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WHY MIGHT ONE CALL GRACE THEIR CHURCH HOME?

There are many reasons, some of which are...

We call Grace Episcopal Church our church home because...

We live together in the awe of worship
in the Presence of the Mystery of God
Whose inclusive grace moves us to embrace all
with unconditional love and gracious acceptance.

We attempt to love the world as God loves it...
following the way of Christ,
sensitive to the winds of the Spirit,
seeking to discern the Word of God in the biblical tradition,
the Movement of God in the context of our culture.

While we are rooted in the Anglican tradition...
in background,
in faith perspective,
in worship expression;
we attempt to speak to the challenges of living today.

We find our window to God in the face of Jesus...
while affirming the quest and insight of other faiths;
opening ourselves to dialogue and mutual enrichment in our pluralistic world.

We are intentionally a community of open mind and warm heart...
where the broken find healing,
the doubting learn to trust,
the anxious find peace,
and the strong are confirmed, trusting God...
the God of the Beginning,
the God of the End,
the God with us in the Meantime...
this in-between time.

We invite all to join us in this exciting venture of faith.

HOW IS WORSHIP DONE AT GRACE?

What do we mean by “liturgy?” Liturgy refers to our style of worship and literally translated means “the work of the people.”

What is “the work” that we do? “The work” that we do is relational and ritual, and its foundation is the Paschal Mystery - the death and resurrection of Christ. Through our church calendar, also called “the liturgical calendar,” we walk through the stories and events of Christ’s birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. We give our thanks and praise to God and work to connect the story of salvation with our stories. The ritual opens space for us to respond to God and to one another with faith and love.

Who are “the people”? “People” means you and all the members and guests of Grace Episcopal, those who are gathered here and now in this time and in this place. The “people” also stretches wide to include the Communion of Saints, the whole Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion, Catholics, Orthodox and Lutherans worldwide (they are all “liturgical traditions.”)

Who participates? While there are leaders who have specific roles in the service (clergy, acolytes, Eucharistic Ministers, and choir), we believe worship to be a corporate act - inclusive and participatory. All who gather (kids too!) are invited to sing, to pray and to hear the proclamation of Scripture. We all pass the peace, we offer our gifts, and we share in the feast. All who are baptized, regardless of denomination or age, are welcome to receive Communion. It is through our worshiping together that we become a sign for the world of God’s abundant welcome, forgiveness and grace.

What is the BCP? BCP is Episcopal shorthand for “The Book of Common Prayer,” located in every pew. Almost all of our services of worship can be found in this book, which lives at the center of Episcopal identity. The BCP contains liturgies, prayers for many occasions, the full psalms, the Catechism of the Church, historical documents and much more. Look through the BCP to get a sense of who we are as faithful, worshiping Episcopal people.

Service Schedule

Sundays

8:15 am Holy Eucharist - Rite I

10:30 am Holy Eucharist - Rite II (This service is at 10:00 in the summer.)

Mondays

4:15 pm Contemplative Prayer and Meditation

Wednesdays

9:30 am Holy Eucharist – Rite I

First Sunday of Every Month

7:00 pm Taizé Service (This is an ecumenical service of simple chants, prayers, reading from Scripture and silence which come together to form a prayerful and gentle focus on the Spirit’s presence).

WHAT DO “ANGLICAN” AND “EPISCOPALIAN” MEAN?

“Anglican” comes from Latin *Anglicanus*, meaning ‘English.’ It is applied to the Church of England and all the sister churches around the world that trace their heritage to the Church of England.

Christianity had reached Britain by the mid 200s with Roman soldiers and traders. When the armies had to pull back in another 150 years or so to defend their homeland, they left a vigorous Christianity which spread to the smaller island, Ireland, and developed its own traditions in a form we now admire as “Celtic spirituality.” Meanwhile much of Britain, having been taken over by Saxons and other pagan tribes from the Continent, needed to be re-evangelized. This process began in 597 when Pope Gregory VI sent the missionary Augustine, who became the first archbishop of Canterbury. In addition to spreading the gospel, he and his successors worked to bring the Christian practices already existing in the more remote parts into greater uniformity and under papal control.

Fast forward 900 years. On the Continent several reform movements were aimed at pruning away accumulated embellishments in doctrine and practice and sought to restore what was seen as the heart of Christian faith. In England, King Henry VIII at first opposed these changes but then he saw political advantage in throwing off the “yoke” of Rome. Thus in the 1530s an independent Church of England was born. Tensions remained between extremists on both sides, those wishing to cling to the old ways and those hankering for a still more thorough “reform.” It took many years to find the balance, a *via media* (“middle way”) between Roman Catholic and Protestant proponents, and to shape Anglicanism into what has been called “the roomiest church in Christendom.”

