

PARISH PROFILE
OF
GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Grace Episcopal Church is to proclaim Jesus Christ as our Savior. We are dedicated to growing the Kingdom of God by actively living out our Baptismal Covenant. Through God's grace we are committed to welcoming all, nurturing each other, building loving relationships with friends and strangers alike, and being renewed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

OUR PRAYER

Almighty God, giver of every good gift:
Look graciously on your Church,
and so guide the minds of those who shall choose
a rector for this parish, that we may receive
a faithful pastor, who will care for your people
and equip us for our ministries;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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OUR HISTORY

Our history began on the porch of Benjamin Dorrance's unfinished home in Kingston, when **Dr. Henry L. Jones**, rector of St. Stephen's Church in Wilkes-Barre, celebrated a service there in the spring of 1892. From this humble beginning would come Grace Church. After several moves to other temporary locations, parishioners built a small permanent chapel in 1906 on the site of the present church. The new community was so successful that its members separated from St. Stephen's and incorporated as a self-supporting parish on April 5, 1921.

Grace's first rector was the **Rev. Albert Whittaker** (1921-24), an active leader in civic affairs. The next rector, the **Rev. John F. W. Feild** (1924-1928), gave the impetus to start building a new church. Under its third rector, the **Rev. Ralph A. Weatherly** (1928-1959), the growing congregation finished the current stone church in 1930.

Rev. Weatherly, and his successor, the **Rev. Lyle E. Scott** (1959-1983), guided Grace Church for over fifty years. Throughout this period, the flourishing congregation maintained a generous dedication to service, demonstrated in the growth of many organizations, including the church school, service guilds, and the choir. Grace Church also helped found the Prince of Peace Church in the Back Mountain.

When Father Scott retired in 1983, fifty-five years of Grace's history had been spent under two rectors, both of whom had left Grace to enter retirement. After the tenure of Lyle Scott, Grace called the **Rev. Robert Gendreau** (1984-1987). After Father Gendreau's resignation a supply priest, the Rev. Joseph Leo, and the Rev. Denton D. Durland III, Interim, guided the parish until Grace Church found a new pastor.

Under the **Rev. David Laquintano** (1989-1999), Grace Church regained vigor and life. Centering his work upon liturgical worship and Biblical preaching, Father David attracted many new, young families to the Grace community. In the period of 1990-1992, the church was refurbished, both inside and out, as a welcoming place of worship. Under David Laquintano's tutelage our parish launched four new priests into the Bethlehem Diocese.

During the search for a new rector following Father David's departure, Grace was led by the Rev. Edward S. Sykes, Interim, and the Rev. John Leo, as a supply priest (1999-2001). In spring 2001, the parish called the **Rev. Cynthia M. Spencer** (2001-2002) to be rector. In June 2002, Mother Cynthia received a call to begin work at another parish. The Grace Church vestry voted to hire the Rev. James Stevenson as a supply priest, and then, Father Stevenson agreed to stay with us until we found our new Rector.

Our seventh Rector, **Rev. Geoff Howson** (2003-2008) came to us from Montreal, Canada. Father Geoff brought stability and mission to Grace Church following a time of transition. His support of community outreach served Grace well, and our numbers and commitment began to grow once again.

The **Reverend John Franklin Hartman** (2009-2020) was called as the Ninth Rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Kingston, Pennsylvania on October 1, 2009. Prior to this calling he served as the Director of Church Relations for the Seamen's Church Institute in New York City, and as Deacon at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in New Providence, New Jersey. Father John's warm welcome to newcomers, emphasis on liturgical variety within traditional boundaries, backing of enhanced musical elements during services, and support for expanded youth ministry led to increased membership, as well as parish activities. Several important bequests were made to Grace during this time, as well. Recently, however, especially with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our parish has seen a decline in membership, which in turn has led to decreased success in our financial stewardship. In June 2020 Father John retired, moving to Virginia, where he will serve as supply or interim priest to parishes. The Reverend Earl P. Trygar, Sr. became interim rector in July 2020.

