MISSION STATEMENT

Striving to worship God, follow Jesus, and be inspired by the Holy Spirit, we seek to:
- Cultivate a community of intentional and abundant welcome.
- Celebrate our diversity and creativity.
- Love, support, and care for each other and God’s creation.
- Serve all humankind both locally and globally.
- Advocate for justice, reconciliation, and healing.

VISION STATEMENT

- Bravely inclusive with open doors
- Boldly caring with open hearts
- Broadly spiritual with open minds

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Rev. Dr. Alberta C. Wallace, Intentional Interim Minister - alberta@gracechurchvt.org
Alastair Stout, Minister of Music - alastair@gracechurchvt.org
Diane Chartrand, Assistant Minister of Music - dchar99@yahoo.com
Kit Wallace, Church Administrator - kit@gracechurchvt.org
Beth Wolven, Financial Secretary - beth@gracechurchvt.org
David J. Dean, Minister Emeritus
Alan D. Walker, Minister of Music Emeritus

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Administrator’s Office, ext. 204
Interim Minister, ext. 205
Alastair Stout, ext. 208
Beth Wolven, ext. 202
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Call to Order

Devotions

Celebration of Life

Acceptance of the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) and Report of the Church Clerk

Nominating Committee Report

MOTION:

To receive the report of the Nominating Committee and to approve the slate of officers and Council members through June 30, 2022.

Old Business

CET Committee Report

Good Happenings

Congregation questions

This is the time for the congregation to ask questions of Staff and Church Council members concerning the overall church program and ministry.

New Business

Use of Capital Campaign Funds for Finial Removal

Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee

Personnel Manual Revision

Other (from the congregation)

Vote to adjourn the 2021 Program Year Annual Meeting

Closing Hymn (Black Hymnal 448: Take My Life and Let It Be) and Benediction
The 233rd annual meeting of Grace Church was called to order by Moderator Mary Ashcroft at 11:00, a quorum being present. The opening prayer was offered by Rev. Holly Ross Noble, who then read the Necrology.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the 232nd annual meeting without changes. The motion was APPROVED by a unanimous voice vote.

The Nominating Committee Report was presented by Jody Hart Guimond, who moved its passage. The motion was seconded. The Moderator asked whether there were nominations from the floor.

Sue Stager moved that Sue Best be added to Children’s Ministries. A second was heard. This amendment to the motion was APPROVED by voice vote.

Sue Stager asked who would represent Finance at Council. The Moderator explained that the Finance committee would elect that representative, and that Council minutes would reflect their choice.

Sue Stager offered her name to be added to the Nominating Committee. This amendment was seconded, and the amendment APPROVED by voice vote.

Dee Bort stated that her name was listed in error under the Stewardship Committee, and requested that it be removed. This amendment was seconded, and was APPROVED, though not unanimously.

Alastair Stout clarified that while Gary Salmon will be chair of the Music Committee, Barbara Kirk will be its representative to Council. It was moved and seconded that Barbara Kirk be Music committee’s representative to Council. This amendment was APPROVED.

The Moderator called for a vote on the multiply amended motion of the Nominating Committee, and it was APPROVED by unanimous voice vote.

Old Business

Margaret Franklin asked whether there were plans to proceed with modifications to the Sanctuary under the reVision program. Alastair pointed out the elegant work Ken Willis has done to create wheelchair spaces, and observed that these improvements represent the final step of Phase I under reVision, and recognized the generous financial support that has made these efforts possible. He noted that Phase II involves moving the organ console downstairs to the main floor of the Sanctuary, and stated that half of the approximately $40,000 needed for that project is promised. Moving the console will allow the choir to assemble as a unit in the front of the balcony. Alastair reminded the congregation that Phase III would involve extending the platform outward to provide a larger performance space.

Bonnie Kelly asked when the choir might be able to resume singing. Alastair said that the date for that is uncertain, and, while the fellowship enjoyed in singing together is important, we may need to rely on instrumental talent and vocal soloists, or small ensembles for the present. Alastair continues to research the question of safe use of choral ensembles, and is conferring with other choral directors to that end.
Ron Pulcer stated that a page appears to be missing from the digital format of the annual report, but it appears the missing information is present in the printed version.

Gabi Netsch moved that she be included as a Vermont Conference delegate. A second was heard, and the congregation APPROVED this motion.

New Business

Michelle Fountain moved that $200 be voted in support of a virtual Vacation Bible School. A second was heard, the motions was APPROVED by unanimous voice vote.

Greg Ellis expressed his thanks for the support of the congregation of the Church Council’s actions, thanked the members completing their service on the Council, and thanked Deacon Richard Westfall for temporarily assuming the duties of Chair of the Diaconate. (APPLAUSE) Greg welcomed those joining the Council. He announced that the Pastoral Search Committee of seven has been selected from a pool of seventeen willing nominees put forward by the congregation, and that the names of these individuals will be made public as soon as the members of the pool of candidates have been notified.

Dee Bort thanked the Reverend Holly Ross Noble for her ministry, (APPLAUSE) and the Interim Search Committee for their efforts. (APPLAUSE)

There being no further business to be conducted, the Moderator entertained a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and APPROVED at 11:30.

The Reverend Holly Ross Noble expressed her gratitude to the congregation for their welcome and support, and thanked Alastair Stout and Diane Chartrand for their work in creating the television and online worship services, and then gave a closing prayer.

(Subsequently, it has been learned that the report of the Nominating Committee should have reflected that Bruce Peacock will begin serving the second year of his term on the Finance Committee.)

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Kelly, Clerk
Grace Congregational United Church of Christ  
Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting  
25 August 2019

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Mary C. Ashcroft at 1100. The Clerk verified that a quorum was present. An opening prayer was offered by the Rev. Tracy Fye Weatherhogg.

Greg Ellis, Council Chair, addressed the meeting, and presented some background information. He recalled the special congregational meeting of February this year, called to address the budget shortfall, which resulted in a decision by the congregation to reduce the salary and benefits of the ministers by 30% for 2019. The Council then was tasked with understanding the implications for the ministers and for the church. At a meeting in June the Weatherhogs expressed a desire to have their call dissolved and to move on. The Council, with input from other committees, met several times to define the details of this process. Greg stressed that their overriding concern was to preserve the church. He then read the following

MOTION:

That Grace Congregational Church and Reverends John and Tracy Weatherhogg dissolve the pastoral relationships effective Sunday, September 8, 2019;

and that, in recognition of their service the Weatherhogs be given compensation and benefits at the 70% level for each minister, to be paid bi-weekly on the regular payroll cycle through 12-31-19;

and that the Weatherhogs receive jointly one additional compensation payment of $25,000 to be paid out of legacy funds in the first payroll cycle of 2020, on 1-2-20.

The motion was seconded from the floor.

Kathy Doyle read prepared remarks. She stressed the need for discernment, and urged that the motion be rejected. She called for healing. She said that the Weatherhogs’ willingness to leave did not mean that they wanted to leave, and described the downside to their leaving, and the scope of their involvement in the community. She said that we need to focus on future possibilities, and urged support for the Weatherhogs to stay.

Mary Crowley expressed confusion, and referred to the Annual Report of the church. She felt that the February meeting was hasty, and should have allowed more time to reach a decision. She called for more time now to resolve the issue under consideration, and stressed that the ministers have served us well.

Marty Barclay pointed out that all ministries end, and that the church cannot afford two pastors.

Janice Prindle described how well the Weatherhogs have served this church, and outlined the scope of their influence in the community. She said that interim ministers are in short supply. She called for open discussions regarding the changing role of the church in our society. She stated that a vote to reject the motion was a vote of confidence in the Weatherhogs.

Ray Merrihew called the Council’s approach to the issue bureaucratic. He was hearing a retreat rather than a plan for future progress, and stressed the need to look ahead, and craft a plan for moving forward.
Jeff Dayton stated that he and his family would not be at Grace without the Weatherhoggs. He said they can’t stay at 70% salary. We need to bring in new members, and we all need to do our parts. There are few young people in church in these changing times, as religious participation declines. Losing our ministers does not move us forward.

Sue Bassett was concerned about the process and its lack of transparency. Turnover of ministers should be smooth and graceful. She opposed voting on a single motion.

Don Richardson suggested that the motion be tabled, and urged we listen for God.

Ellen Green pointed out that the “secrecy” surrounding this issue was at the request of the ministers, and stressed that the Council’s actions were taken in good faith.

Matt Getty explained that we are trying to be transparent about the financial situation. The numbers show that we cannot afford two full-time ministers. We have been drawing too much from our Legacy Fund. This practice is unsustainable.

Bonnie Kelly stated that if the Weatherhoggs were going to leave, they should have been allowed to do so on their own schedule, and called for a paper ballot to vote on the motion. This was seconded.

Randy Kelly spoke to oppose a paper ballot. Greg Ellis spoke in favor of a paper ballot. Elisabeth Kulas expressed discomfort with the vote, and would abstain. Sue Stager questioned why anyone would fear voting by division of the house. A motion to vote by paper ballot was DEFEATED on a voice vote.

