

History of Grace Anglican Church

Anglicans-In-Mission

In the beginning there was St. Michael & All Angels Anglican Church. As Prince George grew in the 70s and early 80s, Bishop John Snowden prodded the Anglicans at St. Michael's to branch out like the other main denominations were doing. Nothing happened until the Anglican Church decided on a Canada-wide stewardship campaign called Anglicans-In-Mission on 1983, preceded by a year of prayer, bible study and preparation. St. Michael's covenanted with the diocese of Cariboo raise \$62,000, half of which would stay in the diocese. Double that amount was raised, which made Bishop Snowden offer \$60,000 towards the stipend of a half-time priest, if a new parish was started.

A special outreach committee was formed in 1983. As a result, a motion supported by the Church Committee was presented at the Annual General Meeting of St. Michael's in January 1984, recommending the establishment of a new parish west of Ospika Boulevard.

At a special vestry meeting held April 2, 1984 the following motion was passed:

“That this congregation of St. Michael & All Angel's Church give spiritual, moral and financial support to the establishment of a new parish west of Ospika Boulevard in Prince George.”

We are now going to see the reaction to all this in heaven, where Archangel Michael meets up with Archangel AIM (Anglican in Mission) ...

Michael: Well, who are you? I don't think we have met before. I am Michael.

AIM: No, that is right. I was recently promoted to Archangel and my name is AIM.

Michael: Well, that is interesting. Perhaps you can help me. I have been following the happenings at St. Michael's in Prince George. A fellow in Kamloops – I think his name is Snowden – has been prodding the people down there to branch out and start a new parish. But they were quite comfortable downtown and weren't interested in a change.

AIM: I have exciting news for you! The stewardship campaign they held went very well and Snowden – Bishop Snowden I should say – offered them \$60,000 towards the stipend of a priest if they started a new parish. So, they did, with Reverend Barbara Liotscos as their first half-time priest.

Praise be to God!

Narrator: And that is the story of how Grace Church was born.

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The 10th Anniversary – 1994

On September 2, 1984 the Ven. Al Hosking commissioned 8 families including 2 not present) from St. Michael & All Angels Church to go out and establish a new mission church west of Ospika Boulevard in Prince George under the leadership of the Rev. Barbara Liotskos.

The following Sunday September 9, 1984 was the first service in the basement hall of the Greek Orthodox Church, Tabor & 5th Avenue, with 50 people present. In its first year Grace Church grew from a core group of 8 families to a membership of 39 families.

There was a regular congregation of 50-60 adults and children, and a Sunday School enrollment of 25-30. 10 persons were baptized, 8 confirmed and 1 marriage was performed, Grace Church was duly constituted as a parish by the Bishop and since January 1, 1985 the priest was paid on a half-time basis by diocesan AIM funds. The 1985 budget was \$12,000.

As the facilities at the Greek Orthodox Church turned out to be unsatisfactory, we moved to the Church of the Nazarene, Ospika & 15th Avenue, on October 6, 1985. They were very gracious in sharing their building with Grace for almost two years.

During this time the Building Committee investigated five different building sites. Bishop John approached the parish of All Saints, McBride to find out if they were willing to donate their panabode log building as they no longer used it. They graciously agreed to do so. It was built in 1963 during the incumbency of the Rev. Jim Cruikshank.

A special vestry meeting on June 8, 1987 approved the building plans – moving the church building from McBride and erecting it on a basement constructed to fit the building – and the purchase of 1.1 acres including the buffer zone at Goheen Street for \$41,400. In July the City Council at a public meeting approved the rezoning.

That Labour Day weekend several families drove to McBride to attend a special service presided over by the Rev. Cathy Hall and the Rev. Barbara Liotskos and the Very Rev. Jim Cruikshank, Dean of New Westminster, before removing pews, cupboards, fixtures, etc. and loading them on a truck for storage in Prince George.

