



Grace Episcopal Church
Asheville, North Carolina

2025 Annual Report

January 11, 2026

Clergy

The Reverend John Rice

It was March of 2024 (and no, this is not the start of a novel!), I felt God's nudge to call and make an appointment with Rev. Milly, to see if she might need some extra clergy help. She paused. We talked. We prayed. She said YES!

My experience tells me this is how God calls us into growing God's Kingdom. It begins with a nudge followed by our yes, the willingness to see where that nudge takes us. For me that nudge has become a life-giving journey with all of you – God's beloved people who call Grace Church their home. And that is what Grace has become for Debra and me – our church home!

This in-between time, when a church is searching for their new priest as we have been, is always a challenging time. Will the congregation remain engaged? Will the lay leadership step forward? The answer to both questions for Grace has been an energizing YES. In December 2024, when Kim Hayes quietly approached me with this question, "I feel as if I am supposed to serve as Sr. Warden this next year (2025). What do you think?" There it is, God's nudge and Kim's YES. Her leadership throughout this past year has been filled with wisdom, persistence, and compassion. Thank you so much, Kim. Your YES has blessed us all!

I also want to thank our vestry for their leadership. Their gifts of time, energy, and wisdom have helped Grace journey to a place of new life and new opportunities for us all. Many thanks to Anne Spruance, our office manager, who gives of herself so much every week towards God's work in and through Grace. Another individual who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes is Ted Hill, our church treasurer and key person overseeing most of our church building improvements in 2025. Thank you, Ted, for being one of God's special blessings to us all. A hearty thanks goes to Jackie Schauer for organizing landscaping maintenance. How we look on the outside so often reflects who we are on the inside.

This past year I have worked closely with our highly gifted Pastoral Care Team (PCT) led by Cliff Albertson and Lorie Tola. The PCT meets every Wednesday to update and pray for the pastoral needs of the people. In 2025 we restarted the ministry of Lay Eucharistic Visitor (taking Holy Communion to

the ill and the home bound.) We also began our Wednesday noon Soaking Prayer Service, a time to sit quietly with the Lord “in his holy temple.”

We gather in God’s “holy temple” every Sunday morning (and Tuesday evening) for worship. These holy moments reveal the heart and soul of who we are as God’s beloved children. My special thanks to Shannon Townsend and all the altar guild members, to Jim Cassarino, Cathy Adkins and all the choir members, and to James Cannon and the Taize musicians. Thank you to all our greeters, readers, acolytes and ushers. Thank you to Chris Shaw and Bea Russell and others for your hospitality gifts that make coffee hour so inviting. Thank you all for saying YES and sharing your gifts to enhance the Spirit’s work during our worship services!

We have a lot of people who have been nudged...and have said YES, yet we have one more significant YES to celebrate as we enter 2026. God nudged the Rev. Robert Hartmans towards Grace Episcopal Church. God nudged our vestry to call Robert to be our new priest-in-charge. Fr. Robert said YES! Thanks be to God for the plans that God has for Grace Episcopal Church, *“plans to prosper you, to give you hope and a future.”* (Jer 29:11)

My special thanks to Fr. Tim. It has been a wonderful blessing to serve with Tim this past year. I am so thankful that he too said YES to God’s nudge!

Lastly, please know that serving as one of your priests for these last 16 months has been a wonderful blessing for me, a blessing far more than I could ever have asked or imagined! And, thank you for the surprise celebration and gifts you presented to Tim and me on December 21. I had no idea that you all could keep a secret so well!

Debra and I look forward to continuing the journey with you in 2026. We love you and give God thanks for you.

John+

The Reverend Timothy McRee

Beloved Grace Family,

It has been a wonderful privilege and a great joy to serve you, and to serve Christ among you these past 16 or so months. Likewise, I have been so blessed to share in this ministry with my dear brother-in-Christ, Fr. John Rice, and Debra Rice. We have come through so much together, but we have done so joyfully, with great resilience under the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Over these months, I have helped to lead you in worship, baptized new Christians into the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, being among you as a priest and pastor. I have buried your dead, visited your sick, and prayed with many of you in times of need, sorrow and joy. You have helped me to re-invigorate my sense of vocation and calling to ordained ministry, and I pray that I have been able to encourage each of you in your own life of ministry and service to our Lord.

