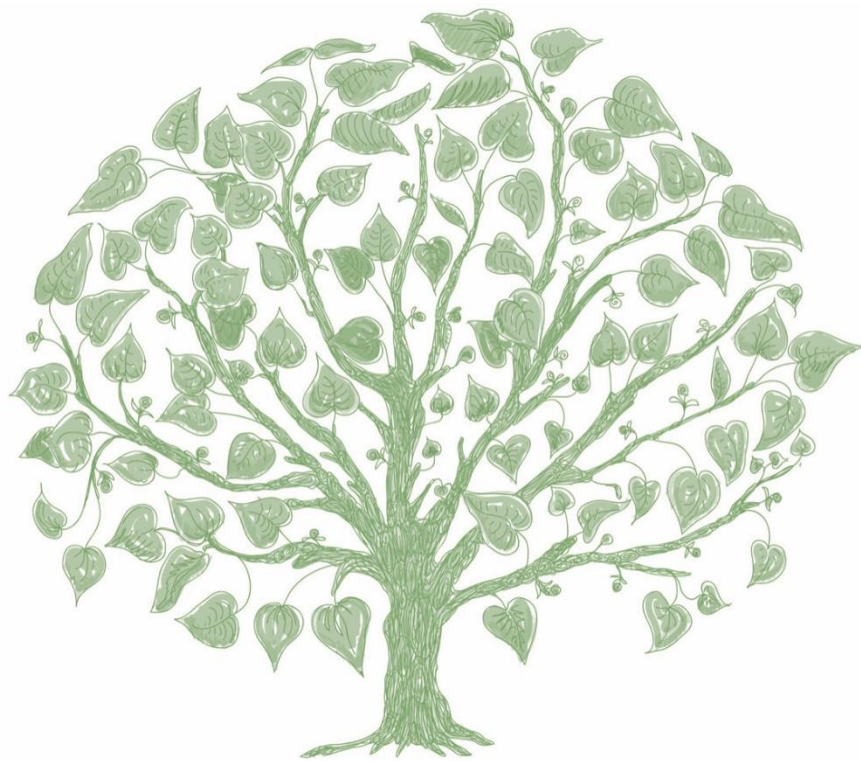


The Ninth Annual Meeting of GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires



January 24, 2021
Virtual Meeting on Zoom

Step into Grace...

...where strangers become friends.

We are an Open and Affirming church. Every one of every age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental ability, or economic status is invited to join us as together we live out the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, service, and justice. No matter where you are in your spiritual journey—you are welcome here.



Grace Church celebration at Gideon's Garden on September 27, 2020. Our only "in-person" service since the beginning of the COVID-19 restrictions. The new van was blessed, Debbie Holmes was honored, and we recognized the enormous efforts that led to an unprecedented amount of produce harvested at the Garden by honoring the Rev. Jen Bloesch, Gideon's Garden Program Director, and Fisher Riiska, Youth Supervisor. Fifty members attended which was the maximum allowed for an outdoor service. The GG chickens accompanied the choir! Photo by Chris Hutchison.

GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires

Ninth Annual Meeting – January 24, 2021

Call to order

Opening Prayer (all say)

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, as we begin our ninth year together as Grace Church, hear our prayers. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Old Business

Minutes of the 2020 Grace Church Annual Meeting (January 26, 2020).

Poll voting on Zoom question 1

New Business of Grace Church

Vestry and Convention Delegate Nominations and Elections

Poll voting on Zoom question 2

Presentation of the Ministry Budget of 2021

Report from the Profile Committee

Remarks from the Rector

The Blessing

May God give you grace to never sell yourself short, grace to risk something big for something good and grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love.

(William S. Coffin) And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

The Dismissal

People's response "Thanks be to God."

GRACE CHURCH
an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires
Ninth Annual Meeting – January 24, 2021

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GRACE CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 26, 2020 GRACE CHURCH at CRISSEY FARM

Call to Order: Kathy Clausen, Senior Warden, opened the meeting with 30 parishioners in attendance. All were thanked for donating their time and efforts to Grace Church. No additions to the Agenda were requested.

Opening Prayer: The Rev. Dr. Janet Zimmerman led the group in opening prayer.

Old Business:

Minutes of the 2019 Grace Church Annual Meeting (January 20, 2019), were unanimously passed. A letter from the Berkshire Immigrant Center was read thanking Grace Church for their monetary assistance and dedication to the immigrant community.

New Business:

Vestry nominations and Convention delegates were presented. Additional nominees were requested from the floor. No additional names were presented. The balance of the slate was unanimously accepted:

OFFICERS (1 year)		VESTRY – AT LARGE (3 year terms; with 2 consecutive terms possible)	
Senior Warden	Kathy Clausen	Class of 2021	Anne Andrews, Dutch Pinkston
Junior Warden	Rick Gore	Class of 2022	John Cheek, Cathy Haywood
Treasurer	Sue Gore	Class of 2023	Dindy Anderson, Holly Murray
Clerk	Mary Anne Grammer		

DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES			
Vestry Delegate	Rick Gore	Vestry Alternate	John Cheek
Lay Delegate	Lee Cheek	Lay Alternate	Doreen Hutchinson

Presentation of the ministry budget of 2020. Sue presented the 2020 budget and answered questions.

Remarks from the Rector

Janet spoke on the missions of Grace Church: the Berkshire Immigrant Center, Gideon's Garden, the Lee Food Pantry, the People's Food Pantry, Multicultural BRIDGE and CONSTRUCT and thanked the congregation for their support. Grace Church reasserted itself as a welcoming and affirmative church for all. Grace Church also lent their support to our Jewish brothers and sisters who are facing increasing hatred and violence through a joint service at Hevreh and by participating in counseling sessions at Berkshire Regional School District. Janet thanked Kathy and the vestry for their leadership and assured the church that the church is in good standing and will continue to be so when she retires May 31, 2020.

Jen presented accomplishments for 2019: the partnership with Monument Valley Middle School, the addition of chickens to the farm, planting day, Celebration Sunday, group visits including Multicultural BRIDGE, Gould Farm, Berkshire Meadows, ExtraSpecialTeas and Railroad Street Youth Project. Jen also presented goals for 2020: increase collaborations with partner organizations, increase number of camps that come for visits, increase visitation to the butterfly house, execute an internship program, continue to experiment with sustainable growing practices and increase farm yield so as to offer a second delivery to CHP and provide produce for the farm stand. Jen also thanked Taft Farm's continued generosity.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm after a blessing from Janet.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anne Grammer, Vestry Clerk



RECTOR'S REPORT

January – July 2020

In January we were flush with the beauty of celebrating the Christmas season. We had worshipped together at Taft Farm in our annual Christmas Eve Service and enjoyed a glorious service of Lessons and Carols on the Sunday after Christmas. Plans were underway for Christian Formation classes in Lent with our sister churches, Christ Trinity and St. Paul's. The community gathered to plan for the Books and Bread year with eight great reads and eight wonderful places of hospitality to share. People from each Episcopal church in the Berkshire Corridor involved with helping to plan and lead the Revival in 2018 were meeting to schedule activities together which would begin with a day of worship and service on Sunday, April 26 in Pittsfield. And a celebration to recognize the historic ministry of The Rev. Jen Bloesch as a minister of the United Church of Christ, called to lead a food, farming, and service ministry at Grace Church was scheduled for May 16 with Bishop Doug Fisher and The Rev. Jill Graham, Associate Conference Minister and Pastor, United Church of Christ. Many guests were coming to visit and life seemed to be headed toward another extraordinary year of worship, service, and fellowship at Grace Church.

I had gone to Texas to attend the funeral of a dear friend on the first weekend in March. Returning that Sunday afternoon, there was talk of a coronavirus that was hospitalizing people in the state of Washington. It was at that time believed to be a limited event, but not much was known publicly about a pandemic that would soon bring our world to a terrible standstill. By our March 15 Vestry meeting, we began a rapid reconfiguration of how to be church in this extraordinary time. One point of light in this tragic pandemic was that it occurred in a time when available technology allowed us to keep connected and in community. A decision was made to stop all in person meetings to keep each other safe. The church office was closed and everything became Zoom. Thanks to a fast-learning curve, Morning Prayer was offered the following Sunday and as Grace Church has done, the people with great generosity and a spirit of adventure, joined in. Together we learned to log on, to sing together, to read and pray together in a venue that, while different than anything we could have possibly imagined, allowed us to do what we do with enthusiasm—give thanks to God, greet and comfort each other, and share this life together.

