

Parish Profile 2018



Grace Episcopal Church
Medford





Grace Episcopal Church Medford

Love God. Love Your Neighbor. Change The World.

Grace Church, Medford is not your typical church. We are a growing and dynamic faith community with a diverse and engaged congregation, a quirky sense of humor, and a passion for inclusion.

This Parish Profile was written by the Search Committee after extensive consultation with the congregation. More than 100 adults and 15 youth joined in lively round-table discussions. About 120 adults and 10 youth responded to a parish-wide survey. Data, reflections, and quotations from the surveys and the round-table discussions are at the heart of this profile.

The profile contains the following sections:

- Who We Are
- Our Strengths
- Where We Hope to Go
- Qualities We Seek in a Rector

For more details about life at Grace Church, check our [website](#), which is listed as one of the [Top 50 Episcopal Blogs and Websites for Episcopalians](#)! You'll find all kinds of information there, including descriptions of our parish programs, our ministries, our building, and our life together. You can also keep up with Grace via social media on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

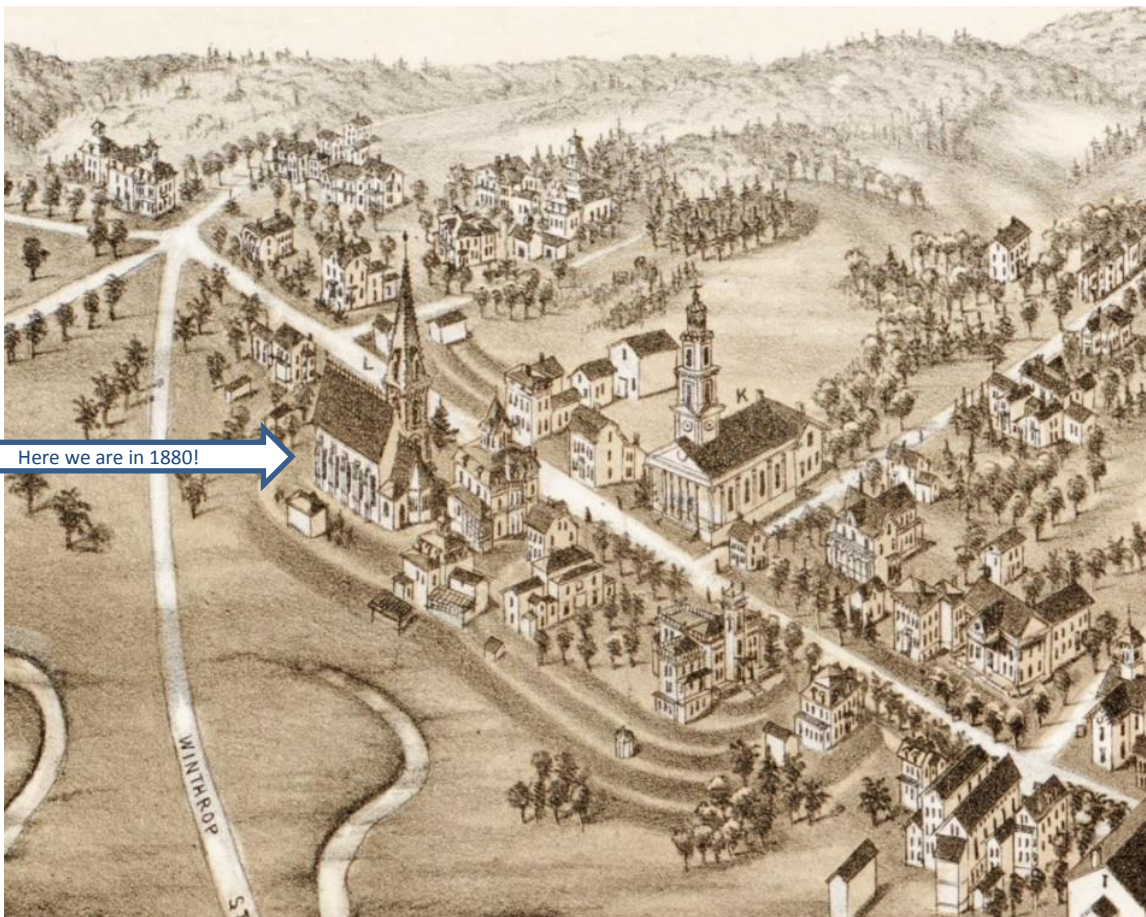
To find out more about the City of Medford, here's some good information from [City Hall](#). And here is where you can find out more about [the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts](#).