In other areas, I have participated in weekly planning meetings, monthly Vestry meetings and monthly Worship Committee meetings. Further, I have led the Monday Bible Study group on Zoom, taught an Adult Formation Class, and a Confirmation Class in preparation for Bishop José's December visit.

My time with you has given this old retired priest great personal satisfaction and real spiritual renewal at a point in my journey when I really needed it. Thank you all so much for that wonderful gift!

As we enter the Year of Our Lord 2026, I am filled with excitement about what God has in store for Grace Church as you begin this new chapter in your story with Fr. Robert and his wonderful family. As a popular song in the 1990's put it: "The future's so bright, I have to wear shades..."

Be assured, dear friends, that you will continue to see me in worship, Bible Study, and parish activities. I will attend worship once in a while at St. Andrew's in Canton to maintain my connection with that beloved parish family. Likewise, I have assured Fr. Robert and our Senior Warden that I will be available to assist in any way that I might be of help going forward.

Again, dear friends in Christ, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the privilege of serving you in your midst in the place where I began my ordained

life a third of a century ago. From the bottom of my heart: Thank you for this wonderful gift! I remain as always,
Your Servant and Brother in Christ,
Tim P. McRee+

Vestry

Facing a challenging period after a year of disasters, Grace's Vestry rose to the challenge and guided the parish to the happier place we have reached today. We appreciate them for all their dedication and hard work. Thank you!

Grace's Vestry

Kim Hayes, Senior Warden

Ali Schaefer

Elaine Potter, Junior Warden

Leslie Schoof

Mia Lehrer

Ron Sims

Rusty McCredie

Paul Vest

Brad Rouse

Monty Wooten

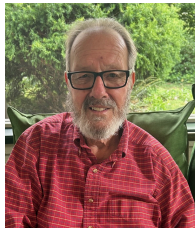


Note: Ali has been appointed to fill Mia Lehrer's unexpired term. For those who might not know her, here's some background information.

Ali Schaefer. Originally a Lutheran, Ali switched to the Episcopal church as a teen and was received into the Episcopal church in Raleigh, NC in 1986. She was married to an Episcopal priest for 34 years and was active in the church including leading Sunday school, youth groups (Rite 13 and Journey 2 Adulthood) and many church pageants and plays for over 22 years. She was also licensed as a chaliceist and a Lay Eucharistic Visitor. Ali recently retired from Ecolab where she was a national food safety trainer. She started attending Grace in October of 2019. At Grace she has been involved with providing Sunday streaming services and serving as both the Epistle

Acolyte and Crucifer. This year she also joined forces with Elaine Potter helping to coordinate weddings for Grace. She says she is looking forward to our great future at Grace!

Vestry Slate



Ron Sims. Ron, his wife Jeanne, and their daughter moved to Asheville in 1995 and started a business. Their daughter finished college at UNCA. Around 2002, they started visiting Grace. In 2003, they became members, drawn to Grace by the many and various ministries within the Church and the caring and giving members already there. From the beginning to the present, Ron and Jeanne have witnessed and experienced the highs and lows Grace has gone through. The determination exhibited not only by its leadership team but by the members, as well, is an excellent indication of the strong foundation we have. God's will for sure!

As a member of a talented and experienced vestry team, Ron looks forward to facing the new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.



Jennifer Thomas. Jenny Thomas is a retired Asheville High School chemistry teacher and a longtime member of Grace. She is a cradle Episcopalian - her father was a priest and her grandfather was a bishop. Her 89-year-old mother is now at Deerfield, and when she's not supporting her, Jenny enjoys spending time outdoors, especially around water. Jenny is a lector, has been on a variety of committees over the years, and has previously served on the vestry. She enjoys the community and the activity of Grace Church. She is looking forward to being a vestry member during this exciting time of transition to a new rector.