Russ Green described trends in stewardship and declining participation, and reminded us that the Mission budget has been repeatedly cut. We can generate excitement about Grace Church. We cannot afford two pastors.

Elisabeth Kulas spoke in favor of the motion. She felt the church has lost its way, lost focus, and feared Grace is a broken church, and is dying. The Weatherhoggs are not at fault, and cannot fix this. It is our job.

Deb Weaver described her close ties to the Weatherhoggs, and to their family. She asked whether the question should be, not whether we should have the Weatherhoggs, but whether they are willing to have us.

Justine Franco decried the lack of details available to the congregation, and was sad and dismayed. She spoke against the motion, and called for more time to decide. We need more outreach, she said, and more willingness to accept change.

MJ Perkins said she was sad and confused, and didn’t want to lose the Weatherhoggs.

Dee Bort claimed that people should not have been surprised by these events, and should have been more attentive and involved.

Michelle Fountain allowed that change is hard. We need discernment and unity. Each of us needs to do more.
Daniel Graves described growing up with the Weatherhoggs, and attending Youth Group. He stressed how valuable they are to him.

Ron Pulcer felt “torn”. He mentioned the decline in population of the city, and the Weatherhoggs’ involvement in the community. With their departure, we will lose all that outreach and all those connections. He felt we are acting too hastily.

Howard Weaver spoke in support of the ministers, and against the motion.

Mary Crowley hoped the Weatherhoggs would be willing to stay longer.

Dave Hoffenberg stated that one pastor would not be able to do all that our ministers are now doing, or all that needs to be done. The Weatherhoggs are not responsible for declining pledge income or declining attendance.

Matt Getty pointed out that all this has been discussed before. He pointed out that the motion is the result of negotiation between the ministers and the Council. However the issue comes out, we need to go forward in love.

Marge Candon expressed her extreme dislike of change. She felt that the ministers are being pushed out the door, and the congregation is being rushed to make a decision.

Tiffany Dayton described how supportive the Weatherhoggs have always been. She joined the church because of them, and worried that we may lose members and financial support if we lose them. She felt we could all do more. She stressed that the Weatherhoggs love us and Grace Church, and if we show we love them, they will stay.

Becky Johnstone described how grateful she is for the Weatherhoggs, and how responsive and caring they are, and stated that we need them to stay.

Heather Hauke said that congregations age. We need to grow the congregation, and turn twice-a-year Christians into regular attendees. If the Weatherhoggs are willing stay at reduced salaries, we cannot let them go. They are effective at what they do, and we must keep them. We need to reinvent ourselves. Cutting salaries and staff is only a bandaid.

Linda Kulas explained that seminaries are closing, diminishing the supply of potential candidates for ministry. She stressed that turnover in ministers involves a three-year period of decline, and wondered whether Grace is strong enough to come through that. She said our process was too hasty.

John Weatherhogg gave some background. He stated that five years ago some members of the Council expressed “no confidence” in the ministers, and that situation has been growing worse. Grace needs discernment. Pastors need to know support for their ministry is strong.

Matthew Hauke felt we can’t decide this issue now, and stated we should table the motion.

Matt Getty wondered whether we were voting on the right question.

Sue Stager suggested the motion be severed into its component parts.
Patty Bartlett spoke to what a loving church this is.

A voice vote on the warned motion was indecisive, and a division of the house was called for by the Moderator. Ayes were 45, Nays 68, and the motion was DEFEATED.

John Weatherhogg stated that this vote did not constitute a clear mandate for the ministers to stay.

Sue Best moved to RECONSIDER. This motion was seconded, and PASSED on a voice vote.

Jim Graves asked that Tracy Weatherhogg be present at the meeting, and she appeared.

Janice Prindle moved to TABLE the motion. This was DEFEATED.

Jim Graves asked whether Tracy Weatherhogg wanted to make any comments. She simply said that she wanted what was best for Grace Church.

Charlotte Gladding lamented the loss of continuity of our leadership.

Winnie Denis stated that the Weatherhoggs are irreplaceable. We can, and need to, all pull together to advance Grace into the future, and we all need each other, now more than ever.

Kim Levins described how she and her wife were not welcome at another church, but were welcomed here by John and Tracy.

Ray Merrihew spoke to reverse his previous vote, and spoke in favor of the motion.

Dave Hoffenberg said that, while it was painful to do so, he wished to reverse his previous stance, and vote in favor of the motion.

The motion was PASSED on a voice vote.

The Moderator entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded and passed at 1:45 PM

The Rev. Tracy Fye Weatherhogg offered a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Kelly, Clerk
The meeting was called to order at 11:30 am by Mary Ashcroft, Moderator.

Church Clerk Margery Salmon declined to be clerk for this meeting. Margery made a motion to make Diane Chartrand clerk for this meeting only. Kathy Willis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The clerk declared a quorum of over 50 members were present.

The opening prayer was offered by Rev. Dr. Alberta Wallace, Intentional Interim Minister.

Robert Ide moved that the minutes of the 232nd Annual Financial Meeting be accepted. Michelle Fountain seconded. No corrections were offered. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Matt Getty, Treasurer, gave the end-of-year report for 2020. He pointed out that although actual pledges were below the pledged figure and other income such as building use was reduced because of COVID, the shortfall was made up by additional money coming in from trust accounts and the Fox Fund, and by reduced spending caused by COVID as well as reduced personnel costs. No unrestricted legacy funds were spent in 2020. Special purpose funds used were less than $15,000.

Matt presented the 2021 proposed budget. A balanced budget is presented without any proposed draw from unrestricted legacy funds: pledges are up for the 2021 fiscal year; $6,594.27 was rolled over from 2020; other income sources are reduced in the budget such as building use. A digital ministry intern and hourly custodial proposals are not funded for this year. There are no salary increases. Trust accounts and Fox Fund are based on a best guess. Michelle Fountain questioned the 0 budget for the Diaconate Care and Compassion committee. Beth Wolven explained that families pay for funeral and collation expenses. Russell Kulas questioned stewardship of financial resources: are investments in fossil fuels and should we look at removing our investments from that. Matt felt this was a question for Legacy Committee.

Matt made a motion to approve the 2021 budget as presented. Rhonda seconded. The motion carried without dissent.

The annual report of the Legacy Fund was given by Randy Kelly. Randy is a new member of this committee, joining Robert Ide and Bill Bannerman. This committee is dedicated to the management of the endowment, funds left to Grace Church by members and friends. This money can be used for emergencies and to supplement pledges for supporting the church. The money is invested with United Church Funds, 60% in stocks and 40% in fixed investments. The fund is currently worth $1,438,996, having increased in 2020 by $168,824. The decision to draw from legacy funds is made by the congregation and council. Possible uses are for major property repairs and improvements and to help those in need. The Legacy Committee also oversees planned giving.

Randy moved to allow money be drawn from legacy funds for C.A.R.E. fund (up to $5600) and Flower Fund (up to $2000). These are an annual distribution and are in addition to any budgeted withdrawals as indicated in the Church/Fox Fund Receipts budget. Greg Ellis seconded the motion. The motion was approved.
Old business:  None was raised

New Business:
Ellen Green presented the new mission statement for Learning with Grace Committee and made a motion that the mission statement be accepted by the congregation.  Michelle Fountain seconded the motion.  The motion was approved.

Russell Kulas renewed his question about funds being invested in fossil fuels and divestment of those investments.  Randy Kelly will pursue.  Bruce Peacock stated funds are invested in moderate funds and those are not fossil free.  Russell Kulas made a request that Legacy Fund Committee look into this.

Bonnie Kelly asked for criteria used to make decisions about reopening for in-person worship.  Laura Zmurko said information from the government, state, hospital, other churches and schools is used by the Reopening Committee.  She said we are opening to small groups.  Bonnie asked for criteria from the state.  Laura responded that we can have 25% capacity in the sanctuary.  Alberta added criteria of number vaccinated.  Mary Ashcroft stated that comments for the Reopening Committee should be made outside of this meeting.

Alberta asked Dave Hoffenberg to speak about membership.  A list of 98 people have been reviewed for possible movement to inactive by the Diaconate.  A new member class will be held via zoom on March 16 at 6:30 pm.  Five or six people have expressed interest.  Dave’s committee is looking to increase our social media presence.  Even though the digital media intern is not funded in this budget, Dave will look into the possibility through local schools and colleges.

Beth Wolven clarified that moving 98 people to inactive would make our total membership 433.

Ellen Green announced that Bridge to Rutland will bring an immigrant to Rutland in February or March.

Alberta reviewed the idea of the Congregational Engagement Team, who will be focusing on where the church is going as we prepare to search for a new minister.  Names of the members will be announced after the first meeting.  The group will report to Council monthly.

Alberta thanked the Music Committee for the potato/Shetland night.

Beth thanked Ron Pulcer for posting the announcement of the annual meeting on the website.

Winnie Denis made a motion to adjourn.  Matt Getty seconded.  The motion carried.

