

We are God's grace, in action, within our church and among our community.

We are an Episcopal church committed to Welcome, Relationships, Outreach, and the Transformational Power of the Spirit.



Our new mission statement was composed with a great deal of prayerful care and consideration, and captures where we have been, who we are, and where we are headed. This parish profile will offer you a glimpse of our congregation. We trust it will pique your interest in developing a broader picture of our faith community. We are ready for change and eager to find a Rector who shares our passions and can serve as a catalyst for growth.

Grace is a church with many facets. We have much in common with all Episcopal churches but we also offer a sizeable variety of opportunities and programs that set us apart. One of our greatest strengths is our commitment to outreach and service. Programs such as our Jubilee Ministries, food and hygiene pantries, and Friday Community Meal provide those in need with support, essentials, and nourishment.

We have been a beacon in downtown Traverse City for many years, having celebrated our sesquicentennial year in 2017. We have a rich history and treasure our traditions but have always been a community that has been eager to expand our service, to deepen our faith, and to welcome others.

The Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) we completed in 2018 revealed that we are a progressive, well-educated community: 50% of the respondents have a graduate or professional degree. The majority of our members are at least fifty-five years old but we have a growing core of younger individuals and families who have brought additional vibrancy to our congregation. We have a strong music program that has achieved a remarkable balance between traditional sacred music and more contemporary offerings.

At Grace, we strive to engage people with empathy and care in their times of need and our new rector should share and support these aspirations. This person will have a passion for teaching, someone who will offer challenging sermons and help us to better understand the scriptures and their relevance in today's world. Finally, we seek someone who can expand our abilities to

become a truly welcoming, safe, and open community of believers, a place where we can support those within and outside of our home.

Our Town & Region

Our broader community, Traverse City, is situated in northwest lower Michigan in the heart of the Great Lakes region. People are drawn to our town for the abundance of outdoor activities, cultural offerings, and small-town feeling. We are blessed with crystalline waters, sugar sand beaches, the gorgeous Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (which is regarded as one of America's most beautiful parks) and miles of trails that offer opportunities for hiking, jogging, and biking.

In the fall, Traverse City offers opportunities for remarkable fall color tours and many people enjoy embarking on winery and craft brewery visits. The winter offers downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing. In the spring, morel hunting is an obsession, and the local farmers are busy planting numerous crops and tending to fruit trees. Agriculture helps to support an ever increasing number of "farm to table" restaurants and many people regard Traverse City as a top spot for culinary delights. Summer offers a notable number of festivals that include the National Cherry Festival in late June and the Traverse City Film Festival in August. Cultural opportunities include two active theatre companies, a symphony orchestra, several choral groups, a world-class art museum, and an array of artistic and educational offerings at nearby Interlochen Center for the Arts. Our community supports strong school systems from pre-K through college: Our high schools are some of the best-performing in the state, and we support Northwestern Michigan College and extension courses offered by several state universities. We are home to a highly regarded culinary school and to the Great Lakes Maritime Academy.

Our town is a resort community, yet we are regarded as a regional destination for business, law, shopping, and health care. We are a relatively progressive, environmentally friendly community with single-stream recycling, a commitment to 100% renewable energy by 2040, and numerous organizations that strive to protect our waterways, forests, and farmland.

In short, Traverse City and the surrounding area provide a stunning environment in which to live, raise families, and retire. We offer a small-town feel with many big city accoutrements. Traverse City is a gem that sparkles blue, green, cherry red, and all the colors of the rainbow.

Who We Are

In our efforts to be disciples of Jesus, we work on two levels. One is to be disciples in the global sense, striving to increase our awareness of how our personal actions influence the coming of the kingdom of God in our neighborhood, our city, and the larger world. The other is to be disciples in the Episcopal sense — standing on the classic, three-legged stool of scripture, tradition, and reason.

We encourage people of all ages to actively participate in worship. Central to our understanding of spiritual formation, one of our goals is for everyone to discover their spiritual gifts within our worshipping body.



