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The Rev. Graham, who had a heart for social justice issues, was a prominent leader in business and public policy arenas. She assumed leadership of St. John's in 1996 in time to oversee completion of a major renovation and celebration of the church's 200th anniversary. Membership was declining when she arrived, and some members refused to take communion from her because she was a woman -- the church's first female rector, in fact. In time, however, her effusive warmth and energy won them over, said the Rev. Albert Scariato, associate rector.

"The attendance numbers went up, and the spirit went up," he said. "We became more inclusive and welcoming of all people."

The Rev. Graham established a preschool at the church. "The children adored 'Miss Meg,' " who met with them during the once-a-month children's chapel, Scariato said.

Under her leadership, the parish also hired its first openly gay staff member in 1997.

The Right Rev. John Bryson Chane, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, described the Rev. Graham as "a rare breed of priest" who was loved and respected and who embraced diversity in the community and in the larger church. She brought young couples and children into the parish, he said.

Before becoming an Episcopal priest, the Rev. Graham, whose sense of humor complemented her impeccable dress and looks, headed several nonprofit organizations and served on numerous boards that reflected her belief that "we are all the fabric of the community."

From 1989 to 1993, she was president of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse and was responsible for leading a 52-member board of directors in formulating national policy and primary research in the area of child abuse prevention and neglect.

She also served as director of the Give Five program at Independent Sector from 1986 to 1989, working to increase philanthropic giving and volunteering in communities.

Susan G. Baker recalled when the Rev. Graham became a co-founder and president of the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 1983. Starting up a nonprofit group is never easy, said Baker, one of the co-founders and co-chairman of the alliance. But the Rev. Graham "was so creative and full of gusto" and was able to use her many contacts to help the fledgling group. "She's just the main reason we made it those years," Baker said.

The Rev. Graham served a two-year term as president of the Association of Junior Leagues International from 1980 to 1982. In 1982, the Junior League of Washington created a volunteer service award in her name to recognize a graduating senior in Washington who demonstrated outstanding volunteer leadership.
She also had been a consultant with the Lily Endowment in Indianapolis in the early 1980s, designing and directing a program to empower trusteeship for multidenominational seminaries in the United States and Canada.

The Rev. Graham was born in Cleveland and graduated from National-Louis University in Evanston, Ill. She received a master of divinity degree from the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria in 1991. Her other studies included clinical pastoral education in the shock trauma unit at Washington Hospital Center and the Clergy Leadership Project in New York.

She served as an interim associate rector at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Frederick in 1995 and as associate rector at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Washington from 1991 to 1994.

Over the years, children remained a primary concern. She was a founding board member of Covenant House and the Bright Beginnings homeless day-care center and served on the Children's Defense Fund advisory board and Children's Hospital advisory board. She also was on the boards of the Points of Light Foundation and the Washington YMCA and the advisory board of the National Commission for Immigration Reforms. While on the board of the National Foundation to Improve Television for Children in the 1990s, she joined in a pioneering lawsuit in Boston to change television programming.

The Rev. Graham's reach also extended to international matters. In 1980, she attended the United Nations Mid-Decade Conference for Women in Denmark, and in 1990 she participated in a study to evaluate policy positions in Israeli and Palestinian efforts to resolve hostilities in the region.

A leader in her diocese, she was a president of the Washington Episcopal Clergy Association and chaired the transition committee that selected Chane.

In 2003, she received the Mayor's Community Service Award for her commitment to children and volunteerism, and she was hailed as an "urban priest who walks the community." At the time, according to a District announcement of the award, she said service was natural to her.

"We live in a city that has enormous challenges," she said then. "There is hope, if we focus on children as priorities. . . . We need to think of children as being sacred."

Survivors include her husband, William P. Graham of Washington; three children, Lisa Graham Mrozek of Pasadena, Calif., Heather Gray Graham of Berkeley, Calif., and Jennifer Bennett Graham, of Aspen, Colo.; a sister; and one granddaughter.

By Yvonne Shinhoster Lamb
Washington Post Staff Writer
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