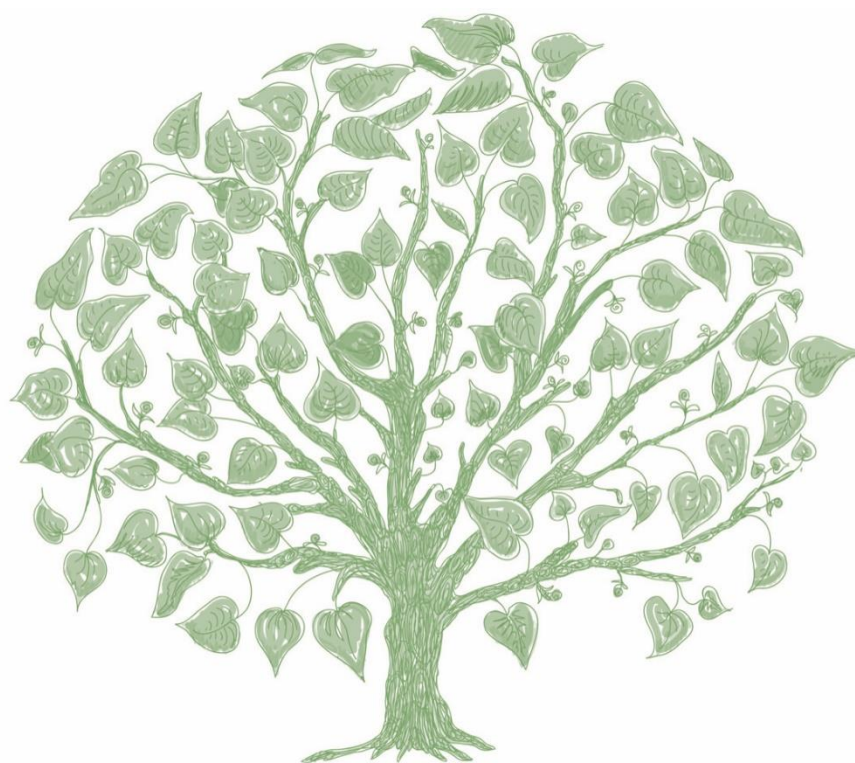


The Twelfth Annual Meeting of **GRACE CHURCH**

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires



February 4, 2024

Step into Grace...

...where strangers become friends.

We are an Open and Affirming church. Everyone of every age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental ability, or economic status is invited to join us as together we live out the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, service, and justice. No matter where you are in your spiritual journey—you are welcome here.



Bishop Doug Fisher visited Grace Church on September 17, 2023

Last Sunday at Crissey Farm



Gideon's Garden Interns 2023



Some of Our Vestry on Retreat

GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires
Twelfth Annual Meeting – February 4, 2024

Call to Order

Opening Prayer (all say)

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who gather today for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Old Business

Minutes of the 2023 Grace Church Annual Meeting (February 5, 2023) are presented.
Vote to approve the Minutes.

New Business of Grace Church

Vestry and Convention Delegate nominations are presented.
Vote to approve nominations.
Presentation of the Ministry Budget of 2024

Remarks from the Rector and Senior Warden

The Blessing

May God give you grace to never sell yourself short, grace to risk something big for something good and grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love. (William S. Coffin) And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

The Dismissal

People's response "Thanks be to God."

GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires
Twelfth Annual Meeting – February 4, 2024

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MINUTES OF THE TENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF GRACE CHURCH

February 5, 2023 In Person at Crissey Farm and Via Zoom 11:55 am- 12:23 pm

Call to Order: Reverend Tina Rathbone opened the meeting with 37 parishioners in attendance. All committee chairs were thanked for submitting their reports. No additions or changes to the agenda were requested.

Opening Prayer: Rev. Tina Rathbone led the group in opening prayer.

Old Business: A motion to pass the minutes of the 2022 Grace Church Annual Meeting (January 30, 2022) was presented, seconded, discussed, unanimously passed.

New Business of Grace Church: Vestry and Convention Delegate nominations were presented. Motion to pass the vestry nominations and convention delegates, seconded, discussion, unanimously passed.

Officers (1 Year)

Senior Warden	Pennie Curry
Junior Warden	Laura Jordahl
Treasurer	Sue Gore
Clerk	Mary Anne Grammer

Vestry – at Large (3-year terms; with 2 consecutive terms possible)

Class of 2024	Anne Andrews (2 nd), Dutch Pinkston (2 nd)
Class of 2023	Cathy Haywood (2 nd), Andrea White (2 nd)
Class of 2026	Mary Booton (1 st), Gino Furio (1 st), Meredith Haider (1 st)

Diocesan Convention Delegates and Alternates

Vestry Delegate: Sue Gore	Vestry Alternate: Pennie Curry
Lay Delegate: Monique Kirchoff	Lay Alternate: Dindy Anderson

Remarks from the Rector and Senior Warden

Tina thanked the vestry members stepping down for their dedication to Grace Churches' missions: Kathy Clausen, Senior Warden, John Cheek, Holly Murray and Dindy Anderson. Tina also thanked parishioners on accepting the roles of vestry members: Gino Furio, Mary Booton and Meredith Haider. Tina also thanked Pennie for stepping up to be Senior Warden and Laura for stepping up to be Junior Warden. Kathy thanked the congregation for the opportunity to serve as Senior Warden. Kathy also thanked the congregation for being there for her when called upon. Kathy transferred the Senior Warden Pin to Pennie.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer reported on fiscal year 2022 finances and answered questions from the congregation.

The Blessing

May God give you grace to never sell yourself short, grace to risk something big for something good and grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love. (William S. Coffin) And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

The Dismissal

People's Response "Thanks be to God"

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anne Grammer, Vestry Clerk

RECTOR'S REPORT

Grace Church had a very big year in 2023. Through it all, and thanks be to God, we remained a community that cares most about loving God, loving one another, and loving the people of the community around us. This fills me with gratitude - and also with awe. As St. Paul says in his first letter to the people of Corinth: "And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13:13)

The year started with a wonderful bang: Grace Church celebrated our 10th anniversary at Crissey Farm by inviting our former rectors the Rev. Francie Hills and the Rev. Dr. Janet Zimmerman to preach alongside me at a festive Holy Eucharist full of deep prayer and beautiful music. Later we shared delicious food at a community-wide luncheon.

During our annual meeting at the beginning of February, we elected two new vestry members: Mary Booton and Meredith Haider, each of whom has added real depth, wisdom, and humor to our governing body. We also appointed, that day, a new Sr. Warden, Pennie Curry, and a new Jr. Warden, Laura Jordahl. Without the power of their leadership, it is safe to say, the rest of our year would have gone very differently. Pennie's dedication, steadfast faith, endless energy, and generous care helped guide us all through, and Laura's quick mind, readiness to work and to do and to organize and - most of all - to show up as and when needed quickly became essential. Thanks be God for the ways the Spirit guides us all.

In February, the rich team of our parish leadership was aided by Andrea White who stepped up to take on the role of parish administrator. Her presence at the helm of the office has been invaluable. We are, at once, more organized, and more friendly than ever before. Andrea has a knack for figuring things out and finding a way. Beyond her administrative duties, at which she excels, Andrea also maintains an open and warm stance towards every single person she meets so that regular parishioners, occasional visitors, and friends from the community all find a reliable and deep welcome here in the office.

Perhaps the hardest part of the year was the premature shutdown of our accompaniment work at The People's Pantry. After more than a year of our steadfast and loving presence on the sidewalks with the people, the Pantry Board instituted a series of new regulations which ended up bringing our work there to a close. It broke our hearts for a time, having to leave. But we trusted in God, and in one another, and we met with several wise friends and mentors who made space for our communal grief and helped to turn it, once more, into hope.

Later in the year, we were able to reapply for the diocesan grant we had received to support our work at the Pantry and fund an initial run of Spanish and English classes which we were then able to offer to the community for free. These classes have been a huge success. We have already lined up a second 14-person, 8-week English as a Second Language (ESL) course, which we hope will be followed by another and then another. Each week we serve our ESL students hot and delicious suppers, largely cooked by parishioners, along with exercise books, pads, pens, paper, etc. As immigration from Latin America continues to grow in our county so does the need for these classes, and we have had waiting lists for every class so far.

