2021 Annual Report

158th Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish

February 6, 2022

Grace Episcopal Church
Amherst, Massachusetts
# 2021 Annual Report
Grace Church Parish

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I. Order of Business

Celebration of the Holy Eucharist 9:30 AM in the Church and via livestream
Call to Order Ruthie Ireland, Clerk of the Vestry
Acceptance of Roll of Membership
Reception of Minutes of the 157th Annual Meeting, February 7, 2021
Recognition of Retiring Vestry Members Chris Freitag, Senior Warden
Report of Nominating Committee and the Election of New Vestry Members and Delegates to Convention
Report from the Stewardship Committee Bruce Stebbins, Chair
St. Michael's Fellowship Doug Adler, Chair
Reception of Reports from Officers and Commissions
Treasurer's Remarks Mark Leonas, Treasurer
Remarks of Wardens and Rector Chris Freitag, Senior Warden Tom Dougherty, Junior Warden The Rev. Thomas Synan, Rector

Other Business

Closing Hymn and Prayer

O God our Creator, make the door of our parish church wide enough to receive all who need human love, fellowship, and care, and narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride, and rancor. Here may the tempted find succor, and the sorrowing receive comfort; here may the careless be awakened to repentance, and the penitent be assured of thy mercy; and here may all thy children renew their strength in thee and go on their way rejoicing; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
## II. Membership 2021

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Marie Coughlin  
Sheila Coy  
Cara Crandall  
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Cecil Currin  
Lou Currin  
Duane Dale  
Beth Damon  
Dick Damon  
Cecily Dann  
Chelsea Dann  
Jennifer Dann  
O'Keefe Dann  
Jaime Davila  
Gabriel Davila-Bustamante  
Brenda Davis  
Elizabeth Davis  
Fletcher Davis  
Lucas Denit  
Lyle Denit  
Jeffrey DeSantis  
Karen DeSantis  
Donna Devine  
Carol Dick  
Charlie Dickinson  
Emma Dickinson  
Will Dickinson  
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Denise Dineen  
John Dineen  
Matthew Dineen  
Patrick Dineen  
Anne Ditzler  
Nancy Dole  
Jackie Dougherty  
Kellen Dougherty  
Kitty Dougherty  
Stewart Dougherty  
Tom Dougherty  
Helen Drake  
Elizabeth Duda  
Gillian Duda  
Jessica Duda  
Jim Duda  
Maria Dye  
Lee Easton  
Christophe Enhstrom  
Jeanette Erard  
Michael Erard  
Alpha Etinde  
Annie Lokangu Etinde  
Floribert Etinde  
David Eve  
Kira Eve  
Max Eve  
Tomi Eve  
Emeka M. Eziri  
Kelechi Eziri  
Suzannah Fabing  
Kent Faerber  
Danielle Federa  
Prunella Fiddian-Green  
MJ Fowler  
The Rev. Heidi Frantz-Dale  
Ellie Fraser  
Christopher Freitag  
Melanie Freitag  
Melissa Freitag  
Rebecca Freitag  
Elizabeth French Finn  
Barb Fukushima  
June Gaeke  
Greyson Garrett  
Sophia Gergely  
Gretchen Gerzina  
Anna Gilsdorf  
Benjamin Gilsdorf  
Sean Gilsdorf  
Andrew Glace  
Mya Glace  
Kathy Glime  
Andrew Gnatek  
Dan Gnatek  
Gail Gnatek  
Abigail Goff  
David Goff  
Yolanda Goff  
Norman Golden II  
Jack Goodell  
Mary Goodwin  
Alice Goodwin-Brown  
Linda Gralenski  
Michael Gralenski  
Matthew Gregory  
Susan Haff  
Andrew Haight  
Charles Haight  
Susan Haight  
Amy Hampson  
Carter Hampson  
Liza Hampson  
Quinn Hampson  
Tim Hampson  
Colleen Harris  
Loy Harris  
William Harron III  
Amber Hartblay  
Cassandra Hartblay  
Marian Hartblay  
Charlotte Hathaway  
Bob Hawley  
Bennett Hazlip  
Ilona Hazlip  
Joseph Hazlip  
Lorie Healy  
Anne Herrington  
Marsha Hertel  
Carlton Ho  
Jonathan Ho  
Linda Ho  
Marissa Ho  
Mary Hocken
Anne Hoffmann
Chris Hoffmann
Sarah Hoffmann
Willy Hoffmann
Margaret (Meg) Holladay
Ann Holland
Anne Homme
Adam Honig
Charlotte Honig
James Honig
Jefferson Hunter
Pamela Hunter
Caleb Ireland
Emily Ireland
Michael Ireland
Ruthie Ireland
Valerie Ivy
Adam Jacobson
Adrienne Jacobson
Deborah Jacquie
Ronald Jacque
John Jenkins
Miriam Jenkins
Tony Jewell
Kimberly Jones
Sharon Judge
Steve Judge
Kell Julliard
Jeffrey Keedy
Maddox Keedy
Mia Keedy
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Charlotte Kelly
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Patrick Kelly
Robert Kelly Jr.
L. Finley Keneally
Brown Kennedy
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Michael Kennedy Costa
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Margaret King
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Laura Klock
Lynn Klock
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Caseem Knight
Kelley Knight
Walter Kohler
Wendy Kohler
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Joseph Konieczny
Maria Konieczny
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Erik LaMotte
Kirsten LaMotte
Betty Lange
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Michael LaPointe
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Susan Lattanzi
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Louise Lavine
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Sandra Lillydahl
Elija Lillydahl-Schroeder
Hosanna Lillydahl-Schroeder
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Susan Lowance
Ann S. Lowell
Bridget Lowry
Fiona Lowry
Janet Lowry
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Violet Lynn
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Sarah Malzone
Wesley Malzone
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Bande Mangaliso
Mzamo Mangaliso
Nomazengie Mangaliso
Unati Mangaliso
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Bill Manning
Kevin Marino
Nathan Marino
Sharon Marino
Tyler Marino
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Mark Marshall
Erin Martineau
Mary Martini
Betsy Mathews
Cindy Mathews
James Mathews
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Sudha Setty
Mira Setty-Charity
Mohan Setty-Charity
Mary Ellen Shaughan
Eugene Sheehan
Marcia Sheehan
Peter Sikowitz
Angela Silvia
Bjorn Silvia
Teghan Silvia
Bryn Margaret Siudzinski
Madeline Siudzinski
Meghan Siudzinski
Robert Siudzinski
Anna Smith
Betsy Cannon Smith
Donovan N. Smith
Ellie C. Smith
Kevyn Smith
Lucy A. Smith
Randall P. Smith
Randall P. Smith
Peter Snedecor
James Soper
Jennifer Soper
Joshua Soper
Katherine Soper
Cynthia Spell
Catherine Spence
George Spence
Jack Spence
Rob Spence
Caroline Spurgin
Diana Spurgin
Kate Spurgin
Richard Spurgin
Richard Spurgin
Sarah Grace Spurgin
Adrian Stair
Emily Starkweather
Bruce Stebbins
Matthew Stebbins
Owen Stebbins
Sara Stelzner
Barbara Sternau
Doug Stewart
Ericka Stewart
John Stifler
Joel Stoneham
Luke Stoneham
Pete Stoneham
Sarah Stoner
Elise Stromgren
Brendan Sullivan
Brooke Sullivan
Cornelia Sullivan
Kyle Sullivan
Thomas Sweeney
Paul Swem
The Rev. Thomas Synan
Pat Szumowski
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Elizabeth Van Dyke
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Jane Wald
Marianne Wald
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Tatjana Wanninger
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The Rev. Raymond Webster
Charles Weeber
Nancy Rose Weeber
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III. Minutes of the 157th Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish, Amherst, Massachusetts convened on February 7, 2021

On February 7, 2021, for the first time ever via Zoom, Clerk Gail Gnatek called the 157th Annual Meeting of Grace Church to order.

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

Role of Membership 2021

Gail Gnatek asked for any additions or corrections to the Role of Membership 2021. Diana Spurgin asked for a correction to the Role. A motion was made to accept the Role as amended, Diana Spurgin seconded, and the Role was accepted by unanimous vote.

Minutes of the 156th Annual Meeting

Minutes of the 156th Annual Meeting, held on February 2, 2020 were reviewed. There were no additions or corrections. A motion to accept the minutes of the 156th Annual Meeting was made, seconded, and approved by unanimous vote.

Retiring Vestry Members

Senior Warden, Marion Rosenau, recognized the Vestry members who have completed their terms: Maria Dye and Sue Abdow. Junior Warden Jeff DeSantis will be retiring and Steve McKelvey will continue on for another term. Marion will be taking a leave of absence from her role as Senior Warden. Marion expressed many thanks to members and officers for serving during the pandemic.

