



Grace Episcopal Church

Nyack, New York



Parish Profile 2022

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Introduction

Grace Church Nyack is a leading church and an exemplar for service and social justice in the community — an Episcopal parish where people from all walks of life come together in all of our splendid diversity to share in the grace and love of God.

Through worship, fellowship, spiritual formation, and active ministries within the community and throughout the region, Grace Church strives to make God's love known in ways that reconcile, heal, liberate and serve.



Our congregation

Who we are

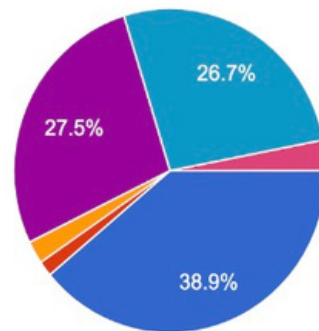
Like the community of Nyack, the congregation of Grace Church Nyack is diverse and inclusive. We embrace people of all races, cultures and sexual orientations and purposefully lean into the principles of radical hospitality where all are welcome.



From approximately 250 members we received 131 survey responses, 45% of whom have been attending Grace for more than 20 years.

Most of us live within a 20 minute drive of the church, but a few come from farther away, including Orange, Bergen and Westchester Counties. Many parishioners work in the community, and are involved in organizations like the Nyack School Board and town government.

Religious Affiliation PRIOR to attending Grace Church:
131 responses

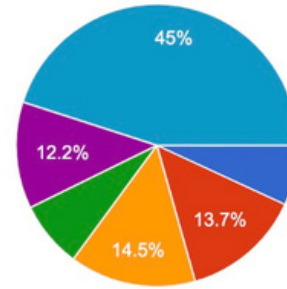


- Episcopal/Anglican
- No prior religious affiliation
- Other Christian (Eastern Orthodox, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, 7th Day Adventist)
- Other (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist)
- Protestant
- Roman Catholic
- Prefer not to answer

Parish participation

Two thirds of us were involved in at least one group or commission prior to Covid. More than two thirds feel that they will return to pre-pandemic involvement when it is safe to do so. Although attendance at church services was down over the past two years, many have followed services online and have participated in other online activities.

Length of time attending Grace Church:
131 responses



- Less than 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

Children and youth



More than a third of our survey respondents have children under age 18. Pre-Covid, we had very robust attendance and participation at our 9:30 a.m. family-friendly service, and dozens of children attended church school afterward. Families are beginning to return now as the pandemic wanes.

"My family found its home in Grace. It was important for us to find a church that welcomes the LGBTQ+ community, but more importantly, a place that embraces the journey of young minds learning to discover and navigate their own faith." — Edward VanSaders



What we seek

Our new rector should

- Build faith
- Care about people and God
- Build relationships across generations
- Trust skills of staff and volunteers
- Tap talents of parishioners
- Encourage participation
- Welcome newcomers
- Have a sense of humor
- Commit to diversity and social justice
- Love children
- Create social and spiritual ministries
- See the big picture
- Listen to and learn from others
- Possess qualities you'd have in a friend

“What I value is a genuine heart and spirit. It is my sincere hope that the next pastor of Grace will be focused on growth and genuine service as well as guiding us to the spiritual tools that help us to create unity and understanding in our world.” — Survey respondent

This person is

- A liturgist
- Relatable
- Active in the community
- Well-informed
- Creative

This person can

- Plan and delegate
- Execute personnel responsibilities
- Work hand-in-hand with music director

Worship, liturgy and music

Liturgical worship and music are central to the life of Grace Church, and a source of enrichment in parishioners' lives. It is a reflection of our commitment to our neighbors and manifested in all of our ministries. Grace extends its welcome to all.



Sunday services, September-June

8 a.m.: A spoken Eucharist with scripture readings, sermon and prayers according to Rite I from the Book of Common Prayer.

9:30 a.m.: A lively, less formal Eucharist designed for parishioners of all ages. The service, adapted from Rite II, includes scripture, a short sermon and music. Young parishioners serve as crucifer, subdeacons, and lectors. Church school follows this service.



