



# *the* **Anchor**



An inclusive, spirited, and Christ-centered urban church community that transforms lives

· Mission and Outreach · Spring 2017 ·

*Dear Friends,*

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to serve, not to be served, and he commanded his disciples to follow his example (Matthew 20:20-28). While we are all enriched and uplifted by being active members of a church, the church exists, not simply for itself, but for the world. Grace Church and Holy Trinity Church, both founded in the 19th Century, along with Grace and Holy Trinity Church, which was founded in the 20th Century, have all been guided by Jesus' call to love and to serve. It is our privilege to keep this tradition alive and thriving in the 21st Century.

By our service, we become sacraments of the kingdom, outward and visible signs of God's grace for all creation. In our service we are signposts, pointing to the Last Great Day, when "death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more ..." (Revelation 21:4). Service carries us into the heart of the gospel.

This issue of The Anchor highlights some of the many ways that Grace and Holy Trinity Church answers Jesus' call and serves in the world. The articles explore service from a personal perspective, provide a history of service in the parish, highlight some of our current programs, and discuss our newest initiative—Circles RVA. I commend them all to you.



*In Christ, Bo Millner*

# The FOUNDATIONS of SERVICE

Grace and Holy Trinity Church has long been known for its compassion for others, and for its work in outreach. More than just as individuals, we work as a church community both for and with those on the margins of society.

In *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, which GHTC read together for Lent, Bryan Stevenson, says:

*Finally, I've come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned. We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation.*

In an interview in the aftermath of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963, Reinhold Niebuhr, American theologian and ethicist, said "Love is the motive, but justice is the instrument."

Our yearning for love, mercy, and justice comes from God. It is seen throughout the Bible, certainly in the life and ministry of Jesus, but also, surprisingly, to many people in the Old Testament as well.

What was God's first act of mercy toward humankind? It's not a well-known biblical incident. In fact, it's relegated to a single verse. In Genesis 3:21, we read that after expelling Eve and Adam from Paradise, "the Lord God sewed garments of skins for the man and his wife, and clothed them." These first articles of clothing were a sign of God's protective care for his creatures, even at the moment of judgment, as God became a tailor to Adam and Eve.

Ever since, God has commanded that we humans care for our fellow creatures in similar

manner. Thus says the Lord, speaking through his prophet Micah in the 8th verse of chapter 6: "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Chapters 17-26 in the Old Testament book of Leviticus are usually referred to as the "Holiness Code." They are marked by a concern for holy living on the part of the people as well as a concern with sacrificial systems and ritual purity.

The holy living to which the Holiness Code calls the people is to be exemplified in all areas of life—economic, social, sexual, and familial. Look at some of the laws from Leviticus:

*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God. (23:22)*

*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (19:18)*

*You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. (19:15)*

*When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (19:33-34)*

*If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. (25:39)*

This is righteousness, a concept that runs all through the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, the prophets and the psalms. The Hebrew word is "yesha," which also means salvation. The masculine form of this noun describes what God has done or will do for us. God saves us out of sheer grace; consequently, we are now called to bear the fruit of righteousness. As Genesis 1:26 says, the Creator God made us in his own image, meaning that we are created to do what God does. *Yesha*, rooted in our deepest inner selves, compels and empowers us to show *yeshu'ah* (feminine form)—God's saving love—to all people.

Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching in the gospels add to the Old Testament story. He announced God's kingdom in new and powerful ways by focusing on love, mercy, and justice. Jesus's acts of justice involve not only healing the hurting but also confronting those who have been doing the hurting. Because Jesus is our model for service to each other and to the poor, it is interesting to look at the influences that shaped his human experience as a young person in an observant Hebrew family and community.

Jesus grew to manhood in the devout home of Mary and Joseph. On Sabbath after Sabbath, he could be found in the Nazareth synagogue. On these days and in the festival pilgrimages to Jerusalem, he absorbed the teaching about *yesha* and *hesed*, variously translated as God's mercy, goodness, love, or loving-kindness. It's hardly surprising, then, to read that when asked about the greatest commandment, he responded with verses from Exodus and Leviticus:

*The first is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength. The second is, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12: 29-31)*

"The Lord is one." In essence, the two commandments are one. To do the first, to love God and neighbor, is to do the second, and vice versa. For Christians, love is not so much an emotion as it is an act of will. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, he is not talking about a cozy emotional feeling. He means that our love for our neighbors is "being willing to work for their well-being even if it means sacrificing our own well-being to that end." (*Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*, by Frederick Buechner) Justice for ourselves must translate into justice for all.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see that God seeks out the poor, the lowly, the least likely to win; Jacob, the scoundrel; Abraham and Sarah, ordinary people; David, the youngest and the smallest; and in the New Testament, a poor teenager named Mary, who embraced the angel's message and proclaimed: "(God) has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:46-55)

Luke, particularly among the gospels, sides with God in this preference for the poor and the outcast by emphasizing it in Jesus' life and message. In Chapter 4, this is the focus of Jesus' first teaching, as he sits and reads from the prophet Isaiah (61): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor."

