



The Angelus

April 2021

From the Rector's Desk: *Greetings in the Love of God!*

More people in our congregation are getting vaccines, we've returned to some worship in person, spring is here, and as I write this, we're anticipating Holy Week, the Great Vigil, and Easter Sunday. It's got a lot of us thinking seriously about "getting back to normal."

This will sound strange, but because I hope in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, and because who we are as a congregation has changed some after Covid and the passage of time, I actually long for not getting back to normal. Whatever normal was. Not because I think it was awful and we need to scrap it all for something newer up-to-date. But simply because we are not who we think we were even a year ago. And we have been shaped for something not fully imagined or maybe explicitly longed for yet.

First, we simply don't have the human or financial resources Grace has had in days of yore to try to get back to what some of us consider "normal" for Grace. Discussions Church-wide suggests congregations could see weekly attendance drop by as much as 20% when things are "back to normal." We have grieved the loss of some ministers, too. And reality calls us more and more to pay our way as a parish by our own pledge income.

All these things and more tell me that we need to build our congregation up post-Covid without the assumptions that we will try as best we can to do everything we've always expected we would do. All these things tell me that we have the opportunity to build slowly and step-by-step into our common life, program, and ministry in the community that truly reflect who we actually are right now and could be in the future—as God calls us to be and do in the power of the Spirit. ***I'll be calling on the vestry, staff, and congregation to be faithful to what God is already up to among us right now, on the ground, in our congregation and the town right outside our doors, as we actually are.***

What do I imagine this will look like? The rector of a parish is one of the key visioners and articulators of direction, especially along with the vestry, so it's right for me to pass on some of the things I'm beginning to see after my few months with you. I have tried to listen deeply to what the rector search committee and the vestry have said to me, as well as some leaders and servants in the local community, over the past several months. And after listening to all of you as I have begun to know you, here are some of the things I continue to see and imagine—I hope with the help of the Mind of Christ.

We have our core of high, lush, catholic worship. That is our niche in this community and our spiritual heart. This doesn't mean we will sweat rubrics or sparkly shoes our acolytes wear. It will mean that we will approach our prayer and worship with deep reverence, penitence, and joy, offering the greatest beauty to God we can, as lovers do when they prepare to meet each other. And if this beautiful communion we experience in the Mass, Daily Office, and devotion to Our Lady does not prod us on to the life of holiness, joyful penitence, and even deeper prayer, then we have not gone deep enough into the Mystery of the Word made flesh,

Crucified, Raised, and Ascended. We have not gone deep enough to see fully the face of Christ in the people that are suffering right here in Sheboygan.

We are a people who love to eat together. I hope with all my heart we will continue that. But I won't be calling on our vestry and congregation to do as much of that as we did in previous years. Rather, I'll be asking our vestry and our hospitality ministers to rethink how and when we eat together. We can have joyful gatherings that invite new people in, with a frequency that won't leave our hospitality ministers exhausted. This does not lessen our relational or culinary beauty, but enables and supports it over the long term.

We are a congregation that has been blessed with special financial gifts throughout the years. I will be calling on our vestry to make sure we live more and more by our own means for regular operating expenses, and maybe even for some non-recurring expenses by saving for the future, as well as set other financial targets over the next several years. In the congregational restarts I've been a part of (and we are definitely in restart mode), knowing you can make it on your own is so empowering and enlivening. The Apostolic Community was no-nonsense and savvy about all that. The New Testament is really direct about Christian community and shared resources.

We are a prayerful congregation, in no small measure because we have taken Christian formation seriously over the years. We will have study groups and such in future, though, again, I don't assume it will necessarily look like it was in the past. I would like to see if we can grow into more than the classroom model of Christian "education"—grow into the ancient model that includes formation through doing and reflecting on our ministries alongside fabulous catechesis. This is especially important for children and youth who are formed as Christians not only by what Christians say to them—as essential as instruction is—but by what the Christians around them show is important through prioritizing and action. So, what if we include younger folks at every level of ministry? What if we included brief Bible meditation, checking-in, and prayer at every gathering of members, work groups, social gatherings? Christian formation then becomes the loving labor of the Body as a whole, along with the special instruction and guidance from those with that charism.

