



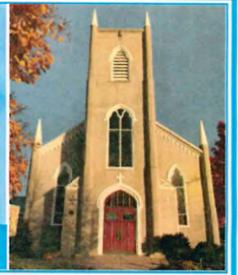
GRACE  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

Mount Clemens, Michigan

# Amazing Grace

WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

Monthly newsletter of the people and ministries of Grace Episcopal Church



November 2021



## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

I recently came across a quote by Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century Christian theologian and mystic. He wrote, "If the only prayer you say in your whole life is 'Thank You GOD,' that would suffice."

What a powerful sentence that is! I had to really stop and think about this. If the only prayer I say in my whole life is "THANK YOU GOD" that would be enough?

How many prayers have I said in my life? Prayers of lament, and petition, asking God for relief from my distress, begging or pleading for my wants, needs, desires, asking for guidance, patience, wisdom, direction and answers, prayers to help make me a better person and stronger in my faith, advocating for others, asking protection or healing for myself and those I love, or screaming for peace and justice in the world, for a change in government or church leadership, demanding to know why or how long! The list could go on and on.

And these are just the prayers that go on in my head that nobody else but God hears. What about all the corporate prayers I have said aloud with others in liturgies, prayer services and other church events? Written words formed into prayers for many things. Many years of repetition, psalms recited – some that resonated within me and some that did not. How many prayers of the people have I heard? Sometimes joining in those prayers while at other times tuning them out as my mind wandered elsewhere.

But isn't this what we are supposed to do? To send all of these prayers to God who we hope and believe will hear and answer them, even if the response comes back to us in ways we don't expect or want to hear? Isn't that what St. Paul reminds us to do – to pray without ceasing?

And how many prayers have been answered? I do not recall; perhaps all, certainly some, but it hasn't been none at all! How often do I remember that my previous prayers were answered and so take the time to say Thank You God? Or do I just take any reply that I received for granted and then move on to my next barrage of requests?

Have I, have we said thank you to God today? Are we thankful for another day of life? Do we appreciate being able to get out of bed and walk or talk or take a hot shower? Are we thankful for the food we eat the safe places that we live, for the bed we sleep on, for the partner, child or family member that supports and loves us?

By paying attention to the details of how others care for us as well as the many good things that we already have and experience every day, we become more aware of the many blessings that we have. We may even begin to focus on our own good fortune rather than on our problems or worrying about things we don't have. If we enter into this practice consistently, feelings of gratitude can and will permeate our lives.

We will automatically become thankful and the words "Thank You" will be forever imprinted on our hearts, minds and lips.

For in the Divine plan, all people will share equally in the gifts GOD gives us. We are all called to be thankful and rejoice forever in what God has done and continues to do.

In order to achieve this though, we must begin with the recognition that our entire created world – plants, animals, humans and all of nature – in short, everything on our planet - is a gift from a generous and giving God. When we have this understanding at the very core of our being, we begin to see everything in terms of gifts received and gifts to be shared.

All that is asked of us in return is to be: **THANKFUL** for receiving them; **RESPONSIBLE** in using them; and **GENEROUS** in sharing these gifts with others.

So as we enter our stewardship season and our national Thanksgiving Holiday, let us be sure to take a moment every day to be thankful for the many blessings that we have received.

And in the words of Meister Eckhart, if the only prayer we utter this week or the rest of our lives is THANK YOU GOD, it will be enough!

Blessings,

Pastor Steve

## Worship Opportunities

**Sundays at 8:30 and 10:30 am**  
**TO JOIN SERVICES LIVE ONLINE VIA ZOOM VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND FOLLOW THE LINKS**

[www.gracechurchmtclemens.org](http://www.gracechurchmtclemens.org)

**TO JOIN SERVICES LIVE BY PHONE VIA ZOOM**

**8:30 Service:** Call 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 881 8016 9300

Password: 246040

**10:30 Service:** Livestreaming

on our Facebook page

**TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

7:00 pm on Zoom

Visit our website and follow the link.

Or call: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 897 3241 7015

Password: 683930

Worship resources are available on our website anytime.



## ***From the Music Ministry***



### Acknowledging Our 151st Year Of Music Ministry

I want to take the time to really acknowledge our music ministry for the time and care they have put in to making the pandemic bearable. The lockdown phases were hard, but we ventured into Zoom and tried on technologies that kept us in contact. The Sunday music videos kept coming, and Brooke kept playing her comforting flute for offertories. As we started to meet for services in person, the singers got anxious to sing live again and started meeting up for lunch.

We didn't have to wait long for an opportunity sing live - our 150th anniversary celebration was coming up fast, and the music was proving demanding. We were joined by eager new members, and rehearsals got underway. Before long, we were finding a groove that felt familiar to the long-time members and bracing to the new. Singing was back in.

