

# GRACE

GRACE EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

Spring 2022  
*notes*

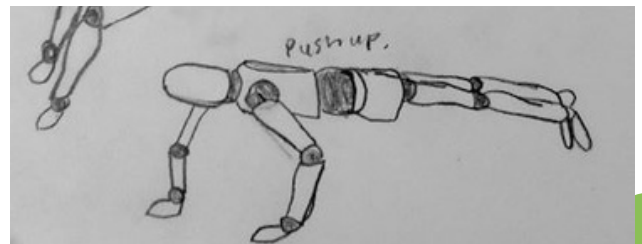


**WONDER • PURPOSE • BELONGING**

The meaning behind Grace's new mission and  
its path towards a bright future



# Art Gallery











Search "Grace Episcopal Day School" on [artsonia.com](https://www.artsonia.com) for more student artwork!

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2021-2022

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## New Members 2022-2023

David DiMartino  
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 Denise Holmes  
 Elizabeth Muniot  
 Denise Robinson  
 Chris Williams



# Get To Know Our New Faculty & Staff

*"What does belonging mean to you?"*



**Jessica B.**

Atelierista

"Belonging means being accepted for who you are and being an integral part of something bigger than yourself."



**Priya G.**

Prekindergarten Teacher

"Feeling of acceptance and being heard."



**Jenny H.**

Grade 2 Teacher

"Having someone to connect to and feeling like my family at home."



**Kay M.**

Physical Education

"Belonging means being able to be in a space where I can be myself."



**Taylor R.**

Director of Learning Support

"Belonging is about being yourself. It means that you can share your vulnerabilities without fear of judgement."



**Reeves S.**

Preschool Assistant Teacher

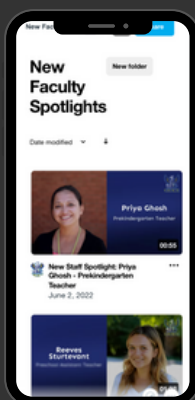
"To me, belonging is being a part of something where you are surrounded by people you feel comfortable around and who you can be yourself with."



**Karl V.**

Director of Advancement

"A place or a community where bravery and creativity comes naturally and showing up feels effortless."



Check out all of our New  
Faculty/Staff Spotlight Videos

PASSWORD: newfs





# A Message from the Head of School



Dear Grace Community,

During our 60th year of anniversary celebration, Grace received a gift during the early months of annual fundraising from an alumnus. The gift prompted me to pick up the phone and reach out to Chris Santy, '82. Right away, Chris and I found common ground talking about the Grace of the past, present, and future. In a subsequent set of calls, Chris told me more of his Grace story. At the center of his experience were his parents who had worked hard to send their three children to Grace when Chris was young. It took some sacrifice on their part to afford the opportunity for their children. Once a part of the school community, the family came to truly admire the quality education, strong leadership, and the visible inclusion and diversity of students and families.

Chris made it clear in later conversations that he wanted to honor his parents with a significant scholarship that could impact the lives of more Grace students now and in the future. Needless to say, this was a wonderful moment over the course of

of our 60th year. Chris and his family felt a true sense of belonging in their years at Grace, and this was evident at a ceremony last June where Chris's whole family and an '82 classmate were on campus to help celebrate the unveiling of this new gift, The Jane and Tony Santy Scholarship Fund, to the school.

We began this year with an intention of cultivating belonging in our community. After the many months apart with Covid in our midst, to return to our campus and rebuild our culture and community was exhilarating and at times challenging. Despite all of the obstacles we faced, this year has truly been one of rising and thriving. At our first ever Community Day, this spirit of "rising" was present as current families and alumni and past faculty gathered to celebrate our return and our future. Chris Santy's \$100,000 gift was set up with a matching opportunity, and we were able to raise more funds in one day during that weekend than any other time in our history.

When I spoke to the class of 2022 recently, I highlighted the notion of



epiphanies after hearing their song choice of “Best Day of My Life” by American Authors for their spring musical. If there has been one epiphany of this past year, it is that even though it can be messy and challenging to live and work together in the world, we should always choose that over the alternative. To belong to a community like Grace is to give meaning and purpose to one’s life. Chris Santy’s gift and the generosity of his family in the past and now the present is just one indicator of this belonging as an essential part of our school’s purpose. I am thrilled to be reconnected with the Santy’s and to steward Chris’s generosity so more students can afford a Grace education. As I look to the future, I am eager to grow this sense of community and belonging even further.

