

# Grace Church Jamaica

August 2022

## Five Big Things About Us

- Family Atmosphere

Members of Grace feel a sense of connection to each other and are very supportive of one another. This sense of love was in full display during the pandemic, as we remained connected through regular phone calls. At Grace, you feel a sense of belonging. The familiarity with the traditions, the hymns, and the service are comforting to the soul. The youth enjoy socializing with one another and participate in activities and community outreach programs.

- Rich History

Grace Church Jamaica is a historic landmark church founded in 1702 before the United States of America was formed. We are the second oldest church in New York State and the first church in the Diocese of Long Island. In 2022 Grace Church celebrates its 320<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Rufus King, a signer of the United States Constitution, is buried in the church landmark cemetery.

- Outreach to the Community

We are committed to serving the neighboring community through various outreach programs with our Soup Kitchen, which provides hot meals to families in need within the neighborhood. Health and Wellness Committee provides blood pressure screening, health care information, exercise programs, and information on living a healthy lifestyle. Social Action Committee provides many different types of social programs as well as a venue for local artist to present their work in an event called 'An Afternoon with the Arts'. The Youth Group Annual Coat Drive and caroling in the Grace Houses, a senior resident. Annual Toy Drive, which has become a staple event for needy children. Our affiliation with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

- Friendly/Welcoming

Here at Grace, we strive to create a warm, friendly environment that welcomes new visitors and encourage their return by providing a friendly greeting before, during and after service. Prior to the pandemic, we joined hands and sang at 'The Peace'. Visitors are invited to join us for coffee hour, and we engage them in conversation. Cards are placed in the pews to capture information and visitors are given a small welcome gift.

- Music

Our music ministry, led by our choir master and organist, blends traditional hymns with songs from Lift Every Voice And Sing. We find this, along with the sounds from the organ and the piano, to be spiritually uplifting. We clap and sway and lift our voices with the choir as we sing praise songs.

## **Five Potential Pitfalls Or Obstacles**

- Parking

Grace, being centrally located in downtown Jamaica, faces parking challenges. There is limited street parking, however, there are private lots nearby and public transportation is easily accessible.

- Membership

We have an aging population and have experienced a drop in our membership. This is partly due to the relocation of our young people after graduation and some of our seniors relocating.

- Finance

Since the pandemic we have experienced a drop in membership and a decrease of funds in our general account making it necessary to withdrawal from our capital funds to compensate for deficits.

- Building Maintenance

The current church structure was erected in 1862 and the parish house in 1912. They are both in need of major repairs which the church lacks the funds to make. As a result, there are areas, in both buildings, that are in dire need of repair.

- Technology

Since the recent pandemic, we've incorporated the use of technology to deliver worship services. However, we need more equipment and volunteers to assist with connectivity and the transition.

## **Five Ministry Opportunities or Potentials**

- Bible Study

Now that we have the capacity to utilize technology in ministry, we can conduct bible study, which had been an in-person practice, virtually. This will attract more people and help increase understand and deepen their relationship with God.

- Expand Choir

Under the leadership of the choir master and organist, Grace choir has the potential of becoming a renowned choir in the community. This would be a way to usher in new members.

- Increase Membership

Giving the current growth and development in the downtown Jamaica, it is feasible to anticipate potential increase in membership. There has been a tremendous amount of new high-rise apartment complexes build in the area. Grace is in a prime location to benefit from the increased population.

- Expand Outreach Program

Based on our past successes with our Soup Kitchen and the Health and Wellness Committee we look forward to growing these programs to benefit more people in the community. We hope that expanding the choir and offering concerts would be another source of outreach to the community.

- Expand Ministries for All Age Groups

There is potential to form new ministries based on the current needs of parishioners and the growing community.

## Five Things We Learned In Covid

- We Are Resilient

We have been able to keep services going despite the challenges of COVID. After the church closure, we were able to organize a skeleton crew, in compliance with the state mandates, to produce virtual services.

- Technology Has a Place in Church

Prior to Covid, Grace had not had virtual services. We have taken a giant step forward and still have a way to go utilizing opportunities for technology. We recognize the benefits of utilizing technology to build our ministries.

- Prayer Groups Were Formed

We had groups that were formed to support each other in these challenging times. Messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, were used to share spiritually uplifting messages, songs and sermons.

- We Learned to Adapt

We had to change the way in which we administer communion which was a difficult change for most of the congregation. We adhere to the social distancing, wearing of mask, and sanitizing hands.

- We Stayed Connected with Each Other

We formed smaller groups who checked in with each other when someone was missing from church service. We made regular calls to parishioners and sent out a monthly newsletter.

## Five Capacities We Seek In A Clergy Partner

- Good Leadership Qualities

A Church leader with qualities that influence and morally support the congregation, the volunteers, and others within the community. Such qualities include moral trustworthiness, social aptitude, empathy, and pastoral care.

- Caring

A pastor often deals with emotional issues, family crises and spiritual struggles. They must have a loving and caring attitude toward their congregation.

- Compassion

A good listener with strong ability to empathize with a person who is hurting and advocate on their behalf.

- Trustworthy

A clear possession of wisdom and discernment into life and struggles.

- Champion For The Youth And Elderly

An ability to emotionally engage all age groups both publicly and privately.