11 a.m.: A full complement of choir, organ, and church music, a Rite II Eucharist with scripture, sermon, congregational hymn singing and choral offerings. Since the pandemic, this service has been streamed on Facebook.

4 p.m. first Sunday of the month (through May): A choral Evensong. A service with prayers, psalms and a reflection, where worshippers can pray about the month past and for the one ahead, led by a cantor and accompanied by our choir. This service appeals to members outside our congregation.

Sunday services, June-September



The church school and choir take a hiatus, and we offer two services:
8 a.m. Rite I and 10 a.m. Rite II, with music.

Service ministry

Acolytes, Eucharistic ministers, element bearers, lectors, ushers, and choir members are integral parts of our services. In their specialized roles these lay people are trained to assist the priest at Sunday celebrations of Holy Eucharist as well as at weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and funerals.

The Altar Guild, an essential part of the worship experience, prepares the altar for worship and takes care of the linens, brass and silver. The team supervises the decoration of the church including flower arrangements, candles, and seasonal accouterments, as well as readying the sanctuary for weekly services, baptisms, confirmation, weddings, and funerals.



"Being a member of the Altar Guild since that time is a job/calling I very much enjoy. I am not a singer nor a good reader of lessons, preferring to be in the background. The Altar Guild helped me be a more informed church person. You learn about the working around the Altar, i.e. setting it up, seasonal/holiday changes, what elements are called, what the rectors need (and don't need or want). Altar Guild work is the type of job that, if done correctly, you are not noticed (which is good). When something is missing or misplaced, that is when you are noticed (which is not a good thing). Over the years the scope of work has changed but the fundamentals are always the same: to serve the rector, the parish, the church, and God." — Sally Ann Mock

Music

Fine music is one of our great traditions and a source of pride and inspiration. In a parish of otherwise diverse opinions on almost every topic, there is near universal support for commitment to our music program.

Grace Church Choir's primary role is liturgical: providing music for the 11 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Feast Days as well as Choral Evensongs.



Brandon Beachamp, Grace's choirmaster and organist, graduated from the world-renowned Westminster Choir College. Under his inspiring leadership, the music program greatly enhances the worship experience at Grace.

Founded in 1886 as a vested choir of men and boys, the Grace Church Choir quickly rose to a high standard of musical excellence. The present Grace Church Choir consists of dedicated men and women with wide ranging choral experience. The choir's repertoire spans the Renaissance to contemporary music by composers who exemplify the breadth and diversity of the Anglican choral tradition.

Grace Music

The GraceMusic concert series features the church choir and professional musicians in programs that consistently attract large audiences to its performances each year.

For half a century, Grace has hosted a Messiah Sing, attended by music lovers from Rockland County and beyond.



“It was a Messiah Sing in 1984 that first brought me to Grace Church. I came back and stayed for its welcoming community, its choices of liturgical format, and for its magnificent music program.” — Margie Winslow

Adult learning

The Adult Spiritual Formation (ASF) Commission creates opportunities for spiritual discussion, exploration and education throughout the year. Its mission is to stimulate, support, and enable the spiritual growth of parishioners, and to deepen our faith community's awareness of God's presence and our commitment to follow the path of Christ.



Throughout the year the commission plans a variety of other events such as special speakers (Bishop Barbara Harris, Integrity founder Louie Crew Clay); poetry and scripture readings accompanied by music; a temporary labyrinth for parishioners; forums with artists in the congregation; dramatic performances (Roberta Nobleman as Julian of Norwich); and architectural tours of the church.



Programs include

Discovery Group

10:15 a.m. Sundays in Patterson Hall

Currently a book discussion group that has recently explored *Simply Christian*, by N.T. Wright, and *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, by Fr. James Martin. A Bible study based on the Sunday gospel lectionary reading will begin in the spring.

Centering Prayer Group

8 a.m. Mondays in the church

Based on a 14th century silent form of Christian monastic meditation that can help bring inner peace. Meditation lasts for 20 minutes and is followed by a short discussion.



Men's Prayer Breakfast

7 a.m. second and fourth Thursday; noon first Wednesday of the month in Patterson Hall. In person and by Zoom.