As we close another year at Grace, I am grateful to our wide and diverse community of friends and supporters. So much has been possible and will continue to flourish thanks to your gifts and belief in our mission and vision.

My deepest gratitude,

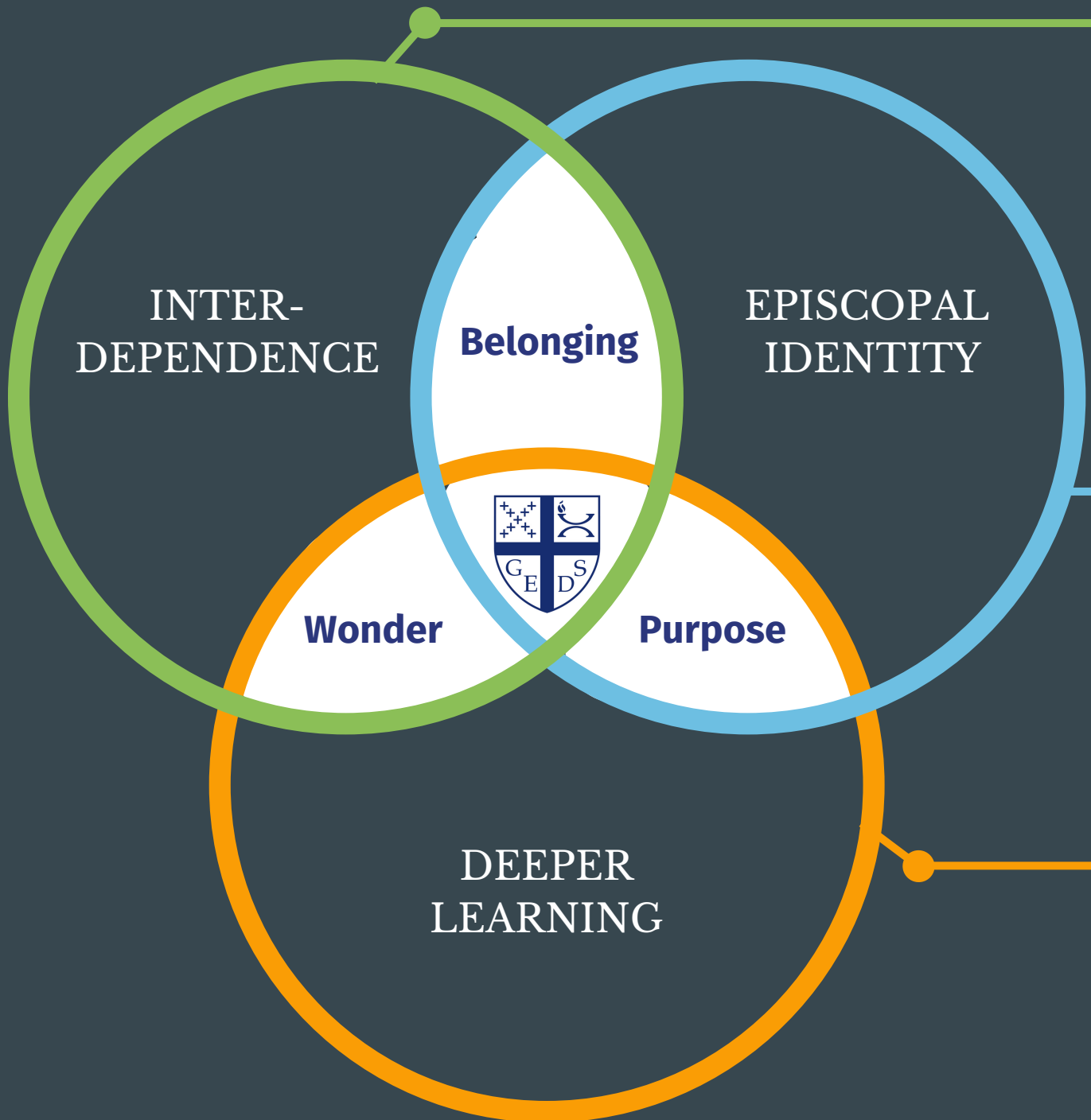


*TO BELONG TO A  
COMMUNITY LIKE  
GRACE IS TO GIVE  
MEANING AND  
PURPOSE TO  
ONE’S LIFE.*



• WHAT MAKES GRACE •

# *GRACE?*





# Our New Mission

Approved on January 18, 2022

Inspired by God's grace, we nurture the potential and growth of each child by providing a joyful and inclusive learning environment rooted in wonder, purpose, and belonging.



**Responsive Classroom** - A student-centered, social and emotional learning approach to teaching

**'Campfire' Gatherings** - Monthly all-school gatherings with a specific focus, topic, or presenter

**Family Engagement** - Fostering deep and active family participation in and out of the classroom

**Emotional Literacy** - Helping students understand their emotions and practice empathy



**Knowledge of Self/Others** - All faith backgrounds help enrich our understanding of religion, spirituality, and faith

**Service Learning** - Connect with people in the broader community and grow as empathic human beings

**Anti-Bias Education** - We model and teach love for all humanity and we value each individual

**Chapel** - Weekly for each grade, Kindergarten-Grade 5 contributes their own prayers



**Innovative Curriculum** - Reggio Emilia Approach, Design Thinking, Project-Based Learning, and Project Zero

**Faculty Collaboration** - Fostering deep collaboration between teachers and specialists across all levels

**Curricular Alignment** - The alignment of our academic curricula across grades

**Integrated Instruction** - Interdisciplinary learning that is deep, holistic, and culturally responsive



Learn more at [geds.org/ourmission](https://geds.org/ourmission)





# THE POWER OF INTENTIONALITY

Understanding the Phrase “Grace Belongs to You”

By Karl Vela, Director of Advancement

Grace has long enjoyed variations of school-wide themes and intentions that have grounded our school in a collective exercise of exploration. For example, in 2018 a school-wide theme on ‘The Chesapeake Bay Watershed’ allowed students to connect their studies to the environment and ecology of the larger world around them. However, in this current school year, this concept of intention-setting was taken to a much deeper and more values-focused direction by the administrative team. This year, the intention was centered around the idea of belonging.

