Welcome to Worship: Thank you for making Grace-St. Luke’s part of your spiritual journey and for joining us today for this virtual worship offering. If you are new among us, please complete an online Connect Card at gracetlukes.org/online-visitor-card. Our clergy-staff team would like to reach out to learn more about you and to explore how life at Grace-St. Luke’s might bless your journey and you bless ours. For more about our thriving faith community including online formation (learning) offerings, please visit www.gracetlukes.org.

Officiant: The Rev. Ollie V. Rencher
Preacher: The Rev. Meredith Jane Day

All are asked to observe silence during the
Voluntary: “Prelude on Llanfair”

Albert L. Travis

Welcome and Announcements
Hymn 214, stanzas 1, 2 & 4, “HAIL THE DAY THAT SEES HIM RISE”

music: Llanfair, Robert Williams (1781-1821)
text: Charles Wesley (1707-1708), alt

1 Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!
2 There the glorious triumph waits; Alleluia!
3 See! he lifts his hands above; Alleluia!
4 Lord beyond our mortal sight, Alleluia!

glorious to his native skies; Alleluia!
lift your heads, external gates! Alleluia!
See! he shows the prints of love; Alleluia!
raise our hearts to reach thy height, Alleluia!

Christ, awhile to mortals given, Alleluia!
Wide unfold the radiant scene; Alleluia!
Hark! his gracious lips bestow; Alleluia!
there thy face unclouded see, Alleluia!

enters now the highest heaven! Alleluia!
take the King of glory in! Alleluia!
blessings on his Church below; Alleluia!
find our heaven of heavens in thee. Alleluia!

Celebrant
Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.
The Collect for Purity
Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect of the Day

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

Grant, we pray, Almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into heaven, so we may also in heart and mind there ascend, and with him continually dwell; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Reader Here ends the Lesson.

Psalm 47 recited by all in unison
1 Clap your hands, all you peoples; *
   shout to God with a cry of joy.
2 For the Lord Most High is to be feared; *
   he is the great King over all the earth.
3 He subdues the peoples under us, *
   and the nations under our feet.
4 He chooses our inheritance for us, *
   the pride of Jacob whom he loves.
5 God has gone up with a shout, *
   the Lord with the sound of the ram’s-horn.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises; *
   sing praises to our King, sing praises.
7 For God is King of all the earth; *
   sing praises with all your skill.
8 God reigns over the nations; *
   God sits upon his holy throne.
9 The nobles of the peoples have gathered together *
   with the people of the God of Abraham.
10 The rulers of the earth belong to God, *
   and he is highly exalted.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
   as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.
I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Reader Here ends the Lesson.

The Sequence: Hymn 215, stanzas 1 & 3, “SEE THE CONQUEROR MOUNTS IN TRIUMPH”

music: In Babilone, melody from Oude en Nieuwe Hollantse Boerententoes en Contradanseu, 1710
words: Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885), alt

1 See the Con-queror mounts in tri-umph; see the King in
2 He who on the cross did suf-fer, he who from the
3 Thou hast raised our hu-man na-ture on the clouds to
roy-al state, rid-ing on the clouds, his
god’s right hand: there we sit in heav-en-ly

char-iot, to his heav-en-ly pal-ace gate!
Sa-tan; he by death has spoilt his foes.
places, there with thee in glo-ry stand.

Hark! the choirs of an- gel voic-es joy-ful
While he lifts his hands in bless-ing, he is
Je-sus reigns, ad-ored by an-gels; Man with

al-le-lu-ias sing, and the por-tals
part-ed from his friends; while their ea-ger
God is on the throne; might-y Lord, in

high are lift-ed to re-ceive their heav-en-ly King,
eyes be-hold him, he up-on the clouds a-scends.
thine as-cen-sion, we by faith be-hold our own.
The Gospel

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke. 24:44-53

Jesus said to his disciples, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you— that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Priest Here ends the Lesson.