But Jesus doesn't just *teach* God's preference for the poor. He embodies it in his life. Look at where he is and who he's with, and you will understand who Jesus is.

So what are we to do with this biblical imperative—this Jesus, who demands love, justice, and care for others?

Jesus leads us to re-order how we live our lives, making the model of his life our lives. He tells us not to be so preoccupied with our possessions or our stature that we fail to respond to God's outstretched hand offering love for all, or that we fail to stretch out our hands to others. The way he calls us to go is no more consistent with the way of the culture today than it was 2000 years ago. We decide how we will influence the world by choosing whether we spread hatred, fear, division, and ill-will; or choose love, generosity, justice, and compassion.

*O Lord our heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be ministered unto but to minister: Bless, we beseech thee, all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, the same thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

—The Book of Common Prayer

**The Rev. Bruce Birdsey & Carolyn M. Chilton**



# CIRCLES RVA and the ROAD OUT OF POVERTY

**W**hat if, no matter how hard you tried, you never had enough money, couldn't make any headway at your work, if you had work, or get reliable care for your kids so you could be reliable yourself? What if you got hurt on your job so you couldn't keep the job, and fell into a pit of debt and unpaid medical bills while you were recovering? What if you grew up with nothing, had never lived anywhere that wasn't disheartening, and you knew you could do better, be better, and dig yourself out of the poverty you had never seen outside of before, but life seemed like just one setback after another, and you just didn't have any idea how?

Most of us have faced some kind of life-de-railing situation at least once or twice in our lives. Too many of us think we accomplished damage control on our own. But the truth is, we did not. The difference between us and so many who live in poverty and can't find a way out is not a matter of will or of character. When we were in trouble, we knew who to call. We had sympathetic allies to soothe our wounded pride, words to express our troubles, and access to resources to support us until we could mobilize our considerable skills and get back on our feet. And if the problem couldn't be solved, we had some kind of actual or spiritual cushion to protect us against ruin or despair, and to make it possible for us to heal.

So with that understanding, Grace & Holy Trinity Church has stepped up our already considerable commitment to alleviating the effects of poverty in Richmond by collaborating with the wider community of private and public organizations participating in Circles RVA. It's the local chapter of a national volunteer-centered, relationship-based model dedicated to helping break the cycle of poverty through community, empowerment and transformation, based on twenty years of research and a track record of measurable success.

Here is some illuminating information from the Circles USA website about a situation that keeps many people in the hole:

*In 2014, the Circles network was asked what is the biggest barrier to getting out of poverty. The answer was unequivocally the Cliff Effect ... The Cliff Effect occurs when assistance programs like childcare subsidies and Medicaid remove benefits faster than people can earn enough income to replace them. By not pro-rating the exit ramp to these programs, the government creates a financial crisis for people as they earn more income.*

*The Cliff Effect creates an enormous "phantom workforce" ... — people who could work, need to work, and want to work but won't because they can't afford to lose benefits for childcare and health insurance.*

Circles offers a unique strategy that works at both individual and community levels, both to empower motivated low-income participants and their families to move permanently from poverty into economic stability, AND to persuade community leaders and major sectors of the community to take collective action to resolve systemic barriers, like the programs that vanish too soon, blocking the path of low-income individuals toward economic stability.

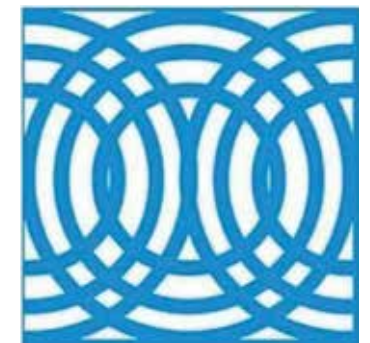
Here's how the program works. The model creates a Circle centered on someone living at 150% or less of the federal poverty guideline who wants to move out of poverty and is not in crisis. People suffering active addiction, homelessness, or continuing domestic abuse need much different interventions and help, and wouldn't be in a position to start the rigorous nature of change required with the model. The low-income person is the Circle Leader. From the start, the model expresses its respect and faith by putting him or her at the center of the process.

The rest of each Circle is made up of volunteer Circle Allies and Resource Teams who mentor and support the Circle Leader, beginning with identifying problems, defining goals, and creating workable life plans. These Allies stay with the Leader for the duration, engaging their connections and knowledge to build the financial, emotional and social resources that can replace the

losses suffered from roadblocks like the Cliff Effect, and that build and support economic stability.

It's an ambitious idea, and it can sound a lot like pie in the sky. It isn't. What makes this program successful is its foundation in years of solid research. The Leaders complete a requisite twelve-week training curriculum, which equips them for their journey by instilling the discipline, motivation and relationship-building tools they will need. The volunteer Allies and Resource Teams are also formally trained before the Circles become active, and are continually coached on how to build healthy relationships with Circle Leaders and their families. Training emphasizes that all relationships are based on mutual respect, where everyone has the opportunity to give back to others in some meaningful way.