The goal of this intention is to provide a deeper sense of belonging at a time when our students, families, and the world around us are expressing a deep and unsatisfied need for authentic human connection. This intention, most commonly expressed as the phrase “Grace Belongs to You” has since blossomed from a framework of support for our students to a conceptual infrastructure through which Grace will continue to adopt new, timely, and meaningful intentions to propel the quality of its program and the richness of its character.





There are so many salient interpretations of the phrase "Grace Belongs to You" that it would be impossible to try and list them all. At its core, this phrase is a calling to each individual to understand the conditions through which they feel they truly belong and to join in solidarity with others in our community to meet those needs for themselves and others. We all experience belonging differently for myriad reasons; a grandparent who lives on the other side of the country and a student in Kindergarten will naturally have very different requirements, and yet we are all united in the goal of providing belonging for every one of our community members. "Part of it is trying to take the sense of community and widening it," says current parent Jasper Cohens, Jr. "I want this school to represent me and reflect on me in a certain way and so I need to represent the school in a way and that will allow me to help the school grow in the way it wants to, which will ultimately help my son's education."

Although personal on its most basic level, one of the unifying qualities of belonging is that it is often joyful. Incoming Board member and Grade 3 parent Denise Robinson shared about her close relationship with her fellow parents: "Our children precipitated our relationship to one another but we have connected far beyond that. I'm not even sure I knew that I wanted that but it is very clear now that it really is just a huge gift," says Denise. "The parent community has just been awesome. I have so many friends who are in a variety of schools right now from public, private, and parochial that do not have that connection."

