

Christian Outreach Committee
of Grace Episcopal Church

Matthew 25:35-40

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

The Grace Christian Outreach (COC) is blessed with an action-oriented, dedicated team of members working to fulfill our mission: “We provide support and coordination for the people of Grace Episcopal Church to reach out in God’s love to our neighbors near and far.”

In addition, every member of our parish plays an important role in this and the parallel Grace mission: “We seek to share God’s love in witness and service to one another and our community, our neighboring institutions of higher education, and through the diocese, to the nation and the world.”

Vision: With God’s grace, we seek to foster Beloved Community, where all people may experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God.

[Becoming Beloved Community webpage](#)

Mission: We support and engage the people of Grace Episcopal Church in loving our neighbors as God’s children: joining with all people, whoever and wherever they may be, to serve the marginalized and those in need, seeking healing, reconciliation and justice.

COC Mission Support:

1) Hands-on Outreach: We believe that building relationships and “walking the talk” are critical outreach opportunities and responsibilities in our committee and parish. We are inspired by Richard Rohr meditations, including these:

“Only through relationships can we know what kind of help or advocacy is truly desired. Solidarity is not about ‘I’m helping you,’ but a commitment to walking and learning together. And of course, learning together requires us to be in dialogue, with the understanding that I have much to learn.”

“I no longer think of our work as service, but as an act of solidarity, of becoming one with our neighbors. Service implies a vertical relationship, one above another. Solidarity calls for a horizontal, two-way relationship between equals, one to one. Of course, God is at the center of it all. “

In addition to sharing information and encouraging participation in the many outreach activities sponsored by Grace as well as in a range of community agencies, we wholeheartedly support the Episcopal Church Becoming Beloved Community vision and commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our society.

We have established partnerships with local groups dedicated to racial equity issues, added a Racial Equity Subcommittee, developed a prison ministry program ([STEPS](#)), and an alternative program to payday loans ([GATES Agreement](#)), become a Boys Home Cottage Sponsor, and supported related programs including the Sacred Ground video/discussion series (<https://episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground>).

2) Financial Support: we approve grant applications that meet our defined priorities and as our budget allows. These priorities are:

- o Local Urgent Needs
- o Health and End-of-Life Care

- o Child Development/Education
- o Domestic Violence/Safety
- o Social Justice
- o International Aid

Our committee has adopted guidelines for the percentages of our annual budget allocated to each category, with Local Urgent Needs set at 50% and each of the others 10%. We are generally unable to fund all the worthy application requests we receive, but are grateful for supplemental funding through the Amazon Smile and Kroger Community Rewards programs, as well as online giving. [Click here to make a donation online.](#)

Agencies that have received grants are asked to submit a Grant Report ([form](#)) at the end of the year. These agencies and their descriptions are posted here ([Grace Episcopal Church Missions Booklet](#)).

Although supporting outreach financially and hands-on is gratifying, our increased awareness of the dire needs in our community is often heart wrenching and daunting. While there is prosperity in our area, there is also poverty. A report published last year lists Virginia as one of three states with the largest increase in income disparity from 2017-2018. Furthermore, the 2018 Carilion Community Health Assessment found that poverty rates, households without access to vehicles, and unemployment are higher in the Rockbridge area than statewide averages, and academic attainment rates are lower. These factors impact physical and mental health, including homelessness, substance abuse, domestic abuse and delayed access to health care.

To make best use of our resources, we collaborate with other community funding agencies and the Grace Gadsden Committee.

[Grant Applications for 2023 - due January 7, 2023](#)

Area organizations wishing to apply for grants to fund programs consistent with the COC mission should complete this [application form](#) and email to outreach@graceepiscopalexington.org.

Please note that priorities for 2022 funding will include programs related to racial equity.

[Grant Reports for 2022 - January 7, 2023](#)

Grant reports ([form](#)) from agencies that received funding this year are due January 7, 2023.

DONATE:

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support outreach efforts in our community and beyond. Your donation will be combined with others from our parish to make a greater impact. Donations go to support local, domestic and international organizations. [Click here to make a donation online.](#)

VOLUNTEER:

Please consider volunteering at a local community organization. In the past, Grace Episcopal has supported numerous community organizations and efforts with hands-on volunteers.

Current volunteer opportunities are included in the [Grace Episcopal Church Missions Booklet](#)

PRAYERS:

Thank you for joining hands to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace:

*Everlasting God, strengthen and sustain all those who volunteer in our churches;
that with patience and understanding they may love and care for your people;
and grant that together they may follow Jesus Christ,
offering to you their gifts and talents;
through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*