



ANNUAL REPORT

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2024



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Rector's Reflection

To everything there is a season.



“To everything there is a season,” we hear in the book of Ecclesiastes, an extraordinary collection of sayings that is part of what we call the Wisdom tradition in the Hebrew texts. To everything there is a season, and within each season, we look for meaning and we trust that the presence of God is with us. And we trust that God is with us because God is trustworthy.

This wisdom saying feels very true to me this year, and we find ourselves in a deeply meaningful season as a parish.

This is the 197th year of Grace’s life as a Christian community, as an Episcopal parish. I think back to those first few who gathered in homes back in 1828, and what they experienced in that season of the parish’s life. Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams and was elected President, and his policies led to the forced movement of native tribes out of this part of the state. There were only 24 states in the Union at that point in total. The Medical College of Georgia was founded that year, with which many families in this parish have links. In that year as well, and the following year 1829, gold was discovered in “old Hall County, what is now Lumpkin County, launching a gold rush in North Georgia.

In many ways, those first parishioners of the fledgling Grace Episcopal Church lived in a different world. But in many ways their lives were the same: they raised their families, they supported their neighbors, they helped build their community, they sought meaning in their lives, they shared their gifts and strengths, they struggled and wrestled with being human, and they worshiped God and shared in the common prayers that have shaped this particular church for all these years.

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I think about them a lot as we now focus our attention on this seminal season in our lives, and look at where we are as a community. I give thanks for the strength of this parish: for our financial stability and the generosity embodied in this place to invest in our spiritual lives and support our neighbors; for our spiritual imagination and the ways we continue to learn and grow and practice our prayers; for the dedication of all those who share their gifts on the Vestry, our committees and guilds and classes and gatherings. I give thanks for the compassion I experience in the wider town, the diocese, and beyond as I hear others in this community express their gratitude for the witness of this parish. I give thanks for the way we embody music and beauty and art and creativity.

Yes, this year will be a deeply meaningful year for us, and I remember that we can feel different emotions at one time. This October, we will celebrate the ten incredible years that we have shared with Cynthia. To be able to work alongside my friend for a decade has been an honor and a privilege, and I know you all feel such gratitude and pride in the holy work you have shared with her.

I also give thanks for Brandon and his family's willingness to come here and begin his ministry as a priest. The parish where you first serve as a priest helps shape your ministry for the rest of your vocation (for better or worse, right?), and it makes me very proud to see you all working and listening and praying alongside each other in a space that invites Brandon to share his incredible gifts.



I give thanks for the incredible staff who have been so faithful for so many years. Their constant presence has helped this parish remain strong and faithful, and I know you all are grateful as well. It truly is an extraordinary group of souls.

I also give thanks for the Vestry and the leadership committees and guilds who share their expertise and their gifts across the full spectrum of the parish's life. In particular now, looking at my eleventh year with you, I give thanks for the deep wisdom and dedication of the wardens of this parish. The Senior and Junior Wardens embody the dedication and grace of this parish, and I am very thankful for them. Sonja McLendon's giftedness has graced this parish for two years in her term as Senior Warden, and I give thanks to God for her willingness to serve. Now, we look toward a season with Stuart Deaderick beginning his term as Senior Warden, and I know his enthusiasm and sincerity will be a gift for us all as well.

Finally, for our Children of Grace Preschool, let us all give thanks. COG's presence in this community bears fruit, as we have seen, throughout the generations. Thanks be to God for the opportunity to walk down that hallway each day and be reminded of what joy looks like.



We have much to be thankful for, and our gratitude should inspire us to live even more fully into the Gospel's call on our life. In this year's Annual Report, you will see a snapshot of this community's shared life of prayer and ministry. You will see your own faithfulness embodied within our Administration, Formation, Compassion, Participation, and Liturgy & Creative Expression Clusters. You will see the incredible result of your willingness to share your financial gifts with your parish community, and you will see how that participation enables us to embody the love of Christ in the world today.

You will also see how we have positioned ourselves for growth with our Mission and Vision Statements, as outlined in what Sonja McLendon has shared with the Senior Warden's report. You will see the fruits of the building renovation work and the Capital Campaign in Julia Greene's Junior Warden's report. You'll see our financial health in what Amy Munn, our Treasurer, shares. Above all, what you see in these reports and figures is two things: the movement of the Holy Spirit which invites us to share our lives, and your willingness to participate with that vision.

For all this in this season of our life, I am enormously grateful.

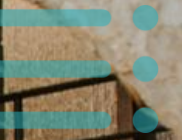
Blessings

Stuart

submitted by The Rev. Dr. Stuart Higginbotham, Rector



Finance Report





Grace Episcopal Church in 2023 had an excellent fiscal year because of increased revenues and the management of costs and expenses. Reba Page and all the staff have managed the expenses well below the budget. As a result of decreased expenses and increased revenues, the Church finished the year with a surplus. As a result of the surplus, the Finance Committee has recommended for the 2024 budget that \$50,000 be transferred to the Doug Smith Outreach Fund and that \$44,730.74 be transferred to the Building Reserve Fund.

