



Grace Episcopal Church

Anniston, Alabama

2019 Parish Profile



Our Mission

“To witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world as we devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and prayer.”

www.graceanniston.org

Our Strengths

Grace Church is a vibrant congregation housed in a beautiful historical building, where the ebb and flow of community activity can be a significant part of church life.

We have a long and storied history of outreach into our community, and nearly 70% of our members have contributed their time to one of our many outreach ministries.

Our members say they were drawn to Grace Church because of our sense of loving community and our reverent style of worship. In their own words, here are some of the things our members value most about Grace Church:

“All are welcome here”



“Grace is my beloved family”



“People willing to serve”



“Concern for others both within and beyond our doors”



“The size makes it easy to get to know people and volunteer”



“The presence of the Holy Spirit is at work in God’s people”



“Glorious history and worship space”



“Beautiful, meaningful order of service”



“We stick to the greater Episcopal idea that we can disagree but still worship together”

Our History

Grace Church is located in downtown Anniston just off the historic, tree-lined Quintard Avenue, which was named for one of Alabama's early bishops.

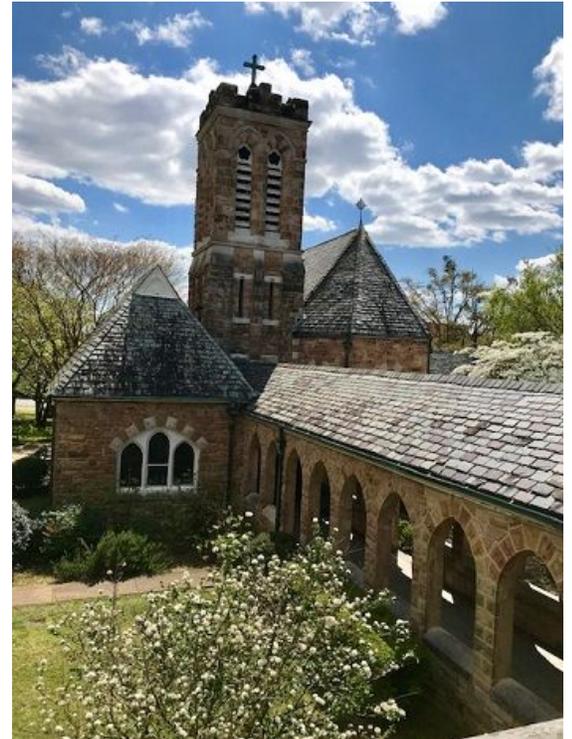
1873: City of Anniston founded by Samuel Noble and Gen. Daniel Tyler.

1874: First Episcopal service — actually the first Christian service of worship — held in Anniston.

1881: Grace Church granted parish status by the diocese.

1882: Construction of Grace Church begun under the leadership of the city founders. The church was to be a "poem in cedar and stone," modeled after stone churches of England with interior finished in cedar and brass as in Solomon's temple. The architect was the renowned George Upjohn, and master craftsman Simon Jewel came from England to be the stonemason. A nearby quarry provided the buff sandstone for the exterior.

1885: The church was completed and ever since has been used by architectural textbooks as a model of perfect proportion and pure gothic symmetry.



THE RECTORS OF GRACE CHURCH

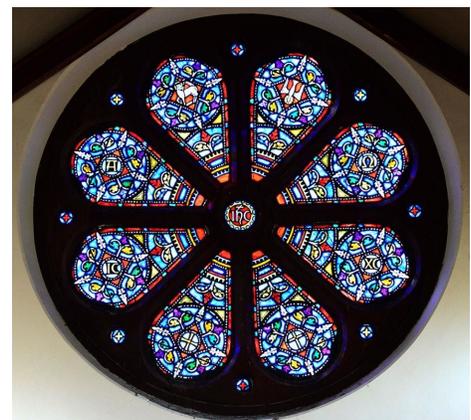
In the history of Grace, nineteen men and one woman have served as rectors. Since 1921, the pulpit has been occupied by primarily five men and one woman who have shaped the life of this parish. The Rev. James Stoney served for 21 years before becoming the Bishop of New Mexico. The Rev. William Stoney served for 13 years.

1973-1987: The Rev. Thomas Jones served for 14 years.

- Initiated sponsorship of Church of the Messiah in nearby Heflin.
- Helped start community-run Soup Bowl.
- Helped start area's first hospice.

1988: The Rev. Eddie Ard served for five years.

