

**Office of Transition Ministry
Grace Episcopal Church Ministry Portfolio**

NARRATIVE

- 1. Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.**

Under the leadership and guidance of our Interim Rector, Father Bill Nesbit, Grace Episcopal Church had a first and most successful Easter Vigil service. This service, held on the Saturday evening before Easter, brought both young and old and members who attend regularly along with those who attend less frequently, together. The service was meaningful, with readings done by candlelight, and joyful, with everyone making a joyful noise with instruments and noisemakers. You could feel a real sense of community as church members emerged, together, from a somber Lent into the joy of the resurrection. That community spirit continued in a reception that followed the service and featured strawberries and a chocolate fountain. Grace, steeped in a 160+-year history, tried a new worship service not done in recent memory and found its membership revitalized and refreshed.

- 2. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.**

Eucharist Rite I and Rite II from the Book of Common Prayer are used at our 8:00 a.m. (spoken) and 10:30 a.m. (spoken with hymns) services, respectively. A mid-day Eucharist is held in the Chapel on Wednesday. We observe a practice of silence in the church prior to the services. Special services are held throughout the liturgical year (i.e., Festal Midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday (including imposition of ashes), and Holy Week Triduum) as well as Lenten Breakfasts with Eucharist and weekly Celtic Evening Prayer services during Advent and Lent. Ministry groups such as acolytes (youth and adult), altar guild, ushers, choirs, musicians, lay Eucharistic ministers, and lectors (youth and adult) participate in the services. Music is important to our worship and includes a choir, pipe organ, piano, and special instrumental accompaniment and offerings.

- 3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?**

Parishioners are encouraged to participate in ministry activities through announcements, bulletins, newsletters, website and Facebook. Invitations are made through special direct mail and by personal requests. All parishioners are invited to contribute to the Ministry Fair and asked to assess their particular gifts through an annual "Time and Talent" pledge. Responses are used yearlong to ensure activities of the church are supported. For new activities there is a concerted effort to seek participants. For example, involvement in the ecumenical Common Ground Community Building increased need for volunteers to work with community members seeking support services, to work in the

community garden and to organize and staff special events. Participation was promoted through multiple means, which led to a new level of community involvement for Grace. Grace works to provide opportunities that are varied in level of commitment. Some opportunities are one-time events and others are of a longer-term nature.

4. As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

We realize that our life as a worshipping community is inextricably linked to opportunities offered by our life together—our worship, formation programs, and ministries. We encourage diversity and support of one another in times of joy and sorrow, creativity and outreach. A sampling of the ways in which we have addressed this question include the establishment of a special corner in the nave where parishioners can linger in quiet prayer. Game nights offer joyful interaction between parishioners, young and old. Support of The Salvation Army is provided through meal preparation, food donations and prayer garden upkeep. Our many activities in our immediate parish family and the larger community develop and strengthen our spiritual, emotional and physical well-being.

5. Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church geographical region.

Grace Episcopal Church has been quite active in the diocese for years. Parishioners have been on the Diocesan Council, the Standing Committee, the Disciplinary Board, Cathedral Chapter and the Nominating Committee and attend convocation meetings. Presently, we have a member on the Disciplinary Board and Cathedral Chapter. We faithfully pay our full diocesan assessment. One of our deacons has spent the last two years serving at two other churches and we are glad to have her back at Grace. She is also one of the diocesan disaster coordinators. One of our parishioners visited and did work in our companion diocese of Lui in South Sudan along with other members of the diocese. We always have representatives at the Diocesan Convention, and one of our members has been a delegate to general convention. We have taken advantage of grants that have been offered by the diocese to provide a playground and a walk-in freezer for the Salvation Army. We are proud of our involvement with the diocese and appreciate their support.

6. How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

Grace has an active lay Eucharistic visitor ministry that brings communion to many home-bound individuals. Every month parishioners bring Godly Play to a nursing home and cook dinner at the Salvation Army. We provide space in our parish hall for an addiction group to meet weekly. Our location in downtown Jefferson City gives us regular opportunities to help individuals in need of basic necessities: shelter, food, transportation, safety. One of our deacons discerned a call to this area of ministry and has made many connections throughout the city to refer those in need to the appropriate services. Grace is committed

to budgeting for a generous discretionary fund so that our clergy can provide help for those who come to our door.

7. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

A community ministry committee was formed. One of the first partnerships developed was with the Salvation Army where we provide a monthly meal and established a Prayer Garden and playground (Vicki Myers). Being a downtown church led us to involvement with the Downtown Business Association. We have provided a concession stand (youth operated), participated in the Piccadilly in White event, and wrote a local food, local places grant (Ken Luebbering). We have partnered with the 1st United Methodist Church in developing the Common Ground Community Building as a community center. We received a MO Depart. of Agriculture grant allowing us to provide a kitchen for the center. We plant vegetable gardens which provide fresh produce for the neighborhood and lead to relationships with the members of that community (Gary Harbison, Ken Luebbering). We offer support to the Samaritan Center, an ecumenical social services agency (Sally Reid), charter a Boy Scout troop and Venture Crew (Tom Nield), and provide a monthly Bible Study (Nanette Ellis). To learn how Grace has stepped outside the “red doors”, listen to a “Jesus Hacked” podcast at <http://jesushacked.blubrry.com/2017/08/03/023>.

8. How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future?

Grace Episcopal Church is preparing itself to be a church of the future on two fronts: modernizing outreach and strengthening stewardship. In terms of modernization, Grace is in the process of updating its website and has been posting more regularly on Facebook. This will hopefully help keep current members more informed and will attract younger people — who live more digitally than older generations — to consider Grace for worship. In terms of stewardship, Grace asks each of us to annually pledge our time, talent and treasure rather than a financial pledge only. This helps for future planning purposes and it makes giving all of the above a regular and prayerful (as opposed to a sporadic) activity. Finally, Grace has held campaigns in recent years to maintain its physical plant, with a Capital Campaign for general, long-term building maintenance issues, and a campaign to replace an antiquated, yet expensive, boiler. Thus, the members of Grace strive to take care of their worship space even as they attempt to fill it with more people.

9. What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

Grace Episcopal Church's year-round stewardship ministry is based on training from The Episcopal Network for Stewardship and is an intentional effort to strengthen congregational members' understanding of our roles as God's stewards and encourage participation in the ministries of the church through gifts of time, talent and treasure. The Stewardship Committee meets throughout the year to pray and discuss stewardship at Grace. We recently held a Ministry Fair where all of the opportunities to serve the church and the various ministries were highlighted. We provided the congregation with a pamphlet with a list of our ministries and they were able to sign up to participate in the

various activities. As we start our annual pledge campaign, there will be a kickoff barbecue, presentations during our Sunday Adult Forum and a lay stewardship sermon. We will again provide a pledge form so that the parishioners can identify their talents and how they can serve the church along with their financial pledge. Stewardship is an essential part of the life in Grace and is celebrated throughout the year.

10. What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

Grace Episcopal Church is the only Episcopal church in Jefferson City and, therefore, has a diversity of views. When divergent views come up against each other, we have a history of choosing community over conflict. However, we recognize that avoided conflict can be detrimental to long-term community health. Strong pastoral care, conversation and counsel have been vital to keeping those in conflict engaged at Grace and soothing the distressed. Leadership in guiding Grace through conflict is needed so we can more fully embrace our differences and thrive as a unique congregation.

11. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Several years ago, Grace embarked on a period of discernment regarding blessings of same sex unions. We held several smaller group meetings and those meetings went well – people expressed themselves respectfully, if sometimes emotionally, and did so despite divergent opinions. Ultimately, though, Grace could not reach an agreement on this issue and it was informally tabled. So, to the extent we sought clarity, or some kind of resolution, it went poorly. With hindsight and perspective, we have learned that, while our diversity can often be the source of great strength, sometimes it makes us less adaptable than we might otherwise be. Some change has been addressed out of necessity, such as remodeling the chancel. The area around the altar was crowded, and after a member fell down several stairs and broke a leg, we realized it was not safe. The placement of the altar had been a contentious issue in the past, and we learned from those failed discussions. Through open dialogue between the vestry and the congregation, all points of view were heard and the altar was reconfigured.

12. Please provide four words or phrases describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leader of your worshipping community.

Grace Episcopal Church is looking for a leader who will be able to handle and promote diversity, empowerment, growth and conflict resolution.