

# *Membership Guidelines for Grace Church (Anglican)*

Grace Church is one parish composed of two congregations worshipping at different sites.

## *Mount Washington Congregation*

319 West Sycamore Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15211-1539  
412/381-6020

## *Edgeworth Congregation*

Shields' Chapel, 325 Church Lane  
Edgeworth, PA 15143  
412/741-1676  
Parish website: [www.gracepgh.org](http://www.gracepgh.org)

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

Who we are, what we stand for, and why we exist  
*We are a high-church Anglican parish  
that worships with the classic prayer-book liturgy of Holy  
Eucharist, proclaims Jesus Christ alone as the "Way, the Truth,  
and the Life," and stands firm for the Faith founded on Holy  
Scripture and set forth in the Creeds.*

*Our threefold purpose is to spread the gospel of God's redeeming  
and transforming love; to build up "the one holy Catholic and  
Apostolic Church"; and to make disciples for our Lord.*

## *A WORD FROM THE RECTOR*

*"Come and see—Follow and grow—Go and tell!"*

Here at Grace Church, we are focused on fulfilling our Lord's "Great Commission" to "make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19). As Catholic Christians, we believe that Holy Baptism is indeed the beginning of the Christian journey of discipleship, which continues as we "come and see," "follow and grow," "go and tell."

"Coming and seeing" is something we do every Sunday morning in response to the gracious invitation of Jesus (John 1:39), who desires to reveal himself to us in the Liturgy, through the Gospel, at the Altar, and by means of his Mystical Body, the Church. "Following and growing" is what we're about during the week, whether at church or at home, as we pray, study, and serve for the building up of the Church and the extension of God's Kingdom. "Going and telling" is both our duty and our privilege as we seek to share with others, by word and deed, the good news of the Gospel, that they too may come and see.

We see ourselves as a community of pilgrims seeking intimacy with God, living by faith in Jesus our Savior. The Holy Scriptures direct us, the sacraments equip us, corporate worship and devotion light our path. On our journey, we welcome all pilgrims to join and serve with us in furthering the Kingdom of God. If you are a seeker or newcomer, we hope you'll consider making Grace your church home.

Faithfully yours,

Fr. John A. Porter

## INTRODUCTION

Grace Church belongs to that part of Christ's universal Church which is called The Anglican Communion. Until 2008, we were part of The Province of the Episcopal Church in the United States, but we are now affiliated with The Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, which covers the southern part of Latin America. We hope soon to be transferred, as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, to the newly-forming Anglican Province of North America.

The Anglican Communion is world-wide and serves as a "bridge" denomination between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Anglicans do not claim to be the only true Church; rather, we see ourselves as part of the "one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" described in the ancient creeds of the Christian faith. This Church is apostolic in that her bishops are in the continuous line of succession from the twelve Apostles; she is catholic because she upholds the doctrines of the universal and undivided Church as declared in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and by the early Ecumenical Councils; she is holy because of the Holy Spirit's work within her, in spite of human sin and corruption; and she is one because she unites all the baptized in Christ's mystical Body.

Membership in the Church catholic is, first of all, union with Christ himself through faith and baptism. This is the indispensable basis on which one comes to "belong" to a local church.

Your baptism is automatically registered at Grace when you either (1) are baptized here, (2) are confirmed by the bishop or "received" by him into the Anglican Communion, or (3) have your letter of membership transferred from another Anglican parish with whom we are in a relationship of full communion.

## BECOMING A MEMBER OF GRACE CHURCH

If you have not been baptized, **HOLY BAPTISM** is the means by which you become a member of both the universal Church, which is Christ's Body, and of Grace Church, which is its local manifestation. The requirements of those who desire to be baptized are two: that they (1) repent of their sins, and (2) believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. If you desire baptism, you should present yourself to the rector, who will receive you as a "catechumen," or one who is preparing to be baptized. The period of preparation can last anywhere from a few weeks to a year. Baptisms are traditionally administered on one of the following four feasts: the Great Vigil of Easter (spring), Pentecost (summer), All Saints' (fall), and the Baptism of Our Lord (winter), but can be held for good reason on any Sunday.

Like adults, infants and young children become members of the church through baptism, when they are presented by baptized and believing parents and godparents (older children speak for themselves). A somewhat briefer period of preparation for the sponsors of infants and young children is required.

If you have been baptized with water "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" in any other church, your baptism is recognized at Grace. As a baptized person, apart from any other sacramental or quasi-sacramental rite like confirmation or reception, and without a letter of transfer, you become a member of this church by having the date and place of your baptism entered into our parish register, and providing us (if possible) with a copy of your original baptismal certificate.

Baptism entitles you to the privileges of membership in Christ's Body, chief among which are the other Sacraments, or "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ."

## *THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH*

The baptized are eligible to make use of the following sacramental "means of grace."

**HOLY EUCHARIST.** Along with Baptism, Eucharist is a so-called "gospel sacrament," clearly instituted by Christ himself. Both are understood to be "generally necessary for salvation." The only pre-requisites for receiving Holy Communion, other than baptism, are (1) careful examination of self, leading to confession, and (2) charity with all. Baptized children may receive communion at any age at the discretion of their parents.

