

Grace Gathering: a worship service celebrating diverse abilities

Grace Gathering began as a call from the vestry to serve those not well-served by the church, and with Rev. Mike Angell's knowledge of a program called Rhythms of Grace, a worship experience for children on the autistic spectrum. With this call and knowledge, the Rev. Laurie Anzilotti came on staff in July, 2019 to explore the possibility of bringing this type of service to Holy Communion.

As work to launch this service progressed, Holy Communion decided to call this service "Grace Gathering" because of feedback from the wider community that "Rhythms of Grace" called to mind the "rhythm method" of birth control, music therapy or dance programs.

Rev. Anzilotti's work-to-date on this project has fallen into three categories:

- **Summer 2019—assessing the need for Grace Gathering service.** The answer from local agencies that serve the disabled was a resounding "yes!"
- **Fall 2019—preparation for outreach to the St. Louis area.**
 - To communicate effectively about this worship service, Anzilotti needed to learn about Rhythms of Grace by reading the curriculum, speaking to other Rhythms of Grace leaders, and traveling to Houston, TX, to worship at a Rhythms of Grace service.
 - Anzilotti developed a communication plan and, with parishioner Claudia Moran, developed a logo, flyer and prayer card to publicize the new worship community.
 - Through forums, preaching, and one-on-one conversations, Anzilotti spread the word about Grace Gathering at Holy Communion. A dozen parishioners volunteered to be part of the Grace Gathering Group that supports the development of the service.
- **Winter 2020—community outreach.** Anzilotti and the Grace Gathering Group currently are reaching out to schools and organizations to invite people to join Grace Gathering as congregants and volunteers.

In addition, Anzilotti submitted and received an Evangelism Grant from the National Episcopal Church for \$2,000. Anzilotti is working with the Grant Committee to secure more funding for Grace Gathering from Episcopal and secular sources.

The goal is to launch the service in August of 2020. In order to meet this goal, by June 1, 2020 we need four families/groups to commit to routinely worshipping and six volunteers who will serve two times a month to set up, attend, and close up services.

Thank you to the Grace Gathering Group members and Claudia Moran for their support of this work.

Submitted,
Rev. Laurie Anzilotti +