The Finance Committee is recommending a balanced budget for 2024. Projected revenues are anticipated to reach \$1,318,072 with total expenses equaling projected revenue. I know that I am repeating a statement from last year, but a sign of a healthy church is an increase in programs with an increase in pledges by the congregation to support such programs.

Three points of interest in the 2024 Budget:

- An increase in salaries for all full-time staff,
- Total Outreach will be \$112,000.00; and
- Pledges have increased for 2024.



Children of Grace continue to have revenues more than its budget. The program has flourished in 2023 with all classes being completely occupied with students. All classes for 2024 are full and a student waiting list has been established by the Director.

The Finance Committee can assure you that the finances of the Church are exemplary. Thank you staff and clergy for your dedication, leadership and support of the Finance Committee and the programs at Grace. Thank you, members of the Finance Committee, for participating in meetings and sharing your thoughts, advice, and guidance in making financial recommendations to the Vestry.

submitted by Randall Frost, Chairman, Finance Committee



Statement 2023 & Budget 2024

	2023 BUDGET	2023 ACTUAL	2024 BUDGET	
INCOME	Pledges	1,061,944.00	1,124,700.49	1,123,472.00
	Plate Offerings	150,000.00	145,716.88	150,000.00
	Prior Year Pledges			6,000.00
	Transfer to Outreach		(50,000.00)	
	Building Use Income	26,275.00	28,082.50	30,000.00
	GWAG Income			
	Misc. Income	1,500.00	2,492.67	2,500.00
	Interest Ameris Money Market		2,332.12	1,500.00
	Transfer from COG	4,600.00	4,499.96	4,600.00
	TOTAL	\$ 1,244,319.00	\$ 1,257,824.62	\$ 1,318,072.00
EXPENSES	Diocesan Support	111,270.00	111,270.00	111,355.00
	Outreach	42,000.00	42,000.00	62,000.00
	Salaries & Benefits	706,337.41	689,138.61	748,300.62
	Building & Grounds	230,400.00	254,294.93	240,100.00
	Administration	86,411.59	103,843.16	90,316.38
	Programs & Committees	29,300.00	17,980.24	29,300.00
	Music & Worship	38,600.00	39,297.68	36,700.00
	TOTAL	\$ 1,244,319.00	\$ 1,257,824.62	\$ 1,318,072.00



Statement of Funds at 12.31.23

GENERAL FUNDS	
Prepaid 2024 pledges	154,447.16
Prepaid 2025 pledges	10,000.00
Prepaid 2026 pledges	9,781.96
Rector Discretionary Fund	44,215.34
Flower Donation Fund	9,490.83
Doug Smith Outreach Fund	49,382.36
Friends of Music	58,681.24
Other designated funds	75,196.95
Sunday Evening Service/Formation	14,889.92
Reserve/Unrestricted Funds	200,403.77
TOTAL	\$626,489.53

CAPITAL FUNDS	
Building Reserve	522,248.13
Bicentennial Campaign/Building Fund	455,302.93
Nave Windows	(1,420.48)
Columbarium Fund	(21,319.33)
Memorial Fund	47,601.88
TOTAL	\$1,002,413.13

ENDOWMENT FUNDS	
Van Giesen Endowment	525,420.43
Grace Ministries Endowment	150,005.17
Wilheit Endowment	500,858.14
TOTAL	\$1,176,283.74

CHILDREN OF GRACE PRESCHOOL	
Designated Funds	58,285.57
Building Reserve	71,825.49
Operating Reserve	122,497.20
TOTAL	\$252,608.26



Vestry



Outgoing Vestry

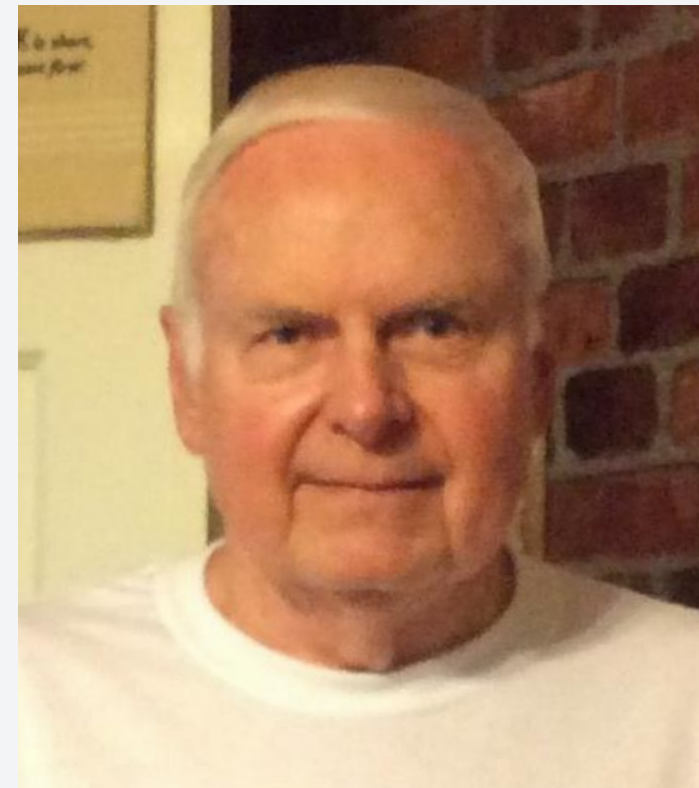
Thank you to these vestry members, who have faithfully served a three year term.



