

## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

#### **Our Need**

Our current Priest in Charge, The Reverend Mary Alice Mathison, is nearing the end of her three-year contract with our churches having completed a discernment process for Shared Ministry that resulted in a joint Covenant. Reverend Mathison's personal aspirations are leading her ministry in a new direction which calls us to seek a new priest. Our goal is to attract a priest who will continue to serve both congregations with traditions and values of the Episcopal Church. At the same time, our hope is for our new priest to be open-minded and creative in ways that will help grow both churches. Like all churches it is our hope to find a dynamic and inspirational preacher that leaves us spiritually fulfilled as we exit worship services. We love our current, largely "senior", membership but also hope for a priest with the interest and ability to attract younger members and their families.

#### **Profile:**

Parish/Mission: St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

City: Panama City Beach and Laguna Beach, Florida

Type of Community: Town

Type of Parish: Yoked

#### *St. Thomas by the Sea*

Zip: 32413

Phone: (850) 234-2919

Website: [www.stthomasbytheseapcb.org](http://www.stthomasbytheseapcb.org)

Number of Communicants: 102

Number of Sunday Services: 67 (Includes evening Beach Services)

Avg Total Sunday Attendance: 51

#### *Grace*

Zip: 32407

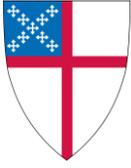
Phone: (850) 235-4136

Website: [www.gracespirit.org](http://www.gracespirit.org)

Number of Communicants: 129

Number of Sunday Services: 48

Avg Total Sunday Attendance: 42



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

#### Financial Data

##### *St. Thomas*

Total Budget: \$121,666

Total Debt: \$0

Total cash on Hand (Checking/Savings) as of Dec 31, 2019: \$125,139

Total Pledge to Diocese: \$10,321

Total Pledges: 2019 - 30 (\$61,933), 2020 - 25 (\$69,570)

Audit Done: August 27, 2019

Parochial Report Filed: March 16, 2020

##### *Grace*

Total Budget: \$152,550 (2019); \$153,077 (2020)

Total Debt: \$25,400 (\$300/month)

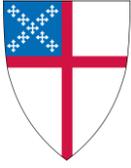
Total cash on Hand (Checking/Savings) as Dec 31, 2019: \$55,248 (includes funds allocated for Hurricane Michael recovery)

Total Pledge to Diocese: \$13,800 (2019); \$10,127 (2020)

Total Pledges: 18 pledges - \$73,940 (2019); 15 pledges - \$63,270 (2020)

Audit Done: August 21, 2019

Parochial Report Filed: Annually (Available upon request.)



**EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA**  
**St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches**

**Previous Incumbents of this Position:**

*St. Thomas*

Name of Last Incumbent: Rev. Mary Alice Mathison	11-01-2017	11-01-2020
Name of Last Incumbent: Rev. Charles R. Floyd	05-01-1995	11-1-2017

*Grace*

Name of Last Incumbent: Rev. Mary Alice Mathison	11-01-2017	11-01-2020
Name of Last Incumbent: Rev. Joseph Hagberg	05-01-2007	11-01-2017

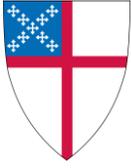
**Position Specifics**

- Position Title: Priest-in-Charge
- Date Position is Open: 11-01-2020
- End Date of Position: Open-ended
- Number of Hours per week: Full time
- Total Compensation: \$87,000

**Information about our Churches**

The Churches of Panama City Beach are composed of the shared ministry between St. Thomas by the Sea Episcopal Church <https://www.stthomasbytheseapcb.org/> and Grace Episcopal Church <http://www.gracespirit.org/>. We are part of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast <https://www.diocgc.org/>. The two churches are separated by 10 miles with St. Thomas by the Sea located on the west side of the neighboring unincorporated community of Laguna Beach [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laguna\\_Beach,\\_Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laguna_Beach,_Florida) and Grace located on the east side of Panama City Beach <http://www.pcbgov.com/about-us/about-the-community>.