Everyday brought something new—new equipment, new ideas. And every day the community of Grace Church was willing to try on a new way of being church. Bible Study moved online. Books and Bread, rather than gathering in someone's welcoming home, went on Zoom to share food and conversation. Centering Prayer gave us a time to rest and restore in a time of fear and grief. Third Sunday Suppers became a way to connect in quarantine. The first supper was definitely an adventure yet everyone was delighted with the experience. The designated end time came and went as we laughed and told stories with friends both in the Berkshires and out of state. It soon became clear that this "disaster" was having some surprising effects. Friends from far away were able to join us for worship and study. Friends who often had challenges being in the pews, were able to attend every offering because no transportation was required. And while nothing will ever replace the opportunity to be together, to hug, to laugh and cry in the warm presence of each other, there was a spark of joy seeing each other's faces and hearing each other's voices—when we were not on mute.

This way of being "online" allowed us to offer Bible Study in conjunction with our sister churches who came together to study the Book of Revelation. Friends from far away could join us for Centering Prayer and suppers. On Easter Sunday we began the morning with Morning Prayer and a time of community and then joined others from across the Episcopal Church to listen to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry remind us that though "it doesn't look like it, it doesn't feel like it, it doesn't smell like it, it was Easter anyway." And the ministry of The Rev. Jen Bloesch was able to be celebrated by more than 81 people from across the country at her installation service on May 16. In a time when the health crisis was met with an economic crisis, Gideon's Garden continued to feed the many



hungry people in our towns by launching its first internship program, welcoming 5 young people to the farm to grow and harvest fresh vegetables.

In the midst of a pandemic, our great sin of violent racism did not abate. In the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor we were confronted with the enormous work that still must be done until all God's children are treated as if their lives matter. Grace Church entered into a time of reflection and study beginning with conversation on a talk by The Rev. Otis Moss III and continuing with a presentation and discussion with Williams College Professor Charles Dew around his book *The Making of a Racist*. Members of Grace Church participated in *Sacred Ground*, a 10-part film-based exploration developed by the Episcopal Church to support dialogue around race and faith.

At the end of July, I retired from 6 glorious years with you at Grace Church. Even though I do not see your faces regularly, you remain in my heart and in my prayers. Through *Tuesday's Child*, I continue to hear about your care for each other and our neighbors in the world. Thank you for all you are and all you do in Christ's name. Grace has known for a while that the building is not the church so you are uniquely able to be open to all that God is doing in and through you in this unprecedented moment. I know that you have been tested greatly in this time of sickness and hardship. I am grateful that you have each other. Know that God working through this grace filled community will surround you with love as together you walk into a hopeful new year.

by the Rev. Dr. Janet Zimmerman, Rector

INTERIM RECTOR'S REPORT

August – December 2020

What a joy it has been to enter this congregation as your $\frac{3}{4}$ time Interim Rector! Grace Church is a healthy congregation with a clear vision and mission. You know how to dream big, discern with wisdom, engage spiritual depth, adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, care for the community, and love each other no matter what. You support each other with good humor and practicality, and your heart for the marginalized is full of hope for a better world.

As a priest who works with congregations in transition, I'm well aware of the need to listen carefully to the foundation stories of a congregation and facilitate healing for present grief and past hurts. Since I live in South Berkshire and had been a supply priest for Grace Church in the past, I already knew the fascinating story of how St. James and St. George chose to come together as Grace Church, but it's been good to hear more of that story and to learn some of your individual stories, as well. 2020 has been a year filled with anxiety and fear due to racial violence, national politics, and COVID-19. We've probably all experienced loss or illness in our circle of family, friends, and co-workers this year; and we've had to quickly learn new ways of interacting while maintaining physical distance. You lost your beloved Rector Janet to retirement, and your capable first Gideon's Garden Program Director Jen decided to end her contract early and move home to Wisconsin. It has been a tough year. There's no doubt about it. Yet you lived up to your name and offered grace and compassion grounded in deep faith in God.

I see my role as being your companion on this journey of transition, not telling you how you ought to do things, but observing your ways, offering an occasional insight, being a resource, and supporting your work. Of course, there are the specific tasks of leading worship, teaching, and offering pastoral care, which are undertaken by a priest on your behalf. Working with the worship team and with those who just naturally are good pastoral care givers has been rewarding, as has been helping the collaborative Adult Bible Study work expand.

We commissioned the Profile and Search Teams early in the fall, and the Profile Team has worked hard to engage as many people as possible in the listening process they adopted. They are well on the



way to completing the Profile that will tell the story of this congregation to prospective priests and communicate in compelling ways the qualities and skills Grace Church seeks in its new rector. The Search Team has also done a bit of preliminary work to prepare for their part of the process of calling a new rector. Lee Cheek chairs the Profile Team, while Robert Forman and Pennie Curry co-chair the Search Team.

While the essential work of transition has gotten underway, the Vestry has faithfully discharged its duties, including an afternoon Retreat in November to reflect on the CAT (Congregational Assessment Tool) results and identify strengths, possibilities, and challenges for the immediate future. I am incredibly grateful for the wise and steady leadership of Wardens Kathy Clausen and Rick Gore, Treasurer Sue Gore, and Clerk Mary Anne Grammer. Leadership extends beyond the vestry. Pennie Curry provides the connection between Taft Farms and Gideon's Garden and co-chairs the Wisdom Group along with Doreen Hutchinson. Andrea White, Dindy Anderson, and Margaret Layton have been innovative in reaching out to youth through on-line VBS, Church School, and Christmas Pageant. Monique Kirchoff keeps our communications fresh and appealing in the weekly e-news, "*Tuesday's Child*." So many other fine lay leaders make this congregation strong in its mission, yet the vestry is committed to continue identifying and nurturing new lay leaders in the coming year. Finally, our staff members are certainly a great asset: Gretchen Fairfield, our capable and unflappable Office Assistant; Chris Clark, our music director; and Lee Cheek, our keyboardist and vocalist (along with our volunteer musician, John Cheek). All bring incredible gifts, energy, and spirit to their work.

My prayer for all of us as we move into 2021 is that we draw closer to the God who is near, who holds, who cares, who acts, who saves. May we be open to the Holy Spirit's movement among us, follow the model of Jesus' self-giving love, and keep moving into a future that embodies love for all God's creation.

by the Rev. Libby Wade, Interim Rector

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

2020, 2020, oh how we will remember this year! For all of us at Grace Church, it was also a remarkable year with radical ups and downs. We said good-byes, and we said welcome. We have learned a totally new way of doing our worship service along with the ways we socialize and conduct meetings. How we interact with each other has a new dimension which we have promised not to lose. I'm leaving the details to others; I'd like to reflect on who we are and how we navigated this exceptional year.

Grace Church, now eight years old, was born out of the extreme choices made by the original two congregations, St. James' and St. George's. We climbed aboard a boat that was headed out to the deep end, out to uncharted territory with fear and faith. There was the heady exhilaration of doing something new mixed with the doubt that we might not be able to do church this way. No building? No address of our own? Our website the most public face of our worshipping community? Secure in this transition though was the foundation of service to the community in Lee Food Pantry and Gideon's Garden. Even if we didn't have a permanent place for our Sunday worship, we knew how to help our neighbors. And we knew how to pray and pray we did. We knew how to worship and support one another and celebrate the important moments in our family.

We knew how to be resilient, we knew how to adapt in big and little ways and we knew how to care for one another. Those qualities laid the groundwork for what was needed this year. What has been a truly beautiful thing to watch has been the unveiling of brand new ways of doing things and the emergence of new talents and abilities. Gretchen Fairfield, our office administrator, came to us as a temporary assistant. She fortunately has stayed and has learned how to put together the Sunday



worship slide show with all sorts of features. She figures things out! Chris Clark, our music director, has created a virtual choir out of three voices by learning new software. The high quality of music we've always enjoyed in person is still setting the environment in our services. Although we had to say good-bye to Jen Bloesch, our first Gideon's Garden program director, this summer she was able to figure out how to have an internship program in the midst of a pandemic. Libby Wade, who was thinking very seriously of acting more like a retired lady, decided to come to be our interim rector, because she knew us. She knew Grace Church because of the community meals we did back in 2014. How fortunate for us, that we have had these people and so many more experimenting and figuring things out.

I often think of this brief passage from Isaiah; *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"*

That creative power of God has welled up in this time. We have been inspired over and over to look for the new. The "new" has been a marvel for us, truly a sign that God is in this ongoing dilemma with us. The creative spirit wells up when we need to figure a new COVID-safe way of doing something. That presence has been felt in this congregation for many years. As we approach 2021, we will need to continue to rely on God's inspiration. We still have many tasks and projects yet to figure out. By the Grace of God we will continue to receive the inspiration of God's spirit.

by Kathy Clausen, Senior Warden

JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

This past year we repaired a leak in the heating system exhaust pipe that was causing stains in the ceiling tiles of the Rector's office. As the landlord was responsible for this, she paid the bill.