- Helped establish Calhoun County Habitat for Humanity.
- All Saints Garden was built.
- Added healing service into the Sunday services once a month.
- Installed a speaker system for hearing impaired.



1995-2008: The Rev. Robert Childers served for 13 years.

- Held first Lobsterfest, annual fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity.

- Grace Church built 3 homes for Habitat.
- Started Wednesday night service, supper and program.
- Began Tuesday Morning Bible Study and Men's Bible Study.

- Started PreSchool Friends, a preschool for children of low to moderate income.

- Cursillo community of Grace was revitalized.

2008-2018: The Rev. Dr. Lee Shafer served 10 years.

- Our first female rector.
- Began Foothills Day Camp for children of low to moderate income.
- Began Beans and Rice Ministry, monthly food distribution.
- Built Gleaner Box food pantry.



Our Community

Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Anniston is midway between Atlanta, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama, just off U.S. Interstate 20.

Anniston was founded in 1873 as a company town for the Woodstock Iron Company.



The military was crucial to Anniston's growth, beginning in 1917 when the federal government established a U.S. Army camp on 19,000 acres north of the city. Fort McClellan was used for military training for another 82 years, before closing in 1999.

The local economy has struggled since the closure of the fort. The city's population has dropped to 22,000, and is now roughly half black and half white. The median age is 43, and the median household income is \$33,988.

Anniston is the county seat of Calhoun County and is home to a federal courthouse, which is set to undergo a \$43 million renovation. Anniston is also home to the newly designated Freedom Riders National Monument, recognizing the city's role in Civil Rights history.

Major employers in the county include Honda Manufacturing, the Anniston Army Depot, and Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center.

The county is home to several public school districts as well as a number of private schools.



Anniston is rebranding itself as a destination for ecotourism. Thanks to the mild climate, people from around the country and overseas travel here to enjoy outdoor activities year-round.

OUTDOOR DESTINATIONS

- Coldwater Mountain Bike Trails, which draw visitors from around the world.
- The Chief Ladiga Trail, a paved trail for walking or biking.
- Talladega National Forest and Cheaha State Park, home to the highest point in Alabama.
- The Sunny King Criterium professional bike race.
- The Cheaha Challenge bike ride, “the toughest ride in the South.”
- Horse riding trails, under development at the former Fort McClellan.
- Silver Lakes, one of 10 golf courses making up the statewide Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail.
- The nearby Talladega Superspeedway hosts NASCAR races.



OTHER ATTRACTIONS

- Anniston Museums and Gardens includes the regionally recognized Anniston Museum of Natural History, the Berman Museum of world history, and Longleaf Botanical Gardens.
- Jacksonville State University in nearby Jacksonville is a four-year college with 7,500 students.
- The Knox Concert Series brings popular artists and classical symphonies to Anniston.
- The Oxford Performing Arts Center in nearby Oxford hosts concerts and touring Broadway plays.
- CAST community theater puts on a full season of shows, including children’s theater.

For more information, visit www.anniston.al.gov and www.calbounchamber.com.