Paul Vest. Paul and his wife Vicki have been members of Grace for the past 29 years. They were also members of Grace when they lived in Asheville for 2 years in the 80's. They are proud parents to two sons, Brian and Kevin, two daughters-in-law

Jessica and Jesse, and find special joy in four grandchildren, Sada(14), Stearnes(11), Jackson(5), and Samara(15 mo). Paul recently retired as the President and CEO of the YMCA of Western North Carolina where he was part of the organization's amazing growth and outreach over the past 29 years. At Grace, he serves as an usher and has previously served on the vestry and as chair of the discernment committee in 2019. He is excited about the opportunities ahead for Grace and looks forward to continuing to explore how our church can serve as a beacon on the hill here in North Asheville.

Senior Warden's Report

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." -- Charles Dickens.

Right you are, Mr. Dickens. Looking back on 2025 was a wild ride! We've weathered fierce storms, both figuratively and literally. We've celebrated successes when we could, given one another comfort and encouragement when times were dark. We've had to learn patience and the sometimes-difficult practice of blind trust – that God would put us exactly where we needed to be, exactly when we needed to be there, with exactly what we needed to get the job done.

God did not disappoint. You'll see in this annual report that our ministries have grown; our stewardship campaign was successful; Frs. John and Tim, never expecting what lay ahead of them a year ago, have been the loving clergy presence that has pastored us through it all. And last, but certainly not least, we have called our new priest! Fr. Robert Hartmans and his family have arrived to guide Grace forward into a brand new chapter!

Today, because hindsight is surprisingly perfect, I can see what this strong, faithful Grace Family is, with God's help, able to accomplish. Congratulations, Grace! And thank you for allowing me to share the best and the worst of it with each of you. Together, we have worked and prayed our way through a challenging year. It has made us resilient and oh-so-ready for whatever comes next!

With love,

Kim Hayes, Senior Warden

Junior Warden's Report

A lot of good things have been happening around the building and grounds at Grace this year. Under my relentless leadership, the playground FINALLY got finished. Which is my way of taking credit for all the hard work Jacquie Schauer and Ted Hill did to get us past the finish line. Seriously, a huge thank you to Jacquie and Ted for wrapping things up.

Other times, as I was again masquerading as Ted Hill, I got major work done around the grounds so they look a lot better and are now a lot easier to maintain. Hopefully you have also noticed the work being done to the columns on the breezeway. In addition, I get to take credit for getting a new freezer and dishwasher for the kitchen, even though Randy Jameson was responsible for all of it.

Over this past year we also:

- Started working on finalizing a better security system.
- Sold and closed on the houses on Irving Street and will use those funds for the betterment of Grace Church.
- Got the stove working again, and the pilot lights are fixed, with help from the MOC.
- Fixed long-term annoying electrical and plumbing issues.
- Fixed long-term water damage in the basement children's areas. It's just waiting on being painted.
- Installed a pulley system for the greening of the church so that nobody has to stand on a tottery ladder 30 feet above the ground to hang garland.
- Purchased a new shed for the upper parking lot to hold tents, etc.

(Again, Ted Hill handled most of this but I get to take credit for it)

So, to summarize, it has been my honor to serve you as Junior Warden by not doing anything but taking credit for everything. And it was fun to find out I'm really good at it. 😊

In all seriousness, we have a wonderful group of Lay people that keep Grace running, and it's awe-inspiring to see. Thank you to our Building & Grounds Committee – Jacquie Schauer, Terri Frue, Randy Jameson, David Withers and Ted Hill.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine Potter, Junior Warden

Financial Report

2025 was a year of many challenges at Grace but, thanks to the efforts of all members and with God's help, our finances have better than survived. For the first year since 2022, Grace operated at a surplus in 2025. Total income of \$425,358 exceeded total expenses of \$425,082 by \$276. Contributions – pledged and unpledged – of almost \$334,000 were less than in each of the prior three years, but expenses were also considerably less than 2022-2024. As in 2024, 2025's net income was significantly helped by refunded solar and payroll tax credits which have now been fully realized. Employee benefit costs were substantially lower than in prior years but other operating expenses increased, particularly those attributable to campus maintenance. Outreach expenditures in 2025 were significantly greater than in 2024 although our Diocesan pledge stayed about the same. We paid about \$7,000 to complete all mandated annual financial audits through 2024. Grace's balance sheet has improved substantially in 2025 and is quite healthy.

