

Grace Episcopal Church serves the community

By CAITLIN NEARHOOD, Sandusky Register 12-29-2018



The Rev. Jan Smith Wood has served Grace Episcopal Church for about seven years.

Exterior of Grace Episcopal Church



A labyrinth is available for anyone needing to walk and reflect.

SANDUSKY

Since its inception, community service is how Grace Episcopal Church has shown its love for the area.

In March 1835, two Episcopalians, Rhoda Camp and brother Zenas Barker, met with Congregationalists and Masons at a home of a Unitarian to organize a local Episcopal church. Soon, a small stone building was built and later expanded. “The parish grew to include three missions, on the south, east, and west sides of the city, with chapels and church schools,” the church’s website states.

Grace Episcopal Church, at 315 Wayne St., is credited with helping found a number of Sandusky entities, including the former Good Samaritan Hospital, which merged with other hospitals to form Firelands Regional Medical Center; Safe Harbor Domestic Violence shelter, Kinship, an agency focusing on child abuse and neglect prevention and providing a place for Sandusky’s first Head Start early learning program.

Today, the church partners and supports with Care and Share, Kinship, Community Youth Mentors, Michael’s House and Bridges to Opportunity, which assists people transition from poverty to self-sufficiency.

A community meal is offered from 4:30-5:30 p.m. two Saturdays a month at the church and members operate a thrift shop nearby at 301 E. Market St., which has clothing and household items, which opened in 1948.

Grace Episcopal Church also annually gives grants to local entities.

“All of our outreach is rooted in being a good neighbor to reach the community and about opening ourselves up to the community,” said the Rev. Jan Smith Wood, who leads the church. “We believe very strongly that God’s love includes everyone and to show that love. That’s the vocation and that’s why Jesus came to live amongst us, to say you are loved. We’re here to tell that good news and be that good news.”

Worship services are offered at 8 and 10 a.m. Sundays and 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays. A Bible study takes place between Sundays services at 9 a.m. Grace Episcopal's congregation, made up of about 80 people, is "a wonderful collection of people who grew up in church, are new to Christianity, and are of various ages, backgrounds and professions."

"It's an incredibly friendly congregation," Wood said. "They take hospitality seriously and feeding others seriously. They're open to new people and to watch out for one another."

Wood, born and raised in southern California, came to Sandusky from Berkley to pastor the church in 2011. She's loved seeing downtown Sandusky grow and develop. "Ohio has something for the larger community," she said. "Sandusky is a wonderful place."

Grace Episcopal Church is also a staunch supporter of the arts, having a choir and a bell choir who practice often and will host an organ concert in the spring. The church hosts art shows for area artists to display their work. "The arts are vital how we worship God and how we can be fully human," Wood said. "We do what we can to support that and be that."

Looking ahead to the new year, Wood anticipates more action to serve the Sandusky community. "We'll continue to connect with our neighbors to see how we can help Sandusky to be all that it could be in terms of justice, kindness and companionship," she said.



Get to know Grace Episcopal Church

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