Who We Are: Our History

Welcome to Grace Church, Medford!

Grace Church is a vibrant faith community that has been active in the City of Medford since its formation in 1847. And we are one of the few parishes in our diocese that has a record of steady growth over the past decade.

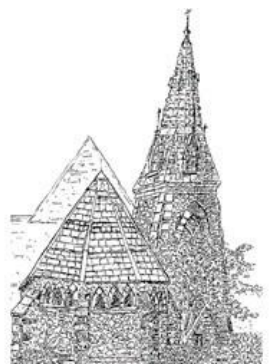
While the parish had humble beginnings in a nineteenth-century guild hall, for most of our 170-year history we've worshipped in a beautiful, historic church building [designed by H.H. Richardson](#) that sits just outside of Medford Square. In 2017 we were presented with a [Preservation Award](#) from The Victorian Society of America for our ongoing commitment to the preservation of our building. The history of our parish family from its founding through 2000 can be found [here](#).



O.H. Bailly & Co. Pub. Boston

Medford, Massachusetts
1880

C. H. Brainard, Agent.



Artist's rendering of Grace Church
by Grace Parishioner, Adele Travisano

Who We Are: Our History

In 2018, we're excited about the growth and energy that's transformed our parish in recent years. These are tough times for many American churches. And we know about this from experience.

Since 2000, Grace Church has successfully overcome challenges to emerge as a dynamic and vital faith community. This period of change and renewal began with the arrival of the Rev. Tom Cook and his family in 2001. Rev. Tom's tenure was notable for the growth in church membership and attendance along with the energy of the congregation. During his time with us, we learned about the importance of lay leadership in parish life and we established many important ministries which are thriving today, such as our [Wednesdays at Grace](#) education and fellowship program, and [youth formation programs](#).

The energy and renewal of those years did not immediately translate into financial health, however, and there was a time, after the departure of Rev. Tom in 2007, when Grace Church could only afford to hire a pastor part-time to balance the budget. Fortunately this individual was the Rev. Noah Evans, who was welcomed by the parish in 2008 as a ¾ time priest.

Only nine years later, we have grown as a parish and lay leadership has become integral to Grace Church's character. Parishioners have expressed dedication to their church community through increased financial support, resulting in a successful \$650,000 capital campaign that helped us restore our worship space and rebuild our endowment.

Increased financial support from the growing congregation also meant that we were able to call Rev. Noah as a full-time Rector in 2011 and hire our beloved Associate Rector, The Rev. Dr. Maggie Arnold, in 2014. Their direction energized lay leaders at Grace to reach beyond the church walls into the local community and the wider world. We now have a wide variety of parishioner-led ministries as well as an increased focus on youth formation, including education for children, youth, and young adults.

We are now a thriving, financially healthy, inclusive church community, ready to welcome our next rector.



Who We Are: Our City

[Medford](#) (population 57,000) is a part of the Boston metropolitan area, bordered by Somerville, Arlington, Winchester, Stoneham, and Malden. Grace Church draws members from all of these communities.

Like these other communities, Medford has experienced modest population growth over the past several years (roughly 2% from 2010-2016), but a major increase in housing values and rents. Like most of the close-in Boston suburbs, there is not much land left for building. Since 2011, the median sales price of houses in Medford has increased by 69%, and rents have gone up by roughly a third during the same period. These changes have led to fears that Medford is “pricing out” newcomers and long-term residents alike, especially young families in need of larger homes. To learn more about Medford and its demographics, [click here](#).

