



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Sep 15, 2020)

Grace Church, Kingston, Bethlehem

30 Butler Street, Kingston, PA 18704, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge

megan@diobeth.org

| | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) | Number of Weekend Worship Services | Number of Weekday Worship Services | Number of Other per Month Worship Services |
| 41 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Current Annual Compensation | Cash Stipend | Housing / Rectory Detail | Utilities |
| \$60978 | | \$12000 | \$3645 |
| SECA reimbursement | Compensation Available for New Position | Housing Available for | Pension Plan |
| \$4333 | \$69590 | 5 | We're in compliance with CPF requirements. |
| Healthcare Options | Dental | Housing Equity Allowance in budget | Annual Equity Amount |
| Negotiable | Yes | No | |
| Vacation Weeks | Vacation Weeks Details | Continuing Education Weeks | Continuing Education Weeks Details |
| One month, including 5 Sundays (standard) | | 2 (standard) | |
| Continuing Education Funding in budget | Sabbatical Provision | Travel/Auto Account | Other Professional Account |
| up to/including \$500/year | No | No | No |

Comp includes \$41-49K salary, commensurate with exp. plus value of rectory, SECA and utilities

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Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

Central to Grace Church's character of warmth and outreach is the ministry of the St. Martha's Guild. This program has been steadily growing and now has 11 active members. In addition to fundraising for the church, the Guild has substantially increased its work with the wider community. Over the last two years the group has been active in visiting and providing needed items for a local group home at the holidays; preparing boxed meals for persons experiencing homelessness; donating items to the clothes closet at St. Stephen's Pro-Cathedral in Wilkes-Barre; giving canned goods to a regional pantry; and donating funds to the Hope Center free medical clinic. The efforts of the Guild are also central to any visitor's welcome to Grace, such as in the way that the group helps organize hosts for the church's popular coffee hour and special celebrations. St. Martha's also conducts regular fundraisers (Rummage & Bake Sale, Hoagie Sales) to help finance parish projects, such as the recent replacement of the flooring in the Wallis Room. The Guild members were honored to attend the Spring Luncheon of the Diocesan Episcopal Church Women group (ECW) for the first time this May.

How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

We are aware that the Church of the future may not include traditional Sunday morning gatherings inside our "big red doors." Several years ago, in recognizing this shift away from tradition, we removed the pews from our nave and replaced them with chairs. We are now able to utilize the nave, not only for traditional worship, but for non-traditional services and other community events. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has offered the opportunity for us to thoughtfully pursue creative and new ways of gathering and to recognize, in a very tangible way, that 'the building' is not our church. We are the church. And we are embracing this opportunity to re-imagine our church encompassing both physical gatherings, as well as virtual gatherings that will engage both parishioners and our greater community.

Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

thoughtful preacher, social, Outgoing pastor, quality liturgist

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

Grace Church finds comfort in traditional Anglican liturgical styles, though not in a strict or exclusive way, and often by enriching worship with modern variations. Grace regularly uses Rite 2 of the BCP with weekly Eucharist services and a robed choir that leads the congregation in singing from The Hymnal and chanting the Psalm at 10am. We also have a more intimate spoken service in our side chapel at 8am. The Great Litany at Lent is an example of a particularly traditional service, while the Blessing of the Animals is an example of a particularly modern one. The congregation is used to an emphasis on the worshipping community. The Prayers of the People are often read in sections by parishioners in the pews. Before Covid-19, congregants enjoyed moving into the aisle to shake hands during the Peace. Many congregants who are not normally in the choir contribute to the music of the church at special times (such as a handbell choir at Christmas and Easter). Grace Church expects good preaching that will address the gospel message in an instructive way, and the hymns are selected by the Minister of Music to reflect this message.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Grace encourages its members to use their gifts in the service of others. Servers assist in the liturgy, and ushers welcome worshipers at the door, bring up the gifts and guide people to the Eucharist. Parishioners act as liaisons to other churches and attend diocesan events to represent Grace. A small number of committed parishioners lead Sunday School. Members speak to the congregation on topics such as stewardship. The St. Martha's Guild adds immeasurable life to the church by helping run outreach events, social programs, and fundraisers. Our music ministry is substantial and led by our Minister of Music. The choir has a regular membership of 10 who elevate our worship each week, with seasonal vocal and instrumental performances by members of the choir and congregation. The choir has also performed at the beginning of a local minor league baseball game and in outreach to area nursing homes at Christmastime. The church has a dedicated vestry who are active in the mission and day-to-day life of the church. The vestry and other members of the church frequently reach out to members of the church who have gone through hardship or who have stopped attending Grace.

As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

Grace is a tightknit community with a fairly even combination of members who have been here a long time and those who have joined in the last 5-10 years. In addition to announcements of larger events in members' lives during the service, the social hour is well attended and-along with special occasions like our Annual Meeting, Thanksgiving Dinner, Mardi Gras Supper, and Holy Thursday Agape Meal-allows members to reconnect with each other. People share day-to-day news, but also the difficult news of illness and hardship in their lives. There is a genuine concern for others' well-being. In addition to making the rector aware of anyone's spiritual needs and special circumstances, the members of the church look after one another materially and spiritually. We have 22 people, including non-Parishioners, in our Prayer Circle who pray for anyone in need. There is a concern that people can feel isolated (especially in a time like coronavirus) and the vestry now calls each member to see how they are doing in these trying circumstances. Traditionally, the rector has also made themselves accessible to the congregation at certain times during the week, in addition to being generally available.