How We Worship

We embrace the practice of an open table communion which is symbolic of Christ's own welcome. Each time we gather for Eucharist, the call goes out for all to come, no questions asked. Under our current interim rector, we have gradually incorporated more inclusive language and gender-neutral references to God, including the Divine feminine. We make a strong commitment to lay participation at all of our services. We also encourage the involvement of our children and youth as well as of newer members.

At Grace, we have three primary opportunities for community worship in the sanctuary:

Our five p.m. Saturday service offers a quiet, less formal Eucharist that attracts a steady group of worshipers. The sacrament of healing is offered twice monthly at both this service and at the Sunday ten a.m. service. Periodically, alternative liturgies have been celebrated.

Our eight a.m. Sunday morning service centers on a traditional Eucharist without music, which appeals to those seeking a small gathering centered in silence and reflection and to those who prefer an early service.

On Sundays at ten a.m., we conduct a service that includes congregational and choral music. Part way through this service, the children return from their spiritual formation to join us for the Eucharist. On occasion, children or guest musicians offer their talents during this service. We have achieved a balance between musical styles that seems to satisfy the majority of our members. Our outstanding new choir director works exceptionally well with a growing group of choristers and our more contemporary group is led by an excellent musician. One or both groups sing at these services and they occasionally offer anthems together.

In addition to these worship services, an intimate group gathers in the chancel for Morning Prayer on Tuesdays. At other times, small groups gather in prayer for spiritual nurturance with one another. These include the women's prayer circle, Morning and Evening Prayer, the men's prayer group, and the centering prayer community. Grace Church is home to the St. Clare of Assisi Chapter of the Daughters of the King, one of eight in our Diocese. We have additional opportunities to gather in fellowship, such as a men's group, a book club for women, a hiking group, a weekly knitting group, and a garden guild that cares for our green spaces and the Garden of Remembrance and Reflection.

How We Teach and Learn

Children

In our spiritual guidance of children, we have the following goals, which build on each other:

- *Nursery (0-3 years)*. We could describe this as "What we do in church." We sing, pray, share sacred stories, and have a snack.
- *Children's Chapel (3 years through 3rd grade)*. Here, we mirror the Service of the Word. We share a holy greeting, the Gloria, a Collect, the Prayers of the People, an offering, and a sacred story using *Godly Play*, the curriculum created by Jerome Berryman.
- *4th/5th grade*. These young people meet in the Youth Room, and base their discussions and art or service projects on the Revised Common Lectionary.
- *Middlers (6th, 7th, 8th grade)*. This group meets weekly to discuss scriptural lessons and participate in service opportunities. We have discovered that the most successful model follows the Revised Common Lectionary because kids and parents hear the same texts and can talk about them together.

These four levels of spiritual guidance meet during the first part of our 10 am worship service. At Grace, it has always been important for the whole community to share the Eucharist together; therefore, the children join us in the sanctuary during the passing of the peace.

Youth

We have one youth group that meets each Sunday:

- *High School Youth Group (9th-12th grade)*. For more than a decade, Grace Church used the Journey to Adulthood (J2A) curriculum, which culminated in a pilgrimage every three years. This has evolved into a mix of weekly meetings, and we continue to adhere to the ideal of pilgrimage: the inward, spiritual journey of the individual in the company of the faithful. Recruiting adult youth group leaders has always been a goal, one more easily met in some years than in others.

Adult Formation

Grace is a diverse learning community, and parishioners can choose between individual and group study. Over the years, we have offered a variety of opportunities for study: we have hosted four-year Education for Ministry courses; small-group Bible discussion groups; theological study; and guest presentations at St. Theo's Men's Group. In addition, adults share teaching our youth group about a chosen theme or cherished portion of church life.

Our licensed spiritual directors offer professional support for exploring one's spiritual life and relationship with God. And for those who want to pursue self-directed study, our library is maintained by volunteers.

Our History

Grace Episcopal Church was founded in 1867 and the original church building was erected in 1876. The founding Episcopalians envisioned a religious center to meet the spiritual needs of a growing community. The parish was admitted to the Diocese of Western Michigan in 1877.