The rise of the British Empire brought a new era as colonists and missionaries spread their church world-wide. The breakup of the Empire brought yet another change as the various national churches became independent, yet retained their link with Canterbury in what we now call the Anglican Communion. This started happening in 1776, in America.

The Anglican Communion currently consists of 38 provinces throughout the world. We are united by four “Instruments of Unity” which are: The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Meeting of the Primates (heads of each province). Of 76 million Anglicans, 2.5 million are Episcopalians.

“Episcopalian” comes from the Greek word for ‘bishop.’ It identifies our church’s unbroken link with ancient times (the “apostolic succession”) and also the church’s structure of authority. It’s the term adopted in the U.S. upon independence, in an era when differences in governance were among the important things that divided churches. (Terms like “presbyterian” and “congregationalist” are other relics of the same impulse.) For more information on decision-making in the Episcopal Church, see the section entitled **“HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE AT GRACE?”** in this pamphlet.

HOW IS SCRIPTURE VIEWED IN THE EPISCOPAL TRADITION?

We believe the Bible is the inspired record of God's self-revelation as a God of power, justice, and love - revealed in the universe God created and in God's other "mighty acts," in the Law and the Prophets, and in Jesus Christ, the Word who took on human form. Not only was he the greatest of the prophets, continuing to open up the deepest meanings of the revelation that had gone before, but he enacted those meanings in his own life and death. He gave us the Holy Spirit who, he promised, would lead his followers into more truth. The books of the New Testament show how that promise began to be fulfilled.

We take the Bible seriously. Our worship services include the reading of at least three portions of Scripture (usually four) and the sermons are nearly always based on these texts. Authority (in a time-honored Anglican formulation) rests on a three-legged stool: Scripture, tradition, and reason based on experience. If any of the three legs is missing, the stool cannot stand.

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation," reads another old Anglican formula. We do not impose any requirements beyond those contained in Scripture. (This is one reason the Episcopal tradition allows for considerable variety among its members as to lesser matters of belief and practice.)

We call the Scriptures the Word of God because God inspired their human authors ("inspired" does not mean dictated to them word for word) and because God still speaks to us through the Bible. Following are some **key principles for reading**:

- Figurative language should not be taken literally.
- Individual texts must not be isolated, or made use of selectively, but always interpreted in the light of the whole revelation.
- We must be sensitive to the cultural background of a given text and seek to understand in what way it reflects a universal principle, and how that principle may apply to us today in our different cultural setting—while at the same time remembering that the Scriptures radically challenge all world systems.
- We must be open and alert to hearing what the Word is saying to us through the Holy Spirit's guidance, making proper use of those gifts that are among the Spirit's instruments: reason, conscience, and the voice of the Christian community both past (i.e., "tradition") and present.
- Since all languages change over time, new translations of the Scriptures may be useful aids to better understanding. We remember, too, that translating, by its nature, involves interpreting.
- While the Bible itself warns against "private interpretation" in understanding what it teaches, individuals often find comfort and devotional inspiration in readings that would not be supported by more judicious canons of interpretation.
- Remember that Gospel means "good news." When you read the account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, allow your heart to be moved by God's grace.

WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO ME TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH GRACE AND ITS PEOPLE?

During your first visit to a service at Grace you should be greeted as you walk in the door. We have teams of people who make an effort to recognize visitors and make them feel welcome. They will be the first folks you will meet at our church.

Most likely these **greeters** will give you a name tag. Its blue color will identify you as a visitor. In addition, during the service, you will be asked to raise your hand as we have a small gift for you. This tradition has a two-fold purpose. The most important is to make you feel welcome (we know you don't really need another coffee mug). The second reason is so we can see you are a visitor and make a special effort to make you feel at home. Those sitting around you (unless they are uncomfortably shy or visitors themselves) will want to introduce themselves to you and welcome you to Grace.

We have a coffee hour every Sunday morning. We hope you will stay for refreshments and give more of us a chance to introduce ourselves to you and make you feel welcome.

If your interest in Grace continues there are a number of ways newcomers have found their way into our fellowship. **Holy Chow** brings new comers and old comers together in small groups for dinner and conversation. It's a great way to meet people around good food in the more intimate setting of their homes. Watch for sign-up opportunities.

A number of caring and interesting couples and individuals are active in our **Host Program**. As you become acquainted with Grace, you will be offered the opportunity for a Host couple or individual to help introduce you to the people and explain the programs and traditions of Grace – all at your discretion and pace.

