

Grace Episcopal Church

Sterling, Illinois

*"We seek to embody the love
of God in Christ and share
that love with others."*

***Worship
Healing
Teaching
Service***

Welcome

Worship



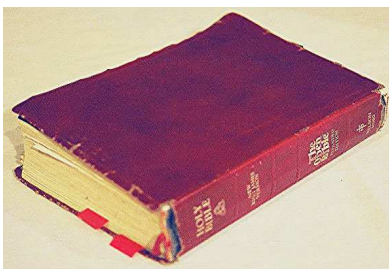
Our worship together at Grace Church is the center of our life, both as a parish and personally as members of God's people. We have worked hard to make it the best we can offer in liturgy and preaching. Worship is now one of our principal strengths.

The Eucharist is celebrated each Sunday at 8:30 a.m. This is especially helpful when the community gathers for feast days and special celebrations.

The Christmas Eve and Easter Vigil services are normally followed by a reception. Special services and study are also held during Lent and Holy Week.

We are open to examining the times and styles of worship in order to improve them and to better meet the needs of our community.

Christian Education



Christian education is an integral part of life at Grace. Since our parish currently comprises mostly adults, our formal Christian Education program focuses on our adult parishioners. It is our goal to reestablish our church school.

Bible study has been a weekly program conducted periodically during the year with special focus during Christmas, Lent, and Holy Week. Classes were held after church in addition to Thursday mornings.

Parish Demographics



Grace Church has 40 active members.

Average Sunday attendance in mid-

September was 31 parishioners.

Our parish is representative of the community's ethnic composition.

Members are diverse in background, employment, and life style. We have an excellent talent pool at Grace.

Staff, Vestry and Committees



Vestry – The leadership of the parish is comprised of the Rector and the Vestry. The Vestry consists of the Rector as Chair, two wardens (designated as Senior and Junior), and six members. The terms of the members are staggered in three-year terms.

The vestry appoints the Clerk and Parish Treasurer. These officials are ex officio although they fully participate in vestry meetings.

Committees – Grace Church has the following active committees: Executive Committee, Parish Life Committee, Altar Guild, and Grace Gardeners.

Parish Finances

Grace Church has a budget of \$117,500 for 2006, including pledged income of \$43,390 and memorial pledges of \$30,000. Other miscellaneous monies include interest, plate offerings, and unpledged income.

The bulk of the annual income of the church is used for salaries and benefits for our rector, a part-time administrator/secretary, and an organist.

The annual pledge to the diocese is currently \$7,000 and \$31,900 provides for miscellaneous items associated with the physical church property.

Seventy-eight percent of our members have pledged financially. Our financial stewardship is multiplied by generous donations of time and talents from our parishioners by participating in our services and activities, and serving on church committees.



Our Community



Sterling Mural Society: Mural 3—Sterling Hydraulic Company
Artist—Dan Sawatzky, 1996

Sterling and Rock Falls are located in northwestern Illinois just off Interstate 88. They are situated on the banks of the Rock River and enjoy access to several larger urban areas.

Chicago is 114 miles east. The Quad Cities of Moline, Rock Island, Davenport, and Bettendorf are 60 miles west and Rockford is 60 miles northeast.

The city of Sterling’s population as of the 2000 census is 15,451 and the surrounding area within a 12-mile radius exceeds 58,000. Rock Falls is just across the river and has approximately 9,580 residents. The median age is 36.2 with the following distribution:

<18	28%
19-24	6.5%
25-54	40.7%
55-64	8.2%
>64	16.6%

Sterling’s school system is highly rated in academics, facilities, and after school programs. There is an overall teacher to student ratio of 16 to 1. There are also three area parochial schools. There are four 4-year colleges within about an hour’s drive and the area is served locally by Sauk Valley Community College located between Sterling and Dixon.

Two area hospitals, an outpatient surgical center, and two medical clinics offer medical resources to meet the community’s health care needs.

Sterling and Rock Falls offer a diverse selection of recreational activities. The area boasts three 18-hole golf courses, a bike path, and 20 parks and indoor/outdoor recreational facilities.

Cultural events include local theater and concerts. The Woodlawn Arts Academy is a local organization offering arts education to the young people of this area.

Many opportunities for volunteerism exist. Clubs and organizations welcome new members and volunteers to the community.

The area's largest employers are schools and CGH Medical Center. With the loss of our local industries, the Sterling-Rock Falls area is reinventing and diversifying its employment opportunities.

Our Parish History

In the late 1830s, the Episcopal Church came to what we now call the Sauk Valley to establish Saint Luke's parish in Dixon. This was one of the earlier outreaches of the Episcopal Church in northern Illinois, and it was with the support of Saint Luke's that Episcopalians began to gather for organized worship services in Sterling in the 1840s.

The original Grace Episcopal Church, Sterling, was built at the corner of Fourth Street and First Avenue in 1864. In its first century of life, Grace Church went through several cycles of activity, growth, and decline. Repairs and additions were made to the building in the 1920. However, by the latter part of World War II, the structure was in significant disrepair and its size was beyond the needs of the congregation at that time.