The biggest news of 2023 however, had nothing to do with our work in the community... In late April the owners let us know that they were looking to sell Crissey Farm and that if we didn't want to buy it we would have to leave. Pennie Curry was essential to every single aspect of the long and difficult process of discernment and transition that followed. Her prayer, her presence, her faithfulness, her humor, and her love sustained us all and we will never be done giving thanks for her leadership.

After multiple meetings with the Executive Team and the vestry, we held four sets of congregation-wide meetings over the course of three months. Throughout the process, every effort was made to ensure the active participation of as many people as possible and we did all we could during every meeting to listen

and hear each other. The process was designed to lead our congregation, together, from reflecting on who we have been, through who we are now, to who we want to be moving forward. Only once the process of communal reflection was completed did we begin to actually look for spaces that might meet our needs. In this way, we staved off a too-hurried move to ‘solving’ the problem of having to find a place to worship and were able to remain focused on what God’s call to us might be.

The summer then got very busy with research and outreach by our vestry, realtor appointments, and site visits in and around Great Barrington. At one point we thought we would buy a property located just above St. James’ and we did everything we had to in order to make that happen. Then the Spirit moved through and among us again, and we refrained from making the offer we had prepared. And so it went, all of us in the congregation, led and supported by the vestry, leaning into the Spirit together as we trekked up steep peaks and through shady valleys until -- entirely unexpectedly, and again thanks to the power of a community at prayer -- we found ourselves exploring the possibilities at Berkshire South.

Berkshire South was one of the very first places we visited. But only after we had traveled far and wide were we able to recognize it as home. I am so grateful to the people of BSCC who have taken such pains to accommodate our needs, and, more even than that, to the people of Grace, and to our vestry in particular, for their faithful and courageous approach to this work. I honestly believe it was God-centered and God-driven, and what could ever be more important than that?

Through all this, of course, the regular work of the parish continued. Our Sunday morning congregation continued on its steady trajectory of growth, our Contemplative Wednesday Eucharist deepened, and under the friendly and capable leadership of Joel Jorgensen, Gideon’s Garden had another stellar year of planting, growth, and community out – (and in-) reach. Our Gideon’s Garden internship this year had 8 students instead of 7 as there was so much real need – and, just in the nick of time, the Rev. Jimmy Pickett came to join us for four months to serve both as our Gideon’s Garden Youth Supervisor and as a newly ordained Deacon. It was a joy to accompany Jimmy through to his ordination to the priesthood and he remains in our prayers, and our hearts, as he begins his new call at St John’s in Athol.

Just a couple of other things:

In March I read an article about a group of Ukrainian iconographers who were writing icons on the slatted lids of wooden ammunition boxes. The money raised by the sale of these icons supports a mobile hospital that treats soldiers on the front line of Ukraine’s war with Russia. After just one mention of this during Sunday announcements, we raised enough money to buy one of these icons. Now, a haunting and powerful icon of the Virgin and Child is expected to arrive any day – and our Bishop has agreed to bless it when it does.

Lastly, in the late Fall, a community of 17 Haitian families arrived in Great Barrington as a result of the overcrowding of family shelters in our state’s larger cities. Many groups and organizations in the Great Barrington community quickly mobilized to assist with our newly arrived neighbors’ transition and resettlement here, and Grace Church coordinated the initial, emergency clothing drive. After leading several worship services with members of the Haitian community in Multicultural Bridge’s Solidarity House, we were asked to lead regular, weekly services on Sunday afternoons in the Grace Church Chapel. The families are being provided housing in a motel here until June, and we hope to be able to provide a sacred space and structure for them all during this time.

Many, many thanks again to every single person in the community of Grace Church for giving so generously of themselves day after day, week after week. May God bless and keep you all!

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Tina Rathbone, Rector

SENIOR WARDEN

2023 certainly handed all of us at Grace several challenges. I have had the privilege of serving as you Senior Warden this past year and am so grateful for all the support I have received from our vestry and from all of you. I am especially grateful for the support I have had during the year from Tina our Priest and Rector. Tina continues to challenge us to spread Jesus' love out in the world by being active and involved with our community and welcoming all who step into Grace. We continue to ask, What is God calling us to do?

In 2023 we welcomed to the vestry Meredith Haider, Gino Furio, and Mary Booton. We will be saying goodbye to Mary Anne Grammer, our vestry clerk who will be retiring from the vestry after serving as clerk for six years. Mary Anne has kept excellent accurate minutes of every vestry meeting. Thank you Mary Anne for your wisdom and patience. I am delighted to report that Meredith Haider has agreed to serve as Clerk after Mary Anne steps down. Dutch Pinkston will also be stepping down from the vestry after serving for 6 years. Dutch has been involved in ministry at Gideon's Garden for over 12 years as well as serving on the vestry. Anne Andrews has agreed to stay on the vestry for another year, making up for time away during her illness. Anne is also a member of our financial committee.

In late April of 2023 Gary Happ, owner of Crissey Farm, informed us that we would need to find a new place to worship on Sundays. We would have until the end of 2023 to continue having our Sunday services at Crissey Farm. Once again Grace had to adjust to changes and begin the search for a new place to worship on Sundays. Tina guided the vestry and congregation in a process we would follow during our search.

We started meeting with the congregation to discuss our feelings about Crissy Farm, a place that had become for many their church home that was safe, warm, and comfortable. We made sure to respect all ideas and allowed space for questions and concerns. We prayed together, studied scripture, spent time in silence listening to God, and supported one another. Over a period of 6 months, we looked at every available rental property that met our needs and also considered purchasing a building and buying land to build. The process called for the vestry to attend many extra vestry meetings and meant each and every member of the vestry teamed with a vestry partner to go out and search, visit, and review properties for consideration.

Thanks be to God we were led to Berkshire South Community Center after six months of searching. It became clear that Berkshire South went out of their way to welcome us and really wanted us as a year-round weekly renter in a beautiful space that allows us to have room to grow. We negotiated a 3-year contract with an option to increase it to an additional two years after reviewing how both parties felt the relationship was working. We began packing up all our things purchasing new totes, and a new storage cabinet, checking out Berkshire South Sound System, and making sure Zoom would continue to be offered to our parishioners who could not be with us in person. A vestry member teamed up with a member of the congregation to determine what would be needed for our move to Berkshire South. Once again, we became lighter and kept only what we really needed. Thank you, Rick Gore and Abe Streeter, for checking out our tech equipment to be ready for our first Sunday service.

During the same time, we needed to negotiate a new lease for our church office space. I am happy to report we have a signed three-year contract with Cindy with an option to extend it for 5 years. We will be installing a new heating system in the office this spring. A big thank you to our Jr. Warden Laura Jordahl for researching and meeting with HVAC companies to obtain bids for the new system. Our storage space in Sheffield is almost empty and we will continue to find a home for the little that is left.

We had a wonderful vestry retreat at Holy Cross in upstate New York. It was a time to rest, pray, meditate, take long walks and just be together celebrating our friendship surrounded by Jesus' love for us all.

How could there be time to take care of anything else in 2023? Well of course, Tina continued all her other pastoral visits, preaching, bible study, Gideon's Garden Internship Program, Vestry meetings, finance meetings, community outreach, worship committee, centering prayer and mid-week Eucharist and all the other calls and visits required of her as our priest and rector.

Over these past 6 months, I have witnessed Tina receiving the news of having to move from Crissey Farm and prepare for the future in a new space while she still continued with all her other ministries. Tina challenges us on many levels to live out the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, service, and justice. Thank you, Tina, for sharing your gifts with us. Going forward your flock prays you take time to rest, play, write, visit with family, and receive the love and joy we wish for you.

