



Grace Notes

May/June 2021

From the Rector

Dear sisters and brothers,

On April 15th, our bishops released their latest update on regathering. It can be found here: <https://www.diomass.org/news/diocesan-news/april-15-pastoral-letter-covid-19-guidelines>. If you would like a printed copy, please let the office know.

We as Grace Church are a sizable community, and I realize that there are many different opinions about regathering for in-person, inside liturgical worship. I have heard many of them and, as always, I welcome these conversations now and in the future.

Given the reasons outlined in the bishops' update, we will

remain open to many forms of worship (for example, feeding the hungry and comforting the grieving), while we remain closed to the one specific form of worship celebrated in our Eucharistic services.

Our bishops cite many reasons in support of Grace's decision to remain closed for regular in-person, inside services: more contagious and locally-active variants, a continued high level of infection, the inability of youth and children to be vaccinated, and inconclusive evidence about whether the vaccination stops transmission from the vaccinated to the unvaccinated.

Another reason to continue to refrain from gathering for indoor worship services is the information coming out about individuals who had the virus and were asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic at the time of their

initial infection but are now, months later, experiencing serious long-term or even permanent effects. There are also increasing reports of what appear to be re-infections of the coronavirus in those who have already had it.

As of this writing, new outbreaks continue to occur locally, and New Bedford is still categorized as high risk for transmission.

For those who believe that we should regather now for regular inside services, I am grateful for your gracious impatience and continued forbearance. We refrain from resuming services due to only one reason with many manifestations -- love of neighbor.

I do have, hopefully, a bit of good news. We are in the planning and preparing stages to offer a weekly in-person, outside service for

those Saturdays when the weather makes it possible. More information will come out a little later in the spring about how to participate in those.

We are in this together. Let us continue to speak and act together out of the Jesus-centered sense of community, loving-kindness, and compassion for the whole of our community to which we are called. And God bless you as you do!

Faithfully,
Chris +

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Sermon, Sunday of the Resurrection, April 4, 2021

Mark 16:1-8

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Lord is risen indeed. Interesting, though, because you don't see him at all in today's Gospel reading. His absence is rather curious given that we are all gathered here, virtually, celebrating his resurrection.

Yes, the Gospel of Mark begins in the usual way we've come to expect. It's early Sunday morning. Followers of Jesus go to anoint his body. The stone covering the tomb is rolled away, that tomb is empty.

These disciples are told that he has been raised from the dead;

they are sent out to tell others, and they are beckoned to go and meet Jesus themselves.

The details familiar to many of us are all right there. Then the story takes an unexpected, and rather abrupt, turn. This is what comes next - "So they went out *and fled from the tomb*, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Then the Gospel ends. Not just our reading for today, but quite possibly the whole book. In the earliest manuscripts of Mark, there is nothing else written after this line. That's it. Only in later copies were additions made, and so originally – in its original form - Mark is the only Gospel where Jesus never makes a post-resurrection appearance.

Today, on Easter Sunday, Mark leaves us not with the resurrected Jesus, but the fear and amazement and confusion of his followers as they are told to go out and meet Jesus, but are not quite sure what to do about it. It may sound odd, but I like the ambiguity, the uncertainty of this cliffhanger ending. And could that even have been Mark's point? Is it possible that the writer intends to be open-ended because the story really has no end?

In this final line which seems so baffling and incomplete, is Mark actually leaving us with an invitation? Is this Gospel beckoning that the resurrection continue in those who follow

Jesus; that the story might continue in us?

Is it telling us that this is the power of the resurrection -- not as much in that stone that was rolled away or the empty tomb as it is in the testimony of those who live out Jesus' resurrected life within their own?

Might this be pointing to resurrection as needing to be proclaimed within those situations which Mark speaks of -- those of despair or fear or death? Mark knew these things firsthand, and we know them as well, too well, perhaps. Each one of us might have different situations in mind, the places and people and relationships in need of God's gift of life, God's gift of renewal, restoration, reconciliation -- resurrection.

Today, among other situations, on my heart and mind I lift up to God:

- The sharp rise in violent attacks on people of Asian descent in our country (itself the terrifying fruit of over a year of heightened, virulent anti-Asian rhetoric and scapegoating);
- Over twenty mass shootings just within the last two weeks -- A uniquely U.S. American crisis of our own making;
- The heartbreaking humanitarian crisis at our southern border;

- The Jim Crow-style racist voter suppression by the state of Georgia as well as other states attempting to do the same;
- How the rollout of the vaccine in our own state of Massachusetts favored those who are white and those who have financial resources while largely ignoring and further marginalizing underserved populations. My heart breaks at the way the vaccine rollout further demonstrated the inequity, racism, and classism that are part of white supremacy and, even unconsciously, structure our society and our own communities.

