IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES RESUME

**WEDNESDAY EVENINGS**

Midweek Prayer Services began Wednesday, July 15 and will continue through Wednesday, August 19. Worshipers will gather at 6:30 p.m. outdoors on the lower parking lot with plenty of social distancing and procedures to keep us safe. Attendance will be capped at 50 persons each week. If you plan to attend, we do ask that you register in advance, either through electronic sign-up each week in our E-notes or by calling the church office.

These prayer services will use the Psalms as a focal point. The Psalms are communal prayers, words that cry out to God in joy, need and sorrow, and the pastors and worship leaders felt that the Psalms were an appropriate avenue for approaching God during these weeks. Worship will also include music and Holy Communion. In the event of rain, there will be no worship that week.

**SUNDAY WORSHIP RESUMES SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 at 12:00 NOON**

While the Grace community has not gathered for in-person Sunday worship since early March, we have continued to worship together online through our virtual service which has been a source of strength, inspiration and connection for persons both near and far. We will begin the process of resuming in-person Sunday worship with services in August, starting August 9. In order to maintain our online service, the in-person service will be held at 12 noon in the sanctuary. The pre-recorded service will continue to air each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and then an abbreviated version of the service will be held in the sanctuary at 12:00 p.m.

The Re-Opening Well Task Force has created a list of procedures for returning to in-person gatherings. Please be sure that you have reviewed these expectations before attending a worship service. The promotion of health and safety for all of us is our shared responsibility and a way of loving our neighbors.

We thank the members of the Re-Opening Well Task Force for their hard work to help Grace resume the use of our facility amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for sharing your expertise, energy and thoughtfulness for the benefit of our whole community. The members of the task force are Ashley Davidson, Burt English, Jean Smith, Diane Lesman, Diane Cole, Tim Gause, Chris Schroeder and Rev. Amy McCullough.

**GRACE CHURCH IS NOW ON YOUTUBE**

You and your loved ones can now watch our pre-recorded worship services as well as other videos via Grace on our YouTube channel. We are slowly getting previous month’s services posted and certainly will have this Sunday’s worship posted at 10:00 a.m. Simply go to YouTube.com and search for “Grace Church Baltimore” and select the channel for Grace United Methodist Church Baltimore. There is also an easy link in the bi-weekly E-notes.

**THANK YOU MASK MAKERS**

Thank you to our face mask sewers for creating a bounty of face masks available for persons coming to Grace, especially important as we resume some in-person gatherings and worship. A special word of gratitude to Jane Benson who organized the sewers, driving materials to homes as needed and providing much appreciated leadership.

Bonnie Caster  Kathy Cosgrove  Kelly Jackson  Kate Mullan  Biz Shaner  Kittie Simmons  Kristin Turner  Megan Wood  Sue Stein  Jane Benson
Organ project completed!

We are pleased to announce that the organ renovation project is now complete. After the final phase of the project had to be postponed in March because of the pandemic, the organ technicians were allowed access to the church during our shutdown in order to complete their work. The lead technician, Dan Angerstein had a crew of four who all worked together to add the final touches to the instrument during a two-week stay. Both Chris Schroeder and David Brock are very pleased with the incredible work that Dan and his team have done. We hope that you have noticed a change in the sound when listening to our services online, but more importantly, we are very excited that you will soon be able to hear it in person.

Many thanks to George Kahl and the Trustees for their support of this project.

A virtual dedication concert to celebrate the renovations of this instrument is in the making. Stay tuned!

Virtual patriotic concert

On Saturday, July 4th at 7 p.m. a virtual Patriotic Concert of Organ music was presented by Chris Schroeder via Grace’s Facebook page and on Grace’s YouTube channel. This event was held since the regularly scheduled 6th Annual Patriotic Concert had to be postponed because of the pandemic. The virtual concert was well received and appreciated by so many, but if you missed it, or want to listen again, it is available on our YouTube channel for perusal at your leisure.

In-person worship

We are excited that we are able to have in-person worship available to our Grace members each Wednesday and Sunday. Our experience of worship will be different as the pandemic continues. Per CDC guidelines, we will not be having any congregational singing, unfortunately. Also because of the concern about the potential spread of the virus by a group of individuals singing, we will have only one soloist sing per service. Members of the music ministry team including the soloists and Chancel Choir members realize that this might be difficult, as singing is such an important ingredient in our worship. We hold to the hope that we will once again be able to sing with one another.

Because of the popularity of the pre-recorded online services and because we realize that not everyone will be returning to in-person worship at this time, the program staff has decided to continue the online services each Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. even with us returning to in-person worship Wednesdays and Sundays.