Barbara Batog



Daniel Grizzle



Vance Holifield



Sonja McLendon



Vestry 2024

Term ends 2025



Julia Greene



Frank Rinker



Jim Brim



Stuart Deaderick



Sue Bowron



Kimberley Boyd

NEWLY ELECTED!

Term ends 2027



Beth Neidenbach



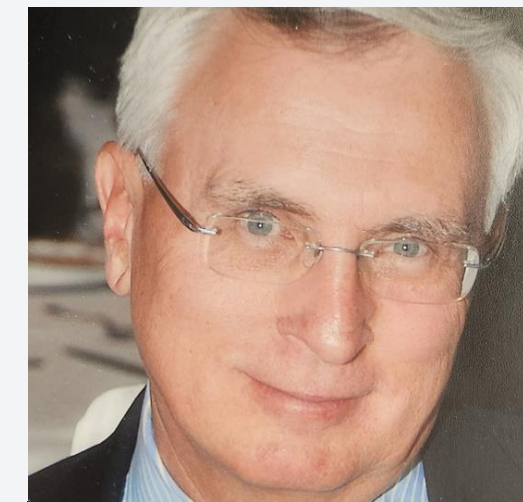
Sally Pittman



Helen Scovill



Anita Smith



Steve Carlson



Cheryl Kelley



Senior Warden's Report





As we move closer to our Bicentennial Celebration, we are reminded of those who came before us, those who are here with us now, and those who will carry on in the future. We are so fortunate to have a rich and well documented history of faithful servants, committed to caring for each other and our community as Christ loved us.

Over the past three years, the vestry has taken time to establish a strategic plan for the future of Grace, evaluating where we are and where we want to be for the future. We have gathered information from the parish and from our community, through forums, surveys, and many conversations, and had deep and spirited discussions about how to best achieve our goals, including a renewed focus on Children, Youth, and Families. We are so pleased to welcome Brandon and his family to Grace, and we prepare to celebrate the legacy that Cynthia leaves after a decade of sharing her gifts with us.

Last year, we renewed our [Bicentennial Capital Campaign](#), calling on the original vision of the men and women who established our Episcopal community in 1828 with the hope that they would create a space for love, prayer, and belonging. And as we realized such overwhelming support for this effort, we recognized that we had the opportunity to evaluate Grace's mission and vision statements for the future.



As with all of our other work, we took this seriously, spending time in prayer and in conversation with our parish members, to conduct this work over the past year. Our mission expresses the work that we do every day, who we are as a parish. Our vision is aspirational, who we see ourselves to be in the future.

As imagined in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Our Mission

Grace Episcopal Church is a congregation in communion with all that is in God, seen and unseen. We are led by the example of Jesus Christ and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to support each other through prayer, formation, worship, and service.

Our Vision

We will welcome all with kindness, acceptance, and love, with God's help. We are Grace, grounded in faith and relentless in compassion.



These statements are more than words on a page; they serve as guiding principles for the work that we do as members of Grace and of our community. They allow us to weigh our decisions and check our assumptions, to align our actions to the mission and vision of Grace. They also allow us to tell the story of who we are and who we want to be.

We will continue to share this work throughout the year, and to use the mission and vision to guide us as we seek to refine our strategic plan and navigate the challenges facing our community.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a member of the Vestry for the past 3 years, and as your Senior Warden for the last two. It has been a deeply spiritual, educational, and rewarding experience, and I am honored to have been trusted with this role. I am humbled by the gifts of this parish, of our staff, and especially of Stuart, Cynthia, and Brandon to the people of Grace and to our larger community. Thank you all for creating a truly special space in keeping with the vision of our founders, and which will serve our community well into the future.

In Peace,
Sonja

submitted by Sonja McLendon, Senior Warden



Building Update





What an exciting time it has been at Grace!

All of this amazing work would not be possible without the dedicated staff who ensure every detail is carefully considered. And it certainly would not be possible without the extraordinary financial support received through the Annual Campaign and the Capital Campaign.

Thank you all!



We have almost completed the much anticipated renovation to the Grace Center. Here is a look at some of the behind the scenes happenings:

- The roof and brick work are complete
- Windows have been installed in the Youth Room
- New furnishings for the Youth Room have arrived and will be installed as soon as inside work is complete
- Work has begun on the bathroom renovations
- New front doors for the Grace Center have been selected and are in the process of being made
- Work has begun on door electronics for security and ADA accessibility
- Plans underway for new landscaping for the Grace Center
- The parking lot lights have been replaced



Other areas of the church campus have been getting some much-needed attention as well.

