

Grace Episcopal Church Jefferson City, Missouri



CHURCH PROFILE 2017

The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri, Christ Church Cathedral

Grace Episcopal Church is part of the Diocese of Missouri, which is headquartered in downtown St. Louis at Christ Church Cathedral and led by The Right Reverend George Wayne Smith. The diocese has had a companion relationship with the Diocese of Lufu in southern Sudan since April 2006. For more information on the diocese, go to www.diocesemo.org.

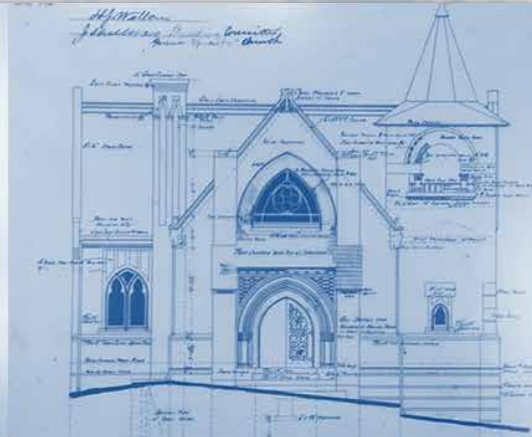
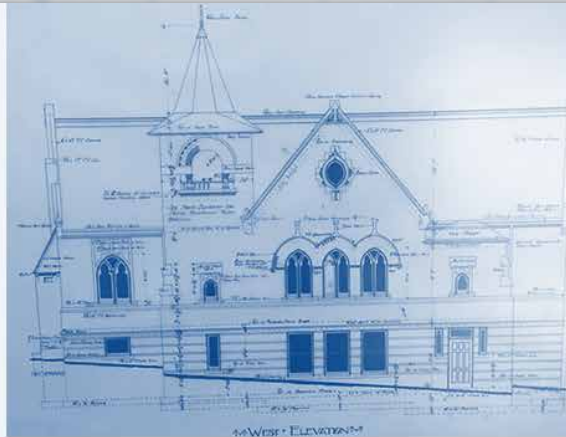
The History of Grace Episcopal Church

Grace Episcopal Church began as a mission church that met in the Cole County Courthouse beginning in 1836. A handful of Episcopalians founded the parish as "Grace Church" in 1840, and they contracted to build its first structure in 1842.

Through the rest of the nineteenth century, Grace Church was a waxing and waning presence in Jefferson City. Records are scant during two particularly stressful time periods: from 1849 to 1851 during the great cholera epidemic, and again during the Civil War. During both time periods, the church building served as a hospital. Indeed, during the Civil War, Union forces

commandeered the church building to use as a hospital. But the Civil War in particular severely affected the fortunes of the church, as many of the prominent members during the antebellum period were transplanted Virginians who were slaveholders and Southern sympathizers. Thus, many fled the capital city during the war.

After the war, however, the congregation regrouped and embarked upon a period of growth that eventually necessitated a larger house of worship. Plans were made in the 1890s for the new church building. The new cornerstone was laid in 1898 and the present structure was completed in 1901.



During the twentieth century, Grace Church underwent two significant periods of growth. The first was in the 1930s, when the congregation grew from 39 to 150 communicants and the budget quadrupled under the leadership of The Reverend Wilbur Ruggles. The second period of growth occurred after World War II, when The Reverend Ned Cole led the parish.

Shortly after The Reverend Cole came to Grace in 1949, he learned that the parish rolls listed a number of faculty members at Lincoln University, a historically black public land-grant university in Jefferson City. But Reverend Cole also found out that these faculty members had been asked to sit at the back of the church and take communion last. Appalled by this revelation, Reverend Cole told one of the vestrymen (a former speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives) that he was not sure that he could stay as rector if that policy stood. The next week, at a vestry meeting, Grace Church changed the policy and began its journey to becoming a leader in the civil rights movement in mid-Missouri throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, another rector, The Reverend Arnold Mintz, later became the president of the Ministerial Alliance in 1960 when he and other leading citizens successfully pressed for desegregation of restaurants in Jefferson City.

The growth in spirit was accompanied by a growth in membership, and in 1963, the need for more space was pressing enough that plans were made to expand the existing church. The new parish hall was completed and dedicated in 1966.