The return of the choir does signal a kind of return to normalcy, though let us not be fooled: the covid virus is still around and still rampant in places, so we must take precautions where we can. Also, what is the "normalcy" we really want to return to, and is it really worth it? The crisis of covid has presented an opportunity for us to evolve - to change the way we work, the way we socialize, the way we love our neighbor as Christians should. We had the opportunity to see what wasn't working in those areas of our lives, and the will to create new, better futures out of them.

The opportunity is still there. What hinders us, of course, is dealing with loss - and there has been plenty of it during the pandemic: just count the funerals we've had in the last year. We get through it with community. Our prayer as a ministry has always been to support the community of Grace with our best efforts as musicians, that through the grace of God our ministry can make a difference with people and keep the community together. "Through the Grace of God" is actually the motto and theme of the 150th Anniversary Celebration of our church, which I wrote into an anthem for everyone to sing. It was intended to be sung progressively over the course of our anniversary year, one verse per month, until the lockdowns interrupted things.

When we finally came together for our 150th anniversary celebration and sang all twelve verses of our anthem, we saw the fruits of our efforts — not just in the product of our rehearsals but the quality of the relationships that the ministry has with the rest of Grace. Our bishop said at the banquet that Grace "feeds people, body and soul," so we musicians are doing our job when feeding the souls around us, with spiritual food that is then transmuted in the listener into inspiration for a life in Christ.

As we go full on into our fall season and prepare for Advent, we plan to be there supporting the Grace community with this same spiritual food, in the same way that our Pastor administers the Eucharist, and in the same way that our food ministries serve the hungry nearly every day of the week. Our prayer is that we remain strong and healthy for this work, and in good relationship with the community. And if you want to join us by singing or playing an instrument, there is ample time for you to do so before Advent. We

## ***QCD - A Tax Strategy for Stewardship***

If you are over 70 ½, you can use Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD's) to give money from your IRA to Grace Episcopal, and not to the IRS. Seriously, would you rather give money to Grace or the IRS?

**WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU GIVING US TAX ADVICE?**

Of course not. We're just bringing up a tax topic that could help some of us "seniors" giving to charities, using our IRA assets instead of our household checking accounts. Consult about QCD's with your IRA administrator, with your CPA, your lawyer, your tax professional, and your sister who does tax returns at the Senior Center.

OK. That said, here's how a QCD works:

Ordinarily, when you take a distribution from your IRA - example, \$2,000 - it's taxable to you as income. But, if you are over 70 ½, and are going to give Grace \$1,000; you tell your IRA administrator to send \$1,000 directly to a qualified charity, (501)(c)(3), like Grace. You won't be taxed on the \$1,000. Generally speaking, the QCD check is a lump sum amount. That's a QCD.

You can't itemize the QCD as a charitable contribution on your tax return. You didn't pay tax on it, so you can't deduct it. Seems fair. However, for many of us over 70 ½, the new standard deductions are higher than our total itemized deduc-

### ***QCD - A Tax Strategy for Stewardship continued***

Why could a QCD work better for you?

If you take an IRA distribution of \$2,000 direct to yourself, it will be taxed. The IRA trustee will withhold \$400 for the IRS (usually), and you will have \$1,600 left to give. Huh? If the \$2,000 is split into a \$1,000 QCD check to Grace and an \$800 check to you (\$1,000 less \$200 Tax withholding), you save \$200 in tax. Why give the IRS \$200 when you can give it to Grace, or your second favorite charity? The QCD can be a better way. It's a tax strategy worth thinking about.

As always, you have to consult with your IRA administrator and tax professional to decide if this is the right strategy for you.

WE ARE NOT SAYING THIS IS RIGHT FOR EVERYBODY

But it could be right for you

And for Grace!

### ***Update from Convention***

The Diocese of Michigan's annual convention was held October 22 and 23. As it was last year, it was a virtual event. The delegates from Grace Church were Tish Germain, Shirley Lappi and Pamela Sherry. This year, there were no 'hot button' resolutions, and the Constitution and Canons Committee did not bring forth any proposed changes to our existing ones, preferring to wait until next year when convention can (hopefully) meet in person. There were the usual review and approval of diocesan budget, and election of lay and ordained individuals to diocesan offices. And, there were some very interesting presentations on present and future projects/events in our diocese.

The first was about the College for Congregational Development. It is a diocesan training program to assist clergy and lay leaders to develop both self and congregations, a framework to learn ways of approaching issues, and to learn skills to engage others. The idea is to grow and develop based on who we are, not who we are pretending to be. Two clergy who have successfully utilized the skills they learned in the program spoke of its benefit to them and their congregations. The program for our diocese will begin next June, and for more information, go to the EDOMI website.