- A new full campus fire alarm has been installed
- The St. Francis Garden walkway and repairs are underway
- An additional flower cooler has been added
- The Choir Loft air conditioning units have been replaced
- New Columbarium niche vaults have been added
- An expansion tank (boiler repair) has been replaced

submitted by Julia Greene, Junior Warden





Ministry Reports





COMPASSION



Compassion

Key Highlights *from* 2023

- Vestry member Beth Neidenbach organized four summer forums to introduce some of our community partners to the wider parish family. This idea came out of one of the Warden's Gatherings with Stuart. On August 6, 13, 20, and 27 we hosted the directors from several of our community partners to provide us with current mission statements and a survey of challenges that each faces with a growing population.
- Parishioner donations to the Rector's Discretionary Fund totaled \$19,022.50, which includes \$9,190 from our parishioners living at Lanier Village Estates.
- School supplies and cash donations were collected and given to White Sulphur Elementary School.





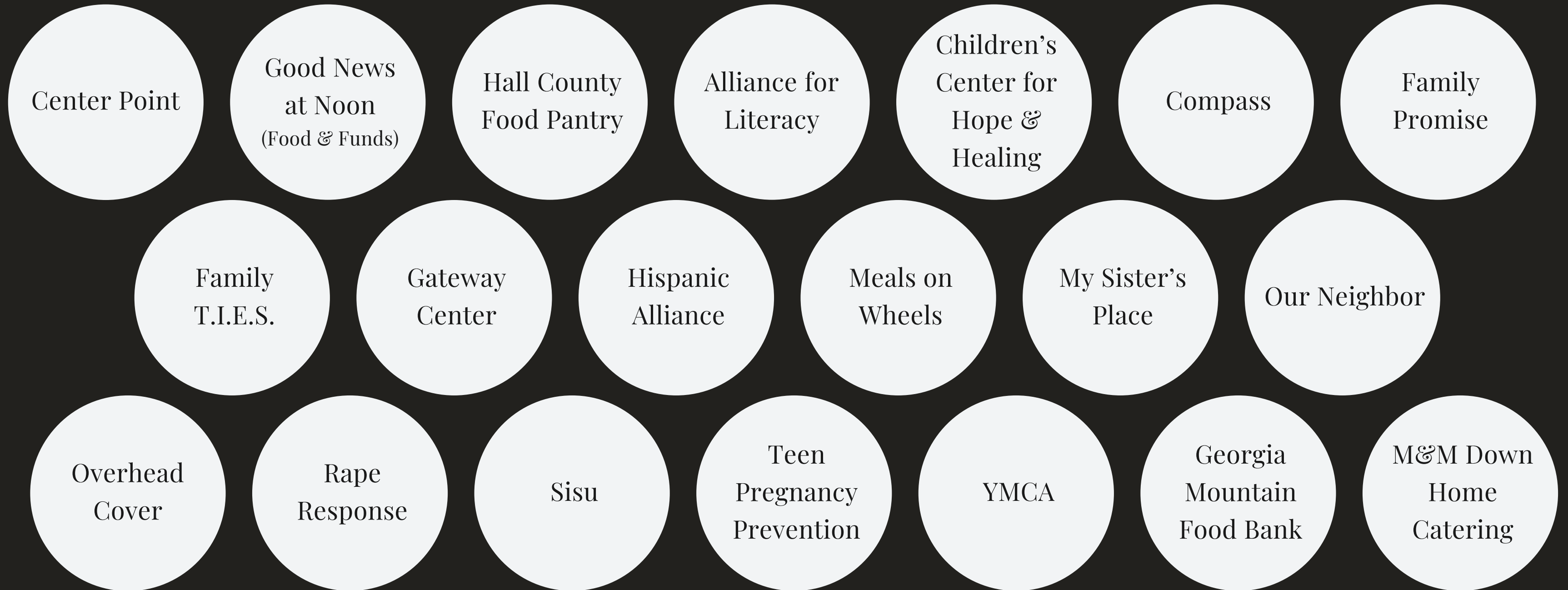
Compassion

Key Highlights *from 2023* *continued*

- Parishioners donated \$2,525 for the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem; and another \$1,475 from the Rector's Discretionary Fund for a total of \$4,000.
- Kathie Futrell completed her season as Chair of the Outreach Committee, serving for well over a decade in this leadership role; in 2023, facilitating the distribution of \$121,625, which includes \$42,000 from the Operating Budget and \$79,625 from the Doug Smith Sr. Fund to our community partners.
- Craig Carpenter agreed to serve as Chair for 2024, especially to facilitate discernment and discussion about greater effectiveness in collaborating with community ministry partners.
- The steering committee recognized that current needs in Hall County for food, shelter, financial assistance, and assistance exceed our capacity to adequately fund them in order to make a positive difference. The committee agreed to use 2024 to consider more effective ways to distribute the generous funds donated by members. NO CHANGES will be made to the grant application process for any agency in 2024. Changes -- if any -- in how Grace allocates funding would be announced well in advance of soliciting funding applications for 2025 and beyond.