**CONFIRMATION.** This is the sacrament of Christian maturity. Adults are often confirmed by a bishop soon after their baptism; in the case of infants and younger children, confirmation is delayed until they are old enough (usually at least ten years of age) to assume informed and responsible ownership of the baptismal vows previously taken for them by their sponsors. Those joining the church who have already been confirmed by a bishop in apostolic succession are encouraged to be "received" by the bishop into the Anglican Communion.

**PENANCE (OR RECONCILIATION).** This is sacramental confession, made in confidence to a priest. It is not mandatory. The Anglican rule is "all may, none must, some should." Our corporate act of confession in the Sunday liturgy pre-supposes individual self-examination and confession of sins to God.

**HOLY UNCTION.** When any baptized person is sick or hospitalized for surgery, or in need of any kind of healing, whether physical, mental, or emotional, the priest may anoint with sacramental oil. Unlike the traditional "last rites" (which are also provided), this is repeatable as often as desired.

**HOLY MATRIMONY.** With the understanding that marriage is between one man and one woman, any baptized adult may marry in the church, subject to certain ecclesiastical and civil requirements. A period of at least six months' preparation is normally necessary, during which the couple meet regularly with the priest for pre-marital direction. Weddings may take place at any time during the year except in the Season of Lent.

**HOLY ORDERS.** This is ordination to ministerial function and leadership. Any of the baptized who, after considerable time of reflection, senses a call to Holy Orders should make this known to the rector, who may initiate a prescribed process of discernment. While women may be "ordered" to the diaconate, this parish adheres to the catholic tradition of an exclusively male priesthood; consequently, women who have been given priestly ordination are welcome to worship with us, but will be neither permitted nor asked to exercise a sacerdotal role.

### **ADDITIONAL RITES**

The **BLESSING** of homes (especially when they are newly occupied), animals, or objects with holy water and/or incense is a rite that is offered to all members of the church.

A class in preparation for **RE-AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS** before the bishop is periodically offered on Sunday mornings and is especially recommended for new members.

**RENEWAL OF WEDDING VOWS** is offered to married couples, particularly on or near special anniversaries of their wedding.

**BURIAL** from the church is provided for all the baptized, preferably in the form of a Requiem Mass. Especially in their advanced years, members are encouraged to complete a funeral directive form available from the office, and to remember the church in their last will and testament.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF MEMBERS

Members of Grace Church are expected to participate fully in the life of the parish. At the heart of this participation is attendance at Sunday Eucharist, the gathering of all the faithful on the first day of the week to celebrate the Feast of the Resurrection through praise, prayer, hearing God's Word, and receiving the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. A "communicant member" is one who receives the Sacrament at least three times during the year, but this is a bare minimum requirement. Ideally, members should "communicate" regularly, if not every week, and on major feasts of the Church's calendar.

As a baptized member of the parish, you are strongly encouraged to avail yourself (and your family) of opportunities to grow in faith, grace, and discipleship. Sunday school classes are offered for both adults and children throughout the year, small groups meet during the week, and there are frequent opportunities for service, both within the church and in the wider community.

The Prayer Book encourages the baptized to "work, pray, and give for the spread of Christ's Kingdom." Members are therefore expected to contribute not only of their time and talent, but also of their treasure. Prior to our Annual Parish Meeting in November, pledge cards are distributed (they are available at any time of the year), and the following year's operating budget is determined by the amount of income that our members pledge to commit.

The Biblical standard for giving is the "tithe," a ten-percent share (also known as the "first-fruits") of your earnings, given to God to support the mission and ministry of the church. The practice of tithing is urged for all members, but is treated as a matter between you and the Lord.

## *CANONICAL PRIVILEGES AND REQUIREMENTS*

As a member of the parish, you are entitled to both voice and vote at our Annual Parish Meeting, held immediately following the liturgy on a Sunday in early November.

To exercise this right, however, you must be certified as a "member in good standing." According to Article II, Section 1 of the Parish By-Laws, this means that you must be (1) at least eighteen years of age, (2) a communicant (receiving holy communion at least three times during the preceding year), (3) "recognized by the rector and wardens as a regular attender of services," and (4) "on the Treasurer's records as a regular subscriber to the revenues of this parish of one year."

If you meet these requirements, you are eligible to (1) speak to any matter that comes before the annual parish meeting (or any other duly called meeting of the parish membership), (2) vote on amendments to the parish by-laws or corporate charter, and (3) cast a secret ballot in vestry elections. You are also eligible to stand for election to the vestry (which is the governing body of the parish), if your name is placed in nomination in advance by another member and seconded by at least two members of the parish.

Taking all these things into consideration, should you decide to make Grace Church your parish, we ask that you (1) speak to the rector to arrange for a conference about joining us, and (2) fill out and return to us the enclosed "Information Form," which provides us with necessary contact information and enables us to add your name and those of your family to our prayer lists.

*If the Lord has given you the will to do these things,  
may he also give you the grace to perform them.*