Alberta offered the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Chartrand
Report of the Church Clerk
2020 – 2021

MEMBERSHIP as of July 13, 2020 533

NEW MEMBERS
CONFIRMATION 0
CONFESION OF FAITH 1
LETTER OF TRANSFER 1
REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH 2
TOTAL NEW MEMBERS 4

LOSS OF MEMBERS
BY DEATH 15
LETTER OF TRANSFER
RESIGNED BY REQUEST/
ADDRESS UNKNOWN/MADE INACTIVE BY DIACONATE 64
TOTAL REMOVED 79

MEMBERSHIP as of June 6, 2021 458

BAPTISMS 0

CHURCH ATTENDANCE  Services suspended most of the year due to the pandemic.

Let us rise for a moment and pay tribute to the memory of those members who, during the past year, entered the Eternal Home:

Members of Grace Church

Lincoln Fenn Alan Perkins
Adele Hall Roger Pike
Charlie Hanley Barbara Pratt
Wendy Hill Don Richardson
Odell Johnston Mary Rounds
Sherida Kinney Edna Sarno
Theodore Mandeville Morris Tucker

Friends of Grace Church

Laurel Patch
Barbara Jo Postlewaite
Annual Report of the Intentional Interim Minister, 2020-21

It has been almost a year since I walked into the sanctuary of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ. It is my practice to listen to the pews when the sanctuary is empty. God’s presence is always present. My eyes spanned the massive space, the stained-glass windows, the well-worn red pew cushions, the towering organ pipes, and the free hanging cross.

I walked in from the West Street entrance to the back of the church and just stood there to listen. My chest became tight, and an overwhelming sadness came over me. I felt sadness and heard tears.

“Why are God’s people crying?” “What happened here?” Those were my questions. I did not know the recent past, hurts, and pains of the church. Once I was told, I understood what I heard from the people in the pews; the Spirit crying out.

Thank you for trusting me with your stories: joys, pains, doubts, and hopes. As your Intentional Interim, I listen, and pray; listen and observe; listen, observe, pray, and ask questions. After listening, praying, observing, praying, and asking questions, I make recommendations to help you see God’s hands and hear God’s voice in preparation to call your next pastoral partner.

As your pastoral partner for worship and mission, I have seen your heart for God and the many ways you care for one another and for the community. In pastoral care, I have witnessed the joy of baptism and seen tears turn to joy and hopefulness at memorial services. As an equipper for the work of God, many have stepped up and out to share their gifts and talents with trepidation, awe, and the wonder of how God can use even them. I have had the honor of being a partner to Grace Church “being church.”

My call is to help you establish a firm foundation in which to launch your new season of being followers of Christ, lovers of God with the power of the Holy Spirit for this time in the life of Grace Church. We are doing just that!

The Congregational Engagement Team is preparing to hear your voices and turn your comments into data that will be used by the Search and Call Committee to showcase how God has called Grace Church to “be the church.” Crafting a Church Profile is the first step to reach out to potential candidates to be Grace’s fulltime long-term pastoral partner. To accomplish this first step hearts and minds must be prayerfully listening to God for the answer to the question: “God, how have you called Grace Church to serve in this season of our lives?” The answer to this question requires you to trust God and expect God to use the past as the steppingstones to your future.

When you join an informal small group facilitated by members of the Congregational Engagement Team, in that space with other members of Grace family, the Holy Spirit will open your hearts to dream together about the church God has placed on your hearts and make clear the gifts, talents and temperament your next settled pastor will need to make those dreams a reality.
Here are recommendations made to the Council, thus far:

**New position recommended:** We have been discussing for months the need for a Digital Communications position. After reaching out to several UCC churches, it is my recommendation a **motion be made for the development of a part-time job description to fulfill the tasks of editing, formatting, uploading all digital materials to the church’s website, social media and public television; this person must come with experience of working with faith communities and children and youth.** This person does not need to be ordained and it is highly recommended it be someone from the local community. Or the position be filled by two (2) people-one with the skills for formatting, editing for Grace’s online ministry-this person could work remote; and one with responsibility to reach out to the community to engage families with children and youth. **Follow-up given to Diaconate and Personnel.**

Recommend review and **update of bylaws and Personnel Manual.** **Follow-up will be at annual meeting.** CET also recommends this be completed before calling the next settled pastor.

**Consider co-facilitators** who serve together. This may provide support for working people to be more willing to share their gifts if they understood they serve as part of a team. It also allows the church to benefit from different leadership styles and highlighting the various gifts present in the people of Grace. **Follow-up falls under the updating of bylaws.**

Recommend **review of terms of service.** Perhaps term limits should only be for the Council Leadership to allow for the Spirit of God to flow anew ever 3-4 years. Please consider allowing all persons to serve if they please on committees according to their passion without restriction. Encourage each facilitator of committees to actively promote their mission to recruit new members. **Follow-up falls under update of bylaws.**

Request that the **new Church Database system** be able to extract members by hobbies and occupation. This could possibly provide a list for each committee to reach out to persons with like interests or passions. **Follow-up by Financial Secretary.**

Consider a **formal nominating process from the congregation for Council leadership.** This may be a means to encourage the congregation to participate in the business of the church and promote a greater sense of belongingness. **Follow-up falls under update of bylaws.**

Redesign the position of Sexton breaking the position down into tasks and skills that could be filled by several part-time persons. **Follow-up by Personnel, Finance, and Church Administrator.**

Perhaps the **fiscal year needs to be changed** to allow timelier follow up with employees to receive their current year Employee snapshot shortly after the budget is approved. **Follow-up falls under update of bylaws, Finance, and Personnel.**

**Partnership recommended for steady cost sharing contribution:** We were approached by Rev. John Longworth, pastor of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church stating the church is expanding their infant care day care services and they would like to partner with Grace for space, custodial support and lay persons or ordained to provide a chapel service to the children. **Council agreed for representatives from the following committee’s follow-up on this proposed partnership:**
Finance, Personnel, Children and Youth, Property, Chairs of Council and Co-Chair, Church Administrator and Interim Pastor.

Proposed time frame for continued Intentional Interim Season:

**June – July 2021** – Using the “train the trainer” model, prepare the CET to begin facilitating the small group gatherings.

**August – November 2021** – CET facilitating small groups. Goal is to reach at least 90% of congregation.

**November – December 2021** – CET preparing report of data collected to Council.


**February – April 2022** – Coaching Search and Call committee.

**April 2022** – Search and Call present Church Profile to Council; make Church Profile available to congregation.

**May 2022** – Call special congregation meeting to approve Church Profile; upload profile to Conference for review; profile is approved by Conference and is submitted to Ministerial Search database- profile goes live.

**June – December 2022** – Search and Call interviewing potential candidates

**January 2023** – Grace calls their next settled pastor! Intentional Interim completes the call once a candidate has accepted.

Report respectfully submitted by,
*Rev. Dr. Alberta C. Wallace*
Annual Report of the Minister of Music, 2020-21

This has been a remarkable year for the Grace Church Music Department. Despite the pandemic, Grace Church has continued to lead in the field of church music. Our choirs were singing and ringing long before other organizations. Grace Church has also continued to support local musicians during these very trying times. All this was possible through strict safety policies that Grace Church and the state implemented. It was also due to the hard work of the Grace Church staff and the generous support of the congregation.

Handbell Choir

The Grace Church Handbell Choir was the first choir to resume after lockdown. The choir has been rehearsing in the fellowship hall every week since June 2020. The choir has recorded music for online services and played for live-stream and in-person services.

The choir was graciously gifted a set of tubular bells that are hanging on a new bell rack built by Ken Willis. They were also gifted a new low C sharp bell. The choir purchased new chimes allowing the old chimes to be dedicated to the Children’s Chime Choir.

Sanctuary Choir

The Sanctuary Choir resumed rehearsals in September 2020. The choir initially met in sections divided between the sanctuary and the fellowship hall but as only half the choir felt safe returning, we transitioned to meeting as a full choir in the sanctuary. The choir has been rehearsing masked and six feet apart inside, and unmasked outside. Due to COVID precautions, the choir stopped rehearsing in December 2020. During this time online rehearsal resources were provided for the singers.

In February 2021 choir rehearsals resumed. They will sing outdoors for in-person worship during July and August 2021.

Both the sanctuary and handbell choirs have been vital sources of social and musical nourishment during COVID. The possibilities of hi-tech editing has allowed the Sanctuary Choir to record music for online and in-person services, often collaborating with the handbell choir. It is very exciting that the choirs have produced such excellent results under very strange circumstances.

Thank you to all who have returned and we’re excited to welcome back more of our musical family as the summer progresses.

The handbell, TTBB and SSAA choirs will resume in September. The sanctuary choir will meet every Wednesday from 6-7pm during the summer. Normal choir schedule will resume in September.

We were all very saddened at the passing of Adele Hall. Adele was a member of the Sanctuary and Handbell Choirs. We are thankful for Adele and all she shared with us at Grace Church.

