

# 2023 Annual Report

## 160th Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish



February 4, 2024

Grace Episcopal Church  
Amherst, Massachusetts



**2023 Annual Report  
Grace Church Parish**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	Order of Business	4
II.	Membership	5
III.	Minutes from the 158th Annual Meeting	10
IV.	Rector's Sermon	13
V.	Vestry and Committee Reports	19
	Senior Warden	19
	Junior Warden	20
VI.	Commission Reports	21
	Liturgical Commission	21
	Christian Formation and Education	24
	Parish Life Commission	30
	Pastoral Care Commission	32
	Outreach Commission	33
	Stewardship Commission	36
VII.	Treasurer's Report	37
VIII.	Membership Information	39

160th Annual Meeting of Grace Episcopal Church  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
4 February 2024

## I. Order of Business

Celebration of the Holy Eucharist	9:30 AM in the Parish Hall and via livestream
Call to Order	Ruthie Ireland, Clerk of the Vestry
Acceptance of Roll of Membership	
Reception of Minutes of the 159th Annual Meeting, February 5, 2023	
Recognition of Retiring Vestry Members	Chris Freitag, Senior Warden
Report of Nominating Committee and the Election of New Vestry Members and Delegates to Convention	
Report from the Stewardship Committee	Bruce Stebbins, Chair
Reception of Reports from Officers and Commissions	
Treasurer's Remarks	Bruce Stebbins, Treasurer
Remarks of Wardens and Rector	Chris Freitag, Senior Warden Tom Dougherty, Junior Warden The Rev. Thomas Synan, Rector
Other Business	
Closing Hymn and Prayer	

*O God our Creator, make the door of our parish church wide enough to receive all who need human love, fellowship, and care, and narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride, and rancor. Here may the tempted find succor, and the sorrowing receive comfort; here may the careless be awakened to repentance, and the penitent be assured of thy mercy; and here may all thy children renew their strength in thee and go on their way rejoicing; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## II. Membership 2023

Abbott, Hannah	Baker, Nancy	Brown, Elizabeth R.
Adler, Doug	Baker, Samantha	Brown, Georgianna
Aldrich, Brenda	Baker, Tom	Brown, Gillian
Aldrich, Rick	Balderston, Jacob	Brown, Gregory
Allbritton, Bill	Barnes, Toby	Brown, Liam
Allison, Barrett	Barnes-Bernal, Bodhi	Brown, Malcolm "Max"
Allison, Benjamin	Barnett, David	Brown, Nate
Allison, Caroline	Barnett, Tamara	Bryant, Karen
Allison, Donald	Barrett, Ruth	Bull, Mary
Allison, Edith	Barrett, Steve	Byler, Lynne
Allison, James	Bashour, Emelyn	Callard, Patricia
Anderson, Gordon	Bashour, Gabrielle	Callard, Tim
Anderson, Gordon "Gordy"	Bausor, Randall	Carlson, Melvin
Anderson, Lydia	Beall, Andy	Case, Wendryn
Andrews, Jess	Beall, Charles	Casey, Kathleen
Appelbaum, Patricia	Beall, Eileen	Cataldi, Marlaina
Arwade, Cyrus	Bedet, Charlotte	Chadwick, Harry
Arwade, Sanjay	Beebe, The Rev. Jane	Chadwick, Sarah
Ash, Alison	Benfer, Katherine	Chapman, Veronica
Ash, Jonathan	Berenson, Mary Kay	Chase, Andrew
Ash, Raiden	Bergin, Lucy	Chase, Calla
Ash, Sophie	Bernal, Angelica M.	Chase, Lucy
Ash, Tori	Blain, Beatrice	Chase, Samuel
Atkinson, Chandler	Blain, Rachel	Christakos, Deborah
Atkinson, Katherine "Kate"	Blanchard, Kerry	Clark, Casey
Atkinson, Lane	Blay, Jack	Cleary, Daniel
Atkinson, Rollin	Bogal-Allbritton, Elizabeth	Coleman, Emily
Atkinson, Stephen	Bogal-Allbritton, Rose	Coleman, Jack
Atkinson, Wade	Botelho, Maria Jose	Coleman, Jeremy
Ayres, Elihu	Boy, Sarah	Coleman, Juliet
Ayres, Emma	Bracciotti, Paul	Collette, Carolyn
Ayres, Jim	Brace, Dee	Collins, Sue Ann
Baird, Andrea	Breon, Emily	Comeau, Lindsay
Baird, Cameron	Breton, Amber	Constantine, Maria
Baird, Ian	Breton, Chris	Costa, Dennis
Baird, John	Breton, JaeLynn	Coughlin, Brendan
Baird, Mackenzie	Brooks, Cheryl	Coughlin, Kevin
Baker, Chris	Brooks, Gregory	Coughlin, Lauren
Baker, Elizabeth	Brown, Beth	Coughlin, Marie
Baker, Joey	Brown, Beth	Coy, Sheila
Baker, Kate	Brown, Catherine	Crandall, Cara

Creaser, Patricia  
Currin, Cecil  
Currin, Lou  
Dale, Duane  
Damon, Beth  
Damon, Dick  
Dann, Cecily  
Dann, Chelsea  
Dann, Jennifer  
Dann, O'Keefe  
Davila, Jaime  
Davila-Bustamante, Gabriel  
Davis, Brenda  
Davis, Elizabeth  
Davis, Fletcher  
Denit, Lucas  
Denit, Lyle  
DeSantis, Jeffrey  
DeSantis, Karen  
Devine, Donna  
Dick, Carol  
Dickinson, Anne  
Dickinson, Charlie  
Dickinson, Emma  
Dickinson, Will  
Dineen, Daniel  
Dineen, Denise  
Dineen, John  
Dineen, Matthew  
Dineen, Patrick  
Ditzler, Anne  
Dole, Nancy  
Dougherty, Jackie  
Dougherty, Kellen  
Dougherty, Kitty  
Dougherty, Stewart  
Dougherty, Tom  
Drake, Helen  
Duda, Elizabeth  
Duda, Gillian  
Duda, Jessica  
Duda, Jim  
Dye, Maria  
Easton, Lee

Enhstrom, Christophe  
Erard, Jeanette  
Erard, Michael  
Etinde, Alpha  
Etinde, Annie Lokangu  
Etinde, Floribert  
Eve, David  
Eve, Kira  
Eve, Max  
Eve, Tomi  
Eziri, Emeka M.  
Eziri, Kelechi  
Fabing, Suzannah  
Faerber, Kent  
Federa, Danielle  
Fiddian-Green, Prunella  
Fowler, MJ  
Frantz-Dale, Heidi  
Freitag, Christopher  
Freitag, Melanie  
Freitag, Melissa  
Freitag, Rebecca  
French Finn, Elizabeth  
Fukushima, Barb  
Gaeke, June  
Garrett, Greyson  
Gergely, Sophia  
Gerzina, Gretchen  
Gilsdorf, Anna  
Gilsdorf, Benjamin  
Gilsdorf, Sean  
Glance, Andrew  
Glance, Mya  
Glime, Kathy  
Gnatek, Andrew  
Gnatek, Dan  
Gnatek, Gail  
Goff, Abigail  
Goff, David  
Goff, Yolanda  
Golden II, Norman  
Goodell, Jack  
Goodwin, Mary  
Goodwin-Brown, Alice

Goodwin-Brown, Ross  
Gralenski, Linda  
Gralenski, Michael  
Gregory, Matthew  
Haff, Susan  
Haight, Andrew  
Haight, Charles  
Haight, Susan  
Hampson, Amy  
Hampson, Carter  
Hampson, Liza  
Hampson, Quinn  
Hampson, Tim  
Harris, Colleen  
Harris, Loy  
Harron III, William  
Hartblay, Amber  
Hartblay, Cassandra  
Hartblay, Marian  
Hathaway, Charlotte  
Hazlip, Bennett  
Hazlip, Ilona  
Hazlip, Joseph  
Healy, Lorie  
Herrington, Anne  
Hertel, Marsha  
Ho, Carlton  
Ho, Jonathan  
Ho, Linda  
Ho, Marissa  
Hocken, Mary  
Hoffmann, Anne  
Hoffmann, Chris  
Hoffmann, Sarah  
Hoffmann, Willy  
Holladay, Margaret (Meg)  
Holland, Ann  
Homme, Anne  
Honig, Adam  
Honig, Charlotte  
Honig, James  
Horn, John  
Horn, Raisin  
Hunter, Jefferson

Hunter, Pamela  
Hwang-Carlos, Camila  
Ireland, Caleb  
Ireland, Emily  
Ireland, Michael  
Ireland, Ruthie  
Jacobson, Adam  
Jacobson, Adrienne  
Jacque, Deborah  
Jacque, Ronald  
Jenkins, John  
Jenkins, Miriam  
Jewell, Tony  
Jones, Kimberly  
Judge, Sharon  
Judge, Steve  
Julliard, Kell  
Keedy, Jeffrey  
Keedy, Maddox  
Keedy, Mia  
Keefe, Nancy  
Kelly, Charlotte  
Kelly, Janine  
Kelly, Patrick  
Kelly Jr., Robert  
Keneally, L. Finley  
Kennedy, Brown  
Kennedy Costa, Gabriel  
Kennedy Costa, Michael  
Kiefer, Marvin  
King, Margaret  
Klock, Benjamin  
Klock, Laura  
Klock, Lynn  
Klock, Suzanne  
Klug, Elizabeth  
Klug, Stephanie  
Knight, Caseem  
Knight, Kelley  
Kohler, Walter  
Kohler, Wendy  
Konieczny, Alan  
Konieczny, Jo-Ann  
Konieczny, Joseph

Konieczny, Maria  
Konieczny, William  
Labor, Jasper  
LaMotte, Erik  
LaMotte, Kirsten  
Lane, Cameron  
Lange, Betty  
Lapis, Jennifer  
LaPointe, Jennifer  
LaPointe, Michael  
LaPointe, Nancy  
Lattanzi, Robert  
Lattanzi, Susan  
Lavine, Isaac  
Lavine, Louise  
Lavine, Michael  
Lavine, Noah  
Laylin, Peter  
Laylin, Peter  
Leavitt, Joan  
Leonard, Bill  
Leonard, Deborah  
Leonard, Katherine  
Leonard, Margaret  
Leonard, Samuel  
Leonas, Andrew  
Leonas, Mark  
Leung, Helen  
Lewin, Ann  
Liberty-Laylin, Sara  
Lillydahl, Sandra  
Lillydahl-Schroeder, Elija  
Lillydahl-Schroeder,  
Hosanna  
Linberg, Catherine  
Lloyd, Julia  
Lowance, Susan  
Lowell, Ann S.  
Lowry, Bridget  
Lowry, Fiona  
Lowry, Janet  
Lowry, Nancy  
Lowry, Sam  
Lowry, Susannah

Lukas, Lisa  
Lukas, Tilman  
Luschen, Kristen  
Lynn, Liberty  
Lynn, Violet  
Malsch, Sally  
Malzone, Sarah  
Malzone, Wesley  
Mammen, Sheila  
Mangaliso, Bande  
Mangaliso, Mzamo  
Mangaliso, Nomazengie  
Mangaliso, Unati  
Manning, Arlene  
Marino, Kevin  
Marino, Nathan  
Marino, Sharon  
Marino, Tyler  
Markovits, Elizabeth  
Marshall, Mark  
Martineau, Erin  
Martini, Mary  
Mathews, Betsy  
Mathews, Cindy  
Mathews, James  
Mathews, Philip  
Mattrey, Gianna  
Mattrey, Jack  
Mattrey, Jada  
Mattrey, Ruby  
Mattrey, Stephanie  
Maxey, Amory  
Maxey, Henry  
Maxey, Libby  
Maxey, Trent  
McDermott, Megan  
McDonald, James  
McDonald, Lisa  
McKelvey, Bridget  
McKelvey, Diane  
McKelvey, Kira  
McKelvey, Stephen  
Mead, Amelia  
Mead, Jim