Agency Partners Funded by Outreach



Total from Outreach Budget: **\$121,625**



*Agencies Which Received Funds from either an
Endowment or the Rector's Discretionary Fund in 2023*

Good News at
Noon (Funds)

Habitat for
Humanity

Hispanic
Alliance

Sacred Roots
Farm

Ninth District
Opportunity

from Endowment Funds: \$40,000.00

from Rector's Discretionary Fund: \$18,087.98

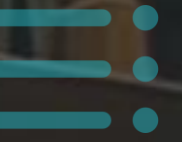
Total: **\$58,087.98**



Compassion

Focus Points *for* 2024

- Restructure the Outreach Committee so that it fosters greater parish-wide participation.
- Nurture an honest examination of the increased need in the community with a keen eye on what we can do as a parish.
- Address the needs in Hall County in the areas of:
 1. Homelessness and Hunger or Food Insecurity
 2. Unmanaged Mental Health
 3. Education Opportunities
- Consider more effective ways of partnering with community agencies so that financial grants can make a greater impact on sustaining or increasing the agencies' missions.



LITURGY & CREATIVE EXPRESSION





Liturgy & Creative Expression

Key Highlights *from* 2023

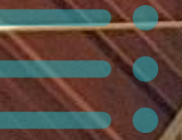
- The Grace Parish Choir received an invitation to serve as Choir-in-Residence at Exeter Cathedral in Exeter, England. We will present nightly choral evensongs August 5-11, 2024. As preparation for this exciting experience, the choir held an all day workshop in September with guest clinician Dr. Jonathan Pilkington. The choir offered three choral evensongs in 2023 and will continue to offer them for our parish and wider community.
- Grace Music Ministry continues to enhance worship services not only with the preparation of choral music each Sunday but also by weaving instrumentalists into our service. These include strings, harp, trumpets, woodwinds and handbells.
- Much thanks and appreciation to Jeremy Landers for his work with volunteers: Brian Bowron, Fred Kump, Doug Smith, Charles Kelley, and Paul Klas, that offer our services live-streamed to Facebook and making them available on our website.
- Compline continues to be offered on Tuesdays at 8:00 PM.
- Grace hosted the annual Christmas concerts for the Music Department of University of North Georgia, Dr. Ben Schoening, Department Head.

Liturgy & Creative Expression

Key Highlights *from 2023* continued

- Friends of Music organized and hosted Herb Buffington for an organ concert in March and The Orpheus Men's Ensemble in October. The concert was very well received and the ensemble was grateful to be able to perform in this lovely acoustic space.

The third annual Messiah Sing Along was also offered. The event was promoted as a community-wide event and was very well attended. The Christmas portion of Handel's Messiah was conducted by Music Director Lynn Swanson and featured a professional chamber orchestra and professional soloists. As admission to this event, the Outreach Team led by Dr. Cynthia Park sponsored a collection of non-perishable items for the Hall County Food Pantry. They also hosted the wine and cookie reception that followed.





Liturgy & Creative Expression

Key Highlights *from 2023* *continued*

- Grace held two Christmas Eve services: 4pm Children's Pageant; The Grace Parish Choir provided a pre-concert for the 10pm Mass. They presented various anthems for choir, soloists, orchestra and organ.
- Our Altar Guild continues to be a stalwart presence for every service we have throughout the year. Beth Neidenbach and the entire team work diligently to follow the liturgical calendar on Sundays as well as plan for weddings and funerals throughout the year.
- The entire Flower Guild, led by Margaret Whalen, shares their incredible gifts with the wider community for Sunday services as well as special seasonal moments in the church's life. In particular, their creativity during the Advent and Lenten seasons adds so much to the worship life of the parish.
- Our Brass Guild comes regularly to polish the offering plates, memorial plaques in the stained glass windows, and other items that we use in our worship. They are a perfect example of how small acts of kindness and dedication add enormously to the life of a community.

Worship Service Totals

108 Sunday Eucharists

80 Weekday Eucharists

43 Home Communions

41 Daily Office Services

5 Weddings

8 Funerals



Worship Attendance

384 Weekly Average Total

300 Weekly In Person

300 Sunday Total

211 Sunday In Person







Liturgy & Creative Expression

Focus Points *for* 2024

- Friends of Music began its fundraising drive earlier this year than in the past. Our fundraising campaign will begin in October. In addition to lending financial support for our Choir-in-Residence at Exeter Cathedral this year, we will be looking to add a nationally recognized organist and choir to our concert series for the 2024-25 year.
- As part of our preparation for residence at Exeter Cathedral, we will offer choral evensongs throughout the spring on scheduled Sunday afternoons at 4:00 PM. The Grace Parish Choir will leave for Exeter, England on August 4 and return on August 12. During that time we will sing six choral evensongs and one Sunday morning Eucharist.
- We have scheduled a fall choral evensong in honor of All Saints' Day. We are in the process of scheduling a guest organist concert for the middle of October.