Gideon's Garden needed a new van, so Sue and I took on this task. We found a used Nissan passenger van and purchased it for \$24,074.00 from Haddad Motor Group in Pittsfield. This was the easy part. The hard part was getting the correct paperwork to the Registry of Motor Vehicles. This required updating our Corporation information with the Massachusetts Secretary of State and the IRS. With COVID-19, this made it harder to do. But after a couple of months everything was in order for us to get the van registered and we delivered it to the garden.

We finally removed all of the items stored at Stevens & Finnerty Funeral Home that St. James had stored there. We hired a mover to relocate some items to our Sheffield storage facility and another company to dispose of the items that we no longer needed.

I helped in laying out a seating pattern for our in-person service at Gideon's Garden. The diocese allowed a maximum of 50 people to attend and we had exactly that many in attendance.

As we are using the office only once a week, I replaced the existing thermostat with one that allows schedules for multiple times per day. We keep the heat at 65 degrees, then it goes up to 70 degrees on Thursdays when Libby and Gretchen are there.

by Rick Gore, Junior Warden

ALTAR GUILD

For the brief time we were able to worship in person, the Altar Guild Teams of Sarah Sieber, Margaret Layton, Cathy Haywood, Lynn Walker, Meredith Haider, Monique Kirchoff, Viola Bagnaschi and Linda White set up the altar each Sunday. Setup is challenging as all the supplies are stored upstairs at Crissey Farm. Therefore, there are only a couple of tables in the space when the team arrives. The teams create the sacred by making sure each element is prepared anew each Sunday.



Debbie Holmes, Chair of the Altar Guild for many years, retired this year passing the torch to Monique Kirchoff. Viola Bagnaschi and Lynn Walker have also retired. We are deeply grateful for their years of service.

by Kathy Clausen

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

January – July 2020

Bible Study is central to our formation as disciples of Jesus Christ. Every Tuesday evening, we meet to pray and study scripture. After COVID made it impossible to come together in person, our gathering place shifted to Zoom. There we studied readings from the Revised Common Lectionary and the Gospel according to Matthew. In June we came together online with The Rev. Sam Smith and people from Christ Trinity Church and St. Paul's Church to explore the Book of Revelation. It was a good study for our times. We have a committed and thoughtful group who brings good questions to how scripture guides their lives in the world. We are always ready and eager to welcome others who would like to add the study of scripture to their spiritual practices.

In January, the Books and Bread group planned their readings and gathering spaces for the new year. They did not anticipate that a pandemic would upend some of their plans. And yet, through the wonders of Zoom they discussed fiction and non-fiction books and how these new lenses gave them a way to understand our complex, beautiful, and sometimes frightening world. It is a wonderful way to transcend our separation while listening and learning from each other as we try to navigate this journey together.

In Lent, we joined with Christ Trinity Church and St. Paul's Church to read and study Bishop Jake Owensby's book *Living a Resurrected Life*. We met one time in person and then continued our gatherings online. Though the number of people from the other churches dwindled once we moved online, the study allowed us to explore what resurrection means in our lives. Placed within the context of the story of Jesus' resurrection, what does living a resurrected life mean for us?

In June and July, the Grace Church community was invited into a study and conversation of faith and race. Following the brutal deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others and the protests that followed in the midst of a pandemic, our church held two conversations. The first one followed a talk given by The Rev. Otis Moss III, called *The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery*. Referring to Professor and theologian James Cones' work, it spoke to how blind fear and prejudice led to the tragic killing of a young black man out for an afternoon jog. Then three weeks later, Williams College Professor Charles Dew shared with us his book *The Making of a Racist* on the influences that shaped his view of race in this country. These conversations were meant to begin a journey of uncovering the impact of systematic racism in this country and in our church.

Grace Church is a place of compassion, advocacy, and action. Learning together, talking together, praying together shapes our work in the world. Thank you to all who participated in these offerings and please consider how you can participate in the future.

by the Rev. Dr. Janet Zimmerman

August-December 2020

Grace Church's Tuesday Bible Study collaboration with St. Paul's Church Stockbridge and Christ Trinity Sheffield blossomed as the Rev. Sam Smith led a Late Pentecost study of the Sermon on the Mount based on a study guide and videos by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, and the Rev. Libby Wade led an Advent Study ("Songs in Waiting") that used art by painter Daniel Bonnell as an entry into reflecting on the Canticles found in the first two chapters of Luke. The Advent Study had a total of 21 participants, evenly divided among the three South Berkshire Episcopal/Lutheran congregations. Plans have been made to continue our collaboration using the Zoom platform with an Epiphany study on "Lament as a Spiritual Practice" led by the Revs. Sam Smith, Erik Karas, and Libby Wade, followed by a Lenten Bible Study led by the Rev. Erik Karas. In addition to increasing our biblical



understanding and strengthening spiritual practices, these collaborative Bible Studies are building relationships and strengthening connections among the three congregations.

Books and Bread continued meeting monthly on 2nd Wednesdays through October, with lively discussions but low participation, perhaps attributable to the loss of fellowship over food necessitated by gathering virtually. However, the leadership decided to re-start the group in January 2021 and then re-evaluate next summer. Thanks to Peter Kirchoff and George Raymond for persisting with this long-standing Grace Church group as it adapts to new ways of gathering during pandemic.

Christ Trinity Sheffield sponsors an Education for Ministry group mentored by Karen Byers. This is a four-year program of education and theological reflection developed by the Episcopal Seminary in Sewanee, TN. One member of Grace was an EfM participant in 2020 and there will be two members of Grace participating in 2021.

The Rev. Libby Wade coordinated a South Berkshire Sacred Ground Circle that met for 12 sessions from August – December. Gathering via Zoom made it possible for two people from eastern Massachusetts to participate in this group. Twelve participants (1/3 from Grace) from four congregations took part in this rigorous exploration of the history of racism in the United States and our own family histories. This curriculum developed and supported by the Episcopal Church seeks to peel away the layers that have contributed to the challenges and divides of the present day, all while grounded in our call to faith, hope, and love. For almost all participants, the Sacred Ground Circle process was eye-opening and transformative, and will most certainly lead to both personal and corporate change and action. Anyone who would like to participate in a Sacred Ground Circle in 2021 can talk with Lee Cheek or the Rev. Libby Wade.

Thank you to all who participated in these offerings. Please consider joining one of these groups in 2021 or suggesting a new topic or study group.

by the Rev. Libby Wade, Interim Rector

BOOKS & BREAD

Books & Bread has a long history with Grace Church. Founded in 1997 by Rev. Jenni Mathison, the book group has continued uninterrupted as an integral ministry of the church, offering the opportunity for congregants to meet monthly for fellowship, shared meals, and lively book discussions. For several years, Books & Bread was led by Sey Zimmerman until his passing in 2018, at which point I was asked to carry on in his stead. Sey was an impossible act to follow, but I've tried to honor his leadership skills and passion for books.

The grid below captures all the important details for 2020. The year turned out to be an unforeseen challenge due to COVID-19. As a result, the bulk of the monthly book discussions were held virtually on Zoom (as noted below). We also lost Janet Zimmerman as a stalwart B&B participant following her retirement from Grace Church mid-year. So, it was not a typical Books & Bread year! Yet it was able to continue due to the enthusiasm and inspiration of people who wanted to ensure that B&B remained a vital part of the Grace Church ministry. It is my hope that once a COVID vaccine is distributed, we will once again be able to safely meet in person for fellowship and enlightening book discussions in 2021.

As shown, we met to discuss books on seven occasions either in person or on Zoom (November's meeting was canceled), with a gathering on January 8th at the Church office devoted to choosing the books and scheduling. The two in-person meetings in 2020 started at 7:00 pm with appetizers and desserts (A&D).



Whether the meeting was “long form”, beginning at 6:00 PM with dinner, or “short form,” beginning at 7:00 PM, was determined by the host. Book discussions at all in-person meetings began at 7:45 PM which allowed enough time for social interaction before the start of the discussion. Virtual meetings began at 7:00 PM and all meetings ended promptly by 9:00 PM. Attendance ranged from 3-4 to upwards of 12 people for the seven meetings.