Operating (checking) cash is comfortable while the endowment has grown over \$60,000 in 2025. Largely due to the cash realized from the sale of the Irving Street properties, our non-Endowment cash now exceeds \$470,000, available for prudent investment and expenditure for capital improvements at the Vestry's direction. We have about \$13,000 in other current assets but we owe only about \$6,000. The parish-funded Rector's Discretionary Fund had a balance of over \$3,400 at year-end.

Finances also look good for 2026. For the first time since 2022, pledges already in hand have increased over the prior year. A balanced 2026

provisional budget has been approved by the Vestry, pending some input and decisions from our new priest.

The 2025 Combined Financial Reports are posted outside the office. Ted will be happy to answer questions about them.

Respectfully submitted,
Ted Hill, Treasurer

Grace Ministries

Children's Formation

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is offered Sunday mornings and Monday afternoons. Our Monday afternoon group, brought over from St. Mary's Episcopal Church, is an ecumenical group that is growing. Shannon Townsend and Sally Withers are the catechists who are serving these two groups.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shannon Townsend

Endowment / Planned Giving Report

The Church endowment pool effectively increased from a January 1, 2025 adjusted spend position of \$754,416 to \$816,833 at December 22, 2025, for a net year to date increase of 8.4% and compares favorably with 2024's normalized performance of 10% (net of incidental distributions, contributions and fees). A spend authorization withdrawal from the investment pool occurred in early 2025 totaling \$33,954 and a spend distribution of \$35,549 in support of capital spending and outreach for 2026 should occur in January 2026.

Brief analysis: While general parish contributions to the pool were approximately \$1,000.00, broader market averages increased measurably in 2025 due to a series of global issues with a continued concentration occurring in large cap technical equities (e.g. Microsoft, Google, et al), along with some

alternative expansion in international equities. Marginally high inflation was the primary contributor for increased borrowing costs (e.g. short term and intermediate Treasury yields averaged 4% in Dec 2025). 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 2025 with U.S. based 'roller coaster' rally in AI focused tech while other portfolio components (primarily investment grade shorter duration fixed income) yielded comparatively marginal returns (4 to 5%). Grace Church is fortunate to have Modera Wealth Management serve as its investment and advisory manager, and the portfolio's results for 2025 are testimony to Modera's expertise in outperforming the broader market averages.

Committee Stewardship: well managed endowment funds require discipline to ensure that they remain a sustainable funding source. The Endowment Committee again recommended a 5% annual spending rate against the endowment pool (fund), based upon a rolling average of the most recent 12 quarters, for proposed budgeting in 2026. The resulting current calculation will release \$35,549 for the 2026 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. Mike Vines, 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 Annual Report

The Episcopal Church Women have had another busy year! We held two regular business meetings. One was in February with twelve members present and the other in October with nineteen members present. In addition to our regular meetings, we held our annual Derby Day Luncheon on the first

Saturday in May. Members attended wearing their finest hats/fascinators and enjoyed socializing with each other!

In February, our members voted to use up to \$1000 of our funds to provide partial scholarships of \$235 per child to help children of Grace attend Camp Henry. We only had one child who attended so we provided \$470 for him to attend two camp sessions. We also voted to provide \$150 to purchase six birthday gift cards (\$25 each) for people living at Compass Point (Homeward Bound's facility on Tunnel Road in Asheville) who have birthdays in April. This is an outreach project of Grace that we have helped with for the past two years. We also provided birthday cupcakes.

On March 15, members of ECW helped with a church wide clean up day to prepare our church facility for Easter and with another clean up day in July.

At our October meeting, plans were made for our annual rummage sale that was held on Saturday, November 8. It was a successful sale where we made \$5040 and were able to donate leftover items to Habitat ReStore, ABCCM, and Goodwill. These agencies were grateful for our donations.

We would like to thank the Men of the Church whose members provided much needed help setting up and taking down tables and chairs, boxing leftover items, and transporting them to the agencies described above. Our members reciprocated by helping the Men of the Church with their Pig Pickin' in October.

Finally, ECW would like to thank everyone who contributed to all of our various activities this year. None would have been possible without your help and support!