For faith sharing, scripture reading and exploring books, short stories, music and art, along with prayer and discussion. A bagel and coffee breakfast is shared. At the noon meeting, men read and reflect on scripture, discuss faith and pray, and share a pizza lunch.

Women's Spirituality Group

10 a.m. last Saturday of the month

Meets for prayer, discernment, learning, and conversation. The group's spiritual practices have included lectio divina, guided imagery, and the creative arts as ways to be open to prayer and explore our faith as individuals and a community.

Lenten Quiet Day

First Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Provides a relaxing time of conversation, meditation, silence, and gentle direction from a wise facilitator in a scenic setting on the Hudson River.



Lenten Supper Forums

Four Wednesdays during Lent

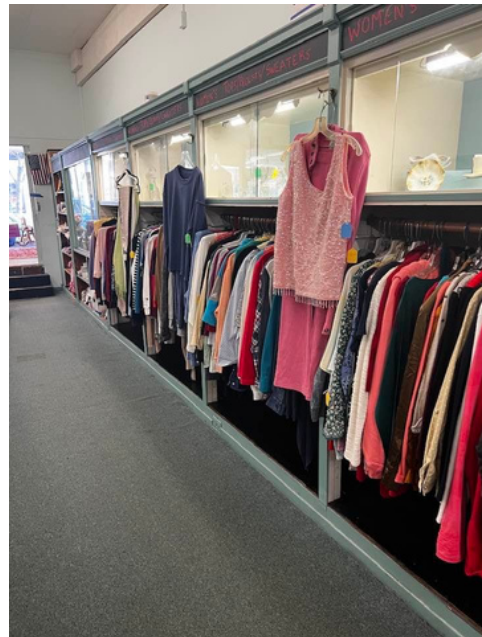
A simple supper is prepared by parishioners and ASF leaders focus on a book or topic for reflection and discussion.

The thing I love most about Adult Spiritual Formation is watching and participating as fellow parishioners go deeper in their faith through Bible study, a book study, or experiential activities such as meditation or walking the labyrinth. — Verne Becker

Outreach ministry

The **Social Ministry Commission** acts as a liaison between the church and community by directing funds to various programs. Ten percent of any bequest goes directly to the Social Ministry Fund. Recent donations include supporting Helping Hands and People to People, two groups that help the homeless and food insecure.

Grace's Thrift Shop is run entirely by volunteers and donates its profits to over 30 charities. The pandemic briefly shuttered the shop, but it was able to reopen with a small staff of dedicated volunteers. In 2021 it donated \$16,000 to its charities, and regularly supports programs at church such as Grace's Kitchen, Senior Youth Group, and makes an annual donation to the church.



Grace's Kitchen began in 2016 as a free breakfast program every Thursday morning run by teams of volunteers. We have served over 6,500 meals. Although our numbers dropped off with COVID and indoor dining was temporarily suspended, we continued to serve take away meals each week.



Midnight Run. Once a month a group of volunteers meets at Grace to make one hundred bagged meals for a program that serves food and clothing to the homeless in New York City. Several times a year our Senior Youth Group makes the trip into the city with the organization to distribute the food and donated clothing.



Grace Church is home to many groups in the community. **Boy Scouts Troop 2** has a charter with the church, and participates with projects in and around the church. We have a long history of providing space for **Twelve Step groups** to meet. Although the pandemic prevented indoor meetings, about 10 groups have since returned, providing a much needed service in our community.



The Resolution Run, a New Year's Day fun run, was organized by a group of parishioners and raised up to \$12,000 a year from 2017-19. The proceeds went to local charities dealing with food insecurity in our community.

Youth ministry

Grace has a thriving community of families regularly attending church services and participating in church related activities. We provide opportunities for children of all ages to grow spiritually, have fun and become a vibrant, giving part of the community.

Family Liturgy: During the school year, the 9:30 a.m. service is a kid-friendly, shorter service meant to serve the spiritual needs of families. The message preached in the homily is relevant to the lives of both children and adults. Children participate as acolytes and lectors. There are interactive activities and fun for all.