Social events are a great way to become a part of the Grace family. We have family picnics, outings to professional hockey games in the winter, baseball in the summer, and a fall hayride. We have Lenten dinners, organized trips to the summer theater, and many other ventures beyond the church walls.

Service groups also provide for opportunities for interaction and getting acquainted. If you like to sing or play an instrument, join the music program. The St. Martha's Guild visit sick and shut-in individuals. The Altar Guild sets for services and cares for the sanctuary. Mentor teams serve the families who live in the Grace homes as a vital dimension of the Community Housing Partnership. Commissions of the church meet regularly to manage church life in areas such as Building and Grounds, Stewardship, Outreach, Fellowship and Worship.

Special issue groups abound at Grace and are another way to meet people and assimilate into the life of the Church. An adult discussion group meets Sundays between the services. There are short-term book groups, a yoga group, various classes, and we are always open to starting small groups that are of interest to you.

Whether it is a baseball game, a small group discussion centering around a particular topic – religious or secular, a new comers class, a long standing committee, the choir, or the Altar Guild, there are opportunities galore for you to become a part of Grace and for Grace to become a part of you.

WHAT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE CHILDREN?

Christian Education and Formation programming for children and youth centers on the Episcopal Children's and Episcopal Youth Curricula. There are five Sunday School classes during Education Hour on Sunday mornings (9:15-10:15 am), Growing into Worship for preschool and first graders during the first part of the 10:30 Sunday service, and youth groups for middle school and high school students that meet at various times. We believe formation to be an ongoing, life-long process and strongly encourage parents to involve their kids beginning at a young age with consistent participation in formational programs.

Growing into Worship - This program offers an alternative to the traditional worship service for Preschool through First Grade children. Teachers "coach" the kids in Episcopal worship practices, centering each lesson on the readings or themes of the day. A story and activity are a part of this gathering. The kids join the worship service at the Passing of the Peace and participate with the larger community in the Eucharist.

TLC (The Little Children) – 3-year-olds through Preschool. This group is craft- and story-based with a shared snack. Parents are encouraged to participate as a "helper of the week" sometime during the year.

Episcopal Kids I – Primary and Kindergarten through Second Grade. This class builds on a foundation of Scripture stories and includes exploration of the structure of the Episcopal worship service and the Book of Common Prayer.

Episcopal Kids II – Third through Fifth Grade. This class is Biblically based and liturgically oriented. Themes include Old and New Testaments, Sacraments, and the Church.

Middle School – This class focuses on an exploration of those called by God and the joys and challenges these people have experienced from Biblical times to today.

High School – This class focuses on the application in life of concepts learned at earlier grade levels, and continues to feature discussion of Scripture and the beliefs of the Episcopal community.

Youth Groups – This gathering of Middle School and High School students from Grace and the greater community focuses on application of Episcopal beliefs through service and fellowship. Scheduling is established at the beginning of the program year. Everyone is welcome to attend and guests are encouraged.

Rites of Passage: At Grace, we walk with each other through many of life's transitions, ritually marking new phases, relationships and understandings. Two particular rites of passage are available for teenagers. Every eighth grader is invited to participate in a rite of passage marking their transition into high school and everyone aged 16 years old and older can participate in the Episcopal rite of affirmation of faith called Confirmation. More information on both of these rites is available from the Director of Children's and Youth Ministries.

For the most up-to-date information please contact the church office or check our website www.GraceEpiscopalHolland.org.

WHAT KIND OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPING MY FAITH AS AN ADULT?

Most of us are on a journey in which the beginning is forgotten and the end is certain, but the road is not so clear. For some of us, our life experiences often challenge long held certainties, for others questions come from an inquisitive mind, and for still others there is a need to become more comfortable in our faith structures or to put it more simply, a need to be closer to God.

We call the continuing development of one's faith "Christian Formation," or sometimes just "Formation." Formation at Grace encompasses adult education and much more. It can be thought of as lifelong learning in a formal setting, but learning can arise as much from experience as from worship or individual or group study.

At Grace, we consider all programs that have educative and/or experiential content to be part of Formation. The centerpiece of Formation is the weekly experience of worshiping as a community. The most obvious other component is Adult Forum, which generally meets in the undercroft (church basement) on Sunday mornings throughout the program year. But as important are our Commissions, Education for Ministry (EFM), Stephen Ministry, Contemplative Prayer, Taizé services, Cursillo, St. Mary's Guild, Newcomers Class, and the various fellowships, Bible and other study groups that meet periodically. Look on our bulletin board, on our web site (www.GraceEpiscopalHolland.org), and in our Sunday bulletins to see what's on the schedule.

All these activities serve to form our experience of, and connectedness to, our common faith. Think of these activities as rest stops along the journey. Taking in one or more may be a need at times, other times just information on the way to Formation; but, like rest stops, they are there for you, for me, for all of us.