While the populations of each town are approximately 4,000 and 14,000, respectively, the inclusion of unincorporated towns and rural population in proximity to either church, excluding Panama City, is approximately 25,000. The addition of Margaritaville, a development of 3,500 homes still in its infancy to the north of Panama City Beach, will likely add dramatically to our population.



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

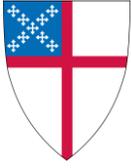
Panama City Beach is a popular tourist destination with millions of visitors every year. Peak daily population during summer is estimated to 100,000. Our beaches, part of what has been nicknamed the “Emerald Coast,” are the primary attraction. The spectacular soft white sandy beaches that literally squeaks when you walk on it, and emerald blue/green ocean water must be experienced to be fully appreciated. Signs at the edge of town proclaim Panama City Beach as home to “The Most Beautiful Beaches in the World.” You will find little disagreement to that claim from any of us.

In addition to the beach, Panama City Beach has much to offer. We have one public high school, one public middle school and three public grade schools with an additional public grade school under construction. There is one church-based pre-school as well as a host of private school options. Both Gulf Coast State College and Florida State University, located “across the bridge” in Panama City, are close by. Housing opportunities are plentiful. Because of our climate, there are family friendly concerts and community activities ongoing year-round. The trend in recent years is to make our area family friendly by instituting ordinances that discourage our town from becoming a wild college Spring Break destination.

St. Thomas by the Sea first held its first service July 1953. We formally became an organized mission in 1954. This was five years before the founding of, what was then known as, West Panama City Beach. Land for the church building, located one block from the Gulf of Mexico coast, was donated by the Lahan family. Relatives of those donors continue as church members to this day. Our parish hall, Jewell Hall, is named for our first priest, The Reverend George Jewell. Parish status was granted in 1988. Shortly thereafter St. Thomas East, a mission of the Parish of St. Thomas by the Sea which later became Grace Church, was established thanks in great part to The Reverend Jack Wilhite. The two churches were known as “The Twin Churches of St. Thomas” until each became independent in 1992.

The two churches share our priest equally. On [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), you can find us by searching *The Churches of Panama City Beach*. While both parishes function independently, we occasionally share activities and support for each other. A significant percent of the membership of both congregations are retirees. Each church has their own outreach programs. Each church attracts several “snowbird” members during the winter months. Friends arrive annually from various parts of the United States as well as from Canada. We love greeting their return each year.

Grace and St. Thomas by the Sea each typically hold Sunday morning Rite II Communion services, with traditional organ music, at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., respectively. Each churches’ choir, small but mighty, proudly sing anthems year-round.



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace parishioners are a closely knit group. Many of us faithfully serve as acolytes, lectors, ushers, choir members, altar guild members and flower committee members. We come together for special events such as funerals, weddings and baptisms to plan, participate, mourn, and celebrate with our fellow members.

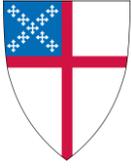
The attached *Covenant for Shared Ministry*, dated January 5, 2020, details the formal relationship between our churches.

#### Outreach

Both churches are proud of our community outreach activities.

#### St. Thomas by the Sea

- Alcohol Anonymous - Three nights every week St. Thomas hosts Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.
- Beach Care Services - We volunteer and financially support Beach Care Services, a 501(c)(3) organization that provides emergency assistance with rent payments, utilities, transportation, etcetera to those living and working in the Panama City Beach area.
- Supper at Grace - We are one of the churches in the rotation that provide Supper at Grace.
- Mom's Day Out – This is an event to help parents of young children find time to complete important tasks without having to endure the expense of a babysitter.
- Pre-school/Daycare feasibility study – Thanks to the receipt of a New Episcopal Community Grant, St. Thomas will conduct a feasibility study to determine the merits of opening a pre-school/daycare. Unfortunately, due to restrictions caused by coronavirus pandemic, this study is on hold.
- West Bay Elementary – St. Thomas has a formal business partnership with this school. We have provided food baskets and certificates for Thanksgiving turkeys for the school to distribute. We built "Buddy Benches" for the school grounds. Members have volunteered as mentors through the Elevate Bay program.
- After School Assistance Program, aka, ASAP – St. Thomas donated school supplies, backpacks, T-shirts and Christmas gifts.
- Miracle League Team sponsorship – We sponsor a Special Olympics baseball team for the annual tournament held at Frank Brown Park.



