



*Grace Episcopal
Church
Asheville, NC*

2023 Annual Report

Annual Meeting – January 14, 2024
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Tahani Sticpewich

Kim Hayes

Donald Alford

Terri Frue

Katherine Kaderabek

Steve Birkhofer

Mathes Mennell

Vicki Vest



Rector's Report for 2023

2023 – Curiosity; The word of the Year for Grace!

Greetings Grace Family and Happy New Year!

As we move into 2024, we begin with a review of 2023 as we lay a solid foundation for the year ahead!

As we reflect on 2023, curiosity is key! What way did God make for us at Grace and what did we accomplish with God's love and guidance as a community? Last year, for me, was one of assessment and growth. As I began my third year as your Rector, I found myself curious, "Are we moving in the right direction? And, have I been the leader I feel called to be?"

These are good questions to ask in one's third year as a leader. The first two years are often spent learning and building a foundation of trust as a leader in a new community. The third year is often one of asking, "is trust present now and are we grounded enough in that trust to move into deeper action together?"

2023 was also a year of assessing what needs to be accomplished for our church to be a fully functional institution. What within our building needs to be fixed? What changes to our ministries need to happen so that our work is vibrant and effective? How can communication be clearer, broader and more efficient? So, in 2023 God made the way, and we accomplished much; new members joined, and rooted members lead the way! And I found myself being very curious about Grace and about my leadership and our future as an established church in Asheville.

As we begin 2024, we will continue this work of assessment and evaluation together. Rev. Guy Sayles will lead a Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) in the month of February. The goal is to hear from church leaders and longtime rooted members, as well as new members about the care you receive and the direction of the church. Then, we will gather information to assist us in developing a clearer mission for our church's future. We will share more about that in the weeks to come. My hope, moving into 2024

and my fourth year at Grace, is that Grace will find even deeper clarity of purpose and mission, and that I can be the leader Grace needs, so that together we can be fully what God has called us to be in this world.

I want to thank all the vestry members who have supported Grace through this year with humor, wisdom, and intentional accountability. We are truly blessed that our vestry has all that it needs to meet the tasks and work of the church well and professionally. I also want to thank the staff of Grace for being present and focused and seeking growth within each of your roles.

I want to thank Jim Cassarino and Cathy Adkins and the choir of Grace. Grace is so blessed to have your leadership and the amazing music with which we are gifted every week. To all the lay leaders hosting ministries and leading Sunday services with me, 'thank you!'. I am truly lucky to be serving with each of you.

I am excited about our slate of vestry members for this upcoming year and want to say Thank You to them for their willingness to serve Grace. I am grateful for all of you, for this Body of Christ we call Grace, and I am curious to see how we grow together in 2024!

Peace,

Rev. Milly

Vestry Election for 2024



Leslie Schoof

Hot Springs native and nature lover who likes to get out and hike as long as it's not raining too hard or the trail isn't too steep. I have a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a North Carolina Teaching License in Comprehensive Science for grades 6-12, which I earned from UNC-Asheville. I also have an MaED from Western Carolina in Biology. I met my husband, Steve, at UNCA while working with the Baptist Student Union, and we have a 19 year old daughter, Alyssa.

I was raised in the Methodist Church, spent some time with the Baptists in college, joined my husband at his Presbyterian Church in Fairview, switched over to another group of Methodists In Weaverville, joined up with the Buddhists for awhile, stayed home and then found Grace. I guess you could say I've been around the religious block a few times.

I taught 7th grade science for more years than I care to remember at Madison Middle School, then spent 11 years at Madison Early College High School (biology, earth science, physical science, and one harrowing semester of chemistry) and currently teach college level dual-enrollment biology and regular biology at Madison High. Retirement is near.

I am an avid traveler, when I can afford it, and have enjoyed visiting Peru, England, Scotland, France, China, and Iceland as well as much of the US. I read voraciously and listen to podcasts constantly because I feel like if I'm not learning something I'm wasting time. I believe deeply in being engaged in community and using our own mental and physical resources to build change that matters in people's lives.