WHO WE ARE

Membership for 2019 - 167

Baptized members under 16 years age - 11

Confirmed communicants in good standing - 59

We at Grace are on the cusp between a small church (0-50 active members) and a medium church (50-150 active members). We are a family church in the broad Episcopal tradition and are pastoral, inclusive, and community-oriented. All members are encouraged to participate fully in the life and leadership of the church regardless of age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or mental ability.

We believe that our priest is the shepherd to our flock, however, we support training to encourage others to lead. Our active members sit on one or more committees, which oversee the administration of all areas of the parish.

In a survey at the beginning of 2020, we analyzed what areas of parish life are important to us (see attachment). In order, participants expressed the most interest in preaching, membership growth, liturgy, Sunday School, outreach to the sick and homebound, and pastoral counseling.

OUR WORSHIP

Grace Church's family gathers each Sunday morning for an 8 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Eucharist. The early worship is a spoken service while the choir participates in the 10:00 a.m. service.

Attendance for 2019

1st Sunday in Lent - 40
 Easter - 114
 Pentecost Sunday - 42
 1st Sunday in Advent - 31
 Average Sunday Attendance - 41

Annual Worship Calendar

Sundays: 8:00 a.m. Rite I (occasionally II) Eucharist service spoken
 10:00 a.m. Rite II (occasionally I) Eucharist service with music
 followed by fellowship hour in the Wallis Room
 10:00 a.m. Church school in the undercroft

Weekly Bible Study during Lent and Advent; Prayer Circle

Thanksgiving Day: 9:00 a.m. Eucharist service

Advent: 7:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols at Grace Church

Christmas Eve: 4:30 p.m. family-oriented children's pageant and service
 11:00 p.m. Festival Eucharist

Christmas Day: 9:00 a.m. Eucharist service

Ash Wednesday: 7:30-8:00 a.m. Drive by receiving of ashes
 7:00 p.m. Eucharist service with ashes

Wednesday evenings during Lent: 7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Holy Week: 10:00 a.m. Rite I Eucharist service
 7:00 p.m. Rite I Eucharist service

Maundy Thursday: 7:00 p.m. Eucharist service (with Washing of the Feet)
followed by stripping the altar and Agape Meal

Good Friday: 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. shared / rotated Ecumenical service

Holy Saturday: Blessing of the Easter Baskets

Easter Eve Vigil: 7:30 p.m. Rite I service

Easter Day: 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Festival Eucharist with music

Annual meeting: held the first Sunday in February after the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist

June or July: 10:00 a.m. Eucharist held outdoors on a designated Sunday

OUR PARISH LIFE

Chalice Bearers and Lectors

Chalice bearers are parish volunteers, licensed through the Diocese. Lectors are also parish volunteers, scheduled on a monthly rotation.

Ushers and Greeters

Ushers are used only at the 10:00 am service. The duties of the ushers include collecting and presenting the oblations and directing communicants to the communion rail. A greeter hands out bulletins as people arrive at the church.

Altar Guild

The Grace Church Altar Guild continues to serve Grace Church by preparing the elements for Holy Eucharist. The Guild has three members and is self-supporting, due to the generosity of the donations of the people of Grace Church. Our duties also include the maintenance of Altar fixtures, ordering memorial flowers and supplies, laundering the linens, care and changing of the altar coverings according to the church calendar, polishing the brass and silver, and replacing or refilling the candles. The Elements of Holy Eucharist are prepared for services on Sunday, plus funerals, weddings, and any extra services.

Music and the Choir

The choir at Grace Church has grown and elevates our worship each week. Patty Warwick, the church's Minister of Music, had developed a faithful, well-rehearsed choir of 10 regular participants. The 8:00 a.m. Eucharist is a quiet service. The 10:00 a.m. service nearly always has extensive participation by the choir, with special music, such as solos, featured occasionally. The choir also sings carols at area nursing homes annually.

The church's pipe organ is a Möller, which dates to the building of the church in the early 1930s but was recently refurbished. There is also a beautiful, completely restored 100-year-old Hamburg Steinway grand piano. The parish also has an electric Wurlitzer organ.

Christian Education

The Sunday school program at Grace Episcopal Church is headed by Robin Yedlock. The children meet in the undercroft during the first part of the 10 a.m. service, joining their parents before communion.