Cheryl Aull, President

Jeanne Sims, Vice-President

Anne Jarema, Secretary

Mary Ann Warren, Treasurer

Flower Guild Ministry

2025 was a busy and productive year for the Flower Guild. I'm so very grateful for our strong team of arrangers. Each one brings their own sense of style and talent. Our team consists of Judy Booze, Lucy Bowen, Teesha Holladay, Nora Jones, Bonnie Kistler, Mary Ann Warren, and Jennifer Witt (also our donor chair). We are so pleased to welcome three new members: Carole Lentz, Jeanne Sims and Chris Thompson. We are also blessed to have Angel Stoudt, our sexton, who helps us with the heavy lifting and transporting of flower arrangements, and Anne Spruance, our very capable office manager who sends out all our information.

Our two big events are Easter and Christmas, when we decorate windows, doors, altars and outside areas. We ordered materials used for Hanging of the Greens – swags, wreaths, and two Christmas trees. This year, we also helped decorate for the Big Celebration, by purchasing 16 table cloths, seven window wreaths and bows, and designed 14 floral centerpieces. These expenses were covered by our flower donors and the generosity of parishioners who make Christmas and Easter donations using the special envelopes placed in the pews.

If you would like to make a flower donation for a particular Sunday in honor or memory of a loved one or event, please contact Jennifer Witt at 828-423-4941.

With much appreciation,
Pat Davis, Chair

Grace Outreach Ministry

In a year of recovery from a hurricane and from the loss of a priest, both of which created a sense of instability and uncertainty, the outreach ministry at Grace continued to support and build relationships with organizations and agencies that are making a difference in our community, the nation and the world. We have learned that there are many ways to reach out.

- Often, it simply makes sense to provide financial support to an organization that is already doing what needs to be done. In 2025, Grace outreach contributed \$31,977.00 to various groups and programs (see below).
- Other times, when help has been needed, the people of Grace stepped up with hands-on involvement, i.e. meals for Safe Shelter and Transformation Village; delivering Manna Backpacker boxes to schools; buying food, school supplies and Christmas gifts throughout the year; unloading pumpkins and working the Patch; helping build Episcopal House XVI; blanket and clothing collections for shelters; birthday celebrations at Compass Point.
- Most recently, we have also begun to take a hard look at the source of social injustices that seem to be at the root of such great hardship in our world and wondering what followers of Jesus should be doing. A new “Advocacy and Action” group has begun gathering to share resources and ideas that could move our outreach ministry into a position from which we might influence those root causes.

All of it – the financial support, the volunteering and the advocacy – works together, even in a challenging year like 2025. Grace Church’s ministry of reaching out to the poor, the hungry and the homeless will continue to unfold day in and day out. Thank you for being a part of the work.

In the year 2025, the following disbursements were made:

Grants

Tranzmission (\$5000) ♦ ABCCM (\$5000) ♦ Habitat for Humanity (\$1500) ♦ Umoja (\$5000) ♦ Operation Gateway (\$1000) ♦ Energy Savers (\$5000) ♦ Homeward Bound (\$1000) ♦ Beloved Asheville (\$1000) Regular Non-Grant Expenditures Deep Time Coffee (\$540) ♦ Compass Point Gift Cards (\$1000) ♦ Pumpkin Patch (\$750) ♦ Jones Elementary (\$300) ♦ Foster Children - Angel Tree, Back-to-School (\$750)

Irregular Non-Grant Expenditures

Diocese of West Texas - flood disaster (\$1000) ♦ NCCDAP - death penalty event sponsorship (\$250) ♦ Safe Shelter - fundraiser sponsorship (\$700)

Pending assignment at year-end (\$2187)

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Hayes

Greeter Ministry 2025

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 Episcopal Church. Each Sunday, we have at least two people stationed in the foyer beginning about 30 minutes before the service begins 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 name tag; and invite them to join us for coffee, treats, and fellowship in the parish hall following the service. We also provide a sign-in sheet for them to leave their names and whether they want more information about Grace, to be added to Grace's email list, and/or permanent name tags. Finally, we offer additional information about Grace in the form of a tri-fold flyer composed by Kim Hayes that tells about the various Grace ministries.