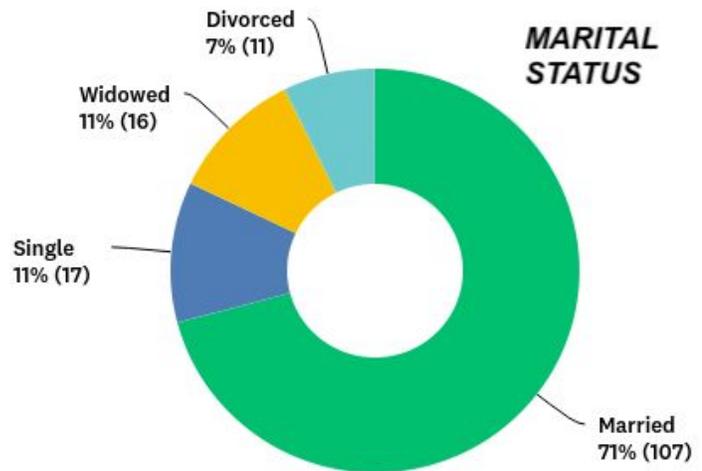
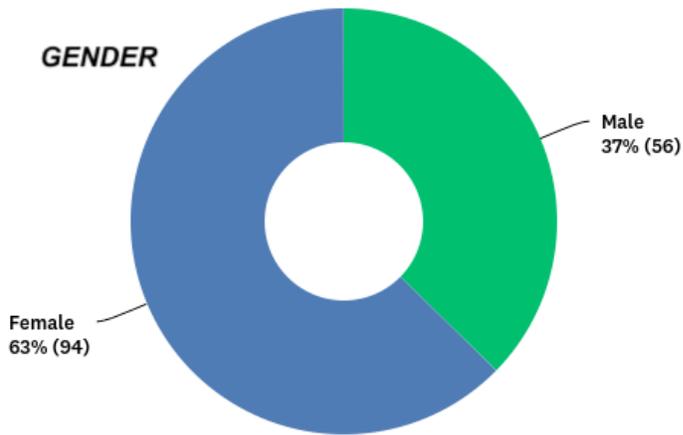
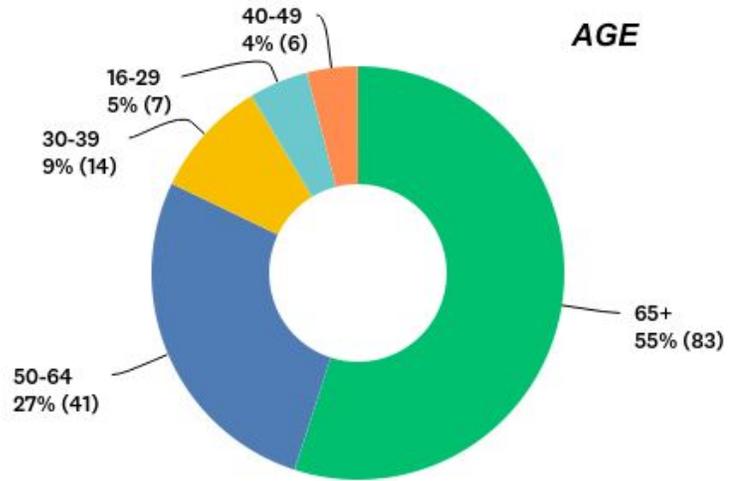
Our Parish Life

We have 364 active baptized members. We have 29 youth communicants in good standing.
Our average Sunday attendance is 100.

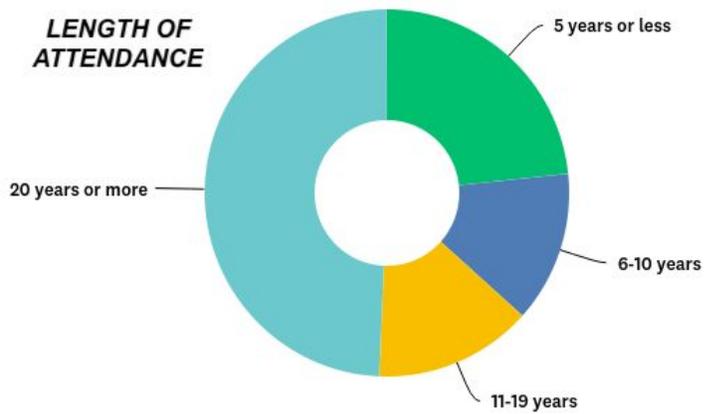


RESULTS OF OUR PARISH SURVEY

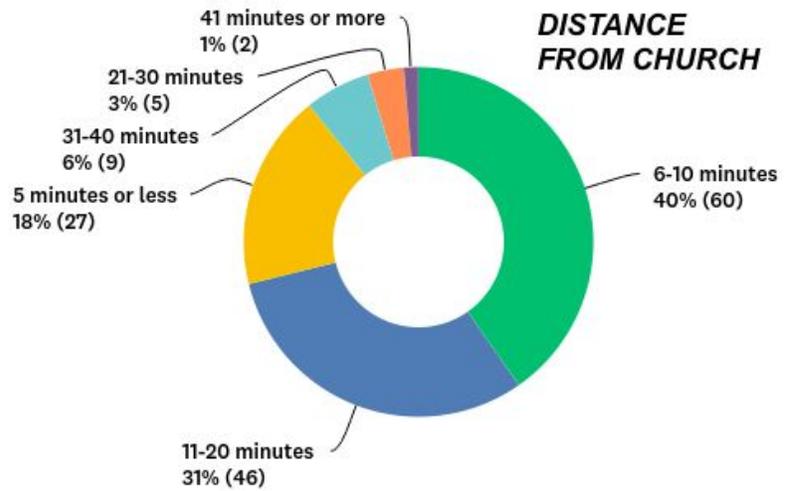
Responses from 150 members ages 16 and up