For those who wish to follow a regular discipline of daily devotional reading and prayer, Grace makes "Forward Day by Day" available. These devotional booklets can be found near the service bulletin basket in the parlor each Sunday.

HOW DOES GRACE DO OUTREACH?

Outreach at Grace is our Church family reaching out to assist those in need. Outreach is our tangible efforts to live out our Mission to be the hand of God in our community and the world. We do this individually in our own ways and corporately through various projects and programs of the Church. It takes the forms of hands-on service and financial support.

Who benefits from Outreach? The purpose of Outreach is to serve people and groups right here in the Holland area, throughout the world, and as part of the Anglican Communion. However, it is our experience that those who serve and give are sometimes the greatest beneficiaries – as it is truly “better to give than to receive.” In addition, making a better community, a better world benefits us all.

How does Outreach learn of those in need? The Outreach Commission learns of needs through donation requests, some of which are recurring and some are new. The list is reviewed often, based on needs that are presented throughout the year.

How is the Outreach ministry funded? By a quarterly budget amount from the Church, special gifts, contributions in kind like food stuffs and clothing, and special offerings. The amount available is dependent on funds received by the Church and allocated to the Outreach Commission by the Vestry.

How does the Commission operate? The Outreach Commission meets monthly. Requests for funds are reviewed and prioritized. If the Commission chooses to fund the request it determines the amount to grant. The amount of the Commission’s gifts is limited to the budgeted amount for the period.

Does the Outreach Commission report back to the Church? The Outreach Commission regularly communicates its actions to the Vestry through formal reports and to the parish by announcements during the Sunday morning services and the parish newsletters.

What are some of the projects supported? A representative sample of the ministries our Outreach has supported includes:

Local Causes:

- Good Samaritan Ministries
- Migrant workers
- Community Action House
- Women in Transition
- Grace Christian Child Care Center
- Emergency relief
- CROP Walk
- Habitat for Humanity

State / National / Global Groups:

- United Thank Offering
- Episcopal Relief and Development
- Gays in Faith Together
- Bread for the World
- Heifer Project
- St. Gregory’s Abbey (Three Rivers)

WHAT IS THE G4C?

“GCCCC” or “G4C” is the acronym for Grace Christian Child Care Center – a full service, non-profit child care program that is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs and licensed by the State of Michigan.

Begun in 1987 as an outreach mission of Grace, G4C is one of the oldest child care programs in the Holland area. At its inception, it was the only program to offer day care for infants. Later the service was expanded to include children up to age 6. Currently it enrolls more than 40 children beginning at age 6 weeks.

The staff of G4C is comprised of dedicated professionals. Many have their Child Development Association Certification and are certified in Infant/Child/Adult C.P.R. and First Aid.

G4C was founded on a strong Christian belief that each child is a gift from God and is ours to treasure, nurture, and love. Although our Center is nondenominational, Christian education is part of the core curriculum. Infants are read Bible stories and listen to Bible songs. All other rooms run a full Bible-based lesson in the afternoons, designed to help children gain knowledge of Bible stories, songs, and Christian moral values.

The curriculum also contains age-appropriate preschool instruction including the Amazing Adventures Preschool for children 3 and 4 years of age with a Michigan Certified Teacher.

G4C is committed to its basic mission of providing quality child care for all who seek it. With that mission in mind, scholarships are granted, as funds are available, to families who can show economic hardship as well as commitment. In 2007, G4C granted over \$50,000 in scholarships. In addition, G4C accepts referrals and payments from the state’s Department of Human Services. Other funding comes from fees parents pay, Grace Church’s budget, special offerings, gifts from individuals, and various fund raising projects.

G4C is governed by a separate Board of Directors comprised of parents, members of the community, and Grace Church parishioners.

G4C is a major program of Grace Church through the use of the church buildings and property, the generosity of its members, as well as their contributions of time and talents.

More information on G4C can be found at www.GraceChristianChildCareCenter.com.

WHAT KIND OF PASTORAL CARE IS AVAILABLE?

Pastoral care is at the center of where the church should be – to provide support within the parish family through caring, nurturing, and healing. It is seen as one of the most important things we do as people of God – being present in times of crisis or transition, or simply responding to the call to gather as a prayerful community. Both clergy and trained lay people are available to focus on the physical and spiritual needs of those who have need of service, comfort, or insight. Through the various arms of this care group there is food and service, help and prayer, comfort and outreach. As we care for each individual within the parish, we nurture, and grow closer as we share in service to those within our parish circle.