New members are always welcome to our liturgy & music family whether it be through a choir or one of our guilds.



FORMATION



Children, Youth & Families Formation

Key Highlights *from* 2023

- Christian Education offerings for children and youth continue to be Godly Play for children Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade, Whirl for children in 4th and 5th grade, Episcopal Youth Community (EYC@GEC) for grades 6th through 12th.
- EYC@GEC discussed social media and faith in spring semester. Youth participated in a one-day confirmation retreat in February.
- Given that EYC@GEC has seen an influx of new faces this school year, fall semester included a walk through our catechism with a focus on reimagining what it means to be a beloved youth at Grace. What is God stirring in us?
- There has been increased youth engagement with diocesan events (EYCDioAtl), including youth serving in leadership roles.
- With Kathy Amos' help, youth packed and delivered meals to the unhoused.

Children, Youth & Families Formation

Key Highlights *from 2023* continued

- Parenting with Grace has been working through Sissy Goff's book, *The Worry-Free Parent: Living in Confidence So Your Kids Can Too*.
- Gatherings this year have included: ice skating, Dahlonega gold mine, and zip lining and Hardman Farm in Helen; Easter party with youth families; youth pool party at White Sulphur Farm; pizza and swimming with middle school families; families with young children gathered for chili and play time.
- Grace Church and Children of Grace Preschool collaborated to plan a successful Fall Festival.
- Families traveled to Lanier Village Estates for Christmas caroling. This was a lovely way to build community the week before our Christmas Pageant.





Key Highlights *from* 2023

The formative work with adults continues to be a central aspect of our common life at Grace. We have seen many new people come to the parish, from various backgrounds, and we continue to focus on ways to strengthen our awareness and engagement with our practice of prayer.

We continue to focus intently on how [The Center for Prayer and Spiritual Practice](#) can be a framework that nurtures intentional conversations and practices within the broader Christian tradition as well as with interfaith partners. The Center offers us a meaningful way to explore and strengthen our sense of self as we grow in our faith. 2023 was a time of growth and enrichment, as you will see from the highlighted notes, and 2024 promises to be full of opportunity!

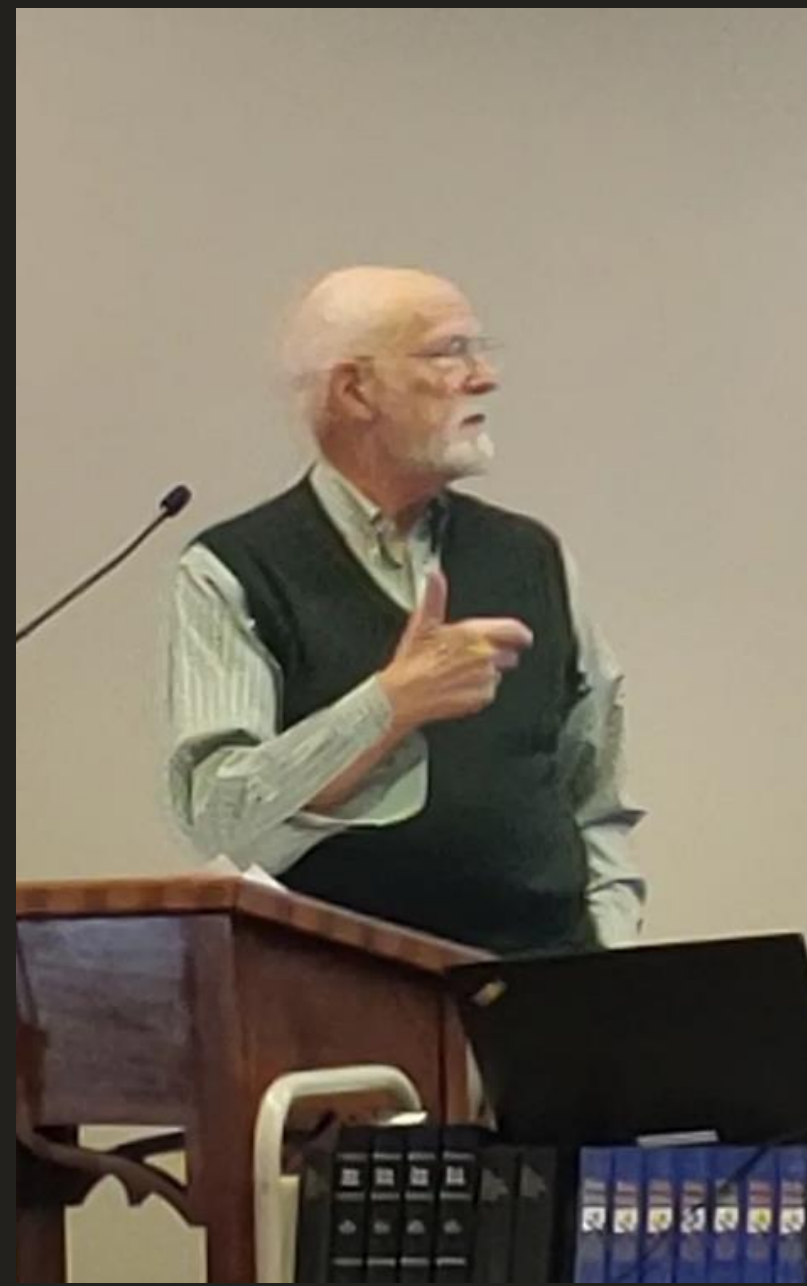
- The Sound of the Genuine retreat, featuring River Guergerian, Lerita Coleman Brown, Barbara Brown Taylor, Bobbi Patterson, and Rebecca Parker
- The ongoing gatherings of the T-3 Men's theological study group
- The Rev. John Cromartie led Sunday School, focusing on the life and teachings of Howard Thurman