Mead, Kimberly  
Miller, Audrey  
Miller, John  
Mirick, Georgann  
Mishkin, Peter  
Miskovsky, Glenn  
Mitchell, Martha  
Mix Barrington, Jessica  
Moner, Emily Anne  
Moner, Meriel  
Moore, Douglas  
Moore, Janet  
Moore, Lisa  
Moore, Robert  
Moran, Charlene  
Moran, Frank  
Moriarty, David  
Morse, Dorothy  
Morse, Tony  
Moss, Castor  
Moss, Eliot  
Moss, Natalie  
Musgrave, Alan  
Musgrave, Elizabeth  
Muspratt, Sandy  
Muszynski, Anthony  
Muszynski, Hannah  
Muszynski, Jozef  
Muszynski, Samuel  
Neill, Elizabeth  
Nelson, Julie  
Niswonger, Dee Dee  
Niswonger, Gary  
Norris, Harold  
Obbard, Catherine  
O'Brien, Jeffrey  
O'Brien, Joan  
Olakanpo, Annabel  
Olakanpo, Bethany  
Olakanpo, Florence  
Olakanpo, Olusoji  
Olakanpo, Sally  
Olson, Erika  
Ortega-Bustamante, Isolda

Owaki, Alesha  
Page, Kenneth  
Palaia, Amy  
Peavey, Douglas  
Peltier, Heidi  
Pemberton, Jane  
Perrault, Lucien  
Perry, Alex  
Perry, Evan  
Perry, Fred  
Perry, Thomas  
Peterman, Janice  
Peterman, Mark  
Pickron, Carlton  
Pickron, Lisa  
Plette, Christine  
Polino, Antonio  
Polino, Francesca  
Polino, Gemma  
Polino, Joseph  
Polino, Maria  
Price, Jane  
Quinlan, Catherine  
Quinlan, Victoria  
Ramos-Velazquez, Virginia  
Rankin, Jean  
Rankin, Larry  
Read, Jennifer  
Read, Matthew  
Read, Rick  
Redfern, Garrett  
Reed-McNally, Karla  
Reed-McNally, Linus  
Reed-McNally, Maureen  
Reed-McNally, Rudy  
Reid, Melinda  
Ricard, Andre  
Ricard, Laura  
Rice, Robert  
Riddington, Dahlia  
Riddington, Forset  
Riddington, Leif  
Riddington, Sara  
Riddle, Chris

Riddle, DeAnne  
Riddle, Emily  
Robinson, John  
Robinson, Lucy  
Rogalski, Patricia  
Rogalski, Stephen  
Rosazza, Jacob  
Rosenau, Marion  
Rosengarten, Mindy  
Rosengarten, Peter  
Samonds, Ken  
Saulsberry, Gaylord  
Saulsberry, Janet Elias  
Scarff, Anne  
Schaeffer, The Rev. Susan  
Schendel, Katie  
Schreiber, Stephen  
Scott, James  
Scott, Nina  
Seaman, Amanda  
Seelig, Harry  
Seelig, Sharon  
Sessions, Phebe  
Seterdahl, Anna  
Seterdahl, Elsa  
Seterdahl, Peter  
Seterdahl, Trudie May  
Shaffer, Sally  
Shaughan, Mary Ellen  
Sheehan, Eugene  
Sheehan, Marcia  
Sikowitz, Peter  
Silvia, Angela  
Silvia, Bjorn  
Silvia, Teghan  
Siudzinski, Bryn Margaret  
Siudzinski, Madeline  
Siudzinski, Meghan  
Siudzinski, Robert  
Smith, Anna  
Smith, Betsy Cannon  
Smith, Donovan N.  
Smith, Ellie C.  
Smith, Kevyn



Smith, Lucy A.	Talan, Kenneth	Wieckowski, Ania
Smith, Randall P.	Taylor, Warren	Wilburn, Adam
Smith, Randall P., Jr.	Tebbetts, Charles	Wilburn, Aidan
Snedecor, Peter	Tebbetts, Walter	Wilburn, Emma
Soper, James	Teng, Janet	Wilburn, Jeanette
Soper, Jennifer	Thompson, Colin	Wilkinson, Pam
Soper, Joshua	Thompson, Zachary	Williams, Dani
Soper, Katherine	Thornton, Benjamin	Williams, David
Spell, Cynthia	Thornton, Dean	Williams, Elia
Spence, Catherine	Thornton, Shannon	Williams, Fox
Spence, George	Thurber, Jane	Williams, Isabel
Spence, Jack	Thurber, Kate	Williams, Kate
Spence, Rob	Tillona, Patricia	Williams, Keith
Spurgin, Caroline	Todd, David	Williams, Kevin
Spurgin, Diana	Treyz, Eric	Williams, Lee
Spurgin, Kate	Treyz, Frederick	Williams, Marion
Spurgin, Richard	Treyz, Justin	Williams, Melinda
Spurgin, Richard	Treyz, Mary Sidney	Williams, Sophie
Spurgin, Sarah Grace	Treyz, Peter	Wilson, Sherry
Stair, Adrian	Tupper, Laurie	Winslow, Reynolds
Starkweather, Emily	Turgeon, Sarah	Wissemann, David
Stebbins, Bruce	Tyng, C W	Wissemann, Kimberly
Stebbins, Matthew	Van Cleef, Aidan	Wobst, Gregory
Stebbins, Owen	Van Cleef, Bryce	Wobst, H Martin
Stelzner, Sara	Van Dyke, Ann	Wobst, Judith
Sternau, Barbara	Velazquez, Archie	Wobst, Natalia
Stewart, Doug	Vigeland, Bonnie	Wood, Ann
Stewart, Ericka	Wald, James	Wood, John
Stifler, John	Wald, Jane	Wood, Nancy
Stoneham, Joel	Wald, Marianne	Wren Zide, Jana
Stoneham, Luke	Walter, Micah	Wright, Arline
Stoneham, Pete	Wanninger, Natascha	Wright, Jonathan
Stoner, Sarah	Wanninger, Sebastian	Wright, Meg Kelsey
Stromgren, Elise	Wanninger, Tatjana	Zamora, Andrew
Sullivan, Brendan	Webster, Eve	Zatyarka, Helen
Sullivan, Brooke	Webster, The Rev. Raymond	Zhang, Enhua
Sullivan, Cornelia	Weeber, Charles	Zobel, Chris
Sullivan, Kyle	Weeber, Nancy Rose	Zobel, Katie
Sweeney, Thomas	Wells, Andrew	Zobel, Noah
Swem, Paul	Wells, Nicholas	Zobel, Sydney
Synan, Thomas	Wells, Sharon	Zou, Lili
Szumowski, Pat	Westhead, Charlotte	
Talan, Catherine	White, Ethel	

### **III. Minutes of the 159th Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish, Amherst, Massachusetts convened on February 5, 2023**

On February 5, 2023, Clerk Ruthie Ireland called the 159<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Grace Church to order.

The Rev. Tom Synan, Rector, opened the meeting with a prayer.

#### **Role of Membership 2023**

Ruthie Ireland asked for any additions or corrections to the Role of Membership 2023. A motion was made to accept the Role as printed, seconded, and the Role was accepted by unanimous vote.

#### **Minutes of the 158<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

Minutes of the 158<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, held on February 6, 2022 were reviewed. There were no additions or corrections. A motion to accept the minutes of the 158<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was made, seconded, and approved by unanimous vote.

#### **Retiring Vestry Members**

Senior Warden, Chris Freitag, recognized the Vestry members who completed their terms: Sarah Chadwick, Donna Devine, and Kathy Glime. Chris also recognized Executive Committee member, Mark Leonas, for his four years of service as Treasurer. Kathy and Mark are retiring, while Sarah and Donna will continue for another term. Chris offered thanks to each member for their service on the Vestry. Gifts were presented to retiring members.

#### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

Members of the Nominating Committee are the retiring Vestry members, Senior Warden Chris Freitag, and the Rector, the Rev. Tom Synan. After discernment with interested parishioners, the committee presented a slate of candidates to the Vestry. Following approval by the Vestry, the slate of candidates was included in an email notification for review by parishioners.

The candidates for the Vestry, Officers of the Vestry, and Delegates to Diocesan Convention are:

Vestry (each for a term of three years)

Sarah Chadwick  
Cara Crandall  
Donna Devine

Vestry Youth (a term of one year)

Amory Maxey  
Tyler Marino

Officers of the Vestry (each for a term of one year)

Senior Warden – Chris Freitag

Junior Warden – Tom Dougherty

Treasurer – Bruce Stebbins

Clerk – Ruthie Ireland

Lay Delegates to Convention

Sheila Mammen

A Vestry member will be elected at a future date

The Rev. Tom Synan asked for nominations from the floor. No nominations were offered.

Patricia Tillona made a motion to close the nominations and to direct the Clerk to cast one vote for the slate of candidates as presented. The motion was seconded, and passed unanimously. The candidates, as presented in the slate, were welcomed to their new positions by the Rev. Tom Synan.

### **Report of the Stewardship Committee**

Bruce Stebbins presented the report of the Stewardship Committee. Bruce recognized Tom Dougherty and Charlie Tebbetts for their help in October with the stewardship campaign. Bruce also thanked Chris Freitag, Tom Dougherty, and Charlie Tebbetts for their stewardship testimonials. Year to date, the 2023 stewardship campaign raised \$451,834 and 147 pledges. Of the 147 pledges, 3 are new pledges. Our goal is to raise \$480k for the 2023 budget.

### **2022 Annual Report**

A motion to accept the reports as printed in the 2022 Annual Report, 159<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Mark Leonas presented the Treasurer's Report. An influx of pledges in December combined with generosity from our parish enabled Grace to meet financial goals in 2022 and close our goal of \$485k. Expenses such as utilities and salaries are fixed and we ended the year with a 25k deficit. Surplus from the previous year enabled us to overcome this deficit. Stewardship pledges were higher this year. Despite this revenue, it is still apparent that we need to implement additional fundraising to raise 10k. This year, we asked for an additional 20k from our investment account. Next year, we would like to raise 10k through fundraising efforts and increase our membership. Mark encouraged the parish to think of ways to increase membership, emphasizing that it is our mission to reach out to the world. Mark offered thanks to everyone for their generosity in pledging, and offered special thanks to Harry Chadwick for his help in balancing the budget this year. Mark also offered thanks to members of the Finance Committee for their experience and wisdom: Kitty Dougherty, John Robinson, DeAnne Riddle, Bruce Stebbins, Lynn Klock, Harry Chadwick, Rich Spurgin and Mark Leonas. Mark thanked Rich Spurgin for his continued help preparing financial reports, and Bruce Stebbins and the Stewardship Committee for their dedicated work. Mark offered thanks to the Plate Counting Committee members: Bruce Stebbins, Sarah Boy, Kathy Glime, Doug Adler, Steve McKelvey, Lynn Klock, Kitty Dougherty, John Robinson, Harry Chadwick, and Mark Leonas. Mark gave a final thanks to those parishioners who put Grace in their will. Mark ended his report by sharing that he will step down as Treasurer. He is grateful for the time he served and is

confident that Bruce will be a great addition. Mark will continue to serve on the finance committee and help support their work. Mark thanked everyone for their trust in him as Treasurer.