Brad Rouse

As an NC native, I'm glad to be back and in Asheville since 2015. After graduating from Yale (economics) and Carolina (MBA) I spent most of my career in Atlanta in electric utility and then personal financial planning. Karen Campbell and I have been married for 47 years with two sons and a grandson. In Atlanta we were Presbyterians but became Episcopalians in Hayesville, NC in 2007 after moving to the mountains. I've served as treasurer and session member in the Presbyterian Church and on the Vestry in Hayesville where I started a ministry that helped low-income families reduce energy use.

In the early 2000s I became more and more concerned about global warming and in 2012 sold my financial practice to focus on climate. I've given numerous talks on climate and am the co-host of "The Climate

Buzz”, on Asheville FM 103.3. In 2022 I published “Climate Warrior: Climate Activism and Our Energy Future”. From 2017-2019 I served on the Energy Innovation Task Force and I’m a newly elected member of the Blue Horizons Project Community Council. After moving to Asheville, I started Energy Savers Network, which has helped over 1000 low-income residents save energy. I’m also a member of the Asheville Rotary Club.

Karen and I live in Chunns Cove. She is active in the choir at All Souls and I’ve been attending Grace since 2020.

David Greiner



James Gray and I have been members of Grace since 2022. Previously, we were long- time members of All Soul’s Cathedral. After moving to North Asheville, we decided that we really wanted a smaller, neighborhood church. We certainly discovered that at Grace. We love the fact that Grace and the Episcopal Church welcomes EVERYONE.

Professionally, I’ve worked my entire career in financial services--wealth management, banking, and in multiple corporate roles. I was the Resident

Director of the Asheville Merrill Lynch office for nine years and now work as a financial advisor.

I grew up in Syracuse, NY and spent 20 years in Washington, DC and Charlotte, before moving to Asheville in 2000. I'm a Certified Financial Planner (CFP®) and hold a bachelor's degree in finance from the American University, Washington, DC.

I'm excited to have the opportunity to share my financial background as well as my experience in serving on a number of nonprofit boards in Asheville. This includes the Asheville Gay Men's Chorus, Asheville Humane Society, Habitat for Humanity, Homeward Bound, and the Western NC AIDS Project.



Monty Wooten

I was born and raised in Alabama. My family was very active in the Southern Baptist church and that's where my spiritual formation was founded. After college I moved to Oregon and drifted away from any community of faith. After moving to Asheville in the early 80's, I began searching for a spiritual homeplace. I visited Grace one Sunday and

that week a member of the church visited me at home and brought a loaf of fresh-baked bread. I was all in and have been at Grace ever since.

Cheryl and I have made many good friends here at Grace and have raised our son among this family of Jesus followers. I have previously served on the vestry in the early 2000's. As of late, I have been involved in the Taize' ministry, the Transition Village dinners and in hosting the music jams known as PubSing. I look forward to the continued transformation of our parish as we seek to serve God through serving others.

Warden's Report

Grateful for 2023 and looking forward to 2024! We have had a lot of good things happen this past year. We have a wonderful Buildings and Grounds committee (Terri Frue, David Withers, Donald Alford and Randy Jameson) that has taken over responsibility for keeping needed repairs/updates to the church campus. The Men of the Church have also been working with them, and we are grateful for that. We finally got the security system up and running through a huge effort by Scott McKenzie. Added to that we've installed motion detector lights throughout the church that turn on automatically when you walk into a room. We want people to feel safe at church, but we also want everyone to feel welcome, and that can be a tough balancing act. But with the love, care and compassion shown by you, we are figuring all of that out. We had our first "deep cleaning" of the church since we returned from Covid. It's a little disappointing that the playground isn't in yet, but it IS coming, and apparently God just has a different timeline than we do. The solar panels are doing what they're supposed to do. We have a lot of amazing new members. The weekly Taize service has been a success. We helped with a successful Winter Shelter at the beginning of the year that has now morphed into a more

permanent shelter. Under Milly's leadership we are growing and are getting into our post-Covid groove (and figuring out what it is), and that feels nice.

Being on Vestry these past 3 years has been a huge growth experience and blessing for me. I have enjoyed all of it, even the parts that weren't easy. All of the people I have served with are there for the greater good. And while we weren't all like-minded, we were like-hearted, just wanting to follow God's lead as to what's best for our church. As I rotate off I look forward to working on getting more people involved and connected with our different ministries, so we can all feel like we're an important part of Grace, because we all are.

