



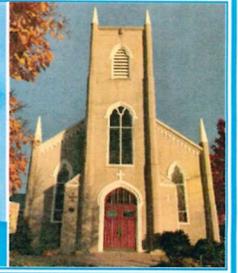
GRACE  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

Mount Clemens, Michigan

# Amazing Grace

WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

Monthly newsletter of the people and ministries of Grace Episcopal Church



February 2021



## ASH WEDNESDAY LEADS US INTO LENT

Isn't Lent just about feeling gloomy, guilty and giving something up? Aren't we just supposed to endure some self-deprecating behaviors for forty days and then return to our normal lives once Easter arrives? I'm sure that there are many people who feel this way about this particular season of our church year, but this is NOT the purpose of Lent.

The ultimate point of Lent is to create change. Change in our spiritual lives, in our relationships with self, others, creation and God. During the Lenten season we are given an opportunity to step back and

consider the ways we need to repent – to turn away from negative behaviors and attitudes that keep us from being the loving person we are called to be. It is a time for us to examine our habits in the hopes of finding a better way of doing things.

The word "Lent" comes from the Anglo Saxon term "lencton" which refers to the springtime of the year when the days grow longer, warmer and brighter and when things begin to grow. This is a season of change when things are moving and new life is emerging from the cold, frozen ground. During this time of year our church pushes us to look at how we are living our faith in our families, towns and places of work. What areas of growth in our lives need nurturing and which need pruning or weeding?

Our Christian calendar helps us accomplish this important internal gardening. Granted, this is something that we should be doing 365 days a year, but it helps to have a designated annual time to really focus on this. So beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, we have approximately 40 days to do this work.

Our Book of Common Prayer designates Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent. It is described as a day of fasting, which is observed by special acts of discipline and self-denial. That's it. There is no other direction given. There are no lists of do's and don'ts. We are not told what to fast from, how to discipline ourselves or what we should deny. Those choices are left to each individual to decide. One size does not fit all. So what will you select and how will it promote change within you?

We are called to a period of fasting, discipline and denial because in our ordinary lives we have too much already. What can we let go of that will move us out of our daily routines and comfort zones? By denying some of our habits we become aware of things we take for granted and help us realize how dependent we are on them. We may also gain insights into how these things actually keep us from being in deeper relationships with ourselves, others or God.

We often focus on the things we put into our body – food, drink, thoughts, beliefs, or things that come out of our body – words, behaviors, attitudes, actions or taking on practices like reading the Bible or other spiritual books, donating money or time, praying more or any other action items. These types of practices are all appropriate ways to help us focus during Lent, but they mean nothing if they don't lead to a deeper relationship with God or deeper understanding of our faith.

So whether you give something up or take something on during this season, it should be with the intent as to how these actions will change or balance our lives in a better way. So how will you regain your balance this season? What practices will you undertake?

Blessings,  
Pastor Steve

## Worship Opportunities

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

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

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

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

Meeting ID: 881 8016 9300

Password: 246040

**10:30 Service:** Call 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 899 8049 9374

Password: 382635

**TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

7:00 pm on Zoom

Visit our website and follow the link.