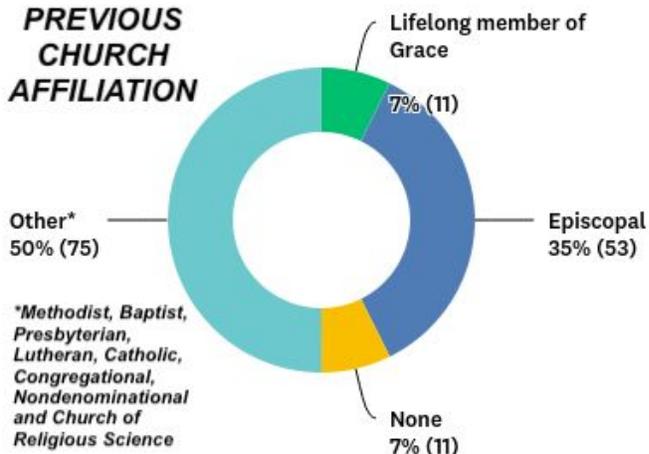
LENGTH OF ATTENDANCE



DISTANCE FROM CHURCH



PREVIOUS CHURCH AFFILIATION



*Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Congregational, Nondenominational and Church of Religious Science

Our Worship and Music

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- **Holy Eucharist Rite 1** is held at 8 a.m. It is attended by a small but very faithful group of followers. Music is provided by pipe organ and violin. Lay ministers include readers, intercessors, ushers, and eucharistic ministers.
- **Holy Eucharist Rite 2** is held at 10:30 a.m. Our more formal worship service, with music provided by a choir and pipe organ or piano. Lay ministers include readers, intercessors, ushers, five acolytes, and eucharistic ministers.
- **Breakfast** is served between Rites 1 and 2 to provide hospitality to the community and fellowship for parishioners. Christian Formation classes for adults and children follow breakfast, although these are not as well attended as in years past.
- **We are open to change.** 74% of the respondents to our parish survey would like to incorporate more contemporary elements, such as Alleluia III songs, into Sunday services. 47% of respondents were interested in a single combined service on Sunday morning.



WEEKDAY WORSHIP

- **Tuesday morning:** Holy Eucharist and Unction, held at 11:30 a.m. If a priest is not present, Noonday Prayer is led by a Eucharistic Minister.
- **Wednesday night:** A more casual service, held at 5:30 p.m. Music is piano, violin, and guitars. A homily most frequently centers on selected lives of saints. Historically, rites from other Anglican churches around the world have been employed as a liturgical alternative. In the event a priest is not present, Evening Prayer Rite 2 is led by the deacon or a lay person. This service is followed by supper and, occasionally, a program.

OCCASIONAL SERVICES

- **Easter Vigil:** Most of the service is sung until light is restored to the worship space.
- **Christmas Eve:** Our children present a pageant to accompany the Gospel reading.
- **All Souls' Service:** The altar is set with numerous candles, and electric lights are off.
- **Blessing of the Animals:** Animals of all types are blessed.
- **Way of the Cross:** On Good Friday and at the beginning of Cursillo weekends.
- **Parish Picnic:** A casual Rite 2 service in the garden occasionally precedes our annual Parish Picnic.



Preparing for the Future

We are mindful and responsive to many changes occurring in the church, not just Grace Church, but in every place and in every denomination. There is a shift in the way, time and place that people worship, learn and grow in Christ. We are being transfigured!

We are responding to this shift by providing meaningful content that may be accessed at any time, to help people continue to be formed as Christians within the church walls and beyond the walls of the church itself.

We are continually developing and curating new learning experiences to equip disciples through lifelong learning, and to allow all ages to stay connected with Grace Church and their own faith formation wherever they may be.

- **Grace Online Christian Formation School**

(ChurchNext) gives members an opportunity to learn individually or in groups. The former rector used our school to occasionally present classes on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. Individual church members may also take courses. Our ECW has used a couple of courses for meetings.

- **Online Confirmation Class** is being offered in addition to the traditional class. Individuals in the online class do the coursework at a time that works best for them. A typical course takes about 45 minutes to complete and is available 24/7. The group meets regularly for review and follow-up.

- **Intergenerational learning experiences** for all ages include “Bring Your Device Sunday,” which gives our younger members an opportunity to “teach” the older generations how to use their devices. This helps our older members to become more proficient and at the same time builds community within the church. In turn, the younger generations are serving in leadership roles to help with new approaches to faith formation.