In 1897, the building was moved to its present location, remaining in the heart of the downtown area. In 1965 a free-standing parish hall was erected, including a full commercial kitchen. The parish hall was joined to the original building in the 1970s, featuring a gathering space as well as church offices.

In 2003, after much prayerful visioning and discernment, the congregation of Grace Church decided to build a new worship space to welcome more people, to continue our mission and ministry by remaining downtown, and to purchase the house adjoining the Grace property for future projects. We celebrated the dedication of our new space in 2005, having doubled the worship area. We honored our forbearers by carefully maintaining the integrity of our historic building, and retained much of the original altar area and our beautiful stained glass windows.

We have been served by six Rectors over the past fifty years. Our most recent Rector accepted another call in November 2015, after serving us for almost seven years. Grace currently has an intentional interim Rector who will remain with us until our new Rector is called.

Where We Work

The Grace campus consists of five properties located on the corner of a charming downtown neighborhood that is surrounded by stately old homes, other parishes, and a synagogue. One block away from the main corridor of Traverse City one finds a variety of restaurants, coffee shops, independent businesses, and more. We are a short walk to one of the pristine beaches of Grand Traverse Bay, Boardman Lake, and Boardman River where many recreational opportunities are offered.

- Our sanctuary, which includes the columbarium, was completed in 2005. The adjoining commons, a large gathering space, separates the sanctuary and the administrative offices. The lower level houses our music room, music library, and some meeting rooms.
- The parish hall has three levels. The church school and nursery are located on the upper level, the main level features a commercial kitchen and seating for 120 people, and the lower level houses the Grace library, meditation room for prayer, youth room, and meeting spaces.
- Our thriving Jubilee House is an outreach ministry and day shelter for those with housing and employment challenges.
- The Spedding Food Pantry is adjacent to the back of the church in a renovated garage.
- The house next door, commonly called “the brown house” was purchased in 2003 for future expansion. Our interim Rector currently resides there.

Our spaces are also open to other groups, both secular and sacred. Our sanctuary has become a popular venue for concerts, weddings, and other special events. We offer meeting and class spaces for groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Oryana, a local food co-op that uses our kitchen for their cooking classes. Four teams of dedicated volunteers provide nutritious noon meals every Friday for the hungry. When there is a fifth Friday, a group from outside of our church is responsible for this task and, on every Sunday afternoon, meals are prepared and offered by members of other parishes.



How We Care For and Support Others

Our ministries give us the opportunity to exercise all four parts of our mission statement. We welcome others, build new and fortify old relationships, demonstrate outreach, and experience the transformational power of the Spirit in our lives and in the lives of those we strive to assist. We have an extensive history of service in Traverse City and the surrounding communities. Several local charities and institutions started here, either at Grace or through members living out their faith in their daily life and vocations. Grace also supports our diocese and national and international mission efforts. Our service groups are diverse and strong: Thanks to a hard-working core of dedicated volunteers, we have many ministries to choose from. Many of our members participate in “VOSH” or Volunteer Optometric Services to

Humanity. Their mission is to provide the gift of vision to people worldwide. Our chapter takes at least one mission trip each year to Central or South America. They provide eye care and glasses free of charge to those in need. We are part of the “Adopt a Highway” program and actively participate and provide refreshments to those who are taking part in the annual CROP walk. Our church has served as a gathering place for the entire community to discuss and pray for a range of local, national, and world needs and crises. In addition, we are home to a chapter of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

Our Jubilee Ministries represent one of our greatest assets and is registered as a ministry of the National Jubilee Network, which consists of over 600 Jubilee Ministry Centers spread across all provinces of the Episcopal Church. Our Center is comprised of the Jubilee House, the Spedding Food Pantry, and the Friday Community Meal program. The Jubilee House is an outreach ministry and day shelter for people who have housing and other life challenges. Serving over fifty people daily, it provides access to showers, laundry, storage, computers, mail delivery, and a kitchen. There is employment support via mail pick-up, access to computers, mobile phone plug-ins, and other resources. The Spedding Food Pantry serves the needy with dignity and respect, and is stocked by food drives, donations, fresh produce from Food Rescue, and our men’s group collects and stocks items from local markets. Open to the public two days each

week, our Pantry serves forty to fifty people at each distribution. The Pantry also houses our “PoWer Book Bags” ministry for children. This provides books to children who might not otherwise have access to them to encourage literacy. We partner with the community organization, “Love Thy Neighbor” to stock and distribute items in our hygiene pantry. As an extension of our outreach and service ministries, we participate with other churches in Safe Harbor, a ministry to the homeless that assists with overnight shelter, meals, and security during the cold months.