Children’s Choir, Children’s Chime Choir, and Joyful Noise

The Children’s Choir and Joyful Noise have been on a hiatus since March 2020. In September 2020, we formed the Children’s Chime Choir allowing our younger members to make music safely. Ken Willis built a special bell holding rack that allowed the kids to play the bells more easily. We also used the new rack to create musical games that introduced them to the world of handbells in a fun and unique way.
The children memorized and recorded bell and chime music for online services and midweek meditations. It has been wonderful to hear our younger church members participate in on-line worship. In addition to music, the children also contributed colorful artwork to our online ministry.

The Children’s Chime Choir now have their own set of chimes. When the choir resumes in September, we will combine chimes with singing and musical drama.

Although most of our youth music programs have been on hiatus, we have hosted various youth drama groups both inside and outside the church for rehearsals and filming throughout the year. We also invited a local dance school to participate in our recorded production of the 2020 Messiah.

Joyful Noise will resume in September.

**Rutland Area Chorus**

The 2020 *Messiah* was an historic production! Hundreds of hours went into the video production, recording and editing of Handel’s masterpiece. It was wonderful to work with live musicians and dancers, and to hear recordings by past Music Ministers of Grace Church. The result was a festive display of Grace Church talent at its best - a totally original and unique reimagining of the story of the Birth of Christ that has been viewed almost 2,000 times all over the world.

In Jim Lowe’s Times-Argus article: ‘2020 in the Performing Arts: A Virtual Resurrection from the Dead’ (December 2020) he wrote:

“...Perhaps the most creative response to COVID-19 came from Grace Congregational Church in Rutland. Rather than cancel its annual and beloved performance of the Christmas portion of “Messiah,” Alastair Stout, minister of music, created a unique recorded multimedia video of Handel’s masterpiece. Solo vocal arias were newly recorded in different parts of the church with the excellent Arka Quartet (aka VSO Juke Box Quartet), while young dancers interpreted choruses recorded in previous years. It set off the holidays with a truly joyful experience.”

*Messiah 2021:* The RAC and orchestra will be in-person this year.

*Spring 2022:* The RAC will perform their spring concert in May 2022. They will join forces with Castleton University Chorale to perform *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff under the direction of Dr. Sherrill Blodget.

**Other activities**

The Music Department has filmed, edited, produced and uploaded over 200 videos for the Grace Church YouTube Channel, Facebook Page and Website. Viewers can revisit these recordings at any time.

The Music Department has planned special services and events throughout the year, including:

- Travelogue Series (with Learning with Grace -LWG)
- Grace Steeplechase (with LWG)
- All Saints Celebration of Life
- Messiah
- Service of Light in the Midst of Darkness
- Fortnightly Christmas Concert
- Christmas Eve Experience
- Shetland Night
- BROC Benefit Concert
- Annual Crowley St Patrick’s Day Sing-along
- Earth Day Sing-along
- Maundy Thursday Service
- Good Friday Experience
- Maypole Sunday
- Pentecost Handbell Concert (with LWG)
We have hosted special vocal recitals featuring local musicians Ryan Mangan and Olivia Boughton. These recitals have included songs cycles by Ralph Vaughan Williams; Beethoven; Faure and Gwyneth Walker.

The Music Department has arranged and composed original music for the Sanctuary and Handbell Choirs saving the church over $3000 in new music and allowing Grace Church to broadcast the music freely online and on PEGTV. We have also produced new Grace Church editions of the Messiah orchestral string parts. These new parts (source from the very best editions available) incorporate the clearest articulations, dynamics and directors notes into one score. This will make rehearsals more economic and result in a much more satisfying musical experience.

**Grace Church Music Catering Service** (an Ad Lib Committee)

Grace Church Music Committee has catered delicious take-out meals: *Harvest Dinner; Shetland Night Baked Potato Dinner; Mother’s Day Afternoon Tea (with Fortnightly) and a Father’s Day Rib-BBQ*

**Shrek The Musical 2022**

The Grace Church and Paramount Theatre production of *Shrek The Musical* will take place in July 2022. The cast, crew and production team are very excited to begin this fruitful collaboration.

**Thank you!**

The Grace Church Music Department is very grateful to the Music Committee and Grace Church staff for their continued support. This has been a remarkable year, but it has highlighted that Grace Church is blessed to have an even more remarkable Music Ministry.

Sincerely,

**Alastair Stout**
This past program year has been unique in that the entire year was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which will go down in the history of our country as the worst health crisis we have faced in the last 100+ years. So much has been published and documented that hardly a day goes by when we have not had to bear the burden of this health tragedy. No need to go into any of the details other than to say we have persevered through so much and have finally approached the end of the tunnel. While we are not free of the effects of this pandemic, many if not all of us are blessed to be able to say that death from this has not visited us personally. Thanks to our collective beliefs and trust in our loving Creator, we are ready to worship again as a congregation as soon as herd immunity is reached and the limitations can be lifted.

In spite of the imposed limitations we have done much together as a congregation, which I hope you take the time to read about in this report from the various committees and ministerial staff. From the perspective of the Council I’m proud to say we have been able to meet at least once a month with the help of the technological advances of the day. I want to thank the members of the Council who have made the often times difficult personal challenges to commit to these monthly meetings and several individual committee meetings in between. Our staff has been very supportive in that effort as well.

We as a Council have found and hired an intentional interim minister in the Rev Dr. Alberta Wallace who has most admirably led us spiritually, emotionally, and with great empathy towards a path to seek the future direction of our church with the establishment of the Congregational Engagement Team as well as sitting in on and offering her expertise on all the committees. She has led the Bible Study Group, Prayer Group, visited the infirm and needy, made contacts with groups outside the church, and most notably asked many “Hey, how are you doing?” Thank you, Pastor Alberta, for being there for me. I especially want to say thanks to Alberta in how she handled the difficult and painful time when it was necessary to say good bye to our Sexton.

I want to recognize and thank Alastair, Diane, Krista, and Alberta for putting together our on line and in person worship experiences this past year. Your creativity and ingenuity in keeping the church alive and relevant has not only been noteworthy to our members locally, but to many others both near and far. We have been a beacon for worship in such a new way for so many. My kudos and thanks to Kit and Beth for keeping the day to day operations of the church going so smoothly during this unusual time.

Finally I want to take this opportunity of personal privilege to say a few words about my tenure as your Chair of Council these last three years. To say it’s been more than I expected in terms of the time commitment and stressful events would honestly be a gross understatement. I don’t want to go into any of the details in this report, but I do want to express to you all that it has been an honor to serve our church and work towards what I consider to be what God wanted for us as a congregation. To those who have gone way out of their way to personally thank me and say that I did a good job, my heart is full of gratitude. It may be cliché at times but it bears repeating - my family and my wife, Susan, deserve much thanks as well for putting up with my absences when the church work called me away from home. I will continue to serve Grace Church in the future if it is your desire. Thank you all and God Bless You All.

Respectfully submitted,
Gregory Ellis, Chair of Council
COMMITTEES
OF THE
CHURCH COUNCIL
Children and Youth Committee Report, 2020-2021

September brought a new year for Children and Youth here at Grace Church. Amidst the Covid pandemic, we were limited to what we could do in person and had to follow state and CDC guidelines. Here are a few things that we were able to do with the Children and Youth of Grace Church during this past year:

- During our in person services between September and mid-November, the children’s time offered during Sunday worship, was coordinated by Tegan Kirk-Elkin.
- We had an Intergenerational Hike on October 4th at Cadwell Trail in Pittsford. We had almost 30 people join us.
- We offered a Whole Church School Program on October 11th and 25th and one on November 8th.
- 2nd grade and preschool Bible presentation was on November 29th and had to be done virtually. There were 6 children we gave bibles to.
- We held a couple of virtual crafting times in December for kids to make luminaries for our Christmas Eve service.
- We took part in the Christmas Eve Family Nativity Drive Thru.
- We participated in the Epiphany Tree Burning on Jan 17th
- We held a virtual craft time to make Valentine cards and sent them to 28 of our Grace Church members.
- There was an open invitation from Alastair for the kids to do artwork for the online services.
- We held 2 more Intergenerational hikes- one in March and one in April.
- We took part in the Good Friday Tenebrae Walk and had an Easter Egg Hunt on the playground.

Even though we were not able to do much in person, we tried to keep the kids involved in ways that were safe during this pandemic. As this year moves on and state guidance begins to open up, we hope to get more children and their families involved in Grace Church activities! Here’s to a New Year!

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Best, Chair

Children’s Bible Sunday
As the Diaconate chair I have written a report which includes a brief summary of all our activities during this past year by each of our strong, devoted sub-committees: Membership, Worship and Sacrament, and Care and Compassion.

The Membership Committee has remained very active despite the pandemic. They conducted meetings and brought new members to our Grace Church family. They have also reviewed our whole church membership roster and checked with individuals as to what level of membership they wish to hold. This is a vital link financially, for the church has to pay annual dues to our Vermont Conference for each full member we have.

The Worship and Sacrament Committee has continued to assist with communion, sign-ins at the West Street entrance when we had in-person worship, and also provided assistance with funerals. All of these areas have had to be limited due to being open for short periods of time and then closed for so long.

Care and Compassion has provided meals for the Boutwell family. In the past we helped to provide funeral receptions, but this could not happen at this time.