Through its various programs, the Church (clergy and laity):

- Provides Communion for those who are hospitalized, convalescing, or shut-in.
- Provides regular visits to those hospitalized or shut-in. (St. Martha's Guild)
- Provides one-on-one companionship to individuals facing life challenges and difficulties, or experiencing a life-changing situation or crisis, through trained and supervised individuals. (Stephen Ministry)
- Makes and provides prayer shawls to persons who are ill. (Prayer Shawl Ministry).
- Has a calling system to relay urgent prayer requests. (Prayer Chain)
- Provides meals for those experiencing illness or tragedy. (Meal Ministry)

Please call the parish (396-7459):

- **Before you go to the hospital, for whatever reason.** This can help us find people to help, and keep you on the radar as a part of our parish family. It is especially important for you to take the initiative on this, since new privacy rules prohibit hospitals from notifying churches directly.
- **When a baby is born or a child is adopted.** The family can be encircled in the parish family for the celebration and to ask God's blessings as a new journey begins. This also can be a time to begin that first step of the journey toward baptism.
- **When you need to talk or pray** about the joyous beginnings of marriage as well as a difficult decision, a change of career directions, or whatever challenge life has presented. God never intended us to walk alone or make decisions by ourselves. At those times, you can discuss any matter in confidence with compassion and in friendship and prayer.
- **When times of trouble overwhelm you** and there is a need for professional help. Our clergy can be a source of comfort as well as a source for referrals.
- **In times of death:**
 - The staff of the Church is available:
 - For comfort and solace.
 - For funeral planning and making final wishes known.
 - For the actual celebration of the funeral service.
 - Our building is available for funeral receptions.
 - A funeral planning booklet is available in the church office.

Your extended parish family can become a source of strength and friendship in good times and difficult ones, and the ministry groups mentioned above always welcome new volunteer participants.

CAN WE GET MARRIED AT GRACE?

What are Episcopal weddings like? Our Book of Common Prayer says, “Marriage is intended by God for mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.” At Grace, weddings are meant to be joyful, meaningful experiences. Our marriage liturgy comes from The Book of Common Prayer and each service is planned together by the priest and the couple.

What role does the church play? One of the most challenging and rewarding of human relationships, marriage is meant to be lived out in a community of faith where it can be supported and nurtured by others seeking to grow in love, forgiveness, justice, and compassion. We invite and encourage those who choose to be married at Grace to be supported by and committed to this church community now and in the future. If the couple lives out of town, we’ll invite and encourage you to find a community that will support you in your life together.

What preparation is required? A member of the clergy will meet with the couple for a series of premarital conversations. These meetings are opportunities to discuss the relationship, hopes and plans for the future and any particular challenges that the couple faces.

What about flowers? How many people does the church seat? What does this cost? How do I get on the calendar? What about music? Can we...? If you are interested in having your wedding at Grace, please contact our office and request a copy of our “Wedding Guidelines” which includes information about our facilities, planning details, and a copy of the marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer.

WHAT ARE THE MEANS THAT MAKE GRACE CHURCH POSSIBLE?

The short answer is “...through the gifts of time, talents, energy, and financial resources of its members.”

We give our time to serve on committees, do spring clean-ups, serve as greeters, visit the sick, and a whole host of things to make the Church be a servant of Christ here in this place.

We give of our talents to be lay readers, choir members, musicians, to teach church school, serve as acolytes, and fill other roles important to the life of the Church.

We participate in educational classes, group discussions, the CROP Walk, social outreach, and social functions as fit our individual needs and sense of calling.

And we contribute such resources as we are able to keep the air conditioning on in the summer and the furnace on in the winter, and to remunerate the staff for all they mean to the health of the Church. Our gifts also support local outreach ministries as well as contribute to the worldwide ministry of the Episcopal Church. At least a tenth of our parish budget is allocated to such outreach ministries.

The Church receives our gifts of time, talents, and money and puts them to work for the twofold mission of the Church: the worship of God and the work of offering God’s love in the world. Every expenditure, from the postage stamps used to order a selection of music for use by the choir, to the salary of the rector, to the payment of the electric bill and the diocesan assessment, should express one or both of these missions – for they are the “business” of the Church.

Grace’s daily operations are supported by the weekly voluntary contributions of the members. Indications of a member’s financial support are taken in an annual pledge campaign in the fall from which the church’s operating budget is formulated. Typically there are monthly announcements from the Church Treasurer in the service bulletin as to the progress we are making toward meeting our financial obligations, and quarterly statements are sent to each family confirming their level of giving (and the accuracy of our bookkeeping) to date. Giving envelopes and pledge cards are available at the church office. Electronic transfers are also available. A copy of the annual budget is available for you in the church office as well. You are welcome and encouraged to pick up a copy.