"Circles doesn't replace the compassionate ministries that are already in place," says Kim Vullo, who serves as executive director of Circles RVA. "It's not about teaching the Leaders to be anyone but themselves. Instead, it's an opportunity for Allies and Leaders to reach across socioeconomic and cultural lines, to grow as humans, doing the heavy lifting, and learning to understand and accept the validity of decisions other than their own."



The volunteers' primary aim is to bring the strength of social connections into each Circle Leader's plan. That can mean identifying and collaborating with area programs, gaining access to resources, navigating bureaucracies, leveraging social networks — whatever steps are needed to meet the Leader's personal goals. This concept of bridging social capital is a foundational element in Circles' theory of change. The model does not permit direct financial assistance to Circle Leaders. For Circle USA chapters, a successful program outcome is reached when a Circle Leader achieves an income equal to 200% of the poverty level, which is considered a living wage.

To become a chapter of the national organization, Circles RVA must raise \$25,000. Starting the first Circle Leaders class requires that 100 volunteers be recruited and in place. They are currently more than halfway to those goals. There is a place for anyone interested, helping cook and serve a meal just one time, or committing several hours every week to become an Ally, or providing financial support to the program.

For the national website for Circles USA, go to <http://www.circlesusa.org/>. For more information about Circles RVA, including information about volunteering and contributing, go to [www.circlesrva.org](http://www.circlesrva.org), contact the leadership at [CirclesRVA@gmail.com](mailto:CirclesRVA@gmail.com), or buttonhole one of the many GHTC parishioners committed to the success of the Circles mission. They are Mary Ann Blankenship, John Chilton, Maurice Cole, Mary Lindert, Dawn McNamara, Wayne Johnson, or Kim Vullo, who is serving as Circles RVA's executive director.

**Ann Norvell Gray & Mary Lindert**





# MISSION, THEN and NOW

The Catechism says that the mission of the Episcopal Church “is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” This definition was introduced into the Catechism in 1979, but the mission of the Church can be traced back to 1607. The words do not limit the means of achieving the desired end and are elastic enough to wrap around mission as it was originally practiced and as it is practiced now, although they are not quite the same.

## Mission Then

*Wee, greatly commending and graciously accepting of their desires to the furtherance of soe noble a worke which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tende to the glorie of His Divine Majestie in propagating of Christian religion to suche people as yet live in darknesse and miserable ignorance of the true knoweledge and worshippe of God and may in tyme bring the infidels and salvages living in those parts to humane civilitie and to a settled and quiet govermente, doe by theise our lettres patents graciously accepte of and agree to their humble and well intended desires. . . .*

King James I, First Charter of the Virginia Company, 1606

Being amenable to these hopeful sentiments, the “adventurers” of the Virginia Company recruited to the 1607 expedition a chaplain, the Rev. Robert Hunt, a vicar of Church of England (CoE), who the two months after the Jamestown settlers’ landing on an uninhabited island in a nameless river, celebrated the first recorded CoE Eucharist in the New World. He is honored on April 26 by a feast day in the Episcopal Church calendar.

Rev. Hunt died in 1608 and was buried in the church he founded. He did not live long enough to convert any “infidels and salvages.” He was followed in the colony by Rev. Alexander Whitaker, the “Apostle of Virginia,” who is commonly believed to have officiated at the celebrity baptism of Pocahontas. He may also have baptized Chanco, a converted Indian who is said to have warned the Jamestown settlers of the impending 1622 massacre. There are few other known or apocryphal converts.

The Jamestown settlers were all CoE, in no need of conversion, and Rev. Hunt’s mission was to provide a church for them. The CoE had no mission statement in those days (it still doesn’t)



*“The Baptism of Pocahontas” by John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889).*

and mission, in the context of religion, meant only spreading the faith by the founding of churches and by converting and baptizing. The number of CoE parishes in the New World increased as a result of migration and aggregation of English colonists who were CoE communicants. Mission was passive. Calls for priests were eventually heard by the home Church and missionaries were sent. Converting and baptizing may have been inspirational for some of the missionaries, but it was clearly of secondary importance, and not very successful in any event.

Mission was easier in colonies like Virginia, where CoE was the established Church. It was aided, but not particularly spiritually,<sup>1</sup> by the prestige of establishment, which resulted in support from royal governors and wealthy planters, and by legislated financial support in the form of mandatory tithes and governmentally distributed glebe lands.<sup>2</sup> But being the King’s Church was of no help of any kind in colonies whose Roman Catholic or Nonconformist settlers had fled religious oppression and persecution in England.

Possibly because of difficulties at home,<sup>3</sup> the 17th Century CoE, and for different reasons<sup>4</sup> the early 18th Century CoE, did not support mission in the colonies well. Its greatest failing was its failure to provide bishops, thus stunting the growth of an indigenous clergy. Ordination by the Bishop of London entailed a long, expensive and dangerous trans-Atlantic round trip. The scarcity of bishops continued throughout the colonial period, until the matter was taken out of the CoE’s hands by the American Revolution. Were it not for The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), CoE in the colonies might have failed altogether.