The Homily: The Rev. Meredith Jane Day

The Apostles’ Creed

In the assurance of eternal life given at Baptism, let us proclaim our faith and say,

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
   He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
   and born of the Virgin Mary.
   He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
   was crucified, died, and was buried.
   He descended to the dead.
   On the third day he rose again.
   He ascended into heaven,
   and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
   He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
   the holy catholic Church,
   the communion of saints,
   the forgiveness of sins
   the resurrection of the body,
   and the life everlasting. Amen.

Please remain standing or kneel for the Prayers of the People.

The Prayers of the People, Form III

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.
Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name may be glorified by all people.
We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.
We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.
Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.
Remembering especially those reflected on the Prayer List as named in the service leaflet, the widowed and orphans, all whose lives are affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and those who now care for them, and those we now name either silently or aloud [N.N.] Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.
Remembering those who have died, especially Carol L. Jones, John Robert Harpole, father of Sue Harpole, and those we now name either silently or aloud [N.N.] Give to the departed eternal rest.

**Let light perpetual shine upon them.**
We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

**May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.**
Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, including thanksgivings for the gifts of time, talent, and treasure that support life at Grace-St. Luke’s; for our School and all schools that serve our community; for the Anglican Communion, The Episcopal Church, and the Diocese of West Tennessee; and for all individuals, communities, and organizations working tirelessly and creatively to respond to the needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Silence is observed.* Then, the Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.

**The Peace**
*Celebrant*  The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People*  And also with you.

The Celebrant and People greet one another in the name of the Lord.

**The Offertory**
*During the offertory music or following this service, your offering supports this virtual ministry and much more of life at Grace-St. Luke’s: visit* gracestlukes.org/onlinegiving; *text GSLChurch ALMS to 73256 to give to ALMS; text GSLChurch PLEDGE to 73256 to give to 2020 PLEDGE; mail to the church office. We are not closed during this season of physical distancing. Instead, we are becoming more open and creative in how we abide with God, walk by faith, and serve one another. Your gift to the glory of God supports the administration, operations, and life of Grace-St. Luke’s Church.*

**Anthem at the Offertory, “Up through endless ranks of angels”**

*music: Julion, David Hurd (b. 1950)*
*text: Jaroslav Vajda (1919-2008)*

Charles McGowan, tenor

Up through endless ranks of angels, cries of triumph in his ears,
To his heavenly throne ascending, having vanquished all their fears,
Christ looks down upon his faithful, leaving them in happy tears.

Death destroying, life restoring, proven equal to our need,
Now for us before the Father as our brother intercedes;
Flesh that for our world was wounded, living, for the wounded pleads.

To our lives of wanton wandering send our promised Spirit guide.
Through our lives of fears and failure with your power and love abide.
Welcome us as you were welcomed to an endless Eastertide.

Alleluia! Alleluia! O to breath the Spirit’s grace!
Alleluia! Alleluia! O to see the Fathers face!
Alleluia! Alleluia! O to feel the son’s embrace!

**The Lord’s Prayer**
*And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

**The Blessing**
*The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.*
Hymn 460, stanzas 1, 4 & 5, “ALLELUIA! SING TO JESUS!”

music: Hyfrydol, Rowland Hugh Prichard (1811-1887)
text: William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

1 Alleluia! sing to Jesus! his the
2 Alleluia! not as orphans are we
3 Alleluia! bread of Heaven, Thou on
4 Alleluia! King eternal, Thee the
5 Alleluia! sing to Jesus! his the

1 scepter, his the throne; Alleluia! his the
2 left in sorrow now; Alleluia! he is
3 earth our food, our stay! Alleluia! here the
4 Lord of lords we own; Alleluia! born of
5 scepter, his the throne; Alleluia! his the

1 triumph, his the victory alone; Hark! the
2 near us, faith believes, nor questions how; though the
3 sinful flee to thee from day to day; In
4 Mary, earth thy foot stood, heaven, thy throne; thou with
5 triumph, his the victory alone; Hark! the

1 songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a
2 cloud from sight received him, when the fury
3esor, friend of sinners, earth’s Redeemer,
4 in the veil hast entered, robed in flesh, our
5 songs of holy Zion thunder like a

1 mighty flood; Jesus out of every
2 days were o’er, shall our hearts forget his
3 please for me, where the songs of all the
4 great High Priest: thou on earth both Priest and
5 mighty flood; Jesus out of every

1 nation hath redeemed us by his blood.
2 promise, “I am with you ever more”?
3 sin less sweep across the crystal sea.
4 victim in the eucharistic feast.
5 nation hath redeemed us by his blood.
The Dismissal

The people are dismissed with these words

Minister Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia.

People Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Voluntary: “Psalm 19: The heavens declare the glory of God” Benedetto Marcello

All are invited to remain standing or to be seated for the Voluntary and then continue the day, giving thanks to God for blessings known and known, and by reaching out in care for fellow parishioners, neighbors, and any persons in need. Members of the parish with any needs or pastoral concerns: email pastoralcare@gracesstlukes.org or dial 901-252-6320, and for hospitalizations or emergencies, dial the 24/7 Clergy-on-Call phone line at 901-252-6334.

The Rev. Ollie V. Rencher, Officiant
The Rev. Meredith Jane Day, Preacher
Dr. Patrick A. Scott, Director of Music & Organist
Charles McGowan, Cantor
Lucy Owens, Director of Communications
Grace-St. Luke’s: Explore the following news, take good care, and please be in touch with the clergy-staff team to assist you along the way!

Virtual Offerings

The Sunday after Ascension Day, May 24, 10:30 a.m. Livestream Service of Morning Prayer according to The Daily Office including sermon and music via the GSL website and Facebook Live.
The Sunday after Ascension Day, May 24, Music in May, 5:30 p.m. GSL Music in May.
More under Worship and Music below.
Tuesday, May 26, Compline (Night Prayers), 8 until 8:15 p.m. via Facebook Live.
Wednesday, May 27, Midweek Christian Formation, 5:30 until 6 p.m. via Facebook Live, “Interview by the Rev. Ollie V. Rencher of Josephine Hicks, Episcopal Relief & Development Vice President for Episcopal Church Programs, about how this unique and vital ministry is supporting the worldwide human family during COVID-19.”
Thursday, May 28, Men’s Morning Fellowship, 7 until 7:45 a.m. via ZOOM. Read more and sign up below.
Thursday, May 28, Compline (Night Prayers), 8 until 8:15 p.m. via Facebook Live.
Day of Pentecost, May 31, 10:30 a.m. Livestream Service of Morning Prayer according to The Daily Office including sermon and music via the GSL website and Facebook Live.
Day of Pentecost, May 31, Music in May, 5:30 a.m. GSL Music in May.
More under Worship and Music below.
Event Details. For important details about each of these and more, follow this link to Virtual Offerings.

Take Note

A Message from the Senior Warden. Senior Warden Simon Wadsworth shares highlights with the parish about life at GSL following monthly meetings of the Vestry. Follow this link for his May 20 letter.

A Message from our Curate, The Rev. Meredith Jane Day. Read on the next to last page of this leaflet a letter from our curate, the Rev. Meredith Jane Day, with an update to her wedding plans, which will now take place on June 6 at Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville. The diocesan curacy program for Meredith+ will end on June 30. Stay tuned for details about how GSL will celebrate her three-year ministry among us before relocating to Cincinnati in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio.

COVID-19 Update Message from The Rector. Read on the last page of this leaflet a message from the Rev. Ollie V. Rencher about life at GSL and plans for the coming weeks.

Quick Parishioner Survey: Household Plans for In-Person Worship. Follow this link for a quick survey to provide the clergy, staff, wardens, and vestry with a general idea of your plans to return for in-person worship when the time comes.

GSL Re-Entry Team. Read under Community Life about how you might serve.

Friday, Looking Ahead eNews. Watch for an email at 3 p.m. about what to expect on the upcoming Sunday including service leaflet access, what’s ahead for the coming week, and any updates from the clergy or the senior warden.

Worship and Music

Worship Schedule. Join us Sunday mornings at 10:30 via livestream as the clergy and musicians lead worship offerings. Compline (Night Prayers) is offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m. via Facebook Live. For more information, visit www.gracestlukes.org/worship. To explore our past and upcoming services, follow this link.

Online Giving
Make a one time gift now by scanning the QR code below with your smart phone!