A planning session for 2020, led by Peter Kirchoff, was held on January 8, 2020.

by Peter Kirchoff

Grace Church - Books and Bread
Book List 2020

Date	Book Title	Author	Pages	Host and/or Venue	Discussion Leader	Start Time	Food
February 12	<i>The Women in the Castle</i>	Jessica Shattuck	400	Zimmerman	Peggy Whitfield	7:00 PM	A&D
March 11	<i>The Teammates: A Portrait of a Friendship</i>	David Halberstam	217	Anderson	Peter Kirchoff	7:00 PM	A&D
April 8	<i>Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City</i>	Matthew Desmond	448	Zoom	Janet Zimmerman	7:00 PM	NA
May 13	<i>Moon Tiger</i>	Penelope Lively	208	Zoom	Monique Kirchoff	7:00 PM	NA
June 10	<i>The Control of Nature</i>	John McPhee	288	Zoom	George Raymond	7:00 PM	NA
September 9	<i>Captains Courageous</i>	Rudyard Kipling	104	Zoom	Monique Kirchoff	7:00 PM	NA
October 14	<i>Searching for Stars on an Island in Maine</i>	Alan Lightfoot	240	Zoom	George Raymond	7:00 PM	NA
November 11	<i>Tears of Salt: A Doctor's Story of the Refugee Crisis</i>	Dr. Pietro Bartolo	208	Meeting canceled			

CHURCH SCHOOL

The year started with Church School as usual on Sunday mornings using the Beulah Land Curriculum, which tells stories using felt figures, followed by wondering questions and an activity. From 1 to 6 children participated on a Sunday. With the coming of the Pandemic and turning to having the church service on Zoom, there was no Church School through the rest of the school year. Thanks to encouragement by Janet and the enthusiasm and organization of Andrea White, a Vacation Bible School was completed on Zoom over five weeks, one day a week. It was enjoyed by the adults and children alike, with amazing questions and conversations among all who participated.

This Fall, we continued with Church School on Zoom following church. Again, organized by Andrea, we studied the Beatitudes, working through 6 sessions and will continue this after the first of the year. During Advent, it was decided that a virtual Christmas Pageant would be presented the Christmas Eve service. Again, thanks to Andrea who organized and directed the pageant and to Annalise Clausen who edited the video. It was enjoyed by many on Christmas Eve.

I am so grateful to Andrea for taking on this new task of Church School on-line. Her enthusiasm, organization, and her inclusive style enabled Church School to continue during this difficult time. Thanks also to Margaret Layton who joined every session with enthusiasm.

by Dindy Anderson



DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Convention this year was virtual and began with the presentation of the budget by Steve Abdow on November 4, in the evening. On November 5th, the pre-convention meeting on Zoom began with Ms. Lee Cheek and the Rev. Harvey Hill, co-chairs of the Beloved Community Commission, who led prayer and shared resources for racial justice work in our congregations. Afterwards there was an explanation of how voting and other procedures would be conducted on Saturday. Attending from Grace were the Rev. Libby Wade and delegates John Cheek and Rick Gore.

On Saturday, November 6, we began with a service of Morning Prayer including the Bishop's address, all of which was on YouTube. The Business meeting on Zoom began at 10am. There was a brief presentation of the budget and treasurer's report. Elections were held and the budget was approved.

After a presentation and vote, The Hispanic Mission in Worcester was admitted to the diocese. The Good News Garden initiative was introduced by Margaret Bullit Jonas on video. Convention was adjourned at noon.

by John Cheek

GIDEON'S GARDEN

No one could have predicted what this year would bring! In February, as Fisher and I were beginning the garden plans, we still had no idea what was coming. COVID of course has made this year at Gideon's Garden unlike any other, but when all things have been tallied, it has actually been an incredible year.

The challenges we faced in the 2020 season were pretty extensive. The arrival of the pandemic put into question much of the programming that we had planned for the summer, including our group visits and internship. While we were able to get some programming organized, there were fewer volunteers over the course of the summer than anticipated.

In May came the day to lay down row plastic before Planting Day. By coincidence, Danny did not need as much space for his crops around the Gideon's Garden field, and he offered us about 1.5x more row space than last year. While this was an incredible gift, it meant that there was a lot more land and crops to care for than in any previous year. The amount of work was daunting and demanding.

However, despite these challenges, this year surpassed our wildest expectations, and we experienced more success on the farm than we could have imagined given the challenges we faced. Although we gained roughly 1.5x the amount of land, we harvested about triple our total amount of produce as last year. Last year we harvested around 3,500 lbs. of produce. This year we harvested 9,000 lbs.!

This exciting success may be the result of a number of factors. For one, Fisher and I learned a lot from the year of farming in 2019. We learned from previous mistakes and determined to try new ways of caring for the plants. We began our season with detailed spreadsheets about how many plants to seed as well as when to seed them so as to maximize their growth and use our space more efficiently. They were also more prepared to do successional planting, which we have achieved with spinach, lettuce, carrots, zucchini, summer squash, and cilantro.

We had a few vegetables this year that stood out for their productivity. Our vegetable "MVPs" were the following:

- Lettuce: we grew seven varieties, and harvested 753 heads in June and July, with another 250 heads growing for fall harvest. This is compared to 2019, when we harvested 253 heads of lettuce.



- Watermelon: our melon plants were very productive this year. With the additional space, we harvested over 1,200 lbs., when last year was only 341 lbs.
- Bell Peppers: last year we did not successfully grow any bell peppers. However, this year, they thrived! In total, we harvested over 300 lbs., and we could have continued had it not frosted so early.

All of this produce was a very exciting accomplishment, because we were able to deliver that much more food to the pantries we serve in this critical time of hunger and economic uncertainty.

While this year we did not deliver to The Guthrie Center and CONSTRUCT, we did gain two new locations for delivery, which included Multicultural BRIDGE, which received a bimonthly delivery that went to 60 families in the Berkshires. We also offered produce to Sheffield Food Program, which offers a food pick-up program on Mondays in Sheffield to about 30 families. Our increased capacity for growing was met by need in the community!

In regard to programming, we had a number of changes due to COVID restrictions. Nevertheless, we persisted maintaining the garden as a place where people could experience fun, wonder, and peacefulness. Because we are an outdoor space where distance between people is very possible, we offered the garden as a place where individuals and small groups could work and volunteer throughout the growing season.

Our first event occurred on June 6, which was Grace Church's Planting Day. About 25 members of the church came to this event in three groups of upwards of ten people over the course of the day. Volunteers helped us to plant our tomatoes, lettuce, squash, eggplant, peppers, cauliflower, and herbs. Instead of a blessing of the garden all together at the Garden, Janet, Jen, and Fisher pre-recorded a blessing ceremony, which was posted over Zoom on the Friday night before the Planting Day event.

A few volunteers from Grace Church came regularly throughout the summer to help. Dutch Pinkston volunteered on a weekly basis from June through August, and he helped in all aspects of the garden. Jainee McCarroll and Ellis Ericson also volunteered regularly at the garden, helping with planting, weeding, and harvesting. On multiple occasions, Ellis participated in a delivery to The People's Pantry.

In September and October, ExtraSpecialTeas resumed their volunteer visits to the Garden. They volunteered on four occasions and helped mostly with harvesting, but also some takedown of the farm. COVID restrictions delayed their coming to the Garden, but as safety procedures stabilized, they were able to bring a group of five individuals each week.

On August 21st, Gideon's Garden was able to host Multicultural BRIDGE's Happiness Toolbox Camp for a volunteer day. Children came in two groups over the course of the day, with no more than 15 children and adults at one time. The children helped with harvesting watermelon and tomatoes. They also visited our flock of chickens, the butterfly house, and the Taft Farms animals. Each group was able to celebrate the end of their camp with a Taft Farms' sponsored ice cream social. Fisher and I also sent each child home with a "CSA share" from the garden, which included hot peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, watermelon, cantaloupe, corn and a bell pepper.

The newest programmatic addition to Gideon's Garden was the internship. In the spring, I advertised the internship with local school districts and other organizations supporting youth. Ultimately, it was determined that the internship would last ten weeks during the summer, and upwards of eight interns would be paid a stipend of \$500 for completion of the internship. The daily itinerary was divided between work, educational components, and team building.



Because of COVID, it was unclear as to whether the internship would get off the ground. When we had one high school student apply in May, he was asked to join for regularly paid hours to help with the high load of work. Timmy worked 10 hours a week from May until online school started again in the fall (about mid-September), and he became a vital member of the team. Eventually, we received enough applicants to host the internship. Our group consisted of five high school students, three girls and two boys (including Timmy).

The internship day began each week with the students observing plants within a plant family that each student was assigned. The interns were requested to answer questions about their plants and track their progress over the course of the summer. After this, the interns participated in work hours on the farm until lunch. Students worked many aspects of the farm, including transplanting, seeding, weeding, and plant care, and harvesting. After lunch I taught a farm-themed lesson followed by educational games, projects, and work activities, such as catching butterflies, a scavenger hunt, and games like Jeopardy.

Ultimately, 2020 was a very successful year, especially in light of everything that happened with COVID. While everything else shut down, we saw that at Gideon's Garden circumstances allowed us to continue our work. Not only could we grow food for this community in a great time of need, but we could continue to invite young people to enjoy the garden as a place of respite, learning, and growth.