This remarkable enterprise was a voluntary society organized entirely by churchmen but independent of the CoE, and took charge of mission

in the New World. Between its chartering in 1701 and 1776, it maintained 310 ordained missionaries, a number that compares favorably with the fewer than 300 CoE parishes existing in the colonies at the latter date. SPG efforts at converting unbelievers, generally Indians and African slaves, were characteristically neither as vigorous nor as effective.

The American Revolution ended the CoE in America. Creating out of its remnants, in a hostile milieu, a new church that preserved its episcopal form, and ensuring the survival of that Church, left little energy for mission during the decades following the General Convention of 1789. But mission was never completely out of sight. In the early 19th Century, the demand for mission resulting from the country’s westward growth was supplied by private, voluntary societies and local dioceses. In the early 1820s, the General Convention created a missionary society and named it “The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” (Missionary Society). Originally it was a voluntary society. Except for clergy, who were ipso facto members, membership cost \$3 annually.

Because of a general lack of enthusiasm for it, the Missionary Society as originally constituted made little progress. In 1832 there were only 251 paying members, and although the Church’s first foreign mission had been opened in Greece (where, it was reported, “a corrupt form of Christianity prevails”), it was the Church’s only foreign mission, and it did not attempt to proselytize.<sup>5</sup> The American west was largely neglected.

The General Convention of 1835 made three significant changes, which suggests that the Church had learned from mistakes evident in the mission of the CoE. In any event, the Convention put Church mission on the right track.

First, it transformed the Missionary Society from a society of which Episcopalians were eligible to become members because they were Episcopalians, into one of which Episcopalians are members because they are Episcopalians.<sup>6</sup> Mission

<sup>1</sup> Robert “King” Carter, of the Northern Neck, the wealthiest of all planters, built Christ Church, Weems (1735), at the end of a cedar-lined road leading from his mansion, and is buried there. His grandson, Robert “Councilor” Carter, III, left the CoE, became a Baptist and eventually a Swedenborgian, joined a mixed-race Baptist congregation and is famous for his Deed of Gift (1791) that freed more than 500 slaves.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps as a result of establishment, in 2014, the Diocese of Virginia was #1 among all domestic dioceses with 182 parishes and missions and 77,377 active baptized members, and those numbers do not include parishes, missions and members in territory that was once part of Colonial Virginia.

<sup>3</sup> The English Civil War, the execution of Charles I, by which both he and the CoE lost their heads, the Protec-

torate of the Cromwells that followed the Civil War, and Restoration of a crypto-Roman Catholic to the English throne.

torate of the Cromwells that followed the Civil War, and Restoration of a crypto-Roman Catholic to the English throne.

Second, the missionary field was declared to be “THE WORLD,” and “domestic” and “foreign” merely designations of convenience. Third, the office of missionary bishop was created. By this action, the Church reversed the passivity of CoE mission. A missionary bishop, in the words of the Bishop of New Jersey, was “a bishop sent forth by the Church, not sought for by the Church; going before to organize the Church, not waiting till the Church has partially been organized; a leader not a follower, in the march of the Redeemer’s conquering and triumphant Gospel . . . sent by the Church, even as the Church is sent by Christ.”

After the General Convention of 1835, “the whole Church began to be pervaded by a true missionary Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> But mission post-1835 was continually hobbled by lack of money. Clearly, ordinary parishioners were not originally inspired by their Missionary Society membership. Voluntary parishioner giving or pledging was nearly unheard of until the late 19th Century, and pew rents were the main revenue source of most parishes. Apportionment of national Church expenses, including mission, among the dioceses was not approved by the General Convention until 1922.

Luckily for mission, as the General Convention contemplated when the Missionary Society was created, it was supported by dioceses, individual parishes and auxiliary societies within the Church. Unquestionably, the most formidable and effective of these societies was the Women’s Auxiliary, created by the 1871 General Convention to unite many parochial and diocesan women’s auxiliaries.

Despite (and perhaps because of) the exclusion of women from any position of authority within the Church, which did not fully end until 1976, the Women’s Auxiliary proved itself crucial to mission, particularly by instituting and administering the United Thank Offering (UTO), which

torate of the Cromwells that followed the Civil War, and Restoration of a crypto-Roman Catholic to the English throne.