Recurring
Set up recurring 2020 pledge payments by scanning the QR code with your phone!
GSL Music in May: Sundays 5:30 to 6 p.m. Music in May concerts feature music for organ, bassoon, flute, and guitar offered by Director of Music and Organist Dr. Patrick A. Scott and Assistant Organist-Choirmaster Debbie Smith and guest instrumentalists. The Sunday video will be announced on the GSL Facebook page at 5:30 p.m. Videos of each livestream offering, including past concerts, will be posted on www.gracestlukes.org/events/music-in-may. Spread the word and tune in.

Upcoming Schedule:
• 24 May: Andrew Carroll, bassoon, & Debbie Smith, organ
• 31 May: Kelly Herrmann, flute, & Patrick A. Scott, organ

The 14th Annual Belvedere Chamber Music Festival, produced by Luna Nova Music (www.lunanova.org) and typically held at Grace-St. Luke’s each summer, will be June 17-20 in a digital form. Concerts will be presented online by way of YouTube, our website, and Facebook. Links to the concerts will be available directly at www.belvederefestival.org and will be made live the days of the concerts. All of our regular players will take part, some from videos made here in Memphis and some with collaborative projects in other parts of the country. Please send any questions or suggestions to Patricia Gray pgray@pgray.net.

Christian Formation

Adults. In addition to Midweek Christian Formation on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m., explore Virtual Offerings for a listing of events or to contact the Rev. Meredith Jane Day (mday@gracestlukes.org, 901-252-6329) for more information about learning opportunities.

Youth: Morning Prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 a.m. on Instagram Live, and Sunday EYC via ZOOM: Middle School 5 p.m., High School 6 p.m. Teens also are connecting on Instagram (gsl.youth) and utilizing the “D365” daily devotion. For more information, contact Director of Youth Formation Amzie Williams.

Children: Households are encouraged to explore Faith at Home and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd resources. All are invited to join us on Facebook: GSL Children’s Formation. For more information, contact Director of Children’s Formation Sharon Campbell.

Community Life

Join the GSL Re-Entry Team. Plans are underway for in-person worship to resume as early as Sunday, June 7. The Wardens will benefit from a team of persons to support the staff and clergy in essential roles before, during and after services. Adults are needed to serve as outside and inside welcome hosts/greeters, ushers, and in other hospitality roles for morning and evening worship offerings (schedule to be announced). All that we do will be smart and safe according to health and government official approved “Faith Community Guidelines for Resumption of In Person Worship” from our Bishop. If you are able to serve, please email Senior Warden Simon Wadsworth (srcw at icloud.com) or Junior Warden Charlie Pazar (pazar at aol.com).

Honoring Our High School Seniors. In preparation for Youth Sunday, June 14, we give thanks for those preparing for graduation: Berent Balink, Anna Margaret Burnett, Dabney Collier, Anna Deason, Claire Epperson, J. D. Huber, Ruby Liles, Mary Chapman Morrow, Ellie Sappington, Bennett Vaughan, and Will Woodmansee. If there are other parishioners to be recognized, please contact Director of Youth Formation Amzie Williams.

MOVING IN FAITH: Join the Journey. How much fun would it be to team up with your church and challenge other congregations, friends and neighbors to work towards common health goals through daily exercise? Join Grace-St. Luke’s, Church of the Holy Communion, and St. John’s Episcopal as we team up to offer Moving In Faith. This is a 6-week journey to a healthier mind, body and spirit through exercise, weekly prayers and scripture readings. More than ever, it’s important to find ways to stay healthy. Friendly team competition is a great way to stay connected and motivate one another. Moving In Faith starts June 1 and is for everyone, regardless of age or fitness level. Visit www.gracestlukes.org/news/moving-in-faith or contact Athletics Director Christi Authement for details.
Thank You for Supporting Life at GSL. The Rector, Wardens and Vestry are glad and grateful that the parish community is practicing self-care and care for others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your sacred offerings of time, talent, and treasure serve to keep GSL strong and sustainable. All financial gifts in any amount contribute in countless ways to support weekly administration and operations, worship offerings, clergy-staff team personnel, and congregational life. You may visit gracestlukes.org/onlinegiving, text GSLChurch ALMS to 73256 to give to ALMS, text GSLChurch PLEDGE to 73256 to give to 2020 PLEDGE, mail offerings to the church office, or contact Parish Administrator Linda Stine (lstine@gracestlukes.org, 901-252-6324).