Fellowship

Parishioners at Grace Church have a variety of programs and activities that promote fellowship. Information is shared through bulletin boards in the Wallis Room, the Sunday service programs/bulletins, and word of mouth. Many parishioners also communicate with each other through e-mail and social media.

Most weeks after the 10:00 service there is a coffee hour hosted by parishioners, who volunteer through a sign-up sheet. Birthdays and anniversaries are noted in the newsletter, the Sunday bulletin, and during the Sunday services.

Other fellowship activities revolve around committee work, including St. Martha's Guild meetings, the egg hunt following the 10:00 a.m. Easter service, informal socials for special occasions that honor parishioners, the annual chili cook-off, and other events. During the Christmas season, the choir and other volunteer parishioners gather to sing carols in the community, including in local nursing homes. Our goal is to provide fun, learning, and fellowship with other Christian friends in a supportive environment.

St. Martha's Guild

The Episcopal Church Women are known in this parish as St. Martha's Guild. All women of the parish are considered members and there are currently 11 active participants. St. Martha's meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Wallis Room and meets monthly except during the summer and January/February.

St. Martha's Guild meetings are devoted to planning outreach projects (such as holiday gifts for those in nursing homes) and fund raisers (Rummage & Bake Sale, Hoagie Sales) to help finance parish projects, such as the recent replacement of the flooring in the Wallis Room. St. Martha's supports the Diocesan ECW outreach ministry by collecting various items to be brought to Diocesan Convention and to be distributed to a social agency within our community.

The Worship Committee and Parish Life Committee

The Worship Committee works faithfully each week to ensure that the various elements of our worship are coordinated and uplifting. The Parish Life Committee plans a

variety of fellowship events, including an annual Mother's Day brunch and Father's Day picnic.

Outreach

Grace Church has a long history of giving to the community. Our parishioners donate clothes for a ministry called "Reach" at St. Stephen's Episcopal Pro-Cathedral in Wilkes-Barre. Our women's group, the St. Martha's Guild, collects personal items for gifts to our homebound parishioners and for seniors living at local homes. At Christmastime, parishioners sponsor an Angel Tree "secret Santa" gift-buying project for needy children in our area. Also, the church provides space for daily AA meetings.

Parish Staff

The parish staff consists of an Administrative Assistant, Music Director/Organist, and a Sexton. The staff have been working at Grace for many years, providing knowledge and continuity. Office hours for the church are currently 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The Vestry

The Vestry of Grace Church consists of nine members who meet quarterly in the evening. New members are elected on a rotating basis for a three-year term at the annual meeting in February. The Senior Warden is chosen by the Rector and elected by the Vestry. The Junior Warden is chosen by the Vestry. The Vestry is responsible for handling property, operations, and finance concerns. Vestry members also serve as liaisons to the other parish committees. The Vestry is governed by a set of standard diocesan by-laws.

The Finance Committee and the Treasurer's Report

Each year, for the annual meeting, a financial report is presented by the parish Treasurer. In the year ending December 31, 2019, the annual budget was about \$207,000. Since this budget has only been met in recent years due to transfers from endowment holdings, the congregation needs to increase revenue from annual pledges, primarily through expanding church membership.

The Property Committee

The Property Committee is made up of several parishioners from the church. These members oversee the physical condition of both the church buildings and the rectory. The committee has no set meeting times but convenes when a problem occurs. If a project is

expected to cost more than \$500, the committee presents a recommendation to the vestry, which votes on what needs to be done.

(Profile continues on next page)

CHALLENGES FACING GRACE

The membership of the church have discussed five areas of challenge for the years ahead:

Covid-19: As in almost all churches, participation in online services have been lower than before the pandemic. The vestry has called every member of the parish to check in and help continue their relationship with Grace. Continued outreach will be necessary to prevent any reduction of our community.

Collaboration with other churches: The membership has expressed interest in increasing collaboration with regional churches. In addition to being the way of the future for the Episcopal Church, Grace feels these efforts strengthen us as an individual assembly and as members of the larger Body of Christ.