In 1970, Grace called The Reverend Harvel Sanders – "Harv" to young and old – to be our new rector. Through new prayer books and hymnals, and church controversies great and small, he presided over a congregation that grew and changed and adapted to the times in a remarkably cohesive and congenial manner. Harv retired in 2004 and The Reverend Joan Yetter served as our interim rector. Then, in the fall of 2007, Grace Church called The Reverend Shariya Molegoda to be our full-time rector. During this time period, Grace worked mightily to transition from a church with a long-time rector, who took care of many issues both in front of and behind the scenes, to a congregation that looked to a lay leadership model to chart a course for many non-theological issues and decisions. Also during this time period, Grace parishioners spent more time looking outward, towards community ministry, both in our immediate, Jefferson City community and in the larger church and the world. In the fall of 2016, Reverend Shariya was called to accept another position on the East Coast; Grace Church then called its current, interim rector, The Reverend Bill Nesbit.



Worship at Grace

Whether it is the quiet contemplative nature of our 8 a.m. Rite I service or the more contemporary language and music of the later Rite II Eucharist, worship and liturgy are central to the life of Grace Church. We observe a practice of silence in the church prior to the Eucharist in order to leave the secular world behind for a time and to prepare ourselves for the liturgy. After the 8 a.m. Eucharist, fellowship continues at breakfast at a nearby restaurant. Coffee hour in the parish hall follows the second service, an extension of the community of the Lord's Supper we have just celebrated. On Wednesdays, a mid-day Eucharist is held in the chapel, drawing a small but committed group of worshipers, some of whom are members of other local congregations.

Many parishioners serve in ministry groups to assist and enrich our worship services. These groups include the acolytes, altar guild, ushers, choirs and musicians, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, and lectors. Also, many lay members work with the rector with lay pastoral care to serve those in the parish community in special need. These individuals include the Lay Eucharist Visitors who carry the sacrament to those in nursing homes or confined at home as well as those who make regular visits to nursing homes. The Prayer Shawl Ministry knits shawls which are then blessed and presented to individuals as tangible reminders of the caring community at Grace.

Special Services

For many of us, the Christmas Eve services are the highlight of the liturgical year. On this special feast, we hold an early evening family Eucharist as well as a Festal Midnight Eucharist. During Lent, we gather for Ash Wednesday services that include the imposition of ashes. Lenten Wednesday morning Eucharist and breakfast draws many parishioners, as does the Maundy Thursday Eucharist and salad supper. And this past year, at the urging of our interim rector, we held an Easter Vigil, which was very successful.

On Palm Sunday the red front doors open for the only time during the church year, and the congregation joins the rector, acolytes,

and choir in procession into the sanctuary where we participate in a reading of the Passion. Other services held occasionally in recent years have included an Epiphany Evensong and weekly Celtic Evening Prayer during Advent and Lent led by lay members.

Music enriches our worship. The Chancel Choir provides music for the second service two Sundays each month. The choir rehearses weekly and welcomes anyone who wants to sing. Individuals and small groups provide special instrumental and vocal music on many Sundays and for feast day services.



Who We Are

Over the last decade, Grace Church's membership has ranged from 350-450 members. In 2016, the church had 350 members. Also in 2016, our Average Sunday Attendance was 112.9. Many Grace Church parishioners are long-time members, and we have many members over age 50. Though we are more ethnically diverse than other churches in our community, we are predominantly Caucasian. A large majority of the adults are married and have college degrees and professional occupations, and household incomes are high for this area.

Although we are geographically distant from our cathedral and diocesan offices, our members have been very active in diocesan activities, regularly serving on committees as well as attending

