



2024... A Year of Grace



2024 Annual Report

What is the Grace Church Annual Report?

The purpose of the Annual Report is to educate parishioners and friends of Grace on the work of the church during the previous year and to celebrate the impact that so many people have made together as we live out our mission.

Our Mission

To Love, Proclaim, and Serve God through life-giving liturgical worship, joyful community, and empowering others.

Serving as the foundational document for our Annual Meeting which takes place at the end of January, this report highlights the good work here on Russell Road and beyond through executive, staff, and program area reports. It is our hope that as you read about the good work of Grace this past year, you will reflect on your role in what we have accomplished together in the last year...

2024... A Year of Grace!

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



Unless otherwise noted, all photos are from the Grace Photo Archive.

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effort was made to present all reports as submitted.*

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Grace Episcopal Church

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THE RECTOR'S REPORT

The Rev. Dr. Anne Michele Turner

Dear Friends in Christ,

I returned to Grace just under three months ago, on October 28. I am deeply grateful for the Renewal of Ministry service which welcomed me back, and I am grateful for the work we have done together since that time: the re-establishment of pastoral relationships, the faithful enactment of our liturgies, and careful planning with the vestry to govern our life together.

Although I cannot write about the activities of Grace Church in the first part of the year—I wasn't here to witness them—I feel that I can tell you about their results. I can tell you about the church I have met on my return. I can tell you what I see in you.

First of all, I see health. Mother Jenny deserves great credit for the good work she did in this parish. Instead of a community riddled by division and unhealed wounds, I see people connecting with one another and with their leadership. I see emotional and spiritual maturity. I see individual willingness to take responsibility for feelings and collective responsibility for the well-being of the community.

In particular, I see enhanced skills in healthy communication and a commitment to using those skills. Grace has had a lot of hard conversations in the past year, and those conversations led to an ability to speak directly, honestly, and lovingly. Such ability can transform a community. I hope that we will never lose it.

I heard many of you talk about the sense of meaning and purpose that guided this past year. The work that this church did was urgent and significant. It mattered deeply. The challenge, going forward, is how to keep that sense of urgency and significance without (we pray) a crisis.



Bishop Gulick with Mother Anne @ Renewal Service



I believe we can do this. This parish is ready to grow. I have been moved to learn, in my not-yet-three-months, just how ready. Whenever I have asked someone to take on a ministry, great or small, I have been met with a “yes.” This willingness to serve is both typical of Grace and an extraordinary testimony to your resilience.

I know that the work of healing is not yet over. The effects of trauma run deep, and they can linger in unexpected ways. I want to help the continued healing. When I first returned, I wrote that I hoped to have the conversations that couldn't be had in September 2023. I still do. Please come talk with me if you have questions, concerns, or anxieties. I do not want this parish to be a place of secrets or taboos.

This work of healing goes hand in hand with our growth. We are healed for the journey ahead, and we are healed by that journey.

What's ahead? Many of you have told me how excited you were by our visioning process before it was suspended abruptly in September 2023. I was, too, and I want to resume it. My hope is that we can refresh our shared imagination, working as a community this spring and summer to develop a shared vision for Grace Church for the next 5-10 years.

The development of any vision naturally leads to the question of how to find resources to implement it. Grace has a strong ethic of service and a high commitment culture. I hope we can lean into those strengths as we work towards our financial sustainability, as well.

Ultimately, we work for not just a year of grace—for God's intervention in our need—but a life lived in grace. God's love for us—a love that we can never earn or deserve—is the foundation of everything we do. We are blessed to respond to it, this year and always.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Dr. Anne Michele Turner



Mother Anne Celebrates at Little Church

THE SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

Mary Hix



The beginning and ending statements of this report are affirmation of the certainty of God's providence and hope at Grace Episcopal Church. In the course of continual change and transformation, your Vestry has experienced the guidance of God's spirit as we have discerned a path forward. This has been a continual collaborative effort between the clergy and staff, 15 Vestry members, and the faithful people of Grace Episcopal Church.

2024 began with the Rev. Jenny Montgomery serving as Grace's Priest Locum Tenens. The agenda for the year ahead was clear: to discern the will of the parish in the calling of the next rector. Mother Jenny's outline for this process stemmed from her expertise in guiding parishes in times of trauma. The Lenten series opened a pathway for parishioners to participate in honest dialogue about difficult matters. Soup and sandwiches (always pimento cheese) fueled the body as hearts responded to experiential stories shared by parishioners.

These Lenten gatherings prepared the way for parishioners to gather in Affinity Groups. Each of the 13 Affinity Groups followed the same process, opening with the reminder of the guidelines for Sacred Conversations, leading to responses to questions about the desires and concerns regarding the call of the next rector. The responses from Affinity Group participants covered the spectrum of thought and concern, and continually evidenced the deep contemplation and love for this parish. Anonymous notes of responses were recorded at each gathering.

The Vestry made several important decisions early in 2024. The Rev. Shirley Graham Smith, Transition Minister for the Diocese of Virginia, provided guidance for our discernment. The Vestry agreed that our decisions would be made by consensus with each Vestry member always being encouraged to openly share agreement and disagreement. We also agreed to navigate the tricky circumstances of confidentiality and transparency, keeping parishioners as informed as appropriate. Most importantly, we agreed to listen intently to the feedback from the Affinity Group conversations and other written responses, and to allow the will of the parishioners to guide our decision making. In a series of parish wide conversations on Sundays and reports to the parish in the weekly Eblasts and bulletins, the Vestry sought to inform the parish as our decision making process evolved.

Vestry members were encouraged to read the full reports from the Affinity Groups, and respond to parishioners' feelings. Bishop E Mark Stevenson reaffirmed that the Vestry had full decision making authority about the calling of the next rector. During the summer months I met with Rev. Graham Smith and The Rev. Anne Turner twice, to begin conversation about Mother Anne being called to serve as rector at Grace. The full Vestry met with Rev. Graham Smith and Mother Anne at Virginia Theological Seminary in mid-August. Following that meeting the Vestry agreed to call Mother Anne to return as Grace's rector, and asked that I meet with Bishop Stevenson and Mother Anne to convey this information. Because of vacation schedules, this meeting did not take place until mid-September.

Within days of the meeting, Mother Anne accepted the call to be Grace's rector and we promptly announced the decision to the parish. In a joyous celebration, Mother Anne was installed as Grace's Rector on October 28.

This August-September time frame included the farewell to Mother Jenny, with gratitude for her leadership, and the welcoming of The Rev. Abbott Bailey as Bridge Rector for a six-week period. Mother Abbott was introduced during the Shrine Mont weekend which provided her the opportunity to get acquainted with parishioners in that relaxed setting. Her brief tenure guided Grace into the program year and laid groundwork for Mother Anne's return.

While the narrative in the previous paragraphs explains the extraordinary circumstances of 2024, it in no way fully describes the life of the parish during the year. As the reader turns the pages of this Annual Report, it will be more than evident that the full mission of Grace continued thorough out the year. With worship as the cornerstone of parish life we gather on Sundays to join in praise and heartfelt thanks. Said services at 7:30 a.m and 5 p.m., La Gracia, Little Church and the Choral Eucharist at 10:30 a.m. provide parishioners access to worship in the manner that best feeds their soul. The Outreach and Justice report describes Grace's work in the world, from the distribution of food to neighbors to the support of vital ministries in Haiti and Tanzania.



Teens & Sponsors on a Mission to Southwest VA

Equally important as the services provided by the Outreach and Justice projects is the community that is built for those who serve. Adults and teens joined in a day of rehabbing a residence with Rebuilding Together - Rebuild America. Teens traveled to southwest Virginia on a Mission trip. The Fellowship team fosters community by providing Sunday coffee hours for parishioners to gather in relaxed conversation as well as Funeral receptions and support for multiple parish events. Evangelism seeks to welcome newcomers to Grace and to spread the good news of Christian faith with seekers.



Rebuilding Day Participants from Grace

The Stewardship committee designs and facilitates the provision of financial and volunteer support for all areas of our parish life. Formation for all ages fosters growth in discipleship. The list of offerings is extensive, including Sunday School, Children's Chapel, Sunday morning and evening programs for Youth, Adult Forum and Inquirers' class, and multiple Bible studies. All of these programs prosper because Vestry members join with lay parish liaisons to ensure vitality to the program areas.