REALM Connect: Benefiting Life at GSL. It is extraordinary to witness increased and new connections between parishioners as well as by clergy-staff team members with parishioners as benefits of REALM. Users can easily update their membership profiles with individual and household photos, reach out to one another through the directory, sign-up for ministry team, fellowship groups and events, manage financial giving, and more. Visit www.gracestlukes.org/realm or contact Receptionist and Ministry Associate Abby Huber (901-252-6336, ahuber@gracestlukes.org) for assistance.

Outreach

Serving Within and Beyond Our Doors. Parishioners interested in participating in outreach may email Outreach Committee Chair Bill Pichette (picwill at rocketmail.com) or visit gracestlukes.org/outreach. More Than A Meal continues on Sundays from 4-4:45 p.m. with a “brown bag” plan that is working well. The Food Pantry is closed with plans to reopen as soon as possible. All who are able may give now or anytime to the Mid-South Food Bank. For information about GSL Servant Ministry Partners, visit gracestlukes.org/outreach.

Stay Informed

If you have not already done so, visit gracestlukes.org to subscribe to the parish eNews to receive weekly, seasonal, and emergency pastoral notices from the clergy or other leaders. Visit http://eepurl.com/bi3C5 to subscribe to the West Tennessee Diocesan Communicator, and for access to beyond-local news from The Episcopal Church, visit episcopalnewsservice.org/email-signup. Please spread the word about these key communication platforms.

The Prayer List

Our prayers are asked for Kristin, Nancy Menzies, Pauline Spiegelman, Jonathan, Martin, Tom, Holly, Jon, Ann and Don Sandberg, Jonathan, Shari Moore, Barb Frazer, Amanda Adams, the Rev. Gary Nowlin, Betsy Tate, Nancy Wilkerson, Charles Chandler, Caroline Clay, Kay, John, Patty McManus, and Brad Larson.

Our prayers are asked for those who have died: Carol L. Jones and John Robert Harpole, father of Sue Harpole.

We give thanks for those celebrating birthdays, especially Alex Boggs, Felix Campbell, Brian Chiozza, Caroline Ciarabito, Jean Cooper, Dan Eason, David French, Cam Gibbs, Grady Hurdle, Mary Ann Jackson, Amelia Lownes, Bill Pichette, Mrs. Ellie Rencher, Pete Rosato, William Shepherd, Rachel Smith, Linden White, Parker Wiggins, and Trae Winston, and for those celebrating wedding anniversaries, especially Dan Hope & Ginger Lehman, Sidney & Mary Selvidge, Ja & Marsha Hayes, and Alex & Jenay Boggs.

About the prayers: Names on the prayer list will remain for 1 month. If you would like your or your loved one’s name to remain longer, please call the church office.
Wednesday, May 20, 2020

A Message from the Curate
Regarding Updated Wedding Plans

Beloved Wedding Guests,

As spring gives way to summer, we are writing to inform you about unexpected changes to our wedding. This season of uncertainty has forced people all over the world to drastically alter their daily lives and to adjust plans, especially for large gatherings. Our wedding, which was scheduled for June 13th at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, was to be a grand affair; hundreds of invitations had been printed, florists were booked, choir anthems were rehearsed, and wedding cakes were tasted, as our guests made arrangements to come to Memphis from far and wide. Back in January, when we sat down together to share what was most important to us in our wedding, two themes emerged: we wanted to celebrate a liturgy that would draw people into the unconditional love of God, and we also wanted to share that celebration with as many of the people we loved as possible.

However, the spring of 2020 saw the spread of COVID-19 across the globe. The unpredictability and fear that accompanied the virus affected our communities, our families, and our churches. When Holy Week and Easter services left the pews empty to keep worshippers safe, we knew that the liturgy of our wedding would likely need to look different too. We debated pushing the date back or splitting up the civil and religious ceremonies. In the end, neither option really appealed to us, and deep down we knew we were so very ready for this covenant with God and one another.