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

#### Grace

- A New Day – The other half of the New Episcopal Community Grant, mentioned above, allowed Grace to begin a partnership with A New Day. A New Day is a Community Transitional Resource Center that operates as a faith-based 501(c)(3) with the mission of assisting and providing hope and support to individuals in transition. A member of our congregation was trained to assist men and women reentering our community. Care is provided to individuals who are: post incarceration, PTSD military veterans, and post Hurricane Michael trauma victims, to name a few. By partnering with A New Day, Grace is a spiritual resource for many who are suffering.
- Supper at Grace – For the past 20 years, Grace has hosted this program to feed the homeless and others in need. Meals for a sit-down dinner are prepared every Thursday evening. During the coronavirus pandemic meals are served on a carryout basis. Grace partners with other churches, including St. Thomas, to host both preparation and delivery of meals on a rotating basis. To quote one of our parishioners, “To me, *Supper at Grace* is the epitome of Jesus’ lessons.”
- Annual fund raiser - Grace holds an annual fall fundraiser. We have had successful garage sales, pork butt sales, and a pumpkin patch. Unfortunately, Hurricane Michael hindered recent efforts.

#### What we learned from our Congregational Survey

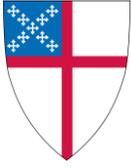
Before preparing our profile, and starting this search process, we thought it important to first seek the opinions of our congregations. To gather this information, we conducted an email survey. We were thrilled to receive 69 responses from the 164 requests sent. Following is a narrative of what we learned.

First, whom did we hear from? There was a near even split of responses from each church. Almost half of the responses came from parishioners who have been with us at least ten years. Two thirds of respondents were female. Perhaps most striking is no respondents were under the age of 50 and 44% were 70 years old or older.

Nearly all respondents believe it important that our priest adheres to traditional sacraments and worship customs of the Episcopal Church. A priest’s ability to present a captivating and inspiring sermon received the second strongest response. There was less consensus on the importance that the sermon be based on the day’s assigned readings, which would seem to indicate many approve of the priest having the flexibility to speak on other inspirational or timely topics.

Most rate fulfillment of spirituality moderately to very important along with the importance of pastoral care for those who are suffering.

Community outreach is viewed as important through both the continuation and enhancement of current programs and by the potential addition of new programs. Some expressed the importance of outreach programs that are sincere, help the needy and help grow our congregations.



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

Christian education for both adults and youth is seen as important, though we have few youths who attend.

Interest in fellowship activities, both tied to religious events and more socially related events, got a mixed response. However, many desire additional organized opportunities to spend time together.

Membership growth of our churches received another very important rating. Most would like to see attendance and membership grow, especially with younger families.

Expanded use of social media did not receive an overwhelming endorsement, though, considering the age of most respondents, this might be expected. Could there be a correlation between growth, youth, and social media?

#### **Summary**

We believe the opportunity presented here is an excellent position for the right person. Two warm and caring congregations excited about the future and located in a beautiful and desirable community. We are eager to hear from you!

Joint Search Committee, The Episcopal Churches of Panama City Beach

*Marna Zok*

*Carl Walters*

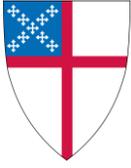
*Bill Smythe*

*Ellena Roland*

*Tom Jacobson*

*Bonnie Hale*

*Debbie Edmondson*



## EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA

### St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches

#### A Covenant for Shared Ministry of the Episcopal Churches of Panama City Beach between St Thomas by the Sea Episcopal Church and Grace Episcopal Church

**Purpose:**

We, the people of St. Thomas by the Sea Episcopal Church, Laguna Beach, and Grace Episcopal Church, Panama City Beach, hereinafter the Episcopal Churches of Panama City Beach, recognize that by combining resources we can strengthen and grow our parishes, hereby enter into this Covenant of Shared Ministry (hereinafter "Covenant") to bring the Gospel to the larger community of Panama City Beach.