As we find our “new normalcy”, we will all find new ways to assist our entire Grace family and serve in any ways in which our Lord needs our help.

Please continue to remain in good health during these unhealthy times.

David F. Hazen
Diaconate Chair

Membership and Evangelism Committee Review

We just had our first New Member Class since the Weatherhogg's left, which is a step in the right direction. It was March 21, 2021 and we welcomed four new members. We went with a new format in which we had all the representatives from the committees and Greg Ellis, the Council Chair, tape a message that was put into a video for them to watch. We will be using something like this for the future.

Membership and Evangelism Committee Goals/Objectives:

We would like to have the next new membership class this summer and possibly one more in the fall of 2021. Now that church is back in session, I would like Alberta to announce that any visitors should sign the friendship register and maybe we can put that out on a table? Due to lower turnouts, I will ask Diaconate and Council members to direct new people they see in church or they know to my email: deacondavehoff@gmail.com.

We are currently working on coming up with a job description for a Communication Manager. It's a new position we are seeking. We need help with all of the social media platforms and with our on-line ministry. I've been trying to increase our Facebook page traffic for years. Hopefully if we find this person, it will help.
We need to keep Grace Church in the community eye and spirit. Alberta said we're going to continue to be the community church in this area but have an even brighter star. I agree. We hope to find events and community projects we can be a part of. If the Halloween Parade comes back, Grace Church should be in it again. 2019's was great for morale and put us in the public eye. Hopefully now that Vermont is opening back up, it will give us community events to be a part of.

**Budget Requests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation Class</td>
<td>$150 (Not sure if there will be one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Development</td>
<td>$850 (I was given this figure. I am not sure where money for the new position will come from or what this is for.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>$400 (Name badges, class costs, new member packet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

I'm not sure how much money my committee actually needs but we have a good game plan for the immediate future. My 6 year tenure is up in September as a Deacon but I have volunteered to stay on. I also said I will continue to be the Committee Chair unless there is someone who wants to step up.

Sincerely Yours,

_Deacon Dave Hoffenberg_
We need to keep Grace Church in the community eye and spirit. Alberta said we're going to continue to be the community church in this area but even have a brighter star. I agree. We hope to find events and community projects we can be a part of. If the Halloween Parade comes back, Grace Church should be in it again. 2019's was great for morale and put in the public eye. Hopefully now that Vermont is opening back up, it will give us community events to be a part of.

Learning with Grace Annual Report, 2021

At the annual meeting on February 14, the Spiritual Growth Committee formally adopted its new name Learning with Grace, and the congregation voted to approve the following mission statement: *Learning with Grace encourages and provides opportunities for lifelong learning so that as individuals and a community of faith we can discern God’s will for us. Such opportunities include Bible study, exploration of God’s world around us, social justice issues, and other topics of interest, led by clergy and lay leaders alike. It is in learning together that we grow as a community.*

Below is an accounting of what we did this year. While it addresses much of what has been requested or seen as a need to address, a bulleted list doesn’t show the enthusiasm of the participants. In each of the items below we have had so much positive feedback and more participation than was possible the year before. Although the pandemic has made meetings difficult, the Spirit has remained active among and within us.

- Bible Study has continued on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 AM. This committed group has met both with and without pastoral leadership and has held our community of faith in prayer.
- With the Music Committee we hosted 6 travelogues, both in-person and on Facebook.
- With the Music Committee we hosted the Steeplechase – an outdoor scavenger hunt in Rutland.
- In the early fall we used UCC materials to study our place in the election process – “Our Faith, Our Vote”
- In the late fall, we used UCC and other materials to begin studying systemic racism in the U.S, “White Privilege”
- The congregation submitted reflections on the theme “Stirring Up Good Trouble” for our Lenten devotional booklet.
- We submitted readings to the Music Committee for the recorded Good Friday service.
- We submitted readings to the Music Committee for the recorded Pentecost service.
- We are reaching out to other committees in the church for collaboration with getting more members and friends involved in our life-long learning opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Green, Chair

Steeplechase, August 2020
The Legacy Funds are comprised of gifts and bequests made by or in memory of members or friends of Grace Church. A listing of all the bequests, together with their year-end balances, is to be found after the purple sheet in the report of the financial annual meeting of 2-14-21.

The market value of the Fund on 3-31-21 was $1,475,322.71, a gain of $36,326.21 from the balance on 12-31-20. There have been no withdrawals from the Fund so far in 2021.

The Legacy funds are divided into two categories: those unrestricted as to use, and those whose use is restricted. The restricted funds are further divided into four areas: Buildings and Grounds, Mission and Service, Music and Performing Arts, and People, Program and Worship.

No withdrawals from Legacy Fund to support the general expenditures of the church are budgeted for 2021.

The Trustees of the Legacy Fund are Bill Bannerman, Rob Ide and Randy Kelly.

Planned future tasks include consideration of continuing our investment with the funds of the United Church of Christ, and a fresh look at divesting of participation in investments in fossil fuels.

Respectfully Submitted,
Randy Kelly
While the global pandemic altered life significantly in remarkable and unforeseeable ways, Mission and Service continues as an essential part of Grace Church. Our committee strives to thoughtfully distribute funds to those in need locally and globally. The needs are always great, but certainly heightened over the past 16 months. We are beyond grateful to the congregation for your continued and loving donations.

A large part of our budget supports OCWM - Our Church’s Wider Mission - which benefits our national UCC headquarters, our VT Conference, and our local church. We also participate in other special UCC offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing provides interdenominational disaster relief; Neighbors in Need supports justice issues in the U.S.; Christmas Fund supports ministers and missionary pensions; and Strengthen the Church provides funds for existing church congregations and new church development.

Internationally, we are grateful to be able to offer continued financial support for Jennifer Wright’s organization in Kenya, HEAL Raising Our World Foundation, Inc. Our donations help with building projects (the latest of which is a new dormitory for the boys), day to day expenses and other special campaigns. Covid-19 closed the school and children’s home for almost one year. During that time, we assisted in providing Caring4You Kits which contained food and personal care supplies. In addition we are providing school fees, room and board for a young boy, John Ndegwa, through a sponsorship.

Locally, we have been able to contribute to many area programs:
- Dismas House - transitioning former prisoners to society
- Open Door Mission - providing meals and shelter for those in need
- New Story - a domestic violence crisis center
- Rutland Parent Child Center - nurturing children and families
- BROC - providing food, fuel and housing to empower self-sufficiency
- Community Cupboard - our local community food shelf
- Rutland Free Clinic - medical and dental care for the underinsured
- Habitat for Humanity - creating affordable and decent housing
- Dream Center - offering support, food and showers for the homeless

We also helped two local families who had fallen between the cracks by providing fuel assistance for one and paying the electric bill for the other, an unexpected gift in time for the Christmas holidays.

Yet, sadly, there were many things we could not do this year, due to the pandemic. The monthly Welcome Table Dinners were suspended suddenly. We recognize what a loss this has been. We found other avenues and opportunities to help the community: baking cookies for the Methodist Church to hand out with their meals; collecting toys, books and games for the Easter Seal Drive.

I am grateful to my committee members, Tracey Marsh and Sarah Pulcer, without whose wisdom and experience I would be truly floundering. We will continue to look for new needs and opportunities in our community and are already excited to be able to support the new Women’s Dismas House. We would welcome new committee members anytime. And please know how truly grateful we are for the congregation’s support and trust in us.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Willis, Chairperson
Adaptation when faced with adversity is what presented itself to all facets of Grace Church during our Covid year. Fulfilling the needs of a congregation spiritually and musically, meeting state Covid guidelines, and just dealing with how to run a church at all levels challenged every committee and organization within Grace. Working together we made it work.

The music program had to deal with fulfilling our Mission Statement while still working within a Covid outbreak that a year ago seemed to have no end. That meant at a minimum providing music for our online services each Sunday morning. As the year progressed we changed our music while still retaining the traditional musical events. The church service moved outdoors to the parking lot in September as did the bells. The bell choir assumed a more prominent role in our music ministry and the choir took a sabbatical in light of Covid guidelines. Special music (both instrumental and vocal) made many beautiful additions to services during the year.

Traditional church sponsored music functions were not eliminated but changed to fit the circumstances as best possible. This included Harvest Dinner, All Saints Service, Messiah, Christmas music, and Fortnightly music events. Take out dinners replaced inside dinners and the celebration of God through “stations” both inside and outside the church for Christmas Eve and Good Friday instead of our more formal Congregational setting created musical and spiritual opportunities. About 90 worshippers celebrated Easter at the Ashcroft farm and Mother’s and Father’s day services will include an extra with a “high tea” for mothers and “rib roast” for fathers as a part of our music committee activities.

The Sanctuary Choir began rehearsing again in mid-winter and provided music for our online services. Plans are to have them singing outside as the summer progresses and perhaps become a regular part of the service this fall (inside).

