contemplative walk in the woods and lighting candles, and creating an Advent wreath out of wilderness materials, i.e. rocks and sand, cactus, etc. Another challenge put forward for Christmas was “to think about what’s ‘good enough’ rather than perfect.” One comment suggested a celebration of Christmas that truly focused on the incarnation might require a departure from some of the more secular elements of the holiday – but also pointed out that features of our Christmas observance related to the solstice might lead us back to reflection on the natural world.

We hope that these bulletin boards will inspire continued conversation among our community on these topics, rather than any topic feeling “finished” once we move onto a new theme.

You can continue to expect our bulletin board to be updated with a new topic or theme on a monthly basis. This board can be found in the Connector – typically propped up on music stands near the door into the sanctuary. Each month, prompts and questions will be provided to help inspire you to share your thoughts! Next to the board you should find markers, index cards, and tacks; there will often be magazines, as well, if you want to cut out an image.
that reminds you of the theme or any of the questions. Please stop by the board often, and be sure to check out the thoughts of your fellow Grace Church members throughout the month.

If you have a suggestion for a topic we might explore together, email Megan at mmedermott@gracechurchamherst.org with your ideas.

**Action! action! ClimateAction@Grace is in action and meeting on the second Sunday of each month in the Fireplace Room of the Parke House from 9:30 to 10:15. Join us!**

Bearing in mind Matthew 7:1-4, we have urged a review of current state of energy usage on the Church campus. Our junior warden Tom Dougherty has responded vigorously, and an energy audit was recently completed. There are no glaring inadequacies but our reliance on two oil-fired furnaces may yield a route to better energy management; the report is pending.

The issue of placement and viability of solar panels is also under review. We applaud the erection of solar arrays over the parking lots at UMass and view similar arrays over cropland and forest with some concern. Grace Church has no parking lot; other churches do. Is there room for cooperation? Tentative inquiries are not encouraging.

These initiatives regarding our energy profile force focus on the reality that management of energy sources is very heavily dependent on the politico-economic ecology of taxes, subsidies, and regulations. Climate advocates must plunge into the political fray; ClimateAction has. We Zoom-attended in numbers the recent public hearing on decarbonization of the Joint Committee on Transportation Utilities and Energy of the Massachusetts Legislature. Under review was a bill (H.3292), the Green Future Act, which foresees carbon pricing (a pollution fee) with strong economic justices provisions. That this committee 'report out' in favor is required for this bill to proceed in the byzantine process of legislation. The Zoom format eased our attendance but a technical glitch frustrated our spoken contribution. Written contributions sufficed.

We seek participation in events and campaigns originating elsewhere. On Saturday, December 11th South Church, Amherst, tolled the **11th Hour Bell Ringing for Climate Change** to advertise the urgency of climate threats. ClimateAction@Grace was there (in a torrential downpour). We are indeed at the 11th hour for effective action on climate change.

We invite participants in this action. Beginning January 11 join friends and neighbors for prayer and meditation before the 11th hour ringing begins. No one is too young; no one is too old. This is an invitation to join religious groups across the country and beyond to express our hope and determination that together we can act boldly to address the climate crisis. Our church bell will be rung for 11 minutes on the 11th day of each month at 11 AM. After the church 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.

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Grace’s Closet is starting up again

With the cold weather upon us, this winter in this time of COVID the Fireplace Room in the Parke House will be a storage and distribution site for warm winter clothes for those in need. There are several ways you can help. Volunteers sort and organize clothes in the Fireplace Room, as well as deliver clothing to the Amherst Survival Center, Craig’s Doors, and Not Bread Alone as requests come in. Parishioners can also donate clean, usable coats and winter clothes for adults only by dropping off items on Sunday mornings or during regular business hours Monday – Friday. We hope you feel called to help, because we need your help.

All health and safety protocols will be maintained, including the need to wear a face mask at all times. For more information, please contact Kevyn Smith at kevynsmith09@gmail.com.

Children’s & Youth Advent & Christmas Opportunities – Christmas Pageant & More

Many thanks to everyone who participated in our pageant on Christmas Eve at 4 p.m.!

In 2022, we have many ways for our children & youth to continue coming together to be creative, explore the Christian faith, and have fun together, and we hope you will join us for these as well.

K-5th Grade Sunday School and Liturgy in the Chapel – Resuming Jan. 16th

Throughout the Fall, a small, inside, masked Sunday School class for kindergarten – fifth graders has been meeting from 9:15-10:15 a.m. Newcomers & friends are always welcome!