These are situations that cry out for God's life-giving power of resurrection. You, I am sure, have others, some very close to home, I imagine.

Our Gospel tells us that the ending which looks incomplete, the ending which seems uncertain, the ending which feels excruciatingly painful can be the opportunity for something new and life-giving to flourish. In God, that which looks like failure or tragedy can be an invitation to continue the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

During the years I lived in Ecuador, I worked with the Latin American Council of Churches. We would often pray a particular Franciscan blessing which I see as speaking to the power of the resurrection within and through

us even in the midst of the most difficult of circumstances.

We would pray it with parents who had lost children disappeared and assassinated by dictatorships; with rural subsistence farmers whose water was being taken or contaminated by corporations; with communities strangled by economic blockade or civil unrest; with those caught in our common shared experience of sorrow and grief.

May God bless you with discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may love more deeply within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears, so that you are able to shed them with those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, or war, so that you may be able to reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you are able to do what others claim cannot be done.

God desires to make these things known to us and through us -- the life-giving power of self-giving love, the building of justice and

peace, deep joy, and our own transformation.

God desires to continually transform our hearts, our lives, our communities, our society. Let us further open ourselves to this.

At times, yes, we may feel like those followers of Jesus we hear about today, and for good reason. Overwhelmed, they flee from the tomb in fear and confused silence. Understandably so. Yet that is not the last word.

God can use and transform this as well. Soon after they flee, we know that these same disciples are openly proclaiming Jesus' resurrection with their word and their lives.

Mark's open-ended Gospel is an invitation for us to take our part in this story, alongside Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The empty tomb, that word that Jesus has been raised, is only the start.

Like them, we are invited to go out and meet Jesus -- within ourselves, within each other, within all those unexpected ways that Jesus appears. We are called to live his resurrected life within our own.

Let us go out to meet him, and let us practice resurrection, together.

Amen.

A Prayer Walk: Praying For and With Our Neighbors

On the afternoon of Sunday, April 11th, Grace's youth group went on a prayer walk in the neighborhood of our church building. A prayer walk is the practice of walking or riding in one's neighborhood and praying for those who live, work, and visit there. Those at home and those with differing mobility needs can pray this way by tracing a route on a paper street map, or virtually through the Google Maps street view function. For Christians, prayer walks can encourage feelings of closeness to Jesus, who was constantly walking outdoors in and among the communities of Galilee, to meet people, to heal, to teach, and to pray.

The New Bedford neighborhood of which our church is a part is filled with people, institutions, art, organizations, parks, businesses, and historical sites. While the possibilities and needs for prayer around us are endless, for this year's inaugural prayer walk we traveled to and prayed at ten sites: the new South Coast LGBTQ+ Network House, the Nathan and Polly Johnson House and the future site of Abolition Row Park, the YWCA, the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center, Seamen's Bethel, the Whaling Museum, the New Bedford Public Library, the New Bedford Public School Department, the Ash Street Jail, and Brandon Woods Nursing Home.

You can view and print the prayers we used on our walk at this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/35ykc5a>. We are invited to use these prayers and others to pray for and with our neighbors here at Grace and in the immediate communities where we each live and/or work. If you would prefer a paper copy of the prayer walk leaflet, please let me know by emailing me at revmelissahowell@gracechurchnb.org, or by calling the church office.

As the pandemic has continued on these months, I have pondered questions like: since it is unsafe to meet indoors, how might the Holy Spirit be calling us and our attention outside of our church walls to the richness of experience around us, the richness of the natural world, and to the experience of our neighbors, our fellow beloved children of God? At times during these months the Spirit's call and movement outward has felt like a gentle pull, and at times more like a firm shove! But whether we feel invited or pushed by God, our attending to and listening for this call has been and continues to be an important part of our work together, both inside our church building's walls and outside of them. We hope that this first prayer walk will be the start of an annual or seasonal tradition at Grace, for our youth and our wider parish community to be together and pray for and with our neighbors.

