



# GRACE CHURCH, MARTHA'S VINEYARD



2018 PARISH PROFILE

# OUR ISLAND HOME... A SPECIAL PLACE

**Everyone has heard about it.** Presidents come to golf and sail and snatch a few days with their families out of the public eye. Celebrities appear at farmer's markets and coffee shops behind dark glasses; some even live here. Multi-million dollar architect-designed homes sprawl in secluded meadows and stand sentry on private shorelines.

Our recently renovated and updated hospital has a harbor view and offers high quality health care and emergency services thanks to dedicated medical staff, visiting specialists, and its affiliation with Partners HealthCare and Massachusetts General Hospital. The community has many holistic health and wellness practitioners as well.

Summertime brings delighted crowds to tour the Island for a day or settle in for a week or two.

Not cheap, but efficient and safe, the Steamship Authority known as our lifeline for good reason carries passengers, cars, trucks, and



*Photo by Vineyard Colors*



*Photo by Vineyard Colors*

freight to and from the Island. Smaller ferry companies travel to and from the Cape and New Bedford in season.

The Island is filled with music from local singer-songwriters and jazz artists appearing in community settings all year to big name jazz, pop, and folk names performing in summertime. The Martha's Vineyard Chamber Music Society brings world-class performers to its popular summer festivals. Our large Island Community Chorus performs several concerts through the year. The Yard offers visiting professional dancers a summer home for creativity and performance.

Art abounds. The Island is a home to many creative artists. There are year 'round and seasonal galleries featuring high quality local and mainland artists.

We have two newly renovated theaters and the state-of-the-art M.V. Film Center all showing movies from first runs to documentaries and classics. Theater programs offer both community and professional drama.

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With a growing emphasis on the health and economic benefits of “eating local,” and a resurgence of larger and small-scale family farms, fresh Island produce, meat, and poultry, eggs and dairy products are widely available.

Fitness options are many, from our large, well-appointed YMCA to private health clubs, specialized classes, and an ice arena. There are several small Yoga studios and the expansive Yoga Barn in Chilmark, an inspiring space for regular classes and retreats.

There are hundreds of acres of open conservation lands, miles of walking trails, beautiful beaches and safe harbors, an Audubon wildlife sanctuary, a small world-class arboretum, all offering a wealth of recreation of many kinds and a chance to appreciate God’s creation up close.

And there is much to nurture the spirit here. We have more than two dozen churches including mainstream Protestant faiths, Catholic parishes, a Jewish temple, a Buddhist center, a Jehovah’s Witnesses Kingdom Hall, and a good number of smaller, charismatic and community-based congregations. Members of our growing Brazilian population have established thriving houses of worship. There is a sizable meditation community with opportunities to practice and study mindfulness, Buddhist, and Zen meditation and tradition.

Our Island home is a floating “village,” a safe and nurturing community to raise a family, where people care about and watch over their neighbor’s children. Community members turn out for school plays and concerts, celebrate students’ sports and academic achievements, and cheer along with parents as high school diplomas are handed out.

Although the population has grown and we may be inundated with happy visitors and hordes of houseguests and seasonal workers



*Photo by Vineyard Colors*

in the summer and there still remains a cohesive year ’round community for which caring for one another is a fact of life.

Neighbors may and will argue bitterly over politics, school regulations, zoning laws, and what supermarket is best, but when push comes to shove we are all in this Vineyard lifeboat and we stick together. And when serious trouble comes to call, Islanders step up, dig deep, reach out.

When a family endures traumatic loss, the community is there. When a teenager dies in a car crash, a fireman perishes in a blaze, a fisherman drowns in a freak accident, a young man succumbs to an overdose, a popular businessman is tragically shot while travelling, neighbors and strangers alike pack the memorial services, grieving with and supporting the bereaved with their caring.