La Gracia Hosts a Bingo Fundraiser



Enjoying fellowship at Shrine Mont

And, the people of Grace Episcopal Church delight in sharing the joy of their faith by having fun. The Chili Bowl, the parish picnic in the early summer, a family Bingo evening, the Shrinemont weekend, Trunk or Treat; the list is extensive. All are opportunities to share food and fellowship and foster a community of belonging.

My heart overflows with gratitude to so many who have joined in will and effort in 2024. Father Santiago and Mother Emma have provided a joyful stability in the midst of evolving leadership, maintaining focus and ensuring continuity amidst change. They met the challenges of added responsibility with willingness and enthusiasm. Time and again I have been reminded that Kevin Hamilton is the linchpin that holds all activities and programs at Grace together. His willing and efficient manner is a gift to the parish.

Mother Jenny encouraged the Vestry to elect its own Executive Committee officers last January. As Junior Warden, Eric Wascowicz has exercised the expertise and hands on skills to maintain the beauty and functionality of the campus. His report describes the myriad of projects that have required attention in 2024. The challenges are always on going, and addressed with his cheerful determination. It is because of Sarah Schultz in her role as Clerk of Vestry that the work of the Vestry has stayed on the track and been on time. I'm at a loss to describe her clear thinking, her attention to detail, her managerial prowess, and her upbeat demeanor.

As Treasurer, Andrew Serke has devoted himself to ensuring careful stewardship of the parish's financial resources. He has provided accountability in a year experiencing a deficit budget. His countless models of future financial stability are a roadmap to continued financial wellbeing. Jane Rosman has been the Executive Committee member at large, accepting many random tasks with her "can do" approach. The Safety Manual and the Policies and Procedures Manual are examples of her efforts.

And so I end as I began, with affirmation of the certainty of God's providence and hope for Grace Episcopal Church. Because of the clergy, the staff, the Vestry members, and the devoted parishioners, this year of challenge ends with eager anticipation of God's will for the future. It has been my great pleasure and true privilege to serve as Senior Warden.

THE JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

Eric Waskowicz



The junior warden's role is interesting and fun, and often the Junior Warden gets more thank-yous than he or she deserves. This year I've leaned heavily on people who know more than I do about the systems at Grace Church. That list begins with Kevin Hamilton, our Director of Operations. Among the many things he does is work with all of our vendors, and solicit proposals for new work. If a vendor is not getting things fixed, or responding to proposals, it isn't because Kevin hasn't been politely hounding them.

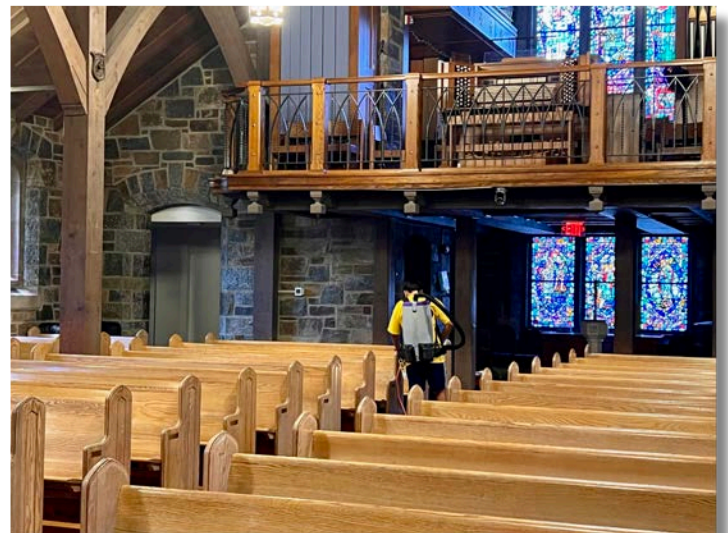
Grace Church and Grace School share the same building, which sometimes requires compromises. As a good example, the glass-door entrance from the parking lot is the main entrance to the school for current and prospective students, and it is also the main access point for delivering food to hungry families in the community. In the next few months the school will be installing attractive, motorized blinds to make it look nicer and improve security. The Junior Warden, Senior Warden, Director of Operations, Treasurer and Rector meet quarterly with the Head of School to discuss issues and share initiatives.

The school is leading a project to replace the access system at the glass doors with a more modern system. A follow-on to this project will include adding video surveillance at each access point to the school.

Maintenance costs for the elevator have risen to the point that it is time for replacement. We are getting proposals now to replace the main elevator this summer, while school is out. And by we, I mean Kevin Hamilton is badgering vendors. We will leverage funds designated for Accessibility in the name of Cleve Corlett.

The second initiative which will significantly impact our building and grounds is installation of solar panels over the parking lot and on the roof of Merrow Hall. We're in the early stages of exploring financial approaches and talking to companies that can engineer and manage the project. Dan Pattarini is leading this effort, which would be designed to meet all the electrical energy demands of the church, currently an annual 40k expense.

Next time you are in the parking lot, try to visualize what it will look like with a roof overhead, high enough to allow trash trucks and fire equipment to pass under.



Nave cleaning on the parish spring clean up day

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We have three HVAC systems here at Grace, one of which was installed a few years ago under the leadership of Rich Kelly, which provides ac/heat for Merrow Hall and most of the Church; a second system housed directly under the nave provides ac and heating for the Nave itself. When this system needs to be replaced in the next few years, it will be a significant capital expense. A third system, located in the boiler room next to the food pantry, heats water for the radiators in the halls leading to between to Merrow Hall. We are currently only using half of this last system, in a few years it could be replaced by a much smaller water heating system.

Along the walkway from the glass doors to the library, we made some improvements. We repainted the railing, and Juan Rojas from the school applied white stripes at the edge of the steps. Outside the window on the hallway between the library and the nave, there is wood that needs to be stripped and painted in the spring.

The library door itself needed refinishing, and the results were very good! So good that we are planning to refinish the entrance to the Malm Narthex this summer as a parish project. This will take several weeks to complete and a lot of individual effort.

This year we formed a creation care committee. Originally set up as an ad hoc committee supporting the Junior Warden, the vestry approved it as a new standing committee. Members are Liz Rugaber, Dan Pattarini, Bill Eckel, Jennifer Eckel, Jan Spence and Cricket Blanton. One of the first actions was to develop a charter to focus the groups efforts in three directions: energy efficiency/carbon neutrality, native plants, and re-use/recycle/compost. If there is a piece of this that interests you, please talk to Eric or anyone on the committee.

A few years ago, Nat Ames installed a beautiful garden at the glass door entrance. Doug Prince, Lynn Rohrs and Barbara Ramm have stepped up to maintain and enhance this space. On the other side of the parking lot, Ben Kong and Barbara Ramm have led the work to remove English Ivy, honeysuckle and bamboo in favor of native plants that support insect and bird populations.