Medford is the home of Tufts University, and Grace Church has had a long-standing relationship with the Tufts Chaplaincy, which is often staffed by clergy or assistants from Grace. The most recent Tufts Chaplain was Dan Bell, who served as our deacon in 2017, and whose ordination is scheduled for February 2018. Dan says that “many of the students I serve [at Tufts] are Episcopalian, and it means a great deal to know that there is a vibrant and welcoming parish just down the street.”

Meanwhile, many Episcopal churches in the diocese have been experiencing the kind of membership decline that Grace suffered in the late 80s and early 90s. Two nearby churches have closed and several others have become mission churches. These trends highlight both the success of the Grace Church congregation and leadership over the past decade, and the possible challenges Grace and other Episcopal churches will face in the years to come.



 **Margaret Smist** shared a link. Admin · October 24, 2017 · Add Topics

.....and there is one great church in this city too 😊



Medford ranks No. 4 in US hottest zip codes list
Medford ranks No. 4 in US hottest zip codes list
FOX25BOSTON.COM

 Like  Comment  Share

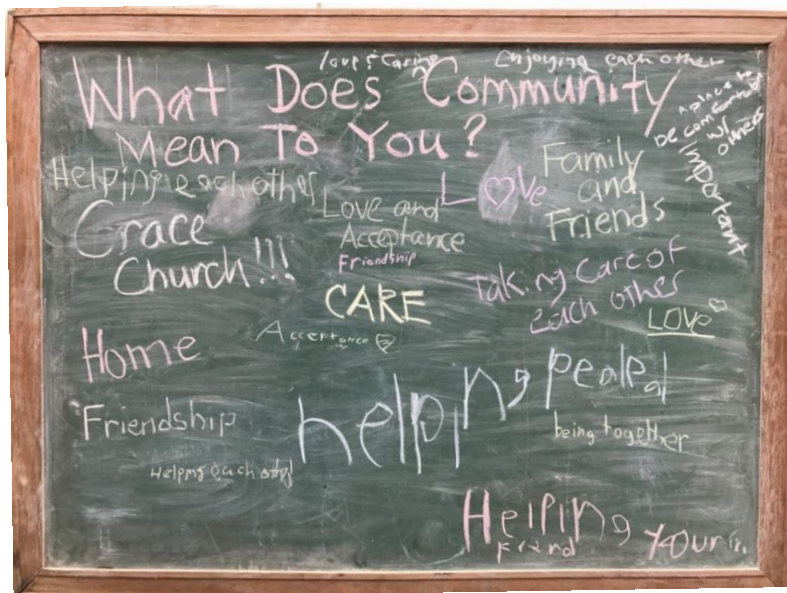
 Lisa Faber Ginggen, Maria Fenn and 12 others

Who We Are: Our Community

“Relentlessly welcoming,” as one parishioner describes us, explains a lot about [Grace Church](#) today, and how we’ve become the thriving [community](#) we are today.

Step into our sanctuary for a Sunday morning service and you’ll quickly see that Grace is a spiritual home to a diverse group of people. We are a parish of all ages, races, and sexual orientations. We come from different social, ethnic, economic, cultural, political, and religious backgrounds.

Our congregation has expanded in the last decade, but also has many lifelong members. While almost 15% of our parish has worshipped at Grace for over 40 years, another 15% has arrived within the last three years. We are a mix of young and old; currently our youngest member is four months old and we have two members over 100. Nearly half of us bring our children to services with us and we have 39 children under the age of ten! We are committed to putting our children and youth at the center of the life of our church.



Grace Church Booth at Medford Community Day, June 2017

As for religious background, we are approximately 30% lifelong Episcopalians, 30% raised Catholic, 30% raised in other Protestant traditions, and 10% who were not raised in the Christian faith. So some of us have a lifetime of devout Christian belief while others are new to the faith. And some of us aren’t quite sure what we believe.

Two-thirds of us live in [Medford](#), while the rest of us are from a dozen different surrounding towns. We are excited about learning, we are committed to participation in our community and our city, and we love to welcome visitors and new members to our beautiful and historic [church building](#).