We have wonderful staff. I have asked them to be very focused in their work and have given them very focused letters of agreement and job descriptions. This will clear the field for more and more lay involvement. It will make us more limber for the development our congregation is being prepared for by God. And I have asked them to listen to you in a very deep way. To support the vestry by listening deeply to them. To hear your own implanted desires over time. To listen deeply to the voices outside our doors.

I have heard from many that we need to be more engaged with the local community in more hands-on ministry, and I agree warmly and happily. We believe this is so about us not because we have read all the congregational development literature about how key robust outreach is to attract more people to church. But because we have internalized the Gospels. We yearn to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ our Lord: we yearn to be known in our town as the church that loves Sheboygan in a very deep and practical way. And as I've said to many of you, to be Anglo-Catholic and faithful to that ecclesial identity means, yes, deeply mystical worship AND serving Christ in those He Himself identifies with most. Just read Matthew 25 for a totally unambiguous picture. And ponder how many of our Anglo-Catholic clergy, monastics, and lay saints on all the continents saw their catholic faith as inherently about serving the poorest and the most crushed by injustices. This will call for very deep, patient, and non-paternalistic listening to actual voices in the larger community.

But to get to the "new normal" that God is preparing for us we have to trust that, first, the condition of having "less" than before is not a condition of deficit. Instead, we are being called deeper and deeper into Gospel blessedness. Just read the Sermon on the Mount, especially Mt 5:1-12, as a way of common life and

ministry. Second, we have to trust that for us to accomplish whatever it is that God has in store for us, we have everything we need for it right now, at least to make a faithful beginning and to listen faithfully and deeply, to God and each other and the voices outside our doors. Third, to trust God when we have to let things go, to try things and not get it right and be OK with that, to let programs and events crash because we don't have the human resources to pull them off. Fourth, to trust that grieving over what has been is a good and fully Christian response to the reality of who we are right now and will be in future. Fifth, if I am faithful to you and try to love you as a rector should, then I will listen as deeply to your hearts as I can, in prayer and silence and in deep respect for who you are as members of Grace. Please pray for me and ask Mother Mary to intercede for me, that I can love you as I am called to.

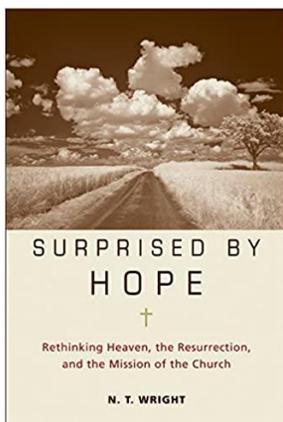
I could go on and on (more than I already have!!! Horrors!!) about the things that I imagine God might be calling us to. But I'll stop here. Not least because ***this visioning and living into the new normal rightfully belongs to rector and vestry together, and especially with all of you.***

A final word. I am a conservative by nature, *in the dictionary sense of that word.* (I'm not staking out any kind of political preferences here.) That is, I am wired to preserve what is of lasting and timeless value. I do not desire change for the sake of change. I get hives around change for the sake of change. What I have said above, as your rector, is all about how we can live, as we actually are right now, more faithfully for the lasting value of the Kingdom, for the faith and Body of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I can't tell you how much joy and warmth I feel as I write this. Because I get to begin this beautiful, holy pilgrimage with you. Let's pray, share freely, confess our sins, proclaim the Crucified and Risen Jesus in the power of the Spirit, and in all things give thanks and praise to God!

Peace,
WLB+

Sunday Morning Christian Formation on the *Sundays of Easter*, 9:00-9:45 am, on Zoom. Apr 18-May 30



Reading together NT Wright's ***Surprised By Hope***. We proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus and say our own hope for eternal life is the resurrection of the dead. And St Paul even says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished." (I Cor 15:17-18).

What does all this mean and what is the Resurrection in our faith? We will read one of the most respected and most accessible biblical scholars in the Anglican Communion, Bp NT Wright, to dig in to the heart of the apostles' proclamation and our faith.