Adult Formation

Key Highlights *from 2023* continued

- The Women's Group continues to be a wonderful space for formation and fellowship.
- Holy Week reflections and conversations
- Newcomer's Class preparing for Confirmation and Reception in The Episcopal Church
- Dialogues in Creation summer series
- Centering Prayer workshop in July
- DOK commissioned eleven new daughters
- Ongoing yoga groups and the Centering Prayer group which meets regularly
- Weekday Bible studies
- Symposium on Holy Living, Holy Dying







Focus Points *for* 2024

- Recruiting teachers, assistants, and parent leaders for children & youth formation
- Encouraging continued family gatherings
- Encouraging worship leadership for children and youth, specifically a team of youth assisting with Evensong liturgy
- Encouraging continued participation in EYCDioAtl events, especially in leadership roles
- Including children, youth, and families in outreach and service opportunities
- Children's Chapel revisioning that allows for a clearer sense of purpose: a space for children to participate in the liturgy of the Word at their own developmental level
- Further engagement and partnership with COG Preschool and Lanier Village Estates
- Completed renovation of spaces will allow for flexibility of discussion and learning



Focus Points *for* 2024

- February weekday Bible study “Field and Stream”
- March 9 retreat on The Power of Presence
- The Center for Prayer and Spiritual Practice’s retreat year for intentional conversation and formation
- September 21 conference at Emory featuring the 40th anniversary of Contemplative Outreach and the ministry of Centering Prayer



PARTICIPATION





Participation

Key Highlights *from* 2023

When it comes to “participation,” we are speaking about the parish-wide opportunities for fellowship and conversation. This is the area of the community’s life that focuses on our connection to one another, and we are blessed with so many active parishioners who share their time and gifts with one another.

- **January** Women's Retreat, Men's Ministry Get on Target event
- **February** Annual Meeting, Children's Trampoline Park Outing, Pancake Supper/
Shrove Tuesday, The Sound of the Genuine retreat
- **March** Organ Concert: Herb Buffington, Youth Service Project, Children’s Bowling
Outing, Evensong
- **April** Men’s Ministry Wine Tasting, Easter brunch, Youth Egg Hunt
- **May** Concert: New South Festival Singers, Graduate Recognition, Youth Pool Party
- **June** Evensong, Youth Dahlonaga Outing
- **July** Newcomer Luncheon, Day in the Mountains & Vogel picnic, Bicentennial
Campaign Project Groundbreaking

Participation

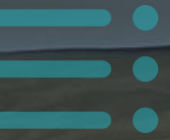
Key Highlights *from 2023* continued

- **August** School Supply & Food Pantry Drives, back to school celebration, diocesan youth tubing trip, Potluck Lunch to welcome the Rev. Dr. Brandon Nonnemaker & family
- **September** Feast Day Breakfast, weekday bible study begins
- **October** Blessing of Animals, Foyers Gathering, The Art of Taking Refuge mini-retreat, Concert: Orpheus Men's Ensemble, Fall Festival (COG preschool and Grace)
- **November** Holy Living and Holy Dying seminar, Evensong, Thanksgiving Potluck
- **December** Advent Wreath Making, Advent Yoga, Sound Bath, Family Christmas Caroling, Messiah Sing Along

You will see that 2024 offers many opportunities for community fellowship, please take advantage of these spaces to get to know one another better.