Grace is in good financial condition – an indication of the measure of love and support the people have for the church. Grace has very little debt, has some endowment funds that are reserved for special purposes, and from time to time there are occasional appeals for the support of special projects that are not included in the budget.

If you consider membership at Grace, we welcome you for what Grace can be and do for you. We hope you find this to be a place in which your spiritual needs are met. If they are, your response to add to this vibrant, healthy place, whatever it can be, will be welcome.

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE AT GRACE? IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The Episcopal Church has a tradition of holy orders, but we also believe in the “priesthood of believers”: that through baptism everyone becomes a full member of the Body of Christ and is called to ministry. The structure within which we make our decisions reflects this belief; the model we use is one in which authority is shared.

On the parish level, we are governed by the collaborative work of the Vestry and Rector and the Annual Meeting of the Parish. The Vestry at Grace consists of twelve elected members, each of whom serves a three-year term. Among those twelve are a Senior and Junior Warden who, along with the Treasurer, are the officers of the parish. Each Vestry member sits on a commission and becomes the link between the various ministries of the church and the governing body. Vestry leads and guides the parish, paying particular attention to vision, management of funds, program, people, and outreach. The Annual Meeting of the Parish occurs in January. All members of the parish have a voice and vote in the election of new Vestry members, the passing of a budget, and any particular “issues” of the parish that are presented and discussed.

On the diocesan level, we are one of 63 parishes in the Diocese of Western Michigan, which is essentially the western half of the Lower Peninsula. Our Bishop serves as “apostle, chief priest, and pastor” to these parishes and the approximately 18,000 Episcopalians who are its members. Every spring, clergy and lay representatives from each parish gather for Diocesan Convention, the body that governs alongside the Bishop. The Convention approves the budget, wrestles with contemporary church issues, considers proposed resolutions and canon changes, and elects people to serve in diocesan and national capacities.

As Episcopalians we are also a part of a National Church, governed by a Presiding Bishop, Executive Council, and a General Convention which meets every three years. Our national structure is similar to the United States government, having been framed by many of the same people. The General Convention meets in two houses, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. The House of Bishops is made up of the bishops of the dioceses across the United States. Deputies are elected by their diocese and are both lay and clergy. Both houses must pass a motion for it to be adopted. The General Convention approves a budget for the triennial, elects members to serve on Executive Council, and considers resolutions dealing with everything from the Book of Common Prayer to the Constitution and Canons of the Church to ecumenical relations. Every nine years Convention elects a Presiding Bishop.

As Episcopalians, we are members of the worldwide Anglican Communion (see the page on Anglicanism). At this level, the 38 Provinces have their own independent structures of governance, but the Primates (leaders of the Provinces) and Anglican Consultative Council (clergy and lay representatives from around the world) gather regularly to consider pastoral, national, and international matters. Once every ten years the Bishops gather for the Lambeth Conference, which traditionally confers rather than legislates as they strive to maintain unity in this worldwide body.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE CHURCH'S CALENDARS?

Like most Episcopal churches, Grace operates on three different calendars. One is the “calendar year,” January through December, which is also our fiscal year in which we keep track of pledge income, salaries, and other receipts and expenditures. Second is the “program year,” Labor Day to Memorial Day, with the summer serving not only as break time but also as a time for planning. Third, and providing the most meaningful framework for all the rest, is the “Liturgical Year.”

The Liturgical Year begins with Advent on the Sunday nearest to November 30, so that each Advent has four Sundays leading up to Christmas. This is a time of waiting and expectation. As Israel waited for the birth of the Messiah, we await his second coming with hope and expectation hearing the stories of John the Baptist, the Annunciation and the Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth. Each Sunday as the service begins, we light another candle on the Advent wreath, as sign of “the light of the world” that is to come.

Christmas Day, the “Feast of the Incarnation,” starts the season of Christmas, which lasts through January 5 (“Twelfth Night”). The expectation of Advent gives way to a time of celebration that Christ is born as we gather with Mary and Joseph and hear the angels sing out with joy, “Glory to God in the Highest!”

The season of Epiphany begins on January 6 and refers literally to the “manifestation” of Christ to all the world, through his baptism, miracles, and proclamation of the Kingdom of God. During this season, we hear how Jesus called the disciples to “Come follow me,” and we too are (re)invited to follow. The length of the season varies depending on the date of Easter.

The season of Lent, a time of self-examination, spiritual discipline, and reconciliation begins on Ash Wednesday, 40 days before Easter. We enter into a “wilderness time” with one another and Christ, simplifying the sanctuary, emphasizing our need for prayer and renewal and tending to the good news message of reconciliation that we have to offer to the world. Lent culminates in the dramatic observances of Palm Sunday, the events of Holy Week and Triduum - the “Three Days” before Easter – when we remember Jesus’ last supper with his disciples and we sit at the foot of the cross.