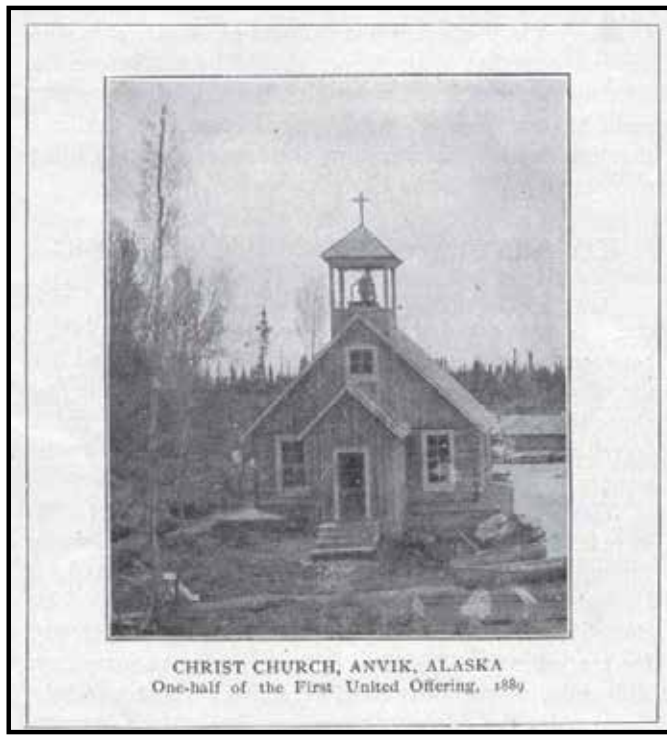
<sup>4</sup> The CoE itself was not firmly established until 1689, and it quickly became, in the words of one historian, “lax, complacent and conservative,” dominated by the landed gentry and aristocracy, uninterested in reform and inspiring only pragmatic and academic interest in religion—a poor environment for mission.

<sup>5</sup> It ended in 1850.

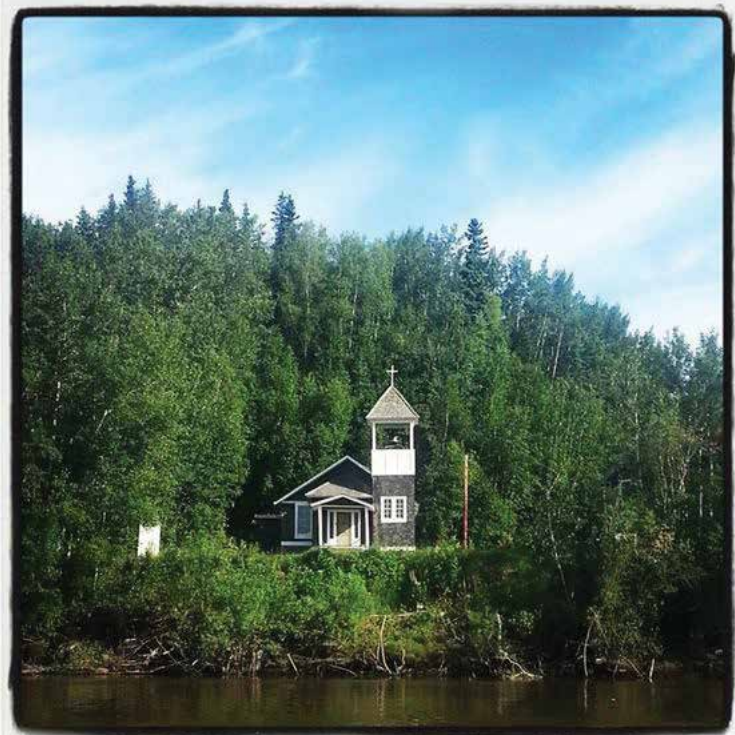
<sup>6</sup> Article I of Canon 1.3 provides that the Missionary Society “shall be considered as comprehending all persons who are members of the Church.”

<sup>7</sup> White & Dykman, *Annotated Constitution and Canons—Episcopal Church*, 1981 edition, p. 241



