“God comes to meet men and women out of his future, and in their history, reveals to them new, open horizons, which entice them to set forth into the unknown and invite them to the beginning of the new.”

Jürgen Moltmann, In the End—The Beginning
Revival
Grace Episcopal Church

PARISH profile

Grace in 2017 finds itself at a crossroads. History and opportunity meet and invite a revival of the Spirit. A small but loyal, well-educated, and talented congregation, free of debt and located in a fast-growing community, step out with courage to bridge to new beginnings. *Let us make the most of this opportunity.*

We seek a rector with the desire and skills to lead Grace as we build on foundational growth, navigate past turbulence and enter into a transformational spirit of revival. For the Rector who appreciates the lessons and gifts of the past and embraces a future of potential and possibility — he or she could not find a more satisfactory home.
On any given morning, commuters living to the east of Montgomery, Alabama, are hurrying to work in the thriving capital city. Some may take a short cut, turning off of AL-110 on to Pike Road, heading towards Interstate 85. Perhaps they notice on their left a beautifully landscaped complex of gardens, woods and open fields, and a well-integrated group of buildings. At the center of the complex is a historic church—a pillar of continuity that has stood since 1893. A few steps away is the large and modern parish hall, a symbol of the dynamic change that is also a part of the history, legacy, and future of Grace Episcopal Church.

Families have lived on and farmed the land east of Montgomery for nearly two centuries. Some sources document an Episcopal presence here as early as 1819, but there was no “congregation” as such until the 1840s, when the thriving planter community of Mt. Meigs created the congregation we now know as Grace Episcopal Church. Formed out of several Episcopal families living in the area, the services initially took place in the homes of parishioners on a rotating basis. By the late 1850s, the congregation felt the time was ripe to construct a permanent home. They enlisted a Pennsylvania architect to design a sanctuary in the “Gothic Revival” (sometimes referred to as “Carpenter Gothic”) style. The plans were duly drafted and accepted by the congregation.

The Civil War broke out in 1861 and the hard hand of war and its aftermath lay heavily on the once prosperous Mt. Meigs. The small Episcopal community struggled on, most attending services at St. John’s in Montgomery.

In 1888, their numbers swelled, in part (it is said) by a number of miscreants expelled from the local Methodist church. After a period of fund raising, the long-delayed sanctuary was completed in 1893. Grace received the status of a “mission church,” led by either a vicar or a priest shared with other area congregations. Its fortunes rose and fell with the local economy and the wider course of US history.
The boll weevil devastated livelihoods in 1912, and the Great Depression of 1929 hit the area hard. During the darkest years of the Depression, it was not uncommon for only 2 or 3 communicants to turn up on any given Sunday; the parish was at times unable to meet its financial obligations to the Diocese. Without the support of other Episcopal churches in the area, Grace might have faded away. In the words of the Church’s historian, however, “the candle burned low and flickered, but never quite went out.”

Grace did not have a settled rector until 1977. During the decades prior, the congregation benefitted from the services of a number of dedicated (and often semi-retired) clergy. The church organist in the early 1950s took it upon herself to organize a children’s choir, infusing some youth into what had been an aging congregation. Church membership began to grow in the late 1960s, and with it the beginnings of new construction on the church grounds. Interim rectors, lay readers, and a visiting chaplain from the local Air Force base kept things together.

In 1980 the sanctuary was placed on the Alabama Register of Historic places; it joined the National Register two years later. Yet the church in the 1980s looked to the future as well as the past. A period of extraordinary growth and development occurred under the leadership of rector John M. Keith, who served Grace from 1984 to 2000.

A beloved rector, and a successful and dynamic period in the church’s history cast a long shadow. Parishioners look to rekindle this energy and momentum. Grace has had two settled rectors since John Keith (one who served 2 years, the other 10) and has hosted a number of supply priests and interim rectors. The parish has experienced some turbulence; some from without, as the national church has sought to adapt to changing times, and some from within.

Our current congregation is made up of members from a wide variety of backgrounds and walks of life, and includes representatives from the law, academia, the military, medicine, and government. We are open-minded, participatory and hospitable in worship and community.

Called by God into being and through service in Jesus Christ we seek to grow with the leadership of a new Rector.
A modern Parish House opened its doors in 2005.