2017 By The Numbers

Avg Sunday
Attendance

152

Pledging Units

108

Operating
Revenue

\$462k

Total Pledged

\$210k

Baptisms

over the last 4 yrs

54

Confirmations

over the last 4 yrs

31

Who We Are: Our Community

Our Growth from 2006 to 2017

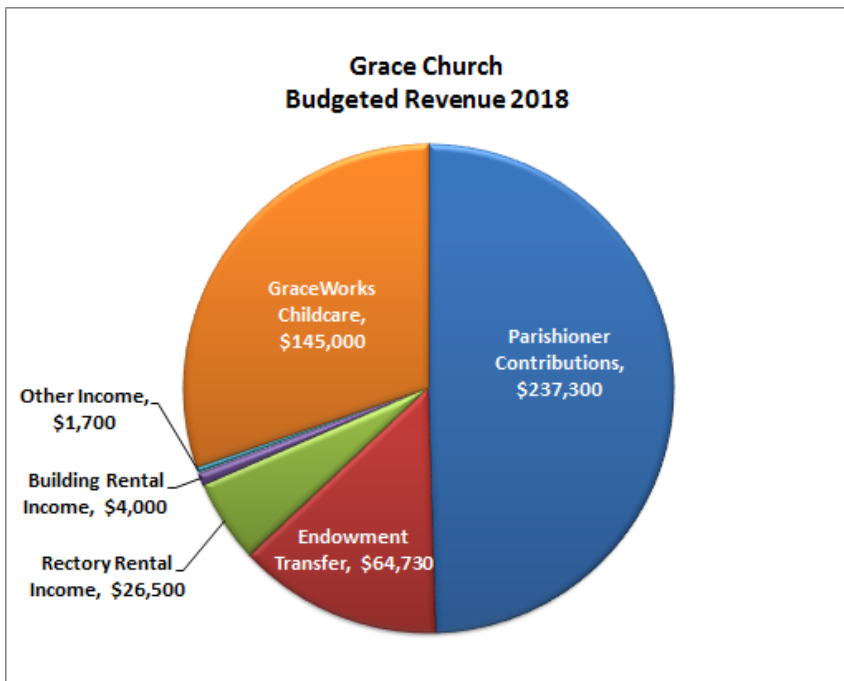
- Parishioner contributions increased from \$178,000 to \$228,000
- Average attendance grew from 100 to 152
- Church school enrollment grew from 35 to 65
- Operating revenues increased from \$234,000 to \$462,000
- Our endowment grew from \$460,000 to \$1.5 million



Celebrating Oscar Greene's 99th birthday



Youth Night



Annual parish picnic



Annual parish picnic

For more detailed financial information about Grace Church, see our [annual report](#).

Who We Are: GraceWorks



2017
By The Numbers

GraceWorks
Enrollment

102

GraceWorks
Staff Members

16

Grace Church operates [GraceWorks](#), a childcare center that is an outreach program of the church and which provides the church with vital income.

GraceWorks has been serving children from 15 months to 14 years of age and their families since 1997. It is comprised of an early childhood program and an after-school program, both of which provide affordable, quality child care to families in Medford and the surrounding communities. During the summer months it also offers a full-day summer program for the after-school class and children in the community.

Families are welcomed to its non-denominational, culturally responsive, family friendly environment where children grow socially and academically. The program also accepts state vouchers, enabling low income families in the community to enroll in our program.

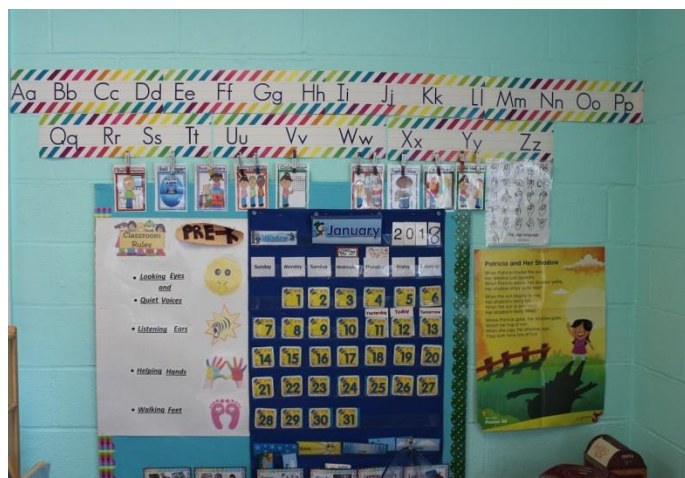
GraceWorks Oversight Committee, a committee of the Vestry, oversees GraceWorks. This committee is comprised of the Grace Church Rector, the Director of GraceWorks, GraceWorks parents, and Grace Church parishioners. The rector supervises the director, who manages the day-to-day operations of the program.