Report of the Nominating Committee

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

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

Vestry (each for a term of three years)
   Rachel Blain
   Patrick Kelly
   Stephen McKelvey

Vestry Youth (a term of one year)
   Emily Ireland

Officers of the Vestry (each for a term of one year)
   Senior Warden – Chris Freitag
Junior Warden – Tom Dougherty  
Treasurer – Mark Leonas  
Clerk – Ruthie Ireland

Lay Delegates to Convention  
Ericka Stewart  
Another Vestry member will be elected at a future date

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

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

**Report of the Stewardship Committee**

Tom Dougherty presented the report of the Stewardship Committee. In 2020 the Stewardship campaign received 179 pledges for a total of $487,000. The 2020 Stewardship goal was $500,000. The 2021 Stewardship goal is $487,000. To date, $300,000+ has come in.

Tom Dougherty stated that he would like to step down from his role on the Stewardship Committee, so that he can focus on his role as Junior Warden.

**2020 Annual Report**

A motion to accept the reports as printed in the 2020 Annual Report, 157th Annual Meeting of Grace Church Parish was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Mark Leonas presented the Treasurer’s Report. This was the 12th year in a row in which Grace ended with a positive balance in the operating budget. Mark reported that Grace Church staff received a 2% raise, and that all staff remained in their positions despite the year of global pandemic. Mark stated that the pledge drive is going well this year. Mark thanked Rich Spurgin and DeAnne Riddle for their dedicated help in preparing the budgetary reports.

**Senior Warden’s Report**

Marion Rosenau delivered heartfelt thanks to the Rev. Tom Synan, the Rev. Megan McDermott, and the Executive Committee for their help through this challenging year. She also thanked our bookkeeper Jaana Cutson, parish administrator Terrie Korpita, and sexton David Ulen. She offered thanks to director of music Beth Hart Damon, and organist Dick Damon, for the music they provided all year.

Marion, who is taking a leave of absence from her role as Senior Warden, mentioned that she is struggling with significant health issues. She is living in Vermont close to family, and most likely will not be returning to Amherst as she had hoped to do. She will miss Grace Church community and is grateful for her time with the parish.
**Junior Warden’s Report**

Jeff Desantis reported on building projects, garden projects and compost projects. It was very difficult to hear his report due to technical issues and poor internet connection.

**The Rector’s Report**

The Rev. Tom Synan referenced his sermon from today and recorded in the 2020 Annual Report recognizing gratefulness for Grace and all who are a part of this church. Tom offered thanks to the Altar Guild, those who volunteered as lectors, and, for music provided by the choir and Beth and Dick Damon, our music director and organist. He offered thanks to Rev. Megan McDermott and her work coordinating the best video performance of a Christmas Pageant ever recorded. He thanked all parishioners for their generosity and stewardship this year.

Tom thanked Bishop Doug Fisher, and shared a recorded message from Bishop Fisher for the 157th Annual Meeting. Bishop Fisher stated that the church is needed now more than ever. He urged Grace to live the definition: we are the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement, we make a difference, and the world needs to hear our message of hope. Bishop Fisher finished his message by asking the question, *how will you follow Christ?*

Tom ended by expressing his gratitude to all the committees and groups who even in the face of a global pandemic did not falter in spirit and testimony and gave generously of their time & talents.

The meeting concluded with a hymn and prayer.

*Respectfully Submitted, Ruthie Ireland, Clerk*

**IV. Rector’s Sermon and Address, February 6, 2022**

Today’s Gospel passage from Luke – The call of the first disciples – is one of my favorites. It’s different from Mark’s and Matthew’s versions which seem to emphasize instantaneous, almost hypnotic, obedience – a single command from Jesus and fishermen suddenly drop everything, and even abandoning their father. Luke puts some real life into it and provides a rich story of ordinary people rising up to answer God’s call.

Jesus starts this encounter commandeering a boat in order to speak the crowd. He sees two empty boats and gets into one of them without permission and without asking. That’s a little nervy, but isn’t that how God sometimes gets involved in all our lives? God doesn’t necessarily wait for permission or an invitation; God just enters and acts.

I think it’s significant that Luke says nothing about what Jesus taught that day from Simon’s boat, because I think if we asked Simon, who was exhausted from a bad night of fishing, he would tell us that he had no idea what Jesus was telling the crowd. He didn’t start paying attention until they went out into the deep water, and Jesus changed his life. Again, isn’t that the way God works – meeting us in the deep waters of our lives?
While Jesus taught the crowd, Simon was either cleaning his nets so that he could get home soon or maybe he was dozing on the side. The lesson ends and Jesus now turns to the very tired Simon and tells him to put out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch. Peter goes along with this even though it makes no sense, letting down his nets – the ones that he just cleaned – after he’s been fishing all night and caught nothing.

What would compel this tired fisherman to go back out? Exhaustion? Exasperation? The Holy Spirit? Maybe some kind of combination of all of the above. As it is for most of us when we encounter Christ. What compels you?

Whatever went into Simon’s decision, what’s important is that there is within it some level of surrender, which is exactly where Jesus is always ready to work with even today – our place of surrender. Simon lets go, he gives in, he surrenders something within him, and in that decision he discovers the mystery of the Gospel and that his life is on the verge of irrevocable change.

Can you imagine the transformation of these fishermen as they go suddenly from deprivation to abundance? As the psalmist says, “weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning.” I love that they have so much that the boats start sinking – perhaps a visual metaphor that Peter and his friends’ old life is coming to an end. As it always is with Christ: life has changed, not ended.

And it’s at this point – too many fish, boats sinking, a change in plans – that Peter realizes this Jesus is more than he seems. He’s only now starting to get a sense of who Jesus is, what he’s about, and what he may expect. And that’s awesome but also scary. But thankfully the message from God to all who suddenly realize they are in the presence of God and are called by God – from Moses to Isaiah to Peter to all of us here at Grace Church – is the same: “Do not be afraid!” It’s the most common command in the Bible, and I think it goes to the core of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Do not be afraid!

I thank God for the call of ordinary Peter. If God can work with him, then there’s hope for all of us. Imagine what God can do with us. I give thanks for everyone at Grace Church for answering God’s call, because it is through you that I feel so incredibly blessed. What is there to fear when one is surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses? Nothing, thanks be to God.

What is the call from Jesus Christ?

It’s an invitation to participate in God’s work in the world, and a promise that God will be with us in this work. Jesus is a healer and reconciler; the Messiah showing us the way to God and the nearness of God. And God, as proclaimed by Jesus is very present and very real, full of love and compassion for all of God’s creation. And we are people invited by God to be part of the divine mission and ministry of healing and reconciliation in a broken world.

For 2000 years this is the call from Christ, starting with a group of unsuspecting sleep-deprived fishermen: to help heal and repair the world and be agents and models of reconciliation. And we are at our best when we rise to the occasion of serving the common good through acts of charity and self-sacrifice. Simple acts of kindness and leading with love for others and for all of creation have been the way the Church has made God and Christ manifest. In the end, I’m guessing we all will be judged primarily by how well we conduct ourselves for the common good rather than how polished we are in terms of well-articulated theology or creedal statements.
I want to affirm today how blessed, honorable, and terrific this congregation has been in this most unusual time of COVID, which unfortunately has not gone and may never fully disappear. You valiantly sustain the mission and ministry that God and Christ call us to, and rise routinely to the challenges brought to us by a chaotic unpredictable world. It’s not easy but God’s work is never easy, so my message today for our Annual Meeting is: THANK YOU. Thank you for everything you do in the name of and for Grace Church.

The year 2021, began with great promise, the rollout of vaccines: Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. There was tremendous hope that perhaps this was the beginning of the end. The energy on Zoom at Vestry meetings to Bible study was unmistakable. Speaking personally it was an emotional experience getting vaccinated. Yes, there was a good feeling about personal protection, but it also tapped into our Christian mandate of doing for the common good. Getting vaccinated, if one can, is doing God’s work by helping everyone stay healthy.

As many of us got vaccinated, the talk of the parish was – when will be back in the church as a community? Many thanks to our wonderful Vestry who with great prudence in April set June 20th as the target date for the resumption of in-person worship. And I thank God that we were able to do it. June 20th had the glory of Easter. It was re-union. It was so moving to see so many people turn out that day. For me that was a glimpse of heaven – the joy of Communion, the reuniting of the Body of Christ.

Back then we sang one hymn at the end of the service and since we’ve evolved gradually along the way. Oh what a joy it was to welcome back the choir. We reintroduced an offertory anthem and an offertory hymn. Eventually the choir joined us in the opening procession and now, thank God, we sing an opening hymn as well. God bless Beth and Dick Damon, our Music Director and Organist, and our wonderful choir for persevering through recordings via phone, the technological mysteries of Zoom and YouTube, and making it back to where they belong. Music is such an integral part of Christian spirituality. Can you imagine Christianity without music and singing? NO!!! Every Sunday is wonderful thanks to you, and special occasions and Holy Days, such as Advent Lessons and Carols, Christmas, Tenebrae, Easter, and Pentecost are sublime. Your ministry is vitally important. Thank you for answering Christ’s call and for all that you are doing.