In the late 1990s and early 2000, the growth of the community and the growth of Grace's congregation indicated a more extensive worship and fellowship space would be needed. A master land plan for a larger church, parish hall, offices and parking was drawn. A decision was reached to first construct the parish hall, with a large, industrial size kitchen, and additional choir rehearsal and Sunday School space, as well as substantial additional parking. The planned parish hall was of a size that large services at Christmas, Easter or weddings could seat more than 250.

This facility was completed in 2005, at a cost exceeding $1,000,000. The majority of the investment was raised through a vision-inspired capital campaign. There is no debt. The construction design anticipated the future addition of a large sanctuary once there was sufficient pressure from growth of the congregation.

Significantly, in contrast with other buildings named in honor of noted Grace leaders, the new building is simply known as "The Parish House" and so it is—a place of gathering, worship, education, Church family and new friendships.

All of the buildings at Grace have their own character—yet are carefully designed to integrate with the original Carpenter Gothic sanctuary. It is worth noting that Grace's beautiful buildings stand completely paid for.

As outstanding as the structures at Grace undoubtedly are, it is the unique gardens that really set the worship space apart from any other church in the Montgomery area, and perhaps the entire state.

Since 1980, the grounds surrounding Grace have been carefully designed and landscaped to provide a series of distinct yet integrated places for contemplation and celebration. A peaceful graveyard is carefully maintained, and in a sober reminder of the hard times that have been part of the fabric of Mt. Meigs' history, a post-bellum "potter's field" graveyard exists in harmony with the stone walls of the gardens. Statuary, ornamental fountains, and mosaics are integrated into the design, as are unique architectural elements, including items salvaged from an Anglican church destroyed in the German blitz of 1940.

In the words of the gardens' chief designer and creator, "These gardens have always conformed to a master idea: that the church, the gardens, and the rituals of life should all be woven into one fabric. We see a church garden as a place where birth, childhood, courtship, marriage, spiritual maturity, and death can all be intertwined, enhanced, and perhaps better borne and understood." It is very common to find local photographers and artists using the Grace gardens, which have been featured in a number of local and national magazines (including Southern Living, Southern Accents, and Fine Gardening), as a setting for their work.

OUR GROUNDS & FACILITIES

The physical plant of Grace Episcopal, which is situated on approximately 25 acres, mirrors its history and its prospects for the future. The original sanctuary not only still stands, but is enlivened with the sounds of worship every Sunday. The original parish hall, known as Vickers Hall, was constructed in 1968-69 and now serves as a work space for mission projects and meetings. A larger building, Keith Hall, was completed in 1990 and houses the nursery and the parish offices.

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WORSHIP STYLES & SCHEDULES

Our liturgical preferences are somewhat flexible; Grace offers a diverse range of worship opportunities. We have accommodated a variety of services and differing pastoral styles, and are open to new things as long as they do not stray too far from the mainstream.

Currently there are two Sunday services: an 8:00 a.m. service without music and a 10:00 a.m. service with music. During summer months, we move to a single Sunday service with music at 9:30 a.m.

Members actively engage in worship. A lay eucharistic minister will officiate Morning Prayer when a Celebrant is not present. Members volunteer to serve as ushers, readers, oblations bearers, altar and flower guilds, and acolytes.

During our transition, we observed supply priests and one Transitional Rector with a range of preaching styles. Some spoke the liturgy; others incorporated chanting. Some delivered carefully researched sermons; others used a storyteller style. Some parishioners preferred one over the other; most appreciated the variety.

Music is a very important part of worship here. A small but dedicated choir and a very accomplished Organist/Choirmaster produce fine musical programs. Guest musicians frequently participate. Our Organist/Choirmaster has considerable autonomy.

While the standard liturgy is the norm at Grace, there are some departures. On our fall and spring parish work days, we wear our work clothes and hold a single service outdoors. The Blessing of the Animals is a popular event every year. Parishioners look forward to our Youth Sunday service, during which the eldest high school student (usually a graduating senior) prepares and delivers a sermon.

WORSHIP STYLE AND SERVICES

Christian formation classes for adults are offered on Sundays after the 10:00 service and on Tuesday evenings, along with a simple soup and salad supper. Nearly 60% of our members indicate that they prefer Christian formation classes that focus on a mix of education based on biblical studies and traditions of the Episcopal Church and education based on contemporary topics and issues.

