

GRACE NOTES APRIL 2020



**Grace Episcopal Church
Grace Church Lane
Casanova, Virginia 22728**

**Rector: The Rev. James H. Cirillo
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Services every Sunday at Grace Church on Route 602 in Casanova at 9:00 AM, followed by coffee fellowship in the Family Center near the church.

RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS

Dear Ones,

Spring has sprung! It's been interesting to see daffodils and crocuses so early this year. Maples are turning red with blooms and I have seen blue birds looking for a nesting place! ☺ I can tell that there is pollen in the air as well. ☹ Can Easter be far behind?

Since we are unable to worship face to face for Easter, I thought I might write about it in my Rector's Reflection for April. I also hope to relate it helpfully in the context of all that is going on locally, nationally and worldwide. Here goes!

In addition to daffodils and crocuses, Easter is also one of the many signs of the arrival of spring. Easter is also the tipping point for a radical shift in thinking between Old and New Testament writers regarding their attitude toward suffering. Suffering may not be something we want to think about as we approach the joy of Easter. However, Holy Week is exactly the time to ponder suffering given what happens that week, because the shift in attitude regarding suffering is due to the cross. Here's what I mean.

When New Testament writers speak of hard times, they express none of the indignation that characterized Job, the prophets and many of the Psalms. The NT writers offer no explanation for suffering but rather keep pointing to two events as if they form some sort of pictorial answer to suffering. The events? The death and resurrection of Jesus.

The apostles' faith, as they freely confessed, rested entirely on what happened that first Easter Sunday. The disciples soon learned what they had failed to learn in three years with their leader: when God seems absent, He may be closest of all. When God seems dead, He may just be coming back to life. Let's remember this as we walk through this nasty pandemic.

The three-day pattern – tragedy, darkness, triumph – became for New Testament writers a template that can be applied to all our times of difficulty or testing. We can look back on Jesus, the proof of God's love for us, even though we may not ever get an answer to our "Why?" questions.

Good Friday demonstrates that God has not abandoned us to our pain. The evils and sufferings that afflict our lives are so real and significant that God willed to share and endure them. The God who sometimes seems out there also came to be here and to be “acquainted with grief.” On that Good Friday, Jesus Himself experienced the silence of God, as He quoted Psalm 22 not Psalm 23 from the cross.

But Easter Sunday was (and is) the real tipping point in this radical shift in thinking about suffering for the NT writers. Easter shows that, in the end, suffering will not triumph. The end will not be suffering but resurrection and joy. And this attitude is reflected in the words of three separate NT writers. James writes, “Consider it pure joy ...when you face trials of many kinds.” Peter writes, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” And lastly Paul, who writes, “We also rejoice in our sufferings.” These Apostles go on to explain what good can result from such “redeemed suffering”: maturity, genuine faith, perseverance, character, dependence on God, and many rewards to come – some in this life and others in the fullness of life to come.

This is true for any suffering we may experience not just that specifically related to following Jesus, though that was the case with the apostles. What we are experiencing now, a pandemic, encompasses suffering on many levels. Isolation, loneliness, fear, anxiety, illness and yes, for some, even grief. We are currently in the tragedy and darkness phases but the good news is that we will eventually come to the triumph phase, though we don’t know when. Whatever happens nationally and personally, we really need to remember to walk all of the way through this journey rather than getting stuck somewhere half-way through.

I am definitely not suggesting that we go looking for trials or grief or suffering. Certainly, Jesus did not! He also did not turn away from it when it came either but rather pressed on through the tragedy and darkness to the triumph that was awaiting Him. So, may it be for us when we encounter such trials as we all are facing now with COVID 19 and whatever else may be on your plate as well. Our joy at Easter comes because of the suffering which came before. In spite of not being able to worship face to face, may our joy be multiplied this year after the trials and sufferings that we are facing. So, let us band together as a family in Christ so that our sorrows may be divided and our joys multiplied, even if it has to be at a distance for the time being.

In the joy of His resurrection, I remain, your sheepdog,

Jim+

April Announcements

A Reminder

Just a reminder about giving during this unusual time in our church life. The church is not closed! Though we are not able to worship or have fellowship face to face, there is still much going on, at least from the clergy perspective. I am working at being in touch with everyone by phone, text and email as well as preparing a sermon for you for Sunday and visiting when and where permissible. There are of course, bills that need to be paid on a regular basis as well, so please continue to pay your pledge or give in your usual way. Many, hopefully, will not have their income affected in their retirement nor will those who are still able to work, so please continue to support the church financially. To those who may be out of work because of our societal shift as we distance ourselves physically, do what you can in giving. AND if you can give nothing at this time, then give nothing with a clear conscience and begin giving again when things improve and you are able. Thank you.

**Please send your check to:
Grace Church PO Box 18 Casanova, VA 20139**

GRACE CHURCH WEBSITE: WWW.GRACECHURCHCASANOVA.ORG

Check out the website, there have been some updates! But we still have a little work to do, such as updated pictures from Grace Church events in 2019-2020.

Pictures, questions or other items of interest that you wish to have posted can be sent to the website email address: website@gracechurchcasanova.org or you can contact Kevin Holmes.

AMAZON SMILE FOR GRACE CHURCH

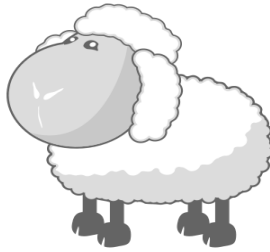
Don't forget to sign up with Amazon Smile to have 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible items given to Grace Church at no cost to you! You can also go to the Grace Church website home page and click on the link there.