Glass door garden area



Library Door before & after refinishing

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

Andrew Serke

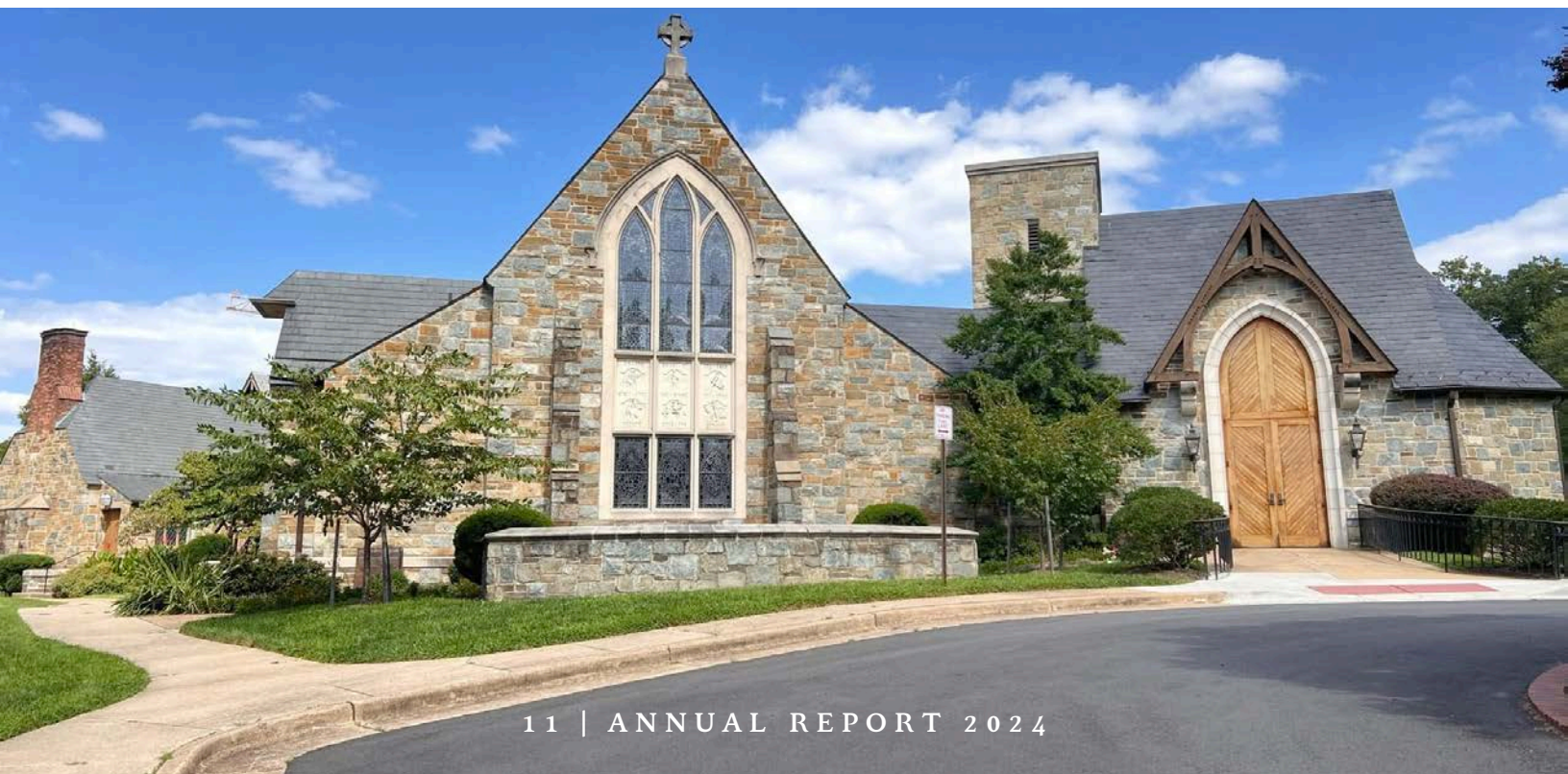


Despite entering the year with a \$52,570 budgeted deficit, Grace Episcopal Church's (GEC) finances remained strong in a year where change was truly a constant. As of 31 Dec, total revenues came to \$1,077,495 against total expenditures of \$1,066,195, yielding a positive year-end balance of \$11,300. Given these figures and stewardship campaign results, the vestry approved the proposed 2025 operating budget of \$1,092,050 expenditures against expected revenues of \$1,090,172. This results in a small deficit budget of \$1,877.

For 2024 revenue, two significant line-items drove a higher than expected revenue; GEC budgeted for \$1,046,655 in revenue and received \$30,840 more than that. First, non-pledged income came in \$42,511 higher than expected. Second, the Grace Episcopal School cost share came in \$22,622 higher than budgeted. These two line-items drove the overages.

For 2024 expenditures, two main areas resulted in a lower than anticipated budget; GEC budgeted for \$1,099,225 in expenditures and had \$33,030 less than that. First, Clergy and Lay compensation—which is approximately 70% of GEC' budget—came in \$18,973 better than expected. Additionally, administration costs were budgeted at \$38,230 and resulted in \$10,654 lower than that amount. Furthermore, GEC was extremely fortunate to not have any major capital expenditures occur this year (e.g., roof repair). We should expect to have some unexpected maintenance in 2025 and beyond.

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The 2025 budget for GEC includes some material changes from the prior year. For expenditures, the vestry approved shifting two roles to part time positions: the Sexton and the Music Director. Timing for both roles varies, with the Sexton adjustment happening in February or March, and the Music Director to occur in July. For revenue, the church anticipates an influx from new fundraising efforts—more information to come about these in early 2025—which serve the purposes of: a) increasing opportunities for community engagement; b) increasing opportunities to invite new members into our community; and c) generate some revenue for the church. In order to grow going forward, our church must continue to look to invite others to our community and try things that might not always be “the way we’ve done things”.

The Grace Church Trust invests and manages the church's endowment to sustain our missions in the long term. The Trust has grown considerably in recent years through the thoughtful and generous contributions of parishioners, families, and friends of Grace. As of December 31, 2022, the balance of the Grace Trust was \$1,696,626.04. This represents a continued increase year over year and is a testament to the management of those funds by that committee. Each donation to the Trust—whether through a Legacy, memorial tribute, or special gift of thanksgiving—helps to ensure the future work of the church.

Finally and most importantly, the clergy, staff, vestry, and treasurer greatly appreciate the remarkable generosity of everyone who is part of the Grace family, and their amazing contributions of time, talent, expertise, and funding to support our many different ministries and missions. Particular thanks go to: Mary Cyrus and Madeline Manaker, who devote much time to ensuring our finances and financial operations go smoothly; Scott Knudsen and all the counters and those who tally; and to Evan Robinson and the Finance Committee for helping support all the various Finance activities and efforts for 2024.

A blue ballpoint pen is shown in the bottom right corner, writing the words "Thank you!" in a blue, cursive script across the lower half of the page. The pen is angled downwards and to the left, with the tip of the nib just finishing the final flourish of the word "you!".

Photo Credit: Canva.com

ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT

Father Santiago Rodriguez



This past year at Grace Episcopal Church has been one of profound transition, growth, and renewal. Supporting the parish, clergy, and staff during Mother Anne Turner's absence was a significant focus, ensuring continuity and care for all. Her return in late October was a joyful milestone, and I remain deeply grateful for the resilience and dedication of our community during this time.

Pastoral care has been central to my ministry, working closely with our COHI team (lay pastoral care givers) to provide spiritual and emotional support to those in need. Serving as the clergy liaison for La

Gracia, I've focused on worship and pastoral care, strengthening connections within our diverse congregation. For much of the year, I also led outreach, advocacy, and social justice efforts, addressing critical issues such as food security, affordable housing, mental health, and support for refugees and asylum seekers. In September, Mother Emma Brice assumed leadership in these areas, allowing me to transition to Fellowship. This new role seeks to integrate all aspects of our community life - intentionally fostering intergenerational and intercongregational connections across La Gracia, Little Church, and all services.

Evangelism has also been a vibrant area of ministry, focusing on inviting, welcoming, and connecting newcomers to Grace. From creating welcoming spaces to organizing formation opportunities, our goal remains to help people encounter God's love and grow as disciples of Jesus. In Adult Formation, we journeyed together in faith, highlighted by the transformative experiences of our Inquirer's Class.

2024 was a year of both challenges and celebrations. I am grateful for the care and leadership of Mother Jenny Montgomery and Mother Abbott Bailey. Their care, wisdom, and talents blessed our community and enriched shared ministry. Amidst our year of discernment and transition, the creativity and dedication of our parishioners and staff have shone brightly. I am deeply blessed to serve this remarkable community, and I am constantly inspired by the ways we embody God's love and grace together.



Christmas Eve Service

Thank you for your partnership in ministry and for making this year one of faith, hope, and love.

ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT

Mother Emma Brice



As I reflect on the past year, my head spins trying to remember everything we have done as a community. We spent most of the year living and worshipping in the midst of uncertainty around whether Mother Anne would return. And in uncertain times, it can be tempting to put up extra shields and protect ourselves. Yet, what I witnessed at Grace was the opposite. We came together. We drew nearer to one another and to God by engaging in honest and, at times, difficult conversations. We practiced compassionate listening and vulnerable sharing. We committed ourselves to the ongoing work of communal life.

Even in the midst of intense parish discernment, many of our programs for children and youth continued at full speed. Our growing team of Formation Hour volunteer teachers pour their energy and their love of Christ into our children's and youth ministries. In 2024, we had 94 young people regularly involved in our programming. We enjoyed the return of some beloved youth group traditions, including the first week-long mission trip and the first overnight lock-in at the church since the pandemic. Little Church continues to welcome many new young families, providing them with a kid-friendly worship space and community.