We currently do not offer children's church or Sunday school for children attending Grace Church. Our nursery worker teaches Bible stories to children who are in the nursery for the first part of our 10:00 a.m. service. Our parishioners realize the importance of establishing a children's program, with 75% indicating that it is very important or somewhat important to offer children's church and Sunday school for children after church. We have three members who are Godly Play instructors.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
OUTREACH AND MISSIONS

Grace has a heart for ministries because the love we receive from God is most powerful and most life changing when we share it with others. We have many opportunities for parishioners to become involved in ministries, both those serving the Grace parish and those serving the wider community outside the church.

Benevolence Committee – With membership open to any interested parishioner, this committee meets on a periodic basis to discuss possible ways to raise funds for outreach, and to discern outreach ministries to support that are reflective of the parish members’ wishes.

Georgia Washington Middle School – Each school year, we collect supplies for donation to the middle school that is only a short distance from Grace; we have also honored the faculty by hosting social events.

Grace Threads/Blanket Ministry – This ministry is a group of members who gather once weekly for sewing projects including making blankets to give to new babies and parishioners who have had illnesses. The blankets are blessed in the worship service prior to delivery to the recipient. They also participate in outreach, such as making blankets for veterans in the fall.

Holy Comforter Food Pantry – One of our established ministries is supported by various fund raisers with proceeds going to support the food pantry at our companion parish, Holy Comforter.

Jubilee Community Center – Parish members serve on the board of an official Episcopal Jubilee Center that is housed in the renovated, former Holy Comforter church in downtown Montgomery, serving as a location for various youth and faith organizations.

Sawyerville Day Camp – Each year Grace parishioners collect beach towels, food, or other items as requested by the Diocese to support the day camp for underprivileged children, held in Sawyerville in west central Alabama.

Support for Homeless – Grace parishioners bring donations of small toiletries, blankets, socks, and warm clothing, provide volunteer services, and serve on the boards of the Mid-Alabama Coalition for the Homeless and local shelters.

PARISH LIFE

Grace periodically hosts various community events that are open not only to the parish and other Episcopal churches, but to all members of the community. Examples of these events include the following, which occur as often as resources allow:

Annual Spaghetti Supper – A benefit for the Holy Comforter Food Pantry, Grace teams up with that parish to host a supper of spaghetti and all the trimmings each year.

Book Club – The book club meets several times throughout the year in parishioners’ homes, discussing one work of fiction and one work of nonfiction at each gathering.

Easter Egg Hunt and Brunch – One of the highlights of the year is watching the children search for colorful eggs filled with candy or small toys and enjoying a wonderful brunch on the parish hall porch.

Episcopal Church Women Meetings – On a rotation basis with other churches, Grace hosts a luncheon meeting (sometimes with garden tour or other program) for the ECW Montgomery Convocation.

Live and Silent Auction – A benefit for missions, the auction combines a wine-and-cheese reception with both an auctioneer and silent auction of items and services such as cabin and beach house weekends donated by parish members.

Parish Work Days – Two Sundays a year – one in the spring and one in the fall – are designated as parish work days. They begin with “Mass on the Grass” and are followed by a day of hard work on the beautiful grounds of Grace. Everyone works together to accomplish tasks such as pressure washing the walkways, mowing our fields, cutting back shrubbery, and changing lightbulbs throughout our buildings.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – Hosted by the Saint Joseph’s Guild (men of the church), annually on the Tuesday evening before Lent, the pancake supper provides an opportunity for the parish and community to enjoy fellowship over a delicious meal of pancakes and sausage.

Supper Club – A popular monthly event open to all parishioners, friendships that began at church are strengthened over dinner at a local restaurant.
OUR CHALLENGES

+ We are faced with many of the same challenges that a family-sized church faces.
+ Our congregation is aging.
+ Many of our members are retired.
+ Our Sunday attendance and pledges are down over the last fifteen years.
+ We have many hard workers, but people get “burned out.”
+ We need to attract younger families in order to grow and thrive.

OUR STRENGTHS

+ We have an educated, diverse, tolerant, and flexible congregation.
+ We have beautiful, well-maintained grounds and facilities. We have additional land for further expansion.
+ We do not have any debt. We have a healthy cash reserve of over $100,000.
+ We are situated in one of the fastest growing communities in the state.
+ We yearn to grow and return to some of our community ministries from years past
+ We are seeking a revival of the spirit.