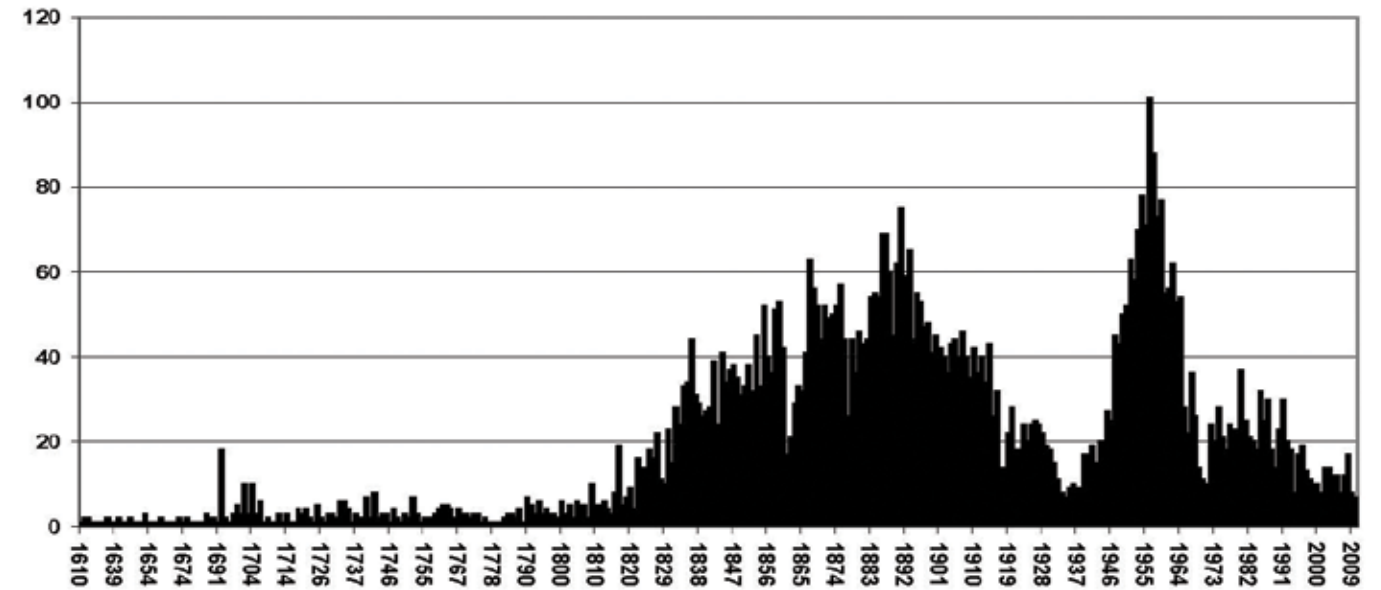


Christ Church, Anvik - 1889



Christ Church, Anvik - today

Number of Episcopal Congregations by Year Founded: 1610-2010



as of 2015 had provided more than \$133 million for mission; and by recruiting, training and sending women missionaries to the Church's domestic and foreign missions, eventually outnumbering missionary men. Half of the first UTO in 1889 went to found Christ Church in Anvik, Alaska, whose population in 1890 numbered about 191, and is now about 84. Anvik is as remote as any Episcopal foreign mission.

From the beginning the goal of mission was expansion of the Church. The traditional "found and baptize" means was commonly supplemented by "planting," which is the establishment by one parish of another, frequently occasioned by growth and/or relocation, of the congregation of the planter parish. GHTC was originally a mission church planted by St. James's, which was then at Fifth and Marshall Streets in what was at the time the booming far West End of Richmond.<sup>8</sup> Two hundred new churches were planted between 1979 and 1984, and church planting continues to this day.

As 19th Century America acquired new western territory by purchase or conquest and Americans migrated westward, the Church went with them. Vast missionary districts,<sup>9</sup> originally served by a single missionary bishop per district, were created. Over time as the population increased, smaller districts were carved out of them and more missionary bishops were consecrated.

<sup>8</sup> Grace Church, a predecessor of GHTC, was planted by St. Paul's. Other planted Richmond area churches are St. Mark's and St. Philip's (by St. James's), St. Andrew's (planted as a Sunday school by St. Paul's), All Saints (planted as a Sunday school by Monumental, of which itself only the

The smaller districts became the present western dioceses in approximately the same chronological order as the territories encompassing them became States. All of the Church's current foreign dioceses are the result of missionary effort that began or intensified significantly after 1835. These include the Diocese of Haiti, which today is its largest diocese in terms of baptized members.

With the exception of the Civil War years, the chart on page 9 shows consistency in the number of Church congregations founded annually between 1840 and 1910. During the same period, the number of communicants increased in every decade, from 55,477 in 1840 to 930,037 in 1910. The chart also shows a decline in new congregations during the World War I and Depression years, followed by a rapid increase in new congregations to the mid-1950s, which was not significantly interrupted by the Second World War. Between 1910 and 1960, the number of communicants again increased every decade, reaching 2,095,573 in 1960. The ratio of the number of Episcopal communicants to total United States population ("E/TP ratio") was 1/308 in 1840 and 1/86 in 1960.

The total number of Episcopal Church parishes and missions peaked in 1955 at 8,053. The total number of baptized members<sup>10</sup> peaked in 1966 at 3,647,297. The E/TP ratio that year, based on baptized membership, was 1/54.

building remains) and St. Paul's (also by Monumental).

<sup>9</sup> The North West missionary district, created in 1860, originally contained 900,000 square miles.

<sup>10</sup> "Baptized members" is not the same as "communicants." The former outnumber the latter, usually substantially.

The chart then shows a decline in new congregations as rapid as the increase after the mid-1950s, and an irregular decline from 1964 to 2009. More congregations were founded in 1691 than in 2009. In 2014, there were 7,044 parishes and missions and 1,504,273 communicants. The E/TP ratio was 1/212.

Church histories give many reasons for these depressing statistics, but the dwindling of traditional "found and baptize" mission is not among them. That form of domestic mission had done all it could do at least by 1971, when Alaska, the last domestic missionary district to become a diocese, did so. In Salina, now the Diocese of Western Kansas, the last domestic missionary bishop was consecrated in 1966. In 1970, to Liberia, the last missionary bishop was consecrated.