### **Senior Warden's Report**

Chris Freitag delivered heartfelt thanks to the Rev. Tom Synan, the Rev. Megan McDermott, the Executive Committee, members of the Vestry, and the parish for their help through this year of transition. Chris highlighted those transitions which included the reintroduction of in-person services and communion wine. Chris highlighted the countless hours put in by Tom and Megan. He also thanked members of the parish for sharing time and talents in countless ways. Chris highlighted the successful Saint Nicholas Bazaar - which included lunch this year, Christmas services, the wonderful work Megan is doing with youth in the church as well as her focus on poetry and art. Chris gave thanks for the creation of three new committees this year: Communication Committee, Fundraising Committee, and Newcomers Committee. Chris stated that we will be watching the budget very closely this year. He invited members to consider serving Grace and join us, as "many hands make for fun and easy work."

### **Junior Warden's Report**

Tom Dougherty offered thanks to Dave Ulen, who retired after 20 years as sexton. He welcomed Dave Goodhind, hired in May, as Grace's new sexton. Tom reported that Grace completed an energy audit that indicated some work needs to be done around campus to tighten energy usage. Thermostats need replacement and Grace will work with Sumner Fuel on this initiative.

The Parke House Revisioning Committee was formed to examine and determine future use for the Parke House. An anonymous donor will make this work possible.

### **The Rector's Report**

The Rev. Tom Synan referenced his sermon from today and recorded in the 2022 Annual Report recognizing thankfulness for Grace and all who are a part of this church. Tom reinforced that most of what he wanted to say he said in his sermon: "who are you? You all are the salt of the earth!" From his sermon, "...we are to flavor the world. As God's agents, we are to season and transform life in such a way that God is better revealed and made manifest in this world. We are called to shine the light of hope where darkness prevails." Tom offered that we are a parish with room to dream. We are not in survival mode; Grace has a future. Tom expressed that he is honored to be rector of this church.

Tom offered thanks for all those involved with worship and liturgy: altar guild, acolytes, lectors, lay Eucharist ministers, the choir, Beth and Dick - our music director and organist, ushers, visitors, counters, flower guild, coffee hour hosts, and every single person in a pew. Tom thanked Megan and everyone who works with our young people. Tom thanked the generosity and support efforts to bring stuffing the Survival Center, books to the incarcerated, warm clothing to Grace's Closet, and Christmas gifts to 40 families in need. Tom thanked those involved with our missions in Haiti and Ramallah and fundraising efforts for these missions, and the Circle of Care who supported and helped the Berchmas family relocate to Indiana. Tom thanked the Pastoral Care Commission for organizing a presentation series on anxiety and depression in the context of COVID, Megan for her Monday Meditations, and Kell Julliard for his mindfulness presentations. Tom thanked Ken Samonds for his presentation on our stained glass windows and the publication of his book, *A Slant of Light*. Tom offered thanks for the Parke House Revisioning Committee, the Vestry and Executive Committee, and the

Stewardship Committee for their support and leadership. Finally, Tom thanked those who hosted Advent Suppers and all those that participated in the Saint Nicholas Bazaar.

Tom concluded with a reminder that “now is not the time for us to lose our flavor and zest, or put our light under a bushel basket, and give up and do nothing. Who are you? *You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.*” May the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, continue to guide and strengthen you in the service of Christ and Christ’s kingdom.

The meeting concluded with a hymn and prayer.

*Respectfully Submitted, Ruthie Ireland, Clerk*

#### **IV. Rector’s Sermon and Address, February 4, 2024**

Today we have some very interesting lessons, as we continue our Epiphany journey of increasing light and ongoing revelation about the reality of God and the sacred identity of Jesus. What began by the light of one lone star has rapidly developed with great intensity and increasing insight – and all done for us and for our salvation.

We have Isaiah practically in a state of ecstasy expounding the wonders of God. The words practically jump off the page. It’s almost impossible to speak without shouting:

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

Where have you been?

The answer, in response to Isaiah, is:

Where have we been? We’re in exile. We’re in captivity. We’re lost. We’re at the mercy of our conquerors, the Babylonians. And life is hard. We see no way forward, no future, no hope.

Isaiah wants to lift up the Judean exiles who think God no longer pays attention to them. He eloquently reminds them of God’s incomparable might as manifest in nature and in history.

He highlights the majesty of God. God’s so big, God sits above all creation and everything, including the brutal and powerful Babylonians, are like grasshoppers in comparison. It’s cosmic in scope with an emphasis on God’s greatness and vastness.

Don’t be afraid, don’t give up, don’t lose hope, because God is paying attention to their pain and struggle. This massive all powerful God is still listening, because God never grows tired.

It’s hard to imagine God, from this perspective, taking the time or making the effort to pay attention to the needs of or have much concern for us or anyone else personally, when we are like mere grasshoppers before the Almighty.

Does God really care? Do we and all creation truly matter?

The answer is yes. God does care, and we and all creation do matter. It's a paradox that the Almighty is not only a giant unknowable abstract, but also a God that transcends creation and is personally invested and takes interest in everything, all the way down to grasshoppers.

We find proof of this in today's Gospel. While Isaiah focuses on the nature and work of God on a grand cosmic scale, Mark hones in on one little teeny-tiny episode: the healing of one woman, who happens to be Peter's mother-in-law.

Ok, a brief side note: *Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you?*  
That Peter was married!!!

Oh my God, what a shock. It's so easy to think all of Jesus' friends were men who somehow were on their own with no family or community. A bunch of guys making it all happen, when the truth is: it was through the greater community that God's work and Jesus' ministry was made manifest and was able to come to fruition.

On the surface this story can seem so insignificant, we might be tempted to think did Mark really need to include this. But there's really a lot going on; so much, Mark had to include it.

Just a few verses back, Jesus called four fishermen to follow him: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They left their boats, their nets, and for two of them – their father, and they immediately followed him. They go to Capernaum, where these four live. On the Sabbath, they go to the synagogue, where Jesus teaches with authority. Someone possessed by a demon challenges Jesus, telling him he knows who Jesus is. Jesus tells the demon to be silent and to come out of the person, which it does, immediately obeying.

It's still the Sabbath, and Jesus and the four leave the synagogue and go to Peter's house.

Why his house?

Did he live nearby? Was his place the nicest or the biggest? We don't know, but doesn't it seem a little odd to invite guests into your home when someone there is sick? Think about what we've been through in the last couple of years. Who among us would have people over while someone in the house is sick with COVID? And who among us would be overjoyed to be invited into someone's home only to find out COVID's there.

It's odd, but maybe, just maybe, Peter invites Jesus specifically for this very reason. Jesus just got rid of a demon. Could he help my mother-in-law who's sick and not getting better?

Here in a home in Capernaum, the power of the Almighty that Isaiah shouts about, most definitely is interested in and cares about the condition of one little grasshopper, one person. Without saying a word, Jesus takes her by the hand and lifts her up, and the fever is gone. Lifting her up is more than simply getting her out of bed. This is resurrection language. At the end of his Gospel, regarding Easter Sunday, Mark uses the same language about Jesus. The women at the tomb are told Jesus isn't there. He's been raised up.

Peter's mother-in-law isn't just healed; she's transformed. And her subsequent serving isn't about being banished to the kitchen to make a meal for the men who get to lounge about in Peter's man-cave. In the original Greek, Mark uses the same word to describe what the angels did after Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.

They waited on him. This newly restored and transformed woman is now doing work that's on par with the angels.

And if you ask me, I think she's also the fifth disciple Jesus calls. And not only that, she's the first Deacon of the Church. Sorry Stephen, Philip, and the other five men mentioned in Acts of the Apostles, you're ministry I affirm, but you were NOT the first deacons. Peter's mother-in-law has that honor.

Later on Jesus will explain the importance of service.

*Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many.* (Mark 10:43-45)

And so the message for us today is:

Have you known? Have you heard? Do you understand? God is paying attention. God is still listening and never grows tired of us. That our God is not only all powerful and mighty, but also extremely caring.

That with Christ, we're restored and transformed, and called to take on the work of angels. And we can't do that sitting down in the comfort of home, be it ours or Peter's. We have to get up. We have to rise like Peter's mother-in-law and join in with others, the community of faith, to do the work God calls us to.

So have you known that? Have you heard and understood that?

The answer, in my humble opinion, is a resounding YES, because the proof is in the pudding. You not only know this; you LIVE this. Thanks be to God and thanks be to Grace Church. This congregation in so many ways gets up, rises to the occasion, to do God's work and to be God's witnesses and agents in a world desperate for restoration, transformation, and hope.

How do you do this? Let's start with our acts of worship, which, need I remind you, are called "services". The beauty of our worship life, our services, is that our liturgy truly is a work of the people as an act of love, love for God and love for one another. All of you play an integral role, seen and unseen, to make this happen: altar guild, acolytes, lectors, lay Eucharistic ministers, the choir, ushers, visitors, counters, flower guild, coffee hour hospitality, and every single one of you in the pew. Your prayers matter. Your presence matters. You matter. Thank God you're here. It's a beautiful thing when we come together and raise up our hearts, our minds, our souls, and our voices to acknowledge the mystery and the holiness of God.

Looking back over the year, Holy Week once again was sublime. Its holiness comes from you setting it apart, starting with Palm Sunday, followed by the beauty of Tenebrae, the sanctity of Maundy Thursday, the solemnity of Good Friday, the awesomeness of the Easter Vigil, and the glory of Easter morning. It's a week we rise up to face the reality of the complexity of who we are – the good and the bad that resides in all of us, while encountering, in response, the infinite depth our God goes to restore and transform us through God's grace and mercy. It's an annual commemoration of Christ's desire that we love one another as he loves us, and you do that so well.

This year Holy Week is almost as early as it possibly can be, starting Sunday March 24<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars now, and participate as much as you can. In the words of the Patriarch Jacob: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God." (Genesis 28:17)

After Easter there's Pentecost Sunday, with the multitude of languages, and our grand annual commemoration of the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in the fall you celebrated the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, with a fabulous parish picnic following. Many thanks to and God bless the Brother Lawrence Guild for answering the call of holy hospitality. All Saints Sunday – always a major feast at Grace Church – last year we recognized and gave thanks for the commitment and dedicated 24 years of service of Beth Damon, as our Music Director, who retired last year. Well done, good and faithful servant! May God continue to bless you and be with you, Beth.

In Advent we officially installed Noah Horn as our new Music Director. We are so happy that you and your family are here. Welcome. I also would like to give a special shout out to Dick Damon, our organist, who is not only gifted and talented, and for whom we are blessed, but also for the gracefulness he has shown in the transition that's taking place in our music program. Thank you for all that you do and for being part of Grace Church.

Last year Advent Lessons and Carols was heavenly, and we were blessed to host, what I hope will be a Grace Church tradition, a Messiah sing along. It was a last minute ask if we could do this, and thankfully we rose to the occasion. I look forward to us hosting it again in December and in years to come. Christmas, as always, was beautiful, across all our services. It's my humble opinion that no one tells the Christmas story better than children, particularly when they have live goats and the Grace Church camel assisting them! A new innovation last year, from what I saw, was the incorporation of the Bethlehem earthquake of 4 B.C., which somehow didn't make it into the Bible. Those of you who were at the 4pm service know what I'm talking about. B.C. stands for "By Camel". It backed into the crèche, and you can imagine the rest. Seriously, though, it's a joy to watch the wonder on children's faces as they place animal figurines in the crèche. The mystery of the incarnation manifests so beautifully on their faces as they enter into the wonder of Christmas.

We are blessed with such a range of worship opportunities: Sunday morning services at 8:00 and 10:30, Liturgy in the Chapel once a month, Wednesday midday Holy Communion and Healing Service, and Friday Evensong. In the words of an old spiritual: *There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place*. Thank you to all who make the liturgical life of this parish the exceptional and transformative experience it truly is. Thank you for rising up and taking on the work of the angels.