Some highlights for 2025 were the many occasions when a newcomer told one of us or a member of the clergy that the greeters made them feel welcome at Grace. We also know that around 40 name tags were created this year representing new and/or newly committed parishioners. We like to think that the connections our greeters made with these newcomers were instrumental in their decision to worship with us.

I manage the schedule, send out communications, and act as the contact person for those wishing to join our ministry. The best way to reach me is at thewilkeys@gmail.com.

As always, the goals for next year are to attract more parishioners to this ministry and welcome even more newcomers to our Grace family as well as retain our current members.

In gratitude,
Diane Wilkey

Liturgical Ministries

Grace Church has a strong group of lay persons who support the Sunday liturgy and aid in providing a meaningful worship experience. This year we were excited to return to our previous practices of acolytes serving as Torch Bearers and Presenters bringing forward the elements to the altar! It takes a large number of people to prepare for and provide a significant and purposeful Eucharistic service. We also have a Taize service on Tuesday evenings. We thank the lay people of Grace who serve in all of our liturgical ministries. If anyone is interested in becoming involved in any of these ministries, please let the appropriate contact person know. We would love to have you join us!

Acolytes and Chalicists	Shannon Townsend, gstownsend@att.net
Lectors and Intercessors	Jenny Thomas, thomas60223@gmail.com
Presenters	Shannon Townsend, gstownsend@att.net
Choir	James Cassarino, jamescassarino@gmail.com
Altar Guild	Shannon Townsend, gstownsend@att.net
Flower Guild	Pat Davis, patdavis.avl@gmail.com
Taizé	James Cannon, imjcannon@charter.net

Respectfully Submitted,
Shannon Townsend

Men of the Church (MOC) Report

The Men of the Church enjoy monthly meetings featuring excellent meals provided by many of our very capable chefs. We meet either at our monthly host's home or the Parish Hall. During our meetings, we discuss and plan various endeavors in furtherance of our ministry.

The Men of the Church provided hundreds of pancakes, together with breakfast side dishes for Shrove Tuesday with the excellent support of the ECW. Also, the late Al Seale led the MOC in orchestrating a "hot soup" event with the generous collaboration of Rye Knot restaurant, resulting in One Thousand dollars of the proceeds benefiting Habitat for Humanity. Our group also covered a minor repair expense to the kitchen oven, financially contributed to the ongoing ministry of Compass Pointe, and served at the end of summer cookout and blessing of the playground.

During the summer, the Men of the Church assisted Father John and Father Tim with an outstanding fish fry featuring bass caught by Father John. Also on our agenda this year, we assisted with both the annual Pumpkin Patch and Christmas Tree sale which included the participation of several of our members.

Our pitmasters smoked in excess of 260 pounds of smoked pork for our annual "Pig Pickin'". This year's event netted \$ 2,550.00. All proceeds from our monthly meetings and Pig Pickin' go to good causes, ordinarily through Outreach. As always, ECW was very instrumental in making this event successful. We thank them for all their assistance and in turn pitch in to assist with their Annual Rummage Sale.

We always welcome new members. If you like to cook or just enjoy good food and socializing, please join us.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Frue

Music Ministry

Grace Church continues to be blessed with a dedicated and accomplished choir. At a time when most of us face increasing demands on our schedules, Grace is especially fortunate to boast a choir distinguished by commitment and a shared sense of purpose. The choir's faithful participation in rehearsals and services is essential to the consistently high standard of music that enhances our liturgical life throughout the year.

During the past year, the choir engaged thoughtfully with a wide range of repertoire that was both musically challenging and liturgically appropriate. The choir continues to maintain a strong and visible presence in worship. In addition, a dedicated group of singers continue to serve as cantors during the summer months and for funerals and other special services.

Grace is further enriched by the participation of guest musicians and parish instrumentalists who contribute their talents at special services throughout the year. I remain especially grateful for the exceptional musicianship, professionalism, and collegial spirit of our parish organist, Cathy Adkins. Her artistry, musical sensitivity, and steadfast support are central to the success of the choir and to the vitality of congregational singing at Grace. I am personally thankful for her patience, good humor, and unwavering partnership, which she sustains with remarkable grace and generosity.