On Easter we rejoice that “Christ has risen!” and begin a fifty-day celebration of his resurrection and its proclamation throughout the world. Throughout this season, we hear readings weekly from the book of Acts about how the disciples wrestled with the challenge of the gospel’s good news. Ascension Day (always on a Thursday near the end of Easter) begins a brief period of waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit to be fulfilled at Pentecost.

Pentecost is another major feast day, the birthday of the Church. We wear red, hear the gospel read in various languages and celebrate the coming of the Spirit. The following Sunday is Trinity Sunday, an acknowledgment of the mystery of the triune God, and then comes a long series of “Sundays after Pentecost” during which the main celebrations are All Saints’ Sunday (the first Sunday in November) and the festival of Christ the King, which is the last Sunday before Advent.

These important seasonal rhythms in our communal life are observed in our services at Grace in a variety of ways. The appointed Scripture readings and sermons follow thematic patterns; likewise, the congregational hymns and the choir anthems fit the seasons. The colors of the altar hangings and other fabrics vary by season, as do the forms used for the Prayers of the People, the Eucharistic Prayer and the music for such fixed forms as the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy”).

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MEMBERSHIP IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The Episcopal Church is a welcoming church within the Anglican tradition. God joins us together into the Church through the rite of baptism. Once baptized, you are forever a member of the body of Christ.

Any Christian Baptism is accepted by the Episcopal Church. Baptism in a Christian community is the only condition the Episcopal Church requires for membership. Once baptized, the condition of membership is met, no matter in which denomination you were baptized.

I am not a baptized Christian. Can I be baptized at Grace? Absolutely. We offer classes for both youth and adults who wish to be baptized and for parents to prepare for the baptism of infants. The Church will support you in this personal journey and guide you along the way.

I come from a tradition with a Confirmation process. Does the Episcopal Church have this too? Grace has a Confirmation process as well as a Reception process for those confirmed in another faith. Please contact the church office or rector for the details on what steps are involved.

What other Christian traditions do Episcopalians come from? Our members come from many different traditions. Relatively few of our members are “cradle Episcopalians” in the sense they were baptized and have only ever been Episcopalians. Our doors, and our hearts, are open to all.

May I participate in Church services and activities without commitment of Membership? You need not be a full member of the Church to participate. You are welcome to attend our worship services at any time. You may join the choir, participate in our many events, act as a greeter or coffee hour host, or join a commission – all you need to do is ask! We invite you to participate in worship and our fellowship! If you find Grace to be the kind of faith community you are looking for, we would be pleased to have you formally join us.

How do I obtain voting rights in the Church? Voting rights are reserved for those people who are 16 years old or older, are communicants in good standing, and contribute to the well being of the Church. If you meet these criteria, you are qualified to vote on matters that come before the congregation.

Where can I get more information? Please contact the church office or the rector if you have other general or specific questions. The office and rector can also assist with Letters of Transfer should you decide to move your membership from another church to ours.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF GRACE'S HISTORY?

Grace Church of Holland (Episcopal)—to use its legal name—is one of the oldest churches in Holland. Outside the Reformed/Christian Reformed orbit, only the Methodists have been here longer. In the years just after the Civil War, the Episcopal diocese in Detroit considered the Lakeshore area in the west a missionary district. A priest came over from Ionia one Sunday in **August 1866** to conduct two services and baptize 11 persons. Later, the rector of the church in Grand Haven held occasional services in the home of a community leader, Manly D. Howard, and in the **fall of 1867** the group decided to formally organize as a parish. The Rev. J. Rice Taylor, with the title Missionary Rector, added not only Holland but also Saugatuck to his duties in Grand Haven.

Three other church buildings preceded what we now call Grace Church, which became home to the parish in 1954. The group met at first in a remodeled schoolhouse on 10th Street, between River and Central Avenues. This was destroyed—along with most of the town's center—in the fire of 1871. The group then met over a saloon for a while, then in the town hall, but services were sporadic until a handsome new building was completed in the Carpenter Gothic style in 1873, on the corner of 11th and Pine. This was also destroyed by fire, in 1886. Grace's third home was on 9th Street just west of River, the building now occupied by the Civic Theater. Some present-day parishioners look back to that building as the place of their baptism or wedding. But by the early 1950s we had outgrown it, and the present church was erected. Thirty years later more room was needed, so the church was expanded to the north and west and the St. Andrew's Courtyard and Resurrection Garden were added.