With peace,
Melissa †



Liturgy & Liturgical Ministry

By Jerré Croteau, Verger

Easter to Pentecost

As I write this, Spring has indeed sprung. The waves of spring bulbs are sending up their leaves and flowers, bouquets of crocus followed by daffodils, species tulips, and hyacinths. The rose bushes are sending forth their first leaf buds, and nature is performing its annual resurrection.

We begin May still in the seven-week **Season of Easter**. The first Sunday is the **Fifth of Easter**, with Virtual Eucharist on Sunday at 10AM. May 9 is the **Sixth Sunday of Easter**. During the intervening week, the Feast of Ascension of Jesus into heaven occurs, then the **Seventh of Easter, also called the Sunday after the Ascension**. The color is white for this joyous season.

The following Sunday the feast day upon which we honor the Holy Spirit and its inspiration of the Apostles, and the dissemination of Jesus' Word throughout the world occurs, **Pentecost**. The liturgical color for this feast day is **red**, representing the tongues of fire that figuratively descended from the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. In the chancel of our Church, the ceiling above the High Altar is a representation of this phenomenon. In gold we see the symbol of Jesus IHΣ (the first three letters in Jesus' name in Greek) surrounded by tongues of fire radiating in a circle. It is one

of the high feast days of the year rating with Christmas and Easter.

Then comes the **Feast of the Trinity** on May 30 this year. The color returns to white for this day. Following this Sunday, we begin the seemingly endless ordinary **Season of Pentecost**. The color for what is called "ordinary time" is **green**. Summer is about to begin. June 6 & 13, The **Second and Third Sunday after Pentecost**, are the last Sundays at which the Sunday service is at 10AM. Traditionally, they had been the Sundays ending the School Year with special mention of Children and Youth, which has been in abeyance during the Covid period.

Beginning Sunday, June 20, and throughout the Summer, the Sunday Eucharist will take place at **9AM**, as we proceed through the numbered **Sundays after Pentecost**.

The Worship Team is currently working out a plan to possibly have a live Saturday 5PM Eucharist outside in the North Parking Lot, limiting the number of participants to twenty-five (25) per Saturday. The details and the first date will be published two weeks before the start. Participants would be required to sign-up for the Saturday once a month that they may attend. Masks would be required, and reserved seating arranged to accommodate individuals or groups within one household, six feet apart, again with a maximum of 25 people. Once these services begin, individuals or households will be able to sign up with **Charlene Ryder at 508 728-4374**

or cryder@umassd.edu. She would also be available for questions regarding the progress of this proposed opportunity. Naturally, should there be a sharp uptick in Covid cases in the area, or there is a forecast of inclement weather, the proposed service may have to be canceled.

Liturgical Ministry

Since a year ago this March, in order to keep everybody safe, the number of Liturgical Ministers has of necessity been kept to a minimum. There were volunteers of new ministers whose talents were needed to broadcast our virtual Eucharists and other services. We were reduced to three Subdeacons who alternated Sundays, two of whom became the Altar Guild. Some took on multiple roles, the few Cantors doubling as Lectors. Our Lectors and a few Choristers were recruited in some instances to read or sing at prerecorded sessions without too many others present that made it safe for them to carry out their functions.

We were all under restrictions. Lay Ministers and Clergy had to make sure that they were six feet apart at all times. Cantors and musicians had to be twenty feet away from anyone else. We all had to learn to read or sing with masks on, making enunciation of paramount importance. We sometimes had to sit in silence as prerecorded portions of some of the major services were dropped in between our live portions, necessitating complicated timed signaling between us and the Audio-visual Team. The prerecording of portions

sometimes necessitated changing paraments and other visual decorations in the Church, as when Easter readings were being recorded during Lent, etc.

We had to adapt all the movements and interactions that normally occur, in what one may call for lack of a better term, the “choreography” that takes place in the formal movements during the service, and in some cases had to drop parts that would have involved too close of contact, for example when the Priest and Subdeacon perform the lavabo. We no longer had processions or recessions, there being so few people to get to the altar. Many loved traditions had to go out the window.

The saddest part of all of this is that the congregation is not physically present, and a whole cadre of enthusiastic Lay Liturgical Ministers, Acolytes, Ushers, Greeters and Sacristans have not been able to perform their practical and ceremonial duties. For me personally, I feel that I have lost touch with all these people that I used to spend so much time coordinating, scheduling, and with whom I interacted each Sunday. From time to time, I see one of our many Lay Ministers and Acolytes, the latter of whom all seem to have grown a foot taller than when I last saw them. I truly miss all of you and pray that you will all be safe and healthy. Someday, when we can return to worshipping together in person, and I don't know when that will be, I intend to reach out to all of you and find out if you are still on

board and wish to serve again. I know that some of the older Lead Acolytes' life changes and education may limit or obviate their participation, but we can find all that out and schedule accordingly, again “someday”. I just hope I am still capable of doing all that I used to do. Your Verger's abilities and “shelf-life” have somewhat deteriorated over the years.