- **Faith Builders Lego class** brings together youth of all ages to explore Bible stories with Lego bricks.



Outreach Ministries

Outreach has always been of significant importance to Grace Church. Our congregation remains generous in their donations of time and treasure, with the hopes of improving and easing struggles in the lives of others.

Grace Church is very active in many organizations that minister to the community, including Interfaith Ministries of Calhoun County, the Anniston Soup Bowl and Cheaha Creative Arts. Even our VBS kids undertake outreach projects each summer.

Grace was involved in the beginnings of several outreach programs and ministries in our community, including the Anniston Soup Bowl and the area’s first hospice.

In 1992, Grace Church helped establish the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity. We have since sponsored several Habitat homes, including one during the 2003 Jimmy Carter Work Project in Anniston. The church continues to support Habitat with both volunteers and financial contributions. One of our signature events, Lobsterfest, is a fundraiser for Habitat.

LOBSTERFEST FOR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

- Held every fall since 1997, Lobsterfest has raised more than \$210,000 for the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.
- Parishioners work together with Habitat staff and Habitat homeowners to provide a fun day for the community. Besides lobsters, hamburgers, and hot dogs, the day offers activities for children (led by our Grace Church youth), live music, and artist and vendor booths.
- The Anniston business community has joined in supporting Lobsterfest by providing or donating ice, a refrigerated truck for the lobsters, cable TV for game day viewing, and prepared sides for the dinners.



PRESCHOOL FRIENDS

- This free-tuition preschool started in 2001 after Anniston City Schools discontinued its preschool program, leaving low-income families with few opportunities for quality preschool education.
- More than 200 students have since come through the PreSchool Friends classroom, and 100 percent of them have graduated from high school. Many have gone on to college, some of them with the aid of Grace Church scholarships.
- PreSchool Friends is a unique educational opportunity where families learn together. Each parent/caregiver is expected to attend school once a week to learn how to best help their children reach their potential.



FOOTHILLS DAY CAMP

- Established in 2012 by Grace Church with the support of other local churches, Foothills Day Camp is a five-day summer camp held at Camp Lee in Anniston for children ages 6-10 who might not otherwise have a summer camp experience.
- High school- and college-aged students and adults also experience the challenge and reward of servant leadership in the context of Christian community.
- In 2018, the Foothills family consisted of 75 campers, 46 youth counselors, 23 adult staff and 6 bus drivers/chaperones.



BEANS AND RICE

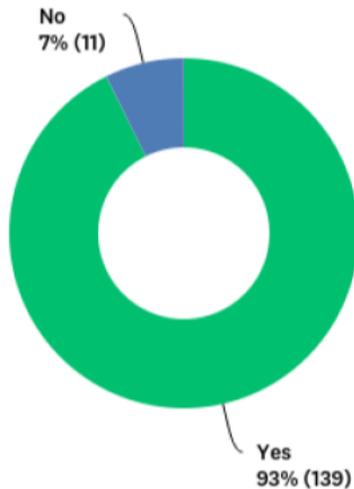
- This ministry began in 2011, and we estimate that we have since distributed more than 100,000 pounds of food to our neighbors.
- Beans and rice are packaged by parishioners and distributed to more than 100 families each month.
- Our ECW has held clothing drives to collect T-shirts, warm clothing, etc., for our Beans and Rice recipients.



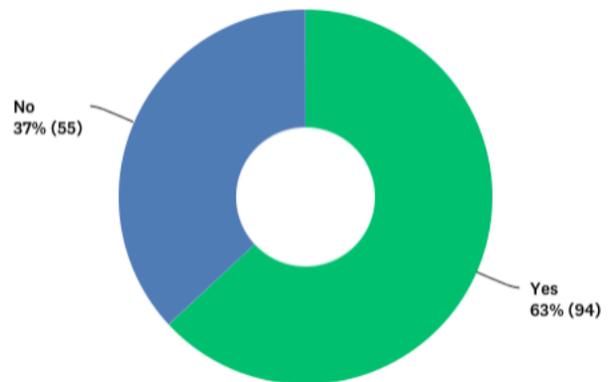
Our Finances

Grace Church is well positioned for the future. One of the strengths of our parish is that we do not have any debt. We have \$1.7 million in a trust fund that continues to grow because of contributions. Our historic building and pipe organ have been refurbished in recent years, and there are currently no major issues with our building.

CONTRIBUTED IN PAST YEAR



PLEGGED FOR 2019



2019 BUDGET

INCOME

Plate offerings	\$5,000
Current year pledges	\$232,790
Prior year pledges	\$10,000
General donations	\$95,000
Lobsterfest income	\$25,000
Trust income	\$30,000
Parish activities meals	\$2,500
TOTAL INCOME	\$400,290

EXPENSES

Staff	\$242,261
Programs	\$70,500
Building and grounds	\$11,000
Utilities	\$36,000
Outreach	\$80,300
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$423,061

Our Diocese

Highlights from a recent letter to the Diocese of Alabama from the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Alabama:

- The diocese is healthy and strong, with 89 parishes, four campus centers and three worshipping communities, including one in a coffee shop in Birmingham. The diocese has a growing baptized membership of over 32,000.

- As a witness to our growth, we have had two very successful capital campaigns in the last 10 years. The first raised over \$6 million for ministry development and expansion throughout the diocese. We are now completing the second campaign, which will raise \$10 million to enhance and expand Camp McDowell, which is known as the heart of the diocese and serves as host to summer camp sessions, various youth gatherings, Cursillo, retreats, conferences, workshops, a wide array of educational and renewal opportunities to support people as they strive to live out the Baptismal Covenant. A new facility called Bethany Village will allow for programs for people with disabilities or mobility issues and an expanded Environmental Education program.



- The diocese has vigorously encouraged and supported local parishes in outreach ministry, and sought to address some of the underlying problems of hunger, unemployment and racial tension with initiatives, both locally and internationally. The Black Belt area of the diocese, named for its rich dark soil, is one of the most impoverished areas of the state, and has served as the backdrop for two successful ministries, the Sawyerville Day Camp and the Jonathan Daniels pilgrimage.

- Most recently we have started a companion diocese relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands and are hoping to extend that relationship to the Diocese of Alaska.

- A major focus of formation and renewal with the diocese is Cursillo, a program for spiritual renewal that has reached into almost every parish, and has greatly helped the sense of affection and community across the diocese.

- Youth ministry is a valuable priority in the diocese, and we have employed a coordinator since the 1970s to assist parishes with resources, workshops and conferences.

- Since 1981, the diocese has relied on a voluntary program of giving from the parishes rather than imposing assessments. While maintaining the standard of voluntary giving, in 2001 the Diocesan Convention established guidelines requesting parishes with annual income of more than \$150,000 to commit to giving 15% to the work of the Church through the diocese, and parishes with annual income of less than \$150,000 to pledge 10% to the diocese.

- Like much of the Church in the United States, we have had turmoil and struggle around the issue of homosexuality. Some parishes lost members as a result of policies or decisions they disagreed with, but in the main, and largely because of the sense of community among the clergy and the people they serve, we have not lost or closed any parish due to this conflict. Some parishes and members are fairly conservative, and others are just as progressive, but we have found a graceful willingness to love each other anyway.

Our Challenges

To grow our numbers: We have an aging congregation. The city's population is shrinking. With three Episcopal churches in the county, it might be difficult for all to thrive.

To unite for the common good: The divisive issues facing the national Episcopal church are felt in our parish. In the past few years, Grace Church has gained new members, drawn to the denomination's openness to allowing LGBT participation in the church at all levels, but at the same time we have lost longtime members who disagree with the church's new policies. One of our parishioners said: "We are a church in the conservative South. While we have several conservatives, there is a group of progressives as well. We are all friends with each other, which is great, but without the right leadership to balance all of this, it could lead to division."

Whom Do We Seek?

We seek a leader who can unite our parish and guide us in spiritual growth ... "who can get everyone out of their comfort zones for the good of the community" ... "who will blow new life into our midst, attracting new people and new opportunities for growth, always being mindful of the Holy Spirit's presence."

The **Top 5 professional qualities** we would like to see in our new rector:

Preaching: Clear sermons that are personal and applicable to daily life, based on the Bible and relevant to the lectionary. "Keep politics out of the pulpit."

Pastoral care: Care for and counsel parishioners in any type of crisis or difficult decision-making. Visit those who are ill and the homebound elderly. Attend fellowship activities.

Youth and children's ministry: Relate to youth and grow children's and youth programs.

Administration: Manage parish affairs and finances; clear plan for parish growth and progress. Maintain open and transparent communication with the congregation. Operate as a team with the vestry, and establish clear goals for the parish.

Community outreach: Inspire and enable the congregation to become aware of and involved in community needs; able to work with other denominations and groups.