The person who grew the most during this 2020 season was our Youth Supervisor, Fisher. This was the second season Fisher and I worked together, and our strong relationship and good teamwork bore fruit at the garden this year. Fisher in particular demonstrated a greater capacity for leadership, both in the farming and in teaching others at the garden.

Fisher was involved in every aspect of planning the garden, which began in late February when seeds were being ordered. Fisher demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the farm as well as a sincere commitment to the flourishing of the garden. He articulated an awareness of last year's mistakes and a desire to implement his new knowledge. After Planting Day, Fisher proved that he had an eye for noticing what work needed to be done. He maintained high standards of plant care and aesthetics. Fisher showed just how much he was paying attention to the garden, and it was obvious that he cared about the health of the plants, the quality of the harvest, and the way we treated the land through our practices. With pride in our hearts, we celebrated Fisher's successes and our blessings for his future at Celebration Sunday in September.

All in all, Gideon's Garden achieved its goals this year. We were able to offer an abundant harvest to the community, particularly in this unique time of need. We increased our programming for young people and continued to offer the garden as a place of learning and respite for the youth of the Berkshires. We strengthened our partnerships with local organizations, including the food pantries we serve, the local school districts, and other organizations serving youth. We continued to care for the land through sustainable farming techniques and proper plant maintenance. Finally, the garden served as a gathering place for Grace Church, a place where church members can experience delight and hopefulness for the future. The garden was a beautiful place for participants and visitors alike to see and experience.

by the Rev. Jen Bloesch

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

The Grants & Scholarship committee had no meetings this year. There were no requests nor disbursements.



HEALING MINISTRY

The ministry of the Healing Team began 20 years ago in the church of St. James. When Grace church began to worship in a space without pews, the Healing team could gather in the back of the worship area during the Eucharist. A team of two members would meet with any worshipper who wished to come for a healing prayer.

Members of the healing team are called when they feel the Spirit of God is leading them to this ministry and the clergy joins them in discerning this call. The Healing Team performed its ministry in different ways this year because the virus does not permit us to worship in person. So, the committee carried on their ministry by phone. Occasionally members of the healing team made in person visits when appropriate. Members of the Healing Team are: Ted Cobden, Pennie Curry, Kathy Clausen, Christy Yeo and Sue Gore.

by the Rev. Ted Cobden

LEE FOOD PANTRY

To respond to human need by loving service.

1/1/2020 Beginning Balance		\$15,897.88
Income: 2020 Donations Received	\$78,584.31	
Expenses:	\$36,673.91	
12/31/20 Ending Balance		\$57,808.28

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
2020 – 1,764

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED
2020 – 4,130

In 2021, the Lee Food Pantry will celebrate 30 years. We have continued to serve families and individuals of Lee, Otis, Becket, Monterey, W. Stockbridge, Stockbridge, Tyringham and Lenox Dale.

COVID-19 forced us to do things in a different way and it has been very successful. No recipients of the pantry enter the building. The number of volunteers is limited and we asked anyone over 60 years of age to stay safe at home. We now pre-bag everything during the week keeping a schedule of volunteers. The only items that need to be bagged on Saturdays are dairy products, which we started purchasing from Highlawn Farm, and any produce that comes in. People are to stay in their cars and pull up to collect the food. Other than welcoming back volunteers over 60, I don't think we will go back to the old way as the changes we have enacted make the pantry function better.

The people in our community have been extremely generous as you can see from the financial figures.

by Susan Gore

MEN'S GROUP

The purpose of the Grace Church Men's Group is to provide fellowship and to enrich the faith of all who participate. Although we do not meet every month, when we do meet, it is usually on a Wednesday evening. Generally speaking, we meet at a residence from 6-9 p.m. for supper and discussion focused on specific topics. All men of the parish and their guests are invited. There are no attendance requirements or attendance expectations. Now and then someone can come to a particular meeting that interests him or he can become a "regular" by attending most all the meetings. At the evening meetings we average about 10 although there are about 20 on our mailing list. We meet at 6:00 p.m. for soft drinks, wine and cheese followed by supper. Our discussion begins at about 7:45 p.m. and we adjourn promptly at 9:00 p.m. We feel God at work in our fellowship and



care for one another. We are strengthened when we share our life stories and feel the support of the other men.

In 2020 we met only once, but it was a very good meeting. On March 4, about 10 of us enjoyed a meal together in the Private Dining Room at Kimball Farms in Lenox. After dinner, we adjourned to the Conference Room where we heard a marvelous presentation by Rick Gore on his life story. At the time we did not know it would be our last meeting for 2020. We had plans for 3 or 4 more meetings but, by the end of March, COVID-19 had shut us down. When we will resume meeting is not clear at this time.

This ministry began early in 2002 when a small group of male parishioners met monthly at the Barrington Brewery for lunch and conversation. In November of that year, shortly after Cathy Richardson became our new Rector, the Vestry met in Retreat at which “involving the men of the parish more fully in parish life” was identified as one of three strategies “for the purpose of furthering the life and growth of St. James in the coming year.” Within a few weeks, that resolve gave birth to the Men’s Group as we know it today. While the small lunch meetings at the Brewery continued for a while, a much larger group began to meet on a regular basis in the evenings as described in the first paragraph of this report. The group has continued to operate ever since. Committee includes: John Cheek, Ted Cobden, Peter Kirchoff, George Raymond and Steve White.

by George Raymond

PROFILE COMMITTEE

The Profile Committee began work August 30, 2020, with the work of learning how to customize, create, and launch a Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) Survey administered by Holy Cow! Consulting firm for the first time in this congregation’s history. (Our previous search in 2013-14 was instituted without a formal CAT survey after five years of discernment which culminated in the consolidation of St. James, Great Barrington, and St. George, Lee, in 2012.) The 110-question survey opened September 28 and closed October 31. Canon Rich Simpson met with the Profile Committee, Vestry and Search Committee November 14 to review the results and share Holy Cow’s analysis of the survey.

Launching the CAT survey proved challenging within the limitations of the pandemic-mandated virtual worship and fellowship. We did not have the opportunity to coach parishioners in person to aid them in the submission of their surveys either online or by paper copy. Despite the obstacles, an amazing portrait of Grace Church emerged, which is currently being used to write a “profile” of Grace—who we are, what we believe, how we manifest as “church” in the world, and who we are seeking to lead us in the next part of our journey in the Way of Love.

On Nov. 25, we sent every parishioner a letter summarizing the results and thanking them for their participation. Since then we have been contacting parishioners about their memories and hopes for Grace Church. As of today (December 29) the Committee is working to have a rough draft of the profile ready to present at the Annual Meeting. The Profile Committee has met weekly since September 4. Our work will be completed by March 1 just before Canon Simpson attends the Episcopal Transition Ministers’ Conference.

It has been a blessing to work with the following deeply faithful and creative friends as we have reflected on the unique historical and Christian spiritual essence of Grace Church: Monique Kirchoff, Sarah Sieber, Holly Murray, *Vestry Liaison*, Jainee McCarroll, *Scribe*, and The Rev. Ted Cobden, *Chaplain*.

by Lee Cheek, *Chair*



SACRED GROUND

Racial healing, justice, and reconciliation is at the heart of the way of Jesus. The Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement seeks to foster Beloved Community, where all people experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God. The Church recognizes that the history of the disastrous European encounter with the indigenous people on this continent and the 400 year history of chattel slavery in this land that eventually became the United States is foundational knowledge for beginning a process of repentance and repair. In particular, the Episcopal Church has benefitted economically from these arrangements of broken human relations and our faith asks us to acknowledge this past.

Beginning August 12, 2020, the Rev. Libby Wade facilitated a small group of Episcopalians from Grace and St. Paul's, Stockbridge and two Lutherans from a suburb of Boston, through 10 sessions of "Sacred Ground," a film- and readings-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith developed by The Episcopal Church. Via Zoom session, we were invited to walk through chapters of America's history of race and racism, while weaving in threads of our family story, economic class, and political and regional identity. The sessions were full of surprising information and deep reflections on our personal and ethnic histories. This repair of our national sin will be an ongoing part of our faith journeys.