Pre-K Room



After-School Quilt Club



Pre-K Room

Who We Are: Our Worship Life

“All are welcome at God’s table.” We hear this every [Sunday](#) before the Eucharist, and it’s an expression that we live and practice in our community and in our worship.

Our largest weekly service is our vibrant 10 am service. This service is a wonderful mix of families with children, couples, and single adults. Kids are invited to attend [Sunday School](#) or [to participate in the service](#), and are actively welcomed in almost all aspects of this service. They sometimes even silently high-five each other (and adults!) on the way to communion.

This service includes a volunteer adult choir led by our music director and organist, Ruth Roper. We sing hymns from a variety of sources including *The Hymnal 1982* and *Lift Every Voice and Sing* as well as music from other traditions. We are blessed to have gifted musicians in our congregation who [share their talents](#) at services throughout the year.

We have a small, committed group that gathers at 8 am for our Rite 1 service. Our 5 pm service embraces different forms of worship including everything from walking in the local nature reserve to a Dr. Who-themed Eucharist to a contemplative Taizé service. This service has provided us a unique opportunity to connect with and welcome a diverse group of congregants and newcomers.



“I come to Grace Church to revive my spirit.”



Who We Are: Our Worship Life



On Wednesdays, parishioners have the opportunity to participate in 8 pm Compline after the Wednesdays at Grace program. We also take worship into the community, including an annual [Ashes-To-Go](#) program on Ash Wednesday, providing the opportunity for local community members to receive ashes at both the local train station and in downtown Medford.

All of our services are grounded in the Book of Common Prayer. We are a broad church whose goal in worship is to make the Eucharist accessible to all. We value sermons that “feel connected,” address “what is currently happening in the world,” and discuss scripture in ways that respond to the needs of our contemporary lives.

Nearly 70% of our parishioners participate in our worship services in a variety of different roles. Older children serve as acolytes and older teens and many adults serve as LEMs, Lectors, or members of the Altar Guild. Healing prayer is offered by [trained lay people](#) during the service once a month and weekly during Lent and Advent. As in all aspects of our life at Grace, in our worship we deeply value active lay participation as well as the leadership of our clergy.

And at the end of the service, we are reminded that while **“the worship has ended, the service begins.”**

“The service has to have structure but can't take itself too seriously. Meaning, that it's OK if things aren't perfect. What matters is that we're there!”



Who We Are: Our Ministries and Outreach

Grace Church “lives its faith calling in the world,” as one parishioner puts it. It is “a spiritual home that feeds its members, but with strong ties to the community.” Another member values our inclusivity and says that Grace “represents the change I would like to see in the world.”

Grace’s [ministries and outreach programs](#) cover a wide range of formal and informal groups that both care for and benefit our existing members and reach far outside our walls to Medford and the world. The majority of our congregation participates in church programs through serving on various committees, teaching in our educational programs, and participating in fellowship and pastoral care programs.

Our community loves to have fun together, often in [fellowship activities](#) such as women’s groups, LGBT+ dinners, and youth programs. Youth nights are held on one Friday night a month, and often include energetic games of Gaga Ball. [Wednesdays at Grace](#), which includes a community meal, Godly Play classes, and adult education, is a central piece of both Christian formation and fellowship at Grace. Over the summer we host community meals at different parishioners’ houses in a program called Dining with Grace, and at Christmas we cherish our energetic Christmas pageant, which this year featured a cow who also was denied a place at the inn, and is followed by a potluck dinner in our parish hall.