Looking ahead, it is important to note that the parish pipe organ will require significant maintenance and repair work in the near future. Careful assessment and planning will be necessary to ensure the continued reliability and musical integrity of this essential instrument. The parish can expect updates on the evaluation process, proposed scope of work, and anticipated timelines throughout the coming year.

I am sincerely grateful to the Revs. John and Tim, the Vestry, the Worship Committee, and the wider parish community for their ongoing support of the music program. Parishioners with an interest in sacred music are encouraged to consider participation in the choir. Rehearsals are held on Sunday mornings at 9:30.

I remain available to parishioners who wish to discuss the musical life of Grace and may be reached directly after Sunday services or by phone/text or email during the week.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. James P. Cassarino, Music Director
jamescassarino@gmail.com
802-558-6583 (cell)

Office Ministry

I have been the Office Administrator at Grace for a year, and it's been an exceedingly busy and enlightening one in many ways. My aim was to make things easier for the parish and to be a calm voice and presence during the upheaval after the hurricane and the resignation of the rector, while supporting our priests and lay leaders.

Since I've been here, I've begun to clean up the administrative areas and pare down paper files and dusty mementoes that haven't been touched in 20 years. I've thrown out stuff, peeled Scotch tape off windows and washed them, quietly removed curled and faded notices, and reduced clutter.

Accurate record keeping has been a big job, both in keeping the records, and in having them easily accessible for those who follow. This includes the Parish Register – the list of members, baptisms, confirmations, weddings and deaths; an archive of Vestry and Planning Team minutes; and an entire year of Sunday bulletins, including Easter services, the various Christmas services, the Bishop's visit, and Baptism. Some of these services have been cloned for decades without any updates or modernization.

I also helped with the purchase and installation of a new telephone system and wifi set-up that can grow with us for many years, a time clock for hourly employees, and streamlining and enlarging the Sunday bulletin font so it's easier for all to follow.

Most of this wouldn't have happened without the able help of Keith Harper, who willingly filled in while I was dealing with my various medical

situations. I was also strongly supported by our clergy; Fr. John and Fr. Tim, as well as Kim Hayes, Lorie Tola, Ted Hill and Katie Douglas.

During this past year, I have learned a lot about myself, as well as leaning on the grace of Grace. I have previously never considered office work a ministry, but at Grace, that perception has changed!

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Spruance

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. We also take 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 work with clergy to stay in touch with those on the prayer list.

Our team includes The Reverend John Rice, Cliff Albertson, Pat Davis, Ginny Moser, Jennifer Witt, Jeff Russell, and Lorie Tola. 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.

This past year three of our members received the Diocesan license for Lay Eucharistic Visitors and are now able to take communion to those unable to make it to church.

The Pastoral Care Team is asking that your prayer requests now be submitted to the team by using the Prayer Request Form, which can be found on our Website – Graceavl.com – or in the Growing in Grace Newsletter. You can also contact a ministry member directly.

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.

Respectfully submitted,
Cliff Albertson

PubSing

PubSing, the monthly sing-along of hymns, old-time gospel and Americana inspirational music, continues and has completed its twelfth year. It was nice to have a hurricane and pandemic free year for a change. We met monthly at our indoor venue, the Cork & Keg, which is in downtown Asheville. Some folks came and brought instruments to play. Others brought just their voices to join us in song. Since many of the riverside areas are recovering; we hope to find a new outdoor home for the warmer months. Come out and join us in 2026 as we continue to sing lively and loudly.

Respectfully Submitted,
Monty Wooten

Stewardship Ministry

The stewardship campaign for 2026 was a huge success. Our theme was - "All in for Grace" and the congregation answered that call enthusiastically.

We had the shortest campaign yielding the most pledges in the last three years.

The final numbers reported show 87 pledging units totaling \$330,890.00 of the \$350,000.00 required. That's 95%!!

The balance comes from open offerings, donations, gifts, weddings, etc.

Thank you to all who have pledged money, given time, and shared talents!

It all matters.

Sincerely,

Stewardship Committee

Submitted by Lorie Tola

Tuesday Taizé at Grace

Taizé styled services at Grace are a long standing tradition now well into their third decade. Offered weekly on Tuesday evenings at 6p.m., the service provides an inviting and soothing sanctuary of authentic peace and quiet to unburden, replenish and reflect. Please join us!

