

Statement from the Elders of Grace Community Church - June 20, 2023

We have loved and served this entire community for over 200 years. We are saddened by the events of the past two weeks. We want to take an opportunity to share our perspective.

In the past couple years, our church has been growing, especially with the children's program. As we have considered how to manage this growth, we realized that we ideally wanted dedicated use of the space we have rented out. This spring, in accordance with the mutually agreed lease, we provided the required notice - with an offer of flexibility, so as to not disrupt the current school year - so that we could continue to grow our program in the space we have.

The daycare owners told us that would most likely mean they would lose their jobs, lose the business, and the parents who had signed up for 2023-2024 would be unable to find another alternative. Out of compassion for the business owners and parents of the daycare kids, we agreed to extend their lease not just through this school year, but through the following school year as well.

About the inspection topic: The remaining minor punch list items have been addressed now, and we have requested reinspection, which would allow simple corrective action of providing the documentation the daycare needs. We are a small church with a volunteer facilities staff doing its best to serve everyone; any indication to the contrary is categorically untrue.

About the flags: This year, someone put up pride flags all along the front of the church. We didn't know who put them there, and they were on our property. Because we are a politically and culturally diverse congregation, we do not put up signage for many things, even good things, on the church front. We generally steer clear of any displays that may be interpreted as political.

About the vandalism: For the past week, a series of untruths about our church, and about the daycare tenancy, were posted on several social media sites. As a result, a steady wave of hate was directed toward the church. We chose not to fight back or want to escalate the situation. Then, on Friday, June 16, our church was defaced in a criminal act, and we were saddened by this response.

Regarding Sunday's protest, we were glad it was peaceful, and are grateful for that. We are particularly grateful to the Marblehead Police Department. Chief Dennis King and his team were outstanding, professional, and fair to everyone.

Moving forward, we are excited to continue serving the Marblehead community for generations to come.