Thanks to our musical staff and Rev. Dr. Alberta Wallace’s insight and direction, the music committee has at times seemed more like meal planners than music planners. We have a music committee and staff ready to lead us in whatever direction we need to go to fulfill the mission statement by maintaining a high quality music program. To Dee Bort, Barbara Kirk, Jim Wright, Mary Doyle, Marci O’Brien, Gretchen Doiron, David Hazen, and Winnie Denis a hearty thank you for another year well served.

Music Committee Mission Statement – 2020

_The Music Committee of Grace Church supports music and mission as an integral part of life at Grace Church and the Rutland Region. The Music Committee makes decisions with the Minister of Music to encourage and maintain a high quality, vibrant music program at Grace Church._

_Gary Salmon_
Music Committee Chair
Thank you to our Committee Members for their faithful service! Our committee meets only when specific decisions need to be made regarding our staffing. All of our meetings are confidential.

Members: John Casella, Winnie Denis, & Laura Zmurko

Our committee would like to thank Carolyn Hazen and Esther Swett for their past service on our Committee. Their terms ended with last year’s rotation. Winnie Denis, who is serving as this year’s Vice Chair of Council, continues to serve. We would also like to thank Brian Kern who has served in this role previously, who always sends us relevant research and current data points to help guide our decision making.

**Personnel Activity Summary since our last Annual Report:**

By June 2020 the Council voted to commission a separate group deemed the ReOpening Committee to help guide our church towards worshipping together. Members of the Personnel Committee participated as well as a cross-section of different committee members and staff. As a ReOpening committee we have waded through all the legislation and mandates to address issues such as sanitation, staffing, new training, products or supplies necessary and policies for using our building. A hearty thank you goes out to Greg Ellis, Marty Barclay, Fred Bates, Sue Best, Matt Getty, Winnie Denis, and our staff for their sincere participation.

We were able to host services both indoors and out for much of the summer and fall. As COVID spiked again – just before Thanksgiving – we were again faced with a pause in our regular gathering for worship.

Separately, we partnered with the Finance Committee to take a look at some of the Employee loan policies that had been previously utilized. We worked together with Council to retire those policies. We also worked with the Property Committee to inventory the charge accounts we have with different businesses and assess which charge cards are necessary for each staff member.

As is our standard practice, the green feedback sheets were distributed each Sunday in November 2020 and collected and consolidated. The congregational feedback remains anonymous and is delivered as part of each employee’s annual review. More than 121 areas of feedback were submitted. Official end-of-year assessments were delivered in person to all 5 of our paid employees. The theme for the 2020 reviews focused on how job roles and descriptions have changed due to COVID-19. Our staff members have been very adaptive, creative, and resourceful in helping to produce digital worship materials. Some staff members have been working on-site, while others worked remotely. We have investigated ways to share the phone answering duties offsite and make sure that our staff is linked digitally. How the job descriptions and roles will change or revert still remains to be seen. We thank Margery Salmon and Greg Ellis for participating in each review.

We were also able to gift Volunteer Appreciation Baskets to those who come in and faithfully help with our office administration duties. We hope to repeat that new tradition in the future.

In December of 2020, the Personnel committee began to formulate the budget for 2021 in collaboration with the Finance Committee. It had been suggested that we budget for a Digital Media Communication role; however, there was not enough funding in the budget for that role to make it to
the final draft. This is a role that we have been hoping for since the 2015 reVision efforts, so we will continue to look for funding.

In January of 2021, the Personnel Committee became aware that our long-time staff member Ken Willis would need to take an extended medical leave. Arrangements were made for his leave time and replacement cleaning efforts. Different employment contracts and partnerships were researched and drafted, but ultimately Ken’s employment was terminated with Grace this winter. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

By mid March 2021, it became apparent that the changing landscape of free preschool in the public schools and the more stringent staffing and building requirements necessary to run our existing preschool would prevent us from reopening in the fall. The Council voted to shutter our Preschool as it had existed. We are currently looking for fresh ideas as to how to use the space and equipment.

In April and May we worked with the staff to help create new job descriptions for different aspects of our custodial role. We have added a Sunday role to help our worship arrangements run smoothly. We have also created a cleaning-focused role to address sanitation. We are looking to partner more with the Property Committee to handle more of the repair and maintenance tasks.

Our committee is small and we would welcome some fresh perspectives. Please reach out to the nominating committee if you are interested in joining us.

Thank you to everyone who helps keep Grace Church moving forward!

Questions or comments about our Personnel Committee can always be funneled to the Chair: Laura Zmurko, ljcz4vt@yahoo.com

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Zmurko

Volunteer Appreciation Baskets
Annual Report of the Property Committee, 2019-2020

The Property Committee has been busy, despite the pandemic, with projects, necessary improvements, and much work that had to be done to keep our church running efficiently. We dedicate this report to Don Richardson, who passed away on May 9, 2021. He was a longtime member of the Property Committee of Grace Church, and we are grateful for his dedication.

Projects that were completed are as follows:

- Paving project in the parking lot outside of the Youth Center.
- Historical plaques were framed and put up in the narthex.
- Electrostatic sprayer purchased to help sanitize and disinfect rooms.
- Sump pumps ordered to help with water problems. To be installed soon.
- Purchase of tents, along with the Music Committee, for outside worship.
- Alberta and Beth’s office have been painted as well as the handrails going up to the balcony.

Ongoing projects:

- New garbage disposal for the Fellowship Hall kitchen has been ordered and will be installed soon.
- Steeple Finial – Jeff Freeman and Esther Swett are working on this. This is becoming a safety hazard and needs to be addressed asap.
- Curtains in Fellowship Hall and in Conference Room will be removed, cleaned, and hung with new rods.
- Plexi-glass shields are being finished for use in the sanctuary.

Projects that are on hold:

- Replacement of Fellowship Hall floor.
- We are installing sump pumps in basement to ease the water problem, but we are investigating long term solutions for this problem.

We have had two successful property clean-ups this year, one in November and one in May. Storm windows were removed in specified areas. Many folks trim, rake and tidy up our property on a regular basis. Thanks to the Property Committee members and Grace church volunteers who continue to help us to make our property look great.

We would like to thank Sue Ellis, Harvey Goodchild, Dave Newton, Dan Swett, Esther Swett, Chris Thompson, Bob Smith, Jeff Freeman, Diane Chartrand, Kit Wallace, and Alberta Wallace for their dedicated service.

Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Bates
Randy Smith

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NON-CHURCH COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OTHER GROUPS
Mission Statement: Bridge to Rutland seeks to offer sponsorship, partnership and a home for those seeking asylum in the U.S.

Since its beginning in 2019 at Grace Congregational UCC as a Spiritual Growth class on immigration and issues at the Mexican/US border, Bridge to Rutland (B2R) has become a community organization made up of representatives from 8 faith communities, 2 justice advocacy groups, and the active remnants of Rutland Welcomes (the group that accompanied the Syrian refugees).

We thank Grace Congregational UCC for an office space, the use of the address for our mail and for our paperwork to accomplish our legal status, and for the support of the congregation along this path.

Over the past year we:

- Became incorporated in the state of VT as a non-profit (June 2020), and established as a federal 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization (August 2020).
- Established a committed working Board of Directors with specific roles.
- Wrote bylaws and developed a budget.
- Established a bank account at HFCU. As of April 15, 2021, the balance is around $8,000.
- Developed a website and Facebook page.
- Helped pull together our partner asylum support organizations in a collaborative group that meets monthly called VT NH Asylum Support Network (VTNHASN).
- Raised a total of $15,000 with VTNHASN during Giving Tuesday that was split among the participating partners.
- Developed a working relationship with the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) in Nogales (both sides of the border) to find asylum seekers who would accept sponsors in VT.
- Developed documents for volunteers (handbook, applications, spreadsheet).
- Made and continue to make presentations in our communities to educate and encourage more to join our current base of 70 supporters and to volunteer.
- Made contact with an asylum seeker through KBI who is currently waiting to cross and would like to have B2R as a sponsor.
- Participated in trainings for volunteer management, grant-writing, legislative advocacy, trauma-informed responses, countering racism, how to communicate with someone of differing beliefs.

We are looking forward to growing our base, empowering our base to new levels of action, raising more gifts (monetary and in-kind), and becoming sponsors in this next year.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Green
Executive Director, Bridge to Rutland, Inc.
Report on the Congregational Engagement Team from the Intentional Interim

Grace Church, in January 2021 each of you received a letter from me asking you to consider serving on the Congregational Engagement Team. The letter was titled, “Pressing toward the Goal” and focused your attention on the following scripture text:

**Pressing toward the Goal**

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. Philippians3:12-16, NRSV

The letter stated:

It is my honor as a Transitional Minister (Intentional Interim Minister) to be your coach and pastor during this season of readiness to call your next settled pastor. Every coach needs a team of committed persons ready to listen, study, pray, and act. This letter is to invite you to serve your church as the pre-check team who will pass off to the Search and Call Committee. Please consider being a member of the Congregational Engagement Team (C.E.T.) for six (6) to nine (9) months during 2021.