Where else is the work of angels happening? As always, in our children and youth ministries. Last year was another terrific year. We were blessed with the return of a Junior Choir for Easter Sunday. We sent a delegation to the Episcopal Youth Event which was held on the campus of the University of Maryland and which brings together young Episcopalians from around the world. When Bishop Doug visited us in May, five young people were confirmed, along with one adult reaffirmation. And we are incredibly fortunate that the youth here feel empowered to take on parish leadership, faithfully answering the call to participate on the Vestry.

I've said it before and I will continue to say this over and over again and again and again that Grace Church, in the Town of Amherst, in the year of Our Lord 2024, has the nicest young people I've ever met in all my years of ordained ministry. Your presence and participation is such a witness and testimony to the faith. Never forget that this is your church as much as it is anybody else's and don't ever let anyone tell you otherwise. Many blessings to you; and praises to Megan McDermott, and to everyone who works with our young people: parents, grandparents, godparents, whomever, and to everyone who in whatever way help and encourage our children and youth to answer the call to discipleship.



Grace Church rose up again this year to help our neighbors both near and far. In 2023, this parish met our goal and provided 512 packages of bread stuffing for the Survival Center's Thanksgiving distribution, as well as over 1,200lbs of food for their pantry. We continue to partner with Books through Bars, a worthwhile prison ministry, and donated hundreds of books for people who are incarcerated. We supplied Christmas gifts for 40 families, resulting in 118 children waking up to a special and more happy Christmas morn. And your generosity is humbling. Grace Church provided about \$30,000 to deserving agencies, such as Amherst A Better Chance, Episcopal Relief and Development's Turkey-Syria Earthquake Response Fund, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the Jerusalem Princess Basma Center, Craig's Doors, and Jewish Family Services. Thank you for being so generous and answering the call to help those in need.

Our missions in Haiti and Ramallah are more relevant than ever, given the dire conditions of both places. We started the year with the Annual Dine In, Help Haiti Out soup supper extravaganza. Our sister parish, Saint James and Saint Andrew's, raised \$4000 for the benefit of St. Mathieu. Solar panels and computers made their way to Bayonnais – talk about a miracle. It's amazing all of that was able to reach the school. Construction began for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Every student, all 250 of them, received a new school uniform at the start of the school year. And six members of St. James in Indian Head, Maryland, our valued and faithful partner, visited us in the fall. God bless our partners in Haiti and Maryland, and all who help in this ministry. And in Ramallah, Teya Awad graduated from the Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center, and is continuing her studies in the field of computers. Our current student is Joyce Harish. This is our 13<sup>th</sup> year and Joyce is our 7<sup>th</sup> student, and among those we've sponsored she's the first young woman to focus her studies in the area of IT.

This last year the Vestry launched three committees: Fundraising, Communications, and Newcomers. It was the year of Mind the Gap, a strategic approach to public relations and social media, and innovative hospitality. You not only "minded" the gap, you closed it. And you closed it in the way churches function best – doing it as a community. So many of you came forward and offered your time, talent, and treasures to help make ends meet: Garden Tours, a week's stay at a parishioner's home on the Cape, the Peter Mishkin Exposition, Mushroom Foraging, and the Harvest Festival with a mini-bazaar. Borrowing from the musical Oklahoma, I don't know if everything is still up to date in Kansas City, but Grace Church is branching out on Facebook and Instagram, and a professional audio-visual system will be installed sometime in the weeks ahead, which will improve tremendously the livestream we provide. All of which, with God's help, will offer a truly welcoming experience at Grace Church in a variety of ways.

There's so much going on in the life and ministry of this parish. Thank you to all who participated in "From One Star to a Dazzling Christ" as well as the Lenten discussion of Richard Rohr's book *The Universal Christ*. Thank you to the Pastoral Care commission for organizing vital presentations concerning topics, such as memory loss, anxiety and depression in the context of relationships, caregiving, and death and dying. Thank you to all who attended Megan's Monday noon meditations, and Kell Julliard's *Joy of Living* program. Thank you to all who share their thoughts and reflections on the Community Bulletin Board. Thank you to Climate Action @ Grace. Keep ringing the bell on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of each month, continue to raise awareness, and continue getting us into good trouble. Thank you to all who are re-envisioning the Parke House. Thank you Vestry and Executive Committee for your support and leadership. You mean the world to me. Thank you to those who hosted and those who attended the Second Annual Advent Suppers. It was Oscar Wilde who said, "Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess." Those suppers are a grand success, as evidenced by the exponential growing number of folks who participated. May there be more opportunities like that this coming year. And thank you to all who participated in the St. Nicholas Bazaar. Seeing all the people who come to the bazaar, reminds me every year that this is an important ministry for many in our area. It's not just a fundraiser. None of our fundraisers are simply fundraisers. All of them are also "fun-raisers" and community

builders. To all who participate in the life of this parish, which you all do: thank you, thank you, thank you. There is no Grace Church without you. Great is your reward in heaven, if I can help it.

Many thanks also to the Stewardship Committee and to each and every one of you for your generous outpouring of financial support for Grace Church. A church budget I always like to say, is a tangible and physical manifestation of a congregation's faith, hope, and charity. God bless you for your generosity and your witness.

My friends, let's be honest. Every year has its challenges. There's so much uncertainty about where things are going. The situation in the Holy Land is a terrible tragedy on all sides and remains a mess. Ukraine continues to fight for its survival. Inflation seems to be improving, but costs also seem to go only in one direction and that's up for everyone – including the church. Hostility in our country shows no sign of abating, and the next election cycle is moving into full throttle. These are tough times but that's why there's ministry. Never in the history of Christendom has any generation been called to relax and do nothing. Like that first deacon, Peter's mother-in-law, we are called to rise up and make a difference, taking on the work of angels.

The life of a parish is first and foremost about its people – past, present, and yet to come – the full Communion of Saints. Faithful souls brought this church into being and it has been lovingly passed along from generation to generation by people who answered God's call to do their part to improve the world and repair it as well. That call is now ours to claim: to make a difference, and sustain and strengthen this wonderful parish, so that we too can lovingly hand it on to those who will come after us.

Now in my eleventh year at Grace Church, I remain so incredibly honored and humbled to be your rector. What makes Grace Church in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts and in the People's Republic of Amherst so special is **you**. You do so many incredibly amazing things through amazing Grace, but even so we have our work cut out for us.

So my friends, *have you not known? Have you not heard?*

Our God is Good, and we are so blessed in so many ways. I am blessed through you!

May the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, continue to guide and strengthen you in the service of Christ and Christ's kingdom.

And may God bless Grace Church,

And The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

God bless you all!

Amen.

*The Rev. Tom Synan*

## V. Vestry Reports

### Senior Warden:

Grace continues to accomplish many things and while I can count myself a part of them, I by no means have done them alone. I would like to thank Tom and Megan for their guidance and leadership, as well as the Executive Committee, Tom, Bruce, and Ruthie for these past few years. I would also like to thank the current Vestry for their help in guiding our ministries and keeping our facilities running. I would also like to thank the Parish for your support not only financially, but also more importantly for your time and talents because without your efforts over the past year we could not continue to be such a vibrant community.

At the beginning of the year, I, along with the Vestry, saw several areas that needed our attention, so we implemented three Committees to address these needs. Our Communications Committee identified and implemented improvements to the church's digital media presence. This included not only creating an Instagram page but many other things. The committee helped publicize several parish events through means that included online messaging, flyers, signs, and announcements sent to the local media and organizations, as well as developing an online form for Church groups to request publicity. The Committee also presented options for upgrading our streaming platform. I am looking forward to a more professional looking and sounding streaming feed from Grace, as our Vestry authorized the funding to go ahead with these enhancements to our system. Thank you to Sarah Chadwick and Patrick Kelly who co-chaired the committee along with Anne Homme, Amy Glynn, MJ Fowler, Terrie Korpita (our Parish Administrator) and Vicky Ix, (the Diocesan Canon for Communications) for your hard work.

We also formed a Fundraising Committee and were blessed by not only raising but exceeding our goals in our budget. We also succeeded in having so much fun while doing it. We really brought people together with the garden tours, art auction, concerts, Cape house auction, mushroom hunting as well as all the wonderful events surrounding the Harvest festival. Thank you Suzannah Fabing and Donna Devine who co-chaired the committee, and all the others who spearheaded, helped, or sponsored these delightful events with their time or financial support. A special thank you to Mary Hocken who shepherded the Harvest Festival activities and made the church so beautiful during the fall.

Finally, we also formed a Newcomers Committee. We all worked to welcome those new in our midst and made sure that they felt connected. Thank you, Rachel Blain, for overseeing this committee.

The bazaar again was a great success and so were the Christmas Services. What an outstanding addition we have with Noah Horn as our new Music Director. Music continues to thrive at Grace Church. I was so glad that we were able to give Tom a Sabbatical, so he could relax, visit with friends and family as well as chill! No one can say that Grace is not involved in our community as well as within the wider one. Our Haiti Ministry, through the generosity of our Parish, exceeded their goal for uniforms and books for all the students. I am very proud of that.

In closing, I would like to say that with many hands the work becomes fun. The committees here at Grace could always use more help. If you are not already a participant or if you have a special talent and time to share, please speak with a vestry member or officer and they would be glad to assist you in becoming more involved with the committees. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as your Senior Warden and as I step down from this position, I look forward to helping or giving advice in the future.

*Chris Freitag, Senior Warden*

## **Junior Warden:**

In highlighting some of the projects performed around the church campus this past year I have to praise our Sexton Dave Goodhind for his energy and ability to make repairs, Also Terrie Korpita in the office for her help with scheduling the various yearly inspections including; The Parish Hall kitchen stove hood, backflow preventers, fire safety, maintenance of our heating units, Amherst Board of Health and elevator inspections.

Here are some of the projects we completed this year:

- Pavers in Columbarium were resealed by Whirlwind Fine Garden Design, Amherst.
- Ceiling lights in Parish Hall and Connector were all changed out, one ballast in the Connector was replaced. Dave G & Tom D
- All thermostat controls were covered and locked. Dave G
- Moldy concrete sidewalks were power washed. Dave G & Tom D
- Met with Alan Snow the Amherst Tree Warden to inspect the invasive Norway Maples that are deteriorating at a rapid pace alongside the church's property boarding the town hall parking lot, creating a liability issue. Is a fund raiser in our future?
- More water mitigation was done, inside basement walls were caulked and sealed, as was an outside patch placed alongside the front steps to the church to keep water from seeping in. Dave G

We arranged to have the Amherst Police to come and talk with the staff about "ALICE" alert, lockdown, inform, counter and evacuate. The police also toured our campus and gave us several recommendations; trim bushes back from blocking windows, put up blinds on exterior windows and keep them drawn during night time hours. Consider installing outside cameras.

There some repairs that we need to use outside contractors and this past year we used; Bob Cote from Blanchard & Daly Electric, BPH Plumbing & Heating and Roberts Roofs.

We continue to work hard to keep this large beautiful campus clean and safe for our staff, parishioners and community.

*Tom Dougherty, Junior Warden*

## **The Parke House Revisioning Committee**

Though the committee has not met much in 2023 that is about to change in 2024 as our donor is keen to move replacing the Parke House with a more updated energy efficient building that has meeting spaces for Grace Church needs and the greater community. Current committee members are Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, Alice Goodwin Brown, Megan McDermott, Mark Leonas, John Robinson and (committee chair)Tom Dougherty.

## VI. Commission Reports

### LITURGICAL COMMISSION

**Altar Guild:** We are indebted to the members of the Altar Guild who make sure the Altar looks beautiful throughout the year. They include Georgann Mirick who oversees the roster of duties for every service and keeps track and orders all Altar supplies; volunteers who set up and clean the Altar at regular services and special seasons of the church year including Advent, Lent, and Holy Week; volunteers who launder Altar linens throughout the year; Lou Currin who heads up the Flower Guild; and volunteers who create beauty at the Altar with flowers at every Sunday service and other special services.