Church School: Serves children ages 4-14 with 45-minute classes held on Sunday mornings after the 9:30 a.m. Family Service. The church school is blessed with a dedicated, energetic, and creative group of volunteer teachers from the parish. A lectionary-based curriculum is used to reiterate and expand upon the message shared in the 9:30 a.m. homily. Sessions involve discussion, games and crafts. Numerous special activities take place throughout the year including the Christmas Pageant, Feast of St. Francis Pet Parade, Easter Fair, Bread for Life program, Earth Day activities and Martin Luther King family giving day.



Confirmation: For youth in 8th-10th grade and available to all pledging members of the parish. Confirmands participate in a curriculum led by an adult mentor involving a review of the concepts of Christianity, communal worship and parish community service. Confirmation begins in September and concludes with a visit from an Episcopal bishop or to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to commemorate completion.

"Senior Youth Group is a wonderful program that sets its members up to be active, service-minded individuals in their communities, while providing the perfect place for young people to congregate and build lasting friendships with one another."

— Dillon Nittoli



Senior Youth Group (SYG): For high school aged youth to work on team-building activities, topics related to spiritual growth and community service. Highlights include the yearly ski trip, hikes in local parks, and summer barbecues. Community service projects include distributing care packages and clothes to the homeless for our Midnight Runs into New York City, assisting workers at Grace's Thrift Shop, and gathering supplies for Hi-Tor Animal Shelter. SYG organizes many efforts to raise funds for the Church Service Youth Ministry (CYSM) Trip including the Easter Fair, Rummage Sale, Haunted House and monthly breakfasts. Previous Service Trips have been to Puerto Rico, Appalachia, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, all with the purpose of spreading Grace's positive influence to areas in need.



Fellowship

Our congregation can cook! And we love to gather to build our community and share our best dishes for buffets, fundraisers — we call them Fun(d)raisers — and parties. Pre-Covid, events throughout the year included game nights, an Advent party, Advent home gatherings with Eucharist, a pancake supper on Shrove Tuesday, an Easter fair, a parish picnic, pot-luck garden parties to salute our Church School volunteers, wine tastings, cook-offs and more.



Pre-Covid gatherings in Memorial Hall.



Clockwise from upper left: the annual parish picnic at Hook Mountain; a spring buffet; our annual parish hike, which is followed by a pot luck supper; and a gathering in the Memorial Garden and Columbarium.



Stewardship and finance

Pledging

Of the approximately 250 household units in the parish, 146 pledged for 2022 for a total of \$334,326.

The total pledged amount has remained relatively steady over the past 10 years (including during the pandemic), though the number of units pledging has gradually declined.

Budget



Our 2022 budget is \$491,705 that includes staff, general operations and maintenance, some outreach, and the diocesan apportioned share of \$57,230.

We have a balanced budget every year with no deficit spending or investment drawdown in excess of profits.

The pledge income makes up approximately 68% of Grace's annual budget. Our remaining income is generated from net rental income of owned property (private residences, long term rental by Nursery School of the Nyacks, and various 12-step groups), unrestricted gifts, a systematic formula driven drawdown of investments, and Grace's Thrift Shop in Nyack.

In addition to supporting Grace Church, the thrift shop donates to various organizations in the village, county and the world.

As a parish we participate in the annual Episcopal Charities campaign. As individuals, we also support various charities.



Thanks to faithful pledgers and forgiven PPP loans, our finances have not substantially suffered during the pandemic and we ended 2021 with a small surplus. As always, maintenance of old buildings presents a serious challenge. In light of this, we have established a new fund to save for major repairs, with the goal of being able to fully fund anticipated repairs and replacements as they arise.

We know that the parish's reputation and visibility has an attraction for church seekers and newcomers, and that the potential exists for growth in membership and support. We also believe there are opportunities for us to more fully understand our role as stewards of all the gifts that God has given to us.

Buildings and grounds

Grace is located in a residential area of Nyack but only two blocks from the bustling heart of the village. It is close enough to the downtown to be easily accessible by car or bus or on foot, yet far enough to be a quiet and spiritual respite from the noise of everyday life.

