



Amazing Grace

Celebrations and Thanksgivings for Life at Grace Episcopal Church—Liberty, Missouri

February 2007

On The Rector's Mind—Ash Wednesday

I invite you, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent..

Book of Common Prayer, 265

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, February 21. Grace will have two services on Ash Wednesday, 7:00 am and 7:00 pm. At both services there will be the blessing and imposition of ashes, and a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Your dried palms from last year may be brought to the parish office at any time to be burned on Shrove Tuesday for use on Ash Wednesday.

Shrove Tuesday

On Shrove Tuesday, February 20, Grace's G-Men and Boys will host our *Annual Gourmet Pancake Supper Feast* which they will serve from 5 - 7:00 PM. The cost is \$5.00 for adults, \$2.00 for children 11 and younger, with a family maximum of \$15.00. This is the last great feast before Easter Day so come for delicious food and fellowship!

Ash Wednesday is a principal fast of the church so attendance at worship is expected and the custom is to abstain from at least two meals if physically able [BCP 16 & 17]. As the prayer book tells us, Lent is a season of self-examination and repentance, a time for extended prayer, fasting, and self-denial and a time for reading and meditating on God's holy Word. The Episcopal Church encourages private confession during this time for those who wish to unburden their consciences. While such confession is not required it is often beneficial. The old saying about private confession is: "All may, some should, none must."

Lent is the beginning of the *Paschal Cycle* which encompasses the dying and rising again of our Lord (*Lent, Holy Week and Easter*). It is a time to reflect seriously and with intentionality on our relationship with God. What areas of my life need amendment? Do I consistently devote time for prayer and for study? Do I regularly participate in Sunday worship and receive Holy Communion? Am I sharing my gifts with others, bearing the light of Christ to those who have not heard the Good News, taking an active role in God's great work of reconciliation? Are the fruits of the Spirit evident in my life? (*See the 5th chapter of Galatians, verses 22 & 23*).

A serious personal assessment is not easy nor is it always comfortable, but the rewards can be great. Once we discover the area(s) of our life in which we fall short of being the person whom God created us to be, we can confess our sins and amend our life with absolute assurance that God loves us and is faithful to forgive all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn to God. The result? We are set free to live again in right relationship with God and with our sisters and brothers.

During the 40 days of Lent, I invite you to take a personal inventory. Am I missing the mark that God has established? In what ways have I turned away from God and turned to myself? Spend time in prayer. Sit quietly and expect God to speak to you, listen for the still small voice. Spend time reading the Bible and hear God's voice through Holy Scripture. Spend time studying and expect God to reveal truth to you. Spend time nurturing your relationships with family members and friends, and expect to see God at work in their lives - and in yours.

Use the 40 days of Lent to draw closer to God and to allow God to draw closer to you. Learn to love God more fully, more unreservedly, and open yourself with greater vulnerability to God's never-failing love for you. An intimate relationship with God does not happen automatically. You must nurture your relationship with God just as you nurture relationships with all those whom you love.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you as you journey through this holy time of preparation.

Mother Susan McCann+

For The Time Being

In his “Christmas Oratorio,” *For the Time Being*, twentieth-century poet W.H. Auden writes of the days when

The Christmas Feast is already a fading memory,
And already the mind begins to be vaguely aware
Of an unpleasant whiff of apprehension at the thought
Of Lent and Good Friday which cannot, after all, now
Be very far off. But, for the time being, here we all are, . . .

However, the poet -- our fellow Anglican -- has his Narrator insist that in this “Time Being” it is our work “to redeem” the season from “insignificance.” At Grace Church, the “Time Being” has been full of significance. So “here we all are” with worship, education for children and adults, fellowship, and outreach.



Children’s Chapel—On Sunday mornings children participate in Eucharistic worship through the proclamation of the Gospel. Then they go down to the Children’s Center in the undercroft to continue their own worship until it’s time to rejoin their parents for Communion. Here they are learning about baptism.

Photograph by Sharon Grimes

Sonshine Academy—The fourth through sixth grade class studied scrolls and investigated the upcoming exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Union station after they learned that Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth and read from “the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.” Then they made their own scrolls from wrinkled paper which they “aged” with brown paint.



