



Grace Church and I seek several fruits through my sabbatical leave in 2022. Deeper engagement with our personal faith lives, conversations with new partners about how faith engagement sustains us through situations we could never have imagined, and a new perspective to navigate through the “narrows” of the post-pandemic world. A family journey to the UK sandwiched between two extended sabbath periods at home will provide space for me to gain the perspective, renewal, and conversation partners I seek. Stable leadership along with a new conversation partner in the form of a “pulpit exchange” priest from the UK will create a similar opportunity for the whole congregation. We will prepare the ground for the sabbatical with a year-long focus on “faithing,” which I define as practice and engagement with one’s spirituality that makes a difference in daily life. Pre-leave I will engage members and non-members in conversation about their faithing and encourage members to have these conversations while I am away. Together we will be strengthened with the faith we need to step out into the future to which God is calling us in the post-COVID world where ongoing threat from fire and flood is likely to be our “new normal.”

Before the pandemic upended our world I was pondering a concept I call “faithing.” With a nod to the millennial-coined phrase “adulting,” by “faithing” I mean the daily actions and attitudes that orient us, make meaning of our world, and help our spirituality actually make a difference in our lives. As a young Gen X church leader I am an anomaly. Most of my peers seem to regard it as an odd thing that I lead such an arcane institution as a church. Yet the majority would call themselves “spiritual,” acknowledging an inner part of themselves oriented toward a greater purpose, that endures beyond death. I began to wonder: how do they connect to the spiritual side of themselves? Much the same way people engage in concrete activities to address and improve their physical health, how do SBNR (spiritual but not religious) folks “faith?” As I looked around my congregation, I saw young(er) people who are clearly on a spiritual journey; using the church in an intentional way to “faith.” None of them had come from a background where church attendance was expected. None of them were “just showing up.” They are using the church to “faith.”

The pandemic, of course, has changed everything. For more than a year, we have been mostly unable to gather physically. “Just showing up” has not been an option. Forced to find sacred space in our homes, in nature, and in our everyday lives, and faced with challenges the like of which many of us have never experienced, we have been “faithing”-taking ownership of our own spiritual lives, finding what grounds us in meaning, hope, and coherence day in and day out.

Wildfires ravaging our region in the fall of 2020 have given us an even deeper need for faith which sustains us.

My four-month leave in 2022 will be dedicated to rest, fun and adventure with family, and exploring the concept of “faithing” in a different context. Besides being the “motherland” of Anglican/Episcopal identity, the UK as a society is further along the post-Christian cultural shift than the US. Having “faithing” conversations with colleagues connecting with younger seekers there will inform the reflection and conversations we have here. My family has spent much of its life in a cross-cultural environment: three years of ministry and much subsequent time in Central America; bridging Latino and Anglo cultures in California. We know the value of stepping out of one’s context. Beyond study, conversation and thought, my sabbatical will allow me to deepen my own “faithing” practice in the ways that have nurtured me over the last year. That will include physical exercise, time with my family, and retreat time at some very special places where I have long desired to make pilgrimage. While the family has always been the primary context of faith, that has been heightened during the pandemic when our households became our only incarnate community. After more than a year of “faithing” in place with them, taking my family on an adventure of faith calls to my heart. I have found fun and adventure, trying something new, no matter how small, having permission to change course or to fail, to be a core “faithing” practice for me over the last year. Our journey will be buffered by several weeks on either side, ensuring I have time to rest, prepare and re-enter with a sense of ease and joy.

It has been a difficult decision to submit this application while we are still very much in the throes of a global pandemic. Nevertheless, after consultation with congregational leaders, I believe this is the right moment. Their desire for my well-being after such a difficult year is oft expressed. After our upcoming year of re-gathering, I believe I can step away for several months with minimal negative impact, and even some benefits to the congregation. We have “faithed” while distanced this past year; we will continue to do so during my sabbatical and will, with God’s help, come back together with fresh perspectives, energy, and life to share.

I will be combining my three-month sabbatical, structured into my Letter of Agreement, with two weeks of vacation time and two weeks of continuing education for a total of one continuous 16-week leave, 5/16-9/6, 2022. This timing will allow a month preparation after Easter and allow a return in time for fall programming.

5/16-6/9 An “At-Home Retreat” will afford an extended sabbath for study and prayer as well as organization of the family for the journey. I will use this time to re-ground myself in my personal “faithing” practices.