But this is getting ahead of the story. It wasn't only the two fires (plus another in 1886 that damaged the rector's home) that made the first thirty years **a period of struggle**. There was the debt resulting from needing to rebuild because of the fires, a frequent turnover of priests, and dwindling membership from the 70 enrolled at Grace's inception causing services sometimes to be held irregularly. But fortunately, the ethnic and ecclesiastical prejudice that existed in earlier times was beginning to fade away.

The next forty years were **a time of stabilization**, despite rectors staying, on average, for less than three years. For more than thirty years, Grace's rector also served the Saugatuck parish. Soon after the turn of the century, Grace was able to add a Guild Room, a rectory, and a pipe organ. Occasional signing services were held for the hearing-impaired (led by a diocesan General Missionary to Deaf-Mutes) and summer services on Ottawa Beach. But in the Depression, when the rectory had to be sold to make ends meet, it became more difficult to call and keep priests. Sometimes the parish had to settle for one still in seminary. Especially important during this time was a succession of dedicated lay members, women and men, who helped keep Grace going and growing.

The 25-year **ministry of "Father Warner"** (whose portrait hangs above the ramp area in the Commons) began in 1943. By mid-century Grace had 300 communicants and it was time to relocate—where the church building now stands. Warner led the parish through this major undertaking and then, in the turbulent '60s, helped set the course for a positive response to movements such as liturgical reform and concern about racism at home and the needs of developing nations abroad. His sudden death in 1968 left much still to be done in several important areas.

Now to touch quickly on developments during the five rectorates since 1968 on aspects of parish life that we take for granted today, but have only come into being in recent decades. **In the 1970s:** Eucharist every Sunday at the main service; the first woman elected to the Vestry; building up a sizable cadre of lay readers (now called LEM's); the commission system; St. Martha's Guild; an increase in Outreach, both in dollar giving and in local social concerns; ecumenical relations with other local churches; more participation in diocesan affairs. **In the '80s:** the first woman from Grace to be ordained; Stephen Ministry; Cursillo; building expansion; the Infant (now Child) Care Center; Taizé music; healing services; and adding a part-time clergy staff member. **In the '90s and since:** revitalized youth ministry; "Holy Chow"; increased laypersons' role in pastoral care; regular off-site communions in local care facilities; greater variety of musical styles in Sunday services; the weekly service for contemplative prayer and meditation.

See a fuller account of Grace at www.GraceEpiscopalHolland.org. Even more "History" is also available on request.

DOES GRACE HAVE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE?

Yes, the Parish came together in a visioning process in the winter of 2003 with leadership from consultant Michael Smith. Approximately fifty parishioners with eight trained parish facilitators met to identify the Charism of Grace. Following that work, Vestry met in a two-day retreat to develop our Vision and long-range Goals for Grace Church.

The Visioning Process document as it appears below was circulated to the entire parish in the newsletter and bulletin inserts and was discussed in Adult Education forums during 2004. The Commissions have used the goals and strategies for their work in subsequent months.

Our Charism

Our Episcopal identity: a faith built on Scripture, tradition, and reason.

Our Vision for Grace Church in the year 2010

We strive to be:

- Faithful to the mission of the Church, and to our unique charism as an Episcopal parish,
- A congregation supporting and matching the energetic leadership of clergy,
- A congregation supporting each other and holding each other accountable for ongoing spiritual growth,
- Rooted in our Episcopal/Anglican tradition and able to articulate that identity to the local community,
- Creating opportunities for nurturing each other, ever strengthening our sense of community and caring,
- Proactively contributing to meeting the needs of the greater community,
- Nurtured by stimulating worship and challenging preaching.

Our Goals

To achieve this vision, we will focus energy and attention on specific ministry areas. Goals have been established for these seven areas. The specific strategies are being developed further with guidance from the Vestry, by Commissions or task force to which the goal is delegated.

- **Church Family/Pastoral Care** – To provide support within the parish family through caring, nurturing and healing ministries and to invigorate the church family towards the love of God in one another while embracing a growing church.
- **Christian Education** – To develop an engaging, vibrant Christian Formation program for all ages, preparing us for mission and ministry.
- **Worship** – To be a church that respects diversity of worship styles within the Anglican tradition, energizing us for mission and ministry.
- **Fellowship** – To value strong relationships within the parish, nurturing us for mission and ministry.
- **Outreach** – To energize and engage the parish for outreach activities as the Gospel calls us.
- **Marketing** – To clearly and simply identify and inform the parish and the community about Grace Episcopal Church and how it lives its faith.
- **Collaborative Ministry** – To be a parish of collaborative ministry that is interactive, mutually accountable and respectful.