Looking ahead, we will most assuredly miss Mike, but look forward to following his journey. We have an amazing slate of new Vestry, and with the leadership of Terri Frue (Sr. Warden) and Don Alford (Jr. Warden) we are starting out in a very strong position.

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to be able to serve such a wonderful group of people in such an extraordinary place. Cheers to 2024!

Elaine Potter



Music Ministry

Grace Church is blessed with a talented group of vocalists always ready to offer their musical gifts to enrich our worship. In a day when people are hesitant to give up their free time, Grace is truly fortunate to have a choir of giving and dedicated singers - a rarity in many churches today.

Their dedication and the joy they bring with them to our weekly rehearsals and services are vital to the quality of music we enjoy throughout the year. Strong in spirit and talent, the choir sings from a large repertoire of hymns and anthems which varies from Renaissance motets to beloved Southern folk hymns. This year the choir successfully tackled beautiful, varied, meaningful, and new repertoire. The choir continues to have a strong presence in worship.

There is also a core of individuals who serve as cantors during the summer months and for funerals and other special services. This past year, we welcomed Ted Hill, Karen Baldwin, and Mickey Trinite as new members of the choir. We also welcomed several guest musicians who joined us on Sunday mornings. Grace additionally enjoys our very own roster of parish

instrumentalists who add their skills and talents at special times throughout the year. We continue to be blessed with the inspiring talent and dedication of our parish organist, Cathy Adkins. It is through her stirring playing and solid musical support that Grace boasts a congregation that sings strongly and joyfully.

I remain grateful to the Revs Milly and Mike, the Vestry, the Worship Committee, and the parish community for the continued support of the music program at Grace. Parishioners are encouraged and always invited to consider joining the choir and sharing their musical talents. Choir rehearsals take place on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. They are lively and a lot of fun!

I'm always available and eager to discuss the musical life of Grace after church on Sundays or by phone or email.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. James Cassarino, Music Director

802-558-6583

jamescassarino@gmail.com

2023 CHOIR

Clifford Albertson, Cheryl Aull, Karen Baldwin, Steven Birkhofer, Elise Cassarino, Kristen Dusenbery, Ted Hill, Richard Jacobs, Anne Jarema, Lynda McCredie, Rusty McCredie, Hannah Pennell, Anita Sayles, Guy Sayles, Becky Smith, Bill Smith, Sydnor Thompson, Shannon Townsend, Mickey Trinite, Marla Woeckener

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild led by Shannon Townsend is the ministry that takes care of the sanctuary for services including preparation and clean up as well as caring for the altar, altar linens, vessels, candles and vestments. My heartfelt thanks goes to this group of people who help out each Sunday. We

do need more people to help out once a month. Please contact me, Shannon Townsend or any member of the Altar Guild to join us.

We thankfully have a budget that allows us to provide what we need for services and to continue clean, repair, and replace our items as they age.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon Townsend



Children's Formation

Children's faith formation continues with Sunday School for kids from 3 years old through third grade. Shannon Townsend is the catechist(teacher).

Called The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, it has been a part of Grace for over twenty years. While it is simple, it is very rich in how it offers children the ability to explore their individual spirituality within the sacramental structure of our faith.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shannon Townsend

Endowment / Planned Giving Report

The Church endowment pool effectively increased from a January 1, 2023 adjusted spend position of \$593,699 to \$712,983 at December 31, 2023, for a net year to date increase of 20.1% (note the S&P 500 is up approx 24% for the same period). No significant withdrawals from the investment pool occurred in 2023 and a spend distribution of \$30,370 in support of capital spending and outreach for 2024 should occur in January 2024.

Brief analysis: While general parish contributions to the pool were less than \$1,000.00, broader market averages increased measurably in 2023 due to a series of global issues with a concentration occurring in large cap technical equities (e.g. Microsoft, Google, et al) and underlying inflation was the primary contributor for increased borrowing costs (e.g. short term and intermediate Treasury yields averaged 5% in Dec 2023). Grace Church continues to maintain a well-diversified portfolio of equities (stocks), fixed income (bonds), and a marginally conservative 5% cash position. Equities were the major contributing vehicle in 2023 (as noted, a U.S. based late 2023 rally in tech and energy issues) while other portfolio components yielded comparatively marginal returns. Grace Church is fortunate to have Modera Wealth Management serve as its investment and advisory manager, and the portfolio's results for 2023 are testimony to Modera's expertise in outperforming the broader market averages; note, Parsec Financial Management combined with Modera in April 2023.