Grace Church is our sacred place, and it takes many hands to make our worship space special. We are fortunate to have a small but dedicated team of volunteers to assist in this important ministry. We thank all members of the Altar Guild for their hard work and willingness to engage in the many activities that are done mostly out of sight. We are always looking for volunteers. Anyone (men and women, singles, and couples) interested in joining this special ministry is always welcome. Thank you!

*Sheila Mammen*

**Acolytes:** At the moment, we do not have a parishioner coordinating children and youth in our acolyte ministry. Since our return to in-person worship, we've concentrated on making sure that acolytes have been part of special services in the liturgical year – which has been very successful! – and at the 10:30 service on Sunday mornings when there's interest. New acolytes are welcome, and returning acolytes are encouraged to serve on any Sunday that works with their schedules. While we have not been regularly having acolytes at 8 a.m., acolytes would certainly be welcomed in that time slot as well!

Megan is currently the contact person for acolyting. Please reach out to Megan at [mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org](mailto:mmcdermott@gracechurchamherst.org) if you are interested in having your child(ren) begin acolyting or return to acolyting.

*Rev. Megan McDermott*

### **Music:**

#### **Winter/Spring/Summer 2023**

The music program started 2023 thankful for the cautious return to pre-pandemic norms that allowed incrementally increasing singing at services throughout the fall of 2022 and looking forward to restoring additional music back into the life of Grace Episcopal Church. Little did we anticipate the surprises in store for us!

Led by music director Beth Hart Damon and organist Dick Damon, the senior choir supported the liturgy at the weekly 10:30 a.m. Sunday service with an anthem, and leading the congregation in a sung psalm, hymns, and service music. Dick also provided organ and piano accompaniment for singing at the 8:00 am service as well as preludes and postludes for both services. Beth, Dick and the choir also contributed to the Town of Amherst's Luminaria celebration on February 11th, reprising – or in one case, anticipating – Sunday anthems and leading the “drop-in” audience in singing selections from the “Lift Every Voice and Sing” hymnal.

The choir's musical journey through Holy Week, started with an anthem and hymns at the blessing of palms in the parish hall on Palm Sunday and a joyful procession up Spring Street with bell ringing, shortly followed by

the transition into Passiontide, then the Paschal Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and culminating in the joy of Easter morning. COVID did have a surprise up its sleeve for the Tennebrae Choir on the Wednesday of Holy Week, but despite decimating the choir and preventing our planned service, Beth, Dick, Dennis Costa, and the clergy created over the course of a single afternoon an equally meaningful and rewarding journey into the shadows and promise of Christ's light returning. Dick provided music at the organ, while the chants were primarily sung Dennis, although Libbey Maxey and I joined him in a few.

Shortly after Easter, we received news that Beth would be retiring after 23 years of leading the music ministry at Grace Church. Anticipating the parish celebration that would be held in the fall, we marked Beth's last Sunday leading the choir on June 4th by singing not only the text ("Psallite Deo nostro in Laetitia") that she set to J.S. Bach's "Sicut locutus est" from his Magnificat and that she used to start the choir season for so many years, but also Alice Parker's, with whom Beth had a rewarding association, "Trinitarian Blessings." The quality of the music program that Beth had built at Grace Church was reflected in the strength of the application pool received by the search committee. The committee choose three finalists who were auditioned over the summer, leading the choir (and a few guests) in mock rehearsals. After receiving feedback from the choir, the committee made a recommendation to the rector, who offered the position to Dr. Noah Horn. To our delight, he accepted.

Personally, I give thanks to my fellow choristers, with whom it has been my privilege to sing for over 30 years. On behalf of the choir, I express our deepest gratitude for Beth's leadership these past 23 years as we have made a joyful noise unto the Lord. Likewise, we look forward with excitement to continue giving glory to God as we work with Noah.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Mark D. Marshall*

#### Choral Repertoire (January–June 2023)

Pieces marked with an asterisk were also presented as part of Grace Church's participation in Luminaria on February 11.

January 8	Johann Sebastian Bach	Break forth, O beauteous, heavenly light*
January 15	Randall Thompson	Choose something like a star*
January 22	Richard Damon	O light of light*
January 29	Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck	O gladsome light*
February 5	Johann Sebastian Bach	O Jesu Christ, mein's Lebens Licht*
February 12	Edward Elgar	Lux Aeterna
February 19	Morten Lauridsen	O Nata Lux*
February 22	Johannes Brahms	Schaffe in mir Gott ein rein' Herz
February 26	Charles Villiers Stanford	Beati quorum via
March 5	Gabriel Fauré	Benedictus from Messe Basse
March 12	Caspar Othmayr	Verleih' uns Frieden gnädiglich
March 19	Brother James' Air	The Lord is my shepherd
March 26	Johann Sebastian Bach	Aus der Tiefe
April 2	Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	Pueri Hebraeorum
	Heinrich Schutz	Ehre sei dir Christe
April 6	Sebastian de Vivanco	O quam suavis

April 7	Johannes Brahms	Adoramus te
April 8	Ignazio Donati	Alleluia, Haec dies
April 9	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Regina Coeli
April 23	George Frideric Handel	Glory to God
April 30	Ralph Vaughan Williams	The Lord is my shepherd
May 7	Elizabeth Hart Damon	Ego sum vitis vera
May 14	George Frideric Handel	Let the heav'ns rejoice
May 21	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Gloria in excelsis from Coronation Mass
May 28	Harry Belafonte	Turn the World Around
June 4	J.S. Bach/E.H. Damon	Psallite Deo nostro in Laetitia
	Alice Parker	Trinitarian Blessings

### Fall 2023

The music program continued to thrive in the year 2023 at Grace Episcopal Church, Amherst, Massachusetts. I began my ministry on September 1, inheriting a wonderful program from outgoing music director Beth Hart Damon, and jumped right in with the season starting immediately thereafter. The church has been very welcoming and I am very glad to be here!

The choir performs each Sunday during the program (academic) year at the 10:30 a.m. service; a list of anthems is given below. Additional weekly music includes several hymns, a sung psalm, and Proper offerings such as the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and fraction anthem. Organist Dick Damon plays excellently and fluently, and handles keyboard duties for both the 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning services. He has performed dozens of keyboard works this fall, including many challenging accompaniments. Guest musicians for our services have included parishioner Kell Julliard (flute), Cobus du Toit (flute), and Jeff Holmes (trumpet).

Several special events took place this fall. The Harvest Festival consisted of many different musical offerings during the weekend of October 21-22, culminating with a classical music concert featuring many members of our parish. On November 5, we celebrated the music ministry of Beth Hart Damon with a special service and luncheon honoring her work at Grace Church for the past 23 years. We are delighted that she continues to sing with the choir that she so ably directed for so long. Around that time, the longest-serving member of the choir, Janet Moore, retired to the pews after 56 years of singing with us, and we thanked her for all of her service as well.

Three December musical events brightened up the holiday season. Advent Lessons and Carols took place on December 10 with the traditional nine lesson-carol pairs. Later that week, we had a Messiah sing-along with orchestra and soloists which completely filled the church, and which we hope will start an annual tradition at Grace. Finally, several services on Christmas Eve brought in the good news of the birth of Jesus with many choral carols and other music.

I look forward to many years of continued music-making at Grace Church, and wish everyone the best for this coming year of 2024. With special thanks to my partner-in-leadership Dick Damon, and to all for contributing to our lovely music program, respectfully submitted,

*Dr. Noah Horn*  
*Director of Music, Grace Church*

## Choir Roster (as of Christmas 2023)

Rev. Adrienne Stair	Helen Drake	June Gaeke	Mary Hocken
Ania Wieckowski	Rev. Heidi Frantz-	Kell Julliard	Natalie Moss
Anna Smith	Dale	Libby Maxey	Randall Bausor
Beth Hart Damon	Rev. James	Lisa McDonald	Sarah Boy
Dennis Costa	McDonald	Lorie Healy	Rev. Susan Schaeffer
Dick Damon	Jim Mead	Marianne Connor	
Duane Dale	Joan O'Brien	Mark Marshall	
Harold Norris	John Stifler	Marsha Hertel	

## Choral Repertoire (September–December 2023)

September 17	Gabriel Fauré	Cantique de Jean Racine
September 24	Richard Damon	Leave It There
October 1	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Ave verum corpus
October 8	Johannes Brahms	How lovely is Thy dwelling-place
October 15	Henry Smart	The Lord is my shepherd
October 22	Herbert Howells	Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks
October 29	Charles Villiers Stanford	Beati quorum via
November 5	Elizabeth Hart Damon	Ego sum vitis vera
	Elizabeth Hart Damon	The Lamb
November 12	Andre Thomas	Keep your lamps
November 19	Ralph Vaughan Williams	O how amiable are thy dwellings
November 26	George Frideric Handel	Lift up your heads, O ye gates
December 3	Richard Horn	A shoot shall come forth
December 10	Felix Mendelssohn	Behold a star from Jacob shining
	Boris Ord	Adam lay ybounden
	George Frideric Handel	And the glory of the Lord
	Anonymous	Rejoice in the Lord alway
	Hans Leo Hassler	Dixit Maria
	Charles Wood	O Thou the central orb
December 17	Henry Purcell	Rejoice in the Lord alway
December 24	Tomás Luis de Victoria	Ne timeas Maria
	Tomás Luis de Victoria	O magnum mysterium
	Harold Darke	In the bleak mid-winter
	George Frideric Handel	Glory to God
	David Willcocks	Sussex Carol

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION & EDUCATION - ADULT

Adult Education at Grace Church was lively and innovative in 2023. We went in new directions. The old tradition of Wednesday evening forums waned while new times and subjects appeared. However some time-honored and durable offerings remain in place.

### Ongoing Programs:

Saturday morning Bible Study with the Rector on Zoom continues. Discussion is lively and participatory. There is a cohort of regulars but newcomers are always welcome.



“Tea and Titles“ is a non-traditional book group, in that we meet, enjoy tea and goodies together, and report to the group on what we’ve been reading since our last meeting. We sometimes share books, but certainly ideas, and when there’s time, a lively discussion ensues. The scribe takes notes, as best as possible, edits and sends them out with a reminder of the next get-together. Some of our members, beginning with Covid are on line, and report there as well. We try to meet every 3-4 weeks in the Connector, but you can check with me Judee Wobst ([judith.wobst@gmail.com](mailto:judith.wobst@gmail.com)) to be sure.

“Raising the Questions” under the leadership of Nancy Lowry meets once a month in the Connector. All sorts of questions are raised in particular liturgical language and how we experience and express our faith.

### **Epiphany:**

In Epiphany there were several meetings with the Rector between services to dig into the season. We discussed the Holy Family and the Magi. One topic was “From One Star to a Dazzling Christ” when we talked about the idea of Epiphanies in the world and in our lives.

### **Lent:**

Our Lenten reading this year was *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr. Meetings were Sundays at 9:15 in person or Thursdays at 9:30 via ZOOM. Like Edward Schillebeeckx before him, Rohr explores the relationship between Jesus the man in history, and Christ our God. Lent had other offerings. The Rev. Megan’s Monday Zoom series on Jesus in Art and Poetry was a welcome addition. There was a talk and discussion, “The Thorny Work of Relationships” by Tom Niels-Duffy in the Parish Hall on March 5

*Eve Webster*

### **Raising the Questions**

Raising the Questions has been meeting monthly for over five years; topics have included original sin, meditation, walking as prayer, religion and politics, liturgical imagery and language, and politics and Christian identity. We share practices, prayers, ideas, readings, and music that are important to us and we have shared them with the wider congregation as well. We meet the second Tuesday morning of each month at 9:30 am. Come raise some questions with us!