The campus consists of the Church, Parish House, Rectory and Memorial Garden/Columbarium. Three rental properties owned by the church are across the street.



Church

Our large and beautiful Gothic style church was built in 1882 of granite and native sandstone with stained glass windows and a bell tower. It incorporates a number of special elements of historical and religious significance, including a stained glass Rose Window which is a replica of the one in the Lincoln Cathedral and stained glass memorial windows in a style copied from Tintern Abbey.



The Gothic arches of chestnut which run from the nave to the altar and forty feet high at the peaks, are supported by twelve granite columns patterned after those at Westminster Abbey. Behind the altar is an intricate mosaic mural consisting of tiny marble tiles depicting lush grapevines which bear six Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Exquisite hand done-needlework also heightens the beauty of the sanctuary. The nave, which can seat 300 people has a complete voice amplification system.

The choir stalls are located on a balcony at the rear of the church overlooking the nave. At their center is a Cassavant organ, considered one of the best instruments in the Hudson Valley.

The Parish House

This two-story building, connected to the church, is where much of parish life takes place. As we return to normal after Covid, we expect this space to once again be busy with weekly coffee hours, parish events and dinners, Twelve Step programs, Boy Scout meetings, and church school activities.



On the first floor are the Rector's private office, the Parish Administrator's office, a fully equipped kitchen, two meeting spaces — Memorial Hall and Patterson Hall — the sacristy, vesting room, and restrooms. Bradley Chapel, a lovely small chapel used for more intimate and weekday services, can also be found here. On the second floor is the Thornley Suite, which houses the offices of the Treasurer and Church School Director, as well as classrooms and a robing room for the choir. On weekdays, the classrooms are used by the Nursery School of the Nyack and the halls are filled with happy young children.



Memorial Garden and Columbarium

This sacred space is adjacent to the parish house and between the rectory and church. It is beautifully designed and includes an outdoor altar and baptismal font as well as lovely plantings. It is a comforting space for the bereaved and is also used by parishioners and community members as a quiet space for rest and reflection. During the warmer months, services and fellowship events are often held here.



Rectory

Known as Babbitt House and named after the first rector. It is a 3-story Arts and Craft stucco building with separate garage and small backyard garden. With 4-5 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, two fireplaces and French doors leading to a wide side porch overlooking the Memorial Garden/Columbarium, it is an inviting and comfortable home for the Rector and family. A number of renovations and improvements have been made over the last several years. Most recently, the entire interior was freshly painted, the floors were refinished and the wooden front steps were replaced.



Rental properties

Grace is fortunate to own three rental properties across the street from the church that provide an ongoing source of revenue. We are committed to keeping these units affordable in an area with skyrocketing real estate values. The church is exploring the possibility of making all of the units Section 8 housing as they become vacant.



These three wooden buildings include:

- 137 First Avenue — Two apartments that are currently rented.
- 141 First Avenue — A small 3-bedroom house currently rented.
- 145 First Avenue — Two apartments that are currently rented. The upstairs unit is currently Section 8 housing.

Staff

Grace Church Nyack has a very competent and committed staff that includes the following positions:

- Church School Director
- Facilities Administrator
- Organist and Choirmaster
- Parish Administrator
- Sexton and Assistant

In addition, a new part-time position to handle social media/online ministry has also been included in the 2022 budget. We have an active and energetic cadre of volunteers as well, including our Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Pledge Secretary, Commission Chairs/members and Security Asst. who donate numerous hours of their time and talent.



History

When the Rev. Franklin Babbitt began visiting Nyack as a young priest of 33 in 1861, he perceived as God-given the opportunity to establish an Episcopal church where there had been none before. Though young Nyack men were leaving town to join the Union forces and minds were focused on the accelerating Civil War, Babbitt believed his mission was to preach the Word of God, to see to the needs of the people of the village, and to build a suitable monument to the Lord. Through his leadership, Grace Episcopal Church was incorporated in October of 1861.



