

# Annual Meeting – January 28, 2024

## Reports Packet

Welcome ~ The Rev. Stanley McKinnon

Outgoing Vestry Recognition  
Submission of the Annual Report

Closing Prayer ~ The Rev. Stanley McKinnon

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## **RECTOR'S REPORT**

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Almost fifty years ago a small group of Episcopalian Christians had a simple desire to pray and worship with like-minded and warm-hearted people in Siloam Springs according to the Book of Common Prayer. That deep longing to connect with God and others in the area and throughout the world in common prayer began what we know today as Grace Episcopal Church. Through their dedication and sacrifice, a few years later the first phase of our beloved church was built in which we continue to gather for prayer and worship today.

In 2001, we added the second phase of our building, the area that we now use as offices, the beverage area, the kitchen, and restrooms. In 2020 we finished the largest addition to the church, the area we are now enjoying, the Great Hall, along with new classrooms, a wonderful dedicated choir room, additional restrooms, and our food pantry.

In each phase of Grace Church's growth over the last almost fifty years we have experienced God's faithfulness and have seen our opportunities to spread God's love to the community expand. Buildings are means to an end and not ends in themselves. The end is for people to connect with God and each other. That is why I believe God has fulfilled the dreams of that original group of Episcopalians, who simply wanted a place to pray and worship.

Now, it's our turn to dream God's future for us and those who come after us. Thanks be to God for their dream, for our dreams, and God's faithfulness.

The reports that follow are an expression of those dreams.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stan

## **SR. WARDEN**

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Reflecting on 2023 from both an individual and a church perspective, it is a year that for me can be summarized by "growth". Personally, I was challenged in my last year on Vestry to grow into the role of Grace's Sr. Warden, a challenge for which I will be eternally grateful. I grew by serving on the Search Committee for the 14th bishop of Arkansas, Bp. John T. W. Harmon, and as Grace's delegate, I further grew as an Episcopalian by getting to participate in both the Diocesan and Electing conventions. To say I spent this year weeping more tears of joy in church than ever before is a wholeheartedly true statement.

As a Church we grew together in 2023. In the literal sense, we grew when we welcomed new life and new members; we've grown our pledges. However, in a more nuanced sense, we grew this past year when we moved to one service on Sundays bringing our whole community together for worship consistently for the first time since the pandemic began. We grew in our joint purpose as we embarked upon another round of antiracism training through Sacred Ground and invited Canopy NWA to share our space at Grace in an effort to truly welcome our neighbors from all over the world. The Vestry pushed us to grow and mature as we reviewed compensation for church staff and implemented new, interest-based community groups focused on bringing us closer together and closer to our faith. We've grown stronger as we've supported

our newest seminarian in answering their call and as we've continued to meet the needs of our neighbors who struggle with hunger despite difficult economic conditions.

All this growth signifies to me that I vacate the Sr. Warden position at a time when we are a healthy community and a healthy church, and I've no doubt that we will continue to grow stronger, to grow larger, and to grow more faithful in the years to come.

With all my gratitude,  
Jackie

## **JR. WARDEN & PROPERTY REPORT**

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It has been a pleasure to serve with the Vestry, Fr Stan, Bay and especially Ben Bergstrom because of their commitment to the health of our congregation and their good stewardship of our resources. Stewardship is not solely about protecting what resources we have, but about actively preparing for Grace Church's future. We all preform acts of stewardship when we care about our congregation and our community; when we find opportunities to support and volunteer; and when we recognize needs in our community and can bring all our talents together to meet those needs. Grace can and does use our building to help provide for not only our needs as a congregation, but for Siloam Springs, and in a way for the whole world. We support the Gary Baird Food Pantry, we provide space for several outside groups including AA, and we have very recently in providing office space for the refugee resettlement organization Canopy: supporting their work in welcoming and providing homes and opportunities to people in need.

In 2023, I believe our main goal as a Vestry was to actively prepare for the future of Grace Church. Fr Stan, Bay, Jackie, and Ben along with the whole Vestry looked at long term repair and maintenance for out 50+ year old building, and how we can keep it as a home for all future generations of Grace Church. We identified necessary repairs and updates that we can accomplish in the coming years (including repair of damage to the south facing doors and replacing our windows) that will increase the lifespan for the Nave and will better house our church inside of it.

In addition to these future needs, we had some unexpected events in 2023, where we had to work to mitigate some accidental damage to our building and rental properties. These include: a tree collapsing and damaging part of our building, unexpected damage in one of the bathrooms of our rental property, and damage related to the cold temperatures last year and again in 2024. Through the work of staff and our congregation we have weathered these storms and I believe that we are well prepared for our future.