Or call: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 897 3241 7015

Password: 683930

*Worship resources are available on our website anytime.*

### ***A Message from Amy Saari, Music Minister***

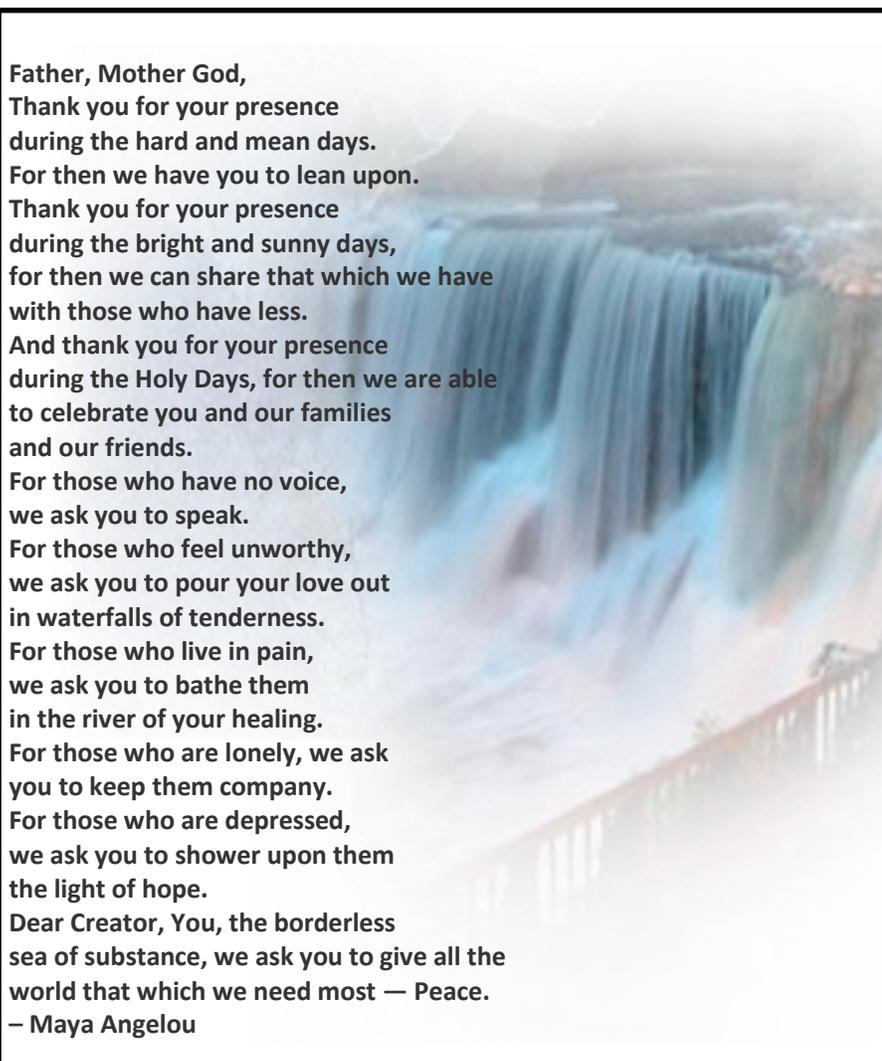
Prayer does work. One of our choir singers reminded me that today in a friendly chat. Their sharing of good news and healing was a testament to the power of prayer in our little choir community. Singers feel free to ask for prayer for themselves or their loved ones, and especially now, in time of pandemic, we have had to work overtime in the prayer department to keep the circle going.

The choir has a formal prayer that we use before rehearsals to center ourselves to the task of singing, but we also rely on holding each other—and each other's families—in our own little circle of prayer, whenever necessary. And lately, it's been necessary! It's become apparent to me that prayer works not just because God hears and answers us, but because prayer keeps communities supported. "Wherever two or three" are gathered in the name of Christ, the verse goes, "there am I"—there is Jesus in the community. And we don't gather just to pray but to answer prayer, to be the hands of Christ where we can for each other.

I'd like to think of Grace as a prayer-answering church, as much as it is a praying church. It's certainly a fine vision to have, if you believe as we do that prayer works. The church's ministries offer many ways to be the answer to someone's prayer. And the Prayers of the People in our bulletin every week remains the touchstone for offering prayer on behalf of our community, our loved ones, and the world.

If you want to contribute to prayer musically, talk to me at [soundsorceress@gmail.com](mailto:soundsorceress@gmail.com). This new year brings the possibility of new technologies making music easier, and if you sing or play an instrument and want to evolve the music ministry with us, there is definitely a place for you. I plan on creating a choir video for Easter, so if you have Google Chrome and wired headphones, you're halfway there, and now is the time to get in touch and join us.