Expanding membership: While we do not anticipate significant increases in our numbers, the church continues to explore ways to expand its outreach to new members. We have been encouraged by the arrival of people in recent years. Grace needs to continue advancing our reputation as a welcoming and supportive Christian community and attract and retain those who come through our “big red doors.”

Improved programming for youth: The church needs to develop attractive activities for its younger members. Regional ventures such as Christophany have been a success. Unfortunately, recent attempts to form a regional youth group did not move forward.

Increasing stewardship: Grace’s budget of \$207,000 has only been met in recent years due to significant transfers from endowment holdings. The congregation needs to increase revenue through expanded giving and membership.

OUR PARISH BUILDINGS

The Grace Church building is a modified English Country Gothic design. The main stone building of the church was completed in 1930. The nave is flanked by traditional stained-glass windows, with the dedications of the parishioners who sponsored them. Above these windows are monochrome clerestory windows. The church has a chapel area affectionately known as the Children's Chapel with a separate seating section on one side of the nave. The chancel is reached by climbing three stairs, the altar, two more. The main church has had a new heating system installed.

The large, open area of the undercroft of the church has sliding partitions, which are used for the church school. There is also a separate room that houses the nursery, and a large kitchen that can be used for special occasions and fundraising dinners.

The adjacent air-conditioned Wallis Room (the parish hall) is in Reformation style. It has a small, recently refurbished kitchen that is heavily used. The Wallis Room hosts many parish activities, including parish meetings, fellowship hours, and choir practice.

The church also has an air-conditioned office, with a separate lavatory, up a short flight of stairs. The office has a photocopier and a computer with high speed internet access.

Outside, alongside the church is the beautifully landscaped Rusty Flack Memorial Garden. The back door of the church leads into the backyard of the rectory. The building of the rectory was completed shortly before Father Weatherly's retirement in 1959. Extensive renovations were completed in 2000, and some additional improvements have been made since. The rectory is a red-brick and stucco house with four bedrooms, a large living room with fireplace, a dining room, two and a half bathrooms, a modern kitchen, and basement. There is also an office/library for the Rector, which has a separate entrance. Additionally, there is off-street parking.

OUR COMMUNITY

Geography

Grace Church is in the suburban borough of Kingston, directly across the Susquehanna River from the city of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Wilkes-Barre lies in the heart of the Wyoming Valley. The name Wyoming (which was later adopted by the western state) comes from a Native American word for “large plains.” The Valley is bordered on the east by a mountain ridge that includes the fast-growing suburban communities of Mountain Top, and on the west by a mountain ridge that gives passage to the Back Mountain suburban communities of Shavertown and Dallas. Through the Wyoming Valley flows the Susquehanna River. In addition to Wilkes-Barre and Kingston, numerous small boroughs and townships lie along the twenty-five-mile stretch of the river, forming one long continuous populated area. The entire area (including the nearby city of Scranton to the north) has a population of over half a million, which makes it the fourth-largest population center in Pennsylvania, after Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and the Allentown metro area. The city of Wilkes-Barre itself has a population of about 41,000 people. It is the economic and social center of the Valley, as well as the Luzerne County seat.

Kingston

All the numerous small boroughs and townships in the Wyoming Valley have distinct identities. Kingston, which has a population of about 13,000, is considered one of the nicest communities in which to live, with good property values and well-maintained homes and yards. Grace Church and its next-door rectory are located in one of the nicest neighborhoods of Kingston, surrounded by many stately houses. It’s only a short walk from the church and the rectory to the town hall, the municipal swimming pool, a public library, two grocery stores, several pharmacies, physicians’ offices, law offices, parks, banks, and restaurants. Many people appreciate the small-town atmosphere, where neighbors know each other. The borough has its own police department, fire department, and department of public works. Kingston is home to thirteen churches of various denominations. Within the borough itself are a private college-preparatory high school, a Catholic elementary and middle school, a public middle school, a Montessori school, and four public elementary schools (as described in greater detail below).

Education

The Wyoming Valley offers numerous educational strengths. The Wyoming Valley West School District serves the young people of Kingston and eight other small communities. The district includes a high school in the municipality of Plymouth, a middle school in Kingston, and numerous elementary schools throughout the communities in the district. The Chester Street Elementary School, which is located in Kingston not far from the church and rectory, offers a gifted program. Nearby West Side Vo-Tech provides career-oriented public education.