With the resumption of in-person Sunday worship, we revised some of the programming we instituted at the start of COVID. The hours the church was open for private prayer were scaled back. We also discontinued promoting the National Cathedral on Sunday mornings (Goodbye Imani!), and started livestreaming our 10:30 service for everyone who is unable to be here in-person. Many thanks to our YouTube crew, Chris Freitag, Charlie Tebbets, Kathy Glime, and Amory Maxey, for managing the livestream. And to all who attend Grace Church in this way and to those who join us on Sundays for the Zoom coffee hour, we are so happy that you are connected to us and we want you to remain connected.

And in July, after almost 500 days, we discontinued the Daily Prayer, which was delivered every morning via email at 5:45am. It was a work of love that was originally meant for just a few weeks, when we all were overly optimistic about COVID going away. Many thanks to all of you who read the Daily Prayer, shared your thoughts and comments with us and shared it with others, and thank you also to those who shared prayers and poems that were special to you.

If ‘ZOOM’ was the word for 2020, ‘RESUME’ was one of my favorite words this last year. In terms of our worship life, it was a great to resume in-person the Wednesday midweek healing service and Eucharist, Friday night Evensong, and Liturgy in the Chapel. Thank you to all who participate in the liturgical life of this parish – acolytes, lectors, LEMS, and ushers. Thank you to the altar guild and the flower guild who maintain the beauty of this church so that it reflects the greater glory of God. And thank you to Tom Dougherty our Junior Warden,
all gardeners, planters, and others who likewise maintain the upkeep of our church, making it such a beautiful and inviting house of prayer.

God bless all who answer the call to sustain our ministries to Haiti, Ramallah, and the Circle of Care. The students at St. Mathieu once again started the academic year with new school uniforms. The school, which began 14 years ago with only 45 students, now enrolls over 240 children and has a staff of 14. A new school building was completed this last summer which includes a library. On a personal note, it was sad to learn that Père Diègue was retiring. He was a great asset to the school and he was one terrific partner in this important ministry. He will be missed, but we also welcome Père Wallin Decamp and look forward to working with him, and hopefully hosting him here in Amherst sometime this year. We also just had the second annual soup extravaganza Dine In, Help Haiti Out, which was delicious and nutritious and an act of love for a great cause. I hope this is a sign of a new tradition for us.

Bisan, the student we sponsored at Episcopal Technical & Vocational Training Center since August 2019, graduated and is working in a very good restaurant. Thanks be to God and thanks be to you! We wish her all the best as we welcome our new student Teya, who started her studies this last August. She too is studying Hotel/Hospitality management, learning to serve, cook, and cater.

And here at home, the Berchmas family is acclimating quite well. It is hard to believe they are here in Amherst with us for over three years. May God be with them and bless them. Many blessings and thanks to everyone who sustains these worthwhile and important ministries.

The generosity of this parish as always is tremendous and humbling. Food donations to the Amherst Survival Center continuously come in. We donated well over 1400 pounds of food, and provided 400+ packages of bread stuffing at Thanksgiving. Once again 40 families (103 children) had a brighter Christmas thanks to your generosity. And this parish continued its generous support for local and global needs. The Fourth Sunday of the month collections were monthly opportunities to give, but ultimately resumed their place on the monthly calendar when in-person worship started up again. In a year of tremendous uncertainty and growing needs, this congregation – answered God’s call to love others – and gave away almost $32,000 to deserving agencies near and far, such as the Interfaith Cot Shelter, the St. Vincent Center for Disabled Children in Haiti, the Women’s Education Fund, and Catholic Charities: Afghan Humanitarian Support. Thank you for being so generous and so caring for the welfare and well-being of others. In the words of St. Paul, God loves a cheerful giver.

And speaking of cheerful followers of Christ and answering his call, let me give a giant shout out to the children and youth of this parish. God bless you as you let God into your life during these difficult times. In ways that are so unfair, you are on the front lines of the pandemic, and yet thanks to you Sunday School and Youth Group are up and running. It was a delight that we once again had an in-person Christmas pageant, hopefully next year with a few live animals. And can you believe it? Our most recent Confirmation class was confirmed in December when Bishop Doug visited us. I can. That was a glorious day when we had a baptism, 6 confirmations and 5 receptions. Talk about a community of faith collectively answering God’s call.

I have said it before and I will say it again, that Grace Church, in the Town of Amherst, in the year of our Lord 2022, has the most wonderful young people I have ever met in my years of ordained ministry. God bless you for being who you are and for being part of this parish. Always remember: this is your church as much as it is anybody else’s and don’t ever let anyone tell you otherwise. A big thank you to Megan McDermott for all the great work you are doing as Director of Creative Formation, and to everyone who upholds and supports the young people of this parish.
The mission and ministry of the Church manifests in so many ways. Thank you to everyone who participated in the discussion of Jemar Tisby’s thought-provoking book The Color of Compromise. Thank you to those who participated in the Reconnecting at Grace series. Thank you for all the sharing that took place during these heartfelt discussions about life during COVID, prayers and poems that sustain you, creation care and ways to be better stewards of the planet, and who are your saints and heroes. Thank you to everyone who participated in Kell Julliard’s thoughtful presentation: Mindful Discipleship: How to Thrive during the Holidays and all who attended our Advent Series: Space for Your Spirit. Thank you to all who shared wonderful thoughts and great ideas for the Community Bulletin Boards regarding saints and ways to rethink Christmas. Thank you to all who answered the call for the redesign of Pastoral Care. Thank you to all who help with Grace’s Closet. Thank you to Climate Action @ Grace for ringing our bell for 11 minutes on the 11th day of each month as a call to action to save our planet. Keep doing the prophetic work you’re doing. And many thanks to everyone who participated in the St. Nicholas Bazaar. It was pure joy to have that back again. Seeing all the people who came to the bazaar reminded me how important this ministry is for so many people. To all who answer Christ’s call to participate in the life of this parish, great is your reward in heaven, if I have a say.

Many thanks also to the Stewardship Committee and to each and every one of you for your generous outpouring of financial support for Grace Church. The church budget is not just numbers. It is a tangible and physical manifestation of a congregation’s faith, hope, and charity. God bless you for your faith in God and your faith in God’s Church—a wonderful and sacred mystery.

My friends, let’s be honest. This has not been an easy year. Anxiety is heightened everywhere these days. COVID is not going away and new variants are a constant possibility. There are dire warnings about the economy, inflation, supply chain problems, and labor shortages. Children and adolescents suffer from depression, anxiety, and compulsive behavior, and young adults question whether they have a future, given climate change. Military might is suddenly on display in Eastern Europe. Who knows where that’s leading? And the number of dead in this country from COVID may soon reach 1 million lives lost. These are challenging times for everyone, but in the midst of all that, I remind myself of Jesus’ words from today’s Gospel to those who answer his call: “Do not be afraid.”

I remind myself of that a lot, because there is so much uncertainty. But I also count my blessings, because I am incredibly blessed and fortunate, thanks to you. Thank you for your ceaseless commitment and dedication to the mission and ministry to which God is calling us. I am encouraged knowing that we will persevere together and continue to bear witness to a world that is in a lot of trouble.

My friends, there is no other place I would want to be right now than right here with you at this amazing Grace Church. I love Grace Church. Don’t you?

It is an honor to be your Rector. Thank you for being you, thank you for being here, and thank you for answering Christ’s call.

God bless Grace Church and God bless each and every one of you!

Peace. Peace be with you.

Amen

The Rev. Tom Synan
V. Vestry Reports

Senior Warden: I would like to begin my report by thanking the Parish for the privilege of allowing me to serve as your Senior Warden this past year. This has been a challenging year with the Pandemic, but we have accomplished many things and done it safely. I would like to thank Tom and Megan for their guidance and leadership, as well as the Executive Committee, Tom, Ruthie, and Mark for their individual work in keeping our Parish strong and vibrant during these difficult times.

Tom and Megan were very creative with keeping us together in Community as we progressed through this Pandemic. Daily Prayers and zoom services as well as services from the National Cathedral kept us going. Zoom coffee hours allowed us to meet together and made much needed socialization possible. We worked on how to bring back the staff in person to keep them safe and to give added support in all they do to keep the Parish going. Beth and Dick provided some musical offerings with some choir members masked and socially distanced. June saw us coming back together again in person. We were so glad to be back even with every other pew, socially distanced and masked. I thank the committee that worked on our protocols to help make this happen. As the Pandemic seemed to let up we were able to stop socially distancing, but kept masking to keep us safe. We also instituted a streaming component to our service, so that those who needed to stay at home could be a part of our services. I want to thank those parishioners who helped and continue to help us with this streaming component. Several zoom offerings were held with varied topics and we also had a confirmation class readied for the Bishops visit December 5. I was also so happy to have the Saint Nicholas Bazaar back. Everyone seemed to have fun, stay safe and it was quite a success. Christmas services were also held in person and while we continue to mask as the Pandemic continues we are able to bring some normalcy to our lives.