I am blessed to serve with all of you who wish to make a difference where Christ call us to go. I hold all of you in prayer and as I think of you, I invite you to remember Paul's letter to the Philippians Chapter 1, *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

Respectfully submitted,
Pennie Curry, Senior Warden Grace Church

REPORT FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN

While reflecting on this first year of serving as a warden of the church, I felt it important to reacquaint myself with what, definitively, the role of a warden is. Thumbing through my dictionary, I found this definition: a warden is "a lay officer who, with other members of the vestry, is in charge of the temporal management of the parish." And so it is, that while the leadership role as warden requires me to be in charge, to some degree, of matters relating to the parish, I am always acting with my fellow vestry members. Looking back, I feel such gratitude for this vestry fellowship. Every member fully contributes his or her unique gifts to the cause of keeping, holding, and loving Grace. Throughout the year the tasks put before us were always viewed through the lens of serving our church's mission and congregation. The combined commitment of our inspiring Rector, Tina, our dedicated Senior Warden, Pennie, and our vestry members have given me the needed support to settle into this warden role, aspects of which are chronicled below.

During our February vestry meeting I made the recommendation to purchase an OWL videoconferencing webcam to improve the online experience of our vestry meetings, or any committee meeting, scheduled at the Grace office. After the purchase approval the OWL webcam was incorporated into general and vestry office meetings. The webcam gives those participating online the ability to see the face of a speaker present in the office meeting, along with improved auditory capability and a panoramic view of the whole meeting group. As hybrid meetings provide a useful format for many of our members, this improved communication tool has proven to be an asset.

A review of our current ministry groups to determine how we, as vestry members, could better serve each group took place during our March meeting. I was then called upon to meet with our interim Parish Administrator, Andrea Saville-White, to discuss how our ministry groups communicate with the office, Grace members, and visitors to our services, and what role vestry members might provide in aiding overall communication. Out of many ideas came the initial launching of permanent name tags to reduce the time churchgoers spend at the welcome table every Sunday filling out disposable name tags. This was to be the first of several steps to aid communication, though more pressing matters in the coming months would take precedence. Ideally, our incoming vestry will revisit this topic in 2024.

Later in the spring, I was tasked with contracting a professional cleaning service to thoroughly wash the church office space carpeting and upholstery- the first time in many years. At the same time, the Crissey Farm owners shared their plans to put the event space on the market to sell in the near future. This

news impacted all matters of the vestry, going forward, as is discussed in the Rector's and the Senior Warden's reports. As vestry plans were put into place to best facilitate how this information would be shared to the Grace community at large, and the communal action steps going forward, I worked with our treasurer, Sue Gore, to better understand our financial resources. I then created a series of graphic charts for Grace members to visually understand our budget commitments and the impact different scenarios would have on those commitments.

Much of the summer months were spent deeply considering the whatabouts- all the space possibilities for worship. By the fall this deep discernment and search period led us to the Berkshire South Community Center, and plans were made both to sign a one-year contract with BSCC for our worship space and to renew our contract on State Road for our office space. For the latter, it was necessary for me to meet and receive quotes for replacing the antiquated furnace/HVAC system so that payment of the replacement could be incorporated into the renewed contract. After a review of two quotes from reputable HVAC contractors, an agreement was reached between our landlord and ourselves to collectively pay for the replacement, and a three-year extension of the contract was signed.

During the final weeks of 2023, the vestry supported its church by preparing the way toward worshipping at BSCC. We partnered with ministry leaders to ensure that all essentials would be provided for in our new space. As mentioned at the start of this report, I am so grateful for our vestry and its sense of dedication during a particularly trying year. It is with optimism for the future of our church and its mission that I look toward the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Jordahl, Junior Warden Grace Church

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Regular lay preaching on Sunday mornings has continued to offer inspiration, education, and real gift to our community this year. We were forced to take a hiatus of several months while we worked to secure a new space in the middle of the year, but we have since taken up the careful process of preparation again and will return to active and regular lay preaching in January of 2024. Thank you to each one of our lay preachers. Your courage, generosity, and faith are an example for us all.

Our Tuesday evening Bible Study meetings have continued through the year. We started with our regular study of the lessons appointed each Sunday. In February we started a five-week study of the Psalms using Walter Brueggemann's Book, *The Spirituality of the Psalms*. The course ended with the creation of our own book of Psalms, *The Psalms of Grace*, which we printed in a pamphlet and gave as a gift to the congregation of Grace. All the psalms in it were written (anonymously) by members of the Bible Study group, and the book was illustrated with the gorgeous art of Mimi Alford. After a return to study of the lectionary readings, studied *The Gospel of Mark* using Rowan Williams' book of the same name. To wrap up that course of study we gathered over Zoom and read the entire gospel out loud, chapter by chapter. None of us knew how it would be, sitting physically alone in our houses, listening to our friends read the Gospel out loud, and all of us were surprised, I think, by the power of the process, the love, and the uniting truth that reached us all that night. We are keen to find ways to replicate the experience and will work towards doing just that in 2024.

Centering Prayer on Thursday evenings, along with our communal reflections on the Gospel during our regular Wednesday contemplative eucharist, have continued to offer the space, time and community we all need to deepen our understanding of the way God works in our lives and in the life of the world. And our work in the community has done the same. Gideon's Garden, the Internship program and the Taft Fellowship, along with our evening language classes and most recently our celebration and worship with members of the newly arrived Haitian community in our midst have all revealed to us the truth of

Emmanuel, God with us, and we pray we will be able to continue to both give to and receive from all of our neighbors in Great Barrington and beyond.

Lastly, 2023 saw an extension – and deepening – of our annual Vestry retreat. In part because of the amount of work the vestry put in this year, we shared a 2-night, three-day retreat together at the Monastery of the Holy Cross. There we were sustained by the regular, steady prayer of the brothers five times a day, by the beauty of the place, and by the presence of each other – for all of which, I thank God.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Tina Rathbone, Rector

ALTAR GUILD

Grace Church continued to worship in person at Crissey Farm throughout 2023, with additional services for the Blessing of the Animals and Gideon's Garden at Gideon's Garden, and Christmas Eve in the greenhouse at Taft Farms. Additionally, midweek contemplative Eucharists were held at the chapel on State Road. All of these were supported by the work of the altar guild.

We have finished our time at Crissey Farm and made the necessary adjustments to worship in our new space at Berkshire South. We have a little less storage space in our new home, but no more stairs!! If there was an Altar Guild medal to be given out, it would need to go to Laura Jordahl and Joel Jorgensen for the almost infinite number of trips they took up and down those stairs, carrying our storage boxes up and down, and up and down, and up and down.

And, as always, my gratitude goes to the members of the Altar Guild for setting up, and putting away, and washing, and polishing, and ironing, and sewing, and remembering all the details. The women and men of this group are exceptional people who volunteer their time and talents (and a bit of treasure) to make our communal table warm and welcoming.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Sieber, for the Altar Guild

BOOKS & BREAD

Celebrating its twenty-seventh year, Books & Bread has long been an important ministry of Grace Church. Attendees of these monthly gatherings continue to share their passion for books at each others' homes throughout the year. In January, we traditionally meet to nominate and vote on the eight books we will read and discuss. All are welcome to nominate their book choices and attend the gatherings throughout the year. The discussions are always lively and informative.

The grid below captures all of the important details for 2023. Meetings began at 6:00 PM for a social hour over appetizers and beverages, followed by dinner and dessert, or on occasion for appetizers and dessert. In either case, this pre-discussion time traditionally allows the opportunity for social interaction before we review the book. Those opting to attend on Zoom were invited to do so. Attendance this past year ranged from 5 to upwards of 13 people. A special thanks to the hosts noted below.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Kirchoff

Date	Book	Author	Leader	Pages	Host
Feb. 8	Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer	James L. Swanson	Peter Kirchoff	388	Peter & Monique Kirchoff
March 8	Notes from a Small Island	Bill Bryson	Monique Kirchoff	317	Tina Rathbone
Apr. 12	Destiny of the Republic	Candice Millard	George Raymond	432	Martha Katz
May 10	Beautiful World, Where Are You	Sally Rooney	Pennie Curry	368	Carol Way
June 7	Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Family	Anderson Cooper & Katherine Howe	Carol Way	336	Peter & Monique Kirchoff
Sept. 13	Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius	Dave Eggers	Monique Kirchoff	375	Frank Garretson
Oct. 11	The Personal Librarian	Marie Benedict & Victoria Christopher Murray	Frank Garretson	352	Carol Way
Nov. 29	Grant's Final Victory	Charles Bracelen Flood	Martha Katz	250	Mark & Dindy Anderson

CHURCH SCHOOL

We are blessed to have four to six children who regularly attend, ranging in age from two years old to young adulthood, with three to four teachers who rotate two by two weekly - Dindy Anderson, Margaret Layton, Mary Booton, Holly Murray, and Andrea White.