For our first meeting, please read chapters 1 and 2 and be ready to discuss. We will see if we can explore this book together in a more seminar style.

You may order the book, ***Surprised By Hope*** on your own, or you may order it through our rector, Fr William Bulson (wbulson@gracesheboygan; 920.452.9659).

Deadline for ordering through Fr William is Friday, Apr 9.

The Zoom link for this Easter formation group is:

<https://zoom.us/j/93247049800?pwd=bzVGbXRRc052WHJVVkJEwaE9lYVpXZz09>

Thank you

Thanks for the Help with Staff Days In

Many thanks to you, the people of Grace Church, for your gracious and patient allowance for our office's "Day In." Office staff were able to get caught up on some essential administrative duties because of your support. Thank you for allowing us the space and time during work hours to focus exclusively on those tasks. Please do not hesitate during regular hours to get in contact with us as you need to.

Many thanks to our outgoing vestry members and Hello to our New Vestry Leaders!

Because we have committed and capable disciples of Christ on our vestry, the mission Christ gave us as he ascended can carry on here in this congregation. So—Thank you to outgoing Sr Warden, Kristin Plucar, as well as outgoing vestry members Randie Barrows, Jack Britton, Sutton Cecil, and Amelia Fitzsimmons. When you see them, be sure to thank them!

Many thanks to new Sr Warden Stuart Schmidt, and new vestry members David Annis, John Davis, Mary Gallimore, Angel Klinzing, and Pat Sather.



Your Rector Has Had His Shots!

I'd very much like to meet up with those of you who have completed your vaccinations for Covid and who would feel comfortable allowing me to visit in your home. Home visits have been an important part of my ministry throughout the years and I have shamelessly invited myself over to people's houses many times for coffee or dinner. A congregation our size can take full advantage of that and in just this way weave the personal and warm fabric of love together, with God's help. Because our public health situation still has a few limitations and I can't assume everyone is ready and willing to have me stop by, I'd be grateful for your help. I'd ask that you get in touch with me, let me know if you're among those who are ready and willing to have your rector stop by for a visit and some brief prayer, and we can arrange a time to get together in your home. Please get in touch with me at: wbulson@gracesheboygan.com or 920.740.2308. I'll try to get hold of some of you, too.

April Birthdays

Jennifer Whitford 4/2
Jay Maki 4/5
Alexandrea Hammes 4/5
Paula Solinger 4/7
Charles Burgett 4/8
Grace Burgett 4/8
Jasmine Palmer 4/11
Mary Ann Neuses 4/13
Benjamin Maki 4/16
Steve Gallimore 4/19
Nicholas Whitford 4/20
Austin Barrows 4/22
Marlene Roeseler 4/22

Clifton Bartels 4/23
Jonathan Fischer 4/25
Joyce Wessel 4/25
John Ambelang 4/26
Marjorie Buttz 4/27
Valerie Kains 4/28
April Anniversaries
Pat & Wayne Sather 4/2
Scott Gedemer 4/4
Anne & Robert Hanlon 4/8
Nicholas Calvert 4/9
Jennifer & Nicholas Whitford 4/14
Constance & LeRoy Schneider 4/16
Elizabeth & Cory Bouck 4/16

Parish Staff

The Right Reverend Matthew Gunter, *Bishop*
The Reverend William Bulson, *Rector*
The Venerable Michele Whitford, *Priest Associate*
The Reverend Michael Burg, *Deacon*
The Reverend Paul Aparicio, *Deacon*
Dr. R. Benjamin Dobey, *Organist Choirmaster*
The Reverend Nicci Beeck, *Deacon, Parish Administrator*
Julie Davidson, *Sexton*

The Vestry

Stuart Schmidt, *Senior Warden*
Ed Clabots, *Junior Warden*
Brian Heck, *Treasurer*
Vestry: David Annis, John Davis, Luke Fitzsimmons, Mary Gallimore, Angel Klinzing, Helen Mullison, Pat Sather, Mary Snyder

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