# OUR ISLAND HOME... A SPECIAL PLACE

Every Christmas season for decades Islanders have given money, toys, clothing, and volunteer time to bring joy to needy children through the Red Stocking Fund. All winter church members around the Island cook hearty dinners, serving up food and fellowship every night of the week. And a church-based program offers shelter to homeless neighbors all winter.

Our lives flow to the rhythm of the seasons. Winter storms and blustery nor'easters may be a mixture of scary, inconvenient, exciting adventures, or a chance to stay in and enjoy the fireplace while imagining life here in times gone by.

Summer races by in a sunny blur of work, traffic, visitors, and countless special events. In autumn Islanders take their turn making sure to enjoy a few beach trips, hikes, and picnics before the warm days end.

Islanders work hard at jobs, running businesses, caring for families; retirees find themselves busier than ever as they leave jobs then take on new roles and responsibilities in the community. We chuckle when visitors ask the perennial question: "What do you do all winter?"

Going through our daily rounds of work, family, responsibilities it is easy to overlook the natural beauty that surrounds us. Then we are struck with the sight of sunshine glinting off the harbor, a vibrant green meadow, stonewalls and grazing sheep, the canopy of leaves above a side road, waves crashing on the shore, and we count our blessings for these gifts.

The Vineyard may be our little piece of paradise but it does not come cheap or easy. Everything from real estate to food, clothing, and gasoline costs more than mainland prices. Rentals are scarce

and expensive; housing programs work hard to find decent homes for year 'round families and individuals.

Many struggle with low incomes and high costs of living. There is poverty, unemployment, and homelessness. Thankfully, violent and extreme crime levels are low. But, as is true anywhere, there is domestic abuse, mental health issues, alcoholism, and a growing substance addiction problem. We are not exempt, and some say the isolation and economic challenges here add to these issues. Martha's Vineyard Community Services, 12-step programs, private counselors, churches, and caregivers all are hard at work to keep our neighbors safe and sober, nourished, housed and healthy. There is always work to be done!



*Photo by Vineyard Colors*

# WE WELCOME ALL HERE



WE EXTEND A SPECIAL WELCOME to those who are single, married, divorced, straight, gay by God, filthy rich, dirt poor, or yo no habla inglés. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, who are skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds.

We welcome you if you can sing like Andrea Bocelli or can't carry a note in a bucket. You are welcome here if you are "just browsing", just woke up or just got out of jail. We do not care if you are more catholic than the Pope or haven't been to church since Joey's baptism.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over sixty but not grown up yet and to teenagers who are growing up too fast. We welcome soccer Moms, NASCAR Dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latté-sippers, vegetarians, and junk-food eaters.

We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you are having problems or if you are down in the dumps or if you do not like organized religion.

If you blew all your offertory money at the dog track, you are welcome here. We offer a special welcome to those who work too hard, don't work, can't spell or need a church because Grandma is in town and wants to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We offer a special welcome to those who are in need of a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throats as a kid or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake. We welcome tourists, seekers, and doubters, bleeding hearts... and especially YOU to a church called GRACE!

*Fr. Phil Egitto at Our Lady of Lourdes says he adapted this from text originally used at a Lutheran Church, where the pastor was happy to give him permission to reprint.*



# WHO WE ARE

Perhaps because Grace Church consists of a modest-sized congregation with an average attendance of about 70, its sense of community and air of welcome are well known in Vineyard Haven and, indeed, on the entire island of Martha's Vineyard. As our interim rector Susan Eibner has pointed out on several occasions, we are a special and brave congregation. Special and brave because we have endured and risen above the sudden, unexpected death of our beloved Priest-in-Charge, Brian Murdoch on October 15,



2016 followed barely a week later by a flood of our kitchen and pre-school rooms. The flood and resulting water damage threatened our major fund-raising initiative of our popular summer lobster roll program. Still, somehow, the congregation of Grace Church pulled together and found a way to operate the pre-school in restricted space and launch the lobster rolls as soon as reconstruction of the kitchen made it possible. The volunteer efforts and hours involved were really quite remarkable.