Then, on a warm April day, we went for a (socially distanced) stroll at Elmwood Cemetery, close to our homes in Memphis. Walking and talking among the stone monuments, we took turns sharing our anxieties about the wedding. Stepping through the quiet markers of lives past, we found the gravestones of Sister Constance and her companions. During an outbreak of yellow fever that ravaged Memphis in 1878, these Episcopal nuns faithfully cared for the sick and dying at the cost of their own lives. The irony was not lost on us. There among the trees, we offered a prayer written in commemoration of their sacrifice:

We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of Constance and her companions, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death: Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

We grieved as we felt our future wedding memories slipping away. We reflected on our callings: Meredith to the priesthood and Jackson to medicine. Caring for others in the most dire of circumstances is at the heart of each of our professions. In the end, both of us felt a high degree of responsibility for making plans that would protect our community, loved ones, and the most vulnerable among us. This prompted us to make the difficult decision to celebrate our marriage in a much more intimate setting with only our immediate family, and sadly, without a crowd of friends and relatives in the pews of a packed church.

Even now we can’t know exactly how our wedding will look. This invitation reflects the wedding we wanted to have with all of you, but can no longer safely celebrate up close. As we fill these envelopes, we feel sadness at this loss but are trusting in the abiding love of Christ in our lives. The mystery of the sacraments is that God shows up at any time, in any place, with ordinary people. Although the day will look different, we have no doubt that God will be present and praised as we commit to life with one another. On June 6th, in the chancel at Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville, we will be holding all of you close in spirit, wrapped in your love and care for us. You have prayed for us, raised us, taught us, and loved us in so many ways; for that we will never fully be able to express our gratitude.

These days are difficult, and we do not know what the future will bring. We pray this invitation will be a reminder of how much we cherish each of you; please know that it carries our hopes for a day in the future where we can all celebrate together face-to-face. You can stay up to date on those plans on our website at meredithandjackson.com.

We know that the love that has brought us to this moment will go forward with us into the future. Thanks for taking the journey with us.

Fondly,

Meredith and Jackson
Friday, May 22, 2020

A Message from the Rector
Regarding COVID-19 and Mindfulness at GSL

Dear Grace-St. Luke’s Church and School Community:

I pray you and yours are faring well and give thanks for our common life of faith. It is important to keep our community informed of how the GSL clergy and lay leadership is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely in how worship and more will be offered in the near and far future. If you have any questions along the way, please contact me directly.

Since May 7, when Bishop Phoebe announced that in-person worship may begin as early as June 1, guidelines have been adopted for use by faith communities based on directives from health and government officials. On behalf of the Vestry, Senior Warden Simon Wadsworth and Junior Warden Charlie Pazar and I are working with a Re-Entry Team to outline a plan for GSL based on the May 20th Faith Community Guidelines for Resumption of In-Person Worship. In-person worship could begin as early as June 7. However, this plan could change if health officials and the Bishop direct a delay for the care and safety of us all. Meanwhile, we need your help by Monday, May 25. If you have not already done so, please take a moment to complete a quick survey: Household Plans for In-Person Worship. Follow this link to provide a general idea of your plans to return for in-person worship when the time comes.

Most importantly, our virtual worship offerings will continue for the foreseeable future. We want all to stay safe and practice self-care, making the decision most right for them. Staying at home to worship and pray as an integral member of the parish reminds us that together we make up the strength of the body of Christ. Certain audio-visual upgrades and equipment are necessary to maintain livestreaming services in a way that is both a positive experience for viewers and manageable by staff and volunteers.

Thank you for the countless ways by which you make us strong. Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and because the Church is the People, Grace-St. Luke’s is alive and well. Our vision is to be a thriving community of hope, belonging, and healing through worship, parish life, and service, and who rejoices in the love of Jesus to transform the world.

I look forward to sharing future updates related to the pandemic, including how GSL remains mindful, prayerful, and responsive for the good of the wholeness of the human family.

Godspeed as we journey with Jesus,
Ollie+
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