

GRACE GATHERING REPORT

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.

In Spring 2020, following the initial phases of exploration and invitation to committee members, Grace Gathering committee members split into three subcommittees for Liturgy, Outreach and Events. The Liturgy committee adapted existing Rhythms of Grace material to better fit the goals of Grace Gathering, hired grant musicians for the services, and prepared a preview service prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the months following, they adapted their offerings to a Zoom format. The Outreach subcommittee utilized a contact spreadsheet to begin making connections with area agencies that serve disabled children and adults. However, due to the pivot in the structure of Grace Gathering, this activity has been on pause since early 2020.

May through July of 2020 served as a "purposeful pause" for Grace Gathering as group members discerned how to adjust Grace Gathering to suit an online delivery format. In August 2020, the group began once-monthly online worship opportunities in addition to developing and launching a webpage for Grace Gathering contacts and resources.

Following Rev. Anzilotti's departure in October 2020, the Vestry hired Hannah Shanks, MSW in December 2020 as a contract worker to provide organizational support for Grace Gathering. Hannah has conducted one-on-one meetings with Grace Gathering group members, Rev. Angell and Rev. Anzilotti in an effort to evaluate the present status of Grace Gathering and identify the future goals and direction of Grace Gathering. The group met in late January 2021 to discuss the findings of the one-on-ones and identify priorities.

Shanks and Grace Gathering leaders continue to work together to provide all necessary grant reports and updates. At present, the group is intentionally considering their goals and the steps/supports that will be needed to build the thriving, intergenerational, sensory- and disability-friendly worshipping community they have prepared to launch. Additional goals, deadlines and metrics will be outlined in the report Shanks will prepare based on her work, anticipated to be completed in Spring of 2021.

Despite a year of multiple upheavals, Grace Gathering members remain committed, enthusiastic and engaged in their shared vision for this ministry and are grateful for leadership's sustained commitment to seeing this program through.

Submitted,
Hannah Shanks, MSW