A ground-breaking service was held on Saturday, November 1, 1987 at 1 pm with Archdeacon David Ellis of St. Michael's representing Bishop Snowden as celebrant and the address given by the Rev. Barbara Liotskos. The contractor started work the following Monday using building plans drawn up by Michael Tkachuk from St. Michael's.

The budget was \$157,000 with land costing \$48,000, basement \$55,000 and relocation and upgrading the 120-seat building and fabric \$50,000. It was funded by:

- Grants from:
 - The Council of the North \$20,000
 - The Diocese of Cariboo \$10,000
 - The Rufus Gibbs Foundation \$7,200
 - St. James Church, Vancouver \$5,000 and \$15,000
- A loan at 6% from The Anglican Foundation \$20,000

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- Sale of debentures at 8% \$11,000
- A Mortgage at 15% from The Bank of Montreal \$30,000
- Sale of logs:
 - Small \$50
 - Large \$100

Together with money raised previously by the parish. The work was done within budget.

The first service in Grace Church's own building was Easter Sunday 1988. God provided in so many ways: the red carpet from the Bank of Nova Scotia building; chairs, tables and cupboards in the hall and metal office desk and an organ from the Canadian Forces Base at Baldy Hughes; logo was designed by Leslie Turner and Barbara Liotskos.

On September 9, 1988 (4th Anniversary) there was a special Re-Dedication and Blessing Service of the new Grace Church building with Bishop Snowden as presiding celebrant and the Very Rev. Jim Cruikshank, Dean of New Westminster preaching. It was a joyous occasion for all, thanking and praising God for all His blessings.

Barbara Liotskos moved with her family to Kamloops at the end of September, 1998. The Bishop appointed Rev. Roger Cooper as first full-time incumbent as of December 1, 1988. Grace continued to flourish under his leadership. In the ten years there were 108 baptisms, 33 confirmations, 44 weddings and 19 funerals.

Grace is grateful to good neighbour Joe Sabatino who has done wonders landscaping the buffer zone and around the church. All praise and glory to God for all His blessings during the first ten years and thank you to all who have contributed to and participated in the building of the Grace Church community.

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The 20th Anniversary - 2004

Rectors:	1984 – 1988	Rev, Barbara Liotscos
	1988 – 1996	Rev. Roger Cooper
	1997 – 2000	Rev. Lyn Oldale
	2001 –	Rev. Frank Wood

In 1996 Rev. David Dingwell was interim priest for 6 months. Rev. Kit Hellenius was ordained deacon in 1994 continuing being a member of the hospital chaplaincy team until 2002. Barbara Ellison has been the faithful organist since 1985. Having previously done the job on a voluntary basis, Carol Helgason became part-time paid secretary in April 1999.

- Roger Cooper was leader and mentor in the 4-year study of the bible under the auspices of Education for Ministry (EFM). He also involved Grace in the Soup Bus program, which is still on-going, serving sandwiches and soup to over 100 street people downtown every third Sunday of the month.
- Lyn Oldale started a Women's Spirituality group which still meets in the home of Carol Helgason.
- The Baby Layette Program initiated by Dorothy Armstrong, a public health nurse who worked at the Health Unit, is still going strong. A container with baby clothes and blankets is given to young mothers in need as determined by the public health nurse.
- The Golden Age Tea for Seniors is a big annual event, where we provide entertainment for one hour and then serve tea for up to 200 seniors.
- The mortgage has been paid off.
- The people at Grace are very supportive of the Cursillo Movement and have provided leaders, staff and participants over many years.
- Take a turn in leading worship services at Rainbow and Parkside nursing homes with some weekly visitation.
- Beautiful stained-glass windows designed and made by Heather Miller replaced the main window and five windows on the north side as well as the window in the stairway to the hall. Bishop Jim Cruikshank dedicated them in 1999.
- Four Alpha courses have been given.
- Pastor Elijah Ginthinji, now rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church of Christ the King, Nairobi, Kenya visited and preached in October 1998. Sunday school children make and send Christmas cards to the Sunday school children at Christ the King and money was sent to Pastor Elijah to buy bibles for the young people.
- For the last two years Grace has joined with Our Saviour's Lutheran Church to celebrate the first Sunday in Advent. A pot-luck supper is held in one church after which the congregation go in a candle-light procession to the other one, where a service is held.