Having implemented our nominations process several years ago, we again used this process and had another successful time finding new leaders for Vestry and Diocesan Convention. Our nominations process is more open and accessible to the Parish. The Nominations Committee consisted of Alice Goodwin Brown, John Jenkins, Peter Sikowitz, Tom Synan and me. Members of the Nominations Committee gave testimonials as to why they served on Vestry as well as the benefits of serving. Multiple bulletin inserts were used to request nominations and provide opportunities to meet with the committee and potential nominees. Potential nominees were invited via zoom to vestry meetings to see what the Vestry does first hand and then discern if they were interested. I am happy to say that again this process provided a good list of names and nominees were selected. Alice and John have decided to run for a second term on the Vestry and I appreciate their staying on. I want to thank Peter for his service on Vestry and for his help on the nominations committee. I encourage everyone to think about how you can best serve Grace. We are always looking for people with special talents to share.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who are currently involved in some ministry here at Grace. I know that there are other committees that could use some additional helping hands. If you would like to become involved, feel free to speak to me or any member of the Vestry. The Pandemic has changed many things this past year, but Grace continues to forge ahead in community doing important work both within our community as well as abroad.

Chris Freitag, Senior Warden

Junior Warden: Jeffrey DeSantis passed the Junior Warden torch to me with a tour around the Grace Church campus in early 2021, both around the grounds and inside the many structures including the; Church, Connector, Rectory, Undercroft, Chapel, Columbarium, Parke House and Parish Hall.
First priority – or so I thought was to look into replacing or adding storm windows in the rectory to make the building more comfortable and energy efficient. This is a long-term costly project that will require more time to investigate.

Spring clean-up date set for May 15, with help from Paul Brecciate and Sandy Muspratt we prepped many of the flower beds and spread mulch.

The men’s toilet in the downstairs bathroom developed an internal leak/drip, though no water was on the floor, water was leaking by at rate of approximately 5 gallons per day. Dave Ulen our sexton tried to repair as did yours truly, however to no avail. Dave located a plumber who came in and replaced the internal fixtures. We tried our usual plumbers however they were tied up with a job at UMass and could only look into emergencies.

With church services back wouldn’t you know it that the organ would not play, turns out that an old outdated relay was the culprit as were some ancient switches. Bob Blanchard our electrician needed several visits to ferret out the problems and he replaced what was needed.

Coming back to service the shape of our wireless system in the church came up. Chris Freitag and I contacted Andrew Zucchino from Sonix Pro Audio and we replaced the system with a new wireless that sounds clearer to many. In 2022 we will be looking into upgrading our live streaming recording system.

Starting to get the church campus ready for the fall and Sunday school my attention was shifted to the 25-year-old approximate Parke House heating system which had failed us. Upon an early fall heating system repair it became evident that there were pin holes in the existing heating chamber tank. Surner Oil our supplier and maintenance company were backed up with work and recommended we Contact JamRog HVAC. We solicited three quotes to replace the heating system and with some help from Chris Freitag and John Robinson we decided to go with a commercial heating replacement system from Jamrog HVAC. The system was installed just in the nick of time before the weather turned really cold, just two weeks before the Bazaar. The day of the Bazaar an electric relay in the Parke House failed, we had plenty of heat in the Parke House but none in the Parish Hall. The failed relay has been replaced, however the electrical system in the Parke House is, or appears to be as old as the Parke House.

During the early Fall which was relatively dry, when it did rain, it came down in buckets and several areas mostly downstairs in the All-Souls Walkway and Undercroft had some water seep onto the flooring. Will continue to monitor this issue as repairs are extremely disruptive and costly.

Sherie Wilson called for a Fall clean-up of the campus garden beds. The clean-up was well attended and spearheaded by Mary Hicken with help from Helen Drake, Maria Dye and Paul Bracciotti, Kitty Dougherty, Mike and Linda Gralenski, Alice Goodwin-Brown, Sandy Muspratt, Katie Schendel and friend.

Jeffrey DeSantis and I checked all the roof gutters that we could safely reach and cleaned them out along with some minor roof repair on the Rectory roof. We are currently looking for a company that can repair the roofing, drains and gutters that we cannot safely reach to keep clear and in good repair.

The Grace Clean Energy Committee members, Mary Hicken and Don Allison addressed the Vestry about an energy audit from Eversource that happened on December 6th, 2021 with myself and Sandy Muspratt. Results of the audit will be forth coming from Eversource and shared with the vestry.
I look forward to continuing to keep the Grace Church campus/buildings in good repair with help from the congregation and outside contractors when needed.

Tom Dougherty, Junior Warden

VI. Commission Reports

LITURGICAL COMMISSION

Altar Guild: We were closed for services during the first half of 2021 because of Covid. Nonetheless, during these months, under Lou Currin’s direction, members of the Flower Guild continued to provide fresh flowers or potted plants for the Altar. Once we resumed normal services at the end of June, Altar Guild members returned to their regular duties: Georgann Mirick maintained the roster of duties, and members volunteered to set up and clean up at regular services, launder Altar linens, as well as take on responsibilities for special services including the monthly Liturgy in the Chapel and Advent. We thank Altar Guild members for their dedication in keeping the Altar looking beautiful.

We especially acknowledge the contribution of Veronica Chapman who laundered albs for Acolytes and LEMs for many years. Veronica’s contribution was an important gift to the Church. When she retired from this duty in 2021, the decision was made that LEMs would launder their own albs.

We are extremely grateful to have wonderful volunteers including a few new ones. Their service continues to make Grace Church special. Thank you!

Sheila Mammen

Acolytes: There was no acolyte activity in 2021 except towards the end of the year when a very small group of seasoned acolytes began to participate in services.

In the 2020 annual report, I wrote that the COVID-mandated break in church services offered an excellent time for me to step aside from directing acolytes to allow for new leadership when services resumed. I am delighted that Trent Maxey has agreed to take on this wonderful and enjoyable role.

Repeating what I wrote last year: “I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work with this wonderful group of young people over many years. Working with young people as they found their places at the altar has been a true blessing in my life.”

Nancy Lowry

Music: 2021 began much as 2020 ended, in terms of the Choir needing to make videos to be included in Grace’s online services, due to the pandemic. We were limited to having 8 singers, along with myself and Dick, for a total of 10 people in the Sanctuary. Although we were hugely grateful to be able to do anything at all, it certainly felt much “less than” what we have been used to over the years. We limped along in this manner as best we could, hoping and waiting (as we all were) for a time when things could be more conducive to music-making.

That time came just this last fall, in September, when Tom and the Vestry decided that the Choir could go back to “normal” (that is, if normal includes the wearing of masks!) with our full cadre of singers, sitting in our usual choir chairs at the front of the church. We have been so deeply grateful and delighted to be able to be part of Grace’s in-person services, offering our anthems and however many hymns Tom and Vestry deem appropriate during this still-COVID time. To be sure, the number of singers in the Choir has diminished a bit, with some long-time members choosing not to participate during the pandemic. We’ve now worked our way up to three
hymns – Opening, Offertory, and Closing… perhaps, someday, we’ll be able to return to singing the usual 5 hymns (adding a Sequence and a Communion Hymn to the three mentioned above), but we’ll see if and when that can happen.

We managed a lovely Advent Lessons & Carols service this last December, which was heart-warmingly well-attended, and did our usual 3 services for Christmas Eve, which all went very well. Fortunately, playing the organ for services did not have as much “germ-concern” as choral singing causes. Dick has been pleased to be able to resume fairly normal musical activities once we began our in-person services in June. He recalls having heard a voice teacher describe how his decision to take a year’s sabbatical from singing was one of the most foolish things he ever did… he said that it took him four or five years after his vacation to get back to his former abilities. So, Dick has been pleased not to have had more of an interruption in his work, which could likely have caused a negative impact in his playing of the organ, which would make things less satisfying/inspiring for the congregation.

As I’m sure we all are, both Dick and I are eager for a time when we can be free of any COVID concern and life, both at Grace and beyond, can just “be normal” again. We pray for that eventuality, while we feel much gratitude at being able to do the music that we’re currently able to accomplish.

Beth Damon, Director of Music

Young People’s Choir:
Due to the pandemic, there were no opportunities in 2021 for a Young People’s Choir.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION & EDUCATION - ADULT

With the pandemic restricting meetings at the church, adult education had its limitations but was vigorous. Several ongoing programs kept up their momentum:
• Bible study held weekly meetings with the Rector by Zoom. Participation was lively and engaged.
• “Raising The Questions,” mentored by Nancy Lowry, met on Zoom numerous times. The group is exploring and questioning our beliefs and practices while searching for new and rediscovered ways of expressing them.
• “Tea and Titles” returned to in-person gathering in December. The rest of the year Jude Wobst faithfully gathered readers’ individual reports and sent them on to the group.

Thanks to Tom and Megan, many other programs took place in 2021. During Lent, we gathered on Zoom to read Jemar Tisby’s “The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism,” an exploration of the American church and racism. Then in the fall, the clergy organized small discussion groups outdoors. Also, in September, Megan held a workshop, “Poems and Praise”, exploring art and creativity in spiritual growth. On Wednesday evenings in November, the clergy held a confirmation class in preparation for the Bishop’s visit on December 5.

Also of interest in November was parishioner Kell Julliard’s presentation on mindful discipleship, examining science and the practice of mindfulness.