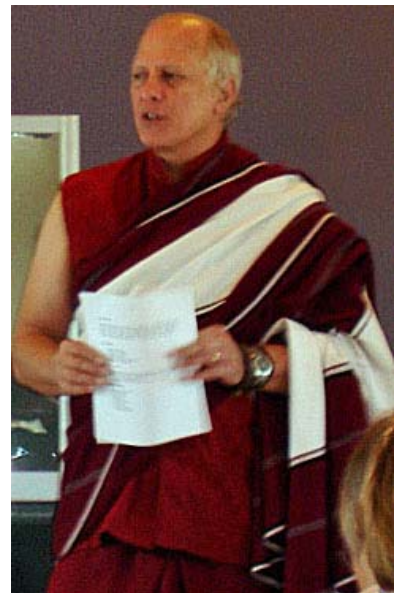
Photograph by Sharon Grimes

The Adult Forum series on “Religious Traditions” began January 28 with a presentation on Judaism by Rabbi Paul C. Silbersher of Congregation Kol Ami, a “welcoming and inclusive Reform congregation” in Johnson County. He emphasized the importance of “knowing your story” as he gave thoughtful responses to the questions submitted to him about interpretation of the Bible, life after death, and Jewish understanding of Jesus. He is not only Rabbi of the Congregation but also Cantor. When Father John brought the children from Sonshine Academy upstairs to welcome the presenter with their “Shalom” song, he sang his answer to them in a resonant baritone.

The series continued on February 4 with a presentation on Buddhism by Lama Chuck Stanford, co-founder and Executive Director of the Rime Buddhist Center, Monastery, and Institute of Tibetan Studies in Kansas City. He is the Buddhist member of Kansas City’s Interfaith Council and is familiar to readers of the *Star* through his columns in the Saturday Faith Section. Lama Stanford gave an overview of the history of Buddhism, of the several Buddhist “denominations” today, and of central Buddhist beliefs. He also shared his own spiritual history, beginning with his Christian childhood and including his present commitment to prison ministry.

The series will continue later in February with presentations on Islam and Hinduism.

Photographs by Sylvia Nadler and Lolly Ockerstrom



Fellowship on Wednesdays and Sundays - In the "Time Being," fellowship continued with pot luck suppers after Wednesday evening Eucharists and Coffee Hour after services on Sunday.



Photograph by Ron Brink



Photographs by Jerry Venters

Super Bowl Party—On "Super Bowl Sunday" football fans and chili specialists congregated in front of a big screen TV in the parish hall. The "ticket price" for entry was a donation to the Grocery Store for Franklin Friends. Party goers cheered both Bears and Colts and crowned Jim Hill and Brad Chance as royal chili cooks. Other chili awards went to Henry Bramman, Ross Warnell, Ron Brink, Cassy Venters, Melinda Howe and Madison Hayter.



Super Bowl Photographs by Jerry Venters

Franklin Friends Spaghetti Supper

An enthusiastic group braved frigid temperatures February 2 to celebrate the success of the Franklin Friends ministry as it nears its first anniversary and to discuss ways it can be even better in the future. They toured the new Grace’s Grocery in the undercroft , then enjoyed gourmet spaghetti prepared by Chef Diane Pike, with the assistance of her sister, Sue Pike-Bower. Over ice cream cups and coffee they considered a reorganized Ingathering plan outlined in a power point presentation by Father John. The new plan assigns a Manager to each “department” in the Store. For example, a Produce Manager will oversee fruit and applesauce supplies and a Bakery Manager will do the same for Nutrigrain bars, cereal bars, and pop tarts. The whole congregation will be divided into groups headed by the Managers, who will involve their group members in the operation of the ministry. Children’s Chapel participants will help move contributions from the Ingathering barrels to the loading dock (shelves!).



Franklin Friends Snapshot

Weekend Food for Hungry Children, January 5 – February 2, 2007

Children now receiving backpacks containing weekend food: 41 (25 Franklin students, 16 brothers and sisters in the home)
Simple meals provided each week: 246
Meals so far this year: 1,176
Other children receiving supplementary snacks: 5
Snacks so far this year: 25

Weekend Food Provided, February through December, 2006

Simple meals: 7,871
Backpack meals for as many as 57 children in a week during the school year.
Grocery sacks for families to pick up during the summer.

Living the Baptismal Covenant

“Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?”

“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?”

“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”

To each of these questions, we answered, “I will, with God’s help.” (BCP, p.305)

With this issue, the *Amazing Grace* newsletter will share stories of how Grace Church people live out the promises we made when we entered into the Baptismal Covenant which is the ground of our life together.