Pennie Curry and Lee Cheek, members of Grace Church, along with Jim Wade and others, completed the course on December 16, 2020. Meredith Haider and Dindy Anderson joined a group in January 2020 facilitated by a member of St. John's, Williamstown. Other groups are being planned for Easter season and Pentecost.

by Lee Cheek

SEARCH COMMITTEE

Though our work will only begin next spring, after the profile committee finishes its work, the search team will be winnowing applicants for our next rector. As we do, we pray for wisdom and patience, mutual respect, and clarity of vision, that we may choose and receive a priest who serves with warmth and humor, inspiration and faithfulness, and who will lead us where God is calling Grace Church. We are pleased to report that the following people have volunteered to help with the winnowing of applicants for our next priest. Meredith Haider, *Chaplain*; John Cheek, *Vestry Liaison*; Sally Brooke, John Ericson, Ellis Ericson, Andrea White.

by Pennie Curry and Robert Forman, *Co-chairs*

THIRD SUNDAY SUPPERS

In 2013, we began the Third Sunday Supper program. (In the beginning the suppers were held on the Second Sunday). The idea was for parishioners to be invited to join together on a Sunday evening, once a month, at a local restaurant for some fellowship and dining. Our first dinner was at Sullivan Station in Lee on May 10, 2013 (that was a Friday but that's another story). With very few exceptions, we continued to meet physically, month in and month out, always on a Sunday, until March 15, 2020. Only 4 people attended that dinner and it was clear that the pandemic was closing in. Starting on April 19, we met by Zoom each month right up through December 20. Attendance is around 10. The physical dinner on March 15 was our 80th and if the virtual dinners are included, we are up to 89. We have visited 27 different venues since 2013.



What we did in 2020:

Date	Dining Venue	Cuisine	Location
January 12	Aegean Breeze	Greek	Great Barrington
February 9	Morgan House	American	Lee
March 15	Koi	Chinese	Great Barrington
April 14	Virtual via Zoom		
May 20	"		
June 23	"		
July 21	"		
August 18	"		
September 15	"		
October 20	"		
November 17	"		
December 15	"		

The program has been successful and apparently well received, even though we cannot meet in person for the time being. The first supper of 2021 is scheduled to take place at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 17 via Zoom.

by George Raymond

TUESDAY'S CHILD

Every Thursday, the first draft of *Tuesday's Child* is sent to the five individuals who contribute content to the newsletter. They proofread, supply additional material, update mailing addresses, suggest deletions, give advice, provide music, original prayers and live Zoom links to sites, often with access to more information on particular topics. Our newsletter requires a small community of informants.

2020 was *Tuesday's Child's* seventh year. Since its inception on January 22, 2013, it has been sent out every Tuesday morning to recipients now numbering about 103. It includes information about worship times, upcoming events, the scheduling of lectors, responders, acolytes etc., names of those in need of prayer or a get-well card, the Gospel for that week, a video featuring the hymn of the week and more.

Every week 54% of the 103 to whom we email the TC open our email. That is a good percentage for a not-for-profit and for a religious e-newsletter. This year the layout of the TC was changed to make it easier on the eye and faster and easier to locate your area of interest.

The goal is to make *Tuesday's Child* interesting, attractive, and informative and so build and sustain our community, now especially as we are unable to meet in person. Suggestions and relevant pictures are always welcome.

by Monique Kirchoff

WELCOME TABLE

The Welcome Table, staffed by one or two committee members, was truly a welcoming presence for our church. Incoming parishioners could pause at the table for a name tag, a copy of the worship service, bulletins, and updates on everyone's news. It was a joy to see newcomers and old and new friends and neighbors enter and greet each other before the service began. These weekly informal gatherings by the Welcome table often sparked friendships and conversations which would later be continued at coffee hour.



Once the service began, the next duty for two committee members was passing loose plate collection, delivering it to the altar, then overseeing parishioners going up for the Eucharist. After the service, we would pack up the contents of the Welcome Table in the bin provided.

This year has brought the shuttering of our church facility at Crissey Farms. It is good to be able to Zoom the Sunday Morning Prayer sessions complete with music, and we are fortunate to have that technology available. One thing that has been made clear by the drastic change is that Zoom cannot replace the actual in-person experience of “bumping into” friends and neighbors, shaking hands, giving a hug, and generally not having to treat each other as if we were radioactive. We hope this can change in 2021 with the advent of a COVID vaccine and the subsequent ability to inhabit a physical space together. The family of Grace is waiting!

The Welcome Table committee members are: Debbie Holmes, Viola Bagnaschi, Sally Brooke, Anne Andrews, Sue and Rick Gore, Maureen Terry, Doreen Hutchinson, George Raymond, Sarah Sieber and Marcia Doelman.

by Sally Brooke

WISDOM GROUP

The Wisdom Outreach Committee met once in December, 2020.

The goals for 2020 were:

1. Continue working on distributing community grants with the Wisdom Committee being the decision group.
2. Support Jen to enact some of the ideas she would like as our Gideons Garden Program Director.

We did not formally work on grants, but organizations who requested financial support were given the following:

1. Multicultural BRIDGE received \$5000.00 in the Spring. We also gave \$2000.00 in gift cards to give to families in December.
2. Berkshire Immigrant Center received \$5000.00.

We are in process of looking for a Grace representative to be a partner to each of these organizations as we designed in our community grant program.

Jen implemented the internship program at Gideon’s Garden this summer. It really worked and the interns had a valuable experience and learned much given the volunteer constraints due to COVID.

1. We increased the yield and gave fresh produce to the pantries and CHP/WIC. She established grant partnerships in the community of people working on food insecurity which became greater due to economic downturn.
2. We stabilized the Gideon’s Garden Leadership for this next year. Matthew Bilotta will take on the youth coordinator role (Matthew worked at Taft Farms) and Annalise Clausen has accepted the leadership role, Director of Farming, and will shepherd the garden and planning for winter and plan for the spring, summer and fall growing seasons.

Goals for 2021:

1. Support Annalise in her role development this year.
2. Formalize the internship program.
3. Find Grace representatives to partner with the current organizations we support.
4. Regroup for 2021 when able.



The Wisdom Outreach Committee was formalized as an organized ministry of the Congregation following the Church's participation in the diocesan sponsored programs "Partnership for Missional Church." It seemed fitting to organize our community work as missional. Both Pennie Curry and I participated in the year long program and were excited to co-lead this Wisdom Group as an outgrowth of both the program and the knowledge growth of our congregation. The program gave us common language to name what we had been doing with Gideon's Garden. We were now a newborn church – by merging St. James' and St. George's congregations. There had been much work done together and we were both missional, "Churches Without Walls" and action oriented.

In my years as a co-leader of this ministry, I have seen such development of people looking for ways to serve our community. I see committee members so open to the next possibility. I do not feel equipped to say if they are closer to God, but their responsiveness to human need is palpable. Their willingness to explore how to meet it is very fulfilling. These are good people being the light of Christ in our corner of the world.

A more normal year has this group being goal focused. I foresee supporting Annalise in her new role with the help of a youth coordinator, meeting in-person with the interns to hear and learn first-hand what their experience is like and having Grace representatives partnered and involved with the organizations we are supporting. These will all allow us to see what impact we have had. This will make mission palpable and visible. Given the needs I see in the community with the impact of COVID, it will be good to see what new needs we can meet. I believe our group will be more creative after the year of introspection most have had. It will also be great to meet who is interested in working with us as a rector.

by Doreen Hutchinson

WORSHIP

January – July 2020

Our year began with the celebration of Christmas and Epiphany, which is the anniversary of Grace Church. Once again, we celebrated with music, prayers, Holy Eucharist, and cake. On the Sunday before the remembrance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, we came together with Christ Trinity Church in Sheffield and Hevreh of the Southern Berkshires for an Interfaith worship service and activities based on meeting the needs in our community. It was a wonderful day filled with the joy of many of our neighbors. More than 150 people participated.

Until March, we gathered at Crissey Farm on Sundays at 10:00 am for a service of Holy Eucharist, Rite II. Our Altar Guild prepared the beautiful space where God's presence was palpable. This devoted group includes Debbie Holmes, Viola Bagnaschi, Sue Happ, Cathy Haywood, Monique Kirchoff, Margaret Layton, Sarah Sieber, Lynn Walker, and Linda White. Our choir, led by Chris Clark, showed up early to practice and prepare hymns, anthems, chanting, and bells that allowed us to pray in our singing. Lee Cheek and Sara Keene supported us through their beautiful accompaniment on the keyboard. We were blessed to hear the voices of John Cheek, Mary Anne and John Grammer, Dutch Pinkston, Doone Marshall, Nancy Fishell, Howard Seip, and Fred Hollman.

An important part of our worship time was the opportunity to receive prayers for healing. A group of faithful ministers, led by the Rev. Ted Cobden, listened to the particular petitions and offered prayers to strengthen and encourage those in need. In 2020, the Healing Team consisted of Ted Cobden, Sue Gore, Pennie Curry, Kathy Clausen, and Christy Yeo. People who receive healing prayers find peace in this sacred practice.