For many, this sense of belonging is felt from the first moment they arrive on campus. "Even not knowing anybody, I could tell from the faculty and families that this was a place that was warm and welcoming. It was just a general attitude and felt like everybody knew each other including kids of different grades," says Cohens as he reflects on his very first visit to Grace. Now at the end of his

second year as a Grace parent, Jasper has a more nuanced understanding of how that feeling is created. "Part of it is also feeling not lost... I experience belonging at Grace and even though I'm not in the classroom the way I have been in the past, I still have that sense of inclusion."

As we look into the future, our work to sustain and enrich the feelings of belonging that are a hallmark of the Grace experience will continue while we also adopt new intentions inspired by our updated Mission (Page 9). Next year's school-wide intention is centered around the word 'Wonder' especially as a deeper form of curiosity that inspires a lifelong love of learning. Part of our continuation in fostering belonging is to explore these new intentions together as a community with a learner's mindset. "Our Intention is going to be more intentional this coming year" says Jessica Boritz, current Academic Assistant and incoming Atelierista. "We set the intention but everyone is learning about it together. It's important for the teachers and the parents to consider themselves learners as well."





Ultimately this focus on belonging is a momentary re-calibration on an aspect of our school that is deeply ingrained in everything we do. Belonging is not an act, but an outcome. This year, we are reminded that creating belonging for everyone in our community requires an unwavering commitment to one another. That is something we can lovingly provide because of the grace that is given to us day after day.

It was perhaps one of our Grade 5 students who put it best during #GraceBelongsToYou The Musical when she proclaimed "Grace belongs to all of us! Thank you for all the joyful moments this year, big and small." Truly, belonging can only be created within the courageous hearts and open minds of those with whom we share a community, and it is with deep gratitude for all of our Gryphons that we celebrate and seek to deepen the belonging that flows through Grace. ✚



*Our Intention is going to be more intentional this coming year. We set the intention but everyone is learning about it together. It's important for the teachers and the parents to consider themselves learners as well.*

*- Jessica Boritz, Atelierista*



**GRACE**  
**BELONGS TO YOU**





REMEMBERING

# David O. Williams

MAY 1, 1937 - APRIL 3, 2022



“He was a living and loving testament  
to the mission and vision of Grace”

Dear Grace Community,

On Sunday, April 3, 2022 our beloved Board member David Williams passed away after battling cancer for many years. Joyful and lucid until the end, Dave never wavered in his deep commitment to Grace and his desire to see it thrive. Even while in hospice, Dave was engaged with the school and grateful for its growth.

Dave began his affiliation with the school in 1962 shortly after its founding by Grace Church. He was a friend and staunch supporter to all Heads of School, from Jane Wood up to and including myself. Over his 40 years of connection and service to Grace, Dave served on the Board as a Chair, a Finance Committee stalwart, and a liaison to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (EDOW) on their finance committee. In his professional life, he had a long career as a lawyer with the Labor Department. His two daughters, Rebecca '79 and Priscilla '85, attended Grace. His wife, Marietta, was also deeply involved in the life of the school before her passing in 1995. He is survived by his lovely daughters, a grandchild, and his fiancé Pat.

In the last few years, as Grace was looking for a solution to pay its debt, Dave was deeply engaged in helping the school find a path forward. In the late 90's, he helped the school acquire the property. In his capacity as a member of the finance committee at the EDOW, he represented the interests of the school and Grace Church with equanimity and dedication. The former Chief Operating Officer of EDOW Paul Cooney says it best, “Dave was a very rare breed. Fine lawyer. Great church person. Wonderful human being. I don't know of anyone who had a greater love of Grace School! He knew what it is to really believe in something.”

Dave was on the search committee when I was appointed Head of School in 2016. From the moment I was hired, he was my biggest champion and supporter. He made frequent visits to Grace, and with optimism for the future, he gave generously and often to the Gryphon Fund. Pre-Covid, Dave frequently visited campus to give us support and tell stories of the past. His presence made us all feel like we were part of something larger than ourselves. He gave of his time and his treasure, and Grace held a central place in his long and successful life. He was a living and loving testament to the mission and vision of Grace, and I am indebted to him beyond words. I am grateful to have had a final visit with him a few weeks ago when I delivered a card that all of the children and staff made for him. I am heartened to know that he knew we loved him as much as he loved us.