In 2023 we focused on teaching the traditional Bible stories to build a foundation of Christian vocabulary and connection to the Bible. We use the Gospel reading to connect with a Bible story when appropriate. In January we began with the reading in Matthew 4:18-23, "Fishing for People." The children relish in our discussions of the Bible story each week and ask wondering questions.

In Church School, we love coloring creations, writing poems, praying, and being together in our church school community. For example, on Transfiguration Sunday, February 19th, we enjoyed making stained glass windows with tissue paper to see the changes in light and reflection. Several Bible stories we listened to and wondered about this year were The Woman at the Well, The Raising of Lazarus, Jesus Appears to His Disciples- breathes the Holy Spirit, On the Road to Emmaus, Pentecost, and many more based on the Gospels.

We use various resources to weave together a curriculum to meet the needs of our children.

- Beulah Land: Developed by Christian educator Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, Beulah Land is a felt board teaching resource that offers children stories of the Christian faith.
- Illustrated Ministry: Founded by Adam Walker Cleveland, a Presbyterian minister, the team at Illustrated Ministry creates accessible faith-based intergenerational resources for the church and home.
- Lectionary Story Bible: (Years A, B, C), By Ralph Milton: Three volumes are based on scripture readings from the *Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)*.
- Lesson Plans that Work: Published by the Episcopal Church and designed to follow the Revised Common Lectionary, we adapt these plans within the context of the needs and interests of the children who come to our church.
- Books

- Dear Mama God, by Daneen Akers
- Mother God, by Teresa Pecinovsky
- I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, by Lesbia Scott
- In God’s Name, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- God Said Amen, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- God’s Paintbrush, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

We thank you for the gift of children. With each child, you refresh your promises to all of us.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Saville White

DIOCESAN CONVENTION

On October 28, 2023 the 122nd Diocesan Convention was held at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. At the previous convention, also held in Amherst, online attendance and voting were streamed. This time only portions of the Convention were streamed, and all voting delegates had to be present at the Convention venue. This change helped the proceedings flow more seamlessly.

The Convention opened at 9 am with a continental breakfast and a message from Bishop Fisher, inviting us “to consider making Mary Magdalene the patron saint of our diocese.” In a rousing address to our assembly, he went on to explain the reasons why this was a great idea. His talk was followed by a Eucharist and a Call to Order and Welcome at 10:30. There were reports on *Credentials and Registration*, followed by the election of a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer, and a Secretary. Before the delegates adjourned for lunch, they passed a resolution to heal the legacy of slavery through an act of atonement, and they passed a budget for 2024. This resolution and these budgets were subjected to incisive questions and rebuttals by various delegates before being passed.

The Convention reconvened after lunch with a video by the *Episcopal Path for Creation Justice* which included a commentary by Rachel Field and Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, whom you may recognize from retreats sponsored by the diocese. There were words by the *Clergy Compensation Committee*, the *Mental Health Committee*, and appointments of the *Board of Examining Chaplains*, not to mention a report from the *Committee on Planning of Next Convention*. That report was just one of 14 reports that addressed the business, spiritual, and financial work of the diocese. After a closing prayer, blessing, and dismissal, we were adjourned.

As at the last convention, the Diocese addressed the material and spiritual needs of its constituents in many ways. The 122nd Convention was as productive as it was organized and interesting.

Respectfully submitted,
Monique Kirchoff, Lay Delegate

GIDEON’S GARDEN

From Joel Jorgensen: *As I conclude my first full year here at Gideon’s Garden, I am never not surprised by the passing of the seasons. The work of the Garden – much like the work of the church – is one of slow but sure repetition and deliberate movements from one phase of the season to the next. When looking at the season as a whole, it is a daunting task to imagine what’s ahead; let alone getting through the season beginning to end. But when you’re in the thick of it and begin to lose yourself in the work itself, the season is over in a blink of an eye. As such, what is needed for good work to happen, I’ve learned, is first courage to begin the work, then patience to see it through, and most importantly, many hands to lift it up. This goes for the care of youth as it does the care of a field. Of course, this*

goes for the steady growth and care of one's own soul as well. Thank you again for another successful season and may the seeds of last year bear even more fruit this year.

Rev. Jimmy Pickett: *It is with deep gratitude that I reflect on this past season at Gideon's Garden. This garden is a gift from God, and I saw so much growth over the short time I placed my feet on this holy ground. I saw growth in friendship, confidence, and skill in the lives of each of our interns and in my own life. The therapeutic nature of soil allowing stories to be told and heard, abundant flowers to grace the field and our Wednesday morning Eucharist in the Grace Office, and even the sadness and grief of dying squash and chickens, are held tenderly by the small corner of Creation that we call Gideon's. I will never fully be able to express how deeply grateful I am to have spent my time as a Deacon with my hands in the dirt and my heart in the community here, but I am the Priest I am today thanks in part to all those I met in Gideon's Garden. I look forward to hearing about next summer's harvest, again and again, season after season.*

Returning for his first full year as director at Gideon's, Joel spent the early winter months of 2023 planning and ordering seeds for the field for the coming season and researching propagation techniques which he was only somewhat acquainted with. During the less busy months of the year, Joel regularly lent a hand to Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Bounty in the distribution of food and produce to pantries and programs across the county. During this period, Joel also reached out to a number of schools and programs in the area advertising Gideon's Youth Supervisor position to high schoolers and college students. Joel also taught a few classes at Simon's Rock and Monument Mountain on food systems and sustainability.

Beginning in late February, Joel resumed construction of the propagation greenhouse that was fully funded a year prior by Emerson Collective. In early March, Joel began seeding for the coming season at Taft's greenhouses. By mid-March, Joel had completed the greenhouse and began propagating with the help of volunteers. Whatever new space was created with the greenhouse was quickly being taken up by seedlings. Around 2,800 seeds were planted with many seedlings dedicated to other programs like CHP and Multicultural Bridge's Solidarity Farm & Garden at the old fairgrounds.

In March, Rev. Tina and Joel, with the help of the diocese, decided to bring in Rev. Jimmy Pickett to Grace Church and the Garden for the season as part of his transitional diaconate with the aim of Jimmy aiding both Joel at the Garden and Grace Church with his parish ministry. To be sure, the success of this year would not have been possible without Jimmy. By April, the no-till bed was prepped and ready for early plantings of kale, spinach, peas, and radishes. During the spring, Joel also applied for a few grants such as the Jewish Women's Foundation of the Berkshires and reapplying for a \$5,000 grant from Emerson Collective – both of which were received in full. Upon realizing that he had somehow underplanted, Joel began to solicit donations from Ward's and Clark's nurseries which agreed to supply whatever surplus they had throughout the season. Joel also received donations of compost from Stanton Farm for the further amendment of the no-till garden.

In June, the newly ordained Jimmy Pickett arrived. On Saturday, June 3rd, Gideon's Garden held their 2023 planting with the help of folk from Grace Church, St. Paul's, Multicultural Bridge, Project Connection, and many Garden Interns from the previous year. For the first time, we managed to plant everything we intended to in one day! The weeks following planting day, Jimmy and Joel worked on a number of smaller projects. Jimmy completed the planting tables that will have teas, strawberries, raspberries, and herbs for everyone's edification and enjoyment and Joel put together the irrigation for the season.