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How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

Grace has a variety of limited but effective outreach programs. The church hosts large AA meetings in our buildings and an annual recovery service. We also have persons who participate in both communities and promote communication between the two groups. Our hope is that this outreach has reduced stigma and promoted engagement in both groups' related missions of support and acceptance. Grace also conducts activities to benefit the community such as hosting monthly transgender support groups; visiting and providing gift bags for a local group home; preparing boxed meals for the homeless; donating items to the clothes closet at St. Stephen's Pro-Cathedral in Wilkes-Barre; and giving canned goods to a regional pantry as part of an Advent mindfulness campaign. Members also regularly help organize outside events such as suicide prevention and homelessness support walks and bring fellow parishioners to participate. The church recently tried to host the regional men's roaming shelter for two weeks but this initiative did not take place due to shelter scheduling problems. Members of the church have dealt generously with individual members of the community who have come to us for help.

Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

We have had combined services with a nearby Methodist congregation, including our Palm Sunday procession lead by therapy-certified donkeys from Young's Funny Farm. We have also partnered with other regional Episcopal Churches in ministry and in worship. Several years ago, 4 local Episcopal congregations partnered to hold a Lenten pilgrimage. Each week we gathered at each one of the 4 churches to hear a history of the host church, enjoy fellowship and food, and we concluded each week with a healing service conducted by the clergy of the host church. Within the larger geographical Episcopal community, we are blessed to have the opportunity to gather in worship with congregants throughout the Diocese of Bethlehem during our annual convention in October, Chrism Mass, and many other special services and events hosted by the Diocese. Members of Grace have also served as delegates to diocesan conventions and served on the Diocesan Council and the Commission on Ministry. The youth in the church have participated in local youth camps with members of other churches (Christophany) and also camps in the Poconos. They have also attended a Bishop's Day for youth.

Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

Our beloved church and rectory are located in a beautiful community in a rather affluent neighborhood. It is a peaceful and picturesque church with an attached memorial garden that is ideal for meditation and prayer. Because of the affluent neighborhood we have sometimes struggled to begin ministries that will serve our immediate community's needs. 'Traditional' ministries such as food banks or clothes closets don't address the needs of this community. Beyond contributing to pre-existing ministries of regional churches, we have discovered two ministries that have enhanced our local community: 1. A free lending library. It is very appealing to take a moment out of a hectic day, grab a book, and read in the serenity of the garden. The project was a memorial dedication to a parishioner's mother who had a similar lending library in a neighboring community. 2. Christmas caroling at nursing homes. During the Advent and Christmas seasons, the choir and other parishioners join our Minister of Music in sharing the gift of music with the residents and staff of these facilities. For information you may contact our Church Administrator, Nancy Pleskach, or our Minister of Music, Patti Warwick.

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What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

We believe that stewardship encompasses both supporting the church financially and dedicating our commitment and abilities to the community. A majority of our members pledge (38) but we also have significant and regular contributions from non-pledging attendees. The amount of these gifts vary, and each gives according to what they feel called and able to do. There is a strong core membership that gives freely and regularly of their talents to various ministries and activities including our Music Ministry; Parish Life Committee; St. Martha's Guild; Sunday School; Ushers Program; diocesan-wide conventions and worship events; and the physical maintenance of our church building and rectory. In addition, members of vestry participate both in regular meetings and in frequent consultations with the rector between gatherings. At Grace there is a shared spirit of gratitude to God for all that we have been given, including the closeness of the Grace community itself. Many of our members came from other churches or returned after a long period of being churchless, and found a family here. We are committed to help Grace grow as a loving and supporting community in Christ.

What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

Although in many ways Grace Church is a traditional medium-sized church in a northeastern PA suburb, we have strived to represent the Gospel in being openly inclusive in our leadership and membership. This is a reflection of our adherence to the teachings of Jesus and also our belief in the dignity of all persons. There is a deliberate welcome made during the announcements and we do everything we can to make everyone feel embraced during our social hour and beyond. This effort has been aided and advanced by our rector who fully embraced LGBTQ inclusivity and who, as an openly gay man, empathized with those facing exclusion. We are proud that we are known as a welcoming church in our community. In a time that our nation has been divided along many fronts, we have learned that some in our community do not like hearing messages that are overtly political from the pulpit, however well these messages might be rooted in the Gospel. While we do not feel that the message of Jesus should be watered down, relationships with those who have felt at odds with some of the messaging have sometimes been broken. We are trying to reach out and listen so that everyone feels welcome at Grace.

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

There are some more traditional members of our congregation who were not comfortable with removing the pews from the nave. Some were overwhelmed with the disruption and change of their worship practice in the sacred space which they helped to build and create. After further dialogue, we came to the compromise of not removing the pews from the side chapel, a resolution that was well received. And, generally, the earlier of our 2 Sunday services are held in this chapel. (Note: this answer speaks to question #11 as well.)

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Prior Incumbents

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. John Franklin Hartman | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2009-01 | 2020-01 |

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. Geoff Howson | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2003-01 | 2008-01 |

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. Cynthia M. Spencer | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2001-01 | 2003-01 |

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Church School | | Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School | Number of Students for Children School |
| Sunday School | | 1 | 5 |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School | Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School | Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School | Number of Students for Adults School |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Day School | Number of Students for Day School | Number of Teachers for Day School | Number of Total Staff for Day School |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|



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Worshipping Community Web site: <https://gracekingston.org/index.html>

Media Links:

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/gracechurchkingston>

Languages Significantly Represented:

Provide Worship or Classes in:

References

Bishop:

kevin@diobeth.org 610-691-5655

The Rt. Rev. Kevin D. Nichols

Diocesan Transition Minister

megan@diobeth.org 610-691-5655, ext. 225

The Rev. Megan Dembi

Current Warden/Board Chair

James Youells, Sr.

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Sara McNelis

Search Chair

Bill Bolan

Parish/Institution

The Rev. Earl Trygar Sr.

Local Community Leader

Tony@wbpreservation.org Cell phone: 570-793-3631

Tony Brroks