On Wednesday at noon, we gathered at the Grace Church Chapel for Holy Eucharist, Rite I. This service included a celebration of holy women and holy men who remind us of God's continued



presence in the world. It allowed us to reflect on how these people inspire and intersect our own lives. We are very grateful for Pam Drumm who served as Altar Guild for our Wednesday Eucharist.

Centering Prayer, an ancient Christian practice that allows one to rest in the stillness and love of God, convened every Thursday at 5:00 p.m. at the Grace Church Chapel. In this time we prayed, reflected on our spiritual practice, and shared our challenges and joys in deepening our relationship with God.

On February 28, we remembered Ash Wednesday in two services at the Grace Church Chapel. On March 15 we began worshipping online. We began with Morning Prayer with recorded music and Janet reading most of the liturgy. Within weeks, our lectors and intercessors began leading us in worship via Zoom. And before much time had passed, Chris Clark, Lee Cheek, and John Cheek had begun pre-recording our music so that our ability to sing and pray was greatly enhanced.

We settled into a worship practice of offering Morning Prayer on three Sundays of each month and an Agape Meal on the fourth Sunday. The Agape Meal allowed us to participate in a feast of thanksgiving from our own homes. The community was invited to prepare a special place for the communion elements prior to worship. At the prayers, the people were invited to share the gifts of God with the people of God.

With the gift of technology, many members of our community served as worship leaders. I am grateful to them for their faithful flexibility. Thank you to Dindy Anderson, Anne Andrews, Kathy Clausen, Pennie Curry, John and Ellis Erickson, Tom Doyle, Sue Gore, Meredith Haider, Jainee McCarroll, and Robert Forman for your careful preparation so we could fully enter into our scripture and prayers.

In preparation for our time of worship, slides were made so that the community could fully participate in the service. Thank you to all who helped to proofread and prepare special slides for worship. I am particularly grateful to Kathy Clausen, Lee Cheek, and Gretchen Fairfield.

Thanks to technology, Centering Prayer continued. Every Thursday at 5:00 p.m. we gathered online to spend time in silence and then a time of reflection. Poetry, stories, and personal experiences invited us to gratitude and strength. It was an important time of peace in the midst of a time of pain and anxiety.

This has been a year none of us will forget. Thank you for your courage and your love. Thank you for gathering to pray, sing, and share a time of remembering the love that cannot be extinguished by darkness. Thank you for sharing your spirit with us all.

by the Rev. Dr. Janet Zimmerman

August – December 2020

“When life gives you lemons, learn to make lemonade.” So goes an old saying that took on new meaning in 2020 as what most of us thought would be a few weeks away from in-person worship turned into nine months with no end in sight as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage around the world. Grace Church worship leadership learned a great deal about worshipping virtually in a very short time and continued throughout the year to refine and improve their ability to produce high-quality worship broadcast via Zoom on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. and on special occasions.

One of the advantages to this format for worship has been a nudge toward creativity and flexibility and the ability to include more video and visual components to enhance the worship experience. Some who might not be able to attend in-person worship or Centering Prayer due to distance or physical limitations are now able to participate regularly and fully. Others who have been regular worshippers in the past, but don’t have adequate access to internet, are now unable to participate.



An intentional effort has been made to connect with these folks regularly via mail or phone, and a vestry sub-committee is looking for ways to improve in this area, so that no one feels left out of the life of this congregation. As we enter 2021, a vestry sub-committee has also been formed to consider our approach to technology for worship, and the diocese has made reimbursement of up to \$2000 available to each congregation to help.

In September, we observed a Season of Creation as a worship theme, culminating with a wonderful outdoor harvest festival worship service at Gideon's Garden. It was the first time the congregation had been able to gather in-person for Holy Eucharist since early March! Careful planning and lots of work by many people made it possible for us to follow the protocols and stringent guidelines of our Diocese, Taft Farms, and the Great Barrington Health Department. That morning a small group also made a video of the blessing of the animals of Taft Farms, which was shown as the prelude to the Zoom worship service on Sunday, October 4, St. Francis Day.

We continued the established pattern of Morning Prayer on Sundays with an Agape Meal once a month. In November, we used photos on All Saints Sunday to honor those who had entered the great cloud of witnesses; and at the end of the month, we blessed 2021 pledges on the Feast of Christ the King and looked at ways Grace Church lives out a commitment to Matthew 25 ministries of compassion, care, and justice.

During Advent, our virtual worship services included a Service of Prayer and Healing, a visit from Bishop Doug Fisher who preached and celebrated one Sunday, a Longest Night Service, a New Year's Eve Vigil, and a poignant farewell to the Rev. Jen Bloesch, who left her position as Gideon's Garden Program Director to move back to Wisconsin. During the Interim time, Jen preached and officiated Morning Prayer one Sunday a month in addition to her Gideon's Garden work. She has left her mark on the Garden, the congregation, and the community, and will be missed.

Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we were unable to hold the Christmas Eve Eucharist in the greenhouse at Taft Farms, but our Church School leaders rose to the occasion. With Andrea White as coordinator, a delightful intergenerational Virtual Christmas Pageant was recorded and shown as the Liturgy of the Word for our Christmas Eve Zoom worship service. We also mailed blessed communion wafers to almost everyone in our parish directory, and so were able to celebrate Holy Eucharist broadcast from the Grace Chapel.

This has been a year like no other, and 2021 promises to continue that trend. It is a distinct pleasure to work with such talented and capable lay and clergy leadership. In addition to saying goodbye to the Rev. Jen Bloesch in 2020, Viola Bagnaschi, Debbie Holmes and Lynn Walker retired from Altar Guild. Monique Kirchoff has taken on the role of Altar Guild Coordinator for 2021. I am grateful to the Rev. Steve White and the Rev. Ted Cobden for their assistance and support, as well as the Rev. Betsy Fisher and Canon Rich Simpson who officiated worship between Janet Zimmerman's retirement and my arrival as Interim Rector. I'm certain we'll continue developing and expanding worship leadership roles as we learn and adapt to the current reality and find new ways to be together while apart, all the while offering to God our prayers of praise, thanksgiving, lament, confession, and intercession with our whole hearts and minds and bodies.

by the Rev. Libby Wade, Interim Rector

LITURGICAL RITES CELEBRATED

Our worship pattern and attendance were greatly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All Sunday Services were in-person from January 5 – March 8.



All Sunday Services were on-line (Zoom) from March 15 – December 28 with the exception of September 27, which was in-person at Gideon's Garden & limited to 50 people.

All Wednesday Services were in-person from January 15 – April 8 and discontinued after that.

Private Communion in homes or nursing homes were also discontinued due to the pandemic.

While Holy Eucharist was the pre-COVID weekly norm, after March 15 most Sunday services were either Morning Prayer or another form of liturgy without Eucharist. We celebrated an Agape Service on-line about once a month.

Sunday Holy Eucharist (most included Healing)	10	Marriages	2
Weekday Holy Eucharist	16	Burials	5
Sunday Agape Feast	7	Death (Awaiting Burial)	1
Private Communion	4	Baptisms	0
Sunday Morning Prayer	31	Confirmations/Receptions	0

Special Services

Celebration of New Ministry (The Rev. Jen Bloesch)
 Ending of a Pastoral Relationship (The Rev. Jen Bloesch)
 Blessing of the Taft Farm Animals
 Service of Prayer & Healing
 Longest Night Service
 Blessing of Gideon's Garden in the Spring
 Blessing of the Harvest in the Fall
 Lessons and Carols
 Christmas Eve Virtual Christmas Pageant & Holy Eucharist
 New Year's Eve Vigil

Holy Week Services were shared with the Berkshire Deanery.

Sunday Service on the Day of Pentecost was shared with the Diocese of Western MA.

Burials/Deaths

Richard Edward Gore, Sr.
 Marion Chapin Andrews
 Charles John de Melker

Frederick J. Bunce
 Mary Elinor Hamill
 John Albert Grammer, Jr.

Marriages

Elizabeth Menaker & Huslan L. Wernz
 Anna Mary Murray & Gunnar O'Neil Babcock

YEAR ROUND STEWARDSHIP

Things were a bit different this year and the committee needed to change our approach. The committee consisted of John Cheek, Tom Doyle, Dutch Pinkston, Sally Brooke and Lynn Walker.

The materials from the Episcopal Network for Stewardship were published in *Tuesday's Child* and sent out by mail to those who do not have internet access.