On June 25th, Rev. Tina, Joel, and Rev. Jimmy greeted the eight Gideon's Garden Interns for the 2023 season. Three of the interns returned from last season and felt quickly at home. The others, with the guidance of our returnees, were soon able to find their own niche in the Garden. With each new group of interns comes a different internship program with its own quirks and personalities. This year – with as few words as possible – was simply fun. The bonds that each of the kids brought with them and the

bonds that were created had a contagious spirit. While much of the structure from last year remained, Jimmy, Tina, and Joel's focus on the needs and support of each individual student is what makes this program special. Of course, this is a Garden program after all. All of the students worked incredibly hard, some even specializing in the work that best fits their interests. By the end of the summer, we had expert pruners, weeders, harvesters, washers, and even a resident project manager and engineer. We also maintained our weekly field trips. This year, we went to Mumbett's Freedom Farm, Berkshire House of Corrections Aquaponics program, the Guthrie Center for pickling with Kevin West, High Lawn Farm, and of course a few trips to Lake Mansfield for some fun. The internship again concluded with a garden party hosted by our interns for their family and friends and many of our helpers from Grace Church. Big thanks were in order for all our interns, volunteers, parents, and friends at W.E.B. DuBois Middle School. We are abundantly grateful for another successful internship program.

Production at the Garden this year was quite difficult. Jimmy, Joel, Tina, the volunteers, and the interns suffered smokey days, buggy days, rainy days, and more than anything: gray days. As such, our production was *significantly* stunted due to the few sunny, warm days we had. As it turns out, sunlight is very important for plant production and pollination! On top of that, due to the wet weather, the conditions were perfect for blight which caused our two most heartbreaking losses: summer squash and tomatoes. But regardless, Gideon's Garden managed pull out ~7,200 pounds of food for pantries and programs in the area. Peppers outshone much of the Garden with just over 1,100 pounds of sweet and spicy peppers! They will surely be a staple for future years. We look forward to sunnier summers next season.

This year we also had an incredible group of weekly volunteers which was such a blessing to start the week with. People from Grace, St. Paul's, and Berkshire Botanical Gardens regularly pitch in and help every week. Baked goods and treats became an accustomed staple and welcome sight on many mornings, deepening the community among us. To thank our volunteers, we also began organizing meals which will hopefully continue to mark occasions at the Garden. Thank you, Jim, Louise, Gale, Laura, Anne, Ruby, Dutch, Orly, and our friends at BCARC for your help this season.

More broadly, the South County Food Access Collaborative Working Group – a collaboration of various organizations in South County – pulled together this year a new distribution system for pantries and programs in the area that now allows Gideon's to make one-stop drop-offs of food and produce at the Berkshire Grown cooler! This might seem small, but this is an amazing step for Gideon's Garden and our community partners as it allows for much less time driving and more time focusing on farming. Food access has come a long way in Berkshire County and without our community partners, much of what Gideon's does would not be possible. Thank you to all the folks at Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Bounty, CHP, and Fairview Hospital for all the invisible work at our pantries.

We concluded the season with a farewell to Rev. Jimmy on October 1st for Gideon's annual St. Francis Celebration at the Garden. Jimmy left his mark at the Garden by planting some garlic and instilling a passion for onions that will carry us for future seasons. Jimmy also provided seed money to start a cut flower garden so that pantry goers would have roses with their bread. Jimmy will always be a friend of the Garden. Toward November, we organized our first combined Gideon's Garden alumni get-together where we had soup, and hot cocoa, and invited our friends Aaron and Rachel from MAPS (Music, Art, Puppets, Sound) to help us design a mural to put on the wall of our new greenhouse which is expected to be completed this summer. Since then, Joel has been planning for the next season – this time hoping for the best and preparing for the worst by keeping what worked last year and diversifying crop types to stay balanced regardless of the season.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel Jorgensen, Director

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

The scholarship/grant committee had no meeting this year. There were no requests for either this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Doreen M Hutchinson

HEALING MINISTRY

The Healing Ministry provides personal prayer for those who wish to come to the prayer team in the back of the worship area during the administration of communion on Sunday morning. Members of the Healing Team are Ted Cobden, Pennie Curry, Sue Gore, and Joel Jorgensen.

Ted Cobden

HOSPITALITY

We started the year with a fabulous 10th-anniversary celebration of Grace Church on Epiphany. We were joined by Francie Hills and Janet Zimmerman, the two other priests since Grace Church's founding. The celebration included lunch, a wonderful cake made by Debbie Holmes and cupcakes, games, and reminiscences of our time together. A big thank you to all who planned it.

We had several luncheons in the Spring at Crissey Farm so that we would all have the opportunity to gather together and socialize. Many people attended and were accompanied by great conversation. We also had a wonderful Easter celebration complete with the usual Easter hunt for the children.

On the first Sunday in October, the service was held under a tent at Gideon's Garden for both a celebration of the bounty from Gideon's Garden and the Blessing of the Animals. Apple cider and donuts were supplied by Taft Farms and enjoyed by all.

On October 19th we celebrated the ordination into the priesthood of our Deacon, Jimmy Pickett and Misty, the Deacon from St. John's in Williamstown at Trinity Church in Lenox. We were in charge of organizing the party after the ordination with help from St. John's. Once again, the people of Grace Church stepped forward with lots of delicious food as well as providing many hands for set-up and clean-up. It was a glorious celebration!!

In December, we had a wonderful feast supplied by Pennie and Taft Farms, including home-made tamales and many other treats. Juan Diego Cabrera provided much assistance with both the food and the distribution of the wreaths. As we were leaving, we were given a Christmas wreath to take home. A delicious and delightful morning!

A huge thank you goes to all those who participated in providing treats and setting up and cleaning up for coffee hour during this year. This includes Ian and Mary Booton, Laura Jordahl, Sue and Rick Gore, Monique and Peter Kirchoff, Cathy Haywood, Carol Way, Lee and John Cheek, Marcia Doelman, Sally Brooke, Nancy Fishell and Howard Seip, Jainee McCarroll, and Holly Murray. A special thanks goes to Debbie Holmes who always makes sure that we have plenty of supplies, was essential in organizing during the transition to Berkshire South, as well as taking her turn at coffee hour!! None of this could happen without all of you!!!

Respectfully submitted,
Dindy Anderson

LEE FOOD PANTRY

To respond to human need by loving service.

1/1/23 Beginning Balance		\$116,567
Income: 2023 Donations	\$55,041	
Expenses:	\$72,007	
12/31/23 Ending Balance		\$99,601

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
2338

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED
6328

In 2023, the Lee Food Pantry has had a 25% increase in households served. Many thanks to the 40-plus volunteers that help make the pantry the success it is. Also, thank you to Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire Diaper Project, Irie's Pet Pantry, and Big-Y. To all at Grace Church and Gideon's Garden, my heart is full.

Our biggest challenge for the future is finding a new location for the pantry. The town of Lee will be demolishing our current location to build a much-needed municipal center as none of our current ones are up to code. The project will take a few years, which gives us time. I will be meeting with the town administrator soon. Lee Food Pantry has been mentioned at every meeting. Our citizens are also concerned.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Gore

MEN'S GROUP

Overview. The purpose of the Grace Church Men's Group is to provide fellowship and to enrich the faith of all who participate. Although we do not meet every month, when we do meet, it is usually on a Wednesday evening. Generally speaking, we meet at a residence from 6-9 for supper and discussion focused on specific topics. All men of the parish and their guests are invited. There are no attendance requirements or attendance expectations. Now and then, someone can come to a particular meeting that interests him or he can become a "regular" by attending most all the meetings. At the evening meetings, we number 8-10 although there are about 30 on our mailing list. We meet at 6:00 pm for soft drinks, wine, and cheese followed by supper. Our discussion begins at about 7:45 pm and we adjourn promptly at 9:00 pm. We feel God at work in our fellowship and care for one another. We are strengthened when we share our life stories and feel the support of the other men.