Adult education is alive and well at Grace Church. Plans are underway for 2022.

Eve Webster
Creative Formation

Last summer, with blessing from Tom and the Vestry, my title changed from “Priest Associate” to “Priest Associate and Director for Creative Formation.” This signified a desire to more intentionally incorporate into my work at Grace the creation of opportunities for spiritual exploration and nourishment through arts, creativity, and literature.

In September over two Tuesday evenings, I offered a two-part course called Poems of Praise--Expanding our Vocabulary and Imagination for Praise through Literature. In our first class, we primarily read and discussed a wide of array poems approaching praise from different angles and attitudes. In our second class, we used poems as prompts for our own poetic explorations of praise. This was offered as a hybrid course, with people gathering both in-person in the Connector and over Zoom. As time permits in 2022, I look forward to developing other offerings, either led by myself or others, around creative topics.

For Advent, Grace hosted a creative, contemplative service on Wednesday evenings called Space for Your Spirit that offered visual art and poetry as a spiritual resource. The services also prompted inviting creative response to the evening’s Scripture passage. I plan to create and share PDFs based on the 4 sessions for those who have any interest in resources for engaging in creative contemplation at home. In 2022, I hope we might discern what it could look like to hold a creative service like this on a more regular basis and what time might work best for it.

Arts & creativity continue to be a part of the formation work I do with our children. Particularly, our new Sunday School curriculum (which you can read about in my children’s formation report) relies heavily on the arts as a way of engaging with Scripture.

If you are interested in connections between faith/spirituality and creativity, the arts, and literature and would like to be a part of conversations on what exploring those connections can look like at Grace, please be in touch. I would love to collaborate!

Rev. Megan McDermott

CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMISSION - CHILDREN & YOUTH

Children

In 2021, children’s ministry at Grace took a variety of approaches as we adapted to changing circumstances in relation to the pandemic.

Through the Winter and Spring, we continued our virtual children’s formation program, which included gathering twice a month over Zoom. One of these gatherings was a K-5th grade Sunday School class on the Beatitudes, while the second gathering, inspired by our in-person Liturgy in the Chapel services, was a short, online worship service.

The summer gave a break in programming in which we discerned what ministry would look like in the Fall. The pandemic has invited more urgent reflections on questions like: What does ministry look like for the realities of
the resources and kids we have now, rather than the realities of a few years ago? How do we offer children’s ministry that is both robust and sustainable?

I’ve since focused on only offering one class for K-5th graders on Sundays from 9:15-10:15 a.m., with all of our programming for 6th – 12th grades being done through youth group.

We have also shifted curriculums. In 2020-2021, we found a curriculum that seemed suitable for online gathering. For 2021-2022, the primary goal was finding something suited to a large age range of students learning together in one class. After looking at several curricular options, I ended up subscribing to Sparkhouse Digital, an online curriculum hub that allows us to access all of the publisher’s children’s curriculums, as well as supplemental materials we share with families.

Out of the curriculums available, we’ve been using Sparkhouse Rotation. The Rotation Sunday School model teaches the same Bible story over a number of weeks, but from the vantage point of a different discipline each week. This gives more chances for students to connect with a story and have an experience that resonates with their particular learning style. Over the course of the Fall we’ve done Creative Drama, Art, Music, Science, and Research Skills “workshops.” This means we’ve explored Bible stories by: making instruments, writing poems, acting with masks in the style of ancient Greek theatre, creating and decorating treasure chests to remind us we are treasured by God, finding pictures online that we felt represented the fruits of the Spirit, reflecting on facts about baby animals while thinking about God coming to us as a baby, and more. This curriculum does a great job at inviting children into a creative, personal relationship with their faith and the Bible, and I’m excited to continuing to see how it connects with our kids!

Liturgy in the Chapel began again in-person. This monthly worship service on the third Sunday of the month, 9:45-10:15 a.m., invites children of all ages and their families together for a short, child-focused service of Holy Communion. In 2022, I hope to rewrite our Liturgy in the Chapel service so that it might become even more accessible for our children and better introduce some of the fundamental, foundational ideas behind our faith and worship. I am thankful to Janet Teng for all of her work in setting and cleaning up for Communion – especially while I’m juggling Sunday School class beforehand.

In September and some of October, we met outside in the Garth for both Sunday School and Liturgy in the Chapel, but once temperatures dropped, moved indoors. When the weather improves, moving children’s programming outdoors may be a consideration again.

Typically Sunday School’s attendance has been around 4 children, while Liturgy in the Chapel has been about 6. Though small, these gatherings have been vibrant. Because of the pandemic, and particularly children’s eligibility for vaccination coming so much later than adults, our numbers for in-person events are not representative of all the families who are invested in our communal life in Grace Church. Throughout this time, I’ve been able to touch base with many parents and continue to provide resources for faith formation at home through a weekly email; I hope all our families are assured that the church is still here for them.

At 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve, we had an in-person Christmas pageant thanks to the leadership of Kate Atkinson, who directed; Alice Goodwin-Brown, who taught and led music; Katie Schendel, who coordinated costumes; and the many children and parents who contributed their time and effort. Though smaller in numbers than our typical pageant (a few young adults graciously filled in the gaps of our cast list!), it was still a joyful proclaiming of the Christmas story that featured children of all ages.
Because of the smaller number of families with young children participating in our worship services, as well as ongoing Covid concerns, we have not re-opened our nursery, which typically was open for childcare through the Sunday School hour and the 10:30 a.m. service. We look forward to re-opening when feasible; this will require hiring an all-new staff of nursery care workers, since many we had employed prior to the pandemic, have graduated and moved.

In 2022, we continue on with a spirit of flexibility – checking in with parents and guardians of young children about how we might best continue to minister to their families in light of the ups and downs of this pandemic.

The Rev. Megan McDermott

Youth

As with our children’s programming, our youth programming went through shifts over the course of 2021 as more opportunities to resume in-person parish life began. At Grace, we define our youth programming as being for children in grades 6-12.

The first half of 2021, the youth group continued meeting every other week on Thursday afternoons via Zoom. Zoom youth group featured a range of topics and activities. We explored liturgical feasts and seasons, like Epiphany and Lent, and did a special Easter series exploring Bible stories of the Resurrection accompanied by art. We had gatherings focused on playing games virtually together and sharing how we’ve been. We also had chances to pray together.

Last Lent, we had a special series of youth group sessions on Saturday mornings on the themes of self-reflection & action, which included a guest speaker from Episcopal City Mission, a social justice organization based in Boston; a creative writing workshop about writing as a means of self-reflection and the role self-reflection has in our spiritual lives; and a session about listening to voices calling for a more just juvenile justice system.

On alternating Thursdays, our high school Confirmation class also met on Zoom. Over the course of the year, this group of three students and I discussed the different questions of the Baptismal Covenant as a way of more deeply understanding what Christian faith offers us and asks of us. This group of three was confirmed by Bishop Doug on Dec. 5th, alongside a number of adults in our congregation.

Over the summer, we considered what youth group might look like for the 2021-2022 school year, particularly as we moved back to in-person gatherings. I landed on offering youth group two times a month, with a focus on providing a balance of fun, community-building activities as well as opportunities to continue cultivating the conversational richness that I found Zoom offered us. Because of what makes sense with scheduling and available leadership, we no longer have a middle or high school class during the Sunday School time slot on Sunday mornings.

Some of our community-building opportunities in 2021 included mini-golfing, going to Mike’s Maze, and bowling at Pinz, as well as organizing and pricing toys together for the Christmas bazaar.

This Fall, I began regularly meeting with First Church Amherst’s new Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Nathan Patti, about ways we might support each other and collaborate on youth ministry. The aforementioned bowling event was a joint gathering with the First Church youth group. We look forward to finding more ways to connect our communities in 2022.
Our youth group’s more conversational gatherings (which were accompanied by food when we were able to be outside) have been held at noon following our 10:30 a.m. services, typically on the third Sunday of the month. These have been organized around a curriculum called The Teen Compass Faith and Wellness Program from the organization Living Compass; this resource, designed by Episcopal priest/family and marriage therapist Rev Dr. D. Scott Stoner and teacher/family and marriage therapist Holly Hughes Stoner, helps churches facilitate conversations on the connection between faith and various aspects of wellness in youths’ lives. So far we have talked about spiritual wellness, stress, relationships, and rest and leisure through the lens of Christian faith – engaging in self-assessments that help us see where we are caring for ourselves and where we are struggling, brainstorming about ways to better care for ourselves, and connecting this care to messages from the Bible. This felt like an appropriate focus for this program year given the tolls that this pandemic has taken on mental and emotional health.

I am thankful to Kate Atkinson for being a consistent volunteer in helping guide both these fun & conversational events!

As mentioned in my children’s report, our middle and high schoolers also played an essential part in this year’s Christmas pageant. Additionally, some of our youth returned to important roles in in-person worship throughout the year, including as Lay Eucharistic Ministers, acolytes, lectors, and live stream operators.

The Rev. Megan McDermott

Campus and Young Adult Ministry

Throughout the first half of 2021, ministries to local students and young adults continued online as they did for much of 2020.