YO Tea



Dining With Grace



LGBT Potluck



Christmas Pageant Fun



Youth Night and Gaga Ball



Hiking in the Fells

“I value our openness to all, regardless of religious background, sexual orientation, age...basically every category you can think. I love that we embrace everyone and invite everyone to participate in the Eucharist.

We’ve historically been very involved in the broader community, and with building interfaith relationships. I love that we are open to other religious groups using our building as a safe space to worship.

And of course, that we’re super child-friendly. And just...the people. They’re awesome.”

Who We Are: Our Ministries and Outreach

We also care for those in our church community who need extra support. In addition to the priest's pastoral care, our dedicated lay leaders work to [care for](#), nurture, and [pray for](#) all those who call this church their home.

Over half of our parish mentions Grace's outreach and community service as an important reason that they attend Grace, and an overwhelming majority (95%) believes that it is important for us to play a role in the community life of our city. Reflecting that value, we lead and contribute to the [St. Luke's soup kitchen](#), [food](#) and [clothing](#) pantries, holiday wishing trees, and [community cleanups](#). We are an active participant in the [Medford Interfaith Clergy Association](#), and work to bring health initiatives to the city. We have been recognized by the local community for our leadership on [environmental issues](#).

"At Grace, people roll up their sleeves and work. They do things that are important to them. They welcome newcomers. They are real people with real lives who work hard, have their own struggles, yet find the time and energy and grace to give of themselves."



Medford Conversations



Like Comment Share



Clothing Pantry



St. Luke's Food Kitchen



20s/30s Group volunteering at Habitat For Humanity



Who We Are: Our Ministries and Outreach

Beyond our borders, we also work in partnership with the [Church of the Divine Savior in Bogota, Colombia](#). And we are committed to responding in whatever ways possible to crises around the world, whether it is raising money for hurricane victims, or participating in educational programs about systemic racism. One recent example is a [community concert](#) we held to raise funds for the World Food Program's relief effort for refugees and internally displaced people in Syria. This event, initiated and executed by a team of parishioners, is seen by many as an example of the type of work we would like to continue to do.

Over 80% of our parish participates in our ministries and outreach programs, which are a central part of who we are and how we live our "faith calling in the community."



Church of the Divine Savior Bogota, Colombia



Syrian Refugee Benefit Concert

Who We Are: Our Strengths

We are welcoming and inclusive.

Everyone who enters Grace Church is welcomed, encouraged, and embraced. There are no “tests” for belonging at Grace, and we value our many types of diversity. We believe that these attributes are some of the keys to our growth and vitality as a community.

- *“From the very first day, I felt welcomed without judgment (of attendance frequency) or pressure (to immediately immerse).”*
- *“I love the diversity of ages, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. at Grace.”*



Who We Are: Our Strengths

We care for each other.

We are truly a church family, and we show each other kindness, warmth, caring, help and support. We encourage members to participate in the life of Grace Church beyond worship on Sunday, and have developed a strong sense of fellowship.

- *"I attend Grace Church because of the feeling of love when you walk in the door."*
- *"It didn't take long for me (and my family) to develop meaningful relationships with folks at Grace. And these connections...continue to be immensely important."*



We are active in the broader community.

Grace Church participates in the life of our community and is particularly committed to participating in the civic life of Medford, honoring our interfaith commitments, and considering how our faith calls us to act in the world.

- *"Whenever you go to an interfaith event in Medford, you always see lots of Grace Church faces there. This makes me very proud and says something about who we are as a parish."*
- *"I like Grace Church's social justice commitment and that is part of what keeps me coming back."*



Who We Are: Our Strengths

We love and support our children.

At Grace, young families find a comfortable and accepting spiritual home, one that welcomes the participation and energy of children in the life of the church, including worship.

- *“We chose Grace because it was the first place that we felt so completely welcomed and at ease with our baby (even though he makes noise during the service).”*
- *“We stress the importance of child-friendliness in worship even though our own children are adults. That is because we believe kids are an important part of making Grace what it is.”*



We provide a spiritual home for all our parishioners.

We support each other in our spiritual journeys. 95% of our parish says that their spiritual needs are being met at Grace.