History. This ministry began early in 2002 when a small group of gentlemen parishioners met monthly at the Barrington Brewery for lunch and conversation. In November of that year, shortly after Cathy Richardson became the new Rector of St. James Church, the Vestry met in Retreat at which "involving the men of the parish more fully in parish life" was identified as one of three strategies "for the purpose of furthering the life and growth of St. James in the coming year." Within a few weeks, that resolve gave birth to the Men's Group as we know it today with Ted Cobden in the lead. While the small lunch meetings at the Brewery continued for a while, a much larger group began to meet on a regular basis in the evenings as described in the first paragraph of this report. The group has continued to operate ever since.

What we did in 2023. On April 5, we dined at the White residence with Prescott Winter, a neighbor of the Whites, as our speaker. He gave us a very interesting insight into the activities of the National Security Agency where he spent his whole career before retiring to Great Barrington a few years ago. On August 30 we had our annual BBQ at the Cheek home in South Egremont. There were 15 men in attendance, pretty much a record. On November 15, we had dinner, at the Kirchoff residence in South

Egremont, with a program that featured Julie Michaels and Ari Zorn who gave us a very thorough rundown on the W.E.B. DuBois sculpture project. The sculpture will eventually be located in front of the Mason Library in Great Barrington. Finally, on December 6, numbering 14, we were hosted for dinner at Frank Garretson's home in Sheffield. Our guest-of-honor was Pennie Curry, the Senior Warden of Grace Church. Her topic was "my life". An extraordinary evening.

The Men's Group Steering Committee: Steve White, Chair
 George Raymond, Secretary
 John Cheek, Ted Cobden Peter Kirchoff

MOVIE NIGHT

At their leisure, participants watch the movie that has been selected for the next Zoom get-together. At that Zoom meeting, the film is discussed for one hour. What kind of movies? They may cover a variety of genres and would, generally speaking, be ones getting high marks from critics including those with R ratings. Movies known to contain an excess of sex and violence would be avoided, regardless of critical acclaim.

The current practice is to have monthly Zoom meetings on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. Meetings in the busy months of July and August may be suspended.

Information about the currently scheduled film appears in *Tuesday's Child*.

Here is a list of movies we watched and discussed in 2023:

Discussion Date	Movie Title	Discussion Leader
January 5, 2023	Locke	George Raymond
February 2	The Swimmers	Jainee McCarroll
March 2	The Castle	Peter Kirchoff
April 6	<i>No Movie Night</i>	-
May 4	Scent of a Woman	Mark Anderson
June 1	Doubt	Ted Cobden
July	<i>No Movie Night</i>	-
August 3	La La Land	Carol Way
September 7	Living	Ted Cobden
October 5	The Big Chill	Mark Anderson
November 2	The Verdict	Peter Kirchoff
December 7	The Wife	George Raymond

If a Parishioner has an interest in becoming active in the movie selection process and leading discussions, please email George Raymond at graymond747@gmail.com or call him at 413.637.7224.

MUSIC

I've been directing the choir for nearly two years, joining with Lee who has been at the keyboard far longer. After her retirement as semi-permanent Senior Warden, Kathy Clausen joined us thus enhancing the soprano section. While the choir is larger in summer, we have maintained a good standard even in winter, and hope to have singer and voice teacher Gina Beck join us when she can.

We try to keep an interesting mix of music from the Hymnal 1982 as well as the several supplements. Lee and I choose the music usually only a week before the service and then post a YouTube version of one of them in Tuesday's Child. Lee often spends considerable time choosing preludes, postludes, and then practicing them.

My main hope for choir and congregation has been to bring the theology and storytelling of hymns to the forefront. I could sum this up with something I saw recently on Facebook. "The library may be where theology is written with ink on paper, but the choir is where theology is written with the voice on

the heart”. To this end I also work to have the choir sing in musical phrases rather than just note by note, carefully emphasizing important words so that both choir and congregation can sense the deeper meaning and unite music and words into one.

As in the past we continue to use percussion instruments and our White Chapel Bells whenever appropriate to enhance our music and singing.

Our services at Gideon’s Garden give us the opportunity to worship and sing in the beauty of nature even as the setting brings challenges. The Blue Christmas service at the office and the Christmas Eve service at the Taft Farms Greenhouse also take us out of our normal space.

The Lessons and Carols service affords a wonderful opportunity to sing more of our favorite Christmas carols. This year was special again, thanks to the beautiful harp playing of Teresa Mango and despite the absence of the Clavinova, which had already been moved to Berkshire South.

Of course, we eagerly anticipated our move to Berkshire South with what we think will be a fine setting and acoustic for our music.

Respectfully submitted,
John Cheek, Choir Director

SAFE CHURCH

As of this writing, all employees, staff, officers, vestry members and volunteers who work regularly with vulnerable people in the parish, including Gideon’s Garden, and Church School staff are certified in Safe Church Training, as provided by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. Following the annual meeting, any new vestry members, or other identified members who need or wish to take the Safe Church training, will be contacted and their participation in the training arranged. At this time there is still the intention to review and implement a new policy to cover safe church mandates within our programs and programming.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Sieber, Safe Church Officer

THIRD SUNDAY SUPPERS

In 2013, we began the Third Sunday Supper program. (In the beginning the suppers were held on the Second Sunday). The idea was for parishioners to be invited to join together on a Sunday evening, once a month, at a local restaurant for some fellowship and dining. Our first dinner was at Sullivan Station in Lee on May 10, 2013 (that was a Friday but that’s another story). With very few exceptions, we continued to meet in-person, month in and month out, always on a Sunday, until March 15, 2020. Only 4 people attended that dinner, and it was clear then that the pandemic was closing in. Starting on April 19, 2020, and continuing through June 20, 2021 we dined only by Zoom. In-person dining resumed on September 19, 2021. Our dinner at Aegean Breeze May 21, 2023 marked our 10th anniversary. The December 18, 2023, dinner was our 119th get-together. We have visited 29 different venues since 2013.

What we did in 2023:

Date	Dining Venue	Location
January 15	<i>Cancelled</i>	-
February 19	Koi	Great Barrington
March 19	Morgan House	Lee
April 16	Fiesta	Great Barrington
May 21	Aegean Breeze	Great Barrington
June 18	<i>Cancelled</i>	-
July 16	Morgan House	Lee
August 20	Fiesta	Great Barrington

September 17	Amici	West Stockbridge
October 15	Morgan House	Lee
November 19	Mint	Lee
December 17	Aegean Breeze	Great Barrington

The program has been successful and apparently well-received. The first supper of 2024 is scheduled to take place at 6:00 pm on Sunday, January 21 at Koi.

Respectfully submitted,
George Raymond

TUESDAY'S CHILD

Tuesday's Child, the Grace Church e-newsletter, continues in its effort to inform and hearten its recipients. It is sent out every Tuesday.

The newsletter has gone through several iterations, with the goal of making it more engaging and easier to navigate. After some thought and discussion, the decision was made to follow Tina's Weekly Message with news from Gideon's Garden (in season, sent in by Joel), followed by updates from the Church School (sent in by Dindy Anderson, Margaret Layton or Andrea White), announcements from the Special Announcements (usually sent in by whoever has the information), and lastly the Weekly Worship Schedule (sent in by Andrea or Tina) which contains the names of events, their times, locations and their zoom links. These have been the biggest recent changes, but they are not guaranteed to be the last. We try to keep the information that most concerns the readers at the top of the newsletter.

The rest of Tuesday's Child remains divided into several sections:

Opportunities to Give / Volunteer offers ways and places that parishioners can donate, or give their time to their communities and to their world. Sometimes gift cards for students are called for, or volunteer work is needed at a local Food Pantry, etc.

Learning and Discovery provides information on lectures, musical venues, and classes offered by the diocese or the community to enrich the spiritual and intellectual lives of the participants. Some of us took Spanish classes, sponsored by the diocese, to help us converse with our new neighbors.

I Want Some Friends offers opportunities to mingle with our fellow human beings, exchanging and discussing ideas in reading groups, dinner outings, movie discussions, and in a men's group. In-laws, siblings, friends and children have all been welcomed on many occasions.

Sunday Morning presents the Gospel reading of the week, and a music video, appropriate for the season, selected by John Cheek. You can practice your sing-along skills here.