Hospitality takes on a special meaning at Grace Church. We were one of the first two island churches to begin soup suppers in the early 1990s. From January until Easter we welcome dozens of Islanders each Friday for a hearty meal prepared and served by parishioners, with warm fellowship for cold evenings. Whenever possible we send to-go containers home with them.

Every Christmas, Grace Church parishioners prepare and host a free Community Christmas Dinner, a festive traditional meal with turkey, ham, plenty of side dishes, desserts and good will.

We support the Island Food Pantry with regular food collections and have held winter coat drives to be distributed by Clothes To Go, a local church-based program offering free clothing to all.

Grace Church has a strong presence at the annual Church World

Service CROP Walk, inspired by retired clergyman Fr. Alden Besse who organized the first walks in 1991 and coordinated the Walk until he relinquished the job at age 90. Now two Grace Church members continue on the organizing committee and parishioners of all ages pledge and walk each year to help feed the hungry.

Our Sunday coffee hours reflect our definition of Hospitality - feeding and welcoming everyone. Far beyond traditional coffee and cake receptions after services, parishioners prepare and serve a light lunch buffet. Many worshippers, guests and drop-ins linger long after church, savoring food and fellowship — Grace Church style!

Grace Church, though small, contains a congregation with a large heart, demonstrating caring not only for each other but also for the Island Community and the needy wherever they may be found.

# PRE-SCHOOL

Grace Preschool has celebrated over 60 years of providing the Martha's Vineyard Community with a quality childhood program that has served over 650 children since its founding. Established in 1956 as the Grace Church Co-operative Playgroup, it is the oldest existing preschool on Martha's Vineyard.

The Pre-School area (downstairs in the church building) has activity spaces which encourage both play and quiet time. Also recently renovated due to the major leak in October 2016, it has new floors and new sheetrock walls. One side of the downstairs has large windows and can be open to the outside, and a stairway up leads to the playground located behind the church, which is surrounded by wood fencing.

Grace Preschool has a cozy home in the church's spacious basement where it was begun by the late Mary Ann Hoxsie, a community-minded parishioner and early childhood professional. The pre-school thrives today, offering scholarships to enable children to attend and embracing students of other cultures. We are blessed to have a teacher who speaks Portuguese, and can be responsive to our growing Brazilian population.

Because the Grace Pre-School remains non-denominational, we would welcome any attempt by our new rector to encourage the involvement of more pre-school families and the children's program at Grace Church.



## WHAT WE SEEK IN A RECTOR

During our discernment process in seeking a new Rector for Grace Church we determined that the most important quality in a rector is a deep spirituality which is infused with intellectual curiosity and a sense of joy that can foster a deep sense of community in our parish.

- We seek a rector who values creating a sense of community not only at Grace Church but in reaching out to meet the needs of the community at large.
- We want a rector who values the importance of all of God's children whether very young or very old or somewhere in between and who appreciates the diversity of all who worship at the church. We welcome the opportunity to be challenged to deepen our faith and to deepen our commitment to service for others.
- We seek a rector who will enlighten us through sermons which clarify the readings, tell a story and deepen our understanding of scripture and how to live as a Christian in today's world.
- We seek a rector who can work closely with our Music Director and organist to select a musical offering each week from the variety of hymnals which complements the liturgy and inspires the congregation.
- We seek a rector who cherishes the importance of pastoral care to those members of the Church and family members who are ill and infirm. We seek a rector who will encourage lay ministry to assist with pastoral care duties.
- Finally, we seek a rector who values the role of stewardship and recognizes the importance of caring for not only the Church buildings, but meeting the challenges to support outreach programs all while insuring a strong sense of financial stability at the Church.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Much of what we envision for the future of Grace Church is rooted in the past. We want to continue to be a place that will support the community and offer hope to those in need. We want to be a place of worship that attracts and supports the schedules and demands of young families so that they can find a place of worship that provides fellowship and respite from the constant pressures of high tech life and parenting responsibilities. We wish to be an active, diverse group of creative and open-minded people; to be able to speak freely, support and accept one another and to attract people of all ages.