Committee Stewardship: well managed endowment funds require discipline to ensure that they remain a sustainable funding source. The Endowment Committee again recommended a 4.5% annual spending rate against the endowment pool (fund), based upon a rolling average of the most recent 12 quarters, for proposed budgeting in 2024; 4.5% was drawn for 2023 given the weak performance in 2022, and 6% was drawn for 2022 given the stronger market performance in '21. The resulting current calculation releases \$30,370 for the 2024 Church budget to be used for purposes consistent with the Endowment's By-Laws.

Your Endowment Committee includes: Ms. Anne Jarema (Secretary and Associate Coordinator), Mr. Todd Kaderabek, Dr. Gael Paschall, Mr. John Chastain, and Steve Birkhofer (Lead Coordinator/Chair). Your Committee meets quarterly (typically the second Monday or Tuesday eve following the end of each calendar quarter). All Parish members are welcome to attend and contribute to these meetings.

Peace to All,
Grace Endowment Committee



EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN (ECW)

The Episcopal Church Women have had a busy year! We began with a kitchen clean up day held on March 9 th . Nineteen women and several spouses helped clean and organize the kitchen. Plans were made to label pantry shelves as well as the drawers and cabinets. Later that month this task was completed so everyone who uses the kitchen can find any items needed. Our next gathering was the spring potluck luncheon held on April 22 nd . Twenty-five women attended and plans were made for our annual fall rummage sale to be held on November 4 th . We also discussed our budget and voted to appropriate up to \$1000 for partial scholarships for children attending Camp Henry or diocesan youth gatherings. Ultimately only one child attended Camp Henry and was awarded \$235 towards fees. Up to \$3100 was set aside to replace the ice machine in the kitchen. Thankfully, David Withers and Angel Stoudt were able to fix our old ice machine, so this money is available for future repairs, replacement, or other kitchen needs. \$200 was designated to be spent on new tablecloths. Eight new tablecloths were ordered and received. Our final formal meeting of the year was a fall potluck luncheon held on October 7 th . Thirteen women attended and detailed plans were made for our rummage sale. In preparation for this sale, several members spent a day cleaning up the room and landing area above the kitchen. This space is used by many organizations within the church as a storage area. Items routinely stored in the storage house for the rummage sale can now be stored in this area. Our rummage sale held on November 4 th was a great success! More than thirty ECW members and ten or more Men of the Church spent the week of October 30 th – November 3 rd setting up the displays in the parish hall, the foyer, and the storage house. We made \$4647 and were able to donate many leftover items. Twenty bags of clothing were taken to ABCCM. Many household goods and furniture were taken to the Habitat Restore and to Homeward Bound. These agencies were very grateful for our donations. We would like to thank the Men of the Church whose members provided much needed help transporting items and setting up heavy tables and signs. Finally, ECW would like to thank everyone who contributed to all

our various activities this year. None would have been possible without your help!

Cheryl Aull, President

Jeanne Sims, Vice-President

Anne Jarema, Secretary

Mary Ann Warren, Treasurer

Finance Ministry – Year to Date, December 31, 2022

The closing year has delivered more exciting growth and change at Grace, including many new faces in the congregation and additional programs. Growth and change have included only one staff position change (Father Mike Reardon locally transitioned effective Jan 1, 2024). Administrative staff members including Jill Stevenson (Office Mgr), Katie Douglas (Bookkeeper & Reporting Accountant), and Angel Stoudt as Sexton all continue to do an extraordinary job.

Expenses for 2023 closely followed the trend line for 2022 (totals expenditures in 2022 totaled \$476K). No significant staffing changes occurred between the comparative periods. Savings were realized beginning in mid-2023 from the solar panel(s) installation (approx. \$2K comparatively) while increases occurred in other areas (e.g. COLA consideration for clergy and staff given the continued erosion from inflation). While Grace enjoyed a modest operating surplus of \$13,360 in 2022, a modest operating deficit has followed for 2023 (approx. \$9K).