Thanks to my choir singers for keeping the prayer circle going; every effort makes a difference, in more ways than we know.



**Father, Mother God,  
Thank you for your presence  
during the hard and mean days.  
For then we have you to lean upon.  
Thank you for your presence  
during the bright and sunny days,  
for then we can share that which we have  
with those who have less.  
And thank you for your presence  
during the Holy Days, for then we are able  
to celebrate you and our families  
and our friends.  
For those who have no voice,  
we ask you to speak.  
For those who feel unworthy,  
we ask you to pour your love out  
in waterfalls of tenderness.  
For those who live in pain,  
we ask you to bathe them  
in the river of your healing.  
For those who are lonely, we ask  
you to keep them company.  
For those who are depressed,  
we ask you to shower upon them  
the light of hope.  
Dear Creator, You, the borderless  
sea of substance, we ask you to give all the  
world that which we need most — Peace.  
— Maya Angelou**



#### **COVID-19 VACCINE CENTRAL**

The Macomb County Health Department is responsible for making the COVID-19 vaccine available for citizens and those that work to protect us.

**The following people are currently eligible to be vaccinated against the Coronavirus:**

- *Residents over the age of 65*

**These essential workers who live or work in Macomb County:**

*Paramedics and EMS workers, Home health and hospice workers, Other health care workers with direct or indirect contact with patients, School employees, Law enforcement and correctional officers, Workers in child care institutions, adult/child protective services and homeless shelters, All municipal employees, Persons who volunteer for any of the above.*

New vaccination appointments open weekly on Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. and close when all available doses have been allocated.

To schedule an appointment, call: 586-463-8777

Or, use the online scheduling system to make, confirm or cancel an appointment: [www.macombgov.org/covidvaccine](http://www.macombgov.org/covidvaccine)

## ***Presiding Bishop joins call for Christians to counter Christian nationalism during webinar***

By Egan Millard

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry joined the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in a webinar on Christian nationalism. The webinar provided an overview of what Christian nationalism is, how it is showing up in America and how Christians can address it.

The topic of Christian nationalism has been widely discussed in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, during which right-wing rioters invoked Christian language and imagery.

Christian nationalism is an ideology that seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. The ideology manifests itself in various forms, such as a drive to privilege Christianity above other faiths, a belief that the U.S. is favored by God over other nations, and the false assertion that the founding fathers created the U.S. to be a Christian nation. It is also correlated with white supremacy, which indicates that white Americans who espouse Christian nationalist principles are far less likely – in contrast to those who don't espouse them – to believe that African Americans face significant discrimination and police brutality.

Christian nationalism is absolutely a threat to a pluralistic, democratic society, and something that needs to be wrestled with in order to move forward and not repeat the events of Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>.

Curry said current iterations of Christian nationalism follow a pattern in which Jesus' most crucial teachings – such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule and the parable of the Good Samaritan – are “moved aside and suppressed for a broad, ambiguous Christ figure who can be adapted to any cultural context.” The same pattern was used in Christian justifications of slavery and apartheid, he said. “When that Jesus Christ is compromised, we're going to find danger,” Curry warned.

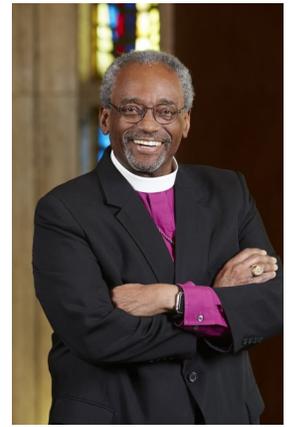
“I have always known – I'm 67 years old, been Black all those 67 years – and I have known since childhood that the Klan professed to be Christian,” Curry said. “We grew up knowing that, so we knew that there was an unholy conflation of Christianity and white supremacy, and it was often tinged with Americanism.”