6/10 I travel to Gloucester, UK, with my family. I became familiar with the Diocese of Gloucester through a companion diocese relationship as part of a team both visiting and hosting visitors in 2010-12. While in Gloucester I remember thinking, “I want to bring my family here!” I wanted them to experience the ancient rhythm of life of a cathedral community and the beauty of places where Christians have worshipped for thousands of years. In conversation with the Bishop of

Tewkesbury (assisting bishop of Gloucester) who visited us in the Napa Valley in early 2020, the seeds planted in 2010 took root and grew. After hearing about what I wanted to study and seeing our church, he decided to connect me with a female vicar in his diocese in Bourton on the Water in the Cotswolds, another tourist destination, who has been having success attracting younger seekers to her church. We'll begin our time in Gloucester experiencing life on the Cathedral Close and getting oriented, and then stay nearer the parish to participate in the life of the church community. I will spend intentional time with the rector and have "faithing" conversations with those who've joined their community.

Next we'll head to London for two weeks. The church locus there will be Epping Team Ministry in North East London. Our congregation is part of a global partnership with Epping which began during the pandemic in online bible study and worship. Epping team is part of the innovative Heart Edge ministry started by St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. I'll meet with staff at Epping and Heart Edge and have "faithing" conversations with some of their newer members. With the family we'll explore the museums, history, and culture that London has to offer. From there we'll spend time in Oxford with the life-long family friends whose relationship took me to England for my first international journey when I was 14. This "faithing" time will be about friendship and family, including allowing our children of similar ages to get to know one another.

The time in Europe with family will close out with a few days to explore Paris and visit the Chartres labyrinth and then a family pilgrimage to Taizé. I am thrilled to be able to take my children there to experience the rhythm of life and prayer together, a place and style of prayer I first learned about when I was 14 and have longed to visit for most of my life! After the family departs I will make retreat on Iona, another place which has long called to my heart.

8/15-Fly home and have three weeks, until 9/6, before I return to work. This is time for rest and re-grounding, coaching, study and prayer and at least one "fun" mini-trip activity with the family in these three weeks to remind ourselves we can still have adventures at home! My first Sunday back, 9/11, will be close to my 6-year anniversary as rector of Grace. A blessed return!

I've had an image in prayer and have begun to speak with leaders about this time in the life of our congregation as "the narrows"-as though we were a ship passing through a strait between two larger seas. The past is behind us, the future we cannot see is ahead, and this time feels compressed-financial resources, energy, volunteer ministry, brain power-margins on every possible front are incredibly narrow. Borrowing from a poem by Wendell Berry, we like to say at Grace that "what we need is here." That is still true-we have what we need, we have our daily bread, but it feels like not much more. We waiver between anxiety for the future, grief over the past, and hope that God is not done with us yet. "Faithing" in this landscape is a survival skill.

Unsurprisingly, this spiritual state of the congregation reflects my own spiritual state as its leader. In my fifteen years of ordained ministry, I have come close to burn-out a couple of times, including in my early years at Grace, after the "honeymoon" wore off and before we hired an assistant rector for only the second time in the congregation's history. This year has been

different. I have had my moments of utter desperation bordering on despair. I have passed through various stages of profound grief and loss. In the 2020 wildfires, 40% of the land area of our county burned, my family evacuated in the middle of the night and 15 parishioners lost their homes. I carried in my body the trauma of the evacuations and fires for several months before intentionally releasing it in spiritual bodywork with a coach. But I have learned, through this year, to truly “faith.” I’ve relied on daily, sometimes hourly reminders of prayerful surrender and deepened my practice of centering prayer. I’ve learned a rhythm of working from home that includes boundaries and weaves small life-giving interactions with my family into my day. I regularly work outdoors and ground myself by noticing the patterns of nature. While I’ve not been able to take an extended period of vacation during the pandemic (and have not taken a sabbatical in my 15 years of ordained ministry), I have discovered a rhythm of “mini-vacations,” hikes-adventures, trips to the beach, time at a family cabin-that sustains me. In Jan. our retired associate priest thanked me for “taking care of yourself so that you can be here for us and bring us hope.” Truly this year has taught me that self-care is not a luxury, in the midst of chaos and trauma, it is a basic necessity. “Faithing” has made all the difference.

Now what I need is “balcony time,” time to get a higher and broader perspective, to study, pray, think, consult and converse, and come back ready to help intentionally shape this period of deep change in the church’s life. After the stress and trauma of the last year, I need a sustained period of rest and reflection. I hope to add to my self-care a discipline of study, deep conversation and reflection that will help me continue to gain perspective when I return and continue to pilot the ship of Grace into the future that God has for us.