One of these ministries was a biweekly gathering of a Theology on Tap group (which has made some creative departures from its original bar/restaurant-based format!) over Zoom. I came to co-lead this ministry through my affiliation with United Christian Foundation, an ecumenical mainline Protestant campus ministry serving the University of Massachusetts. The Theology on Tap group is open to people of all ages, but with a special welcome to young adults, and is an informal and supportive setting for conversation about life and faith.

Through much of 2020 and 2021, I also hosted a weekly prayer group over Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. While not exclusively for young adults, this ended up being the main demographic the ministry served. The prayer group would begin by having a discussion on an aspect of prayer or spirituality before entering a time of prayer for the needs and blessings of our communities and world.

Grace Church also participated in the ministries of the growing Western Mass. Young Adult Ministry Network (YAMN), which brings together young adults ages 18-40 from across the diocese and is led by Network Organizer Will Harron. In addition to promoting connection through Discord (an online platform that allows for discussion, voice messaging, etc.) and regular Zoom planning and check-in meetings, YAMN hosted a Lent series on Zoom based on Godly Play, a way of telling and wondering about stories in the Bible popularized in Sunday School classrooms; a number of Evening Prayer Zoom gatherings over the summer; and an online Bible study.

In the second half of 2021, we had more opportunities to renew connections – or create new ones – in-person as well as online.
At Hampshire College, I was allowed on-campus as an advisor to the Hampshire Christian Students group. This semester, we’ve held a game night, a Prince of Egypt movie night, and an Advent Communion service. At UMass, I attended an on-campus fair introducing students to religious and spiritual life opportunities where I was able to help represent the Theology on Tap group, the Young Adult Ministry Network, and Grace Church. Pandemic restrictions at Amherst College have prevented me from getting involved in on-campus worship life, but I was happy to be in touch with their new Protestant chaplain Rev. Shannon Ferrand-Bernardin about ways to continue our support of students; recently, Grace was able to show support by purchasing a number of Bibles for student use.

In summer 2021, the Theology on Tap group began meeting in-person again, moving back to our original monthly basis. At first, we gathered outdoors, including at local parks and a rented bonfire and hay ride in South Hadley, but moved inside as things got colder, gathering once at Local Burger for food, drinks, and conversation about saints, and later at Spare Time in Northampton for a bowling Christmas party. With the Omicron surge, we are re-evaluating how we might best gather together to ensure everyone can remain masked at all times.

The Young Adult Ministry Network also was able to host a number of in-person offerings, including a day of ministry and hospitality to Appalachian Trail hikers, a weekend retreat for young adults at the Barbara C. Harris Center in New Hampshire, an apple picking afternoon in Shelburne Falls, and a retreat day in Longmeadow.

The pandemic has greatly disrupted the lives of many students and young adults, but in 2021, we continued to make efforts, particularly through collaborative work with ministry partners, to make space for them and their exploration of faith. In 2022, I hope we might be able to restore more regular rhythms to our ministries and outreach to young people, especially undergraduates.

The Rev. Megan McDermott

PARISH LIFE COMMISSION

The mission of the Parish Life Commission is to spread the joy of Christian fellowship and hospitality throughout Grace Church and the larger community. Many committees and events strive to maintain a strong, social connection throughout our membership. Because of COVID-19 we have not been able hold our parish life gatherings, but we look forward to when we can have these events again at church:

*Our Annual Meeting, preceded by the BLG Brunch*
*Newcomers Brunch with the Rector*
*Shrove Sunday Pancake Coffee Hour*
*The annual Pentecost Picnic*
*The annual St. Michael’s Picnic*
*The annual Stewardship Feast of Grace*
*The café at the St. Nicholas Bazaar*

Our Parish Life committees normally serve our members in many important ways. The Hospitality Committee provides coffee hours after our services, schedules ushers, and welcomes newcomers. The Brother Lawrence Guild provides delicious cuisine at various gatherings. The Funeral Committee provides support in planning and executing funeral receptions. The St. Nicholas Bazaar Committee not only provides a community event but
also raises money that is crucial for our budget. The Garden Ministry continues to maintain our gardens and to address areas of need.

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

Funeral Reception Committee:

There were no funeral receptions held in 2021.

Saint Nicholas Bazaar: This year’s bazaar was especially meaningful since we were unable to have one in 2020, and in-person events continued to be challenging. Thanks to everyone who participated, the bazaar raised over $11,000 dollars. This special event brings together a large number of parishioners for work, fellowship and fun, in addition to raising needed funds for the church. Everyone who was involved in any way contributes to, and shares in, the bazaar’s success.

Respectfully, Joan O’Brien

Garden Ministry:

Despite the restrictions of Covid, the Garden Ministry continued to serve Grace Church by beautifying its landscape. We held a work day in the spring and again in the fall, mulching the gardens in May and “putting them to bed” in November.

Mary Hocken brought joyful flowers to the Goodwin Garden, our most public venue. Maria Dye and Paul Bracciotti planted and maintained the Parish Hall window garden, Michael and Jeanette Erard brightened the Connector planters for Easter, Sherry Wilson switched the bulbs for annuals for the summer and then chrysanthemums for fall and Helen Drake brought the year full circle with holly and berries for the winter. Several Garden Ministry members weeded, watered and took care of the other gardens.

The Erards made the Columbarium Gardens a place of peace and beauty as they have for many years. However, they announced this fall that they are retiring. We will miss them very much. We need able successors. An appeal in the fall brought three new Garden Ministry members who will join us working in the spring. More volunteers are needed—no experience necessary.

A special thanks to our Junior Warden, Tom Dougherty, who assisted ably in our work and noticed that our planters need replacement, a project for this spring.

On a sad note, we bid farewell to Cheryl “Sherry” Johnston who died in March after a long illness. Sherry was a wonderful gardener who helped organize our plant sales and conceived the idea of a shade garden at the entrance to the Parish Hall, donating many of the plants herself and working hard on its maintenance.

Thanks to all the Garden Ministry members who worked so hard this year even when the church remained closed, but especially when we reopened and welcomed the parish home.

Sherry Wilson, chairperson
Iconography Workshop: The iconography workshop continued to meet via zoom to stay in touch with each other until the parish hall was opened for groups once again. Since then we have been able to work together in person, safely masked and at appropriately distanced tables.

Sandy Lillydahl

PASTORAL CARE COMMISSION

Traditionally the Pastoral Care Committee has been a way for people in the church to support parishioners who are going through a hard time. For many years, Jeannette Stebbins chaired this committee that provided meals, rides to appointments, and cards for parishioners in need of condolence or connection. In recent weeks, Tom and Megan asked several of us to get together on Zoom to think about pastoral care going forward, particularly in response to the challenges of the pandemic: increased isolation, illness or the life-complicating threat of illness, and so many difficult transitions and losses.

Holy Communion Distribution
Given the evolving needs of this time, an idea came up to provide a way for people who currently aren’t able or comfortable coming to church to receive communion. If you would like to have the host delivered to your home so you can participate more fully in communion, please get in touch with Terrie Korpita in the parish office and/or Gail Gnatek, and we will arrange for this to happen.

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

Offering Support
If you feel called to help with pastoral care, we welcome you. Please get in touch with Gail Gnatek about opportunities to participate. There are many ways to offer help: cooking, baking, delivering food, writing cards, checking in over the phone, or giving someone a ride. There are many ways to express compassion.

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

Contact information:
ggnatek@gmail.com or
tkorpita@gracechurchamherst.org
(413) 256-6754

OUTREACH MINISTRIES COMMISSION

For a second year in a row most in-person services were canceled for much of the year. Despite this, the parish continued its generous support for local and global charities through its 4th Sunday Outreach Offerings. Offerings were generally somewhat lower than in the same month of 2020. Most notably, individual donations for Easter totaled $3,660.00 in 2021 compared with $13,760.00 in 2020. However, the Rector had established a challenge fund of $5,000 to encourage donations that year and the parish outdid itself meeting that challenge! In 2021 the offering returned to a more typical level.
Among the organizations the parishioners supported this way were Craig’s Door, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Not Bread Alone, the Interfaith Cot Shelter, and A Better Chance. Non-local organizations included Ahli Arab Hospital, the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund to help Texas deal with the spring floods, and St Vincent’s School for Children with Disabilities.

In addition to the 4th Sunday Collections parishioners continued with their support of programs such as the Adopt a Family program for Christmas, and its Circle of Care support of the Bechmas family.

The Commission thanks everyone for their generous donation of time, talent, and treasure to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We encourage anyone who knows of charitable initiatives, local or global, to contact the Commission to see if there is any way it can help.

Chris Hoffmann, Chair

Adopt-A-Family for Christmas:

Once again Grace Church gave in abundance to struggling families. All 40 families (103 children) were adopted and $1500 was sent to the Family Outreach of Amherst which does so much to support the most vulnerable families in our community. Your generosity continues to amaze. Thank you, thank you.