“We are not condemning being patriotic,” Eaton said. “That's different. Christian nationalism conflates our allegiance and our understanding – even our relationship – with God with a particular secular state ... so you cannot by that definition be a real American unless you're a certain kind of Christian.”

Christian nationalism “demands a tribal loyalty,” which includes “violently defending the group and the tribe against outside influences. It's about subduing others. It's about waging wars and, many times, cultural wars. It wants to define the 'us' against a 'them.'”

“The more virulent or dangerous kind of Christian nationalism says, ‘We're number one because we're God's favorites.’ And that borders on blasphemy, idolatry,” Curry said. He also called on Christians to model lives of public faith that embody the compassion, dignity and harmony described by Jesus in the Gospels.

“We must counter these negative perversions of Christianity and of our humanity with an affirmative, positive way of being Christian. I do think Christianity must re-center itself on the teachings, the example and the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth.”



***GIVING IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS*** Even though we are not meeting for Sunday worship we encourage you to continue giving to Grace and its ministries. You can give online through a link on our website at [www.gracechurchmtclemens.org](http://www.gracechurchmtclemens.org)

## February Birthdays

Suzanne LaMontagne 2/6  
Tish Germain 2/8  
Janet Poucher 2/8  
Vivian Dusina 2/11  
Laura Crawford 2/12

Howard Rosso 2/12  
Susan Fox 2/15  
Janet Seewald 2/24  
Helen Fitzgibbon 2/28  
Ulrike Lamb 2/28



### ABOUT LOVE IS THE WAY

Walk the path of love with one of the warmest, most beloved spiritual leaders of our time, and learn how to put faith into action.

As the descendant of slaves and the son of a civil rights activist, Bishop Michael Curry's life illustrates massive changes in our times. Much of the world met Bishop Curry when he delivered his sermon on the redemptive power of love at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle at Windsor Castle. Here, he expands on his message of hope in an inspirational road map for living the way of love, illuminated with moving lessons from his own life. Through the prism of his faith, ancestry, and personal journey, *Love Is the Way* shows us how America came this far and, more important, how to go a whole lot further.



### BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK UPDATE

Mount Clemens Schools have resumed on site attendance, but students that prefer to remain remote are permitted to do so. The Director of Food Services is organizing food distribution for all students and has agreed to include our bags with her distribution upon establishing her procedure. It was not yet in place for the month of October. The count for this school year has been less than 100 per week. We are currently able to fulfill packing without additional help, but we expect the number to increase as we proceed with the school year. We encourage everyone to continue submitting "B" Dollars and other funds for our ministry. We will share further updates as they occur.

Michael and Donna Oakley



### Recommended Donations

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



Currently

### COMMUNITY SUPPERS

Wednesdays and Sundays at 4:30 pm, take-out only

### GRACE FOOD PANTRY

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

### Tuesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom



Visit our website and follow the link.  
Or call: 312-626-6799  
Meeting ID: 897 3241 7015  
Password: 683930

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

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



### Grace Episcopal Church

115 South Main Street, Mt. Clemens, MI 48043  
Office 586-465-4573 Fax 586-463-9162  
Email: [gracemtclemens@yahoo.com](mailto:gracemtclemens@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.gracechurchmtclemens.org](http://www.gracechurchmtclemens.org)  
Office Hours: Monday–Thursday 10:00 am–4:00pm

## Grace Episcopal Church Staff

**Rev. Steven Steinberger-Domienik**

Cell: 203-641-2068

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

Clergy Emerita: The Rev. Deacon Betty Brogan

Minister of Music: Ms. Amy Saari

Parish Administrator: Donna Hodgson

### 2020 Vestry

Pam Sherry, Sr. Warden

Jim Smith, Jr. Warden

Rosemary Berger, Charlie Carroll,

Gay Gillespie, Martha Houser,

Tom Stotz, Nicki Urban,

Treasurer: Janet Seewald • Clerk: Tom Stotz