The 1967 General Convention acknowledged Episcopal Church membership in the Anglican Communion. At the time, the Communion had endorsed a program, called *Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ* ("MRI"), of linking Anglican dioceses throughout the world in cooperative efforts and abandoning the "sending/receiving" basis of traditional mission. The practice was believed to be condescending to those on the "receiving" end, although no doubt not as much as considering them "infidels and salvages". According to an historian of the modern Church, MRI's promoters believed it to be the right "approach to missionary activity in the postcolonial age," with the primary responsibility for mission belonging to "the indigenous church."

MRI is the progenitor of the Church's current *Partners in Mission* program, which was established in 1977. These programs are roughly concurrent with an acceleration of former Episcopal foreign missions' autonomy, and consensual absorption of other former missions by local Anglican Communion member churches. Both are

seen in the history of what began as the Episcopal mission to Liberia, begun in 1836 and becoming successively the Missionary District of Liberia, the Diocese of Liberia, and the autonomous Episcopal Church of Liberia. Then in 1982, it became no longer a part of the Episcopal Church, but a member of the Church of the Province of West Africa, which itself originated as an SPG-sponsored mission to Ghana in the mid-18th Century.

The number of foreign missionaries (and spouses) supported by the Church peaked at 495 in 1965. In 1962-66, there were about 200 appointed missionaries; in 1977, 71, and in the early 2000s, 49, 18 of whom were ordained. In 2015, the Church was supporting 54 missionaries, including 25 Young Adult Service Corps volunteers. Eleven of them are ordained.

### Mission Now

Here is how the dictionary definition of mission is expressed in these two sources, 81 years apart:

*missionary one sent on a mission; particularly, one sent to propagate religion;*

Webster's Universal Dictionary (1936)

*missionary: a person who is sent to a foreign country to do religious work (such as to convince people to join a religion or to help people who are sick, poor, etc.)*

www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/missionary -

Definition of Missionary for English Language Learners (2017)



From the beginning, ministry—what the Church does for humanity in obedience to Christ’s commands—was an indispensable adjunct to mission. The most common ministries were educational and medical. The first foreign mission to Greece in 1830 comprised two ordained missionaries, their wives and a printer of books, who produced 30,000 books over the life of the mission. One missionary couple did nothing but educate. The many missionary women sent by the Women’s Auxiliary in the latter 19th and early 20th Centuries were sent to teach and to heal; they were not permitted by rules of the Church then in effect to conduct worship or baptize. It is hard to imagine that mission would have taken root without these ministries—or that the women missionaries completely abstained from evangelism, regardless of the rules of the Church.

With the throttling down of traditional mission and the emergence in the second half of the 20th Century of demands for social change that could no longer be ignored or suppressed came expansion and proliferation of the Church’s ministries. The online history of the UTO notes a shift in grants in the 1960s by the Women’s Auxiliary,<sup>11</sup> “from missions to ministry.” Ministries have come and gone, others been renamed or repurposed, and it would unduly prolong this article to list them all, let alone summarize what they do or did. Clicking the “Ministries” tab on the Church website drops down a list of 27 current ministries. There is no “Mission” tab, but “Mission Personnel” and “Mission Relationships” are listed as ministries.

The Five Marks of Mission, a 1984–90 development of the Anglican Communion, have been embraced by the Church and appear on its website as “What We Believe.” They are worth quoting here:

Observe that the first two Marks hark back to old time mission like it used to be, but the rest are essentially ministerial. No doubt the Church is committed equally to all of them, but as is usually the case when limited resources must be spread among several goals, some Marks are more equal than others. In a recent Church document titled “The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America at the United Nations,” accomplishments of the Missionary Society under categories ranging from “Environment and climate change” to “Youth and young adults” are discussed.

All the accomplishments are ministerial, and there isn’t a word in the document about

<sup>11</sup> Then palliatively renamed the “General Division of Women’s Work”—“Episcopal Church Women” didn’t come into use until 1985

sending missionaries to found or bolster infant Episcopal congregations or to convert and baptize “infidels and salvages.” This may be unremarkable in view of the nature of the document, but you would think that if the Missionary Society had founded churches or baptized converts, it would have taken the opportunity to say so. The job descriptions of the eleven ordained missionaries supported by the Church in 2015 indicate that only one is sent to nurture a parish and baptize. His job description is “parish priest.”

The mission of the modern Church is clearly no longer exclusively or even mainly its propagation. Mission has evolved naturally and understandably into a number of ministries with traditional mission among them. Any necessity for domestic baptizing missionaries all but vanished long ago. Foreign mission of this kind is adequately supplied by other Anglican Communion churches in regions of the world favorable to it in which the Church no longer has any presence, if it ever did. In regions of the world hostile to it, Christian mission of any kind is more difficult now than it was centuries ago when these regions were “uncivilized”. Improved communications technology makes it easier for the ruling authorities to detect and suppress it, often by cruel means. This is in some regions no different from Indian massacre. The Church has decided to devote most of its energies to ministries that address national and worldwide social problems that are much more serious and urgent than, say, an insufficient number of Episcopalians in eastern Syria — or, for that matter, in Los Angeles.