- *“I appreciate that I’m accepted where I am in my spirituality...I don’t feel pressured to be more or less than I am.”*
- *“I crave ritual and familiarity, comfort and succor, and personal challenges. I get these in various ways each week, from the familiarity of the liturgy...to seeing old friends and making new ones, to the reaffirmation...that I am perfect and loved by God right now, but that we can always do better, with some specific ideas of what to do to continue to make the world a better place.”*



Where We Hope To Go

At Grace, we are thrilled to be able to look back at our parish over the last several years and see the kind of growth and vitality that many other churches would envy. At the same time, we recognize that growth brings challenges.

Grace Church is expanding from a **pastoral parish into a programmatic one**. This is an exciting time and a demanding one as well.

We are looking for a rector to help us shape our vision for the future, one who will help us harness the existing energy and commitment among our lay leaders and build a more effective – and expansive – organizational structure.

Lay leadership is an indispensable part of Grace Church, and a majority of the parish participates in our lay-led ministries. We want parishioners to continue to feel confident about taking ownership of existing ministries and exploring new ideas. **We want to encourage, inspire, and develop new lay leaders at Grace**. There is a great deal of passion and interest in our parish to do more as we grow, and we need a rector who can harness that energy and help us develop a **more coherent and collaborative path forward**.

There is a strong sense at Grace that we are doing a lot of things well and are headed in the right direction. But we also have ideas about where we can go from here and ways we can strengthen our community.

- Parishioners have expressed a keen interest in seeing **more opportunities for adult religious education**, which is mostly limited to our Wednesdays at Grace program. In addition, there is a desire to **expand opportunities for spiritual practice**, including new ways to engage in contemplative worship.
- Many parishioners are parents with younger children. Maintaining and growing our religious education opportunities for youth is important to them. Additionally, there is a strong desire to create **new opportunities and programs for the senior members of our parish**. We are committed to trying to build programs for all groups in our diverse parish.
- In many areas, parishioners have expressed a wish to create **new small group activities** at Grace that would help foster the kind of tight-knit personal connections that make our growing parish still feel close, warm, and welcoming.

There's no one way to guarantee our success in the future. As one parishioner said, as we grow, we want to continue to "Preach the gospel, cast the nets, and let God do the rest."



Qualities We Seek In A Rector

Grace Church, Medford, seeks a rector who can be: a pastor, nurturing and challenging the community of faith; a preacher, making scripture relevant to the lives of the parishioners; and a steward, inspiring the wise use of the varied gifts of the parish. We are looking for a rector who can help us successfully make the transition from a pastoral to a programmatic church, without losing our parish's unique spirit and warmth.

Pastor: We seek a rector who is strongly connected to scripture and can guide people of every age and at every stage of spiritual development to a deeper knowledge of God. Parishioners want a rector who shares the community's deep commitment to the inclusion of people of diverse backgrounds, including differences of race, sexual orientation, and political opinion. The rector should also be skilled in and "comfortable working with parishioners of all ages," helping each person develop a deeper spiritual life in Christ.

Preacher: Parishioners are outspoken in their desire for a preacher who inspires, teaches, and uplifts them, making scripture relevant to their lives. Sermons should challenge and inspire people to deepen their faith and commitment to Christ's teachings in ways that are relevant to the parish's daily life and the challenges of our world. The parish also wants the rector to lead opportunities to become closer as a faith community through small group gatherings for education and prayer, including programs about the Episcopal Church, Bible study, and opportunities for contemplative prayer.

Steward: The rector must be invested in growing the parish community, while balancing outreach and ministry to the existing church family. The rector will need to manage the church's resources and staff while also overseeing the GraceWorks program. The rector should also have a commitment to nurturing the leadership of the laity and helping the parish make an effective use of its many talents and resources. We are seeking a rector who can "reshape existing programs and introduce new ones" while being "prayerful in consideration of any changes."

How To Apply

We invite candidates to visit the [Rector Search application page](#) on our website, gracemedford.org, for more information on how to submit an application and how to contact the Search Committee with any questions.



Grace Episcopal Church is a multi-generational, diverse and welcoming Christian Community, which values shared leadership, service to those in need and nurturing all in the love of God.





Grace Episcopal Church
Medford