Mary Hocken

Haiti Ministry:

The past year has brought appalling disasters to Haiti but also has seen the Haiti Ministry at Grace Church rise to the many and growing needs of the St Matthieu school in Bayonnais. The assassination of Haiti’s president in early July triggered frightening wide-spread gang violence throughout the country; then a devastating earthquake in August was followed by the destructive tropical storm Grace just two days later. In addition, rampant inflation (the price of gasoline increased five-fold!) and rising Covid infections have made this an unusually difficult year for Haitians and those who are concerned for them.

The Haiti Ministry has undertaken many projects this year to improve and expand the educational opportunities for the children of Bayonnais, who will inherit many of their country’s challenges and will need a strong education to address them. But the troubles in Haiti also meant that none of us could safely travel there this year, and we issue this report without first-hand observation of the Ministry’s impact. We hope that we can visit again in 2022 – to deliver books to the school library, to assess teaching, to view a new building, and to meet the new priest in charge of the school. It has been very challenging to forge this important relationship by conducting all of our business over WhatsApp!

Throughout all the difficulties of the year, Grace Church provided steady financial support, together with our partners at St James in Indian Head, MD. The school now enrolls 240 local children and has a very dedicated staff of 14. Remarkably, St Matthieu did not have to suspend classes at any point in the year.

Here at Grace Church, the year began with a January soup fundraiser, entitled “Dine In, Help Haiti Out.” The event was organized by Sarah Chadwick. Because of Covid restrictions, we were unable to hold our customary midwinter soup supper in the Parish Hall; instead, we offered soup, bread and cookies, delivered to your door. Members of the committee made the soups and cookies, and Hungry Ghost Bakery in Northampton donated bread. Tom Synan offered a blessing on Zoom, and Meg Holladay compiled a playlist of Haitian songs that people could listen to as they ate. We raised over $2000!
In Bayonnais, July 2021 saw the retirement of Père Joseph Tancrel Diegue, who had been the priest in charge at St Matthieu for over six years. He was an extraordinary leader who will be greatly missed both in Bayonnais and here in Amherst. Mark Peterman carved a beautiful plaque to honor his retirement, and Laura Klock put together a wonderful photo book documenting the relationship between Amherst and Bayonnais during his tenure. Fortunately for us, Père Diegue had a hand in choosing a very able successor. We have begun to build a connection with Père Wallin Decamp, who appears to be energetic and engaged. We have had limited communication with him as yet but hope to develop the relationship further in the coming year. Already he has managed to purchase a plot of land adjacent to the school and to initiate a school garden there with an inaugural planting of carrots.

St Matthieu’s School now enrolls 240 local children, an astonishing expansion from the 45 children enrolled in 2008, when Grace Church first became involved. The quality of teaching has improved as well. We have been fortunate to have partnered with Anseye Pou Ayiti, a Haitian NGO that offers a high quality two-year training program for teachers in rural Haitian schools. Several teachers at St Matthieu have been trained there. This year the principal, Clibert Massillon, completed the program’s inaugural course for school leaders.

The growing enrollment and the increasing quality of the education the school offers, however, have presented the Haiti Ministry with some complex questions to address. The school now encompasses pre-K through 6th grade, but the UN and the Haitian government have recently redefined elementary education as grades K-9. More students from St Matthieu now complete 6th grade and hope to continue their education. In recent years we have underwritten the tuition of a few promising students to attend 7th through 9th grade at other schools. This year individual members of Grace Church and friends of the Haiti Ministry are supporting 14 scholarship students, but we have had to turn down others. The pressure to expand the school to include those upper grades is leading us to explore partnerships with organizations outside Grace with similar goals and with successful programs in place in this region of Haiti. We have yet to identify partnerships for what we feel is an inevitable expansion, but we are actively working on it! We have asked Père Decamp and Clibert Massillon to develop a budget as a first step.

A new building for the school campus—the fourth that Grace has funded—was completed in the summer, in time to go into service at the start of school in the fall. It houses a library (a rarity in rural elementary schools in Haiti), a multi-purpose space that doubles as a lunchroom, and cooking space. A librarian was hired over the summer, but his training has been delayed because of the difficulty of travel within Haiti right now. Members of Grace Church donated $5000 for books for the library. The majority of those funds will be spent on books published in Haiti, but we have been accumulating some books in Amherst that will be taken as soon as our travel resumes. A new water pump now delivers water to the school, a significant mark of progress.

As has become a tradition, we held a campaign over the summer to raise money for school uniforms, textbooks and school supplies, and this year we sought additional donations to buy books for the library. As always, the members of Grace Church were very generous in their response, and we raised $12,500. In appreciation, we held a modest thank-you coffee event in the Garth in early October.

In July, members of the Haiti Ministry held a retreat to focus on our mission, evaluate our work and set some goals for the coming years. Tahina Vatel provided the template for our discussions, which led to a thoughtful exploration of the implications of increased enrollment and adding grades. While the group endorsed taking on more grades in theory, the need for a partner organization to realize that plan was clear. We decided that it is necessary to stay focused on our mission: helping as many children as possible complete elementary school
(now defined as finishing 9th grade), rather than committing to support the most promising students through école secondaire (grades 10-13).

One idea for helping those who successfully complete 9th grade and want to continue their education beyond that has been to approach private schools in the U.S., both Episcopal and non-denominational, to take on the financial sponsorship of individual St. Matthieu graduates in secondary school. Some promising conversations are in progress. We are also exploring a few foundations that offer such scholarships in Haiti. We hope to be able to report positive developments in the coming year.

In thinking at the retreat about how best to make use of the hiatus in our visits to Haiti, we decided that this would be a good opportunity to familiarize ourselves with other organizations nearby that are doing related work in Haiti, to share information with them, and to look for ways we might benefit from each other’s experience. Accordingly, in the coming winter months we will be hosting a series of conversations with representatives of the following New England organizations: Be Like Brit, the Crosby Fund for Haitian Education, Opportunities for Communities, and HOST. We encourage members of the congregation to attend. Dates are February 1 and 8, and March 1 and 8, all at 7pm in the Connector.

Because of the Coronavirus, we have again been able neither to visit nor to host our partners at St James’ Church in Maryland this year. They have provided steady financial support and have attended some of our monthly meetings via Zoom, but we are all eager to meet in person as soon as possible. To honor their partnership in this Ministry, Sandy Lillydahl wrote a very beautiful icon of St James, which has recently been sent to them. St James’ contribution covers most of the Bayonnais teachers’ salaries every month, and our work would be seriously compromised without them. We are enormously grateful for their participation.

In closing, we want to acknowledge our deep appreciation for the privilege of working on this ministry. We salute our partners in Haiti, Food for the Poor and Anseye Pou Ayiti, and especially the dedicated faculty and staff of L’Ecole St Matthieu. And of course, we simply could not continue without the consistent generosity of the members of Grace Church. That has been amazing and wonderful! With deep gratitude, I thank you on behalf of the entire Haiti Ministry group: Sandy Muspratt, Suzannah Fabing Muspratt, Patty Appelbaum, Meg Holladay, Tahina Vatel, Joan O’Brien, Martin Wobst, John Stifler, Laura Klock, Brown Kennedy, Mary Hocken, Tom Baker and Bonnie Vigeland.

Submitted by Bonnie Vigeland, co-chair

Refugee Resettlement Project – Circle of Care

The Grace Church Circle of Care came together in the fall of 2018 to provide support for a then ten-person Congolese Refugee family. Our work was quite intense during the first year but now, with most of the family reasonably facile in English, the adults all fully employed, and everyone increasingly comfortable with Amherst life, our Circle’s work has focused primarily on homework help for school girls, providing assistance with filling out complicated bureaucratic forms, and general encouragement when something gets complicated!

As more family members are eligible for Learner’s Permits and Driver’s Licenses, there continues to be a need for experienced drivers willing to accompany new drivers as they learn. In the past year two cars were generously donated to the family and one has been purchased. Other milestones: one mom and toddler team recently returned from a three-month visit to Rwanda so that the son could meet his dad! Dad has a pending application for spousal immigration to the US. One of the older daughters did a trial sojourn in Indianapolis, but has returned home to Amherst. The eldest high school sister has just “aged out” of school, but expects to receive
her diploma in June, along with two of her sisters. The two toddlers, now 2 1/2, are eager to find placements in
daycare/preschool.

And not a day goes by that the family doesn’t express gratitude to God, as well as to us, for the love and support
Grace Church and the Circle of Care continues to provide.

Respectfully submitted,
Heidi Frantz-Dale

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

Our merry band of men, women, and the occasional teen helpers serve the Parish by preparing and serving food
for most church events. Our work includes the planning, shopping, setting up, cooking, and cleaning up. We
believe that many hands make light work and the “work” can actually be fun!

Ordinarily, BLG serves meals at the following events: Annual Meeting, the Pentecost and St. Michael's picnics,
the Stewardship In-Gathering Potluck, the St. Nicholas Bazaar Cafe, and other assorted receptions. In 2021, for
yet another year, these usually happy events were curtailed, owing to the pandemic. With God’s grace, we are
very hopeful that it won’t be much longer before we can resume our ministry and the many enjoyable times that
bring us all together in the sharing of meals.