Challenge: For 2023 (at Jan 7, 2023), 100 pledges totaling less than \$343K had been delivered. As of this writing (Jan 8, 2024), the Stewardship team is still working to repeat or exceed the 2023 totals for 2024.

For 2024, income is projected at \$447K (this includes an assumption that final pledges will net \$396K and other revenues will net \$51K). Expenses are budgeted at \$447K. A balanced budget is projected as of early Jan

2024. Comparatively, the original budget for 2023 reflected all income sources of \$460K and expenses of \$471K, with a projected deficit of \$11K; through Dec 2023, adjusted receipts and expenditures net to a nominal deficit (\$9K). For 2024, most budget entries will require a continuous due diligence on expenses. Other than an inflation adjustment for ministry compensation, no other measurable increases are included in the projected 2024 budget and it is anticipated that further savings will be realized given the solar project completion in mid-2023.

For 2023, the most significant facility improvement initiatives included finalizing the solar project campaign and further due diligence on the playground. The solar project required a \$50K commitment from Grace that was generously met by parishioners and the needed funds for the playground are to be sourced from an inherited IRA received by Grace through the estate of Mr. Jim Black (a long time Grace parishioner). Sources for Church financial guidance in 2023 included previous Treasurers Anne Jarema (2021) and Joe Aull from years before (and still contributing) as well as Carol Tannenbaum from the Diocesan office. Ms. Katie Douglas has been providing financial reporting since late Summer '2022 and has now become indispensable to the Grace team. Please continue to follow our financial progress on a monthly basis in the Church bulletin board posting.

Steven Birkhofer, Grace Treasurer



Flower Guild Ministry

As I reflect back on this year, I am so very grateful for our strong core of flower arrangers. Each one brings their own unique style and talent as witnessed each Sunday. Our team consists of: Judy Booze, Judy Bowen, Teesha Johnson, Nora Jones, Bonnie Kistler, Mary Ann Warren, Jennifer Witt (also Donor chair), me. We are also blessed to have Ginny Moser as our treasurer, and Angel Stoudt, our sexton, who helps us every week carrying the large arrangements back and forth.

Our two big events are Easter and Christmas, when we decorate windows, doors and anything outside that we deem “decorable”. We order materials for “Hanging of the Greens” --swags, wreaths and two Christmas trees. Also included are Advent materials, candles & holders, pins and wreaths. These expenses are covered by donors and the generosity of parishioners, who make Christmas and Easter donations using the special envelopes placed in the pews in honor of loved ones. These names are listed in the church publication.

If you would like to make a flower donation for a particular Sunday in memory or in thanksgiving for a loved one, please contact Jennifer Witt (828-423-4941).

With much appreciation,
Pat Davis, chairman

Greeters Ministry

We formed the Graceful Greeters, with an organizing meeting in the parish hall on July 31, 2022. From a core group of seven people in the second half of 2022, we reached a high point of thirteen in the middle of 2023. We have had some struggles getting enough volunteers in the last quarter of the year as people travel or encounter health issues.

I (Diane Wilkey) manage the schedule, communication, and am the contact person for those wishing to join our ministry. My phone number is (404) 202-4750, but the best way to reach me is at thewilkeys@gmail.com.

The mission of Graceful Greeters is to create an environment of warm welcome and engender a deep sense of belonging for all who enter Grace Church. We have two people stationed in the foyer to greet all who enter and remind regular parishioners to wear their name tags. Our mission regarding visitors and newcomers is first to make sure they are seen, greeted, and welcomed. Next, we want to help them find the sanctuary, bathrooms, and Sunday School/nursery; answer any questions they may have about the worship service itself; offer them a temporary nametag; and invite them to have coffee and treats following the service. Finally, we offer additional information in the form of a one-page flyer composed by Kim Hayes that has pictures of the clergy and staff and their contact information as well as times and places of our worship services. The greeters are currently buying refreshments with no reimbursement.

We met with Reverend Milly on July 9, 2023 to firm up our mission and set some goals for the remainder of the year. Our stated goals were:

- *Stop using SignUp Genius and sign up directly on the Ministry Schedule. This was implemented and has worked beautifully.*
- *We will eventually shift the coffee hour responsibilities away from the Greeters to a Hospitality Ministry that will be formed as soon as possible. This has not happened and remains a goal that needs to be addressed.*
- *Reverend Milly will provide [something] for the greeters to wear to identify us as such to other worshipers. The VPOD will mention the greeters and what we're wearing at the beginning of the service each week*

and tell visitors/newcomers to look for us during the coffee hour. I don't know whether the VPOD mentions the greeters each week, but we have begun wearing crosses on red ribbons as identifiers.