*Respectfully submitted by Bryan McKenzie*

2023 was another year of stability with our rental properties. We have the same great tenants, and we seek to be responsive and responsible stewards of the properties. Our largest project this year was a shower pan rebuild in the primary bedroom en-suite in the house on E Cornell. We also have a list of maintenance and larger projects to work through at both houses as time and budget allow. Additionally, we continue to use the same lawn care service and are grateful for their great work. It is a privilege to own these properties and we seek to honor God as we use them to provide quality housing.

*Respectfully submitted by Ben Bergstrom*

## Music

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There is little to report this year, primarily because everyone involved in the music program has been so faithful in regularly attending rehearsals and services. Everything has gone like clockwork. Special thanks to Liesl Dromi and members of the choir for your many hours of preparation to lead the singing during morning services; and thanks also to Jayme and David Amonsens and Jewel Gilbert for your work in preparing music for Celtic services.

The nave organ has been somewhat neglected this past year because our organ builder, Steven Cook, announced that he has retired from tuning/repair work. I have contacted another company, Red River Organ, which will start maintenance work later this spring. I look forward to a complete re-tuning overhaul after Easter.

It was a pleasure to welcome the JBU Cathedral Choir to Grace Church this past fall. I hope it was the beginning of a longstanding partnership, and that we can host them at least once a year in the future.

*Respectfully submitted by Paul Whitley*

## OUTREACH & JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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The past year has been a year of transition and pruning for the O&J Committee. We continue to meet and discern, together, how to best use our gifts, energy, and volunteer force to live out the baptismal covenant's call to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being".

### 2023 Milestones:

- MLK Jr. Day
  - We are delighted to report that the 2nd Annual MLK Clothing Drive was a huge success. Through the generosity of the Grace parish, mountains of clothes were donated that helped us meet several needs in our local community. Throughout the drive we heard and witnessed many wonderful stories. It was so heartwarming to see children arrive at the clothing drive excited to pick out their own clothes and to see the excitement on their faces as they heard their parent say yes. The first year we had the clothing drive, I was thinking about people being warm and having comfortable shoes and their necessities being met. What I didn't think about was the self-esteem and confidence I would see being built as people tried on and selected clothing. We had patrons shopping with other patrons and assisting each other in finding the correct sizes. There was so much laughter and joy. Thank you to everyone that donated and volunteered. It is truly one of my favorite events.
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner
  - We had a super turn out for 2023 Shrove Tuesday. It was nice to be back in person and we were able to give a decent donation to the Genesis House once again. Huge thanks to all of our volunteers, come back in 2024!

- The Garden in Siloam Springs
  - The Garden, under the faithful leadership of Patty Arnett, is undergoing a season of transition. A few faithful volunteers have helped to maintain The Garden in its current state while those in leadership discern how to transition the space to one that is more self-sustaining and reflective of the volunteer force committed to its maintenance.
- Siloam Pride
  - In June, we celebrated our LGBTQIA+ siblings by hosting a booth at Twins Springs Park during Siloam Pride. Stan gave a blessing at the start of the event, and we handed out Episcopal stickers, hugs, blessings, and did our best to embody the affirming space that is Grace Church. Thanks to all the volunteers that helped organize, run the booth, set up, and take down!
- Thanksgiving Family & Christmas Family
  - In December, we were able to provide Christmas for a small family that had just been accepted into the small house community at Genesis House. Thank you to everyone who brought gifts, the family was so very grateful!

*Respectfully submitted by Beth Smith*

### **The Gary Baird Food Pantry**

Josh, Karis, Chris, Caleb, Cindy, Marsha, the Chaney family, the Dinwiddie family, CeCe, Ben, Camden... and I'm sure I've lost a few in the shuffle... I'm so grateful for the kind and compassionate volunteers that have been generous with their time through 2023.

I was told on more than one occasion that the Grace Food Pantry was a lifesaving resource for people as their own fridges and cupboards were empty. While food insecurity breaks my heart, every Saturday I count it as a blessing to see basic needs met through the generosity of the Church, and the community. Grandparents are bringing their grandkids with them to play on our playset while they wait for food. Remote controlled car races have happened on more than one occasion in the parking lot. The Pantry has changed my idea of what a food bank can look like in the best way possible.

- **Food orders placed in 2023:** 50
- **Individuals served in 2023:** 1,775
- **Food distributed:** 53,301 (lbs.)
- **Food cost in 2023:** \$33,822.93

*Respectfully submitted by Ike Weaver, Director of the Baird Food Pantry*

## YOUTH & CHILDREN'S FORMATION

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2023 was full of lots of exciting opportunities for our kiddos!

This past year I was able to take a group of high schoolers from around the Diocese of Arkansas to EYE (Episcopal Youth Event) which is a huge youth conference for Episcopal Diocese all around the globe. It occurs every 3 years, but it had been 6 since the previous one due to covid. What the youth and I witnessed there was the embodiment of all the things I value most about our faith. It made us all proud to be Episcopalian and excited for the future of the Episcopal Church. I am eagerly looking forward to the next EYE, and heartily encourage any Grace kids that are of age to attend.