Through the years, Babbitt's talents and energies served the parish well and his vision became reality and finally tradition. During his rectorship (1861-1918), the parish family grew in numbers and in strength to become a continuing force for good in the community. Wishing to affirm the Scripture that says, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," the Rev. Babbitt encouraged the members of the parish to replace the original wood church with a larger, beautiful Gothic Church of granite and native sandstone with stained glass windows and a bell tower, consecrated in May of 1882.

Since Babbitt's time, Grace Church has been led by ten rectors. They have contributed greatly to the life of our parish and the surrounding community, building needed buildings and raising the funds to maintain and renovate them. In addition to the church itself, the Grace Church campus now includes a recently renovated parish hall and offices, rectory, memorial garden and columbarium, and three income properties. Fine liturgy and music has long been a tradition and source of pride at Grace Church; our magnificent Casavant Frères organ was built in 1967 and upgraded with additional pipes in 1994, and a choir is active in leading our congregational worship.

In recent decades our rectors have helped to foster joint religious services with the other churches in Nyack; ministered to the people of the village who were in need; sought out those who were unchurched; and reached out to the community by opening our doors to self-help groups. They have encouraged lay ministries among our members, and as they helped us understand and develop our Christian life and faith, they have molded us into a family – diverse though we are- through our worship, and through communal activities and outreach.



The Rectors of Grace Church

- The Rev. Franklin Babbitt 1861 – 1918
- The Rev. Albert Larrieu Longley 1918 – 1922
- The Rev. Stanley Brown-Serman 1923 – 1928
- The Rev. Ernest W. Churchill 1932 – 1945
- The Rev. Claxton Monro 1945 – 1950
- The Rev. Harold B. Thelin 1950 – 1960
- The Rev. George Frank Regas 1960 – 1967
- The Rev. Charles Robert Green 1967 – 1979
- The Rev. Robert Allen Jewett 1980 – 1993
- The Rev. Richard Lloyd Gressle 1995 – 2011
- The Rev. Owen C. Thompson 2013-2021

Strengths and challenges

Grace Episcopal Church of Nyack is and has always been a vibrant worship community that offers strong social outreach. Supportive members inspire one another as they address the evolving needs of fellow congregants. Grace Church's dynamic music ministries enhance our Sunday services and offer additional venues for members from the village of Nyack and its surrounding communities to experience the joy, peace, and spirituality found within our church.

“After attending funeral masses for two former students who’d died on 9/11, I found my spiritual home at Grace. I was baptized in 2005 and was confirmed in 2017. Grace will always be my place.” — Valerie Mathews

“ I like the way we help one another, for example at Midnight Run or Men’s Prayer Breakfasts.” — Jim Cochran

Grace also provides:

- Motivational leadership during challenging times within the Nyack community and in the world (for example: conducting a prayer service when Ukraine was invaded)
- The continuation of multiple services during the pandemic both in person and virtually to meet the various needs of our congregation
- Ways to celebrate and embrace our myriad diversities
- Coffee Hour/Newcomer’s Party to welcome newcomers to our church family
- Innovative Adult Spiritual Formation Commission programs
- Opportunities for personal enhancement through Midnight Run, prayer breakfasts, parish picnic, rummage sales

As we navigate in a post Covid-19 world, Grace Church faces some challenges. Some of our goals include strategies to:

- Grow our church membership
- Integrate families into the 11 o'clock service
- Create more effective communication among the three services
- Find additional ways that embrace/encourage/celebrate the wealth found in our diverse church community
- Provide more programs to bridge the generations
- Hire a rector who is culturally sensitive, outgoing, inspiring, energetic with a sense of humor who is able to make a connection between spirituality and this modern world

“I’m proud of our leadership during Covid-19. During times of community upheaval we have supported one another. “ — Kim Cross

“Informal prayer meetings gave us time to process changes.” — Jacob Nevill

How to apply

If you are a priest of the Episcopal Church in good standing and, having read our profile, believe you have the skills we seek and would find joy in ministering to our congregation, we invite you to send your resume, current OTM Portfolio, and a cover letter to: TransitionGrace@gmail.com.

Copy the Canon for Transition Ministry, Nora Smith, at nsmith@dioceseny.org.

The window for application closes on June 8, 2022.