We are a parish that wants to care for those who are ill and we support lay ministers to assist with pastoral care in visiting those who are homebound or in the hospital, and to help those who are struggling with death and dying. We want to continue to be a place of sanctuary and hope for those who struggle with addiction and depression. We want to sustain our generous spirits, to embrace creativity in our services



with stimulating music and activities. We want to understand and learn more from the scriptures, to nourish us as we seek wholeness and community and to learn more about the beauty and joy of being created by Love and of being forgiven and redeemed by Love in Christ.



# WORSHIP AND EDUCATION

## 8AM • HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE 1

There is a core group of people committed to this contemplative service. The sense of tradition is important to participants who feel strongly about the consistent use of Rite 1. They see it as a service they can rely on as a “centering presence” in their spiritual lives. There is no music – no organ or hymns. As one parishioner put it, “This service distills things to the essence of worship, without all the fluff”. The quiet, intimate and meditative tone of this service is cherished by those who are “early birds” and seek monastic simplicity in their worship.

## 10:00AM • HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE 2

This is the service with organ, choir and full procession. The choir presents an anthem each week and healing ministry is offered after communion. There is a Worship Committee which works with the Rector and the Organist/Choir Director to plan services. Together they share insights, visions and plans for seasonal and special services throughout the year. Coffee hour follows the service in the Parish Hall.



## Christian Education

Grace Church currently has about ten children actively involved in the parish. Our small Children’s Ministry is here to serve children, youth, and families of Grace. Its mission is to engage children in a loving, nurturing church community and to engage whole families in a community of faith. It is to provide spiritual formation opportunities for both children and parents, and to be cognizant of opportunities for children and families to play valuable roles in the church. The children’s program is led by Leigh Ann Yuen and runs September to June during the 10:00AM service.

Throughout the year we invite families to Grace community activities such as ice cream socials, our annual “blessing of the backpacks” at the start of each new school year and Prayer Hikes through woodland trails to a lovely beach.

We have a small number of children participating as acolytes. We would love to have other children join, so that they can learn and participate in important roles during the service.

Adult Christian Education Classes led by James Norton between services have included such topics as a study of the Book of Job with illustrations by William Blake, a discussion of Karen Armstrong’s book *St. Paul The Apostle We Love to Hate* and a study on the origin and meaning of the Lord’s Prayer.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Several important Island programs and institutions bear the indelible mark of Grace Church whose clergy and parishioners were instrumental in their creation.

Included in these are: The Red Stocking Fund, which has donated toys and food to needy Island families since 1938; Camp Jabberwocky, an Island camp for children and adults with disabilities and Church World Service CROP Walk, where parishioners of all ages pledge and march each year to help feed the hungry.

In recent years Grace Church has sought to address the needs of our growing homeless population. The parish joined with an Island-wide clergy group to establish Houses of Grace, providing overnight shelter in several Vineyard churches. A number of parishioners have volunteered at the church shelters and Grace contributes a weekly hot meal for those overnight guests. A performance of Handel's Messiah, which began as a tradition at Grace Church in the 1970's, was recently revived with the participation of choral singers, soloists and instrumentalists from Churches throughout the Island.



Grace Church has long been known for caring about its neighbors in countless ways – from offering food, shelter, and fellowship, to working for peace, justice, and equality for all. In the late 1980s, The Rev. Terry Henry led the congregation to launch community soup suppers which are still going strong every winter. For these and many other ministries, Grace has more than earned its affectionate description: “The little church with a big heart.”