We invited representatives from our missional partners to speak about the missions of Grace. Two of our missional partners offered video presentations to share with the congregation during our Zoom worship services. We heard first from three people involved with the Berkshire Immigrant Center who told us about their work and how our funds had been used. We also heard from



Gwendolyn VanSant of Multicultural BRIDGE. Jen Bloesch described how the mission of Gideon's Garden had changed somewhat due to COVID restrictions. Since outreach and education opportunities were mostly unavailable, she concentrated on meeting the huge need for food from our food pantries, who were serving record numbers of people, by greatly increasing the crop yield. Sue Gore spoke about her work at the Lee Food Pantry. On the final Sunday before the ingathering, we conducted a Q and A with the congregation asking; "How have you used your gifts of time, talent and treasure during this year with COVID? What do you see for Grace in 2021?"

The ingathering of pledges was at our Sunday Zoom service on November 22nd.

by John Cheek, *chair*

BALANCE SHEET AS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Assets	<u>11/30/20</u>
Lee Bank Checking Account	90,393
Trustee Investment Account	2,327,276
Lee Food Pantry Account	43,302
Rector's Discretionary Account	5,644
Vehicles	24,969
Total Assets	<u>\$2,491,584</u>
 Fund Balances	
Operational Funds	913,260
Building Funds	\$1,197,734
Mission Funds	\$8,391
Memorial Funds	\$311,526
Lee Food Pantry Fund	43,302
Rector's Discretionary Fund	5,444
Mahaiwe Cemetery	1,042
Rector's Sabatical	3,085
Gideon's Garden	6,583
Total Funds	<u>\$2,490,367</u>
 Total Liabilities and Funds	 <u>\$2,491,421</u>



	2021 Working Budget	2020 Budgeted	11 Mo Actual	2021 Budget
	Weekly Collection			
	Pledge	\$ 160,521	\$ 157,627	\$ 148,772
	Loose Plate	\$ 1,500	\$ 412	\$ 500
	PayPal/Tithely Fees Paid	\$ -	\$ 148	\$ -
	Special Offering	\$ 500	\$ 3,897	\$ 500
	Investment Income			
	Trustees	\$ 109,865	\$ 70,549	\$ 105,284
	Crane Trust	\$ 3,800	\$ 3,644	\$ 3,800
	Nancy Cobden Memorial	\$ 58,970	\$ 61,000	\$ 38,000
	Other	\$ -		\$ -
	Other Income			
	Flowers	\$ 1,500	\$ 105	\$ 1,000
	Gifts in Memory		\$ 1,215	
	Grants/Assistance from Diocese		\$ 30,268	\$ 2,000
	Total Income	\$ 336,656	\$ 328,865	\$ 299,856
	Expenses			
	Worship			
	Flowers	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,923	\$ 1,000
	Liturgical Equipment	\$ 500	\$ 257	\$ 300
	Special Services Expense	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,553	\$ 2,500
	Music Supplies	\$ 200	\$ 616	\$ 500
	Guest Musicians	\$ 700	\$ 600	\$ 700
	Supply Clergy	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
	Technology			\$ 3,000
	Benevolence - Mission - Outreach			
	People's Pantry	\$ 2,200	\$ 4,400	\$ 500
	Lee Food Pantry	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 500
	Gideon's Garden	\$ 16,000	\$ 7,201	\$ 4,970
	Multicultural Bridge Initiative	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 5,000
	Berkshire Immigration Center	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
	General Outreach	\$ -	\$ 5,198	\$ -
	Crane scholarships/grants	\$ 1,700	\$ -	\$ 1,700
	UTO out of Operations	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
	Assessment for Common Ministry	\$ 28,741	\$ 26,346	\$ 30,356
	Wisdom Group	\$ 1,000	\$ -	
	Clergy's Discretionary Fund	\$ 800	\$ 800	\$ 800
	Christian Nurture			
	Adult Education	\$ 500	\$ 49	\$ 500
	Church School	\$ 150	\$ 293	\$ 300
	Vestry Formation	\$ 350		\$ 350
	Coffee Hour	\$ 300		\$ 300
	Special Receptions	\$ 500	\$ 2,597	\$ 500
	Greeters Table	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ 250



	Office and Administration			
	General Supplies	\$ 1,400	\$ 882	\$ 1,400
	Postage and Box Rental	\$ 200	\$ 304	\$ 600
	Printing and Duplicating	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,853	\$ 3,500
	Advertising	\$ 1,000	\$ 739	\$ 1,000
	Web/Constant Contact Expenses	\$ 1,200	\$ 2,009	\$ 1,800
	Accounting Software	\$ 1,400	\$ 810	\$ 1,400
	Office Cleaning	\$ 910	\$ 280	\$ 2,250
	Rent, Utilities and Maintenance			
	Office Rental	\$ 19,600	\$ 17,054	\$ 19,200
	Crissy Farm Rental & Set-up	\$ 20,000	\$ 17,280	\$ 20,000
	Storage Rental	\$ 2,100	\$ 2,111	\$ 2,232
	Electric	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,092	\$ 1,500
	Gas	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,438	\$ 1,800
	Phone	\$ 1,900	\$ 1,672	\$ 2,040
	Insurance	\$ 1,850	\$ 2,076	\$ 2,100
	Building Maintenance		\$ 1,729	
	Personel Expenses			
	Clergy Salary and Benefits, Secretary, Choir	\$ 196,535	\$ 175,423	\$ 149,818
	Director, Gideon's Garden Director			
	Accountant Expense	\$ 5,450	\$ 4,658	\$ 5,250
	Keyboardist/Organist	\$ 5,920	\$ 5,595	\$ 6,440
	Clergy Sabatical	\$ 500	\$ -	
	Clergy Expense Reimbursement	\$ 500	\$ 154	\$ 500
	Clergy Continuing Education		\$ 395	
	Clergy Search Expenses			\$ 15,000
	Sundries	\$ -	\$ 2,886	\$ -
	Total Expenses	\$ 336,656	\$ 303,273	\$ 299,856
	Net	\$ -	\$ 25,592	\$ -

SLATE OF OFFICERS, VESTRY MEMBERS, DIOCESAN DELEGATES

OFFICERS (1 year)

Senior Warden Kathy Clausen
Junior Warden Rick Gore
Treasurer Sue Gore
Clerk Mary Anne Grammer

VESTRY – AT LARGE

(3 year terms; with 2 consecutive terms possible)

Class of 2022 John Cheek, Cathy Haywood
Class of 2023 Dindy Anderson, Holly Murray
Class of 2024 Anne Andrews, Dutch Pinkston

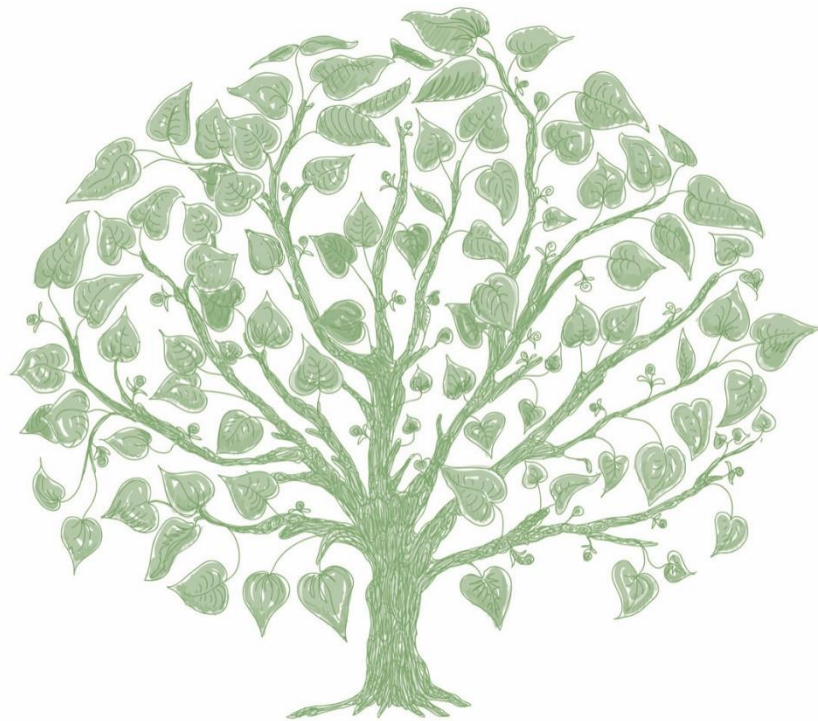
DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Vestry Delegate Dindy Anderson Vestry Alternate Sue Gore
Lay Delegate Sarah Sieber Lay Alternate Sally Brooke



GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires



GRACE CHURCH STAFF

Bishop of Western Massachusetts: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Douglas Fisher

Interim Rector: The Rev. Libby Wade

Gideon's Garden Director of Farming: Ms. Annalise Clausen

Choir Director: Mr. Chris Clark

Keyboardist: Ms. Lee Cheek

Office Assistant: Ms. Gretchen Fairfield

GRACE CONTACT INFORMATION

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founded January 1, 2013