Farewell (but not really!) to Timothy McGowan

In July, Grace Church and the members of the Chancel Choir had to say goodbye to Tim McGowan, our tenor soloist, as he and his fiancé moved to Champagne, IL where Nick will be starting a doctoral degree in Piano Accompanying. We are very excited for this new chapter in their lives but were saddened to see them go. Barb Starkey, Chancel Choir President, presented Tim with a framed Maryland crab print.

Though we won’t see or hear Tim in person, we will be able to continue to hear him each week! Since Grace Church is continuing our online services, Tim will be able to record his part sending it so that it can be merged with the other music for the final product. We are delighted that Tim will be with us still, if only virtually!

In the mail

Eicher Prize awarded at Peabody

It is my pleasure to write to you with good news: while this pandemic has altered how we deliver our curriculum and how our students perform, we are delighted to announce that the Peabody Organ faculty awarded the Bruce R. Eicher Prize to Wendy Johnston and Midori Ataka. Wendy is a student of John Walker and a Master of Music Candidate at Peabody. .... Midori is also a Master’s degree candidate in the studio of John Walker....

In light of COVID-19 and the communication challenges it has created, we were not able to connect with Midori, but were able to speak with Wendy who expressed her deepest gratitude. What better way to say thank you than with music? [see links below for performances by these two students]

Thank you for your generosity in supporting Peabody and our students, and for making it possible for us to bestow this great honor upon Wendy and Midori. Sara Ferguson, Asst. Dir. of Donor Relations and Special Events.

https://youtu.be/v6uEDgE5DNo      https://youtu.be/9LazwC8m6kk
RISING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

July 8, 2020

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Over the past four years, we have proclaimed, together as a conference, that "We are One." (Ephesians 4:1-16) We are one in times of celebration and joy, and we are one in times of challenge and struggle. As the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and so many others have drawn the nation and our denomination into a conversation about the sin of racism, our conference has been engaged in several prayer vigils, public witnesses, and an intensified call to action. For some, these acts of public witness have created the sense that we are no longer one because we are talking about systemic racism and oppression. Yet, it is more important than ever that we remain connected; that we embrace our unity in Christ to confront this evil together.

When Jesus opened the scroll to the passage from Isaiah, he announced that, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19).

I believe this and many other passages evidence that equality, justice, freedom for all, and fullness of life are ours because Jesus is Lord and God has ordained it to be so. We must work together to make this become a reality for all.

What is happening in this country must be addressed from the perspective of the Gospel -- not to make people feel bad or to engage in partisan politics -- but to equip disciples for the transformation of the world. That is our duty. To not engage the crises of the day makes our preaching and teaching disconnected from our lived reality and, some would argue, irrelevant. Karl Barth famously quipped that a good preacher should have a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. As is stated in our shared Social Principles, racism is a sin. To help everyone explore and respond to becoming an anti-racist church, I have called upon the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to preach one sermon a month and offer one teaching opportunity on racism or systemic oppression. Each of us has much to learn in this area. We do our best learning together in covenant with one another.

In order to help facilitate this work, The Discipleship Council has provided an excellent outline of action for churches who are ready to commit to becoming an anti-racist church. This, and other resources for people at various points along this journey, may be found at bwcumc.org/justicenow. There will also be resourcing added each month to assist with the preaching and teaching efforts.

Our focus on rising united to end racism does NOT mean that anyone is being asked to apologize for being White, to denounce their ancestors, or confess that being White is to inherently be a racist. And yet, there is still a truth that stands before us: racism exists; the architecture of racism and White supremacy are real and harmful; and we must confront them to live out our Gospel commitment, baptismal vows, and the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. As we engage this work, it will also be incumbent upon those who have suffered under systemic oppression to release any bitterness or animosity and, as real confession and change occur, work toward reconciliation and healing. This is what it means to walk the road toward Christian perfection. This is what it means to be one.

As people of God, we understand that God created all people in God's own image. God didn't create one race as superior and others as inferior. God created all persons as sacred, worthy, and equal. For centuries, humans have distorted this truth to exert power over one another. While progress has been made toward creating a more just and equitable society and church, we have much more work to do. The coronavirus stands out as an example of disparities in health care and the systemic inequality rampant in our
society. Another current example is the disparity in access to the Internet, which has impacted distance learning. It is these types of disparities that we must work to overcome. 