Jennifer Danish  
Head of School

# #GRACERISING

## Illuminating the Path of Grace's Future

By Karl Vela, Director of Advancement

'Hope,' 'a new day,' 'the horizon,' 'excitement' were just a few of the reactions in the Zoom chat during the State of the School Address on February 10, 2022 when Head of School Jen Danish asked attendees to reflect on a painting by Alain J. Picard entitled *Grace Rising* (pictured below). Much like this vibrant impressionist pastel, Grace is on a bright horizon faced with limitless opportunity. The hashtag and phrase #GraceRising which has adorned everything from Grace Give Day to Graduation is both a celebratory acknowledgment of this trajectory and a commitment to maintaining it.

Perhaps the strongest reflection of #GraceRising lives in the words of our new Mission Statement (Page 9). This new Mission, carefully crafted with the inclusion of faculty, staff, the Board, and many others, serves as a North Star for Grace in everything from the academic program to fundraising and admissions. One of the major themes, unpacked during the discernment process, is that Grace is by nature a place that is diverse, equitable, just, and inclusive. Likewise, there is a substantial and critical role for every one of us to play in Grace's continued ascension. This new Mission provides an orientation for that core piece of our identity so that we might all journey on the path of #GraceRising together.

This year, there have also been major material and practical developments that have buttressed the trajectory of the school's future, not least of all a land sale to Montgomery County. Thanks to the herculean efforts of the Head of School, Board

of Governors, and Grace Church leadership, the school sold the property on which it sits back to the County, (which was originally purchased in 1999). The sale price enabled the school to pay off its debts, establish a capital expenditure escrow account to address deferred maintenance, and create generous cash reserves. Most importantly, this sale allows the school to remain in its home for a minimum of ten years and for up to 20 years with potential renewals. Thanks to the wise investment of the leaders and supporters who helped Grace purchase this land 22 years ago, the school is now on an unencumbered financial footing focused on thriving, rather than surviving.

The look of Grace has also changed substantially this year. Thanks to the aforementioned financial security from the land sale, many capital



*Grace Rising*, Alain J. Picard



improvements have taken shape. The projects have included the painting of the building, new paved surfaces, a carpeted interior, heavy landscaping, and HVAC & electrical upgrades. All these changes have provided Grace's physical plant with a major visual and functional upgrade and there are other major forthcoming improvements.

And yet, for all of these wonderful changes, the true ethos of #GraceRising is intangible and lives in the hearts and minds of our Gryphons, the students, faculty, parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends. One measurable manifestation of the strength of the school's foundation comes in the form of teacher and administrative staff retention. "It does feel like this is a unique time in our school's history" says Assistant Head of School for Academics, Kate Kelliher. "Grace has always been a really special school, a place where teachers choose to be because they really care about the kids and our community. As simple as that sounds, that is not the case at many other schools. Many schools are having massive turnover of both teachers and administrators, and we are not seeing that this year at all."

The administrative team, in concert with the faculty, are also developing the strength of our program in new and exciting ways every day. New members of the administration and faculty bring fresh talent to complement the long-tenured members of the team that have made Grace what it is for decades. "We have thought leaders now, people who are at the top of their field," says Carrie Beaudreau, Board Secretary and parent of two alumni from the classes of 2014 and 2016. "She [Head of School Jen Danish] is really committed to delivering the best product. Jen