After consultation with leaders, I believe the summer of 2022 will be a good time for the congregation to “faith” without me for a season. Introducing the theme of “faithing” during the 2021-22 program year will give us a common language to talk about the shift in our spiritual lives during the pandemic. I plan to have as many “faithing” conversations as possible between now and when I go on sabbatical, challenging the congregation to have at least as many while I’m away! Having our associate Anne Clarke run the parish while I am away will help solidify her authority, leadership and pastoral relationships. Lastly, our plan to invite a priest from the UK to stay in the rectory for a pulpit exchange will add a sense of freshness and excitement for the congregation during my time away. While my family is having a cross-cultural experience in Britain, the congregation will be having a cross-cultural experience with a British priest who can come alongside Rev. Anne and help the congregation consider “faithing” from some new angles.

In the five years since Rev. Amy came to Grace Church in 2016, our congregation has weathered floods, fires and now a pandemic of extraordinary scale. Our small community has been in a steady cycle of loss and destruction, followed by rebuilding and recovery. Nearly 10% of our congregation has suffered fire damage to their homes; grapes discarded due to smoke taint have cost our local wineries (and benefactors) hundreds of millions of dollars. Power outages and fire evacuations now affect us for six months of the year, interrupting schools and

work, testing our fragile sense of safety. On top of this came COVID restrictions which closed hospitality services that account for 70% of the Napa Valley economy.

St. Helena, California is a strong community, but we are weary, and our resources are strained. Now more than ever we require a vibrant, resilient spiritual leader to help us navigate the difficult questions around what is next and how we will get there. We have moved past any questions of “why us,” and “why us again,” and seek to explore complex themes about framing our future:

What systems, processes, and staffing are necessary for us to reach and care for our members and reach out and incorporate others in this ever-changing environment?

How will we be able to extend our reach beyond our small community?

The cost of living in Napa Valley prohibits many younger adults from making wine country their home today. How can we bridge the generational gap between those within and beyond our Valley (who have joined online) and those who grew and built Grace Church in the 1990’s and 2000’s?

What does Christian hospitality look like in a secular tourist mecca?

How are we called to use our privilege in the service of “repairing the breach” of poverty, racism, and hatred in God’s world?

Rev. Amy’s sabbatical could not come at a better time for our congregation. As we persevere through physical and material reconstruction, we whole-heartedly support our pastor’s spiritual and intellectual renewal. Her work to explore daily practices of faith in and out of our church will assuredly inform our answers to the questions noted above. We hold Rev. Anne in high regard and look forward to her growth in a leadership role while leading the congregation and partnering with “pulpit exchange” clergy during Rev. Amy’s absence. She will provide our congregation with a much-needed stability, while creating the opportunity for us to experience new perspectives.

Additional administrative support and an exciting UK clergy pulpit exchange-please see Budget Narrative for our full plans!

My hope is that this time of leave and the time leading up to it will engender all kinds of conversations-in our small groups, in forums, in sermons, on blog posts, even in our quarterly “Thursday Pulpit” articles in the local newspaper. One thing the pandemic has taught us is that making room for difficult conversations is more important than ever. It will be important to make

space for people to say “That (you being away) was hard...” AND “Here is how I have learned and grown through the experience.” I plan to have a group of leaders-including some of those younger members who have chosen Grace to “faith”-as discussion partners and co-leaders of the ongoing “faithing conversations” project I mentioned above. Our learnings will inform strategic planning and decisions in 2022-23 and beyond. Though I will be in and around St. Helena for close to half of my leave, I do not anticipate any contact with the congregation. My experience has shown that Grace members have excellent boundaries; as one member has commented, “We are not a ‘needy’ congregation. We know how to care for one another.”

There have been several years’ planning for Rev. Amy’s sabbatical; it is contemplated in her Letter of Agreement as is standard for our diocese; Rev. Amy had given up a sabbatical at her prior parish to come to Grace and it was a part of pre-hire discussions. For several years vestry and wardens have been aware of the upcoming date of the sabbatical (summer of 2022). In the summer of 2019 Rev. Amy took some accumulated vacation for a total of five continuous weeks away; wardens and staff viewed this as a “trial” of having the rector away in preparation for the sabbatical. This resulted in some learning about additional administrative help and being very clear about lines of authority in the rector’s absence. However, the assistant rector, who was quite new at the time, was able to handle a major pastoral crisis in the life of the congregation while merely keeping Rev. Amy informed. The group providing feedback for specific sabbatical plans and working on this application originally came together in Feb of 2020, just prior to the pandemic. The work was then put on hold. Given Lilly’s new regulations about the possibility of splitting up the leave, Rev. Amy seriously considered two shorter leaves during the summers of 2022 and '23. However, consultation with the personnel committee, wardens and application team indicated strong support for not only her taking the sabbatical leave but making the application now and planning for one extended period of leave rather than two shorter ones. Leaders felt this would both benefit Rev. Amy and better serve the purpose of a sabbatical and benefit the congregation and staff by not having to prepare for two extended leaves. Some leaders certainly expressed hesitancy and concern about Rev. Amy being away for four months when we will (hopefully) have been physically re-gathered for ten months; they simultaneously expressed recognition and support of the deep need Rev. Amy has for this sabbatical. Thirty congregational leaders, including current and past wardens, vestry and staff, were consulted with and/or assisted with the creation of this application. With previous rector having taken two sabbatical leaves in his 23-year tenure, a clergy sabbatical is a known quantity at Grace. NB: Grace applied for and was denied a Lilly Clergy Renewal grant for our previous rector’s sabbatical in 2013.