In an innovative act of sacramental hospitality, our late Father Brian Murdoch took to the streets in full clerical garb on Ash Wednesdays, offering “Ashes to Go” to passers by, evangelizing and blessing all comers.

Specific activities and programs have changed over the years to meet the evolving needs in the community and society as a whole. Grace continues this important tradition of our members being dedicated to answering Jesus’ call to do our best to feed the hungry, and help our less fortunate neighbors in whatever way is needed.

# MISSIONS

While always responsive to our local community needs, Grace's generosity has never stopped at the Island's shores. Committed to the steadfast belief that all people are our neighbors, whether near or far, Grace has helped support causes and individuals around the nation and globe.

Grace Church has been a stalwart and steady supporter of Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), always contributing beyond our yearly Diocesan assessment. We are honored that our beloved retired clergyman, The Rev. Alden Besse, has been a longtime contributor, who made his first donation to The Presiding Bishops' Fund (now ERD) in 1947.

Our annual budget has always included a line item for charitable giving. Even in years when income fluctuated; parishioners added individual contributions. The Grace Church Missions Committee works throughout the year to research and educate parishioners about needs



***“It happens all the time.  
I feel really welcome, especially in  
the Parish House, but also every  
single time I’m in the church itself.  
I hope other people feel the same  
way. It’s a gift from God.”***

*Ike Russell, Member of Grace Church*

for support both at home and abroad, and carefully assesses requests and recommendations for organizations as potential recipients of “Grace Grants” made at the end of each year.

Recipients in recent years have ranged from large charitable organizations including ERD, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Rescue Committee, to small private organizations seeking to raise funds for programs helping struggling communities in several countries. These grants address crucial issues including clean water, sanitation, child health, and nutrition.

The Missions Committee also addresses the local needs here on the Island and has recommended grants to Family Planning of MV, Vineyard House (a residential program for those in addiction recovery), Martha's Vineyard Community Services, and many other special programs. In 2018, the group will be working to establish a partnership with one or more community groups or organizations abroad as a meaningful focus for giving and service.

# LOBSTER ROLLS



We are an amazing church! For many summer residents, the first stop when getting off the ferry is to head to Lobster Rolls at Grace Church. As our major fundraising initiative, we begin in mid-May and run to the end of September with an all-volunteer crew, many of whom have been there for years.

Every Friday night from late spring to fall for the past 27 years, volunteers come to prepare, package and sell generous lobster rolls with chips, a drink, and a generous slice of pie. Along the way, these volunteers have become lifelong friends with each other and with many of our weekly customers. With lots of hard work and love in equal measure, Lobster Rolls has raised over a half a million dollars for the Church and generates a lot of good will in the community. People can picnic in the playground or eat in the church hall in inclement weather; it's become a truly social event.



This event has made Grace famous on the Vineyard. Lots of loyal customers wait patiently for opening night, and they love to see the numbers sold for each week and know that they are a part of that.

We have won "Best of the Vineyard" on Martha's Vineyard for the past eleven years, and we are very proud of the fact that it is our Friday night gatherings that give us a chance to spread the word.



# CHURCH HISTORY

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Vineyard Haven, Mass., April 8, 1891



The first recorded Episcopal service on Martha's Vineyard occurred on Christmas Day, 1862 at Capawock Hall (now the Masonic Hall, Church Street in Vineyard Haven).

Later, that same year, an association was formed with the express purpose to separate from the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole and to "form an association for the purpose of raising money to build a Church in Vineyard Haven." On Sunday, June 3, 1883, Mr. R. A. Ottiwell presided over the first service at Grace Church with approximately 100 persons attending.

In 1960, the Reverend Henry L. Bird arrived. Reflecting the times, he was concerned with justice and equality. Inspired by the leadership and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he joined with several parishioners in supporting the creation of a chapter of the NAACP on the Island. Eventually, his convictions took him to the Civil Rights march in Selma, Alabama.