Having begun at the end of the COVID shut-down with the idea of reaching out to first responders, this past year was the third 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 'members' who attend regularly. The service attendance in general, varies between 25 and 40 weekly, and remains as mostly non-Sunday-members of Grace. Many of our regulars travel from the far reaches of our county to weekly offer their assistance and to worship.

Judy (Rhodes) Baroody, Grace's former children's choir director, who has led the music of Taizé for all these many years continues to offer the perfect

musical accompaniment and spiritual atmosphere. Her ability to lead by following the worshipers is what provides the service with its inherent free-form feeling. This year saw the addition of Mark Sudimak on guitar and vocals along with long time accompanist Monty Wooten, with his beautiful mandolin renderings joining Judy on the keyboard.

James Cannon along with a number of volunteer laity: Laura Billings, Paula Sims, Alan Baroody, Natalie and Andrew Owens, Susan Sudimek, Kelly Golden, Kim Hayes, Craig and Lynn Sumey, Teesha Holladay, Wanda Goukas, Deborah Kolp, Monty Wooten, and Meredith and Wyatt Brooks serve as co-presiders offering scripture readings in many voices and the invaluable help in setting up and taking down the service arrangement. Amy Trees and Judy Phillips are the dedicated Healing Prayer ministers, with Judy Baroody, John Rice and Lynn Sumey offering relief. All contribute to Grace's beautiful Taizé style service.

Again this year with Judy's direction we expanded our repertoire of services to include three new Lenten settings so the music varies from one week to the next but remains true to the established service order. In addition this year she composed a very special Fourth Advent service featuring Christmas/Advent hymn portions styled in the repetitive Taizé style. Thank you Judy, Monty and Mark for a most memorable service.

The service continues to attract a widely diverse worship group from many faith traditions and Christian denominations. Of the many to join in the service this year were Lynn & Craig Sumey who were invited in by the lawn banner while in Asheville visiting the bank across the street. A Presbyterian minister between assignments, they dropped in one evening to see what a Taizé service was. For the past year, if they were in town on Tuesday evening, they were either worshipping or volunteering in some way to serve at Taizé. They will surely be missed and yet we wish them Godspeed on their new sojourn in Scotland.

The service is well known as open to everyone and often visitors from area faith communities come to observe and worship. During this past year we have had the gratifying privilege of fostering two new Taizé services in our region. Amy and Debbie, our prayer ministers, have taken the model and are now

offering a monthly service at the Feed & Seed congregation in Fletcher. Towards the end of summer we were visited by a group from Hendersonville's First United Methodist Church who were exploring the possibility of offering a monthly service to their community. In October HFUMC began their well received undertaking.

Just as encouraging are the occasional notes and comments we receive from folks who, after a long absence, drop back by for a visit and remark on how the service is just as they remember it, often from when it was only offered monthly.

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

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 or for our world. For more information, visit: <https://www.graceavl.com/taize-grace/>

Respectfully Submitted,
James Cannon

Wedding Ministry

As an integral part of the mission and vision of Grace Church of sharing God's love in the world and empowering the presence of the living God, the wedding ministry has been a space where all are welcomed to celebrate the sacrament of holy matrimony in the presence of God. We seek to form deeper relationships with those searching for a place to marry within our community as well as for those who are visiting the Asheville area. Weddings range in size from small to large with each couple and minister leading in the design of the service. All couples are required to have pre-marriage counseling and also work with one of the wedding coordinators at Grace. Currently Elaine Potter

and Ali Schaefer are working with the couples. The Rev. Katherine Johnson was the previous coordinator at Grace until the summer of 2025.

In 2025 we had seven weddings at Grace. 2026 is looking to be even busier as we already have six weddings already scheduled and two active inquiries. In November we began reviewing our wedding guidelines and fees with our senior warden Kim Hayes. Elaine and Anne Spruance have been actively working to keep our guidelines and web information up to date. We are always looking for people who would like to join this meaningful ministry, so if you would like to be involved, please reach out to Ali Schaefer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine Potter and Ali Schiefer