This call was answered by twenty members of Grace; sixteen (16) were able to fully commit themselves to participate. In February 2020 Grace’s Leadership Council accepted the following persons to do the work of the pre-check team: Beverly Anderson, Mary Crowley, Winnie Denis, Michelle Fountain, Margaret Franklin, Ellen Green, Russ Green, Dave Hoffenberg, Glenn Horgan, Bonnie Kelly, Randy Kelly, MJ Perkins, Jeannie Stimpfel, Esther Swett, Howard Weaver, and Marci Wheeler.

This team began in March the debriefing process - reconciling in their hearts, minds, and actions regarding the life disrupting events of Grace: the dissolution of the pastoral partnership with the previous pastors and church life in COVID-19. The goal was to restore the peace and unify this group which represents all the factions of Grace Church to focus on not repeating the past.

They were coached through the stages of reconciliation: acknowledging that there is a problem and naming the problem(s); showing empathy and understanding to those who felt aggrieved; preparing to reconcile by connecting the problem(s) (areas of omission and commission) to the bylaws and personnel manual; finally listing the actions necessary for change to restore a healthy relationship between members and pastoral partners.

This process is to prepare them to facilitate small group gatherings. Now, that they have had the time and safe place to change disrupting events into opportunities for God’s grace to grow and thrive, they are ready to guide the broader church to “press toward the goal,” of answering the questions:

- What is the Spirit saying about Grace Church’s future?
- Who is Grace called to serve?
- What image does Grace church want in the community?
- What characteristics, gifts and skills are needed in the next settled pastor?
- What tasks absolutely must be performed by the next settled pastor?
The CET is being prepared to start facilitating the small group gatherings by August. Attached are their monthly reports to the Council which include suggested actions necessary to restore Grace Church to a healthy relationship between members and future pastoral partners.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Alberta Wallace, Intentional Interim / CET Coach

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Report to Council from Congregational Engagement Team
Report for March, 2021

The CET is a good representation of Grace Church. The Team is made up of persons who have longevity with the church; short history with the church; and a broad range of opinions and questions regarding how we got to this transitional season in the life of Grace Church.

We have been meeting weekly since the end of February, in-person and Zoom for persons who are traveling. We are in the debriefing phase. This phase challenges us to share our stories; baring our souls which is increasing our trust level with one another. We have covenant with one another to only share CET topics with other CET members. A covenant of confidentiality is challenging for those members who were involved in the process of dissolving the ministries of our former pastors. Yet, we have agreed to respect their commitment to confidentiality.

The outcome of the debriefing phase is to agree on a statement that is truthful about the departure of our past pastors and hopeful for our future. This is a statement that would be offered to the Search and Call to use in the Church’s profile. It is also our goal to begin using this statement consistently to begin to foster a new narrative about our past and focus on our future.

With God’s help we will find avenues to acknowledge the best of the ministry from the Weatherhoggs and discern what questions need answers and those that need to lay dormant.

Respectfully submitted from servants of Grace Church in partnership with Christ under the power of the Holy Spirit,

Congregational Engagement Team:
Beverly Anderson; Mary Crowley; Winnie Denis; Michele Fountain; Margaret Franklin, Ellen Green; Russ Green; Dave Hoffenberg; Glenn Horgan; Bonnie Kelly; Randy Kelly; MJ Perkins; Jeannie Stimpfel; Esther Swett; Howard Weaver; Marci Wheeler; Facilitator Pastor Alberta Wallace, Intentional Interim
Dear Grace Family,

We have been meeting weekly to prepare ourselves to facilitate small groups to answer the questions:

“Who are we?”

“Who are we supposed to be?”

“What gifts and talents are needed in our next pastoral partner?”

The responses will be used to provide information to the Search and Call in preparation for the crafting of Grace’s Profile to be viewed by potential candidates for our next pastor. We are being guided through the five (5) focus points for churches in transition: (1) **Heritage**; (2) **Leadership**; (3) **Connections**; (4) **Mission**; and (5) **Future**. The sixteen of us feel we are representative of the congregation. We all come to this task with a range of emotions and feelings about the process and details of the dissolution of the ministry of John and Tracy Weatherhogg. The following message is the first statement about our **Heritage** we were able to provide, after weeks of listening to one another’s pain and questions with love, respect, and grace.

*The process leading to the departure of our former pastors was painful and should have been more open. As membership and pledge income diminished, the sustainability of two pastoral positions became unlikely. Some questioned the pastors’ leadership methods; others were greatly nourished by their ministry. We acknowledge that many people suffered, but as Christians we have the hope of resurrection: new life in Grace Church. We are examining our church history, truly living in our present, and anticipating our future. Please join us in small group meetings this summer to determine what we collectively need from a new pastoral partner to help us grow our church and do Christ's work in our community.*

Monthly we will provide messages that have come from our discussion times to help us as a faith community embrace change as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to reveal how Grace Church can care and support one another and serve in the ways God has set for us. From our review and discussions on the five (5) focus points for churches in transition, we will provide recommendations to the Council and to the rest of the Grace family for consideration at our annual meeting on June 6th.

**Recommendations: Leadership & Future**

The CET recommends an ad hoc committee be appointed to review and update the Bylaws last revised in November 2014. We recommend that this committee consider the following changes are made to the Bylaws:

- Article VII, Section 6...Council minutes go out in draft form to the Council members within 48 hours and the vote to accept via email. Council minutes will be made available to the congregation within seven (7) business days via email, website (requires a password protected access) outside the Church Administrators office.
- Article V11, Section 1: Third sentence to read:  “The Council will seek the will of the congregation in discerning its decisions, knowing that the history of Congregationalism considers the true power of the local church is held in trust to those voted to serve on the Council. Council only acts unilaterally when it is related to respecting the dignity of staff in personnel matters. The Council shall report details of all proceedings to the congregation via minutes and all outcomes of executive sessions.
• Article VII, Section 4: …shall consist of Pastor. All are ministers in the church. Please state if this includes the Minister of Music. Provide updated graphic representation of the Church Council Structure.
• Article VII, Section 7: Please explain what is “executive session ” and what members of the Council participate.
• Article VII, Section 8: The Church Council may hold meetings by electronic means. A quorum shall be required. The minutes of such meeting shall be presented at the next stated meeting of Council. Should a vote be needed, the Council Chair shall send the proposed motion to each member of the of the voting body (the Council) with an explanation of why the vote cannot wait until the next in person meeting. Each voter shall confirm receipt of the proposed motion by sending a positive or negative vote to the Council Secretary by a designated date. A majority vote shall adopt a motion. The Secretary shall report all voting results to the Council Chair including the number of voters responding and the number of positive and negative votes. An immediate declaration of the results shall be issued to the voting body by the Council Chair. The motion, including all information relevant to the vote, shall be recorded in the Secretary’s minutes. The information will be disseminated to the Congregation in the same manner as in person minutes are distributed.
• Article VII, Section 10: The Church Council shall review Terms of Call for Pastor according to the Covenant Agreement. The Church Council shall review terms of employment for all non-ordained staff annually. Please include in this section who on the Council participates in this review or “according to the Personnel Manuel.”

Recommendations: Future

• The CET recommends a members and associate members only section be established for the website that is password protected. This will provide another avenue for members to review minutes of Council and other committees, financial reports, upload of digital photo directory; new member orientation video/information; current Bylaws, church history.
• We recommend an annual series of sessions in-person and available on the website to re-orient and orient members to “What is Congregationalism?” and “What is the United Church of Christ.” This recommendation was accepted by Learning With Grace. LWG and the Diaconate are currently working on the first design of these sessions.

We are excited about what the future holds for Grace and how God will be honored.

Your sisters and brothers in Christ,

Beverly Anderson — brandx@vermontel.net
Mary Crowley — artrandmarycrowley@comcast.net
Winnie Denis — winnie05763@gmail.com
Michele Fountain — mfountain@wcsu.net
Margaret Franklin — mugsfranklin@yahoo.com
Ellen Green — eepgreen@hotmail.com
Russ Green — mtnruss@gmail.com
Dave Hoffenberg — deacondavehoff@gmail.com
Glenn Horgan — glennhorgan@hotmail.com
Bonnie Kelly — bck4237@hotmail.com
Randy Kelly — grkelly40@hotmail.com
MJ Perkins — mjperk@earthlink.net
Jeannie Stimpfel — happyvtmtn@aol.com
Esther Swett — endswett@comcast.net
Howard Weaver — haveavermd@yahoo.com
Marci Wheeler — whelmar@comcast.net
Flower Committee Annual Report, 2020-21

The Flower Committee and its function took on many new forms this past year. We discontinued Sunday flower memorials as the services were taped for PEG TV early in the week. I hope you all understood how difficult a task this could have been had we tried to get fresh flowers on that schedule.

Grace Church held outdoor Sunday services during May, and will resume in-person, inside worship on June 6. At that time we will resume our Sunday flower memorials to the extent that we can.

I will be in contact with you as it all begins and hope that you will wish to continue your memorials. It is always so important to get them published in the STAR as well as the Sunday bulletins. Maybe you will want to make some changes as well as additions to your memorials.

If anyone would like to join our committee, don’t hesitate to contact me at 483-2337.