*We have thought  
leaders now, people  
who are at the top of  
their field."*

*- Carrie Beaudreau, P'14, '16*

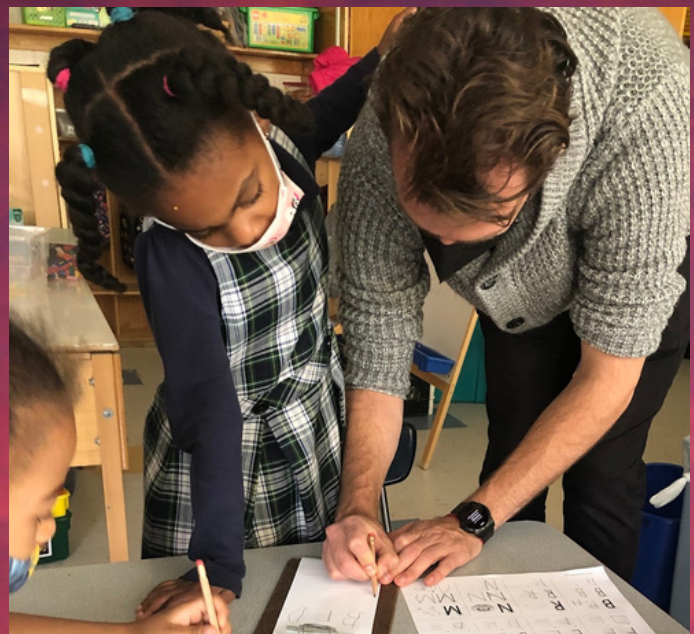


knows her stuff and she is sharp." A steadfast and loving commitment to Grace is not held by the faculty alone. This year, Gryphons with all manner of relationship to the school have shown historic outpourings of volunteerism and support. The Gryphon Fund has received 100% participation from every faculty, staff, and Board member, with current families not far behind, showing their highest participation percentages in years. In November, Grace's first-ever Grace Give Day saw record participation from current and alumni families and friends to create the most successful single day of philanthropy in Grace's history. All of this, combined with the exuberant and active volunteerism of the PTO, has galvanized our school community around generously and joyfully offering support, each in their own individual ways.

Not only is Grace Rising, it is growing! The 2022-2023 school year will welcome the largest student body within the last half decade, including two full Pre-Kindergarten classes. Thanks to the refined vision and development of our Reggio Emilia-inspired early education program, Grace is also developing a well deserved reputation as a school where our youngest learners are empowered to develop their own lifelong love of learning in an environment that fosters their whole person.

It is also important to acknowledge the context within which Grace is rising. Faced with yet another year of unprecedented challenges to in-person learning from the pandemic among countless other social, ecological, and geopolitical upheavals in our society, many schools are suffering from fractured communities and beleaguered processes. "In some ways we're still reeling from COVID, but I think it's a piece of our history that has made us stronger," says Jennifer Hamilton, Kindergarten lead teacher with 22 years experience at Grace. "This year I had the best Back to School Night I've ever had. The parents wanted community and they wanted help. They were so grateful."

In all things, our school not only honors the inalienable right to receive grace, acceptance, and inclusion for who we are, but it also calls upon us to lift up and nurture that ethos. For our dedicated faculty, our bright and curious students, and supportive families, #GraceRising is more than just a statement; it is a calling. Grace is feeling the buoyancy of a rising tide and it is due to the countless actions, large and small, from many members of our community. As new Learning Specialist Taylor Ray put it, "Grace is the perfect name for this school because there truly is grace within this building, and we all give that to one another throughout every day and year." ✚



*"Grace has always been a really special school, a place where teachers choose to be because they really care about the kids and our community. As simple as that sounds, that is not the case at many other schools."*

- Kate Kelliher, Assistant Head of School for Academics





# GRADUATION 2021



## Graduation Remarks from Grade 5 Lead Teacher Luigi LaPietra

There were countless changes this year. One difference was that we could not talk while we ate lunch inside the classroom. Therefore, during lunch, we enjoyed audiobooks, podcasts, and nature movies. But, one show stood out from the rest. When I put on Bob Ross' *Joy of Painting*, we all sat mesmerized by his tingle-inducing voice, the rasping of his tools, and the hypnotic landscapes that took shape in front of our eyes. As I thought about this year's class, and this year in general, I made connections to the wisdom that Bob would sprinkle into his show. I wanted to share a few of them.

**"You need the dark in order to show the light."** We do not need to be reminded of the darkness in the world, especially after the past 15 months. It seemed impossible that there could be light in this world; not this year. But our community was the light that stood in stark contrast to the dark we saw daily in the world. We were able to join together, even if it was through a Zoom window, to create the warmth, strength, and love our community is known for.

**"It's hard to see things when you are too close. Take a step back and look."** Many times I compare my students to little seedlings. Grace has been the nursery that took tender care of you. During your time here, we teachers nurtured, challenged, knew, and above all, loved you for who you are. Now it is time for you to go out into that big world. At this moment, you might only 'see' leaving Grace. But, I would like for you to 'take a step back' and reflect on your years here. Truly look at the full picture of your time, and take great pride in your growth.