At our Parish retreat, we were finally able to have "Kid's Camp", a mini Camp Mitchell experience that has been an idea in the back of my mind for years. The leadership at Camp Mitchell were able to bring that idea to fruition and are now trying to implement something similar for all parish retreats! We had lighter child attendance this year due to the timing of the retreat, but the kids that were there loved it and I am excited for more kids to get to have this experience down the road.

Back home at Grace, our Sunday morning kid's program is thriving, although a little unpredictable in numbers. We have had Sundays with 2 kids, and Sundays with 14! I have been using "A Joyful Path" which is a curriculum that explores our relationship with the Divine in the context of our daily relationships and our relationship to nature. We have also spent Sunday mornings just talking about our Spiritual lives, how the church functions, why the church calendar is the way it is, the happenings in the wider church, and so on. The kids almost always surprise me with the small things they notice or remember.

Our Jr. High youth group has been super fun, and well attended. We greatly enjoyed our Lent posters, as well as the various game and movie nights. We are just starting a new curriculum that explains the Episcopal Church in "gamer" terms, and look forward to exploring where that may lead us. Our Sr. High group has been a little more difficult this fall due to family circumstances and timing. Seems like our high schoolers tend to be busy these days! We are working on shuffling that schedule around a bit to accommodate the group a little better.

In 2024 we are welcoming Jayme Amonsens back on Sunday mornings. She will be helping with Children's Ministry as well as continuing her work with evening youth groups. I am thankful to have such an eager and engaging partner in ministry!

Thank you all for sharing your children, it is an honor to be able to spend time with them and I hope that their spiritual lives are being fed and inspired by our time together.

*Respectfully submitted by Bay Greenhill*

## PRAYER CHAIN

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The Grace Church prayer chain is a group of Grace church members that actively pray for our church family and any additional requests. Communication is primarily sent through email. We choose to keep the full list confidential within the group to protect any requests that are confidential. For this reason the list shared in the Thursday Tidings and Sunday Bulletin includes first names only. If you are interested in joining the prayer chain, please contact Bay or myself. If you have a prayer request you would like us to pray for, please contact Bay, anyone on the prayer chain or myself.

*Respectfully submitted by Toni Barnett*

## **ALTAR GUILD**

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Grace Church has a dedicated Altar Guild. This is a ministry open to anyone interested in learning how to serve. Colleen Anderson and Mary Benjamin are co-leaders and depend on Sherri Lamb, Ben Rhoads, Jonathan Mason, and new members Laurie McKinnon and Cindy Stinnett. Jayme Amonsens and Cece Smith are our helpful substitutes.

The duties of the Guild are setting the altar and cleaning everything after each service. We polish the brass and silver each month. We cover the regularly scheduled services, also any funerals, weddings, and baptisms. The beautiful liturgical colors for different seasons of the Christian year make our job more interesting. The addition of flowers which are donated by members of Grace add to the beauty at the altar. Bay Greenhill, Administrator, helps with ordering supplies such as candles, wine and wafers, and upon occasion new linens. We could not do our work without the help of Bay!

We are still planning on having a shelf system in place in the second small room to the right of the altar. This will help us to have better organization for the supplies needed. Please talk to Colleen or Mary if you are interested in learning more about the Altar Guild.

*Respectfully submitted Colleen Anderson and Mary Benjamin*

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

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Grace continues to provide a weekly livestream of our Sunday service - please express a word of thanks to Michael Denison & Matt Dromi for their dedication and service! They have also covered special services, Holy Week and Christmas services, and are always at the ready when asked. Thank you for continuing to bring the church to us when we cannot come to the church!

I am also grateful for Stella Greenhill, who keeps our social media accounts current. Thank you Stella!

*Respectfully submitted by Bay Greenhill*

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

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### **LOOKING BACK AT 2023**

2023 has been a good year financially for Grace. We ended the year in the "black" and were able to fund all of our ministries at the level they were budgeted. Thanks to everyone who contributed!

### CASH REVIEW

The preliminary *Statement of Activities* shows 2023 operational revenues (the income we receive to pay the staff, bills, and expenses of the church) were \$487,125. Our actual total operational expenses were \$503,441. The deficit of \$16,316 was covered by income from our two rental houses.

### REVENUE

Our 2023 actual pledged income was paid at 98%. Thank you to all who were able to complete their pledge!

## CLERGY AND STAFF

As in 2022, our kitchen staff and breakfast expenses were offset by a generous Memorial gift given to support food ministry at Grace. These expenses are incorporated into budgets so that we can retain the staff and our wonderful breakfasts!