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- The Paschal candle stand was donated by Wilf Courtemanche, who made it from a raw piece of diamond willow.
- The first service to bless pets was held this summer with several dogs, one cat and one horse being brought to church.
- Over the years Grace has been blessed with faithful and hardworking Sunday school teachers and youth leaders. The big event – the Time, Talent & Treasure Dinner & auction is still a major fundraising event providing an evening of fun and laughter as well as needed funds.
- A Memorial Fund was set up to which people can make a donation in lieu of flowers in memory of a loved one. The donations received will be saved and used for equipment and/or capital equipment.
- Three pictures on the south wall come from the old altar. Jim Jordan discovered them and had them mounted.
- Last Spring Roy and Val Cardwell cooked up a delicious Gourmet Dinner and raised over \$2,000 to pay for our fire insurance. The church was redecorated into romantic café style.
- A parish picnic has been held every June and whereas it used to be at West Lake, in recent years it has taken place in Wilkins Park.
- In February 1998, all at Grace Church experienced much pain after a break-in at our church. Satanic symbols were written on the altar, banners were removed, cupboards were broken and the office trashed. A special re-consecration service was subsequently held, and an alarm system installed.
- The Diocese of Cariboo ceased to exist on December 31, 2001 and we came under the care of Archbishop David Crawley of Kootenay Diocese. The parishes of Cariboo became known as APCI – The Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior. On March 16, 2004 the Reverend Gordon Light became suffragan bishop.

There have of course been many, many more events and happenings over the past ten years that have contributed to the life of the parish. The hard work provided by so many different people in so many different ways contributed to making Grace Church a happy family church.

Praise be to God

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The 25th Anniversary – 2009

Reverend Canon Frank Wood has been our Rector since 2001. Barbara Ellison continues to be our faithful organist and selects the hymns for our services, and Carol Helgason continues as our part-time paid secretary since 1999.

The 20th Anniversary celebrations went off wonderfully well with Rev. Barbara Liotskos our first Rector here, as were Rev. Roger Cooper, our second Rector with his wife Loretta. Bishop Gordon Light celebrated at a special service on Sunday.

2005

- Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Youth Group joined ours under the able leadership of Christie Kurjata and Emma Anserillo.
- The church was transformed into an intimate dining room decorated by Carol Helgason. Val and Roy Cardwell served up a sumptuous dinner, "Lassiz Bon Temps", which raised over \$2,500. Music was provided by John Rogers.
- Outside walls were stained and the sprinkler system was repaired and extended.
- In December we received an anonymous donation of \$5,000.

2006

- "Newfie Night", Annie Strickland's idea, was a wonderful evening and \$1,200 was raised.
- The "Hale and Hardy Women's Weekend" was held at Moose Springs Resort organized by Zonia Wood. 18 women attended and enjoyed the program.
- The Spring Yard Sale was held over two days for the first time. Organized by Sandy Houston and Susannah Pow raised over \$1,000.
- Our Rector, Frank Wood went into hospital on July 10th for a bypass operation in Vancouver and returned October 10th.
- In September Panda Bear Preschool rented the hall. The carpet was removed and replaced by high-grade lino (\$5,300).
- A new Yamaha keyboard was bought for \$1,300.

2007

- We started the automatic bank withdrawal system with 16 participants. It is operating well.
- Our grant towards our rector's stipend was reduced by \$2,500 to \$17,500 by Bishop Gordon Light and will go down by the same annually from now on to make us self-supporting.
- In October we hosted our last Golden Age Tea after more than 10 years of providing seniors with an afternoon of entertainment and coffee, ably coordinated by Barbara Ullstrom as usual.
- 100 dead pine trees were removed in the buffer zone at a cost of \$2,120.

2008

- Panda Bear Preschool left and the hall was repainted.