Children participate at Little Church

Likewise, our many other ministry teams were busy in 2024. The food pantry continues to serve the needs of our neighbors. The choir, altar guild, ushers, lectors, and LEMs make worship possible. There are so many remarkable things going on at Grace in any given week. But where do I most feel the Spirit at work?

I feel the Holy Spirit fueling our ministries when we collaborate across many program areas. For example, when the youth team up with older parishioners to transform a home on National Rebuilding Day. Or when I am able to bring cards drawn by Kindergarteners to people in the hospital. I feel the Spirit when choir members attend Little Church and sing out the hymns in the midst of off-beat drumming and bells. I feel the Spirit when we come together as one community worshipping in two languages through bilingual services.

As we look forward to 2025, I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us in our communal life and ministry. I hope we will find more ways to collaborate and build connections across the entire breadth of the Grace community.

I feel blessed to be serving at Grace with incredible colleagues both lay and clergy. May we continue to listen carefully for the Holy Spirit and all the ways she is moving in our midst.

Faithfully,
Mother Emma+

DIRECTOR, OPS & COMMS' REPORT

Kevin Hamilton



Operations and communications are examples of Shared Services, functions whose support spans the whole organization, assisting most major initiatives and departments. For Grace, the equivalent of departments would be our “Program Areas,” the organizational groupings for our ministries.

One of the blessings that comes with overseeing a Shared Services functions is interacting with many people across the organization; supporting a number of initiatives and directives. As the Director of Operations and Communications, the challenges presented over the last year required a great deal of fluidity. The work included assisting Mother Jenny, Priest Locum Tenens, and vestry with administrative support for the parish discernment process, feedback mechanisms, and sacred conversation logistics.

Another major initiative that was put on hold in 2023 but picked back up and completed in 2024, was phase one of our church database update (Breeze). This required touching all 2500+ records in the system multiple times to ensure each person was placed in their appropriate status. This update has improved the visibility of individuals for parishioners when searching Breeze and has paved the way for future update phases. This initiative represented approximately 6 - 7 weeks of work in total.

Seeing the need for increased communication between Operations and Finance, I initiated a weekly check in between myself and Mary Cyrus, our Finance Administrator. This weekly check in has proven to be a valuable use of time and focus. Being able to regularly connect on current initiatives has helped both Operations and Finance enhance communications and join efforts on items like proposal reviews and policy/process creation.

I would like to acknowledge the professional work of Addie Budnick. Addie, our Communications contractor, produces bulletin files and email communications. She also recently took on the Grace Notes layout as well. I would not have been able to provide the support needed to the parish this last year without Addie on the team. A Senior at VTS, I am sure Addie will be a fantastic priest as her parish work with us has provided invaluable experience and a glimpse of the other side of parish work-life.

I would also like to acknowledge the amazing Office Volunteer Team. With Barbara Ramm as our dedicated coordinator, this dynamic team provides coverage for phones and office visitors, as well as various projects. The team has grown over the last year and I’m humbled to know these special people.

I also want to say a big thank you to Pedro Hernandez and Amorita Quintanilla, our Sextons. Both of these committed team members ensure our facilities are clean and are in good order for parish life.

Finally, welcoming Mother Anne Turner back as Rector capped off 2024 with a sense of closure to a difficult season but also ushered in a renewed sense of purpose and energy. One of Mother Anne’s leadership strengths that I have missed most is her ability to vision cast while orchestrating stakeholders to dream together, plan, and support one another in the advancement of important goals and meaningful work. With this renewed purpose and energy, I am looking forward to Grace having an amazing 2025!

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC'S REPORT

Dr. Alain Truche



This past year has been one of transition at Grace Church in many aspects including the music ministry. I started being Music Director on January 2nd, 2024, following an interim period led by Dr. John “Chappy” Stowe. I continued rehearsing with the Adult Choir and continued planning the music aspect of the Worship services in conjunction with Mother Jenny.

The Adult Choir has seen an ebb and flow of members due to members moving or focusing their time elsewhere. We have gained three new members and have settled at an overall balanced number of members in each section of the choir with a full attendance numbering at 17.

Besides singing on Sundays at the 10:30 AM service, they also sang at the numerous special services including two Choral Evensongs on May 19, 2024 and on November 3, 2024 for the Feast of All Saints. They also sang for the annual Advent Lessons and Carols on December 8th, 2024.

When I took over the Music Director position, the Adult Choir was the only active group within the music ministry. In March, I decided it was time to resume the participation of the Handbell Ensemble. We started with five members plus myself. Quickly we added two more members; thus now we are at seven members plus myself. They have played about every 6 weeks during the program year. New this year is having them play for the 5:00 PM Christmas Eve service.

At the same time the Handbell rehearsals resumed, I reached out to parents of children in our church and school communities to resume a Chorister program. In the spring, we had five 5th graders who met once a week for rehearsals and who sang periodically with the adults at the 10:30 AM service.

In September, I offered the opportunity for young children to participate in the Chorister program, but with having the 5th graders graduated from Grace School and not having younger children ready to step into the choir, the number interested was too low to keep it going. After Mother Anne’s return, we discussed the future of Choristers and how challenging it is to recruit new members. Late in the year, I decided I need to focus on the younger children (Kindergarten and 1st Grade) and will offer starting in January 2025 a new choir named Novices which will focus on music discovery using a method called Eurhythmics that teaches concepts of rhythm, structure, and musical expression through movement. There are seven parents who have expressed interest thus far.



GRACE EPISCOPAL SCHOOL REPORT

Amanda Hungerford, Interim Head of School



The 2024-2025 School Year at a Glance

- ◉ 117 students are enrolled in preschool through grade 5 with 65 attending with siblings.
- ◉ Each day we live the mission “to honor the gift of Childhood.”
- ◉ Mother Emma serves as our School Chaplain and as religion teacher to kindergarten through grade 5.
- ◉ We are on track to run a balanced budget of 3.1 million for the 2024-2025 school year.

◉ We began the year with significant leadership transitions. Our Head of School, Patti Culbreth, made the difficult decision to retire early in order to spend time with her husband, who is battling cancer. In her absence, Amanda Hungerford stepped in as Interim Head of School, with Ashley Brittingham serving as Interim Assistant Head of School for the year. Meanwhile, the School Board continued its plan to launch a search for a new Head of School to begin in the 2025-2026 school year. With support from The Education Group, the Head of School Search Committee has been diligently working to find the right leader for the next chapter of our school. A decision is expected in January.

◉ The National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) sets a theme for its schools each year, and the theme for 2024-25 is "Let your light shine!" (Matthew 5:16). This verse beautifully aligns with our Grace Character Keys, especially in its emphasis on demonstrating compassion and respect for others. Beyond highlighting our Character Keys, the verse has inspired our students to actively seek ways to serve their community. This year, students from Kindergarten through fifth grade have had the opportunity to visit residents of the Small House, a special department within Goodwin House, where they shared songs, poems, and created crafts for the residents. We are also grateful for our continued partnership with the Grace Food Pantry. In November, our families generously donated over 300 boxes of cereal, and in December, our school community assembled children's treat bags for Food Pantry clients. This spirit of service and compassion reflects the true meaning of "letting your light shine," and we are proud of the many ways our students have embraced this call to serve others.

◉ The fall was filled with community building events like classroom buddies, Fall Family Social, Back to School Night, the Camp Grace Gala and our Christmas Musical Show.

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◉ Proceeds for the Gala will help to reinvigorate the art room on the 2nd floor, which is newly named the Design Lab. Initial renovations took place this winter. The spring will bring additional renovations, as well as changes to the furniture and tools available to our students and teachers.

◉ Our winter began with participation in the Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade. During the winter months, our students are busy mastering skills and concepts in the classroom. From our youngest students celebrating their ability to independently put their jackets on to our oldest students mastering Carol of the Bells for the Christmas program, joy is found in growing and learning in the classroom. The winter is also a busy time in our admissions cycle, and we ask our families to re-enroll as well as offer new families positions for the fall. Please be sure to share the news of Grace School with friends whose children would find it an awesome experience.