*******AmazonSmile Shopping App for Android Users Now Available*******

You can now support Grace in the Amazon shopping app on your Android device! Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations to Grace from your Android device.

- * If you have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping App, open the App on your Android device.
- * View Settings and select AmazonSmile.
- * Follow the in-App instructions to complete the process.

AmazonSmile is not currently available for IOS users – we'll let you know when it becomes available.



Feed My Sheep

With schools closed for the remainder of the school year, those families we serve through FMS will need more support than ever. The stock on the shelves is getting low, as you can imagine.

Please consider a trip to the church building with some food for Feed My Sheep so we may continue to help those in our area living on the margin. Such folks on the margin are greatly affected by the changes that have come due to COVID 19 and their lack of financial resources.

It will be nice to get out and take a “Sunday drive” so to speak. You could bring your picture (Diane’s letter) at the same time.

If you want to shop, go ahead. If you don’t, just bring something from your pantry to share. Deliveries are still going out weekly, but your help is needed to re-stock the rapidly emptying shelves.

“The king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

from Matthew 25

Hello to all!

This is a letter contains a story and an Easter time activity for Grace Church. I hope you will find time to read it and be happy that you did.

The pandemic is preventing any of us from worshiping together at Grace during Holy Week this holy season; however, it cannot prevent us from worshiping together in one innovative way.

A few days ago, I read the following story about a creative and effective way that the congregation of a church in Italy came together for Easter in spite of quarantine restrictions:

A priest serving amidst the epicenter of the pandemic near Milan, Italy, wrote that shortly after Masses were suspended, "the need arose to at least see the faces of the people in my parish, because celebrating Mass looking at the empty pews was sad."

The priest contacted his congregation asking them to send photographs of themselves to him so that he could tape their images onto their church's empty pews.

"This gesture meant a lot to the people, who even in staying home, were still present," the priest wrote.

Soon after, word got out about what he had done and people from other parishes and cities began to send their pictures, too.

Let's borrow his idea and form a "congregation" of photographs at Grace.

It will be strictly voluntary. Do not compromise the health and safety of yourself or others by participating in this activity. If you choose to participate, here's what you need to know and do.

There is a roll of masking tape at the back of the church on the small bulletin table.

Bring a photograph of yourself or your family to church to tape onto the seat back of Grace Church's pews where you normally sit. You know, "your pew."

This will indicate that you and others are together in spirit throughout Holy Week 2020 and beyond. Hopefully, our hearts will be gladdened by the sight of a growing number of photographs of our gentle and loving Grace Church family.

Mary Neal and I can help you by taking photos in your yard, delivering your photos to Grace, and by printing out photos emailed to us.

My telephone number is (540)347-9186. My email address is gulickdm@earthlink.net.

Mary's telephone number is (540) 272-3560. Her email address is muffneal@earthlink.net.

Jim has already placed his picture at his place at the Lord's table.

Also, there are palm fronds at the back of the church in a basket. If you decide to go to the church, please pick up one or two or three, if you wish, for Palm Sunday this Sunday.

As you leave the church, please take a disinfectant wipe, also at the table with the tape, and wipe down both inside and outside door knobs before you leave.

Last, as Jim mentioned in his most recent email, Carol is asking us to bring food for our Feed My Sheep when we come to tape up our photographs. It's very much needed. Again, wipe down the door knobs before you leave.

I look forward to "seeing" you all fill Grace Church's pews as Easter approaches.

Much love,

Diane

Treasurer's Report – February 2020



Income for the month of February was \$9,004.28 (budget \$10,423.75). Expenditures totaled \$8,921.45 (budget \$10,193.42), resulting in income for the month of \$82.83.

There were no obligations due and unpaid at the end of February.

Interest earned on our Raise the Roof Fund during the month of February was \$4.01. There were no expenditures. The balance in the roof fund account at the end of the month was \$14,970.78.

The book value of our endowment fund as of February 29 was \$57,511.98.

Please continue to pray for Grace Church that it will grow spiritually, financially and numerically. If you have any questions about this report or any financial matter, please contact me.

Judy Ball, Treasurer



Birthdays and Anniversaries for April

Dave & Jennifer Coates 4/1 anniversary

Amy Totten 4/5 birthday

Renee McLeod 4/6 birthday

Genna Warren 4/7 birthday

Dee Garrett 4/14 birthday

Courtney Holmes 4/20 birthday

Katie Helbock 4/23 birthday

James & Marilyn Ottevaere 4/30 anniversary

APRIL READINGS

DATE 2019	DAY	LESSONS
4/5	The Sunday of the Passion Palm Sunday	Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130 Romans 8:6-11 John 11:1-45
4/9	Maundy Thursday	Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14 Psalm 116:1,10-17 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 John 13:1-17, 31b-35
4/10	Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Psalm 22 Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16,5:7-9 John 18:1-19:42
4/12	The Sunday of the Resurrection Easter Sunday	Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43 John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10
4/19	The Second Sunday of Easter	Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Psalm 16 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31
4/26	The Third Sunday of Easter	Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Psalm 116: 1-3, 10-17 1 Peter 1:17-23 Luke 24: 13-35
5/3	The Fourth Sunday of Easter	Acts 2:42-47 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10