I would like to give a special thanks to our long-standing committee members:

- Dee Bort
- Sharon Brown
- Wendy Daley
- Jo Fretz
- Carolyn Hazen
- Holley Moran
- Esther Swett

Let us welcome on board our new member, Cheryl Smith!

God loves you all,
David F. Hazen, chairperson

The Fortnightly: Celebrating 142 Years … Fall 2020 to Spring 2021

December 17, 2020 – COVID Pandemic Concert: Sophia Botti, pianist

A wonderful concert in person and on Facebook. Guests masked and socially distanced

A bit of history: A century ago the influenza pandemic of 1918-20 ravaged the world. Over 50 million died. Many Vermonters, many of whom were young and healthy, were lost, particularly in Barre and Montpelier. Fortnightly members worked on the World War I effort, contributing to the United Warfront. Fete day was canceled in 1916 due to an outbreak of scarlet fever. Now we are again in the midst of a global pandemic, and hoping to see the end brought about by widespread vaccination.

March and April, 2021 – Programs were canceled.

May 9, 2021 – Mother’s Day Concert in the Sanctuary with Ryan Mangan, tenor

Take-out English Tea: currant scones, clotted cream, jam, sweet cake, cucumber & cream cheese and chicken salad finger sandwiches, tea bags … all for $10

Join us on September 23, 2021 for a program about Alastair Stout’s time at Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England

Thanks to all who provided tea and cookies. Please join us to keep Fortnightly going.

Bonnie Kelly, president; Carolyn Hazen, vice president; Cathy Fullenwider, treasurer
When we were forced to temporarily close Rapha Community Center in March of 2020, I didn’t know what would happen to our community during the remainder of 2020. There were so many unknowns, but we took it day by day and opened our minds to new ways to care for our children. We developed the **Caring 4 You Kit** program, which enabled us to deliver essential supplies and food to our children while they were at home with guardians and relatives. The response to the program was astounding and by the end of the year, we raised enough money to deliver over 200 kits.

In November, our Form 4 students returned to school to finish learning the curriculum they needed to cover before they took the KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education), a rigorous national exam that measures their academic success, as well as our schools. In January, all of our students returned to school. We implemented mask and hygiene rules, as well as social distancing requirements and were thrilled when everyone in our community was finally together again. Our students were definitely eager to return to the classroom!

While our children were at home, we focused on improving the educational environment at the school by constructing a new lab facility. We also broke ground and made great progress on the boys’ dormitory. By creating more space, we have made it possible to welcome more children to our community. We look forward to expanding our services to help as many children as possible.

It is so exciting to see how our community has come to life again. I’m grateful to all of our volunteers, donors and supporters for continuing to give generously, even with so much uncertainty in the world. We have been able to improve our facilities and provide support to our children, so they have every opportunity to thrive.

I look forward to sharing more news throughout the rest of the year. Our annual How to Draw a Lion Art Auction will take place this Fall and we are planning two volunteer trips to Kenya in 2022. Stay tuned for more info!

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Musick Wright
Library Annual Report, 2020-21

For the past year, with the closing of the church due to Covid-19, the library has been closed, so there is little to report. During that time, ordering and processing new books or checking in borrowed books was suspended, but resumes this month. It will take some time to catch up. Our committee has lost a very active longtime member, who is no longer able to participate. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Florence Boutwell for her many years of service.

Meanwhile, I invite anyone interested in joining us to contact me, by email (jlpen77@gmail.com) or by phone (802-342-2924; you may need to leave a message, as I screen calls from numbers I don’t recognize). We could use help with typing, filing, and shelving. We like to work together, but also are able to work on our own schedules, so it is a flexible commitment to support our church community.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Prindle, Librarian

Memorial Garden Report, 2020-21

The Grace Church Memorial Garden, which is located on the south side of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, was dedicated in 2001. The purpose of the garden is to “provide a dignified space for the final disposition of cremated remains of members of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, and others, at the discretion of the clergy.”

The marble bench in the garden is in memory of past moderator, Chester B. Eaton. Donna Brileya donated the sundial in memory of her sister, June Bishop and family, Dawn Bishop and Matthew Bishop. The “Grace Church Cemetery” marble marker (from the cornerstone repairs of the church) was installed on July 1, 2015.

Interment fee schedule is: $175.00 to Grace Church for perpetual care and maintenance of the garden and $175.00 to open/close the grave for burial.

The committee would like to thank all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the years to maintain the beauty and serenity of the memorial garden.

Those presently interred in the garden are:

Betseyjune Odell Bennett
Robert John Bennett
Pel Buth
Marilyn Jean Cochran
Andrew Crowley
Arthur Edward Crowley, Jr.
Joan Wilder Gannon Dean
Eleanor L. Greenwood
Frederic Morton Greenwood
Laura Stearns Greenwood
Paul Lewis Kerns

Joseph John Korona
Marion Sloan Loveland
Hull Platt Maynard, Jr.
Linda Kay Orr
Jeanne Lucille Rodgers
Richard Eugene Rodgers
Michael Butler Southard
Dorothy Louise Wentzel Whitford
Harry Ernest Whitford, Jr.
Meredith Clarke Ellis Whitman
Ida H. Wright

Respectfully submitted,
Frederick Bates, Lana Bates, Sue Ellis, Barbara Smith,
Jody Hart Guimond, Rev. Dr. Alberta Wallace
Prayer Group Annual Report, 2020-21

During this past year, the Prayer Group has met at 8:00 a.m. weekly on Wednesday mornings in the Chapel or remotely in our homes. We begin with a brief time of meditation led by a member of the group. Intercessory prayers are offered for each member of the church whose names are listed for that week. Postcards are sent to them informing them that they and their family are being prayed for each day that week. In addition, we pray for each member of the group, their concerns, and for any request we get during the week. Prayer requests may be emailed or telephoned to Marty Barclay (grambarclay@hotmail.com or 802.775.1076) or to the Church Office (802.775.4301). In addition, we pray for other churches and ministers in the Vermont Conference, the Southwest Association, and for our church staff and volunteers. We close our meetings with prayer.

In addition, Grace has an email prayer chain that is updated each week. Contact me if you would like to be a part of that ministry.

It is a privilege and a joy for us to participate in this important ministry of our church. We invite you to join us at 8:00 a.m. in the Chapel on Wednesday mornings.

Blessings,
Marty Barclay

Prayer Shawl Annual Report, 2020-21

This past pandemic year has been a challenge for all, including the members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry team. We were only able to meet in person 4 or 5 times. However, many of us continued to knit and crochet at home, and we were able to provide over 52 members and friends with the gift of a prayer shawl. Shawls have, for centuries, been a universal and embracing symbol of an inclusive, unconditionally loving God. Each prayer shawl brings comfort and support to the recipient as prayers and blessings are woven into each shawl. When we are able to meet, we pray a blessing on each shawl. They are also blessed at a worship service during the year.

We are pleased to report that since 2010, we have given away over 467 shawls.

In April of 2021 we again began to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in the Parlor at Grace. We are always looking for more members, so if you like to knit or crochet or would like to learn, please consider joining us on a Wednesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Look for time and place in The Star.

Blessings,
Marty Barclay
## WOMEN’S MINISTRIES INCOME AND EXPENSE REPORT

**For Period of July 1, 2020 – May 12, 2021**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning Balance</strong></td>
<td>$1,183.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing Machine Sale</td>
<td>300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donation (CWS shipping cost)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donation</td>
<td>20.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBS—Permanent Fund (check for Property Committee)</td>
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<td>November soup sale</td>
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<td>Cookie Tray Sale (14L, 6S, $10 donation)</td>
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<td>May Soup Sale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Incentive Fund (interest from 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBS—Constance Dana Fund ($ for local missions)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church World Service (120 school kits; 124 hygiene kits * $2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunther Silher (transport of kits)</td>
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<td>Grace Church (Property Committee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Material Aids ($260 and transport of kits, $40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWS (60 school kits; 77 hygiene kits * $2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Incentive Fund (2 students @ $275)</td>
<td>550.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missions (money from Constance Dana Fund)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ending Balance</strong></td>
<td>$ 848.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MISSIONS for 2020-2021:**

- Dismas House                                                                200.00
- Women’s Dismas                                                              200.00
- Newstory House                                                              400.00
- Open Door Mission                                                           600.00
- Rutland Free Clinic                                                         500.00
- Community Cupboard                                                          600.00

$2,500.00

This past year has been a very different year dealing with the pandemic. We were not able to hold our Rummage Sales, which are our biggest fundraiser for Women’s Ministries, as well as our soup sales throughout the winter months. That being said, we were not going to be able to give to our local missions without drawing money from our Constance Dana Fund, which we did. Also, the Church World Service kits were done twice during our program year due to COVID. Usually done in late April/early May, CWS delayed this for 2020 since COVID was still new and so kits were not sent out until September 2020. Our sewing group sent out more kits this past April in 2021 as usual.

The items in red are what the committee agreed on and are in the process of being done as these reports are being printed. They will be all set by the end of our committee’s program year on June 30, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Susan Best, Treasurer*
2021 Grace Church Annual Budget Expenses