GES Participates in Alexandria Christmas Parade

◉ The Spring will be packed with more community celebrations like our Grace Sleepover in Merrow Hall, our all-school Talent Show, Bingo Night and Field Day. Graduation for our fifth graders is always a poignant moment when each graduate gives a legacy speech with poise and pride to share their journey at Grace with the full school community.

We are truly grateful for our partnership with the church and the shared mission of serving others together. We look forward to the opportunities and growth the year ahead will bring.



Memories from Camp Grace, our 2024 Gala

EDUCATION- ADULT FORMATION REPORT

Report by Father Santiago Rodriguez, Clergy Liaison

The heart of our Adult Formation ministries lies in shaping disciples of Jesus Christ. In 2024, we embraced this mission through a tapestry of offerings, inviting adults to deepen their faith across diverse areas: from Bible study and spirituality to the dynamic interplay of faith, culture, and daily life. Our programs—Sunday Adult Forums, Bible Studies, Inquirer’s Classes, formation series, and small groups—fostered growth and connection. This year, we were blessed with vibrant participation, both online and in person, reflecting the enduring hunger for spiritual nourishment within our community.

Sunday Adult Forums: A Mosaic of Perspectives

This year’s Sunday Adult Forums showcased a remarkable array of voices, with 42 presenters leading 28 sessions - a testament to the rich tapestry of talent and wisdom within our parish. Attendance averaged 18 participants per session, including Zoom attendees and presenters, and excluding our annual budget meeting, which drew an exceptional crowd to Merrow Hall.

The topics were as varied as the presenters themselves, ranging from theological explorations to contemporary social issues. One standout series, “Grace at Work,” launched in the fall and continues to inspire. Parishioners shared personal stories of how their faith informs their professional lives. The voices heard in the fall included small business owners, a variety of specialists in many aspects of health care, nutrition and mental health, a lawyer, a chemist, and a specialist in management. The issues addressed were as wide-ranging as career choice, working with people of different faiths or no faith, service to neighbor, and management style, but all the presentations spoke to the many ways in which loving one’s neighbor as oneself plays out in different work situations.

La Gracia - Estudio Bíblico: Faith in Action

La Gracia continued to thrive as a cornerstone of bilingual formation.

This year, our Bible studies focused on the Letters of Paul and the Gospel of Mark, enriched by:

- **Video Series:** Exploring Ephesians through thought-provoking visual resources.
- **First-Friday Cenitas:** These monthly gatherings combined fellowship with Gospel reflections, deepening communal bonds and spiritual understanding.



La Gracia gathering in January, 2024

Continues on Page 20

Bible Studies: Diving Deep into God's Word

Our Bible Studies flourished in 2024, fostering robust dialogue and spiritual reflection. Two ongoing groups anchored our offerings:

Saturday Mornings:

Under Chrissy Crosby's leadership, participants engaged in theological reflections on the upcoming Sunday's readings. The study uses the African Model of Bible study, using 3 translations: read for a word or phrase, then how the passage resonates in our lives today, then what challenge or invitation from God have we heard in the translations and our conversations. This Zoom-based group provided a sacred space to prepare hearts and minds for worship, and for people to gather for community.

Wednesday Nights:

This dedicated group meets weekly on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 9:00 PM, under the leadership of Steve Lovell. The studies focus on entire books of the Bible, exploring their original meaning and contemporary application. The bible study embraces a didactical approach, tackling topics from Old Testament law to Revelation's interpretation, while welcoming diverse viewpoints. Currently studying Exodus, they've also explored books like Matthew, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Amos. All are welcome to join and enrich their faith journey.

Additionally, we offered specialized studies on the Book of Isaiah and the theme of Women in the Bible. Each session unearthed fresh insights, drawing participants closer to the living Word.

Book and Movie Clubs:

Stories That Speak to the Soul

The summer months came alive with engaging book and movie discussions, led by Father Santiago Rodriguez. These gatherings offered a fresh lens to explore Gospel themes and spiritual truths through contemporary narratives.

Highlights included:

Films: *The Holdovers* and *CODA* sparked lively conversations about grace, reconciliation, and the human condition.

Books: *The Lincoln Highway* and *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* invited readers to journey through stories of redemption, resilience, and divine mystery.

These discussions became sacred spaces for connection, reflection, and joy, reminding us of the transformative power of storytelling.



Interested in learning more about volunteering in Adult Formation?

Contact:

Vestry Liaison Mary Stewart at mary.stewart@gracealex.org,

Parish Liaison Anne Boris at awcboris@hotmail.com,

or Father Santiago at santiago.rodriguez@gracealex.org.

EDUCATION- CHILDREN'S FORMATION REPORT

Report by Rushad Thomas, Vestry Liaison

Children's Formation has long been a major priority here at Grace Church, and 2024 was no exception. Throughout the year Mother Emma and our wonderful volunteers provided a variety of faith-building experiences for the children of our parish, from weekly Sunday School lessons and the Christmas Pageant, to Trunk-or-Treat and Little Church, the rhythms of sharing God's all-embracing love with our youngest parishioners carries on.

Highlights of the year included the return of a new tradition, "Alpacalooza," (with additional participation of cute bunnies and goats), our annual visit from St. Nicholas of Myra (beloved by all as Santa Claus), our intergenerational Advent wreath-making event, and lots of great lessons during Children's Church. We are also grateful to Dr. Truche for initiating our young choristers program, and to Mother Emma for leading a six-week Bible study for women and girls in the Fall. So many of our youngest parishioners also serve faithfully at the Lord's altar as acolytes, and we were pleased to see a number of them attend the National Acolyte Festival, held annually at Washington National Cathedral.

We invite any parishioner who has a heart for sharing the faith with children to consider volunteering with our ministry. Children's and youth leaders (*myself included*) frequently say we learn more about God from the kids than we could ever teach them ourselves. It is a deeply rewarding ministry to know you are shaping the church of today, and the church of the future.

On behalf of the vestry of Grace Church I would like to thank all the volunteers who make our Children's Formation programs possible. You are true evangelists in the vineyard of the Lord!



A moment from children's formation hour



Alpacalooza



Interested in
learning more
about volunteering
with children?

Contact Mother Emma Brice at
emma.brice@gracealex.org.

EVANGELISM PROGRAM REPORT

Report by Vestry Liaison Dan Pattarini & Parish Liaison Mindy van Wart

2024: Evangelism Highlights

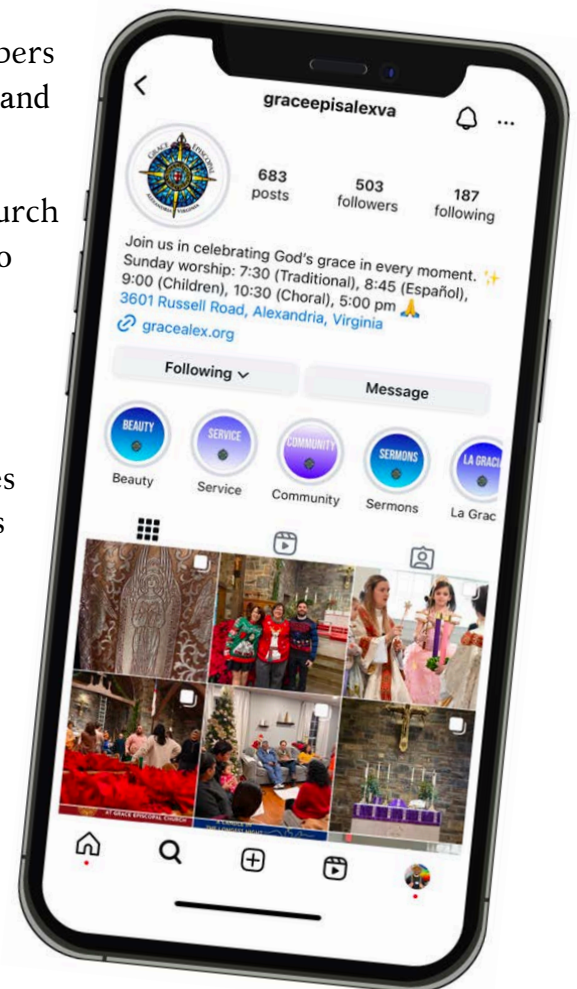
- In 2024, we logged about **22 newcomers and newcomer families**.
- **3,748 Facebook likes; 40% increase** from 2023.
- **502 Instagram followers; +104 new followers**.
- The one key statistic for evangelism that must be highlighted is that **83% of those that come to a church do so because of a personal invitation**. Grace Church is no exception.