Wyoming Seminary, an internationally renowned, 175-year-old private, K-12 college-preparatory school, is located in Kingston (the upper school) and in nearby Forty Fort (the lower school). Kingston also has a Montessori School with grades from pre-kindergarten to six. Several other private and parochial schools operate on the West Side of the Wyoming Valley.

Local institutions of higher education include Luzerne County Community College, Misericordia University in Dallas, Wilkes University and King's College in Wilkes-Barre, as well as three local branch campuses of the Pennsylvania State University (Lehman/Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton, and Worthington/Scranton). Personal enrichment and continuing self-education are served by Kingston's Hoyt Library and Wilkes-Barre's Osterhout Free Library, which provide local readers with a wide choice of materials.

The Economy

Northeastern Pennsylvania is, literally, the crossroads of Mid-Atlantic commerce. Two major highways run north-south through the area: I-81 and I-476 (the Pennsylvania Turnpike). Interstate 80 runs east-west across the middle of the state, including a stretch that crosses the southern part of Luzerne County. In addition, I-84 and I-380 connect Scranton (on the west) with New Jersey, New York State and New York City (to the east).

The region offers two metropolitan centers: Wilkes-Barre and Scranton (the seat of Lackawanna County). The area enjoys a diverse economy, from manufacturing to retail. There are currently three major areas of large-scale commercial development.

Part of the local economy is driven by demographics. Northeastern Pennsylvania has one of the highest populations of senior citizens in the country. Because of this aging population, a large area of employment is health care. Among the important local facilities are the Commonwealth Health, the Geisinger Medical Center, the John Heinz Rehabilitation Center, and many medical offices.

Recreation, Sports and Entertainment

Another major business, tourism, is based on the area's recreational possibilities, furthered by the proximity to the Poconos to the southeast and to the Endless Mountains in the northwest. Within a 30-mile radius, there are several ski resorts that offer downhill and cross-country skiing, as well as snow tubing. In the summer, water parks offer a variety of summer recreation. Hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, fishing, swimming and boating are available in over nearby state parks, lakes and private recreational areas.

High school sports, especially football, draw large crowds locally. There are also professional sports teams that play within a 20-minute drive from Kingston. The AAA minor league baseball team affiliated with the New York Yankees play in nearby Lackawanna Stadium. The Pittsburgh Penguins' hockey team has a AAA team that plays in the arena in Wilkes-Barre Township. In addition, NASCAR sponsors races in the Poconos twice a year, and there is harness racing nearby.

Besides sports, the new arena in Wilkes-Barre Township hosts shows by nationally renowned entertainers. Other notable local annual events include the St. Patrick's Day parade, Cherry Blossom Festival (first week in May), Fine Arts Fiesta (last week in May), Fourth of July celebration, Wilkes-Barre Farmer's Market (July to November), and a vast variety of ethnic, Volunteer Fire Company, and arts festivals.

The Wyoming Valley also enjoys the fine arts. The F. M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts in Wilkes-Barre regularly hosts the Northeastern Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as a variety of touring Broadway plays, musical groups, and performers. There are many local acting ensembles and dance studios. Nearby Wyoming Seminary, as well as the local universities, also host a variety of arts events that are open to the public.

OUR VISION

- > to find a new rector who will support the mission of Grace Church
- > to grow our numbers by focusing on both families and individuals.
- > to encourage more active participation of parishioners by introducing additional activities and opportunities for involvement.
- > to encourage the growth of our youth programs

OUR NEW RECTOR

We hope to find a rector who:

- Radiates an outgoing, pastoral presence and reaches out to the congregation to make everyone feel part of our community
- Demonstrates thoughtful, down-to-earth preaching that is inspired by the Gospel and reaches across the congregation
- Maintains the vibrancy of our congregation and embraces new members and families
- Participates in and encourages the social life of the church
- Deepens our ties and shared programming with other churches
- Embraces our commitment to quality liturgy, music & youth programming
- Supports members of the community in need, including the sick and homebound