The work of dismantling racism is hard. Very hard. It evokes resentment, denial, anger, fear, and pain. And yet, we must do it. As we dive into this work, we must realize, it is always easy to talk about racism and oppression in general, but it is exceedingly harder to create real, tangible change. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in his speech, The Other America, "It is much easier to integrate a lunch counter than it is to guarantee a livable income and a good solid job. It's much easier to guarantee the right to vote than it is to guarantee the right to live in sanitary, decent housing conditions. It is much easier to integrate a public park than it is to make genuine, quality, integrated education a reality." Generalities are easy; specifics are hard. It is hard, but it is not impossible. We are a people of faith, hope, and determination.

Some have argued that this is not the right time to engage this work. That we are stretched thin as we face the realities of COVID-19, a recession, and other exhausting events in our lives. I again look to Dr. King in addressing this sentiment. In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, he states, "'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that 'justice too long delayed is justice denied.' To demand that those suffering injustices be patient and wait is itself a manifestation of privilege. If you literally cannot breathe, you cannot wait patiently for air. The time, beloved, is now.

It is essential that we keep the doors open for further conversation. I pray for each of you every day. I love you, I seek to serve you, and I recognize that each of us is a sacred child of God. It is my prayer that we will continue to serve Christ together -- all to the glory of God.

Blessings and Peace,
Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

Grace’s Church Council is meeting through the summer to discern how Grace Church will act to know our own history and work actively to eradicate racism. If others in the congregation would like to be a part of this work, you are welcome to reach out to Marie Yeh, Church Council chair, mayeh@loyola.edu, Jean Smith, Grace Lay Leader, emjsmith@aol.com, or a Grace pastor.

During the online worship service of June 28, George Kahl shared the following:

Good morning. 

Rev. Amy asked me to share with you some of a conversation I had at our staff meeting on Tuesday, June 23.

I speak to you today as your financial secretary here at Grace. It is my responsibility to receive, count and post all monetary gifts given to Grace.

It has now been sixteen weeks since we last worshiped as a congregation in our sanctuary. However, during these weeks that we have been staying at home due to COVID-19, the ministries of our congregation have continued. We have worshiped via recorded services posted on Facebook and now YouTube. We gather for virtual prayer services, Sunday School, Bible studies, special services and even social times.

Our outreach ministries to others also continue. We are supporting various food provider projects in Baltimore, participating in Project Transformation that serves city children and giving assistance to those seeking help with emergency expenses.

All of this is made possible by the generous contributions that you, Grace members and friends, have continued to make week after week during this long period of separation. Each week I am amazed at the support and faithfulness of the Grace community. One would think that we would have seen a dramatic reduction in giving since we are not worshiping together. However, that is not the case. Furthermore, the congregation is supporting special asking for our outreach ministries at a very unexpected level.

When I come into Grace on Monday mornings, one of the first things I do is go into the sanctuary and take time to offer up prayers for the Grace congregation and the ministry that we are called to do. I want to thank you for your continued support of our ministries here at Grace. You are a blessing. The peace of the Lord be with you.
Today is Ascension Sunday. The 40 days have passed and now Jesus is rising into heaven after his Resurrection. Luke is the only gospel to recount the events of the Ascension with any detail, and he even does it twice. He closes his gospel with the story, Jesus standing with them, promising the Holy Spirit will come, going up, and then they went and worshiped at the Temple.

In Acts the story is almost exactly the same, a little bit of the wording changes, because he's not copying what he wrote before. But something new is added. Two men in white robes are there when Jesus ascends into heaven. And they have a question for the disciples. “What ya looking at?” “Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven?”

The disciples looked up because they didn’t want to stay here . . . they didn’t want to be stuck on earth with all its pain . . . they wanted to get away, get to heaven, they wanted to go up to the Kingdom of God. We have not changed much over two millennia, over 2,000 years. Many Christians are still looking up, just waiting . . . watching for a time when we will get to heaven. Looking up and just praying to get out of the house and away from Corona.

Humanity has always been fascinated with looking up. We’ve always had a knack for dreaming about the heaven . . . seeing UFOs, watching Star Wars or Star Trek, the Hubble telescope and now missions to Mars. People look to heaven more and more.

I’m positive that the disciples had this feeling as well. They had lost their closest friend, for good this time. Their leader and savior had left them behind, with dangerous Roman and Temple authorities who wanted them dead. They wanted out, they wanted to get to the Kingdom of Heaven. “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?” They pleaded for something easier, something better, something quick. They were thinking of what would happen to them, being passive.