In the meantime, God bless and keep you all.

playing Bingo, reading stories, and participating in church school lessons. Join us at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at any time by phone, text, or email at: 508-728-4374 or cryder@umassd.edu



Children's Ministry

By Charlene Ryder

The church school children and teachers created many beautiful butterflies to be placed on our Resurrection Cross for the Easter Season. The final project was amazing. It will be on display during our virtual church services this Easter Season.

We continue to offer our Children's 'Storytime' via zoom on Sunday mornings at 11:15AM

Food & Faith

By Trish Morck

Spring has sprung, and with that the prospects of flowers and buds, butterflies and bees, and gardens and farmers' markets! I am excited to see what each week of our CSA (community supported agriculture) will bring us, starting in a few weeks' time, as well as what will be planted and grown in our little vegetable garden in the backyard. I have managed to keep some herbs alive in the

mudroom through the winter, so those are ready to head outside as well. If you're looking to purchase produce locally and possibly buy into a CSA, check out the options below:

<https://www.localharvest.org/new-bedford-ma/farmers-markets>

<https://www.massfarmersmarkets.org/>

<https://guide.farmfreshri.org/food/farmersmarkets.php?zip=02740&show=40&sortBy=closeness>

<https://ediblesouthshore.com/farmers-markets/farmers-markets-summeroutdoor/>

Several weeks ago, I started reading a book called "Simpler Living, Compassionate Life", edited and compiled by Michael Schut, formerly the Economic and Environmental Affairs Officer of the Episcopal Church. It is a compilation of essays from a diverse group of authors who offer up their thoughts and perspectives on what living simply means. The book touches on many topics, but I wanted to share here what Cecile Andrews writes about food:

"...For most of us, our attention is constantly diverted. We're rarely aware of what we're doing.

"Take food. Food is probably one of the best symbols of our American way of life. Food is meant to nourish us, but it is also meant to be enjoyed. And the only way you can enjoy it is to pay attention to your eating. But we



never do that. Our contribution to world cuisine is fast food. What does it mean to have drive-through windows to get our food? We have invented food that can be eaten with one hand while we're doing something else. It's pathological. We're not tasting the food; we're not getting any real pleasure or even nourishment out of it. And with all the chemicals and petroleum involved in our food production, our way of eating is destroying the planet as well. In other words, we're trashing the planet for something we are not even enjoying."
 ("Simpler Living, Compassionate Life" – pg. 39)

Does this make us reflect on what we consume daily? Will we think differently about our food choices? And more broadly, what are other ways our attention is diverted in such a way that we don't even think about what we're doing while we're doing it?

SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarship applications are available on the Grace website or by request to the office via email office@gracechurchnb.org.


Scholarship applications must be submitted to the office by June 15th for consideration.



Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts &
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Climate Emergency Webinars

Wednesdays in May



Let's come together to

- Pray: May 5, 7 p.m.
- Learn: May 12, 7 p.m.
- Act: May 19, 7 p.m.
- Advocate: May 26, 7 p.m.

*Hosted by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and the
Creation Care Justice Network (Diocese of Massachusetts)
in answer to our bishops' call to make a faithful response
to the climate emergency.*

Find more details and register online here:
www.diomass.org/creation-care

Webinar series: Responding to climate emergency

The [bishops of the Episcopal dioceses of Massachusetts and Western Massachusetts just issued a declaration of climate emergency](#). In response to that announcement, the Creation Care Justice Network of DioMA and the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (Creation Care Advisor, DioMA; Missioner for Creation Care, DioWMA) are convening 4 weekly webinars in May to discuss the 4 "planks" of the Declaration.

The series is for Christians concerned about climate change who wonder what God is calling us to do, individually and together. They provide a unique opportunity for our two dioceses to come together to consider our call as followers of Jesus to respond to climate crisis.

These free webinars will be held on **4 Wednesdays in May, from 7:00-8:15 p.m.**, and will include presentations, small group conversation, and resources. **We encourage everyone, especially clergy and congregational leaders, to attend.** [You can register here.](#)

May 5 – PRAY: What is our prayer and spiritual grounding in the midst of climate crisis? What new forms of prayer might we explore and what ancient forms of prayer now have fresh meaning? What spiritual resources renew our strength?