There is also a list of those needing prayers, or a kind word. This list is updated by Andrea, the Parish Administrator.

Grace Church lists the employees of Grace Church, with photos, and with contact information.

Tuesday's Child gets sent out to 116 people a week. An average of 73% of people who receive it open the email. My hope is that it continues to be a source of inspiring and welcome communication between us.

Respectfully submitted,
Monique Kirchoff

WELCOME TABLE

The Welcome Table, staffed by one or two committee members, continued to be a welcoming presence for Sunday services at Grace. Incoming parishioners and visitors paused at the table for a name tag, a copy of the worship service, bulletins, and updates on members' news. It was a joy to see newcomers as well as old and new friends and neighbors enter and greet each other before the beginning of the service. These weekly informal gatherings by the Welcome Table often spark conversations that continue at coffee hour.

A checklist of those attending, either in person or on Zoom, was kept by a committee member and put in the office briefcase when finished.

Once the service began, the committee members passed the loose plate collection and delivered it to the altar. After the service, they packed up the contents of the table in the bin provided.

The Welcome Table committee members are Rick and Sue Gore, Sally Brooke, Doreen Hutchinson, Marcia Doelman, Sarah Sieber, Carol Way, Anne Marie and Robert Pohl, Dale and Louise Peterson, Mary Booton, Anne Andrews, and Harmony Twing.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Brooke

WISDOM COMMITTEE

The Wisdom Committee met once in July 2023.

We had three requests for financial support:

- 1) Stanton Home
- 2) Berkshire Immigrant Center
- 3) Multicultural Bridge

The committee validated congruency with mission, researched the request, and sent recommendations to the vestry.

We distributed the following:

- Stanton Home - \$4,000.00
- Berkshire Immigrant Center - \$3,000.00
- Multicultural Bridge – created an emergency fund with \$2,000.00 given to Gwen to manage requests to her, in addition to our regular annual donation of \$5,000.00 to their summer camp program, Happiness Toolbox

Respectfully submitted,
Doreen M Hutchinson

WORSHIP

We had no interruption to our in-person Sunday worship this year, thanks be to God! And with one or two kinks, caused by problems with the Crissey Farm equipment (not ours!) we were able to offer worship over Zoom for all these services.

So many of us have a role in making our Sunday Eucharist what it is that I cannot name them all here. John and Lee Cheek who provide our music so beautifully each week, the welcome team, altar guild, acolytes, lectors and intercessors, those who offer healing prayer, and everyone who brings such delicious food for our coffee hour each week all share their energy and their giftedness with generosity and grace. The Sunday school team continues to nourish and care for the kids who come regularly and the kids who come sometimes with steadfast love and deep welcome. We have been helped this year

also by the addition of several young acolytes and altar servers, including Caroline Murray, Ellis Ericson, Koa and Vivi Hutchison, and Jacob and Ava Rosero. It is only with the help of all these people that our worship has been able to sustain an ever-growing group of us each week. I am so grateful.

Our Wednesday Contemplative Eucharist was also offered weekly in person and over Zoom. The community of 9 or 10 that has formed around this simple, quiet service has been a gift to us all as it has become a reliable and much-needed pause, and breath, in the middle of the week.

Thinking of our Sunday services this past year, a few specifics stand out:

- Once again, we were able to celebrate Holy Week with our neighboring Episcopal congregations in the Southern Berkshires: on Maundy Thursday, we washed one another's feet at St Paul's Stockbridge; on Good Friday we had a much larger than usual gathering to venerate the Cross in the Grace Church Chapel; and on Saturday night we joined together at Christ Trinity in Sheffield for the Easter Vigil. Easter Day was – as always – a day of real celebration, gorgeous flowers, and beautiful music at Crissey Farm.
- Pentecost was – again, this May – an extravaganza of joy and gratitude complete with flashing red umbrellas and whirly-gigs of every kind we all waved behind the flying silk white dove as it arced its way down the aisle.
- In September we welcomed Bishop Doug Fisher for his regular visitation to the parish. Bishop Doug preached and celebrated and was assisted by seven children, many of them vested (one for the very first time) and the joy felt was palpable. After a festive Coffee Hour, Bp Doug met with the vestry where he was extremely supportive of the parish as a whole, and also, of our discernment process around finding a new space in which to worship.
- Later in September we had our first-ever baptism at our Wednesday Contemplative Eucharist when a parishioner's grandson came back to the US from Hong Kong for just a few days.
- On the first Sunday of October, we gathered under a tent at Gideon's Garden on St Francis Day again to give thanks for all of God's creation. Together, we blessed many, many animals, and brought our memorial garden to a close by cutting down the sunflowers and saving the seeds for next year. Joel Jorgensen and Jimmy Pickett preached – moving some to tears.
- On Thursday, September 19th many in our community joined others from across the diocese to celebrate Jimmy Pickett's ordination to the priesthood at Trinity Church in Lenox, and on Sunday the 22nd Jimmy celebrated his first-ever Eucharist with us at Crissey Farm. It was, of course, a blessing for us all.
- Later in the year, the Feast of All Saints was another important day among us. This year we remembered all those who have come before us of course. And we also celebrated those who will come after us by welcoming Bauer Nolan Penney into the community through Baptism. (Bauer's brother, Finn, slightly stole the show when he helped bless the congregation with Holy Water with igniting joy.)
- Lastly, after a lovely but too-short Advent, we celebrated Christmas Eve at Taft Farms in the greenhouse again this year. The space was, once again, miraculously transformed by Pennie Curry and the good people of Taft Farms. This year our Bishop, Doug Fisher, joined us for the celebration. He preached a powerful sermon weaving together the truth of our hopes and our fears. Then, together, we once again sang, prayed, and gave thanks for the greatest truth of all: *Emmanuel – God with us.*

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Tina Rathbone

LITURGICAL RITES CELEBRATED

All Sunday services of Holy Eucharist and Wednesday Contemplative Eucharist Services were held both in person and over Zoom except our Christmas Eve service at Taft Farms which was held in person only as there was not enough Wi-Fi to support Zoom.

Centering prayer continued Thursday evenings every week throughout the year (held both in person and Zoom) and we had a number of special services as well. Please see below.

Sunday Eucharist with healing prayers	52
Wednesday Contemplative Eucharist	50
Wednesday Morning Prayer	2
Memorials & Funerals	2
Deaths	2
Baptisms	2
Confirmations / Receptions	0
Special Services	7

Special Services: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday in the chapel. Blessing of the Harvest w/ Eucharist at Gideon's Garden. Blue Christmas Service in the chapel. Three Holy Eucharist Services in Spanish and Creole at Multicultural Bridge's Solidarity House, Great Barrington.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Tina Rathbone

YEAR-ROUND STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship committee for 2023 consisted of Mary Booton, Sally Brooke, John Cheek, Mary Anne Grammer, Dutch Pinkston, George Raymond, and Lynn Walker. Four speakers were chosen to speak about Stewardship for Grace Church. On October 15th, John Ericson spoke. On October 29th, Lynn Walker spoke. On November 12th, Dindy Anderson spoke, and on November 19th, Holly and Caroline Murray spoke. In-gathering of pledges was on November 26th.