ADMINISTRATION





Key Highlights *from* 2023

- Renewed focus on Children, Youth and Family ministries
- Hiring of Brandon Nonnemaker – Associate Rector for Children, Youth and Families
- Additional flower cooler for Sacristy installed
- Addition of two new columbarium bays completed = 140 additional niches
- COG Preschool - addition of artificial turf for playground
- Bicentennial Campaign resumed and revised for 3 year term - projects to include Grace Center remodel including bathrooms and youth room, ADA accessibility, landscaping and signage
- CVD Committee renamed to the Buildings and Grounds Committee
- Groundbreaking for the Grace Center construction
- Fr. Stuart joined the faculty at the Candler School of Theology at Emory as Assistant Professor
- Bob Pennington and David Hauserman rotated on the Endowment Committee



Administration

Key Highlights *from* 2023

- FDIC coverage increased through IntraFi for funds at both Peach State Bank and Ameris Bank in excess of \$250,000
- Endowment funds dispersed to the following: Habitat for Humanity \$15,000, Hispanic Alliance \$5,000, Good News at Noon \$5,000, Good News Clinics \$15,000
- Tipton Construction began on remodel for the Grace Center
- Brandon Nonnemaker's ordination
- Church's technology updated to 2-step authentication
- New fire alarm system installed
- Annual Diocesan Council in November
- Vestry Retreat with enneagram activities
- Formulating new parish-wide vision statement
- 2022 church audit by Aldridge and Associates
- New furniture for youth room and classroom ordered from McGarity's
- Successful 2024 stewardship campaign
- New A/C unit purchased for Grace Center



Administration

Focus Points *for* 2024

- Completion of Bicentennial Campaign projects
- New signage for exterior and interior
- New furniture for youth room and classroom delivered
- New landscaping for Grace Center installed
- Parochial Report
- 2023 Audit



Children of Grace Preschool





Fundraising

Spring Fling

March 17, 2023

We raised **\$13,918.09**, after all expenses, thanks to generous donations from our parents, Grace parishioners, and Gainesville/Hall County community

Ornament Sale

\$650 was raised for our 3rd year for COG commemorative ornaments.



Summer Sessions



- 33 new students to COG, retained 17 for the 2023-2024 academic year
- 19 COG alums returned for K & 1st

Summer sessions included Spanish, dance, and playball as extracurriculars



2023–2024 Academic Year

- Enrollment numbers continue to reflect positive increase: Enrollment started at 100 students from Pre-Toddler thru Pre-K, January 2024 Enrollment is 104 students
- COG was lucky enough to add 5 new classroom teachers to an already exceptional teaching staff. We are also hosting a work study student who supports one of our younger classrooms on Fridays.

August

- COG Imaginative Play Room began is continues to be built out. This room gives our students an opportunity for imaginative play outside of the classroom.
- Hosted Tears and Cheers on 1st Day of School for COG parents to gather, have coffee and pastries and get to one another and Fr. Brandon
- All classrooms are communicating thru Class Dojo
- Pre-K continues to use FrogStreet curriculum. 3s begin using FrogStreet to support our building blocks to Pre-K. FrogStreet aligns with Gainesville City School curriculum and received high praise from Hall County School contacts.
- Extracurriculars (Playball, Dance, Tumbling, and Spanish) started back up again and have gone well so far. We added Process Art for the 2023-2024 year.



2023-2024 Academic Year *continued*

September

- Started monthly partnership with Hall County Library. Children's librarians come in monthly to read to COG students.
- Mother Goose visited for her 1st of 2 visits. Our students focused on Me! Marvelous Me! with her
- STEAM Programming: Elachee came to deliver a program on animals and habitats
- Hosted Pastries with Parents to give parents an opportunity to learn about COG and answer any questions they may have

October

- Pre-K hosted Breakfast Buddies which gives parents an opportunity to come in, have breakfast and be a part of their child's class for the morning
- Pre-K had their 1st field trip to GTA's WonderQuest's performance of The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe
- Partnered with Gainesville Fire Department for Fire Safety Week
- COG's 2nd book fair thanks to Parishioner Jennifer Mullis and Usborne books. Proceeds from the book fair allowed us to supplement every classroom's library from teacher wish lists, gave us 100 books for our school library, and gift every child at COG a book for Christmas
- COG hosted our 2nd Family Movie night in conjunction with Grace's Fall Festival. It was so much fun and well attended by COG kiddos both past and present



2023–2024 Academic Year *continued*

November

- Pre-K parents joined us for the Pre-K Pies and Performance Thanksgiving celebration.

December

- Well attended and successful Christmas Performance of Say Cheese for Christmas!
- 2023 commemorative COG ornaments handmade by COG staff. We raised \$650 to support improvements for the preschool

January 2023

- 2nd STEAM programming in school. Elachee brought Star lab for 2s, 3s, and 4s.
- 2023-2024 Registration opened January 17th
- 86 students have registered for the 2024-2025 school year as of Friday 1/19/24

Clergy & Staff

The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham, DMin. *Rector*

The Rev. Cynthia Park, PhD. *Senior Associate Rector*

The Rev. Brandon Nonnemaker, EdD. *Associate Rector
for Children, Youth & Families*

The Rev. Mary R. Hemmer *Priest Associate*

Lynn Swanson *Music Director/Organist*

Reba Page *Parish Administrator/Finance*

Brenda Morgan *Executive Assistant to the Clergy*

Jennifer Williams *Director of Communication*

Jeremy Landers *Facility Manager*

Jessica Voyles *Ministry Coordinator*

Meg McPeck *COG Director*

Liz Katz *COG Assistant Director*





Grace Episcopal Church



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