Speakers: Rev. Lise Hildebrandt (Co-Convener, Creation Care Justice Network (CCJN)) and Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

May 12 – LEARN: What is the climate emergency and what is a faithful response? How does climate change connect with other areas of injustice, such as racism, economic inequality, and gender bias?

Speakers: Bette Hecox-Lea, PhD (CCJN; Marine Biology Laboratory; St. Barnabas, Falmouth), Rev. Natalie Thomas (Episcopal City Mission), and Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

May 19 – ACT: What can we do on a local level to address the climate emergency? What next action steps do we feel led to take as individuals and as communities of faith?

Speakers: Alex Chatfield (CCJN; Coordinator, Climate Justice Ministry, St. Anne's-in-the-Fields, Lincoln), Rev. Rachel Field (Good News Gardens), Margaret Thurston (Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW))

May 26 – ADVOCATE: Why and how can people of faith become politically engaged in order to push for systemic, comprehensive solutions to the climate crisis on local, state, and national levels? What is it like to move from the sidelines and get involved in public advocacy?

Speakers: Sue Swanson (CCJN; Coordinator, Green Team, St. Paul's Church, Bedford; State Legislative Team, Mothers Out Front), Lucy Chatfield (Sunrise Movement), Rev. Fred Small (Faith in Action, Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light), Marty Nathan (Springfield Climate Justice Coalition)



Gifts March-April 2021

Community Breakfast

Gifts of James Bisagni, James Ring

Memorial Gifts

Gifts of William Reed, Frances Plocica, Dick & Jeanne Greenhalgh, Norma Dyer, Priscilla Guillemette, Beatrice Smialek, Gerry Lopes, John & Muriel Medeiros, Walter Stauch, Amelia Smialek, Susan & Ed Hollingshead, William Finn, Roland & Harriet Shaw, Jenny Correia & Karen Scalzi, Hazel Bosworth & Martha Thomas, Patricia & Richard Burke Jr., Janice Rebello, Shirley Beck & Family, Louise Kelly, Michael & Liliana DeAlmeida **in memory of Alfred Smialek**

Laundry Love

Gift of First Citizens Charitable Foundation

Martha's Pantry at Grace

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Gifts of Nancy Krueger, Roland & Harriet Shaw, Anna & Clarence Richardson, Jr., Joanne Greaves, Travis Bowie, Deborah Clark, Rosalie Hutchinson, John Whiteside, Norma Dyer, Colleen Costa, Dick & Jeanne Greenhalgh, Gerry Lopes, Jeremy Gentry, Priscilla Guillemette, Michael & Julie Vargo **in memory of Dennis Beck II**

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Gift of Richard Cormier **in memory of Dennis Beck I**

Gift of the Rev. G. Kenneth & Mary Lou Garrett **in honor of the Rev. Melissa Howell's Ordination**

Gifts of Jerré Croteau, The Pye Family **in memory of Dennis Beck I & Dennis Beck II**

Rector's Discretionary Fund

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Gift of Chuck Cotter & Marilyn Saint-Aubin **in memory of Kate Towers**

Gift of Ann Kenney, Priscilla Guillemette **in memory of Alfred Smialek**

Gift of the Rev. G. Kenneth & Mary Lou Garrett **in honor of the Rev. Christopher Morck**

Flower Fund

Gift of Judy & Harold Isaksen **in memory of loved ones who always have a place in our hearts**

Gift of Tom & Paula Cabral **in memory of the deceased in the Grace Family**

Gift of Jerré Croteau **in memory of Robert Owen Boardman**

Gift of Charlene Ryder **in memory of Norma Ryder**

Gift of Marilyn Saint-Aubin & Chuck Cotter **in memory of Kate Towers & Peter Cotter**

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Gift of Jean Brown **in memory of Edna & Whitey Severino and John Beardsley**

Gift of Travis Bowie **in memory of Richard Bowie**

Gift of Kingsley & Janet Doe **in memory of James & Berniece Miller, Mazelle Tilton, Richard & Judith Phelps, Anna Weidner, and Allen Doe**

(Gifts, continued)

Gift of Sean & Patricia Corwin

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Gift of Larry Correia

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Gift of Joan Swain **in memory of Norma Bossé, Dennis Beck I**

Gift of David & Peter Smialek **in memory of Alfred**

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