A Stewardship letter was written. Committee members gathered at the church office to mail out the letters and pledge cards.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Booton

**SLATE OF OFFICERS, VESTRY MEMBERS,
AND DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES 2024**

OFFICERS

Senior Warden	Pennie Curry
Junior Warden	Laura Jordahl
Treasurer	Sue Gore
Clerk	Meredith Haider

VESTRY - at Large (3-year terms; with 2 consecutive terms possible)

Class of 2025	Anne Andrews (3 rd), Cathy Haywood (3 rd)
Class of 2026	Mary Booton (2 nd), Gino Furio (2 nd), Meredith Haider (2 nd)
Class of 2027	Matt Marcos (1 st), Jainee McCarroll (1 st), Kevin Rosero (1 st)

DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Vestry Delegate	Sue Gore
Vestry Alternate	Penne Curry
Lay Delegate	Monique Kirchoff
Lay Alternate	Dindy Anderson

Grace Church - 2024 BUDGET

	A	B	C	D	Q	R
1				2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
2						
3			Weekly Collection			
4			Pledge	\$ 160,024	\$ 187,141	\$ 198,950
5			Loose Plate	\$ 1,000	\$ 4,339	\$ 2,000
6			PayPal/Tithely Fees Paid	\$ -	\$ 48	\$ 40
7			Special Offering	\$ 200	\$ 18,172	
8						
9			Investment Income			
10			Trustees	\$ 159,227	\$ 146,156	\$ 174,457
11			Crane Trust	\$ 9,000	\$ 3,358	\$ 3,600
12			Nancy Cobden Memorial	\$ 66,000	\$ 66,000	\$ 69,600
13			Zimmerman Education	\$ 7,100	\$ 7,500	\$ -
14						
15			Other Income			
16			Flowers	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,650	\$ 1,600
17			Gifts in Memory	\$ -	\$ 1,300	\$ -
18			Grants from Diocese		\$ 16,100	
19						
20			Total Income	\$ 403,551	\$ 451,764	\$ 450,247
21						
22			Expenses			
23			Worship			
24			Flowers	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,651	\$ 1,600
25			Liturgical Equipment	\$ 500	\$ 739	\$ 500
26			Special Services Expense	\$ 3,500	\$ 2,220	\$ 3,500
27			Music Supplies	\$ 1,000	\$ 181	\$ 1,000
28			Guest Musicians	\$ 900	\$ 350	\$ 900
29			Supply Clergy	\$ 1,610	\$ 200	\$ 1,300
30			Technology	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,115	\$ 1,000
31			Sunday Set Up -Berkshire South	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,200.00
32			Benevolence - Mission - Outreach			
33			Services in Community	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
34			Lee Food Pantry	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
35			Gideon's Garden	\$ 6,535	\$ 8,758	\$ 6,750
36			Multicultural Bridge Initiative	\$ 5,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,000
37			Berkshire Immigration Center	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,000
38			Crane Scholarships/Grants	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600
39			UTO out of Operations	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
40			Assessment for Common Ministry	\$ 28,752	\$ 28,752	\$ 29,906
41			Du Bois Freedom Center	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
42			Clergy's Discretionary Fund	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
43			Stanton Home	\$ -	\$ 4,000	\$ -
44			ESL/Spanish Lessons	\$ -	\$ 1,455	\$ 6,100
45			General Outreach	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,564	\$ 3,500.00
46						

	A	B	C	D	Q	R
1				2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
47			Christian Nurture			
48			Adult Education	\$ 500	\$ 530	\$ 500
49			Church School	\$ 500	\$ 226	\$ 300
50			Vestry Formation	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,455	\$ 3,000
51			Coffee Hour	\$ 200	\$ 467	\$ 300
52			Special Receptions	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,696	\$ 4,000
53			Greeters Table	\$ 300	\$ 150	\$ 200
54						
55			Office and Administration			
56			General Supplies	\$ 1,400	\$ 3,026	\$ 2,500
57			Postage and Box Rental	\$ 500	\$ 355	\$ 400
58			Printing and Duplicating	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,848	\$ 3,000
59			Advertising	\$ 500	\$ (100)	\$ 500
60			Web/Constant Contact Expenses	\$ 3,300	\$ 4,221	\$ 3,500
61			Office Cleaning	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,375	\$ 1,500
62						
63			Rent, Utilities and Maintenance			
64			Office Rental	\$ 21,600	\$ 22,400	\$ 26,400
65			Berkshire South Rental	\$ 25,200	\$ 23,920	\$ 29,000
66			Storage Rental	\$ 2,484	\$ 2,447	\$ 2,550
67			Electric	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,657	\$ 1,800
68			Gas	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,641	\$ 1,800
69			Phone	\$ 1,600	\$ 2,056	\$ 2,200
70			Insurance	\$ 2,400	\$ 2,453	\$ 3,900
71			Berkshire South Move		\$ 2,500	\$ 5,000
72			Building Maintenance	\$ -	\$ 960	\$ 3,500
73						
74			Personel Expenses			
75			Clergy, Secretary Salary, Benefits	\$ 154,620	\$ 159,774	\$ 162,474
76			Choir Director	\$ 11,340	\$ 11,340	\$ 11,880
77			Gideon's Garden Director	\$ 57,220	\$ 57,274	\$ 59,572
78			Gideon's Youth Supervisor	\$ 8,000	\$ 27,500	\$ 10,000
79			Gideon's Taft Farm Fellows	\$ -	\$ 750	\$ 750
80			Gideon's Garden Intern Stipends	\$ 5,600	\$ 6,000	\$ 7,500
81			Accountant Expense	\$ 5,900	\$ 5,845	\$ 5,845
82			Virtual Tech	\$ 8,580	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,840
83			Keyboardist/Organist	\$ 8,910	\$ 9,075	\$ 9,180
84			Clergy Continuing Ed/Conferences	\$ 500	\$ 210	\$ 500
85			Sundries	\$ -	\$ 2,860	\$ -
88			Total Expenses	\$ 403,551	\$ 440,956	\$ 450,247
89						
90			Total Income	\$ 403,551	\$ 451,763	
91			Total Expense	\$ 403,551	\$ 440,956	
92				\$ 403,551	\$ 440,956	
93					\$ 10,807	

95		PASS THRU ACCOUNTS		
96		Change the Babies Pass Through Income	\$	901
97		Teen Gift Card Pass Through Income	\$	350
98		Gideon's Garden Pass Through Income	\$	20,143
99		Rector's Discretionary Fund Income	\$	950
100				
101		Total Pass Through Income	\$	22,344
102				
103		Change the Babies Pass Through Expense	\$	-
104		Teen Gift Card Pass Through Expense	\$	350
105		Gideon's Garden Pass Through Expense	\$	4,686
106		Rector's Discretionary Fund Expense	\$	950
107				
108		Total Pass Through Expense	\$	5,986

**Grace Church - Great Barrington MA
Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2023**

Account #	Account Name	YTD Balance
Assets		
1.110.110	Lee Bank Checking	81,455.32
1.140.100	<i>Trustee Investment Account</i>	
1.110.135	Grace Church General Fund	671,726.81
1.120.110	Handicap Building Fund	18,945.84
1.120.145	St. George's Property Fund	734,733.70
1.120.153	Clergy Housing Fund	143,142.70
1.120.157	St James Property Fund	369,395.97
1.130.105	Crane Scholarship Fund	5,932.11
1.140.148	The Fludder Memorial Flower Fund	9,834.80
1.140.151	The Weatherbee Memorial Fund	76,785.06
1.140.154	Frank W Beatie Memorial Music Fund	83,989.11
1.140.156	The Carlson Memorial Perpetual Candle Fund	6,655.73
1.140.157	Nancy S. Cobden Fund	146,080.50
1.145.100	Zimmerman Educational Fund	6,973.73
1.170.100	Columbarium Fund	1,289.39
1.180.100	Sabbatical Fund	3,262.04
	<i>Total Trustee Investment Account</i>	<i>\$2,278,747.49</i>
1.150.110	Lee Food Pantry Checking	99,600.91
1.150.115	GCSB Rector's Discretionary Checking	4,141.65
1.500.100	Vehicles	24,969.00
	Total Assets	\$2,488,914.37

GRACE CHURCH

an Episcopal Community in the Southern Berkshires

Our Lady With Our Child



This icon was written on an ammunition box lid for Grace Church for the benefit of the Pirogov First Volunteer Mobile Hospital of Ukraine

GRACE CHURCH STAFF

Bishop of Western Massachusetts: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Douglas Fisher

Rector: The Rev. Tina Rathbone

Gideon's Garden Director: Mr. Joel Jorgensen

Choir Director: Mr. John Cheek

Keyboardist: Ms. Lee Cheek

Parish Administrator: Ms. Andrea Saville White

GRACE CONTACT INFORMATION

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next Annual Meeting: February 2, 2025

Founded January 1, 2013