WHOM DO WE SEEK?

+ A rector who has the ability to care for and counsel parishioners facing any type of crisis or difficult decision. (Pastoral Care)
+ A rector who has the ability to manage parish affairs and finances; someone who has a clear plan for parish growth and progress. (Administration)
+ A rector who has the ability to deliver clear sermons relevant to both the lectionary and parishioners’ lives. (Sermons/Preaching)
+ A rector who has the ability to attract and work with youth; someone who can grow children’s and youth programs. (Youth and Children’s Ministry)
+ A rector who has the ability to plan and conduct worship services as a central event of the congregation. (Worship Leadership)
+ A rector who is visible to and engaged with the congregation; someone who participates in fellowship activities.
+ A rector who will effectively manage a small team; a part-time office assistant (three days a week), a bookkeeper, and an organist/choir master.
The community of Mt. Meigs/Pike Road, once an outpost of the capital, is now a vibrant part of the "River Region," sharing in the growth of local industry and government. Grace, once a country church, is now a centrally located urban parish.

It is hard to know where the City of Montgomery ends and the Town of Pike Road begins. Grace communicants live and work in both. Some travel 15 or so miles from within Montgomery to attend church services at Grace.

For many years Pike Road was the name given to the area in northeastern Montgomery County that included a few stores, a post office, a train stop and a consolidated school that were closed or moved a number of years ago. Primarily, it was an area of farms and pasture land.

Through the years Montgomery's population has advanced eastward into Pike Road. In 1997 the Town of Pike Road was officially established and has gradually incorporated some areas of traditional Pike Road into its jurisdiction. Citizens live and work without regard to whether they live in Montgomery or in Pike Road.

Pike Road ranks #2 overall in the state, in a study of Alabama cities by job and career website Zippia, that looked at poverty levels, median household income and unemployment rate. The data came from U.S. Census Bureau numbers collected from 2010 to 2015 as part of the American Community Survey. Pike Road's median household income of $92,609 was third best in the state.

From a focal point at Grace Church a four-mile radius includes the neighborhoods of: Lake Forest, Arrowhead, Town Lake, Stonybrook Plantation, Lockshire, Bridlebrook, Freeport, Woodland Creek, Providence, Merrywood, Bon Terre, Foxwood, Breckinridge, Deer Creek, Wynlakes and Tuscani. Extending that radius another mile includes the neighborhoods of Copperfield, Starbridge, Taylor Crossing, New Park, Halcyon, Waterscapes, Boykin Lakes, Vaughn East, and The Waters. The U.S. Census reports the town grew by 1600% in the first decade of this century.

Yet, a short two miles or so east and south from Grace Church you will encounter pastures and crop fields. You might even pass a tractor on the road or see a crop duster. You would certainly see many cows and lots of horses.

One of the long-range objectives of the Town of Pike Road was to develop an independent school system. Two years ago, the Pike Road School System opened a school in Pike Road providing kindergarten through 8th grade. The official plan was to add a grade per year, and academic year 2017 through 2018 includes 9th and 10th grades; ultimately, the grades will be extended through high school. The initial enrollment exceeded expectations and physical expansion of the school system's physical facilities is already under way. The campus for kindergarten through 6th grades remains at its initial location. A new campus some distance away—the renovated historic Pike Road School—was opened in Fall of 2017 for 7th through 10th grades. As the school continues to grow and add grades, the Pike Road School System is now seeking an additional facility to house the high school program, and athletic field development is also planned. The school's progressive curriculum has experienced strong parent-student interest.
Many entertainment and cultural activities are offered in Grace's home area. The Alabama Shakespeare Festival has a wonderful theater located in Montgomery dedicated not only, as you might expect, to the performance of many of Shakespeare's plays, but also to a variety of popular musical productions such as Peter Pan, Mary Poppins, and Elvis in the Early Years. That festival is also the home of the Southern Writers' Project. The Museum of Fine Arts is located adjacent to the theater in the beautiful Blount Cultural Park. The Montgomery Performing Arts Center in downtown Montgomery offers a wide range of performances. Troy University has acquired and is now operating Davis Theater for the Performing Arts. Cloverdale Community Playhouse is a community theater that offers opportunities to local people interested in participating in the production of and performing in plays. The Montgomery Symphony offers several performances every year including three popular free concerts at traditional holidays. Annually, the Alabama Book Fair is held in the area and features a wide array of discussions and workshops about books of interest to children and adults and has featured authors such as Pat Conroy, Rheta Grimsley, Rita Mae Brown and Rick Bragg. The Montgomery Zoo has been a tremendous success for Central Alabama.