Blending evangelism with service and outreach and fellowship continued as a trend in 2024. Even as the parish was engaged in the crucial work of sacred conversations around the past, present, and future of the church, we continued to welcome newcomers in many ways.

The vestry greeter program continued throughout 2024 with members of the vestry present every Sunday to greet long time parishioners and newcomers alike.

Digital evangelism through Instagram, Facebook, and the Grace church livestream also continued to be an important part of reaching out to the community. In 2024, we published 249 posts and 350 stories on Instagram and gained 104 followers. On Facebook, we continued to engage parishioners and invite newcomers to join us. We saw an increase in likes and comments on Facebook this year. Our most popular content in 2024 were Throwback Thursday photos (pictures of the church in the 1940s-70s), and photos of our worship services during Easter and Christmas.

The vestry and lay leads for evangelism together with Father Santiago engaged in a robust discussion and review of evangelism and welcome efforts at Grace with a hospitality survey / inventory. Identifying areas to improve and investments that might be made to ensure a positive first impression leading to connection, the group also discussed ways to equip all members of the congregation to evangelize... the first step of which is to invite.



In this spirit, with the approach of Advent and Christmas, the evangelism team (led by Father Santiago) designed a set of invitation cards highlighting the lessons and carols and Christmas pageant services and listing the service schedule throughout the Christmas season. The cards included a QR code which links to an online version of the schedule.

In planning for 2025, evangelism at Grace will continue a trend of invitation and connection through worship, fellowship, and service with plans to incorporate evangelism in activities like the annual Chili Bowl, National Rebuilding Day and Holy Week.



Below: Father Santiago at the Potomac yard Metro Station for Ashes to Go



Above: Advent/Christmas invitation card provided to the Grace Church Community to invite friends and family to our services



Interested in learning more about volunteering in evangelism?

Contact:

Vestry Liaison Dan Pattarini at dan.pattarini@gmail.com, Parish Liaison Mindy Van Wart at mindaruski@gmail.com, or Father Santiago at santiago.rodriguez@gracealex.org.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

Report by Chad Eckles, Vestry Liaison, and Lynn Rohrs, Parish Liaison

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP AT GRACE / LA GRACIA?

Fellowship at Grace Church is a cornerstone of community life, supporting gatherings for reflection, connection, and celebration. With the help of many parishioners, the Fellowship team manages events that foster Grace's welcoming spirit, including weekly coffee hours, special receptions, and large events that bring the church community together.

FELLOWSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Sunday Coffee Hours:

After the 8:45 La Gracia service and 10:30 service.

Foyer Dinner Groups:

Coordinated by Heather Wishart-Smith.

Festive Coffee Hours:

Celebrating ministries, events, or milestones.

Annual Events:

AGAPE Reception after Easter Vigil, Annual Meeting Brunch.

Kitchen Maintenance:

Supplies and equipment upkeep for parish activities.

Consumables:

Maintaining all consumable supplies to support Parish Life activities (paper goods, beverage supplies) throughout the year.

Funeral Receptions:

Support for set-up and family assistance.

FUNERALS/MEMORIALS 2024

4/13 Nancy Macklin

6/29 Joanne Davis

8/3 Charlie Pease



Fellowship event



Celebration of our Seminarians



Farewell for Chappy & Welcome to Alain

SPECIAL EVENTS 2024

- 1/28 Annual Meeting Brunch
- 3/30 AGAPE Reception
- 3/31 Easter Coffee Hour
- 5/5 Seminarians' Farewell Coffee Hour
- 5/19 Youth Sunday Recognition & Evensong Reception
- 6/2 Parish Picnic Support
- 6/23 Parish Meeting with Mother Jenny
- 8/25 Farewell to Mother Jenny
- 9/6-8 Shrine Mont Weekend Support
- 9/29 Founder's Day Festive Coffee Hour
- 10/28 Renewal of Mother Anne's Ministry Reception
- 11/3 Evensong Reception
- 12/1 Advent Wreath-Making Event

FELLOWSHIP IN 2025: A NEW VISION

Plans are underway to expand Fellowship into a broader Parish Life ministry, emphasizing collaboration and volunteer engagement. Initiatives include:

Coffee Hours: Weekly sign-ups via SignUpGenius.

Subcommittees: For funerals, event set-up, and special receptions.

Volunteer Opportunities: Cooking, shopping, cleaning, or event support (e.g., setting up, serving, or cleaning).

GET INVOLVED

Fellowship offers flexible ways to contribute, from hosting coffee hours to assisting with receptions or kitchen cleaning. Every effort, big or small, adds to the warmth and hospitality that define Grace Church. These opportunities can be an hour, a morning, once a month, twice a year—all are important when added up. with gratitude for our generous, faithful community and vibrant parish life.



Reception set-up in the Auditorium



**Interested in learning
more about volunteering
in Fellowship?**

Contact:

Vestry Liaison Chad Eckles at
cke1986@gmail.com,

Parish Liaison Lynn Rohrs at
lynn.rohrs@gracealex.org,

or Father Santiago at
santiago.rodriquez@gracealex.org.

OUTREACH & JUSTICE REPORT

Report by Keith Davis, Vestry Lead and Jennifer Pease, Parish Lead

As this year ends, we want to take a moment to reflect on our Outreach efforts and celebrate all the incredible work the Grace community has done together. Committed volunteers, generosity, and hard work have been the driving forces behind this year's successful Outreach efforts, and the dedication and generous support of parishioners have truly made a difference in our community and well beyond.

Father Santiago continued to deliver unwavering leadership, support, and guidance to the Outreach program. His dedication to serving the community was reflected in the recommendations, vision and hard work he brought to Outreach, and the community Outreach serves have been the direct beneficiary of all of his efforts. Thank you, Father Santi, for everything you've done!

We are so grateful and blessed that Mother Emma took on the leadership role for the Outreach program beginning the summer of 2024! She has already had such a positive impact on the Outreach program, and we look forward to the many great ideas and fresh perspective she will undoubtedly bring to Outreach.

The following is a heartfelt look at some of the key highlights from our outreach programs this year.

Asylum Relief (Refugees): This year, we have provided financial support to two families seeking asylum, driven by both our own contributions and discretionary funding. It is a meaningful start considering the vast need.

ALIVE!: It has been a busy year for ALIVE! They received federal support from HUD to fund a new food warehouse and have secured the finances needed to remodel Alive House. They are also Partnering with Carpenter Shelter to share a social worker, which has been another great win. Food demand remains high as it does at the Grace Food Pantry. Grace supports ALIVE programs through annual donations from the Outreach budget, Step Alive fundraiser sponsorship and participates in the furniture distribution program.

Brown Bag Lunches at Meade Memorial: We have continued to fund facility costs, and, thanks to an army of Grace volunteers, we deliver sandwiches every six weeks to Alexandrians facing food insecurity. It is a small gesture that means a lot too many. In kind donations from Grace parishioners in support of brown bag lunches totaled \$1,670.00 in 2024.

Carpenter's Shelter: We maintain our annual funding, playing a small yet significant part in their ongoing mission.

Casa Chirilagua: We are excited to have Mother Emma leading the charge in partnering with Casa Chirilagua, and in 2024 we continued to provide space for their special events – such as their Christmas and graduation parties. We are looking forward to growing this partnership in 2025.

Christ Church: Our parishioners volunteer for the Lazarus emergency assistance program, and we provide crucial funding. This program supports not just our food pantry clients but other residents of Alexandria as well. The Grace Food pantry is also supported by food donations from the Christ Church food program.

Community Lodgings Inc and Cristosal, El Salvador: Our annual funding supports these organizations, continuing our commitment to help those in need both locally and internationally.

EYC Mission Trip: We fund this important mission, which may become even more critical as we explore new areas of support. There is also a budding interest in adult mission trips, and we will be exploring potential opportunities in 2025.

Haiti Micah Project: Grace has a long history of supporting this important mission, and this year was no exception. We donated \$17.7K, with \$13.7K coming from the generosity of our parishioners. This support is needed more than ever given the current situation in Haiti.