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

Respectfully submitted, Mark Leonas, for Members in Service: Sarah Chadwick, Jeffrey DeSantis, Tom
Dougherty, Tony Jewell, Steve McKelvey, Doug Moore, Sandy Muspratt, Diana Spurgin, Janet Teng, Virginia
Ramos, and Reynolds Winslow.

**ClimateAction@Grace (formerly Greening Grace)**

Rebirth is a theme of our faith and so it is with our group: Greening Grace has become Climate Action. The
focus on learning, education, self-evaluation and individual response to the threat of climate change has shifted
to a collective response to a dire situation and a very pressing challenge: what can a small entity do to honor
our foundational charge, that of Genesis I, stewardship of the earth. The Bishops of Massachusetts spoke last
Lent of a Climate Emergency ([https://www.diomass.org/news/pray-learn-act-advocate-ma-bishops-declare-
climate-emergency](https://www.diomass.org/news/pray-learn-act-advocate-ma-bishops-declare-
cclimate-emergency)).

ClimateAction meets in person, via Zoom and in hybrid form each second Sunday of the month between
services. Regular meetings resumed in August 2021.
We have not neglected 'greening Grace', and have sought to advise -and yes, chivy – our Vestry and hardworking Wardens to review our efforts to reduce the church’s carbon footprint through a new energy audit recently completed. A review of possibilities for solar panels is also before us. Our presence at St Nicholas’ bazaar suggested ways to modulate gift-giving through “Our Christmas Gifts to the Earth”

Pray, learn, act, advocate implore the Bishops. Advocacy in our polity, that’s lobbying. Climate Action has sought 'lead lights', groups of competence and experience, with which to join our voices in the political process. We followed the lead of Climate_Action_Now_Western Massachusetts in pressing for passage of H.3292, the Green Future Act, by attending a Zoom session before the Joint Committee on Transportation, Utilities, Energy (TUE) of the Massachusetts Legislature and by a postcard mail blitz.

“We are one body.” ClimateAction action seeks to join with others of our faith in this crucial ministry. The urgency of a substantial, collective response to the climate threat leads us to join Green Faith, https://greenfaith.org, in crying out – the 11th hour for climate action: we tolled the bell of South Church on December 11th at 11 am for 11 minutes in heavy freezing rain; we tolled the bell at Grace on January 11th at 11 am for 11 minutes in sub-freezing temperatures; we will toll the bell at First Church on February 11th at 11 am for 11 minutes. And we will recruit more bells, “Never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee.”

Sandy Muspratt

**Ramallah Ministry**

Grace Church continues to support a scholarship for a Palestinian student to attend the ETVTC (Episcopal Technological and Vocational Training Center) in Ramallah in the West Bank. This is our eleventh academic year doing so. Bisan Freij, whom we supported from August 2019 through June 2021, graduated from this two-year program and is working in a very good restaurant, using her ETVTC skills to raise the funds she needs to continue her studies at the university level.

Our new student, Teya Awad, started her studies at the ETVTC this August. She is also in the Hotel/Hospitality and Culinary Arts Stream learning to serve, cook and cater.

Giovanni Anbar, the executive director, is very supportive of his students, many of whom start with little confidence, but graduate with usable skills and clear goals.

After a very difficult year due to the pandemic, Giovanni said things finally returned to normal this fall. Our once-a-month olive oil sales, which fund the scholarship, also returned to normal in November after a year and a half hiatus. Thanks to support from a few different sources, we were able to fund the scholarship during that time. Giovanni is very appreciative of our support.

DeAnne Riddle

**STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION**

First, I’d like to thank parishioners who helped me these past few years preparing the Stewardship mailings; Janet Teng, Jean Rankin, Tom Sweeney and Bruce Stebbins. Secondly my thanks go out to all the parishioners who pledged making the job as the Stewardship Chairperson these past seven years a pleasant task. 2021 we
had 170 pledges totaling $464,786, just short of our goal of $478,500 but, rather encouraging considering the on-going pandemic. Going forward Bruce Stebbins is chairing the Stewardship Committee, please give him and the church the support you have given me.

Tom Dougherty, Stewardship Chairperson

Our 2022 Stewardship Campaign began in late October 2021 with members of the Stewardship Committee past and present (Tom Dougherty, Charlie Tebbetts and myself) sending out pledge information and pledge cards to our parishioners of record, followed by a sermon from The Reverend Tom Synan on October 31st extolling the virtues of pledging. That was followed by further information about pledging from the Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, Bruce Stebbins, and by testimonials at the following 8:00 and 10:30 AM the first two Sundays in November from Tom Dougherty, our Junior Warden, and from Chris Freitag, our Senior Warden, as well as Stewardship Committee member Charlie Tebbetts.

Since the ingathering on November 21st, we have received $417,488.00 in pledges for 2022 from 134 parishioners, including 6 new pledges, and are hoping to hear from another 64 households who have yet to pledge.

Our goal is to raise $480,000 for the 2022 budget.

Bruce Stebbins, Stewardship Chair

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


* deceased

Doug Adler, Chair

VII. TREASURER’S REPORT

In 2021 God’s grace blessed us at Grace once again in many ways, as we resumed in person worship. In spite of the continuing pandemic, we were able to hold our own financially and finish the year with a tiny surplus, in
effect breaking even with regard to our operating budget. Again, your generous pledges and faithful fulfillment of them, along with the thoughtful monitoring of expenses by staff and committee chairs, helped us maintain financial health. We continue to be hopeful that in 2022 our finances at Grace will allow us to continue all programs and ministries.

In these challenging times, we continue to be blessed by the hard work and dedication of parishioners like yourselves who find creative ways to serve the parish. Among others, we are blessed to have the continued expertise of Rich Spurgin, who prepares informative, helpful monthly financial reports. We are also grateful to DeAnne Riddle, who after many years of preparing our annual budgets, has handed off that task to Harry Chadwick. Working with DeAnne. Rich, and the Finance Committee, Harry has crafted a workable break even budget for 2022.

The Finance Committee includes Rich Spurgin, Kitty Dougherty, John Robinson, DeAnne Riddle, Bruce Stebbins, Lynn Klock, Harry Chadwick, and Mark Leonas. Like many church committees, Finance now uses zoom and other means to review ongoing financial matters and plan for the future. They have provided sound advice on a range of issues to aid the Clergy, myself and the Vestry in making financial decisions. Recently they reviewed and recommended the break even budget for 2022, which was subsequently approved by the Vestry. A copy of that budget is included in the Annual Report.

I should also recognize our loyal group of collection counters, who returned to service when in person services resumed in June. Counters include Bruce Stebbins, Sarah Boy, Kathy Glime, Doug Adler, Steve McKelvey, Lynn Klock, Kitty Dougherty, John Robinson, Harry Chadwick, and Mark Leonas.

This past year presented yet another plan for collection of pledges and other donations. Resuming Sunday services in June, parishioners can now leave their offerings in plates at the rear of the church, or by mailing pledges and other contributions to the Office.

In the midst of all this change, we are very thankful for the dedication and hard work of Tom Dougherty and the Stewardship Committee. The response to the 2021 Stewardship Drive was remarkably good. Initial response to the 2022 Stewardship Drive, under the leadership of Bruce Stebbins, has been positive, although we still have a ways to go to meet our financial goals for this year.

Once again this year a number of beloved parishioners left bequests in their wills which will be invested with the Diocesan fund and hopefully generate income to help our operating budget. The Trustees of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts continue to manage our endowment funds well and to make quarterly distributions, providing essential additions to our operating budget.

We continue to be in good standing with our diocesan auditor Steve Hasbrouck, whose 2021 audit confirmed that our financial records are proper and accurate.

I have appreciated the opportunity to serve Grace Church as your Treasurer during the past year. We continue to hold our own during these challenging times and hope for improvement in the year to come. Your support has been invaluable and is very much appreciated.

Mark Leonas, Treasurer
VIII. MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

**Baptisms**

Madeleine Rinderle Clark  
Kenneth Harold Page  
Dean Thomas Thornton

**Marriage**

Sarah L. Stoner and Kevin A. Coughlin  
Unati P. Mangaliso and Norman D. Golden II  
Lindsay Comeau and William A. Harron III

**Confirmands**

Abigail Florence Goff  
Kell N. Julliard  
Tyler Joseph Marino  
Amory Mark Maxey  
Kenneth Harold Page  
Sarah Emerson Secor

**Received**

Linda Marie Gralenski  
Michael Joseph Gralenski  
Colleen C. Harris  
Loy H. Harris  
Diana Rogers Spurgin

**Reaffirmed**

Catherine Brooke McGraw

**Requiem**

Lucy Benson  
Martha Faison  
Audrey Young Funk  
Joel E. Gordon  
Donald Junkins  
Jeannette Trowbridge Stebbins
Added - New members/Reactivated

Alison Ash
Sheila Coy
Linda and Michael Gralenski
Kell Juliard
Sarah Malzone
Elizabeth Raposa

Transferred/Moved

Don and Jane Buckloh
Katherine Messina