Another program detailed/updated was the Sacred Ground initiative, which Grace participated in just before the pandemic. We held weekly discussion sessions here between services, on the topic of becoming Beloved Community, which abruptly ended when we began the covid-related shutdown. The program addresses racial healing, reconciliation and justice. It is about telling the truth, proclaiming the dream. It delves into how people of color suffer racism, and how white people, both consciously and unconsciously, perpetuate racist systems. There are films and readings, but it is not just another 'program'. It is a spiritual journey, grounded in the Christian faith. According to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Sacred Ground helps us hear the story of our past and write a new story for a new future, with plenty of room for all of God's children. More information on the diocesan website.

During convention, the bishop always gives an annual address. This year, she began with "We are marked, we are scarred, we are not the same. We are doing it". She further stated, "we are here and God is here. Let us own our tiredness, sadness, grief, pain and anger." She further encouraged us to immerse ourselves with our God, to stop and listen, we will know what invitation is on the horizon. She concluded her address with "My breathtaking joy is to be your bishop".

Other events were a report from the Diocesan Reconciliation and Reparations Research Team; a video on the benefits of planned giving, and the "happy surprises" that can result from this process; the announcement of the formation of a Diocesan Liturgy Task Force with a call for volunteers; a video on the journey of the formation of the mission Church of the Incarnation in Pittsfield Township to its new current status as a parish; an update on campus ministry; and an update from the Technology Task Force.

Finally, convention concluded with Eucharist. In her sermon, Bishop Perry stated that we need to re-think how we present ourselves. She asked what if we actively move forward to recognize how alive the spirit is in our walls. The early believers went to the Gentiles and told their story, the spirit was working in their lives. She encouraged everyone to stop waiting for people to walk through our doors, and asked what would happen if we left our walls of comfort, to go into the neighborhoods, what would happen if we would go to them. She asked us to listen, hear, offer our stories, and stated "What would happen? I wonder!"

## November Birthdays

Betty Brogan 11/1  
Jane Carpenter 11/1  
Monica Dunbar 11/7  
Robert Johnson 11/06  
Carolyn Siewert 11/10  
Daniel Fox 11/10  
Joe Grossi Valenti 11/11  
Tom Murphy 11/16  
Ena Pederson 11/22  
Pam Schafer 11/23  
Maureen Cobb 11/22  
Donna Chapman 11/28



### Treasurers Notes

During the month of November, we will be kicking off a new program for communicating with everyone. The new program we are using is called Realm. At the moment we are just using the accounting feature. The whole program will include not only accounting, but how we will communicate with each other.

An invite will come to you through email to set up your page within realm. If you do not have email, or a computer, I will help you set up your account.

Also, we will be changing our online company from Tithely to Vanco. Those that regularly give to Tithely I will be sending you information on how to switch over to Vanco when it is up and running. Plus, a link will be added to our web page once we go live! And if everything goes as planned by the end of November, we should be changed over.... stay tuned for updates...

And as always feel free to call me with questions at 586/337-0108

Tish Germain

Treasurer



### Grace Episcopal Church

115 South Main Street, Mt. Clemens, MI 48043  
Office 586-465-4573 Fax 586-463-9162  
Email: [gracemtclemens@yahoo.com](mailto:gracemtclemens@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.gracechurchmtclemens.org](http://www.gracechurchmtclemens.org)



Tuesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom

Visit our website and follow the link.

Or call: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 897 3241 7015

Password: 683930

### "B" BUCKS for Blessings in a Backpack

If your wallet has any dollar bills with B on them, please pass them along to help us fill backpacks with weekend food for hungry Mt. Clemens students.



### Recommended Donations

Canned Soups, Canned Vegetables and Fruits, Macaroni and Cheese, Peanut Butter/Jelly, Tuna Fish/Canned Chicken, Spaghettios, Hamburger Helper, Instant Mashed Potatoes, Spaghetti Sauce, Pasta, Cereal, Applesauce in Cans



Currently

### COMMUNITY SUPPERS

Wednesdays and Sundays at 4:00 pm, take-out only

### GRACE FOOD PANTRY

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00 am-12:00 pm

## Grace Episcopal Church Staff

**Rev. Steven Steinberger-Domienik**

Cell: 203-641-2068

Email: [pastor@gracechurchmtclemens.org](mailto:pastor@gracechurchmtclemens.org)

Clergy Emerita: The Rev. Deacon Betty Brogan  
Minister of Music: Ms. Amy Saari

### 2021 Vestry

Pam Sherry, Senior Warden  
Jim Smith, Junior Warden,  
Karen Davenport, Kris Eckert,  
Ann Farrell, Brooke Lau, Martha Houser,  
Marilee Racine, Tom Stotz  
Treasurer: Tish Germain • Clerk: Tom Stotz