As you are aware, COVID-19 is having a profound impact on the Grace Church parish. Our Sunday services have been suspended, as have Sunday school and hospitality gatherings. Our Eucharistic Visitors have not been able to visit shut-ins, our office administrator is only able to work in the office twice a week; the rest of the week’s work is being done from home. We are unable to distribute our prayer shawls to those in need. We haven’t been able to do the fund-raising we had planned with Lenten Fish Fries and Flea Markets.

There are some positive things happening and they are due to your continued awareness of stewardship. At this time last year, we raised $23,136.00 through pledges and plate collections. In the current environment, without plate collection since March, we have contributed $31,414. Thank you so very much.
for remaining faithful to Grace Church. Our renters are also maintaining their lease agreement commitment.

Although we have lost the in-person Sunday Eucharist service at Grace Church, we have joined with St. Martin in the Fields, Lumberton, in their Virtual Chapel service. It takes place every Sunday at 9:30 am. You can reach it through their web site http://stmartinslumberton.com. In fact, you can go to their site right now to see what the service looks like, they have them cached. Our Kathy Waugh assisted in the service on May 10th, so we recommend starting with that one. In the coming weeks, we will alternate with St. Martin’s to provide an online reader for the services. Go to St. Martin’s web site, click on the Virtual Chapel link on the first page. That will bring you to a list of services, click on the Read More link under May 10 and you’ll see this:

43 Elizabeth Street, Pemberton, New Jersey 08068 • Tel (609) 894-8001
www.graceepiscopalmnj.org • E-mail: graceepiscopalmnj@comcast.net
May 10, 2020 Worship

5/10/2020

Note: Due to technical difficulties, some of the words to the sequence hymn (immediately following the second reading) are missing. A link is provided below where you can find the text of the hymn.

Recognize the altar at the bottom of the picture? Simply click on the Play symbol and see the entire service. You can pause and rewind just as you can using any video. The text for the prayers and the songs are displayed on the screen, so no need for a hymnal or prayer book on your end. Notice there is also a virtual Sunday School link. Check that out, too.

Your vestry has been using online tools to keep in touch with each other and to meet virtually. Zoom has been a very useful tool for us.

Not having a full time Priest’s salary and benefits as an expense and revenues from our renters being current has helped us. However, the loss of revenues
from not having our fund-raising activities will have a significant impact on our budget, particularly in the upcoming summer months when traditionally there has been a decrease in donations. We also don’t know how long the COVID-19 restrictions will be in place and how that will affect our tenants ability to meet their obligations.

The bottom line is we need you to continue your generous support.

We anticipated a dramatic increase in people needing our Food Pantry. In March, we saw that – our client numbers went from an average of 65 to more than 100. We prepared for 100 for our April distribution and to our surprise, the numbers dropped back into the 80s. We took the excess fresh produce we had left over and gave it to the Christian Caring Center in Browns Mills. May dropped to 66, so we did some on-the-spot research into the drop in clients by driving through Sunbury Village and touting our Food Pantry encouraging people to come before we closed at 2 PM. We found that there were a significant number of new residents in that area who didn’t know about our ability to help them and many of our regulars thought that we were closed. We will better spread the word in the community before the June distribution. We have been lucky with our volunteers – although the majority of them are in the “at-risk” category we have had enough of a mix of young and old that is sufficient to process and distribute our offerings to the wider community.

Speaking of at-risk, you may know our oldest congregate, Bob Reeves, is living at the Masonic Home in Burlington. Bob contracted the Coronavirus and was hospitalized. We were unable to visit him. We got word through his granddaughter Stacy that he has recovered, was released from the hospital and is back in residence at the Masonic Home. What wonderful news!! The only bad news – we still can’t visit him.
While the day-to-day realities of running our congregation remain, our immediate priority is to ensure that we can minister to one another and those most in need in our community, especially in relation to the Food Pantry and how to minister to our shut-in population. If you can access the Internet at home, a wealth of resources are available – from the St. Martin in the Fields Sunday services to a plethora of resources on the Diocese of New Jersey https://dioceseofnj.org/ and the National Episcopal Church https://episcopalchurch.org/ sites that include virtual choirs and orchestras, reading and listening prayer resources and so much more.

Please remember that our ministries require increased and sustained charitable support and so do those of the wider church community. Our Men’s and Women’s Club continues to work on maintaining our buildings and grounds while wearing masks and maintaining their distance. The latest included weeding, planting and mulching our gardens.
Janet and Dave Tuck produced a new reredos (the cloth background behind the altar) to replace our badly worn white one. Hopefully, you will be able to see it in person in the coming weeks. Dave also managed to greatly reduce the weight of the reredos by using a lightweight insulation board as the backing instead of ¾ inch plywood. The lighter weight will be a relief for those who change the reredos to match the color of the liturgy. Dave and Janet’s next project is to replace the green one.

The intent of this letter is to speak with everyone in the congregation about what is happening, the impact COVID-19 is having on Grace Church’s ministry and to encourage your continued charitable support, especially your pledges and gifts. Please take the time to learn to use our E-giving resources, if you need help, we should be able to provide it. Grace Church can receive donations through PayPal (requires a PayPal account and draws funds either from your bank account or a credit card), Bill Pay (make arrangements through your bank, draws directly from your checking or savings account), and the always reliable US mail (but don’t send cash – use a check). You can connect with Grace
Church’s E-giving services by clicking on the Donate button on our website: http://www.graceepiscopalachurchnj.org/od

God bless all our parish family,

Ken Maskell, Stewardship Chair
Kath Waugh, Sr. Warden
Ingrid Welsh, Treasurer
Joan Hess, Director of the Food Pantry

2 attachments

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