**Vision:**

Episcopalians known throughout Panama City Beach as Christians proclaiming the Good News of Jesus.

**Mission:**

To grow the Episcopal community through fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation creating a powerful force for help, healing, and hope.

*Ways and Means:*

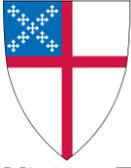
1. Sharing a priest offers synergies in leadership and finance to accomplish our mission.
2. Developing creative outreach and advocacy in ways that more effectively bring the Gospel to the larger community.
3. Seeking opportunities to increase fellowship between the congregations.
4. Drawing from each church's worship and traditions to strengthen our liturgy and music.
5. Providing education and formation opportunities for people of all ages.
6. Enhancing communication between the churches and with the community at large.
7. Increasing our visibility in the community through branding as "The Episcopal Churches of Panama City Beach".
8. Encouraging all members' investment in time, talent, and treasure to increase opportunities in evangelism.
9. Holding ourselves mutually accountable for developing and fulfilling our mission.

**Affirmations:**

1. The formation of this Covenant is supported by both vestries and the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.
2. Each church will maintain its own identity. This is not a merger or consolidation and does not involve the dissolution of either congregation. Each church will maintain its own facilities, vestry, by-laws, and finances.
3. A Shared Ministry Team will continue to operate in order to foster opportunities between the parishes and for the broader Panama City Beach area.
4. Amendments and extensions of this Covenant require the signed approval of both vestries.
5. We will be flexible and understanding concerning the priest's time and commitment to each church and the Diocese.

**Responsibilities:**

1. The vestries will charter a Shared Ministry Team which will work collaboratively in assessing and making recommendations to both vestries for improvement to the shared ministry. The Shared



**EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF PANAMA CITY BEACH FLORIDA**  
**St. Thomas by the Sea and Grace Episcopal Churches**

Ministry Team will be comprised of the Senior Warden, one vestry member, and one lay member of each church. The maximum term of consecutive service for the vestry member and lay member will be three years.

2. Clergy and vestries will foster opportunities for increased sharing in areas such as programs, fellowship, outreach, communication, and worship, within the context of honoring traditions of each parish.
3. Each parish will share equitably in the cost of supporting a priest as specified in the priest's Letter of Agreement approved by both vestries and the Diocese.
4. The parishes may agree at any time to share non-clergy costs for any purpose of mutual interest. Such costs will be approved by both vestries. Cost sharing agreements for non-clergy expenses may be terminated at any time at the request from either vestry after a mutually agreed transition period.
5. A joint vestry meeting will be held at least quarterly with an agenda, time and location as mutually agreed by the priest and senior wardens of each parish.
6. The vestries of both parishes will establish a joint search committee and with Diocesan oversight conduct a search in 2020 for a priest.
7. Either parish must inform the other if it intends to cease participation in the Covenant at least six months prior to that event.
8. Disputes involving the Covenant which cannot be resolved by the parishes will be referred to the Bishop or his designee for mediation and resolution.

**Duration and Accountability:**

Both congregations will commit to a three-year period for the continued development of this shared ministry, beginning with the signing of this covenant. After the first three years, this covenant will continue in force unless specifically amended by both vestries.

No later than 24 months after adoption of this covenant, the vestries and priest-in-charge shall engage in a Mutual Ministry Review. Subsequent Mutual Ministry Reviews shall be scheduled and administered as outlined in the priest's Letter of Agreement.

As of this date \_\_\_\_ (month), \_\_\_\_ (day), \_\_\_\_ (year), the undersigned vestry members of the Episcopal Churches of Panama City Beach, pledge their commitment to this Covenant.

\_\_\_\_\_ (outgoing Senior Warden, St. Thomas by the Sea)

\_\_\_\_\_ (outgoing Senior Warden, Grace Episcopal)

\_\_\_\_\_ (incoming Senior Warden, St. Thomas by the Sea)

\_\_\_\_\_ (incoming Senior Warden, Grace Episcopal)

This Covenant will be effective on the date in which the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast signs this document.

\_\_\_\_\_ (month) \_\_\_\_ (day), \_\_\_\_ (year)

Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast