

Grace Episcopal Church  
Ministry Reports for 2011

Annual Meeting: January 8, 2012

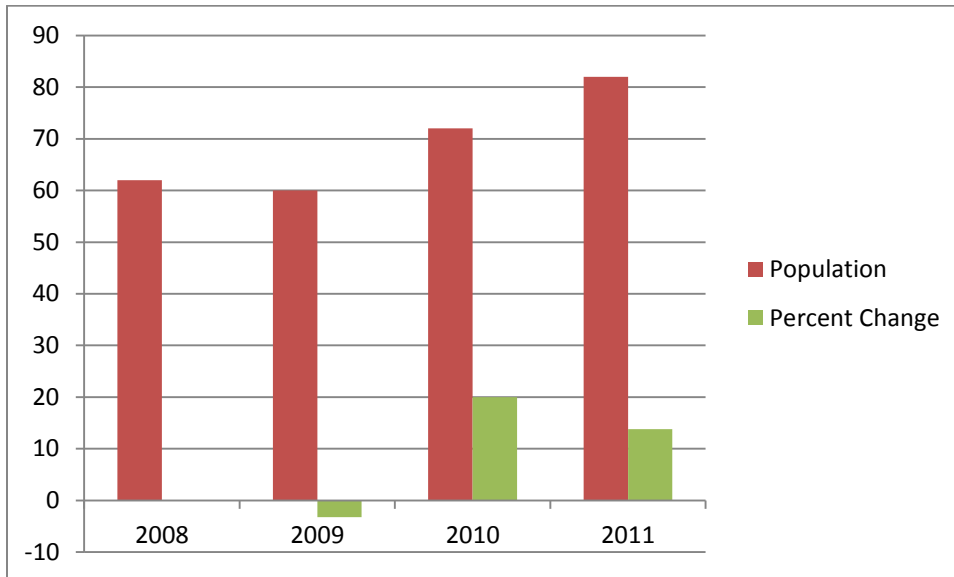
**Vicar's Report (Tim)**

Since I wrote a letter with the Stewardship Letter that went out to the parish, and since that letter expressed my feelings about Grace, here I'll just give a bullet-pointed summary:

- Our Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) went up from 72 to 82 in 2011, a healthy 14% increase.

Grace Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)  
and Percentage Change  
2008-2011

2008	62	
		➤ -3.3%
2009	60	
		➤ +20%
2010	72	
		➤ +14%
2011	82	
		➤ ?
2012	?	



- Since the Chapel comfortably seats 90-100, the parish leaders and clergy are discussing moving to two Sunday services—8 am and 10 am—this Lent (February).
- Whether this happens or not, Adult Education will start up again on Sundays beginning this Lent.
- We added a third childcare person in 2011 because we have more small children.

- We have two new (unpaid) staff members, under my direction: Mary Webb, Assistant Pastoral Minister, who leads the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT), and **Cathy Bader**, Assistant Homilist, who preaches quarterly and as needed.
- Matt Bader has begun the process for ordination; he preaches occasionally.
- Once again we had our fabulous Pentecost Preachers. This past year's were:
  - Hank
  - Andrew
  - Stef
  - Robin

- On All Saints' Day—our fourth anniversary—when **Bishop Talton** visited us, Barb, Hank, and Susan Barle were received into the Episcopal Church from other denominations and Becky and Mike were confirmed.



- We had our first annual Advent Speakers Forum, which proved very popular. The speakers were:

- **Louis Gill**, Executive Director of the Bakersfield Homeless Center and Alliance Against Family Violence
- Valerie Schultz, columnist for the Bakersfield Californian
- Gokh Alshaif, President of the CSUB Muslim Student Association
- John Stark, Chair and Associate Professor, Management and Marketing



- We had monthly Taizé (meditative) services, which we hope to revive.
- The Rev. Deacon Mary Hintz and Dr. Rod Douglass from the School for Deacons visited.
- Two new groups formed, Aging with Grace, headed by Barb Fleming, and Welcoming, headed by Elaine Berg.
- Numerous other groups continued: Daughters of the King, Book Groups, Grace Men's Group, Outreach, Worship, Grace LGBT, Roamin' Romans, and others.



- Grace's LGBT group for the first time had a booth at the annual Bakersfield Pride Day.

- **Canon Kate Cullinane** visited on July 17 and again on December 4.
- Clergy and parishioners of Grace participated in a new interdenominational group, California People of Faith against the Death Penalty, and SAFE California, collecting signatures for a ballot proposition eliminating the death penalty in California. Clergy and parishioners are involved with another new group, Progressive People of Faith, an interfaith social justice group.

- Grace parishioners attended the annual Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance) commemoration.

- We started a small prison ministry.
- Conversations with the Vicar, held each summer, continued.
- We had parish potlucks, the annual Christmas party, and the EYF Christmas party.
- Rainbow Voices from Fresno visited.
- Grace had large contingents at the Southern Deanery meeting and Diocesan Convention. Grace youth attended both events, at the latter in large numbers.
- Grace co-sponsored the visit of Jeanne Woodford, executive director of Death Penalty Focus, who spoke at FCC and CSUB.
- Cathy Ellenwood and Matt Bader led a pre-Advent retreat.
- We had our annual "Hot Fun in the Summertime" education and fellowship activities.
- We had **Lenten and Advent suppers and program**.
- We enjoyed, as always, the annual Children's Christmas Pageant.



### Associate Vicar's Report (Vern)

I continue to be in awe every Sunday when I look out upon the faces gathered in our Grace community. I feel a deep sense of privilege when I think of the stories represented by those faces. We often talk about doing ministry,

but this year I think we moved to “being ministry.” It pleases me that we have been very intentional about opening pathways for every person to find expression of their particular talent in ministry.

I count it an on-going gift to work directly with our vicar, Tim. I deeply appreciate his academic credentials, his pastoral sense, his challenging preaching, his leadership and friendship.

The one hundred mile round-trip between our home-in-the-mountains and Grace continues to define and shape my relationship to Grace as a priest. My responsibilities include oversight of the worshipping and musical ministries. I deeply appreciate the leadership that Philip Holt gives to our worship as well as the support from Miriam Raub Vivian who maintains rotas and provides an editorial/spell check eye for drafts of the bulletin. Recently added to worship are Kat and Andrew Lisa who will be assisting with the acolytes and Elaine Berg who coordinates our Welcoming Ministry. Melinda Hill coordinates Altar Guild which cares for the altar and continues to increase in numbers. Our Grace Choir makes a wonderful contribution to worship and continues to grow under Christopher Borges’ direction. Jason Sliger provides excellent keyboard for our hymn singing and choir anthems.

I produce most of the Sunday bulletins and seasonal liturgies and I work with Melinda publishing the weekly *Grace at Midweek*.

One major responsibility that I relish is the opportunity to preach on a regular basis, usually twice a month. This continues to challenge me at an intellectual level and keeps me active in a diverse political and literary climate as we seek to understand what Jesus calls us to in ministry for these present days.

I am also a member of the Bishop’s committee and often serve as consultant on various project groups.

Being twice retired, I am appreciative of your understanding for our summer “disappearances” while Melinda and I wander throughout the southwestern United States.

Vern+

### Senior Warden’s Report (Cathy Henry)

This year has been a very fruitful one for Grace, as well as being a very productive one. We are four years old and continuing to grow. Through much of that time, we have had ideas and made plans that sounded terrific at the time, but did not gain any traction. In this past year, we have seen some of those ideas and plans, like the Welcoming Committee, come alive again with new leadership and energy. Events already in place occurred for a second or a third time, and this year, the success of the Wine Tasting allowed us to give nearly 50% more money to our chosen charities than we had the year before. I think that combination of growth and energy is the story of Grace in 2011.

In addition, many things are now in place and continuing with minimal effort on our part. There is a structure in place for communication and for maintaining communication with regular updates to the directory. Child care and Sunday School have settled into a pattern that runs easily week after week. There is always more than one person to oversee the various aspects of preparation on a Sunday morning. The website has been redesigned and is current and informative. We are weaving ourselves into a community that cares for and looks out for each other, whether we have been at Grace for four years or four months. In addition, we are more connected with the Diocese with increased participation on committees and in Diocesan events.

As we start 2012, we are challenged to continue to use our time and our talents, meaning both our abilities and our financial resources, to support Grace, both in our spiritual life and growth here, and in our work in the community. This past year has shown us that we have moved past the “brand new” stage and into a position of being an established church. I am excited to see where we grow from here.

### Acolytes (Miriam Raub Vivian)

**Grace's Acolyte Guild** now boasts eleven youth members: four girls and seven boys/men. Five of the older, more experienced acolytes serve mainly as crucifers, while the other six are torchbearers. David Deleersnyder and youth leader Aaron Conner are currently our only trained thurifers. This last year, Vic Metzgar crafted several more wooden pectoral crosses for use by our acolytes, and four colors distinguish the number of years served: **green** for new acolytes, **red** for those in their second year, **blue** for



third-years, and **purple** for acolytes who've served three years or more, with the guild on an academic/school year calendar. Acolytes underwent their annual training in late August, and will likely participate in another in February. Beginning this fall, Kat and Andrew Lisa are lending their expertise and leadership to guide our acolytes and help them prepare on Sunday mornings. Miriam Raub Vivian continues to schedule the acolytes and is always looking for more youths to participate in this important worship ministry at Grace.

### **Aging with Grace (Barbara Fleming)**

The Aging with Grace Committee met September 25, 2011 to discuss aging issues of interest to the congregation. Aging with Grace will begin in 2012 offering quarterly educational discussions of current aging concerns. The first year's topics are as follows:

- January 29, 2012 *We all age; Is this normal?* With Barbara Fleming
- April 15, 2012 *End of Life Issues: Death & Dying and Grief & Loss* With Kathy Dunham
- July 8, 2012 *Advanced Directions (Wills & POA) and Health Insurance* With Margaret Carlson
- October 7, 2012 *Nutrition and Weight Issues of Aging* Speaker TBA

The Aging with Grace Committee is composed of: Elaine Berg, Margaret Carlson, Kathy Dunlap, Mike Dunlap, Barbara Fleming, Chair, Anne, Giddings, Lucy Lynch, Bernadine Noxon, Jerry Pettiford, Sarah Chan Pettiford, Becky Rule, T. Vivian

### **Assistant Homilist (Cathy Ellenwood Bader)**

I have the honor of sharing my thoughts and personal theology with the congregation 4 times during the year. I have a Master of Science degree in Counseling and a Master of Arts degree in Education. I look at scripture from this perspective, listening for the call to look at our internal lives, our own personal psychology, and how our actions bring us into greater communion with God. While not an ordained minister, I take my call to priesthood given at baptism very seriously. I welcome discussion and hope to bring a different view to our community.



### **Childcare/nursery (Miriam Raub Vivian)**

As our parish membership has grown over the past year, we have added two adult caregivers in our nursery/preschool class. In addition to Lisa Weems, we now have Aida Asher and Anne Marie Briano. Aida "floats" between our nursery and Sunday School class, staying wherever she is most needed. Our childcare staff have also helped provide care during special, non-Sunday services (e.g., Christmas Eve) and weeknight parish gatherings, such as Lenten soup suppers and Advent potlucks, and the programs that follow them. The rough average number of children in our nursery each Sunday ranges from 3 or 4 to well into the teens. Our staffing now seems to be meeting the size of the parish we've become.

### **Cycles for Leadership (Elaine Berg)**

Unfortunately this ministry has gotten off to a slow start. It is a fairly small ministry that is made up of parishioners that are already extremely active in many other areas and other Grace ministries. It was extremely difficult to schedule a meeting that didn't conflict with one or more other meetings. I prayed about this situation and spoke with Tim about my dilemma. We decided to put a temporary hold on the Cycles Ministry until the spring of 2012 at which time I hope to get it up and running. It can be a vital ministry that could help the other ministries of Grace once it begins to prosper.

### **Daughters of the King (Stephanie Antongiovanni)**

Daughters of the King is an order of women, based in the Episcopal church, dedicated to a life of prayer and service. The Mary Magdalene Chapter of DOK now consists of nine active members. We meet monthly in each others homes and maintain a prayer list daily, adding to it as prayer is needed from our faith community. We are recognized by a cross that we have promised to wear daily. We are actively looking for new members and invite prayer requests if needed.

For His Sake, Stephanie Antongiovanni



### **Episcopal Youth Fellowship (Aaron Connor)**

The **Episcopal Youth Fellowship** was revamped a little over a year ago, during December of 2010. Since I had been involved with the Acolytes, I was asked if I would take the task of taking charge of the youth ministry.

EYF at Grace is composed of mostly high school and junior high teens that meets twice a month on the second and fourth Sundays in the Fireside Room during Eucharist.

Early on, a survey was created for the teens to take to give an idea of where our youth were at in terms of spiritual growth and their feelings on the church. I shared the results in confidence with a friend who majored in Psychology. She advised the ministry focus on building community, and that has been my focus ever since.

This year the youth ministry has been involved in a few projects at Grace. The two major fundraisers have been the shirt sales during the summer, and wreathes during the winter. They have had several outside of church gatherings involving pizza gatherings at Ellis Island, bowling, Monster Golfing, and a Christmas party. Other activities include hanging Christmas lights, and making luminaries for Christmas Eve.

Later in the year, your Youth Ministry got a bit of spotlight in the wider diocese. Ashleigh McGuire and Michael Nason spoke at the Southern Deanery meeting last summer, and Michael's words of, "It's new, but it's not" were the focus of Canon Kate's Friday Reflection. The entire group participated in the Diocesan Convention last October, our group made up almost half of all the youth that were present.

We aren't making this up as we go anymore. There is community of young people at Grace that is well connected to each other. One of the challenges has been keeping the group connected between those second and fourth Sundays either in terms of lesson plans and learning, for keeping project ideas steady. The youth group would like to meet every Sunday. But right now this isn't doable as almost all of our youth as acolytes, and the Youth Director does actually enjoy Sunday services. The most likely solution would be when Grace started holding two services, where the youth could meet in that time.

This year of the focuses of the ministry will be fundraising and replenishing the youth account. I would like the youth to slowly start integrating more into the life of the congregation. As always finding lesson plans that will hold their attention will be a challenge.

Kicking off 2012, Grace will be hosting the first Diocesan Youth Event at the end of January. Ashleigh and Michael are both interested in being Youth Delegates for Province VIII for General Convention. If any of them are picked, then there would be a trip to Illinois this summer. And I'm almost certain we would be returning to Modesto in the fall.

### **Eucharistic Ministers (EMs) (Philip Holt)**

As our overall community at Grace has grown during this past year, so too has our team of Lay Eucharistic Ministers. This past year we had five additional parishioners receive the required training for the Lay Eucharistic Ministry. Because the Eucharistic Minister is a lay person who represents the congregation at the altar and assists with the distribution of communion, a significant part this ministry is to integrate with our priests and the liturgy during each service. Our ultimate goal is to assist with the creation of a focused worship experience for our parishioners that celebrates and elicit the highest honor for our Lord God.

For more information or to participate in this ministry, please contact Philip Holt. We have a group of intelligent, brutally honest, and inclusive teens at Grace. It's been my pleasure to assist them.

**Grace Book Club (Cathy Ellenwood Bader)**

Grace Book Club is a social/spiritual group who meet weekly throughout the year. We do not meet during Lent or Advent. This past year we read 4 books, including our last book, "The Sweetness of Tears". Typically, we meet on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00 pm. For our last session, we met in the Barles' home. Our conversations are lively, and inspirational. We will be starting up with a new book very soon.



**Grace Choir (Christopher Borges)**

2011 has been a great year for the **Grace Choir**, solidifying our "humble" beginnings, welcoming new members, and enjoying new music. We rehearse Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30pm and sing on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. We have also had continued involvement from members of the BHS Choir community, including eight singers joining us for Christmas Eve. We would love to continue "growing" new singers in the choir, and all members are welcome to discover how enjoyable this sort of ministry can be.

**Grace Men's Fellowship (Matt Bader)**

Grace Men's Fellowship is an organization that meets quarterly for a meal at a member's home. We gather to talk about our lives and to share how we are challenged to become more Christ-centered as individuals and as a group. We believe in the importance of men getting together as a group to share their lives and faith experience.

We are hoping to add service projects that will benefit the greater Bakersfield community. For more information contact Matt Bader at [mbadermft@gmail.com](mailto:mbadermft@gmail.com).

**Grace Young Adults (Andrew Lisa)**

The Grace Young Adults (20's & 30's) group is in the planning stages of its first event to be hosted at the home of Andrew and Katherine Lisa, sometime in February.

**Lectors (Readers) (Miriam Raub Vivian)**

There are currently thirty-eight active members of our team of readers at Grace, and new readers are welcome! Readers serve (generally in pairs) about once every three to four months in worship services at Grace, reading either the Old Testament lesson or that assigned from the New Testament. A former theater instructor from Bakersfield College, Hank Webb has led several training sessions for our lectors. Miriam Raub Vivian currently schedules the lectors.

**The LGTB Community of Grace (Lori Toia & Arcie Aldapa)**

The LGTB Community of Grace met several times through the year. The meetings were held at various locations including restaurants, the chapel, movie theaters, and our home.

We hosted a booth at pride where we handout information about Grace's inclusivity of LGTB folks. We had a total of 150 visitors at our booth.

Outside of the social events (movies, game night, etc.) we had, we also had discussions about our experiences at Grace. We all agreed that Grace has been a wonderful place to worship and that we have always felt welcome.

I would like to discuss with you an opportunity we have to co duct a couples retreat which would include ALL couples. Patricia Puskarich has a friend who is an ex-Catholic priest and he teaches couple communication skills and relationship skills. I believe his is a certified marriage and family counselor in Hemet. He is willing to come up and hold a one day retreat.

Please talk to Patricia about him, his name is Scott. We would like to organize it around valentine's day :). We would need use of the chapel for the day, lunch, and copies of any handouts he needs.

Also, I have a TV larger than the one in the closet, I would like to donate. It has a remote too! It will need to be strapped to the TV cart for safety reasons, would you like me to take care of getting a strap?

In closing, Arcie and I would like to thank you and Grace for the opportunity to lead the LGTB community of Grace. We look forward to another year of community building and worship with the family of Grace.

### **Outreach (Miriam Raub Vivian)**

Grace focused a lot of attention on outreach efforts in 2011. These included special monetary collections for the **Grace Family Fund** (namely at Easter and Christmas), as well as a special food and cash collection to create **Thanksgiving meals** for 5-6 families in (or outside) our parish. As a parish, we continued our weekly effort (through the large Sunday **offering basket**) to collect items needed by the **Alliance Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault** (food, toiletries, diapers, toys), and the second Friday of the month remains dedicated to **servng dinner at the Homeless Center**.



**Habitat for Humanity** has not been building homes in Bakersfield this year, so we are waiting on their return to town to organize a Grace workday with them. **The Socks Project** during Lent helped collect new athletic socks of all sizes for the Bakersfield Homeless Center (as part of a collaborative effort with the School for Deacons in Berkeley), and in that same season we collected bills and change in the little blue boxes for the Episcopal Church's **United Thank Offering**. During Advent we promoted the intra-parish **Helping Hands Project** to assist parishioners with light-duty house projects, and once again supported the **Angel Tree** project, which matches gift-giving parishioners with children of incarcerated women.

For as long as Grace has existed, we have also promoted donating to **Heifer Project International** during Advent, and that campaign ran through Advent as well. Much of our effort during late summer and fall went into planning, organizing, and putting on the 2nd annual **Grace Wine-tasting and Silent Auction** fundraiser, this year at a donated venue, the lovely outdoor Gardens at Mill Creek. Proceeds were roughly 30% greater this year than in 2010 and were divided between three local agencies: the Bakersfield Homeless Center, the Dream Center (for emancipated foster youth), and Ricky's Retreat (a hospice for AIDS patients). At Grace, we continue to make Outreach a high priority--"we are an outreach parish"--and are committed to raising the equivalent of at least 10% of our annual parish budget for outreach efforts.

### **Pastoral Ministry Team (Mary Webb)**

In 2011, PMT members did not make as many hospital or rehab visits as in previous years. This is actually heartening, however, when one considers our principal calling: sharing Eucharist with those who are unable to join us for Sunday worship. We continue to visit long- time parishioners **Jan & Gordon Troxel** in Delano regularly, however. In addition, our outreach to two CCI inmates continues through letters and periodic visits.



### **Roamin' Romans (Stef Donev)**

Grace's former (some might say recovering) Roman Catholics meet periodically and informally to discuss the trip from Rome to Canterbury. It is a hard and at times painful journey to make, and we gather for conversation, sharing, some laughter... and maybe a little healing.

There is no set schedule, never an agenda. When someone needs to meet and talk, we meet and talk. Individual members are also willing to talk privately about all the issues and concerns that can arise when a Roman Catholic starts to think outside the box.

**Recovery Ministry (Stef Donev)**

If you could add up all the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, and all the other 12-Step organizations you will find gathering in church basements, veteran's halls, and other meeting spots around the world, you would find that there are millions of men and women in recovery from their addictions.

There are also millions more who need recovery.

Recovery Ministries network serves as a voice of conscience to Episcopalians throughout the world, building awareness of pastoral and spiritual ministry to those addicted.

Grace celebrated its first Recovery Sunday in October, with a special Recovery liturgy and a sermon by a parishioner in recovery.

For more on Recovery Ministries, go to: <http://www.episcopalrecovery.org/>.

**Welcoming Committee (Elaine Berg)**

The Welcoming Committee is one of the newest ministries at Grace, forming in September of 2011. It is an exciting ministry that has gotten off to a great and productive start. We currently have twelve full time members. Jackie Cooper-Glenn, who represents the Hospitality portion that intertwines with Welcoming and Greg Glenn, who assists with the Ushering and Greeter parts have agreed to be involved as needed. Greg has graciously agreed to continue his Usher and Greeter training sessions.

In the few months we have been up and running, we have successfully improved in the name tag wearing department under the enthusiastic guidance of Becky Rule and Barbara Fleming. You might have noticed our new name tag holder. John Eastridge was able to take the design idea of Becky and build it for us.

In November we had our first Welcoming of Newcomers and Visitors Potluck. About 70 people attended and it was well received. Our second one is scheduled for this spring.

So far the Welcoming Committee is following up weekly with email and regular cards to welcome our visitors. We follow up with parishioners who haven't attended services for awhile to make sure all is well. We also attempt to find out if there is a reason associated with Grace itself that has kept them from attending and if there is anything we can do such as assistance with transportation, to get them back to church.

Some of our upcoming projects and goals are to improve our welcome packets and to include them with the welcoming bread, improve strategies for getting new members excited and willing to help out or join a Grace ministry, better organize a system to pair visitors with more "experienced" members to help with things that might be confusing such as maneuvering through the liturgy booklet and the service itself, and to encourage them to stay after service to have coffee and treats. It serves as a great opportunity to introduce them to others and help them to get to know more about Grace and what we have to offer.