Sports abound as well. Montgomery is home of the Montgomery Biscuits, a Class AA baseball team which is a member of The Southern League. ESPN partnered with the City of Montgomery and has created and produced the Camellia Football Bowl between college teams. The local tennis community has for many years produced the Camellia Tennis Tournament featuring collegiate teams that last year included teams from Texas, Rice, Princeton, Utah, Tulane, Boise State, Denver University and several Southeastern Conference schools. The LPGA has sponsored significant women’s golf tournaments just across the river at one of internationally known Retirement System of Alabama’s outstanding golf courses.

Atlanta and Birmingham afford additional opportunities for cultural activities, music, art and fine dining in an easy trip of three hours or less. Gulf beaches, the mountains, boating and fishing and Alabama and Auburn football games are equally accessible.

The convenience and advantages of a regional shopping hub is evidenced by The Shoppes at East Chase. It is Central Alabama’s premier shopping center, offering customers a variety of well-known retail stores and shopping opportunities. Strip shopping centers anchored by grocery stores are found at a number of intersections a short distance from Grace.

As you might expect, with population advancing eastward, a hospital center supported by a number of general practitioners and specialists has developed around Baptist Hospital East adjacent to Auburn University at Montgomery on Taylor Road.

The general area has been home to the Air Force’s educational center at Maxwell Air Force Base for many years. At Maxwell Air Force Base courses are offered for military officers of different ranks leading to yearlong graduate programs in military and world affairs. An annex to Maxwell Air Force Base is Gunter Air Force Base where the Air Force’s non-commissioned officer’s school is situated. One feature of Maxwell’s educational program includes bringing allied officers to Montgomery and that presents opportunities for those that are interested to participate as guest hosts for officers from countries throughout the world.

Montgomery is the home of the Alabama World Affairs Council which is a nonprofit organization that sponsors lectures and programs focusing on national and international affairs.

Many Air Force officers and enlisted men who were once assigned to Maxwell return to this community to live and work after their retirement from the military and add to this community the perspectives they have developed from assignments all over the world.

Grace Church sits in the heart of the eastward expansion of Greater Montgomery.

The crown jewel of the Montgomery public school system is its magnet program. The elementary school at Forest Avenue and the junior high school at Baldwin are feeders for the magnet high schools in Montgomery. U.S. News and World Report reported that of the top five public high schools in the State of Alabama, three are in Montgomery. LAMP High School has been a success and nationally recognized for its academic program since its first class. In 2017 LAMP ranked #57 in U.S. News and World Report National Rankings, #1 in Alabama Rankings and earned a Gold Medal. Booker T. Washington High School and Brewbaker Technical High School were No. 3 and No. 5 respectively in the State rankings. Of course, entry into the magnet program is highly competitive and the program in each of the schools is very demanding. Montgomery also has several excellent private schools, both faith-based and secular. Winnings in debate competitions, male and female sports, National Merit, science Olympiad, and other competitions are common among both magnet and private school students.

Youth sports and extracurricular opportunities are a big part of life in Pike Road-Montgomery. Sandra Allen, Grace’s organist for years, teaches piano and holds recitals at Grace. Programs through the Montgomery ballet offer opportunities for children and teenagers. Auburn University at Montgomery offers summer short courses. Youth team sports are ever-present each football, baseball, soccer, tennis, basketball and other sport season.

Within five air miles from Grace Church is Auburn University at Montgomery’s campus. AUM began classes in the late 60s and at this time offers a full four-year academic program and awards graduate degrees in a number of areas of study. Two other state universities - Alabama State University and Troy University - also have a campus in Montgomery offering graduate as well as undergraduate degrees. Huntingdon College is a private four-year liberal arts college. The Jones School of Law, an ABA accredited law school, has seen its enrollment increase dramatically in the last two decades and is associated with Faulkner University in Montgomery. Of course, Auburn University, which offers a full range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs, is a short 50-minute drive on I-85 from Grace Church.
The Diocese of Alabama finds its roots and best expression in the mission of Jesus Christ. We see ourselves as a missionary people, committed to spreading the Gospel and sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ for the reconciliation and healing of the world.