We also make dedicated efforts to serve and support our parishioners during times of trouble. Eucharist Visitors (EVs) bring the Sacrament of Holy Communion to those who are unable to attend worship. Members of our congregation have been trained to become Stephen Ministers to provide confidential one-on-one support to people who are experiencing difficult times. We have had a support group to help people cope with death and the Columbarium and Memorial Garden offer parishioners the option for the interment of ashes. We have redoubled our efforts to expand our pastoral care ministries. In addition to paid staff, we have a network of volunteers who serve as office staff, provide financial leadership, offer care for our building and grounds, and help to manage our internal and electronic communication tools.



Where We Are Going

We are open to change *and* rooted in tradition: This reflects our Episcopalian values and is our strength. At the same time, our CAT survey taught us that 98% of our parish is ready for some form of change! Our vision for the future is decidedly focused on the life of the individual: We want to attract families with children, reach out to people and fold them into the life of the church, and we seek ways for people to form meaningful relationships. In addition, we hope to be better advocates for social change and justice, to engage more deeply with our Traverse City neighbors, and we seek ways to support the abundant spiritual talents in our parishioners.

Our identity as a community of trust and mutual support has been tested by past events and, through prayer and guidance, we find ourselves on the cusp of a transformative era. Grace Church has suffered painful repercussions from the 2008 sexual assault of several women by an interim rector. When, in 2015, our Bishop informed the congregation of this misconduct, our first instinct was to insure that the women who had been victimized were safe and had been offered a chance to tell their story to a trusted spiritual advisor. The Holy Spirit continues to show us new ways to grow. We have offered healing services and Holy Conversations. As a parish, we pulled together and had a very frank meeting with the Bishop. We made plans to move forward, including a parish education series on healing, loss, and forgiveness, which culminated with a Healing Eucharist. The Vestry subsequently created a set of policies and procedures for dealing with unacceptable conduct that applies to clergy, staff, and the congregation. Grace Church is eager to proceed beyond this tragedy, yet we are also mindful of the need to keep this conversation open and safe. We have also added quarterly meetings in an effort to keep the congregation better informed about church developments. These efforts have improved communications inside our parish and have established a means by which we might address controversial issues in the future.

We are improving transparency, communication, knowledge, and our use of technology and will continue to do so. We need to find and keep a balance between maintaining our liturgy and traditions and moving into a church that is more fully inclusive and understanding of our differences. We know we will benefit from learning and practicing practical welcoming skills. We have emerged with a renewed passion for outreach, relationship building, welcoming, and spiritual transformation.

Grace Leadership and Staff

Vestry

Barb Dancer, Senior Warden
Elizabeth Black, Junior Warden
James Deaton, Clerk
Kathryn Holl, Keep
Jessica Rickard, Alternate Clerk
Elizabeth Blondia
Mike Cotter
Kelly Ignace
Glen MacPherson
Matt Roney
Tim Sinclair
Jeff Wescott
Bill Pierce, Treasurer

Current Staff

The Rev. J. Kathryn Costas, Interim Rector
Ellen Schrader, Office Coordinator
Jason Hubbard, Director of Music
Karin Willman, Organist
Kathryn Christian, Director of Grace
Harmony
Rebecca Eitzen, Bookkeeper

Discernment Team

Lynn Feeter, Co-Chair
Mike Hanson, Co-Chair
Dan Bruining
Pam Farrell
Anne Kelly
Marcia Lee
Jeff Wescott
Harry Wiberg