Grace Episcopal Church, by the Grace of God, was founded in 1876. Grace has been a beacon of hope and strength to its people and the community of St Helena, California, a community of some 6,000 souls. Through two World Wars, TWO pandemics, a depression, fires and earthquakes Grace Church has been a rock for its people and support for the community. Like

many institutions, churches included, there have been lean years. Yet people have always sustained Grace in its needs.

There are many outstanding events in the life of Grace. Under our last rector, Fr. Mac McIlmoyl, the church grew five times larger in Sunday attendance. The State of CA mandated the old stone church, already too small for our growing congregation, be retrofitted due to earthquakes. That huge undertaking was started in 2001 and along with that a new Parish Hall was built, with the debt from the project being retired in 2013 through the generosity of our congregation and community. Through our 145 years our most important claim is the love of God. That love has given us the energy to do good and meaningful things.

Grace has about 500 members, 230 households, currently less than 100 pledging units, and an average Sunday attendance of 151.

John Bogart 1958-1965

Clarence Hutton 1965-1969

Richard Tumilty 1969-1993

Mac McIlmoyl 1993-2016

In the 145 years Grace has existed our focus has been to adhere to the commandments, Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. Through the various rectors that IS the focus. Grace has always looked outside our walls to help the community and other countries. We have helped build a clinic in Nicaragua, provided dozens of scholarships for young women in Uganda, built transitional homes in Russia, and much more. Our GO (Grace Outreach) committee meets monthly to address giving to our community and the world. Within our Parish are many opportunities for spiritual growth. We teach the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori curriculum for ages 3-13. Our Youth Program is exceptional with an annual service-oriented summer trip. Small Groups are an important part of Grace. We are a social people and have many fellowship opportunities to have fun and connect. Centering prayer and the labyrinth, completed in 2015, have become important spiritual elements in the lives of many people in our congregation and community.

UC Davis- BS Community and Regional Development; BA Spanish, 2001

Yale Divinity- MDiv, 2005

Berkeley Divinity School- Certificate of Anglican Studies, 2005

June 24, 2005, Transitional Diaconate, Episcopal Diocese of N. California

Dec. 27, 2005, Priesthood, Episcopal/Anglican Church of El Salvador on behalf of EDNC

Sept 2005-Sept 2008 Deacon/Priest-in-Charge of the Anglican Church and School of St. Andrew the Apostle, Amatapec, Soyapango, El Salvador

Jan 2009-July 2016 Priest-in-Charge/Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Hollister, California

Sept 2016-Present Rector of Grace Episcopal Church, St. Helena, California

Upon graduating from Yale, Rev. Amy began ordained ministry with a Fulbright Grant to study the intersection of religion and social justice in El Salvador. In addition to her studies there she was placed in charge of a parish and school in a poor urban area on the outskirts of San Salvador. She and husband Vince remained after her Fulbright year, serving in the Diocese of El Salvador for three yrs. Amy professionalized the pre-K- 8 school, expanding the plant and hiring the first dedicated school director. Subsequently, Rev. Amy spent nine years on the board of Cristosal, an NGO which grew out of the Church of El Salvador and has since become one of the leading human rights organizations in Central America. At St. Luke's in Hollister, where the Zunigas spent nearly eight years, Amy established a successful after school tutoring program and a bilingual preschool based in the church. She and husband Vince also worked with other organizations in the region to bring broad-based community organizing to Vince's native San Benito County. At Grace, where Amy has served as rector for nearly five years, she has successfully navigated staff transitions after a 23-year pastorate, planted a Spanish-speaking congregation, expanded the existing strong focus on financial giving to outreach to include advocacy and service, and broadened the church's reach to young families and particularly younger women. Over the past year, Rev. Amy led dedicated staff and volunteers to invest strongly in "virtual church," creating a high quality Sunday live-stream, doubling electronic communications, and more than quadrupling adult formation offerings, all of them online. During this year of awakening around racial injustice, Grace has partnered with neighboring churches to create the Racial Reconciliation Academy, providing multiple opportunities for learning and action.



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