The 16th is also the third Sunday of the month. Every third Sunday, we invite children of all ages and their families to come together for Liturgy in the Chapel – a short worship service with Communion and an interactive children’s sermon. The service is from 9:45-10:15 a.m. Members of Sunday School meet for class first, but then can be picked up at 10:15 in the chapel from worship.

Save the Date – Jan. 16th, Youth Group (Grades 6-12) Discussion on Faith, Wellness, and Emotion, Noon

Following our 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday the 16th (with enough break time to go grab a bubble tea or a snack!), we’ll meet at noon in the Fireplace Room in the Parke House to continue our discussion on this year’s theme: faith and the relationship it has with wellness and caring for ourselves. On the 16th, we’ll talk about what our faith has to do with our emotional well-being. All youth in grades 6-12 are welcome – you do not have to have come to any previous conversations! We will wrap up by 1 p.m.

Because of the holidays, we did not have a monthly fun gathering or community building activity for the first weekend of January, but we will go back to having those gatherings throughout the rest of the year. I’m on the
look-out for more ideas for either indoor or outdoor activities youth group can do together this Winter – share your ideas with me at mmedermott@gracechurchamherst.org!

At-Home Resources

Every week, in my email to parents, I try to include resources for exploring faith as a family at home – often from our Sunday School curriculum publisher, which provides activity suggestions, reflections, and more to use with children. If you are not receiving these emails but these resources would be helpful to you, please contact me at mmedermott@gracechurchamherst.org

Particularly if you are not able to be with us for in-person Sunday School or worship, I would love to hear what are some of the ways of connecting or supplementing your family’s conversation on faith at home that would continue working well for you during this pandemic time. Periodic Zoom gatherings? Video content? Crafts or devotionals to be used at home? Know that I’m here and open to your suggestions and want to be a resource for you in this time!

--Megan

Great blue heron

"Just like Grandma used to make.”

Lunar Eclipse 11/20/21
Campus/young adult ministry updates

Despite the continued challenges of the pandemic, this Fall semester provided a chance to renew our ministries to our surrounding colleges.

I was allowed back on-campus this semester as an advisor to the Hampshire College Christian student group, which gathered for things like a service of Holy Communion, a game night, and a Prince of Egypt movie night. For Amherst College, opportunities to meet with students on-campus were scarce because of pandemic restrictions, but we were able to provide much needed support to their Protestant chaplaincy by supplying 9 students with their own, new Bibles (all of which included a message of blessing + greeting from Grace Church). At UMass, I was able to be on-campus for a Religious & Spiritual Life fair to provide information about Grace, the Young Adult Ministry Network (more info below), and the Theology on Tap group I co-lead; in the year ahead, I hope there will be more ways to connect with all three campuses!

Of course, we also had students seeking us out – visiting, worshipping with us, and becoming part of our Grace Church community!

If you are a college or graduate student hoping to get more involved here OR more involved in Christian ministries on your campus, please email me at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org so I can include you in planning or scheduling for events in 2022 and/or I can get you connected with some of the opportunities for being formed in faith available to you on-campus.

All young adults, ages 18-40, are invited to participate in the Western Mass. Young Adult Ministry Network (YAMN) (http://www.diocesewma.org/young-adult-ministry-network-yamn/) which brings together young Episcopalians from across the diocese for friendship & empowerment as people of faith & leaders in the church. During the Fall, YAMN offered multiple opportunities for gathering – including a free retreat at the Barbara Harris Center in New Hampshire and a Quiet Day hosted at St. Andrew’s, Longmeadow. We also connect online – sharing prayer requests, announcements, and memes on our Discord channel. You can join the Discord at this link https://discord.com/invite/dnAh3v7x37 or email me or YAMN’s organizer Will Harron (William.harron@gmail.com) for information on other ways to get involved.

I have also been continuing to co-lead a Theology on Tap group – a group that meets monthly, for all ages, but with special welcome to young adults – which was virtual for much of the pandemic and has tried out various forms of in-person gathering since this summer, including eating together at Local Burger in Northampton, having a hayride and bonfire rental in South Hadley, and hosting a Christmas bowling party. If you are not on my email list for Theology on Tap, please shoot me an email at mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org so I can make sure you get up-to-date info on joining this supportive and informal environment for talking about life & faith!

--Megan
JOIN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HAITI IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

Members of the congregation are encouraged to attend and join in four conversations with representatives of organizations in New England involved in educational efforts in Haiti akin to Grace’s. Since we can’t travel to Haiti at present, the Haiti Ministry decided to use this time to share information about what we and others are doing in that country.