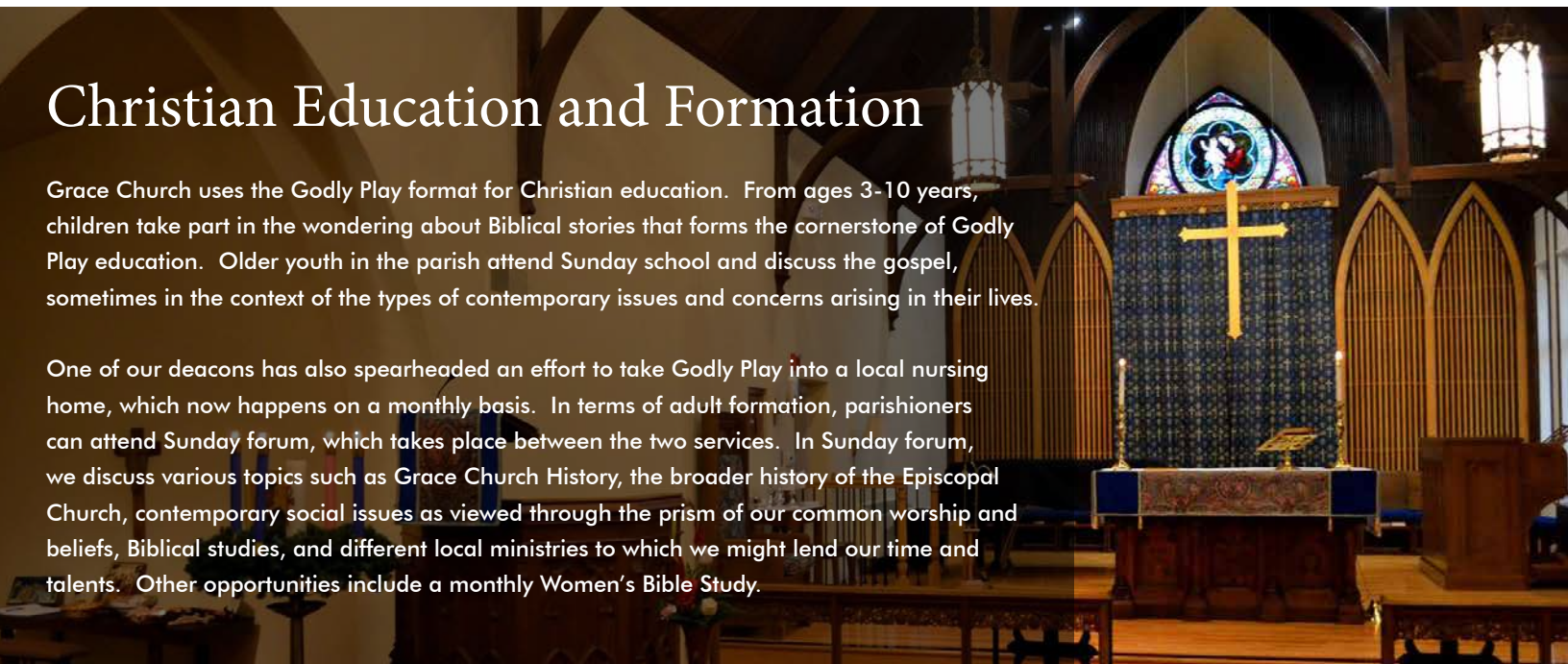
special events such as the recent speech given by our presiding bishop, The Most Reverend Michael Curry, at the Cathedral, and participating in a variety of diocesan youth programs. Members have also been active in diocesan programs for congregational vitality, and we have recently raised up two deacons and two priests from our parish.

Our leaders include paid staff, lay readers, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Godly Play and Sunday School teachers, the Altar Guild, volunteer leaders, an elected twelve-person vestry, and numerous committees. Our senior warden is appointed from the vestry by the rector, while the vestry elects the junior warden. Except for the rector, all paid staff positions are part-time.

Christian Education and Formation

Grace Church uses the Godly Play format for Christian education. From ages 3-10 years, children take part in the wondering about Biblical stories that forms the cornerstone of Godly Play education. Older youth in the parish attend Sunday school and discuss the gospel, sometimes in the context of the types of contemporary issues and concerns arising in their lives.

One of our deacons has also spearheaded an effort to take Godly Play into a local nursing home, which now happens on a monthly basis. In terms of adult formation, parishioners can attend Sunday forum, which takes place between the two services. In Sunday forum, we discuss various topics such as Grace Church History, the broader history of the Episcopal Church, contemporary social issues as viewed through the prism of our common worship and beliefs, Biblical studies, and different local ministries to which we might lend our time and talents. Other opportunities include a monthly Women's Bible Study.





Community Ministry

Community ministry activities at Grace include sponsorship of Boy Scout Troop 10 and Venture Crew 10. The scout troop has been in continuous existence at Grace Church since 1964. Check out the troop's activities at www.troop10.us. Youth also participate in summer mission trips and various local ecumenical projects and food collections for the Samaritan Center.

Indeed, the entire parish participates in ministry at the Samaritan Center, an ecumenical social services agency (see www.midmosamaritan.org). Parishioners help with and donate to various Samaritan Center events throughout the year. Likewise, at the Salvation Army, a community ministry of Grace Church, parishioners help in the garden and provide a monthly meal at the homeless shelter. We also assist with bell ringing for the Red Kettle Campaign during the holiday season. A scout in Troop 10 (also a church member) recently rebuilt a prayer structure at the Salvation Army as an Eagle Scout project.