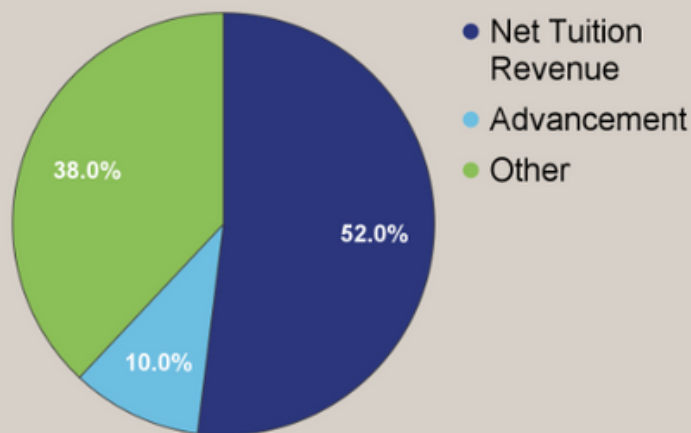
Class of 2021, here is some final wisdom from Bob Ross: **"Find freedom on this canvas."** Graduates, there is a canvas in front of you now. As Bob would say, **"It's time for some big decisions. Where are we going to put our mountain?"** You are on the path of discovering and deciding who you want to be. You have a new school ahead of you, where you will forge your own path. I hope that you will take with you values that Mrs. Shalonda and I have instilled in you: kindness, courage, friendship, and character (to borrow a line from *Wonder*.) I trust they will help guide you. Do not be afraid to take measured risks, push yourselves academically and socially, and trust in your character; as Bob said, **"Go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is."**



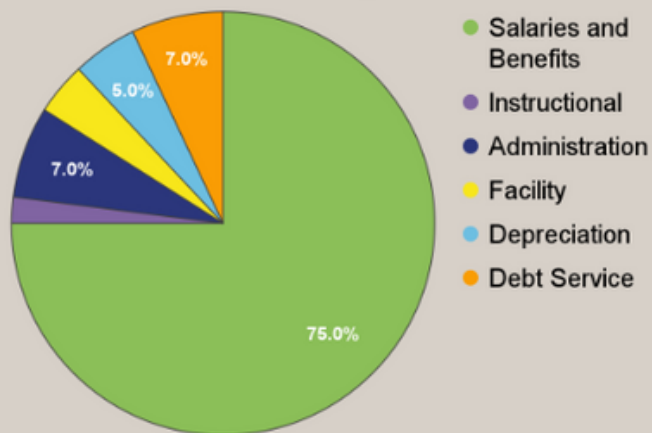


# ANNUAL Report

2020-21 Revenues



2020-21 Expenses



## Gryphon Fund

Donations to the Gryphon Fund, provide unrestricted monies for use during the current academic year. These gifts allow us to meet our highest priority needs inside and outside of the classroom, and therefore make an immediate positive impact on the students and programs at Grace.

## Grace Scholars Fund for Variable Tuition

For 61 years, the Grace community has been committed to the belief that we are better individuals because we are part of a diverse and inclusive whole. This fund allows Grace to sustain a community of families who are equal partners in, and equitable contributors to, their children's education at Grace.

## Introducing the The Jane and Tony Santy Scholarship Fund!

Established in 2021 by Chris Santy '82, The Jane and Tony Santy Scholarship Fund (The Santy Fund) will provide a minimum of 10 years of partial Variable Tuition funding to students with financial need and whose family demonstrates a financial dedication to Grace on behalf of their children. will empower grace to retain and bolster a socio-economically diverse community where all children can learn, grow, and belong.





# Gryphon Fund & Grace Scholars Fund

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The Clark Charitable Foundation, Inc.  
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Grace Church  
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Thornedge Foundation

# "There's No Place Like Grace" Spring Auction 2021

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Dean Griffith and Michelle Artz  
Traci and Drew Grigg  
Don and Ann Hague  
The Reverend Glenna Huber and Richard Huber  
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*Self Portrait*  
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