National Building Day: We built on our initial 2023 success by participating in the April 2024 **National Rebuilding Day (NRD)** event. Rich Kelly organized this year's event with the assistance of 26 parishioners. Outreach supported Grace's involvement by purchasing necessary supplies and tools for this vital community effort.



Tanzania Mission: The Health Tanzania Mission has been a key focus of Grace Outreach for several years. Committee members Henry and Priscilla Ziegler brought renewed attention to this important program upon their return to Grace a few years ago. Our support has facilitated infrastructure improvements and supplies for the Buguruni Anglican Health Centre (BAHC) and backed special health education initiatives. We are currently exploring opportunities for adult mission trips and plan to continue our support of this vital and important program.

V.O.I.C.E.: Our involvement with V.O.I.C.E. is in full swing. We hosted a listening session and the Alexandria "Regional Report Out" with participants from 14 different communities. Housing, behavioral health, and vocational training continue to be key focus areas. The workshop on issues of homelessness in Alexandria was a valuable session for sharing information and identifying strategies moving forward. Funding is provided out of the Outreach budget to support this important program.

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Food Pantry: We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the parishioners and dedicated volunteers involved with the Food Pantry. This year, we distributed over 105,000 pounds of food in more than 13,000 bags, alongside diapers and other essentials. Our efforts are independently funded through generous donations from individuals and support from local sponsors, exemplifying the spirit of giving within our community. We are profoundly grateful to our supporters, including the Church of Latter-Day Saints, Immanuel Church on the Hill, Scouting for Food, Grace Episcopal School, and others who have been instrumental in these efforts. We also applaud our incredible volunteers who ensure everything runs smoothly.



A team of volunteers unloading a large delivery to the Food Pantry

Looking Ahead to 2025: we anticipate that the needs within our community will not diminish, making your continued support vital. In 2024, the Outreach Committee allocated \$28,500 from Grace's Operating Budget and \$120,646 from Designated Funds to various outreach programs and initiatives.

In closing, none of our achievements would be possible without the unwavering support of Grace Church parishioners. We encourage you to include the Food Pantry and our outreach programs in your annual giving plans. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to making a difference.



Interested in learning more about volunteering in Outreach & Justice?

Contact:

Vestry Liaison Keith Davis at keith.davis@gracealex.org, Parish Lead Jennifer Pease at jennifer.pease@gracealex.org, or Mother Emma at emma.brice@gracealex.org.

PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM REPORT

*Report by Nancy Robinson, Morgan Miller,
& Father Santiago Rodriguez*

Community of Hope International (COHI)-

Under the leadership of Nancy Robinson, our Community of Hope International (COHI) team embodies the heart of Benedictine spirituality - seeking God through prayer, work, and hospitality. COHI's mission is to unite lay pastoral caregivers in prayer and equip them to meet the pastoral care needs of our community.

On June 9th, we celebrated the commissioning of a new COHI cohort, adding four dedicated lay pastoral caregivers to our team. Together with the inaugural cohort, they extend the church's care by visiting and supporting homebound parishioners and those facing chronic or acute medical challenges. Clergy complement these efforts through weekly pastoral visits, counseling, offering communion, prayers for healing, and administering last rites when needed.

The Flower Ministry-

The flower ministry, led by John Boris, continued to bring joy and comfort throughout 2024. This ministry creates beautiful floral arrangements for parishioners who are ill, homebound, or celebrating significant life events. Clergy nominate recipients, Altar Guild members transform altar flowers into stunning bouquets, and John's team delivers these gifts with warmth and compassion, embodying the love and care of our church community.

Cards of Care and Connection-

Nancy Robinson leads the creation and delivery of cards to the "extended" Grace family - those living away from the Washington area for any reason, and to those on the prayer list. Continuing the yearly pattern, cards were signed by parishioners and mailed in 2024 during Holy Week, after Shrine Mont, and at Advent / Christmas. College freshman and diplomats and military away from Grace for the first time also receive a care package of Nativity Rubber Duckies. John Boris and his team also send cards (or notes) to parishioners celebrating birthdays, parishioners on our prayer list / prayer cycle, and individuals going through a difficult time.



Church wide card signings



Not just the humans enjoy Nativity Duckies!

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Meal Ministry-

In 2024, Sherrie and Dave Arnold faithfully continued Grace Church's meal ministry, providing nourishing meals to parishioners navigating life's challenges. Their ministry offers not only sustenance but also a tangible reminder of the community's care and support during times of need.

The Prayer List-

The prayer list remains a vital aspect of pastoral care at Grace. Under Laura Weidenfeld's leadership, and with the support of the Director of Operations and office volunteers, parishioners' needs and concerns are held in prayer by the community. For La Gracia, Bernarda Hernandez coordinates this ministry, ensuring that the prayers of the congregation extend to every corner of our shared spiritual life.

Shawl Ministry

Prayer Shawl Ministry June Huber is reviving that longtime Grace Ministry, which knits or crochet prayer shawls to be given by clergy, to provide comfort in times of illness or grief, or to celebrate a new birth or a new stage of life. She is looking for volunteers.



June models a lovely prayer shawl



**Interested in learning more about
volunteering in Pastoral Care?**

[Community of Hope International](#)

Nancy Robinson, nancy.robinson@gracealex.org

[Home Communion](#)

Mike Jones, mike.jones@gracealex.org

[Other Pastoral Care Ministries](#)

John Boris, john.boris@gracealex.org

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

Report by Geoff Whitlock, Vestry Liaison



As of January 12, we have 128 pledgers, pledging over \$740K. This includes 8 first-time pledgers, and 5 prior pledgers who, while not submitting a pledge last year, did return to pledging for this coming year. At the time of publication, we are still seeing 2025 pledges coming in, and we are reaching out to individuals who pledged last year but have not yet pledged this year. The numbers from the campaign so far tell an encouraging story; however, numbers alone do not tell the whole story of Stewardship.

First, I have to express gratitude to the Stewardship Committee's thoughtful and motivated parishioners who helped keep our work on track, and focused on what matters—supporting the mission and ministries of Grace.

While long-time parishioners will have recognized many elements in this year's campaign, this year also represented a step forward in inclusivity. Drawing on the work of the affinity groups over the summer, we intentionally posed the question, "what does stewardship mean to you," in a new way, and to different segments of our parish family. For example, we featured "Ministry Minute" presentations at 7:30 am, 5:30pm, Little Church, and La Gracia, as well as during the 10:30 service. The variety of voices brought a special richness to this year's ingathering!

Pledge season may be over, but Stewardship belongs in every season. So while I thank you for the many ways you support Grace Church, I also encourage you to consider prayerfully what new ways God may be calling you to Walk in Love in 2025!



Interested in learning more about volunteering in Stewardship?

Contact Geoff Whitlock
geoffrey.whitlock@gmail.com

If you have not submitted a pledge for 2025 and would like to do so, visit www.gracealex.org/give

WORSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

By Vestry Liaison Eleanor Reed & Parish Lead John Thompson

Highlights

- New Music Director, Dr. Alain Truche, began work in January
- Three adults confirmed by Bishop Shand at the Easter Vigil
- Candles and peace at the service of healing in August
- Heartfelt joy at the Renewal of Ministry Service with Mother Anne in October
- The fall saw two lovely weddings, the first since 2019

After many years of diligent work from Kemp Williams, John Thompson takes over organizing the Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors and is also serving as the Parish Lead for Worship. Thank you Kemp for your years of service!

2024 called on us to lean into our faith and worship time. Services were places of fellowship and comfort. Our clergy worked hard to keep things going, as did the members of our many worship ministries. Throughout the year space was made for people to pray together about events both inside and outside our church life. Contemplative times for prayer, inspirational social media posts, bible studies, Via Crucis, La Posadas, weekly online evening prayer and regular live streaming, and a quiet advent retreat provided multiple ways to connect with faith and each other. The vestry felt the strength of parish prayer in their work. Throughout the election season, we prayed for social justice during Sunday services, the clergy offered bi-monthly devotionals online over the three and a half months leading to the election and on Election Day the Nave was a space for prayer/reflection.

2024 saw continued use of our traditional spaces, but also seeing other spaces in new ways. Last year's combined worship and annual meeting in Merrow Hall was well received. Mother Jenny used the Malm Narthex for contemplative prayer services in Lent and Little Church continues to grow in the amphitheater and in the auditorium of Merrow Hall.