The diocese is healthy and strong, with 89 parishes and four campus centers and three worshipping communities, and a growing baptized membership of over 32,000 parishioners. In the spirit of growth, we have started a new worshipping community in a coffee shop, offering food and a “third place” for those seeking a new way to engage or return to the Christian community. We have had two successful fund campaigns in the last ten years, raising over $16 million for ministry development and capital improvements throughout the diocese, and to enhance and expand Camp McDowell’s facilities and programs.

The diocese has vigorously encouraged and supported local parishes in outreach ministry, and sought to address some of the underlying problems of hunger, unemployment and racial tension with initiatives, both locally and internationally, including the Sawyerville Day Camp and the Jonathan Daniels pilgrimage in the Black Belt area of the diocese. We have developed a high commitment to the Companion Diocese Relationship Program, engaging with national and international dioceses.

In 2000, the order of Deacons was reestablished in the Diocese of Alabama; we now have over 35 deacons serving across the diocese, with another class to be ordained in the fall of 2016. We have recently launched the Alabama Iona Ministry School, a program to train bi-vocational and non-stipendiary priests and deacons without sending them away for a more formal seminary education.

A major focus of formation and renewal within the diocese is Cursillo, the lay-led program for spiritual renewal. With full support and encouragement of the bishops, it has reached into almost every parish, and has greatly helped the sense of community across the diocese. Happening, a renewal weekend for young people is similar, as is Vocare for college students and young adults; both of them provide a time for young people to look at what they believe and serve to empower young leaders to share their walk with Christ.

Youth ministry is a valuable priority in the diocese, and we have employed a coordinator since the 1970’s. Lifelong faith formation is understood to be an ongoing process for all baptized Christians, and the diocese has employed a coordinator to assist parishes with resources, workshops and conferences to nourish and support teachers and students seeking a deeper relationship with our Lord.

Since 1981 the diocese has relied on a voluntary program of giving from the parishes, establishing guidelines rather than imposing assessments, requesting parishes with annual income of more than $150,000 to commit 15% to the work of the Church through the diocese, and parishes with annual income of less than $150,000 to pledge 10% to the diocese.

Like much of the Church in the United States, we have had struggle around the issue of homosexuality, with some parishes losing members as a result of policies or decisions they disagreed with, but in the main, because of the sense of community among the clergy and the people they serve, we have not lost or closed any parish due to this conflict. The Bishops’ Commission on Generous Pastoral Response, formed in 2014 to help form a policy in which parishes could, with the bishop’s permission, either bless same sex unions or refrain from doing so without any sort of pressure or condemnation.

In summary, the Diocese of Alabama is at its heart a community of faith centered in mission. We offer ourselves into the grace of almighty God, striving to live into the Baptist Covenant, and to equip God’s people to do the work of the Church as we proclaim by word and example the Good News of Jesus Christ our Lord. Our bedrock belief is that we are called to live the gospel of grace in hope and joy, as we share the blessing of life with all of God’s creation.

God’s Peace,

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan
Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Alabama

FINANCIAL HISTORY & STEWARDSHIP

We find ourselves in a stable financial situation; we have considerable assets—25 acres and several buildings—and no debt. Although Grace has seen a steady decline in membership, average Sunday attendance, and pledges in recent years, we are beginning this year to show some rebound. The budget chart below shows growth from 2016 to 2017.

While we will need to address the financial challenge of supporting a full-time settled rector, we have begun this process through our stewardship campaign for 2018 support and through targeted gifts for that purpose.

Finally, our focus on the future has resulted an increase in membership for the most recent year and a congregational projected pledge of $150,000.
SUMMARY OF PARISH SURVEY RESULTS

The Grace Discernment Committee conducted a parish survey to gather opinions about various aspects of parish worship and life, and to document parish demographics for the benefit of potential candidates. We distributed the survey by mail and placed copies in the parish hall, requesting all family members aged 16 or older complete a survey. Fifty surveys were returned; we shared and discussed results with parishioners at Stewardship dinners in October 2017. Below is a summary of results; full report is available by request.

Grace is an established parish with loyal, stable membership who are well educated, active in worship, mission, and parish life activities inside the church and giving of their time for community service. We prefer moderately formal, traditional worship; we are proud of church facilities, the congregation’s welcoming demeanor, and study and fellowship opportunities. Our goals are to attract an empathetic, inspirational, caring settled rector with good pastoral care, administrative, and preaching skills.