*Nancy Lowry*

### **Creative Formation**

Since summer 2021, “creative formation” – opportunities to explore faith through arts, literature, and creativity – has been a named area of my focus here at Grace. In 2023, my primary way of engaging this project of “creative formation” was my Monday Zoom meditation series. Meeting at 12:15 p.m. online, I guide a group through pieces of visual art or a poem, often offering a reflection to jump-start people’s thinking, questions for individual meditation, and time for group discussion. All the series focused on using art or literature as a way of connecting with spiritual questions. Themes shifted according to liturgical season.

Zoom series for 2023 included:

\***Fleeting Epiphanies** – Using the poetry of Tania Runyan, Dorianne Laux, Pádraig Ó Tuama, and Ada Limón, we explored the sometimes fleeting and complicated nature of epiphany moments.

\***Joining Jesus in the Desert: A Lenten Meditation** – Throughout Lent, we looked at visual art that depicted Jesus being tempted in the desert by artists spanning several centuries, countries, and styles (including Ilya Repin, Juan de Flandes, Bartholomaeus Bruyn, Ivan Nikolaevich Kramskoi, Britoin Riverie, James Tissot, Muhammed Sharif, and Kelly Latimore). The artwork invited us to contemplate our own wilderness or temptation experiences.

**\*Summer Poetry and Prayer** – Each week featured a different poem by a contemporary poet. Poems explored topics like: the complexity of having your prayers answered; wonder and beauty as discovered in a stegosaurus; the roles of language and silence in our lives; God’s presence in the midst of illness; what makes a prayer “a good, good prayer;” longing and ego; a yearning for the structure of monastic life; and the impact of recovery on relationships.

**\*Gifts & Graces Through Poetry & Art** – Through October and November, we explored poetry and visual art that helped us see or name gifts and graces in our lives. Visual art included several pieces from the Pattern & Decoration movement of the 1970s; two pieces on display at the nearby Mount Holyoke College Art Museum; and graceful, hyper-realistic paintings by contemporary artist Calida Rawles. Poems by Margaret Atwood, Chris Abani, and Ada Limón invited us to think about finding the gifts in: our pasts; a loved one’s last moments; a parent’s acts of care we may have overlooked; and the abundance and complexity of blended families.

**\*Journeying with Mary: Advent Art Meditation** – In Advent, we meditated on art – once more spanning the centuries! – depicting Mary’s experience of the Annunciation; Mary as connected to the Eucharist; and Mary as one who embraces all of creation. These artworks gave us opportunities to reflect on the role of Mary in our own faith and theology.

All Zoom meditations were recorded and available for those who missed a session or couldn’t join us live. I am happy to share past recordings or links to my slides with those who are interested. These meditations will continue into 2024.

In summer 2022, a morning prayer service began on Tuesday mornings out of interest in a contemplative, creative opportunity for small group prayer. We had begun the year meeting indoors, but the group decided that this experience was most fulfilling when we were able to be outside together; therefore we shifted to meeting seasonally, when we could comfortably enjoy the Garth together. We ended up gathering at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesdays beginning in July and ending in mid-October. This service rotated leadership among multiple parishioners and myself.

Arts and creativity have also been part of campus and young adult ministries, which you can read more about in the campus and young adult ministry report. Additionally, many parishioners took on arts, creativity, and literature in their contributions to the church – for example, Mary Hocken and Kell Julliard’s movement and the sacred workshop last January.

*Rev. Megan McDermott*

## **CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMISSION - CHILDREN & YOUTH**

### **Children**

In 2023, Grace Church offered numerous opportunities for children to participate meaningfully and joyfully in the life of the church.

During our 2022-2023 school year, a K-6th grade Sunday School class was offered on Sunday mornings, from 9:15-10:15 a.m. This class used a curriculum called Sparkhouse Rotation, which uses creative and fun activities, such as art, drama, and games, to teach the Bible. One Bible story was typically featured for several weeks in a row, so students could immerse themselves in the biblical narrative. We focused on Old Testament stories,

A significant success was the re-institution of a Jr. Choir experience during Lent. After several rehearsals led by Alice Goodwin-Brown, a group performed two hymns as the introit to our 10:30 a.m. Easter morning service. During rehearsals, participants also learned about the Easter story and engaged in hands-on crafts, such as decorating an empty tomb that was on-display in the Connector. Easter included egg hunts following both morning services. Earlier that week, we also held a children's Stations of the Cross service.

Sunday School took a break over the summer and re-gathered in the Fall. We moved to the smaller classroom in the middle of the upstairs rooms in the Parke House; this has allowed us to slowly take on the more extensive project of sorting through and organizing the other 2 classrooms' many materials.

For our current 2023-2024 school year, we've shifted our grade range back to K-5th grades rather than including 6th grade. We have also introduced a new curriculum called Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum. We began the year with a unit on "Who is Jesus?" exploring Jesus as the good shepherd, the true vine, and more. Like our previous curriculum, this curriculum leaves plenty of room for wonder, imagination, and creativity, and provides space and time to explore children's questions and thoughts on Bible stories.

In 2023, we welcomed a new volunteer to this ministry, Lucy Bergin, who is an experienced educator and enthusiastic about children's ministry. Lucy and I (Megan) have been co-teaching.

In the 2022-2023 program year, Liturgy in the Chapel went on hiatus because of scheduling conflicts for families and interested volunteers. This fall, we brought back Liturgy in the Chapel with its first gathering in November. This half-hour worship service with Communion is a great opportunity for children and their families to experience the rhythms and heart of Episcopal worship in a child-friendly and accessible way. We debuted a new version of the liturgy which I began working on early in the pandemic. The prayers are crafted with the thought that Liturgy in the Chapel may be some participants' primary or most significant exposure to worship, and therefore tries not to assume background knowledge or previous experience.

In December, Sunday School and Liturgy in the Chapel paused for Christmas pageant preparations. Once again, we successfully had an in-person pageant at our 4 p.m. Christmas Eve service where children and youth took the lead in sharing and embodying the Christmas story!

As more families with young children have visited the parish, we've taken steps to re-open our nursery. I have hired 4 well-qualified and enthusiastic nursery staff who will begin work on a regular basis in February. This nursery staff team is background checked and will complete Safe Church training. Leading up to the full re-opening, we've had the nursery available some December and January Sundays through the help of temporary coverage.

I am very thankful for those who have helped make these ministries possible in 2023. Many thanks to Alice Goodwin-Brown for leading Jr. Choir in preparations for its Easter 2023 performance; to Abigail Goff for helping organize the Sunday School Rooms; to Lucy Bergin for volunteering with Sunday School (& continuing Abigail's organizing work!), Liturgy in the Chapel, and the Christmas pageant; to Mary El Vaughn who has helped as needed with Sunday School and children's music rehearsals/Liturgy in the Chapel; to Henry Maxey who has also helped be a guiding voice and example for younger children in music rehearsals/Liturgy in the Chapel; and to Sharon Marino, Tyler Marino, Katie Schendel, Sean & Ben Gilsdorf, Zoe of Ancient Ponies Farm, and so many others for their pageant help.

As we look to the future, we will continue considering what our Sunday morning offerings should look like to best serve the church of today. Both the Jr. Choir performance for Easter, our Christmas Eve pageant, and

rehearsals leading to those events were the largest draws for children and families in 2023, as opposed to our regular Sunday programming. This might lead us into some ongoing brainstorming about how music and theatre, particularly on a seasonal/special event basis, might be a good entryway for many families into the life of the church. That said, a weekly space provides an opportunity for depth of spiritual formation and learning of Scripture, as well as the building of relationships, that is difficult to replace in another context.

In last year's annual report, one of my listed goals for children's ministry was to "incorporate more, and new, parishioner volunteers into Sunday School and Liturgy in the Chapel." I am happy to say we succeeded in 2023 in bringing more people into the joy of ministering to and with the children of Grace.

*The Rev. Megan McDermott*

## **Youth**

In 2023, our youth group for grades 6-12 met regularly for opportunities to: engage in discussion on the relevance of faith for day-to-day life; serve others; and build community and supportive relationships.

The year's youth group activities included: regular lunch discussions of the book *How Not To Be Afraid: Seven Ways to Live When Everything Seems Terrifying* by Gareth Higgins; the beginning of a new lunchtime discussion series about the relationship between faith and lament; snacks and games at The Quarters arcade/restaurant in Hadley; a visit to the Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew in Greenfield for a youth climate action panel; providing hospitality to hikers on the Appalachian Trail at a ministry in Sheffield; an afternoon of games here at Grace Church; volunteering at Second Helpings, a meal program at Saints James and Andrew; and organizing and pricing toys together for the St. Nicholas Bazaar.

We have embraced a spirit of collaboration in our youth activities – notably with our Amherst neighbors at First Church and with our Episcopal neighbors in Greenfield – and look forward to continued collaborations in 2024.

The first half of 2023 also saw 5 youth in grades 8-10 confirmed by Bishop Fisher after a year-long class that met biweekly for an hour following the 10:30 service. We worked through the Baptismal Covenant as a means of exploring core aspects of our Christian faith. The class ended with an exploration of Anglican history and polity and reflection on why one might want to be a Christian in the first place. Confirmation classes meet every other year, so there is not a class running for the 2023-2024 school year.

I am thankful to those who volunteered with youth group and Confirmation ministries in 2023, particularly Kate Atkinson, Cara Crandall, and Lucy Bergin.

As a part of our ministry with the wider church, over the summer I served as a diocesan chaperone and coordinator for the Western Mass. delegation's trip to Episcopal Youth Event, a gathering that happens every 3 years for high schoolers in the Episcopal Church. Amory, one of our Grace youth, joined 4 other high schoolers from across the diocese from July 4th – 8th at the University of Maryland, College Park to hear from some of our denomination's most engaging speakers, like Presiding Bishop Michael Curry; take workshops on a variety of topics, such as vocation, suicide prevention and mental health ministries, and action in response to climate change; and experience worship with hundreds of other teenagers from across the world. Grace is happy to support these opportunities for our youth members to connect with the wider church. The next Episcopal Youth Event will be in 2026.

Our Grace youth have also been involved in a variety of aspects of parish life, including serving as: acolytes; Lay Eucharistic Ministers; youth vestry representatives; volunteers at events like last year's Harvest Festival; and leaders and volunteers in our ministries with younger children, through assistance with the pageant, Jr. Choir rehearsals, and Liturgy in the Chapel.

Our youth program may sometimes be small in number, but it has been consistent in thoughtful conversation – especially through our Confirmation class! – and fun. Scheduling continues to be one of our biggest challenges since our youth are dedicated to many enriching activities inside and outside of school. Flexibility, in addition to collaboration, will be an important value as we continue discerning the path forward for youth ministry at Grace Church.

*The Rev. Megan McDermott*

### **Campus and Young Adult Ministry**

In 2023, we experimented with different ways of doing campus ministry. During the winter/spring semester of 2023, our campus ministry group – GEMS: Grace Episcopal Ministry for Students – met twice a month on Thursday evenings, providing dinner and conversation for students and other local young adults. I am thankful to Will Harron for co-leading these gatherings!

As we headed into the 2023-24 school year, I decided to try out a different structure because my co-leader, Will Harron, had moved to Greenfield, and dinners didn't feel like the most financially or logistically sustainable choice. For this school year, GEMS moved to monthly gatherings typically on the third Saturday of each month from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Coronation Café. These are drop-in gatherings where students can join for as little or long as they like. The church treats them to beverages/pastries. This shift also included a more purposeful focus on undergraduates and very recent graduates rather than young adults more broadly. These gatherings, though small, have provided a space for meaningful connection in a way that feels sustainable in terms of leadership capacity and cost.