- *We are physically moving coffee hour to the end of the parish hall closer to the kitchen.* We're still determining the best location for coffee hour.
- *We might begin giving out small gift bags to newcomers.* This hasn't happened. I don't know that it's something we want to do.

Our highlights for 2023 were clearly identifying our mission and attracting additional greeters.

We still hope to meet soon with a social worker who can help us recognize and assist any visitors who might need more from us than just a greeting.

Diane Wilkey

Liturgical Ministries

2023 continued to bring exciting changes to our Sunday Liturgy. Carol Booth, who led this ministry for many years passed the torch to me and I schedule acolytes, chalcists, intercessors and lectors.

If serving as an acolyte, chalcist, lector or intercessor at Grace appeals to you, we welcome your participation. We have a dedicated group of lectors and intercessors. If you have been a liturgical server in the past or are interested in learning more about these rewarding opportunities to contribute to the life of Grace, please contact Rev Milly Morrow at milly@graceavl.com

Another important liturgical ministry is our Taizé service on Tuesday nights. If you are interested in learning more about this special worship service please contact James Cannon, imjcannon@charter.net.

Jill Stevenson



Men of the Church

Our members enjoyed several excellent meals provided by many of our very capable chefs either at their homes or the Parish Hall. Several members also provided delicious side dishes, dessert, and refreshments as well. There were three main topics of discussion covered in our various monthly meetings.

One: June—the ice maker in the kitchen was not working. ECW, Episcopal Church Women, offered to purchase a new replacement ice maker. Our Group collectively agreed to pay for the installation. However, one of our members was able to repair the old unit, therefore the need was rescinded.

Two:—‘Pig Pickin’. Planning for this annual event began in early summer. Through several meetings and discussions we decided on a new format which included: elimination of the ‘sit down’ meal. All orders would be available for pick up in to go containers. Orders for plates, sides, pork by the pound were made via telephone to designated contacts. Collections were made at time of pickup by cash or checks.

The new format worked very well. Though there were a few areas that need improvement. We are working diligently to resolve those issues and enhance the process for 2024. The net proceeds from the sale was approximately \$1700.00. As always, ECW was very instrumental in

making this event successful. We thank them for all their assistance and in turn pitch in to help with their Annual Rummage Sale.

Three: December—our members agreed to make a contribution to the First Generation Student College Fund-Irvin.

All proceeds from our monthly meetings and Pig Pickin' goes into the MOC account and subsequently back to the Church usually through Outreach. We are always open to new members. If you like to cook or just enjoy good food and socializing, check us out. Also consider participating in our annual Pig Pickin' as well.

Ron Sims

Office Ministry

Thank you for the opportunity to work for Grace Church. I am grateful for your support. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursday from 9-3 and Wednesday from 9-12, although I always have access to church voicemail and email. Please do not hesitate to let me know if I can be of assistance to you at any time.

Jill Stevenson



Outreach Ministry

Looking back, the past year has been a year spent strengthening our vision for outreach at Grace and then testing it, challenging the process and exploring the possibilities.

In 2023, we identified four local agencies that are addressing a variety of needs in our community.

Our goal has been to provide financial support and engagement with these organizations:

- Energy Savers Network.** Parishioner Brad Rouse introduced us to the work this agency is doing to empower people and restore the climate through free home energy-efficiency upgrades for low-income qualified households.

- **Umoja Health, Wellness and Justice Collective** is a Black-run, grassroots nonprofit disrupting generational trauma & incarceration by teaching resiliency, building community & healing through the Arts. Founder Michael Hayes was a guest preacher and shared with us at adult formation.

- **Tranzmission Asheville** is an agency dedicated to helping make the lives of non-binary and transgender people safer, healthier, and happier through education, advocacy, and support. We continue to seek the best ways to learn from and work with this agency.

- **Faith 4 Justice** is committed to provoking justice for and with Black- and Brown-bodied people through education and advocacy.