“It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority.” You won’t know the time and the place, and it isn’t right now. Jesus was gone, and the disciples wanted to know more, at least show us when or how. They wanted to be like Daniel or the future John of Patmos, John the Revelator, writer of Revelation. Could they at least get a vision . . . they don’t want to feel left behind, feel alone. How can life possibly go on when we lose someone? When we lose a way of life? We feel that hole and feel like our lives will never be the same. . . The disciples were feeling this . . . losing Jesus, his miracles, losing everything . . . how can they go on? How can we go on? What are we supposed to do?

There are a lot of emotions that get wrapped up in these texts about the Ascension. . . and there is a lot of mental confusion. . . a least on my part. Do I really believe that Jesus physically ascended UP into heaven? I mean, I have a logical brain, and honestly that just doesn’t make much sense.

If Jesus went up into the heavens, did he just keep going past the moon, by Mars, whiz by Saturn or Pluto? I mean, those are up, though not really. My up is not the same as someone in Australia . . . that would be their down. So which way did Jesus go? Not to mention the world is spinning and what time did he go “up” from Israel? Did he go straight up? Or was he affected by gravity? So is there an orbital arc as he goes up like a rocket leaving Cape Canaveral?

Well, Pastor . . . you’re just being silly, obviously up means heaven like down means hell. But do I even believe that? Do I really think the entirety of the cosmos boils down to a 3-tiered cake and we live on the middle tier? Interestingly enough, that is very much the thought pattern of some in the ancient world at the time of the gospels and Acts being written. But my modern brain has a little harder time with that. In my honest pastoral opinion, the usage of up and down language to describe heaven, hell or any aspect of afterlife is a waste of time and a reflection of our poor use of language and limited imaginations. It just causes, at least to me, confusion.

I do not intend to be demeaning to anyone who does believe in a physical ascension. . . but I personally find it difficult, and this requires me to approach the story differently. If I don’t believe Jesus “ascended,” as in a body floating up into the sky, what then do I believe about the “Ascension”? I think it very reasonable and faithful to believe the “Ascension” isn’t so much a physical act that occurred at one time and in one place, but instead as a description by the disciples of a divine encounter.

These disciples experienced Jesus Christ with them in a very real way. And then they experienced Jesus leaving, but not just walking away, instead leaving in a way that defies logic or even true description. It left them emotional and even they were confused. They were standing there, looking up and looking lost, probably feeling that way too.

_They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men_
dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” – Acts 1:10-11

These men in white, angels or messengers, if you will, were assuring the disciples that, “Hey. Stop waiting around, time to go, the power is being given you, now go and use it.”

While I don’t really feel a strong belief in the physical aspects of this story, I do feel a huge belief in the spiritual mandate being put forward by Christ and the two messengers. It is a moment of transformation, not for Jesus, but instead for the disciples. The “Ascension” is less about Jesus going up to heaven, and more about the disciples being transformed with the power to be the agents of heaven here on earth. We, made in God’s image, resurrected into new life by Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, are the ones ascending . . . while still here on earth. I don’t think Jesus went up to heaven so much as I think heaven has become part of earth through Jesus. Humanity has been offered the chance to ascend.

I want to share an ascension story like this. A young man, 35 years old, a year older than me, was feeling depressed and beaten. He had just returned from a 2-year international trip. He had gone as a missionary, thinking he could do everything needed to change the world. He was educated at the best schools, a pastor and teacher, he had all the right answers. But things had gone terribly, he failed at almost everything he tried, even failing at getting engaged. He couldn’t even escape the pressures on his way back home, the trip was terrible, storms and the like ruining everything. This young man was suffering a tremendous loss of faith. He wasn’t even sure he ever had faith to begin with. The day was May 24th, 1738, and he was begrudgingly going to a small group meeting in London, at a little place on Aldersgate Street. It was there he had a unique experience, something almost indescribable . . . an ascension.

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

John Wesley had experienced a conversion, he experienced an ascension. He would be spiritually transformed and called to action, sent into the world to witness the faith by leading small groups, preaching in the streets, providing for the marginalized and oppressed. We are gathered in a Methodist church because John, by the will of God, followed that ascension path and inadvertently started a church (was never his intention actually).

Do I believe in the Ascension? Yes. Was it a physical, historical act? Honestly? Don’t care. I do believe it is a spiritual transformation; Jesus connected heaven and earth, the Divine and the Human, and has extended that power to us. We are invited to ascend, with Christ. We are called to embrace the coming Holy Spirit of Pentecost. Yes, there is much loss when Jesus leaves the earth, be it up, down or sideways . . . grief is part of loss . . . but we are given so much more, an opportunity to do even greater things.

ALTAR FLOWERS FOR AUGUST

The flowers on the altar in August are given to the Glory of God and...