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- St. Peter's Williams Lake joined out automatic bank withdrawal system in December and St. John the Divine, Quesnel in June 2009.
- A screen, projector and laptop computer were installed to project hymns in the church.
- Our outreach projects: Soup Bus, Baby Layettes, services at Rainbow Lodge and Parkside and visiting at the latter. Christmas food hampers, and our Sunday School contact with the Sunday School in Nairobi, Kenya continue.

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The Stained-Glass Windows – March 2019

This church was originally built in 1963 in McBride, BC. It became available to the people of Grace Church in June of 1986. Now for the history of the stained-glass windows.

The office and bathroom windows are the original windows. The windows on the south side of the church (also diamond-shaped glass) are original except that in 1993 all were re-camed the leading, and some repairs done due to age and warping from the sun.

- The left-hand window was chosen and dedicated by Rosemary Allen as a tribute to her sister.
- There is a window that represents the Good Samaritan. This is a tribute to one of the founding members of Grace Church – Barbara Ullstrom. Her grace and regard for others coupled with her abiding faith made this a fitting choice. Her family were closely involved in the concept and design of this window and it was their gift to memorialize her.

The common thread on this side of the church is a path that will pass through each window.

- The window behind the altar was built in 1994 based on Psalm 23 “beside the still waters.” The loon in the lake is watched by Jesus after he found the lost black sheep. Barrington Bunny and the squirrel watch over this scene. If you look closely you can see the sign of the cross in the clouds to the right side of the sky. This window This window was donated by Rev. Kit Hellenius in dedication to her late husband Rolf, and their son and daughter-in-law Lawrence and Karen. Another son’s name has since been added and Kit’s too...

The north side windows were built in 1998-99 based on the hymn in the red book “All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.” The common thread of water flows window to window.

- The first window (the one closest to the office) starts with a waterfall with an eagle flying over. Isaiah 40:31 “but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles.” This window was donated by Kit Hellenius, she couldn’t think of one special person so it is dedicated to the Glory of God, as they all are.
- The second window follows the stream to a meadow with aspens in the background and a Grandpa Bear sitting in the stream trying to catch a fish as it swims by, so the Grandson Bear can learn how to do it. This window was dedicated Brandon Lee Bjornson, son of Brandy and stepmother Jean Bjornson. The name Bjornson means Son of the Bear in the Icelandic language. So, it was fitting it was fitting that this window be Brandon’s, who dearly loved his grandpa, who had passed on. This window was donated by the Bjornson family.
- The third window, continues to follow the stream This is a woodland scene with squirrels, as every family has a few nuts, Pepé Le Pew the skunk, and of course Berrington Bunny. This is dedicated to Heather Miller’s dad – Alan Linton Bathurst – and was donated by her family.

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- The fourth window has a meadow beside the same stream with a male deer watching over a female deer as she has a drink from the stream. This window is dedicated to Ralph & Mary Buckley and was donated by their family. Mary had picked this design shortly after Ralph's death as she remembered when they lived by a lake, and they loved watching the deer come down each day for an early morning drink.

This window is extra special too as it was made by Heather's youngest daughter Sandi, her first church window. Sandi had known Ralph when he attended Grace Church but she did not realize until it was being installed that she had gone to DP Todd School with Ralph & Mary's grandchildren, Tamara & Matt Millard.

- The final window on the north side ends with a beaver dam – had to end the stream somehow – and two beavers being watched over by a silver wolf. Again, the wolf is from the Barrington Bunny story by Martin Bell. The wolf represents the Christ figure. This is dedicated to the memory of our dear friends and previous Bishop John Snowden and his dear wife Marjorie. It was a gift from this parish family. Talking to Judy, the Snowden's daughter, All Things Bright & Beautiful was her father's favourite hymn.

In 2000 the window in the stairwell to downstairs was completed.

- This window is dedicated to the memory of Virginia Nicholson. It depicts the tree of life with a stream of living water running through a meadow of Virginia's favourite flowers. Bachelor buttons, poppies, irises and her birth flower, the Albertan wild rose. This window was donated by her family.

Heather Miller

Artist