In 2023, Grace also collaborated with First Church Amherst on three open mic nights led by young adults, themed around spiritual expression and open to people of all faiths/spiritualities. These were hosted in the chapel at First Church. One of these open mics was funded, in part, by a grant Grace received from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, from their Loaves & Fishes grant available to mainline Protestant churches in Franklin and Hampshire Counties. This grant for \$2400 was for the purpose of “Fostering Imaginative Spirituality in Students and Young Adults.” So far, this grant funded coloring pages & pizza for a creative night for GEMS; admission to the Icon Museum in Clinton for participants in a Young Adult Ministry Network gathering; pizza and refreshments for one of the open mics; food at a Theology on Tap event on the Holy Spirit & imagination; ice cream and beverages for a discussion with the Lawrence House interns in South Hadley after a visit to the Mount Holyoke art museum; and creative Advent devotionals made available to young adults. We hope to use the rest of the grant's funds in 2024.

In the first half of 2023, parishioner Micah Walter also organized young adult brunches after the 10:30 service, typically on a monthly basis. Going into 2024, I am open to hearing from young adults in the parish about what they'd might be interested in, if anything, in terms of Grace Church-specific 20s and 30s gathering.

Many of our other opportunities for young adults have been through the Western Mass. Young Adult Ministry Network (YAMN), an organization that brings adults ages 18-40 together from across the region. In 2023,

activities of YAMN included regular board game and pizza meet-ups at Tree House Brewery in South Deerfield; the aforementioned visit to the Icon Museum in Clinton; an annual retreat at the Barbara C. Harris Center; and a day of Trail Magic – hospitality to Appalachian Trail hikers – in Sheffield.

The Theology on Tap group I've co-led, sponsored by the United Christian Foundation (an ecumenical campus ministry serving UMass), was meeting regularly in the winter/spring 2023 semester. As of now, the regular gathering of this group has been on hold (though we did enjoy a Christmas gathering at the Hangar here in Amherst!) so I can explore more possibilities on the UMass campus directly. In collaboration with other local ministers, particularly those connected to United Christian Foundation, we've been brainstorming holding a discussion group or Bible study on-campus.

Exploring connections to the colleges is a part of what campus ministry looks like. Grace is blessed with the opportunity and challenge of having three vibrant and unique communities to consider! In addition to exploring some on-campus possibilities at UMass, I have been welcomed to do some programs at the Spiritual Life Center at Hampshire College. I have two upcoming offerings scheduled at the Hampshire College Spiritual Life – a session on Prayer & Self-Reflection on Monday Feb. 12th, 3:30-4:30 p.m., and a session on Prayer & Imagination on Thursday Feb. 22nd, 4-5 p.m. There has been a staffing transition at Amherst College where I typically connect to the Christian/Protestant chaplain; there is no Protestant chaplain at the moment, but I did connect with Harrison Blum, Director of Religious & Spiritual Life, at the beginning of the school year to offer myself and Grace as a resource to students.

Perhaps most significantly for 2023 and for every year, I continued to reach out individually to college students and young adults who attend worship, inviting them to coffee/tea and further one-on-one conversation. Hopefully many of you have gotten to know the young adults and students among us as well! Students have been involved in a variety of ways in our parish life, including serving as lectors, bell ringers, and volunteers with our children's ministries; attending an Advent Supper; or joining the Grace Church delegation for worship at diocesan convention.

*The Rev. Megan McDermott*

## **PARISH LIFE COMMISSION**

The mission of the Parish Life Commission is to spread the joy of Christian fellowship and hospitality throughout Grace Church and the larger community. Many committees and events strive to maintain a strong, social connection throughout our membership. In 2023 we were able to hold these events:

*Our Annual Meeting*

*Shrove Sunday Pancake Coffee Hour*

*The annual Pentecost Picnic*

*The annual St. Michael's Picnic*

*The annual Stewardship Feast of Grace*

*The café at the St. Nicholas Bazaar*

Our Parish Life committees serve our members in many important ways. The Hospitality Committee provides coffee hours after our services, schedules ushers, and welcomes newcomers. The Brother Lawrence Guild provides delicious cuisine at various gatherings. The St. Nicholas Bazaar Committee not only provides a

community event but also raises money that is crucial for our budget. The Garden Ministry continues to maintain our gardens and to address areas of need.

The Parish Life Commission would like to thank all these committees for all that they do. Your dedication and support of Grace's programs and projects is most sincerely appreciated. Great may your reward be in heaven.

### **Saint Nicholas Bazaar:**

This year's bazaar was a success in more than one way - so many parishioners gave their time and talent (including a couple of newcomers!); we had a clear day and a crowd who came ready to shop; and we had the best sales total in several years. This is such a wonderful community event - for Grace Church and the wider community. Thank you so much to everyone who had any role in making it the great day that it was.

*Respectfully, Joan O'Brien*

### **Garden Ministry:**

Grace Garden Ministry thanked Sherry Wilson for her years of leadership. We think of her as we each take care of a different section of the church grounds.

In the fall we had a successful work party and worked so hard that we cleaned a few areas that were slated for a spring cleanup.

Due to the health deterioration of the large trees in the back of the church and the discussions about removal, the committee wrote a recommendation letter to the Vestry concerning the replacement process, irrigation needs and possible tree selections.

We started planning for a pollinator garden and initial plans were made for the annual plant sale to take place on May 11th next spring.

The garden ministry now has 12 active members and I thank all of them for their chlorophyll thumbs and clipping hands.

*Sara Liberty Laylin  
Grace Garden Ministry Chair*

### **Iconography Workshop:**

Saint Luke's icon workshop met on Sunday afternoons regularly through the year with several 3 day intensive workshops. About 15 iconographers are gaining in skill and increasingly beautiful icons are being completed and blessed. An icon of the Mother of Tenderness was donated to the St. Nicholas Bazaar to help with Grace's fundraising campaign.

*Sandy Lillydahl*

## **Archives Committee:**

In 2023 our committee of two continued work on completing our fine tuning of archival materials. Every work period has a different focus especially when we have requests to find specific materials that take us on an information hunt. It is certainly informative and quite entertaining.

We are still working on our oldest historical materials and building items of which there are many. Filing of yearly materials collected by Terrie happens every January. If any parishioners have items suitable for archival preservation, please contact us or leave them with Terrie in the office.

*Anne Homme and Janine Kelly*

## **PASTORAL CARE COMMISSION**

This year we continued to support parishioners by providing rides to appointments and church as needed. Meals were also delivered to those recovering from illness/surgery when requested. This remains an important mission function of the commission.

### **Volunteers**

A list of people willing to provide rides and/or meals was created and given to the parish administrator to aid in coordinating requests. This will serve as a resource whenever a request for assistance is made.

### **Educational Series**

Seeking to move beyond the traditional role of support through meals and rides, we developed an ongoing series of presentations on such subjects as memory loss, relationships, caregiving, and death/dying. This has been well received and will continue into 2024.

### **Christmas Gifts**

We prepared small gift boxes of cookies and candies which were then delivered to parishioners unable to freely leave their homes as well as those with recent losses. Often the visits were as welcome as the treats. Much thanks to volunteer bakers and those who made deliveries. This was a fun way to let others know they are not forgotten and we miss them.

### **Seeking Support**

If you or a family member are finding yourself in a situation of need, where food or transportation to doctor's appointments or church are difficult or you are going through more than you can handle on your own, please reach out. We will do our best to support you.

### **Offering Support**

If you feel called to be part of this mission, we welcome you. There are many ways to offer help: cooking, baking, delivering meals, writing cards, checking in over the phone, visiting, or giving someone a ride.

*Gail Gnatek, Karen DeSantis, Maria Dye, Ruthie Ireland, Anna Smith*



## **OUTREACH MINISTRIES COMMISSION**

Grace Episcopal Church has several outreach programs to help people in need or to address issues that we need to deal with in our own lives.

**Haiti:** Grace started and continues to support a school, St. Matthieu, in Bayonnais, Haiti. Prior to the opening of the school, few children in Bayonnais had access to even an elementary education. Children now have the opportunity to attend school in their own community through 8th grade. St. Matthieu has continued to teach students in spite of the terrible weather and unrest in Haiti. For more information, visit [www.graceinhaiti.org](http://www.graceinhaiti.org). See more details below.

Every 4th Sunday of the month, the plate offerings at Grace go to a non-profit chosen by the Outreach Committee. Many are local, while others help people in distress overseas. The charities supported this year through the 4th Sunday offering include the Amherst Committee for A Better Chance, the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (Syria Earthquake Relief and Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza), the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts, the Amherst Survival Center, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (for refugees in Sudan), Center for New Americans, Fisher Home, Not Bread Alone, Doctors Without Borders, Craig's Doors and Save the Children.

*DeAnne Riddle*

### **Adopt-A-Family for Christmas:**

Once again Grace Church members and a few community members gave in abundance to struggling families. All 40 families (120 children) were adopted. Last year we adopted 103 children. The families are supported by the Family Outreach of Amherst which does amazing work to help the most vulnerable families in our community. Your generosity continues to amaze. Thank you, thank you.

*Mary Hocken*

### **Haiti Ministry:**

While there is no ignoring the reality of the continuing dire conditions throughout Haiti, the rural school of St. Matthieu in Bayonnais has been spared the worst of the situation. While they have had to deal with some security issues and serious jumps in inflation for food and fuel, it has actually been a year of tremendous positive growth for the little school that Grace Church so generously and consistently supports. The school now educates almost 250 village children from pre-school through 8th grade. This annual report will provide details of the Ministry's activities and accomplishments over the past year.

The month of January was taken up with planning for the February soup supper event, now in its third year. This annual event took place on February 18th and involved contributions from local restaurants as well as many members of Grace Church in its planning and execution. This year, approximately \$3,500 was raised for St. Matthieu. We all ate well and had a good time!

Also in February, the Church of SS James and Andrew in Greenfield made a Lenten pledge of \$1500 to support this ministry and ended up raising \$4,000! We are so grateful for this significant contribution and hope to build on the ties between us in the future.

In late March, we hosted a showing of the film *Madan Sara* at Amherst College. The film details the role of the market women in Port-au-Prince whose determination and hard work support their families and provide food to the entire city. We decided to share the film later in the year with the Grace Church congregation.

In May, after several delays and obstacles, we learned that Brighten Haiti, a non-profit organization that one committee member worked with tirelessly for many months, was finally planning to ship and install solar panels to St Matthieu, a trial installation for Brighten Haiti, a huge and important change for the rural school. For the first time, there would be electricity in the school buildings. The project comprised not only solar panels, but also ceiling fans, lights, and an electric rice cooker. Further collaboration with Bethel UMC Computers in Education expanded the project to include 15 laptop computers, pre-loaded with books in Kreyol, French, English and Spanish as well as educational research and lesson materials. Again, our gratitude for these truly transformational donations to the school is immense.

Over the summer, while delays still plagued the delivery of the solar panels and computers, the school began construction of an 8th grade classroom on the 2nd floor of the main classroom building, meaning that the school would be serving children from pre-school through 8th grade. For the Grace Haiti Ministry, this means a continued search for another church (or churches) who can help underwrite the increasing costs of maintaining the school, and members are actively exploring possible partners. As the school expands, it is clear that Grace Church alone cannot bear the expenses involved.

Summer months, as always, saw the start of the annual uniform campaign, raising funds to supply all 250 children with a new school uniform, books and school supplies for the coming academic year. And we received the welcome news that the solar panels, computers, fans, cooker, projector and screen were all making their way through customs in Cap Haitien and en route to Bayonnais.

The uniform campaign was completed in September, Grace Church members having raised over \$19,000 to cover school expenses for every child enrolled. To celebrate having met this ambitious goal and to express the gratitude of the members of the committee, we held another showing of the film *Madan Sara*, this time in the Parish Hall after the 10:30 service on September 10th. Lu Childs, who was involved in the production of the film, came up from New York to answer questions afterwards and to offer his support for our efforts on behalf of St Matthieu.