As some move grudgingly from the 16th to the 21st century, we are now beginning to get all of our worship documents organized online, so that when it is time to tackle complex services, we can find the various plans and customaries we have used in the past to build and modify for the present. If you are involved in leading a worship ministry you will be hearing from our documents crew in 2025, so we can bring your good information to the Google platform!

Worship is nothing without a strong cohort of faithful workers! We are grateful to all those who are committed members in all areas of worship. If you have not thought about it, please consider taking up a worship position in 2025. Whether you usher, sing, ring, lector, are a Lay Eucharistic Minister on the altar or by taking home communions, intercessor, livestream, altar guild, or acolyte we think you will find there is much fellowship and spirituality to be gained!



Interested in learning more about volunteering in Worship?

Contact:

Vestry Liaison Eleanor Reed at eleanor.reed@gracealex.org or Parish Lead John Thompson at john.thompson@gracealex.org.

Interested in one of our music ministries? Contact Dr. Alain Truche at alain.truche@gracealex.org.

YOUTH PROGRAM REPORT

Report by Khacki Berry, Vestry Liaison

Grace church youth is an integral part of our parish; they contribute to us in so many amazing ways.

Here are just a few:

- This year our young people have done everything from participating in the National Acolyte festival in the Washington National Cathedral to sourdough bread making in the church kitchen.
- Our 37 youth are from 6th to 12th grades.
- We do lots of programmed activities, kicking off the new year with participation in the annual competitive chili bowl, decorating their booths and cooking award winning chili.
- In February they prepare a Lenten pancake supper for the congregation. Rite-13, J2A, and EYC collaborate to make pancake supper possible, working with advisors to make pancakes, serve and wait tables and they have an awful mess to clean up afterward!
- Then in April the whole group is invited to participate in National Rebuilding Day, a national program to help needy elderly neighbors improve their homes. In July the group goes on mission, a week long program to help at a disaster site away from home. During this program the youth get to practice using the tools they mastered several months ago on National Rebuilding Day. They also shop for food and cook their own meals and always have fun activities and prayers to round out their day.
- November brings assembling, shopping for and delivering 140 thanksgiving baskets for our needy neighbors. Then comes the end of their year where they are models for the younger children as star players in the annual Christmas pageant.
- These are just the scheduled events and activities!
- The youth also go bowling, play walky-talky tag, have overnights, participate in a Halloween “trunk or treat”, help with food pantry bagging and distribution and play laser tag. They also make a very handsome and classy group of acolytes. We are ultra proud of our young people. Don’t forget to tell them so whenever you see them!



Youth preparing hoagies for their fundraiser



**Interested in
learning more
about volunteering
with Youth?**

**Contact Mother Emma at
emma.brice@gracealex.org.**

APPENDIX

Annual Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2024

Grace Episcopal Church

January 28, 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

Companion to these minutes is the Worship Bulletin

1. Call to Order at 10:30 by Mother Jenny

2. Opening Hymn #51: *We The Lord's People*; Liturgy of the Word: reflection from Mother Jenny

3. Approval of Minutes: Approval of January 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes submitted. - Motion moved and seconded - with no corrections. **Motion passed - Minutes approved with no corrections.**

4. Motion for voting: Motion made and seconded. The motion passed.

a. The congregation of Grace Episcopal Church, voting at the annual parish meeting on January 28, 2024, hereby authorizes the following procedures to be used to elect new members of the Vestry:

i. On the first ballot, those receiving an absolute majority (50% of the number of ballots cast plus one) will be elected to the Vestry.

1. Should less than a full slate be elected by absolute majority, a second ballot will be held to select those who will fill the remaining vacancies.

2. Should a second ballot be required, those receiving the highest number of votes (a plurality but not necessarily an absolute majority) will be elected to the remaining positions on the Vestry.

3. In the event of a tie vote, the winner is to be decided by lot.

4. The candidate who comes in sixth in the election will serve the one-year term.

5. Introduction of Candidates for Vestry

a. Khacki Berry, Chad Eckles, Ramee Gentry, Laura Laemmle-Weidenfeld, Colleen McArdelle, Morgan Miller, Sarah Schultz, Mary Stewart, Mindy Van Wart, Eric Waskowicz, Janis Wolff

6. Call for Additional Nominations: - none

7. Voting (vote was taken and counters left to tally the votes)

8. Highlights of the budget - Evan Robinson

a. The information is available to all parishioners, please contact a vestry member.

b. Revenues for 2023 were less than expected, but the last month was very good which was cheering. Many people over pledged in the last month, so thank you.

i. Another item in revenue - Good earnings from interest in some new accounts and the anticipated Employee Retention Credit

c. Expenses

i. Personnel is always the largest expense

1. One element is the severance package

2. 2024 there is a high end estimate for a rector or interim, not knowing what the future will bring.

3. We also offered a Cost of living increase in accordance with Diocesan guidelines (people being here for at least a year.)

APPENDIX

Annual Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2024

- ii. We are down in our Diocesan Pledge, but talked to the Diocesan Treasurer and they said pay what you can and we will try to build up.
 - iii. In property and plant insurance went up as insurance is going up in many places with natural disasters etc.
 - iv. Grace is requesting an extension of the existing 2019 Diocesan Missionary Society (DMS) loan for the HVAC system, which included a five-year balloon clause, to mature on 01 May 2024. The balance of the loan now stands at \$311,495.80, and the extension will likely be approved by the DMS board at their Feb 2024 meeting.
 - v. We could have a deficit as high as 50,000 could be less. In previous years we put extra into reserve. This could pay our way for a while though that is a guardrail and we need to be careful.
9. **Highlights of Annual Reports:** Senior Warden Bill Malone and Junior Warden Robby Schrum offered thank yous and referred people to their written reports.
10. **Appreciations:** Mother Jenny asked the assembled for highlights of Grace Church in the past year which came in the form of people offering thanksgiving for the following:
- a. Food Pantry - Judy Willard, Jen Pease
 - b. Food Pantry Volunteers
 - c. Alain - bringing new gifts to the choir
 - d. Lyn Rohrs coffee hour
 - e. Children's program - great revitalization
 - f. Seeing the children run to children's chapel
 - g. Altar guild, LEMs
 - h. Anne Boris, Julia McClung - Adult Forum
 - i. Acolytes
 - j. Lynn Rohrs - Fellowship supplies
 - k. Father Santi - Supports all of us and La Gracia
 - l. Parents who bring their children
 - m. The non grace folks who work in the food pantry
 - n. Liz Rugaber. who put together the sacred ground sessions.
 - o. Bill Malone who put out incredible letters this year and took us through a really hard time.
 - p. Robby Schrum as Junior Warden
 - q. Tracy, Carlos, Khaki who are rotating off vestry.
 - r. Card Ministry, Especially Evan and Nancy, also the card ministry, flower delivery, all the pastoral care.
 - s. Jay Legere and the livestream guild.
 - t. All the people who do things for La Gracia: Pedro, Carlos, the Escobar Family, people who set up, maintain and host that community
 - u. The people who make Friday chapel at the school possible

APPENDIX

Annual Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2024

v. All those who participate in the counting process

w. Mother Jenny for the leadership she has given in the last months

x. The musicians of little church

y. Rich Kelly and all the support he gives, hosting Youth dinners.

z. Those who sit in the pews, and those who notice new faces and go to greet them and make people feel welcome.

11. Litany for the Mission of the Church and the Peace

12. Announcement of election

a. Vestry members elected: Khacki Berry, Chad Eckles, Morgan Miller, Sarah Schultz, Mary Stewart, Eric Waskowicz. Khacki Berry was elected for the one year term.

b. Motion made to destroy the ballots, seconded and passed without objection

13. Communion Service

14. Commissioning of the Vestry

15. **Closing Hymn:** *Gracious God you call your people*

16. Adjournment and Dismissal

Addendum: At the next vestry meeting on February 6th, The vestry elected Mary Hix as Senior Warden, Eric Waskowicz as Junior Warden, Andrew Serke as treasurer, Sarah Schultz as Register, and Jane Rosman as Member at Large.

Submitted by Eleanor Reed, 2023 Vestry Register