### Meanwhile, at GHTC

Grace Church was organized in 1858. The first sermon at Moore Memorial Chapel (later Church of the Holy Trinity) was delivered in 1874. Both churches were involved through auxiliary societies in faith-propagating mission. The Grace Church Ladies’ Aid Society raised money for overseas missions, and its Women’s Auxiliary, “launched in 1891 . . . was particularly active in the mission field, contributing to work in Brazil, Alaska, Wyoming and in the city of Richmond.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1898, the rector of Holy Trinity, at the request of “certain families residing in Chestnut Hill” (a neighborhood included in Highland Park in north Richmond), proposed to establish a mission there with the assistance of the Holy Trinity chapter of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. The Holy Trinity vestry endorsed this proposition and assisted the mission from time to time, in

<sup>12</sup> Gaines & Lankford *History of Grace and Holy Trinity Church 1858–2000*, p.14. Could the work in Alaska have included Christ Church, Anvik? It’s a tantalizing thought.

1900 authorizing the Holy Trinity trustees to take title to the mission property (a requirement of the diocesan canons). The mission organized as a mission church in 1903 and eventually became the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, which, as a result of a consolidation, is now Christ Ascension.

By this act of church planting, Holy Trinity, as its rector proclaimed, took its place “as an active and independent worker in the great field of mission.” It was also the last recorded act of traditional mission of either predecessor church.

But both had been notably active, through auxiliary organizations, in ministries, and the predominant ministry of both was relief of the poor. The Ladies Aid Society of Grace Church was one such organization; another was the Grace Church Mothers’ Meeting Society, founded in the late 19th Century and intended to bring the women of Grace Church into contact with poor women of the Church neighborhood, whose wants could thus be more efficiently ministered to. At Moore Memorial, auxiliary organizations collected clothing and groceries for distribution to the poor, and taught sewing. Garments produced by the students were also given to the poor. Women of Moore Memorial joined women of other Richmond churches, including Grace Church, to form the Richmond Day Nursery in 1888, to care for children of “poor women who must work.”

The stream of ministry begun in the predecessor churches continued after their merger and continues to flow to this day in GHTC. As in the Episcopal Church, some ministries have come and gone. Workday child care, revived in 1965 in the form of the GHTC Child Care Center, was discontinued in 2005 because of significant change in the neighborhood demographic precipitated by expansion of Virginia Commonwealth University. But ministry to the poor has always been central. Today’s Red Door Ministries combine Moore Memorial’s collection of food and clothing for the poor (who are now also often homeless), prescription drug assistance akin to GHTC’s cooperative program with Paragon Pharmacy (which ended when the pharmacy closed), and a weekly meal more filling, balanced, and tasty than that served at the ancestral Soup Kitchen instituted here in 1985.

Our mission to Belize is ministerial: parishioners and students from our Campus Ministry go there, like the missionaries sent by the Women’s Auxiliary in the 1890s, to teach and heal the rural poor. Most recently, Circles RVA, an interfaith and interchurch ministerial program, will involve GHTC parishioners in attacking the root causes of the poverty that has blighted our community since Reconstruction and that our other minis-

tries relieve symptomatically.

Certainly the old form of mission restored people to unity with God and each other in Christ; it taught them His faith and baptized them into His Church. Today’s form of mission unites in Christian endeavor those who minister in Christ’s name and those who receive that ministry; God is in the deed. Who is to say one means is better than the other?



Mission Now at GHTC.

Christ teaches us that the second greatest Commandment is “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Church told us almost two centuries ago that we are all missionaries. If our mission now is the ministry implicit in Christ’s teaching, so much the better.

**Jim Featherstone**

*I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Julia Randle, registrar and historiographer of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, who pointed me in the right direction and recommended (and in several cases loaned me) the following authorities for this article:*

*James Rhayer Addison, The Episcopal Church in the United States 1789–1931 (1931)*

*David E. Sumner, The Episcopal Church’s History: 1945–1985 (1987)*

*Robert w. Prichard, A History of the Episcopal Church (3d revised edition 2014)*

*Other sources are various internet postings of the Episcopal Church.*

*Finally and obviously, I have relied heavily on William Gaines’ and Nelson Lankford’s A History of Grace and Holy Trinity Church 1858–2000 (2000) in the section of the article dealing with mission at GHTC.*

***Grace & Holy Trinity  
Episcopal Church***

8 North Laurel Street  
Richmond, VA 23220

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Phone 804.359.5628 - Fax 804.353.2348 - [www.ghtc.org](http://www.ghtc.org)

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***What is our mission?*** We are an inclusive, spirited, and Christ-centered urban community that transforms lives.

***What is our vision?*** Every member will joyfully celebrate God's love, and the transforming power of that love, in the church, in the city, and in the world.

Our behaviors will be guided by our core values of seeking, serving and caring.

We will embrace what God has placed around us and strive to improve the life of each person we encounter by focusing on three important areas:



The Spiritual Journey.



Children, Teens, and 20s and 30s.



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