There will be four conversations at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays in February and March. Covid restrictions and weather permitting, three will be held in-person in the Connector at 7 p.m.; one will be on Zoom. We’ll begin with brief presentations by someone from Grace and a visitor about our respective projects, then open up the floor for questions and sharing experiences, advice and ideas. We expect each session to last about 90 minutes.

The schedule is:

**February 1**  Doug Albertson and Ken Mundt from Opportunities for Communities, Amherst.
This long-standing organization is based on the concept of linking communities to enhance cooperation and generate educational and sustainable development opportunities in Haiti. College students from the US engage in the planning, execution and management of projects that provide rudimentary economic development potential within its partner communities. For example, OfC operates a school for Restavek children in Les Cayes and a summer school program there, and provides scholarships, health screening, clean water, micro-lending and other amenities in the rural village of Bellabe. Recently, because they can’t send American student groups to Haiti, OfC switched gears and is working with the American University of Les Cayes on academic exchanges and remote learning.

**February 8**  Sheila Humphreys, co-founder of HOST (Haiti Orphanage Sponsorship Trust), Brattleboro. This organization helps support earthquake orphans at Foyer Evangelique Universel Orphanage in Croix-des-Bouquets, near Port-au-Prince. Since shortly after the 2010 earthquake they have been funding food, medical care, education and vocational training for about 40 impoverished orphans, ranging in age from about 9 to the late teens. They do their creative fundraising in southern Vermont.

**March 1**  The Rev. Rebecca Crosby, co-founder and Executive Director of the Crosby Fund for Haitian Education, Old Lyme, CT. This large organization based in the Arti-bonite Valley provides hundreds of full scholarships each year for children from pre-K through technical school or university. It offers those students additional academic support, tutoring, and a computer lab at its Education Center in Deschapelles, along with life skills training, adult literacy, teachers’ seminars, summer camps and other programs for the community. After graduation, Cros-by Fund students are assisted in finding internships and jobs. **This conversation will take place on Zoom; link to be announced.**

**March 8**  Leslie Harrison, long-time volunteer with the Be Like Brit Foundation, Worcester. This organization continues the legacy of a young American woman who died in the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In her memory, her family created a homelike orphanage in Grand-Goâve that today cares for some 66 children. Brit’s Academy, founded in 2016, offers these children high-quality education, including the arts and speakers

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from around the world. Because of the recent troubles in Haiti, the foundation has temporarily suspended its active program of one-week service trips that involved young volunteers from the US in mornings spent building a home for a needy family or, if they had medical training, serving in a local clinic, and afternoons spent interacting with the kids. The earthquake-proof facility for the home and school incorporates solar electricity, rainwater collection and distribution, and nanotechnology water purification. As its children approach young adulthood, the Foundation has instituted a transitional program to support and prepare them for adult lives as leaders. Ms. Harrison has also been involved with Tree of Hope and a wide-ranging list of other programs in Haiti.

NEWS NOTES

Dine In, Help Out – Hot soup on a cold January day – what could be better?
On January 22, the Haiti Ministry will offer
• eight different soups, from local restaurants and parish cooks
• Hungry Ghost bread and homemade cookies
• a choice of home delivery or pickup

Here’s a preview of the options:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScbLxbRObZdNnegqtfBvYNK4Ib6OueyJaqZpDwlwk39rIJKLPQ/viewform.
Each order includes a quart of soup plus two servings of bread and cookies for $20. Last year, many people bought extra to freeze.

Delivery will be between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. Pickup is at the Spring Street entrance from 1:00-4:00. There are some limits on delivery; see the form for details.

All proceeds go to St. Matthieu School in Bayonnais. Thank you!

Bake Up, Help Out – Another way to help out is to bake cookies. Can you contribute 2-4 dozen for the Haiti school fundraiser? Please e-mail Sarah Chadwick at snchadwick@verizon.net.

Good government in Haiti – As you know, Haiti has long struggled for good government. Now a broad coalition of Haitians from all walks of life – “unions, professional associations, farmers’ alliances, human rights and diaspora organizations,” religious groups, and more – has put together a proposal for a new and more representative democratic government with the potential for stability. This is a hopeful prospect. Will Americans support it? Here is a brief article with more details: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/01/opinion/haiti-commission-government.html?searchResultPosition=1
"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 prayer, 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.

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 for updates