Gloria Cortez tries to fulfill those promises through community service that draws on the abilities she developed through her twenty years of active service in the U.S. Army. In those years her administrative assignments took her to sites including a Personnel Center in Germany, to Korea with the Military Police, and to Hawaii with an Intelligence unit. Here at home, she is a Liberty Hospital Volunteer, faithfully devoting several Tuesdays each month to work in Patient Registration.. She helps patients register, gets registration lists to the staff, answers questions, and escorts patients to their destinations. She has served as a Youth Friends mentor, and now works as many as five days a month in the Library of Smithville Middle School near her home. In addition to shelving books, she answers children’s questions and looks forward to helping them with the library computers. Her rapport with children has been evident on Fridays when she helps deliver backpacks to Franklin School.



Cassy and Jerry Venters have recently traveled abroad as part of their efforts to live the Covenant. Working with their Rotary District, they led a group to Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango, Guatemala to deliver and fit new shoes on children in orphanages. They also distributed humanitarian aid. They have been active in Rotary exchange programs for youth and adults. Locally, they are mentors at the Paseo High School.

Credit Abuse Resistance Education (CARE) program that is delivered to high school students throughout the KC Metro area.

Jerry and Cassy are interested in developing mission trips for youth and adults with Grace Church members.

Cassy recently retired from the University of Missouri-Columbia, after a 30-year career in extension’s business development program, helping people start and expand businesses and later working in research and evaluation. A special highlight of her career was coordinating an exchange program for adults with the government of Thailand for 12 years, leading six groups to Thailand and hosting nine groups.



Photographs by Jerry and Cassy Venters

Jerry has been a federal bankruptcy judge for the past eight years and previously practiced law in Jefferson City, Missouri. Through his work he led the court’s effort in developing a

Grace Episcopal Church

520 South 291 Highway
Liberty, MO 64068

Phone: 816-781-6262
<http://www.graceepiscopal-liberty.org/>

Vestry

The Rev. Susan G. McCann—*Rector*

Terry Hayter—*Junior Warden*

Troy Brooks

John Clapsaddle

Laura Gayle Green

Jim Hill

Rebecca Morris

Richard Moore

Carol Sevier

Ann Marie Shannon

Jerry Venters

Mark Walters

Henry Bramman—*Treasurer*

Citty Haden—*Asst. Treasurer*

Ann Marie Shannon and Cassy Venters—
Newsletter Co-Editors

Patrick Morgan and Terry Hayter—*Co-Webmasters*

Staff

Brett Terry—*Organist/Choirmaster, Director of Music*

Larry Winter—*Handbell Director*

Andrea Chiselita—*Nursery*

Verna Morgan—*Nursery*

Rachela Talpes—*Sexton*

Service Times

Sundays

Holy Eucharist I: 8:00am

Sonshine Academy: 9:00am

Adult Forum: 9:00am

Holy Eucharist II: 10:15am

January Vestry Meeting. Summary of the Minutes

The Vestry met January 22 at 7:00 pm in the parish hall.

Financial reports. After the opening prayer, the year-end financial statement was reviewed and approved. Mother Susan gave a stewardship progress report and presented the proposed amended 2007 operating budget which will be considered by the Finance Committee.

Vestry positions. Discussion followed of Vestry terms and positions which will be filled by election at the Annual Meeting. It is the work of the Vestry to fill unexpired terms. Mother Susan nominated Troy Brooks to fill the unexpired term of Ron Swope. A longtime member of the parish, Troy meets the criteria for Vestry membership: regularly participating in Sunday worship, active in the life of the parish, and faithful in financial support of the parish by working conscientiously toward the tithe. Unanimous election.

Treasurer. Until his untimely death Ron Swope had been serving not only as Senior Warden but also as Treasurer. Mother Susan nominated Henry Bramman to serve as Treasurer, which will not be a Vestry position during this coming year. Unanimous election.

Financial Snapshot—Year End, 2006

	<u>2006 Actual</u>	<u>2006 Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Income	199,269	206,300	-7,031
Expense	171,253.20	185,111	-13,359.80

Detailed budget reports are posted on the bulletin board outside the office.

Recycling Snapshot

From July through our latest report at the end of November, we have deposited 9,082.83 pounds of paper in the Abitibi recycling container behind the church. During that time we have saved 12.45 cubic yards of landfill space. For more information about recycling, contact Steve Turek.

A Note of Thanks

Many thanks go to Beth Norman Schneider for co-editing the January newsletter. Beth generously undertook the difficult technical job of formatting the issue during the absence of regular co-editor Cassy Venters.