The Reverend Donald H. Lyons was appointed Rector in 1966. He consolidated Grace Church's role as a liberal, socially active church, addressing such problems and concerns of Island life as high school regionalization, the need for mental health services and the need for programs and activities for Island youth. During his tenure as Rector, the Church provided land from an earlier bequest for a permanent site for the Lamb family's Camp Jabberwocky. Participants in this program for physically and mentally disabled persons are still an important part of summer worship at Grace Church.

The arrival of the Reverend Terry L. Henry in June, 1986, marked a time of important transition for Grace Church. In seeking to define the future course of the Church, four primary goals of the parish were agreed upon: to build Christian community; to nurture spiritual life in the parish; to train the congregation for lay ministry and to provide opportunities within the Church for lay ministry to take place. During

his ten-year ministry Father Henry led the parish in achieving these goals by helping to create a cooperative relationship between the clergy and parishioners, with the goal of a renewed Christian community – not of a single mind, but with a consensus to respect and welcome diversity.

Father Donnel O'Flynn arrived in 1998 and was Rector until 2004. Donnel helped to establish the Burgess Committee in honor of the Right Reverend John Burgess, the first African-American Diocesan Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Father O'Flynn also introduced an early Sunday service titled, "worship in a new key" geared to engage young children and families in Church worship.

In 2006, Father Robert Hensley, in cooperation with then Bishop Thomas Shaw, coordinated the participation of Grace in the "Together Now" campaign which eventually provided funds for the restoration of the wall in the Parish Hall and repairs to the Bell Tower.

Shortly after Father Hensley's departure in 2015, Father Brian Murdoch was appointed as priest-in-charge at Grace Church. Father Brian had preached at Grace on several occasions as a guest minister from Boston prior to his appointment as priest in charge. Father Brian brought great enthusiasm and whimsy with him when he arrived. He ended one of the services by blowing on a kazoo from his pocket and on various Sundays the sidewalks at the entrance to the Church were filled with chalked messages of welcome and greeting. Father Brian's sudden and unexpected death one year prior to his expected ordination as Rector of Grace left our Grace Church community in mourning. Shortly after his death there was a broken pipe in the kitchen at the Parish Hall which flooded the basement where the Church Preschool is located. Grace Church has gradually recovered from these devastating events under the guidance of our first interim rector Cynthia Hubbard and our current interim rector, Susan Eibner.

The Search Committee, the Vestry and the parishioners of Grace Church look forward to finding a new Rector to continue the Grace Church traditions of service for the Island community, respect for diverse lifestyles and political views, and the creation of a caring and welcoming Parish.

*~Acknowledgements: James Norton and The History of Grace Episcopal Church  
by Ruby Holmes Martyn*

# BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS



## *Our parish church is historic:*

The laying of the cornerstone for Grace Church occurred on September 26, 1882 and the building was completed in 1883. Architect W. Frank Hurd of Boston was hired to design the Church building. In 1896, it was moved to the corner of William Street and Woodlawn Avenue where it now stands.

Our church sits on a one acre lot with a bell tower and many historic stained glass windows, which include two Tiffany windows. The main floor includes the nave, which seats 125 people, with an organ and a