In late October, we welcomed six members of St James' Church in Indian Head, MD, who have been contributing to the mission of this ministry for almost seven years, both by providing steady financial support as well as friendship. We enjoyed a potluck supper on Saturday night, services on Sunday, a lunch meeting in the Parish Hall and a rainy visit to a cider mill in New Salem. The warm sense of a joint effort keeping this rural school going continues to bind us all in fellowship.

And also in late October, we finally began to see images of the installation of the solar panels, the fans and lights, the projector and screen and the 15 new laptop computers loaded with educational materials—truly an amazing moment for this school – and for the Haiti Ministry.

In December we received a video from Brighten Haiti showing the solar panels in place, the ceiling fans and lights in the classrooms with the children, the projector and screen in use, the computers set up in the library space, and the children forming a thank you message. We plan to share the video with the entire Grace Church community in January, both as a thank you for contributions to the annual appeal and to announce the date of the soup event for 2024.

In short, it has been a year of transformational change at St Matthieu school. The children there are facing the future with 21st century learning tools – and with hope for their future. The Haiti Ministry is deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of this project, which also gives us hope – and much joy as well.

*Submitted by Bonnie Vigeland for the Haiti Ministry*

Haiti Ministry committee members: Patty Appelbaum, Sarah Chadwick, Mary Hocken, Brown Kennedy, Laura Klock, Sandy Muspratt, Suzannah Muspratt, Joan O'Brien, Diana Spurgin, John Stifler, Martin Wobst

### **Brother Lawrence Guild:**

Brother Lawrence was a seventeenth-century Carmelite monk who experienced the presence of God while cleaning pots in the scullery of his monastery. Accepting what he'd been given to do, Brother Lawrence spent his life attempting to live in God's presence. Like Brother Lawrence, we try to practice the presence of God in the act of preparing meals for our fellow parishioners – and newcomers – at Grace Church. We are grateful for this opportunity and welcome others to join us in this hospitable endeavor.

In 2023 BLG was able to serve a hamburger and hot dog lunch for the Pentecost Picnic and at the Feast of Saint Michael Picnic to approximately 75 parishioners each event.

At the Bazaar lunch café, BLG served up minestrone soup to 65 customers and sold 25 more containers of soup to go.

Serving as a member of the BLG is a great way to get involved at Grace Church. All are welcome to join us. We are very relaxed and light hearted as we prepare and serve meals to the Parish. We recognize God's presence among us in serving food and promoting fellowship in the congregation. When we at Grace Church, meet, greet, and eat with each other, God is with us, and those times are joyful occurrences!

*Respectfully submitted, Tom Dougherty for Members in service: Sarah Chadwick, Jeffrey DeSantis, Kitty Dougherty Tony Jewel, Mark Leonas, Steve McKelvey, Doug Moore, Katie Schendel, Diana Spurgin, Janet Teng and Virginia Ramos*

### **ClimateAction@Grace**

Grace has an active climate action group that focuses on four pillars identified by The Episcopal Church: Pray, Learn, Act, Advocate. CAAG has been active this year with members arranging for our state representative, Mindy Domb, to speak and answer questions in the Parish Hall. A few of our members joined the Climate March in New York City on September 17th. We ring the church bells on the 11th hour of the 11th day of each month to join with other religious institutions across the country to remind us that we must act NOW to avoid a climate disaster in the future. We meet on the second Sunday of each month in the Parker Room from 9:15 to 10:15 between our two services. Please join us. For more information contact Sharon Seelig or Sandy Muspratt.

*DeAnne Riddle*

Grace has an active climate action group that focuses on four pillars identified by The Episcopal Church: Pray, Learn, Act, Advocate with emphasis on the latter two: action and advocacy. The group meets every second

Sunday of the month between services 9:15 to 10:15 in the Parke House of the Parker room. As a small group we hope for greater effectiveness by concentrating on local action within in our congregation, within our town and region and within our state but with occasional forays into the national arena. We are blessed that among us, to guide us, are a Vestryman, a member of the Amherst Town Energy and Climate Action Committee, and members of such local advocacy groups as Climate Action Now of Western Mass. and Mothers Out Front.

In 2023:

- We continued to proclaim our dismay at the dire threat of climate change by tolling Grace's bell at the the eleventh hour of the eleventh of each month for eleven minutes (a practice initiated by Churches on the West coast).
- In March we rallied in Northampton to protest the banking industry's (specifically Chase bank) financing of fossil fuel expansion.
- In September we joined the protest in NYC before the United Nations Climate Ambition Summit.
- We learned from Mindy Domb, Amherst state representative, how to lobby for legislation.
- We submitted comments to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy at public hearings on certain bills relevant to climate.
- We supported our compatriots at SS James and Andrew in their campaign to sustain local farms afflicted from climate change - flooding.
- We have kept close contact with our hardworking Junior Warden on 'green' matters pertaining to our Church campus.

We invite all parishioners to join us. All our voices are needed. The challenge of climate change requires uncomfortable action but, as one member reminded us, together it can be a path of 'sacrifice to joy.'

*Sandy Muspratt*

## **Ramallah Ministry**

Grace provides a scholarship for a Palestinian student to attend the ETVTC (Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center), a vocational high school program in Ramallah in the West Bank, which teaches students culinary arts and IT skills. Most graduates (94%) find jobs or continue their studies upon graduation, in a region (including Gaza) where youth unemployment is around 41%. The ETVTC also provides activities to build a sense of community in a region where youth often feel helpless and hopeless. Spring semester we continued to support Teya Awaad, who was in her second year studying hospitality and culinary arts. She is a wonderful cook, earning an award in a cooking competition. Upon graduation she used her cooking skills to earn the tuition she needed to learn computer skills, which she hopes to use to protect others from computer hackers. Our current student, Joyce Harish, who started in August, is our first female student to study in the IT stream. In October we had a Zoom meeting with Giovanni Anbar, the Executive Director of the ETVTC, who thanked us for our unwavering support. This is our 13th year and Joyce is our 7th student. Charity Navigator gives the ETVTC a score of 100%.

*DeAnne Riddle*

## **STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION**

Our 2024 Stewardship Campaign began in late October 2023 when members of the Stewardship Committee and The Reverend Tom Synan sent out pledge information and pledge cards to our parishioners of record, followed by an announcement from Tom Synan at both services on January 7th.

Since the ingathering, we have received \$462,784 in pledges for 2024 from 152 parishioners, and we are hoping to hear from any other households who have yet to pledge.

Our goal last year was to raise \$485,000 for the 2023 budget. Thanks to the generosity of many, \$500,000 actually came in, which is now the goal for 2024.

*Thankfully,*

*Bruce Stebbins, Stewardship Chair*

### **Planned Giving:**

The Planned Giving Committee, comprised of Doug Adler and Kent Faerber, provides information to parishioners on ways to include Grace Church in their estate plans in conjunction with advice from their legal counsel. Doug and Kent can discuss options to support the long-term needs of Grace through a will or living trust, a designation in an insurance policy or retirement plan, or a life income gift, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust. The St. Michael's Fellowship, established in 2004, recognizes those who have included Grace in their estate plans and parishioners are encouraged to alert the Rector or one of the committee members of such plans.

Tom Baker and David and Jessica Mix Barrington are new members of the Fellowship this year and they join Steven and Susan Abdow, Doug Adler, Brenda and Rick Aldrich, Patricia Andrews, Stephen and Jeanne Armstrong, Steve and Kate Atkinson, Lee Beaty \*, Don and Jane Buckloh, Shirley Brodigan \*, Heidi Frantz-Dale and Duane Dale, Tom and Kitty Dougherty, Suzannah Fabing, Kent and Scottie Faerber, Evan Fotos\*, Hertha Haensel \*, Jonathan\* and Sarah\* Hanke, Charlotte Hathaway, Bob Hawley\*, Mary McCarthy \*, Mel Heath \*, Royster and Kathryn Hedgepeth, Rob Hirschfeld and Polly Ingraham, Mary Hocken, Ann Holland, Anne Homme, Dorothy Ives \*, John Lemly and Catherine Melhorn, Mark Leonas, Karen Lowe, Sheila Mammen, Mark Marshall and Helen Leung, Margo McMahon \*, Roberta Morel \*, Eliot Moss and Hannah Abbott, Marilyn Munn \*, Priscilla Parke \*, Larry and Jean Rankin, Jim and Nina Scott, Phebe Sessions, Eugene and Marcia Sheehan, Bruce and Jeannette\* Stebbins, Mary Steigner \*, Mary Steinway \*, Sara Stelzner, Bernice Taylor \*, Janet Teng, Patricia Tillona, Zina Tillona \*, Charlotte Turgeon\*, Paul Vasconcellos\*, Nancy Rose-Weeber and Charles Weeber, Reynolds Winslow, Jude and Martin Wobst, and Jeffrey Wood \*.

\* deceased

*Doug Adler, Chair*

## **VII. TREASURER'S REPORT**

2023 continued the post-pandemic increase of in person worship at Grace Church. The parish continued to show its support for the church through an increase in pledge commitments. As of now, we have pledges of \$462,784 from 152 pledgers, and we continue to see pledges come in. According to our bookkeeper, Jaana Cutson, there are at least 5 new pledgers that have not been added to this total. We are getting ever closer to our goal of \$500,000. Thanks to all of you in helping us. Your generosity allows Grace to keep the staff and programs that enrich our lives.

We as a parish have also continued to anticipate future costs, and Vestry, staff and the Finance Committee have begun to explore additional sources of revenue in addition to the Saint Nicholas Bazaar, including a very

successful series of dinners at parishioner's homes. Vestry has also begun to fund ways to increase our membership with the formation of a Communications Committee.

This year's budget is attached to this Annual Report. I encourage you to look it over. Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions. Harry Chadwick has done a superb job of calculating cost increases and entering data into the spreadsheet he has created. Once finalized, we forwarded the spreadsheet to Rich Spurgin, who entered it into the format you see today. Rich also provides monthly financial reports for the Vestry, using the data he acquires from our bookkeeper, Jaana Cutson.

In these challenging times, we continue to be blessed by the hard work and dedication of parishioners like yourselves, who generously contribute your time and financial support. And, as always, the Trustees of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts continue to manage our endowment funds well and make quarterly distributions, providing essential additions to our operating budget.

We continue to be in good standing with our diocesan auditor Steve Hasbrouck, whose 2023 audit confirmed that our financial records continue to be proper and accurate.

We continue to hold our own during these challenging times and hope for improvement in the year to come. Your support has been invaluable and is very much appreciated.

*Bruce Stebbins, Treasurer*

## VIII. MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### Baptisms

Clara Mae Hamer  
Emmett Leo McCartney  
Stella Mae Whitworth

### Confirmands

Jospeh Markovits Hazlip  
Nathan Patrick Marino  
Henry Dunstan Maxey  
Gemma Siena Polino  
Madeline AdaireSiudzinski

### Received

None in 2022

### Reaffirmed

Janet Hamilton Teng

### Marriage

Kate Symington Wyeth and Evan Alden Boynton  
Whitney Irwin and Mark Foster  
Alanna Catherine Lloyd and James William Mathews  
Chelsea Langelier and Thomas Smith

### Requiem

Jean Adele Reist Stark D'Andrea  
Robert Coit Hawley  
Victoria Kozera  
William J. Manning  
Catherine Brooke McGraw  
David Moriarty  
Mary Ann Osborne  
Eunice Miller Progulske  
Elizabeth S. Van Dyke

**Added - New members/Reactivated**

Bill Allbritton & Rose Bogal-Allbritton  
Lucy Bergin  
Rev. John Horn & Rev. Raisin Horn  
Cameron Lane  
Frank Moran  
Harold Norris  
Ania Wieckowski

**Transferred/Moved**

None in 2023