## OUTREACH

Grace Church continues to care for its congregants and the wider community. We had many generous donations to both the Clergy Discretionary Fund and the Deacon Gary Baird Food Pantry. The Baird Food Pantry has its own checking account, so income/expenses are not noted in the Grace Outreach accounts, you will find them in their own section on the financial reports. This year the Norm Koeller Community Garden was incorporated as part of the Grace Church food ministry and is no longer a separate non-profit. The costs associated with the NK Garden are noted as a separate line item under the Baird Food Pantry umbrella. The Discretionary Fund was able to shore up the Baird Food Pantry when needed, assist in medical bills, rent payments, and provide for general assistance needs in 2023.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024**

### *Stewardship Report*

Unlike other denominations, the Episcopal Church determines its budget based on pledges for the coming year and relies on your generosity and commitment to fulfill its mission. We greatly appreciate your support as you are able to do so! A few high-level numbers on our 2024 Budget, and some notes:

### *2024 Budget Summary*

- **Total Operating Revenues** in 2024 are budgeted at \$605,500
- **Total Operating Expenses** in 2024 are budgeted at \$579,000 giving us a \$26,500 surplus budget. Grace Church used its reserves during the pandemic from 2020-2022, so we hope to begin rebuilding a reserve fund for emergencies going forward.

**OPERATING** income and expenses help the church achieve its mission by paying the mortgage, utilities, and staff payroll as well as for the pastoral care of parishioners and the community.

**NON-OPERATING** income and expenses relate to additional ministries and investments that complement our church's mission, such as the Rectors' Discretionary Fund, Memorial Fund, the Garden, and the Food Pantry. Our Real Estate Fund holds the two rental houses.

- **Non-Operating** Revenues in 2023 are budgeted at \$76,700

The generosity of Grace Church members allows us to work together to fulfill God's call to proclaim the good news of God in Christ. Thanks to all who make Grace Church such a wonderful place to worship! We especially thank the members of the Finance Committee for their commitment of time and talent and their wise counsel!

*Respectfully submitted by Tony Franco and Bay Greenhill.*

## VESTRY NOMINATIONS

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**Colleen Anderson** – We moved here from California in 2003 to be closer to my sons and their families. Two boys, their wives and 11 grandchildren, 3 Great Granddaughters and 1 Great Grandson due in May. We moved into our home here in Colcord, OK in 2006. Grace welcomed me with open arms in 2007 and I have been here ever since. I serve as Co-Chair with Mary Benjamin for the Altar Guild. Not exactly sure when we started but it has been quite a while now and I love it. (We Have openings !!)  
I also serve as an Acolyte and Eucharistic Minister. If you are ever in Kansas, OK stop by the Arvest Bank there and say Hi, I spend quite a bit of my time there as a Relationship Banker.



**Bobbie Lawrence** - I have been a member of Grace since 2018. St Paul's, Fayetteville was my introduction to the Episcopal Church but Grace was the introduction to my church home. I have served on the Garden Board, the Food Pantry Board, and the Outreach and Justice Committee. I am a current usher and enjoy welcoming new folks to our congregation. One of my favorite Grace events is our annual clothing drive which I organize and lead. I am also a volunteer companion with Circle of Life Hospice and have several patients that I enjoy caring for. I have worked at J.B. Hunt Transport for 18 years and am currently a Sr Manager in Driver Personnel. I live in Lowell with my wife Jackie and our 2 dogs Remy and Oliver.



**Miguel R. Rivera, Sr.** - My wife, Barbara, and I have been active members of Grace Episcopal Church since March of 2023, after we began actively attending services beginning in the early fall of 2022. I routinely serve as an Acolyte during both Sunday and Wednesday communion services. I am trained and I frequently provide communion to our housebound members. I am teaching an adult formation class one Sunday per month and I am engaged in our community (e.g., Hispanic Heritage Festival and volunteer chaplain at Washington Regional Medical Center during the summer of 2023). I graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Arts degree in

Religious Studies and a Doctorate of Law Degree from the University of Illinois College of Law. I also have an Associate of Arts degree in history from Illinois Central College. I practiced law for 31 years and I have been teaching at John Brown University for six years (approximately three as an adjunct instructor, and three as an Assistant Professor). I teach courses in Criminal Justice, Constitutional Law, Business Law, and American Government and Politics. I am a published author and I am currently working on my second novel when my dog, two cats, and bird give me the time to have the computer on my lap rather than one of them.



**Ike Weaver** - I formally joined Grace in 2023 with my wife, Bri. We have lived in Siloam Springs since 2019, and absolutely love this community. I graduated from John Brown University in 2016, and currently work for Walmart in media production. I am serving as the Director of the Food Pantry here at Grace, and you can find me most Saturdays hanging out and distributing food with our amazing volunteer team (as well as speaking very bad Spanish). I love mountain biking, reading, live music, and making new friends. I am so grateful for Grace, and the amazing community here that cares so deeply for one another.