August 2 in memory of Edith Gordon by her husband Tom and sons C.T., Chris, Steve and their families
August 9 in memory of Florence Elizabeth Losey by her grandchildren
August 16 in memory of Helen F. Stokes on the anniversary of her birth by her friend Vickie Leshinskie
August 23 in memory of Ruth Streeks on her birthday by her son Gilbert and daughter Nancy Grasmick; and in memory of Joseph E. Spann by his daughter Jeanette Cosper
August 30 in honor of our 53rd wedding anniversary by Claire and Walter Greenhouse

ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORS FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

September 6 Pat Volker (1) and ________
September 13 Tish Swam and Lynn Beacher
September 20 Kitty Allen and Barbara Bond
September 27 Francette Boling and Glenn Simmons

October 4 Debby Jencks and Diane Topper
October 11 Tom Lynn and Sara Nichols
October 18 Jeaneen Wingate and Claire Greenhouse
October 25 Janet Ander (1) and __________

Please contact Claire Greenhouse if you are interested in remembering someone by sponsoring an altar flower arrangement: 410-337-7407 or aschoolrn@verizon.net
Hearty congratulations to those of our Grace family celebrating birthdays in August:

1. James Thorne, Madeline Wasylak
2. Amaya Greenberg, Timothy McGowan
3. Courtney English-Doud
4. Erin Cheek, John Edgar Locke
5. Peggy McCabe
6. David Farace, Connor Franklin, Pam Tyler
7. Bonnie Graziosi, Betty Nottrodt, Abbott Ottinger, Laura Ottinger
8. Betty Dempster, Lauren Friedel
9. Stephen Gilbert, Michael O’Dwyer
10. Jamieson Allen
11. Todd English
12. Beth Mentusky, Emily Rombach, Andrew Trofatter
13. Lisa Sharpe
15. James Doub
16. Barbara Bond, Allie Holle, Steve Painter
17. Harrison Gilbert, Amy McCullough, Chris Schroeder
18. Carlie Plitt, Vicki Saxon
19. Dianne Van Sciver
20. Spencer DeMetrick, Burt English, Weston Vargas
21. Christina Becker-Birck
22. Don Greenman
23. Mary Aikins-Afful, Molly Cornbrooks, Judy Gillan, Evan Kick, Lynne Sharpe
24. Doris Franklin, Robby Harris

SPECIAL GIFTS
We acknowledge with gratitude the following special gifts to the ALTAR GUILD in memory of F. Carvel Payne by Tonya Spedalere, Bonnie Caster in memory of Downing J. Kay by Benjamin S. Shapiro, Eileen Flynn Toohey

How can SINGING, the one thing that has given me my life’s blood over a lifetime be the same thing that can also bring life to an end?

A letter of appreciation
We are very pleased to belong to Grace Church. I particularly appreciate the Sunday services we can watch online. They are very well done and provide a source of inspiration and joy to me every Sunday. I look forward to each one. They are the highlight of each week for me. We don’t get out much these days, nor get a change to see friends and neighbors, so the connection to the church is extremely important to us. We are thankful for Reverend Amy, Pastor Dane, Chris Schroeder, the choir leaders, the technicians, readers and the others who make this outstanding series of worship services possible. Thank you, Grace Church!

Kristin Turner

Within the Family at Grace

BIRTH
Molly Alice Thomas
June 15, 2020
Parents: Kacey and Phil Thomas
Big Sister: Caroline Grandparents: Kate & Steve Mullan Aunts, Uncles, Cousin: Sara, Pedro and John Parks Navarro, Meghan and Skott Zviman

WEDDING
Katie Spearman and Steven Kline
June 20, 2020

DEATH
John F. Strahan, M.D.
July 12, 2020
survived by his wife Margaret and daughters: Susan Strahan, M.D., Nancy Strahan Blackstone, M.D. and Sally S. Matthews
August 3-7, 2020

Children ages 3 years and older

North Castle is hidden in a frozen land. The King's valiant Knights are on a quest in search of the King's Armor. But the armor is not what they think it is.

Knights of North Castle: Quest for the King's Armor, invites children to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power! Kids will take on the role of brave Knights and begin their quest. They will explore Old and New Testament stories and discover different pieces of protective armor-the Belt of Truth, the Breastplate of Justice, the Shoes of Peace, the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation.

Wildlife Adventures will return as part of the VBS program! Each day a different animal will be virtually shared.

Please register your child on the Grace website; questions – carolyn@graceunitedmethodist.org
Scenes from our first in-person worship on Wednesday, July 15

We seek to act so that God’s love is felt by all