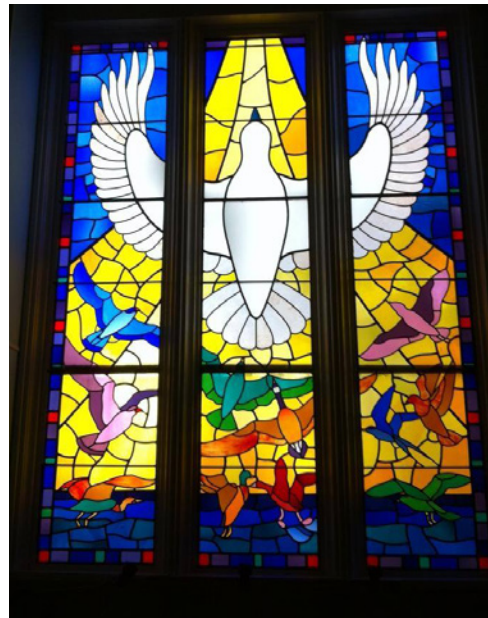
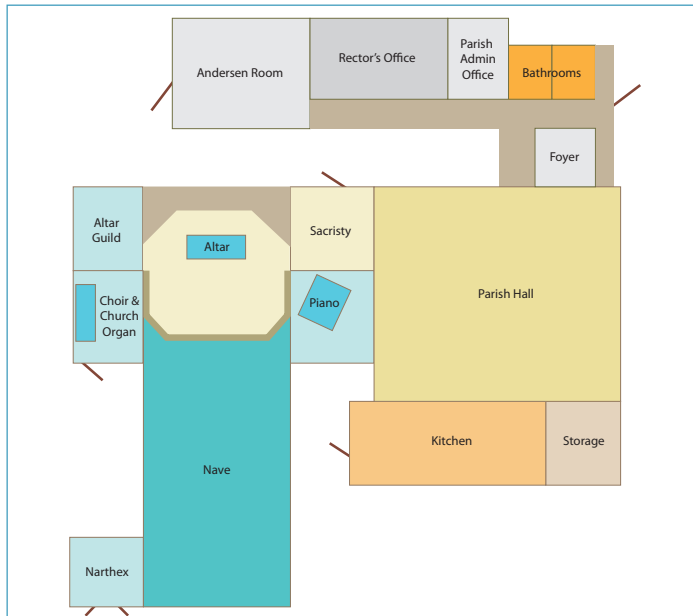
piano. A small narthex houses the baptismal font.

Our parish hall is where our Sunday coffee hours keep our parish community close after the 10am service. Our kitchen, which suffered some damage in October 2016, has been rebuilt into a commercial kitchen.

Outside is our Memorial Garden, where several of our parishioners are interred.

In the back of the church is a playground for the children who attend our Grace Pre-School, which operates three days a week.

A rector's office and parish administrator's office are located along the hallway to the Andersen Room, which serves both as a choir rehearsal space and a place for Vestry or committee meetings.



# GRACE CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT



*The mission of Grace Episcopal Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.*

To accomplish this Mission, we the people who are Grace Episcopal Church, believe we are called by God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to:

- Proclaim the Gospel;
- Promote justice, peace and love;
- Join in prayer and worship; and
- Minister to each other and to others by word and example.

## EXPLANATION

We witness to Christ, our Lord and Savior, in our lives within the Church community and in the community and world at large. All we do and say, all our witness and service, is a response to God's gift to us of life and grace and love. Our sense of blessedness is reflected in our mission. We seek to act in response to our Lord in worship, in praise, in song, in thanksgiving, in confession, in teaching, at work and at play, in service and outreach, in care and maintenance of our buildings, and in growth.

We were indissolubly bound to our mission at our baptism. It is our enduring commitment to the covenant made at baptism that marks our journey with the Christ. In doubt, in sadness, in joy, in searching, we ask together where our mission ought to take us and how best to serve Jesus and others.

As a Church, we organize as Rector, Vestry, officers, choir, committees and members to build a practical structure for our mission. Our goal, our immediate mission, is to create a living body of the faithful who gather to gain the knowledge, understanding, strength, and courage to love our God and Lord and to serve ourselves and others with gladness and singleness of heart, through Christ our Lord.



# GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*This is who we are right now,  
and where we think we may go,  
but we are happy to be surprised  
by the Holy Spirit.*

We welcome interested candidates.  
Please submit a cover letter, resume,  
recent sermon and any other material  
that would help us to learn about you to:

Bernadine Prygrosky  
dogsmom21@gmail.com

or: The Search Committee  
Grace Episcopal Church  
PO Box 1197  
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568  
508-693-0332

