

Members of the vestry engaged in a 5 year visioning exercise. We are now sharing these results with parish as a whole, and inviting all of Grace's membership to engage in imagining Grace's future.

Think five years in the future. What words would you use to describe Grace Episcopal Church?

Busy 7 days a week

A place of prayer, a welcoming social, cultural landmark in Madison - whose people (they are the church after all) are known for the light that cannot be hid.

Sincere, decent, vibrant; faithful; devout; stable; inclusive; diverse; flexible; service oriented; welcoming, joyful, engaged, alive, accepting, accommodating and healing.

The church on the square; a caring community, within; a growing church; believers in Christ;

Involved in the community, meaningful worship, good music.

Outreach, openness, traditional worship

Full pews, known for community involvement, strong youth program

What are its key characteristics?

engagement in the community - outreach to the city and the world - a grateful and generous spirit - giving from a full heart

lively, forthright, united

Resourceful, multi-generational, prophetic / annoying, un-arrogant (“humble” but that has other connotations) thoughtful freedom

A family of believers;

- Strong emphasis on Christian beliefs and teachings

 - Worship services traditional but meeting the needs of a diverse population.

 - Various kinds of programs and ministries

 - Solid financial basis

 - An active, participating congregation

 - Community leadership

 - Urban location

Accessible (open) building, willing to try new things (in addition to traditional worship), strong music leadership (including strong choir/organist), homeless shelter is more than a tenant.

It is a church that continues to tend to the corporal needs of the homeless and hungry while attending to the spiritual needs of all. Grace is a beacon on the Square where all are welcome and many have chosen to call it their spiritual home.

Engaged with the larger community

 - Expanded partnership

 - More extensive use of the facilities

Powerful and dynamic worship.

Prayerful - We seek God’s will for all of the ministries and activities of Grace.

Diverse - both culturally and socially. Men from the shelter regularly attend to receive spiritual healing. The Hispanic ministry is flourishing. Both groups infuse Grace with greater awareness of the needs of the community and our call to act compassionately.

Family centered - There are many ways for families to participate in and be nourished by all aspects of worship, education, and service.

Joyful, creative, challenging, inspiring.

What have been its major accomplishments during this 5 year period?

Parish Community

- Handled new conflicts / controversies better than previous ones, with open hearts and minds. Conflicts that were not easy but we did not shy away.
- Children in the pews, many teens active
- Members active in groups, clubs, and liturgy
- More daytime and nighttime activities
- More families, youth, Sunday School is way up,
- Expanded membership from downtown residents
- Integration of the Hispanic community (maintaining distinct nature yet fully part of Grace)

Administration and Finance

- Increased membership and enthusiastic giving, balanced budget
- Increased staff, youth director
- Preserved and renovated buildings

Physical Space

- Grace is God's house all week, a sacred presence on the square. The church is open and people come for quiet and prayer.
- Concerts and other opportunities for community to be invited in especially during the week
- Greater use by outside groups
- Repaired and redecorated

Community & Outreach

- Greater emphasis on community involvement, outreach
- Increased involvement with the shelter
- Improved shelter maybe at another location 24/7
- Expanded pantry
- Identified a mission, put \$\$ behind it, failed at some things

Relationships and Partnerships

- Working with other downtown churches and groups around homelessness
- Cooperation with other Madison churches on joint projects - ad hoc and ongoing: Youth program and Habitat, host Happenings

What are its ongoing challenges?

- Unable to train and support all people who want to be involved
- Inadequate accountability
- Congregation divided on church's stand on social issues
- Money, space restraints, leadership, publicity
- Balancing resources
- Maintaining youthful balance
- Major costs for building maintenance and repair
- Aging membership
- Pledging in unstable economy
- Competition from mega-churches
- Parking
- Attracting newcomers
- Apathy