Grace Church is also involved at the Common Ground Community

Center (see www.cgcb.org). Grace Church received a matching grant from the Missouri Department of Agriculture that allowed us to create a kitchen at the center and stock it with supplies. This grant also helped Grace Church to create Common Ground's community garden as a demonstration and a source of free food to the neighborhood. A younger parishioner created a path to the Common Ground Community Garden as part of his Eagle Scout project. Many parishioners help at both the center and in the garden. One of our deacons also regularly staffs the center, and many parishioners help with staffing as well.

Finally, Grace Church is home to about eleven families who have come to Jefferson City from Sierra Leone. For more than two decades, these families, who come from both Christian and Muslim traditions, have become a vital part of the Grace family, participating in every aspect of our parish life. The annual Thanksgiving service and fundraiser for a Sierra Leone scholarship fund is held in October.





Stewardship and Finance

Pledge and plate giving at Grace has been stable over time and currently totals approximately \$240,000 per year. Before the calling of a new rector in October 2007, Grace Church began to approach stewardship in a more consistent, routine way. The church established a year-round stewardship program to supplement our annual stewardship campaign, where parishioners are asked to pledge not only their treasure, but their time and talent as well. The annual stewardship campaign begins with a kickoff party in October and ends with a Thanksgiving-themed breakfast in November.

In April 2007, Grace began a three-year capital campaign to raise money for various projects around the church building; for us, stewardship also includes caring for our physical plant and ensuring its use and enjoyment for future parishioners. The vestry also decided to install solar panels to reduce the church's long-term utility costs. At the time, the finance committee estimated that

installing the solar panels would save the church \$200,000 over 20 years. Finally, with the help of a diocesan grant, the vestry replaced all the bulbs in the church with energy efficient, LED bulbs.

In 2010, Grace held another campaign to raise money for renovation of the chancel. Finally and most recently in 2016, the church ran a successful campaign to raise money to replace an antiquated, inefficient boiler and heating/cooling system. While not glamorous, this campaign was necessary to replace an enormous piece of equipment from the 1960s (lovingly known as "the monster in the closet") for which we could no longer reliably find parts. While expensive, the new heating/cooling system makes services more comfortable, increases the church's energy efficiency, helps us conserve resources, and allows us to be good stewards of our physical space. We anticipate that the fix will last for many years to come.



Friendship and Fellowship

Christian fellowship and friendship are important elements within any spiritual community, forming bonds that help us work together to nurture and strengthen each other and serve Christ in our community. The parish plans and coordinates a wide range of social activities and opportunities for fellowship within the parish. These have recently included trips to minor league baseball games, trips to concerts or theater performances, parish community meals on special occasions like Mardi Gras, game nights, chili cookoffs, and many other activities designed to provide hospitality and an opportunity for fellowship. Also, Troop 10, Crew 10, and the men of Grace Episcopal Church host the annual Shrove Tuesday Ham and Pancake Supper.



Challenges facing Grace, and the Strengths to Meet Them

In the survey we used as part of our self-study (The Congregational Assessment Tool [CAT] from Holy Cow Consulting) we found ourselves in the low energy, low satisfaction quadrant, but not deeply so. We see the challenge of building energy and satisfaction as something for us to address with our new rector. Like many churches we have been trying to maintain the status quo with decreasing numbers, and we see that as the principal source of our low energy.

The CAT also tells us that we are a settled progressive church, though our experience tells us that we have some very vocal conservative members as well. Our settled nature is reflected in our genuine desire to be with each other, to work and play together, as well as in our avoidance of addressing our differences so as to not

“rock the boat.” We address conflict when we must, but it is not our strong suit. Some of our dissatisfaction appears to come from this unaddressed conflict, and we hope our new rector can help us with this.

Grace is a special place. In the downtown of the capital of Missouri, it has the opportunity for both urban and rural ministry. Our historic building is well maintained and our finances are stable like our people. We feel that both are a source of untapped potential. Though the challenges we face are real, so is our hope. We believe that the right person will help us focus our efforts to meet these challenges in a way that will enable us to bring the kingdom of God near to Jefferson City.

Jefferson City - Why We Love it Here

As the state’s capital, Jefferson City is centrally located, about two hours from either of the state’s large metropolitan areas, St. Louis and Kansas City. The Lake of the Ozarks, a popular vacation destination, is less than one hour south. The state’s 240-mile “rails to trails” bike path, the Katy Trail, runs through Jefferson City and provides scenic walking and cycling opportunities. Jefferson City also has an elaborate parks system. Finally, Jefferson City is home to many musical and theater groups. To learn more about life in Jefferson City, please visit www.visitjeffersoncity.com, www.jeffersoncitymo.gov, and www.downtownjeffersoncity.com.



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www.gracechurchjc.org