The community decided to move on to a new phase of life, and for several years worshiped in different locations, including the experience of "house church." The cornerstone of our present building at First Avenue was laid in 1947; first services were held there in 1948. Taken as a whole since that time to present, worship attendance levels have been fairly constant.



The influence of the Oxford movement has been notable at Grace Church since the end of the nineteenth century. Until the 1960s, the typical tenure of clergy at the parish was fairly short – one to three years. The ministry of Father William Willoughby, who served as Rector from 1960 to 1983, both departed from the pattern of short ministries and focused Grace Church’s experience of the “Anglo-Catholic” tradition. Like many Episcopal congregations in the early 1960s, Grace underwent a time of heightened growth and activity. Our educational wing was built and the pipe organ installed.

Since Father Willoughby, we have had four called rectors and two interim rectors. Over our history, we have experienced times of controversy and upheaval. At this time, our community is most united and peaceful as ever.

In 2001, during the tenure of Pastor Judy Jones, Grace was linked to Saint Luke’s, Dixon, in a joint ministry relationship. That relationship has been terminated.



Under our most recent Priest-in-Charge, Verna Fair, we have refocused our liturgy on scripture; reemphasized the importance of preaching; and experimented with the more open styles of worship.

Grace Church owns Grace House and the rectory. Grace House houses the offices of the Good Neighbor Center, an organization that tries to help those in need with housing, food, transportation and referrals for medical needs. Groups such as Al Anon often use our church for meetings. Our beautiful rectory is well maintained and ready for occupancy.

Attached is our newly formulated Strategic Plan which was designed with the intentions of energizing the membership.



Diocese of Chicago

The Diocese of Chicago incorporates a wide diversity of perspective. Both a progressive spirit and an on-going appreciation for catholic experience characterize it. The Diocese is comprised of 22 counties in the northern third of Illinois. It stretches from Lake Michigan on the east to the Mississippi River on the west. The northern boundary is the state of Wisconsin; the southernmost city is Watseka.

Chicago is among the 12 largest dioceses in the country. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold was Bishop of the Diocese of Chicago before his election as Presiding Bishop. The Diocese is dependent on voluntary giving by its 137 congregations, of which 36 are missions. Paralleling declining national memberships, the Chicago diocese has seen a disheartening decline with 33,622 communicants in 1991 but only 28,093 in 1996.

The Diocese is rich in its ethnic and racial diversity. There are four Hispanic congregations, one of which is located in the near western suburbs. In addition, four congregations outside Chicago provide Spanish language services, and two others share their facilities with congregations of the Philippine Independent Church. There is one Korean American congregation, and the Diocese is blessed with eight African-American congregations, one of which has an affordable housing program that has received national attention.

Expectations and Challenges



We know it is easy to ask a priest to help with congregational development and church growth, but that it is impossible to accomplish these tasks without the parish's willingness to be flexible and to make the changes necessary to accomplish these goals. We are encouraged by parish response to change but know that the next rector will need to provide the leadership to convert good intentions to realities. We would challenge our next rector to help us develop lay leaders and lay ministries and assist us in making those changes that will foster church growth. We also would like to incorporate new members more effectively into parish life.

Our Christian education program, especially for children and youth, is in need of leadership and development. This program needs to be built again from scratch. The truth is we have few children and youth who participate, and we lose families as a result. Our adult programs have a loyal following.

We look forward to a Rector who is both a team player and someone to whom we can give real initiative in leadership.

We look for a priest who will serve among us as a powerful expression of Christ, the Word Incarnate, and who will help us to make that same Word ever more evident in this place and in our lives.

From Our Website

www.gracechurchstg.com



Dear Friends,

During Mass one Sunday, we were asked to fill out a simple questionnaire that had only three questions --- questions that impact our lives every day and in countless and diverse ways. We would like to share some of our responses with you.

I attend Grace Church because...

...I feel that God is with us.

...My faith is strengthened.

...We have a beautiful liturgical service.

...The people at Grace Church have a loving and welcoming nature.

...I enjoy it!

...It feels like home.

Other people should attend Grace Church because..

...They will feel welcome.

...They will leave feeling good.

...They will have their spiritual needs met.

...They need something that they will be able to find here.

...With God's help, we support each other in good times and in bad.

...The people here are gracious and accepting.

Being a Christian has made my life...

...More livable and enjoyable.

...More rewarding.

...Complete. It has been the source of **many** blessings.

...Serene.

...Better.

You are invited to attend any worship service and event that we have on our schedule, as you search for your perfect church "home."

Thank you for visiting Grace Church. Please let us know if you have any questions. We hope that you will be able to visit in person.

The Grace Church Family



Summary

All people are welcome here! Grace Church, the Episcopal parish located in Sterling/Rock Falls, Illinois, serves a diverse community of faith. Our vision is to be the best an Episcopal Church can be. We are an inclusive, progressive congregation, holding fast to the best traditions of the past and willing to explore the new places God is leading us today and tomorrow.

We would like Grace Church to be a place where we strive to become known outside our parish community as a place where hospitality and care for each other is practiced both within the parish family and offered to visitors and newcomers.

Active participation of the congregation (*servers, lectors, greeters, lay Eucharistic ministers, choir, altar guild*) is central to our worship.



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