Also this past year, Grace Church has continued to work with ABCCM (quarterly food drives, clothing donations, "Advent in a Bag"), Consider Haiti (the Pumpkin Patch raised \$33,670, with a record \$13,475 going to Consider Haiti), Backpackers (continued delivery of Manna Food packs to Jones Elementary School), Transformation Village (preparing and serving monthly meals), Habitat for Humanity (we helped build Episcopal House XV), and Angel Tree and Back-to-School programs (providing Christmas gifts and school supplies for Buncombe County foster children). These successful projects were all made possible through your gifts of time and financial support.

We're excited to report that the Winter Shelter of 2022 is now the Safe Shelter, open year-round, seven nights a week to provide a unique shelter

option for intact families and other vulnerable people in our community. The shelter has grown from 10 beds in 2022 to 20 beds in 2023. Grace Church and volunteers from the parish are in partnership with Grace Covenant Presbyterian, Trinity United Methodist and Counterflow.

This year, we look forward to continuing to strengthen relationships with the organizations and agencies we have supported over the past couple of years. You can also be looking for more about monthly birthday celebrations for residents at Homeward Bound's new Compass Point community and possible collaborations with Rio Grande Borderland Ministries.

The ministry of reaching out to the poor, the hungry and the homeless never ends. We are constantly reminded that what we do now is just part of what will continue to unfold for us and for those who come after us. We invite you to get involved. For more information, please contact Grace Outreach at kimhys53@gmail.com.

Kim Hayes

Pastoral Care Ministry

The Pastoral Care Ministry supports the sick, homebound, bereaved and lonely of Grace Parish and is defined by our mission statement:

The mission of the Pastoral Care Team at Grace Episcopal Church is making the compassionate presence of Christ known through intentional connection and through the physical and spiritual care of those in need.

Some of our efforts in this mission include:

Feed My Sheep – arrange for food to be available in the freezer at Grace for those who are ill, recovering from surgery or otherwise unable to prepare food for themselves. We can always use contributions of soups, chili, or stew in freezer bags labeled with description and date.

Friends in Christ – visit homebound or hospitalized parish members and take Holy Eucharist to those who desire. Also taking Christmas cookies and Easter Baskets to the same members. In addition we make visits to homes, hospitals, and senior living facilities.

Cards and Calls – sending cards to parishioners and making calls to parishioners on their birthdays. Also make contact with those who are ill or in need of support and works with clergy to stay in touch with those on the prayer list. Our Associate Rector Mike Reardon, has been leading our team and has provided guidance and leadership to Pastoral Care. Rev. Milly will be taking over from Mike in the beginning of 2024. In addition to Rev. Milly the team includes Cliff Albertson, James Cannon, and Pat Davis. This year our team will be augmented by members of the Medical Advisory Mission, Dr. Jeff Russell, Dodie King, Ginny Moser, Dr. Don Lewis, Jennifer Witt, and Rebecca Alford.

We meet weekly and our discussions center on updating the prayer list, what resources are available for those in need and how we can connect those in need to those resources. We make calls to those on the prayer list and we pray together for all of them and their needs.

Members of our received the Diocesan license for Lay Eucharistic Visitors and are now able to take communion to those unable to make it to church.

To contact the Pastoral Care Team, please contact any of the members or send an email to the team at Pastoralcare@GraceAVL.com

We remain committed to ensuring that we are faithful to our mission. To that end in addition to our team members we have volunteers who have made themselves available to provide transportation, home sitting, medical advocacy, and other services to those in need. If you would like to join our team or if you can volunteer to provide some services to those, contact us at our email address or call any one of us.

Cliff Albertson



PubSing

PubSing, the monthly sing-along of hymns, old-time gospel and Americana inspirational music, continues and has completed its tenth year. From January through March, we met monthly at our indoor venue, the Cork & Keg, which is in downtown Asheville.

From April through September, we met at our outside venue, Zillicoa Brewing. During October we took PubSing on the road. St. Francis parishioners hosted us for a singing at a downtown park in Rutherfordton, N.C. Since then, we have been back at the Cork & Keg. Come out and join us in 2024 as we continue to sing lively and loudly.