Parish Demographics
- 43% of parishioners have been attending Grace for 20 years or more; prior to coming to Grace 57% were of the Episcopal faith; 43% travel 11-20 minutes from home to Grace
- 60% are female; 35% are in the 70-79-year age range; membership is predominately but not entirely Caucasian; 69% are married; 85% of households consist of adults only; 10% have children ages 0-5
- 49% of parishioners have completed graduate or professional school; another 41% have completed college
- 43% are retired; 39% are employed full or part time; 19% served in the military; household incomes are in the $100,000-$149,499 range (31%); $150,000 or higher (28%); under $50,000 (24%)

Parishioners’ Highest Level of Education
- 49% High school
- 28% Technical/technical school
- 23% College
- 14% Graduate or professional school

Parishioners’ Employment Status
- 28% Currently seeking employment
- 20% Part-time employee
- 19% Full-time employee
- 15% Retired
- 9% Other
- 7% Householder
- 2% Student

Parishioners Position on Religious Issues
- 46% Liberal
- 39% Moderate
- 19% Conservative

Opinions about Worship and The Church
- Christian education preferences: Adult Sunday School (82%), Children’s Sunday School (75%), and Children’s church (73%); important spiritual life opportunities: Teaching series on spiritual life (86%), Retreats and workshops (59%); Ministries such as Cursillo and Daughters of the King (56%)
- Important outreach opportunities: Grace provides aid for our local community (97%), Rector/parish is involved with area Episcopal churches (92%), Rector/parish is involved in diocesan programs (89%)
- Same formality (76%), liturgical style (67%), and traditional music (57%); few interested in contemporary music (5%) or innovative liturgies (4%); sermon content preferred: Personal, applicable to daily life (69%); Biblical/lectionary-based (47%); political/social, charismatic, and children’s sermons less important; mix of study/prayer/pastoral care and socials/fellowship (67%)
- Valued fellowship components: newcomers are welcomed (91%), fellowship between services (60%)

Most want our worship service to remain as it is now:
- + Same formality (76%), liturgical style (67%), and traditional music (57%); few interested in contemporary music (5%) or innovative liturgies (4%); sermon content preferred: Personal, applicable to daily life (69%); Biblical/lectionary-based (47%); political/social, charismatic, and children’s sermons less important; mix of study/prayer/pastoral care and socials/fellowship (67%)
- + Valued fellowship components: newcomers are welcomed (91%), fellowship between services (60%)

Participation in Worship/Mission Parish Life/Financial Support:
- 44% consider themselves moderate, 31% liberal, and 24% conservative on religious issues
- 47% attend worship “practically every week;” 30% or more participate in: Hospitality (52%), Supper Club (48%), Vestry (36%), Christian Formation and Fundraisers (34%), Altar Guild and Book Club (32%), and Usher, Reader, Vacation Bible School, and Gardening/Exterior Projects (30%); over 60 different activities outside the church were mentioned, to include community service groups such as those serving children, elderly, disabled, or homeless individuals and environmental issues.
- 85% have contributed financially in the past year; 72% made a pledge for the current year; reasons for not pledging were mostly status-related (student, unemployed, new member), or financial challenges

Desired Characteristics of Rector:
- Important in role of the rector:
  - Crisis ministry (100%), Hospital/nursing home visitation (98%), Counseling/guidance (90%), Home visitation (84%)
  - Top 5 professional areas: Pastoral care (70%), Administration (64%), Sermons/Preaching (62%), Youth & Children’s Ministry (50%), Worship Leadership (46%)
- Preferred personal qualities: empathetic, compassionate, intelligent, enthusiastic, friendly, leader, outgoing, sense of humor, listener, approachable

Church Goals - Top important goals are a new permanent rector and growth
- + Top 5 reasons people choose Grace: Friends/family worship here (60%), Grounds/buildings/gardens (60%), Small church (58%), Worship service/style (54%), Sense of community/fellowship (46%)
- + Changes needed at Grace focused on activities for children and youth, moderate growth—especially young families, opening our facilities to the community, inclusiveness, improving/repairing facilities
WE INVITE YOU TO

join us

The Vestry and Members of Grace Episcopal Church

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