Monty Wooten



Tuesday Taizé at Grace

Taizé styled services at Grace are a long standing tradition offering wonderful silence, prayer and music for now the third decade. This past year was our first full year of offering a weekly Taizé styled service at Grace . . . And what a success it was and is! With the regular Tuesday night service Grace now has an established community of 'new members' who attend regularly and even have crossed over into our Sunday worship and mainstream programs of the church. Banners continued on the front lawn proclaiming the time and day as well as Grace's web address prominently.

Judy Rhodes, Grace's former children's choir director, who has led the music of Taizé for many many years continues to offer the perfect musical accompaniment and spiritual atmosphere. Her ability to lead by following the worshippers is what provides the service with it's apparent free-form feeling. James Cannon and Monty Wooten serving as co-presiders, with Monty now taking a more active musical role, Amy Trees as Healing Prayer leader, along with Judy Phillips and Debbie Thomas as Healing Prayer ministers, all contribute to Grace's beautiful Taizé style service.

With more services we realized there was a need for varying the services and with Judy's direction we have expanded our repertoire of services so the music varies from one week to the next but remains true to the established service order.

This past year marked two very different Taizé-at-Grace milestones. One of our regularly attending couples who included Tuesday Taizé services as part of their 'courting' were married and included Taizé music in their wedding. They both have taken an active part in our scripture readings during services.

Also setting a new example Rev. Milly comprised the Taizé styling into a regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service for the Fourth Advent Sunday no less. With candles, incense, icons, memorial candles, silence . . . and a Eucharist, our worship was infused solely with the music from Taizé!

Attendance in general remains mostly from non-members of Grace who make up an eclectic group from many varied traditions and those sometimes refer to as un-churched. The service is well known as open to everyone and often visitors from area faith communities come to observe and worship.

Just as encouraging are the occasional notes and comments we receive from folks who after a long absence come back for a visit and remark on how the service is just as they remember it.

Taizé styled services are just another example of how Grace is reaching out and providing for a need in our community —

Grace's Taizé styled services are ecumenical services known for their melodic chants and prayers. Although music forms a central part of the service it is mixed with comforting periods of silence allowing for contemplation. Lighted mostly by candlelight in the sanctuary of Grace Church, the vesper light of approaching evening offers a safe and nurturing space for a well-deserved moment of peace in our hectic lives. Healing prayer is offered throughout the service for oneself or on behalf of someone else.

James Cannon

For more information visit:

<https://www.graceavl.com/taize-grace/>

Ushers Ministry

This has been a very exciting year to be an usher. We were able to do the fun things that ushers do EVERY Sunday of 2023. As an usher we get to meet a lot of wonderful new people.

Specifically for me, I meet new people EVERY week (mainly because I don't remember that I had just met them the week before). We get to take up the collection (who doesn't love THAT).

And then we walk back down the aisle and give it away (which feels pretty good too). And there are fun "behind-the-scenes" things that we get to do that most people don't know about (mainly because we sit in the back behind you so you can't see us).

Seriously, a big thank you to our very faithful ushers: Todd & Katherine Kaderabek, Nate and William Potter, Ben Scales, Ron & Jeanne Sims, Paul & Vicki Vest, and Mike Vines. If you would like to join our wonderful team just let me know, the pay's great and again, it's a lot of fun.

Elaine Potter

Wedding Ministry

The Wedding Ministry at Grace has been in existence since the founding of the church as a space for unions to be communally celebrated and affirmed. Currently, it is led by Rev. Katherine Johnson, an ordained minister in the PCUSA tradition and friend of Grace Episcopal. Both Katherine and her

son were baptized at Grace, and she has also served as interim office manager. The mission of the wedding ministry is to be a welcoming presence for those searching for a welcoming space for their ceremony, and seeks to create long term relationships with both local and visiting couples and their families. In 2023 we were able to welcome couples that ranged in size from a handful of friends and family to over a hundred guests. Grace has been a place of welcome and acceptance for couples from different faith traditions, including Eastern Orthodox, Baptist, Presbyterian, Non-Denominational, and Episcopalian.

We already have three weddings booked for 2024, and are expecting to continue to grow this ministry! We are always looking for individuals that would like to be involved in sending cards to couples on their first anniversary, invitations to worship, and in person help on the day of ceremonies.

Thank you for your continued support of this ministry as a way to walk alongside couples as they take their first steps into their next chapter!

Rev. Katherine Johnson