



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

Grace
Presbyterian
Church

Grace Presbyterian Church Strategic Plan

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GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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Introduction

The members of the Strategic Planning Committee, as representatives of the broader community of Grace Presbyterian Church, have created this document as a concise overview of who we are as a church body, our values and priorities as we move into a new season of leadership, and our hopes for what is to come. It is the result of data gathered at numerous Town Hall meetings over the past year, conducted under the leadership of interim pastor Dr. Steven Marsh. Through these meetings, members of Grace Presbyterian reflected on its history, strengths, weaknesses, connection to Wichita, and connection to the broader presbytery. The conclusions drawn from these meetings are captured in the following pages.

Above all, Grace is a community of Christ-followers who care deeply about the worship of God and care for one's neighbor. It is the hope of the Strategic Planning Committee that this document will be a useful tool for Grace's Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as they honor God's call to name a new pastor for our community. Perhaps more importantly, it is our hope that this document will glorify God as Grace moves into its next chapter.

Strategic Plan Committee Members

Under the direction of Rev. Dr. Steven Marsh

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Church Profile: Who We Are

Grace Presbyterian is a community of believers motivated by love for God and for each other. Founded in 1909, we are a PCUSA Church deeply connected to the presbytery and a community church at our core. We are open to all, regardless of race, sexuality, culture, gender identity, age, politics, or socio-economic status. We are located in the heart of Wichita as an urban church, reaching those nearby and drawing members from beyond our neighborhood. Though Grace is a thriving community of Christ followers, it is not immune to the national trend of declining attendance. Despite this landscape, you will find at Grace that if you simply ask, you will have no shortage of people raising their hand to help you and “do life” with you, and to remind you that you belong in God’s family.

Within our building, we offer a Christian-based preschool to 50 families called Jacob’s Learning Ladder. This preschool is highly regarded in the Wichita community and often has a waiting list. Our Youth Ministry offers Sunday school and robust Middle and Senior High youth groups. In addition, our Youth Director has built a relationship with our neighborhood middle school and provides a weekly lunchtime Bible study and bi-weekly Friday after-school fellowship. We have a strong connection with and support our local WYLDlife/Young Life chapter.

Our Senior High school group takes a yearly mission trip, partnering with organizations like Team Effort, to locales in the US and Mexico, providing hard labor and worship to those lacking the resources and physical abilities. They have assisted with home repair, property clean-up, Vacation Bible School, roofing, hurricane clean-up, and neighborhood beautification, all while learning about socio-economic injustices and race relations. They focus on building life-long relationships with those they serve.

Strong worship is at the heart of Grace. A recent study revealed that our members prioritized aspects of discipleship and faith growth but identified worship as the most important priority in their church life. Worship is central to Grace’s mission, “Making Fully Devoted Followers of Jesus Christ.” It serves as the primary reason for our existence and the main avenue for praising God.

On Sunday, we offer two distinct services for our congregation. For those seeking a more informal setting and contemporary music, a modern worship service is held at 9 am. This is held in our Great Room, where music is provided by our praise band. A more traditional service is at 11 am in our sanctuary. This service offers a more conventional structure, with traditional

music featuring choir, bell choir, piano, and organ. Both worship spaces are enhanced by unique visual arts which celebrate various themes and seasons throughout the year, provided by our own Arts Team.

At Grace, we care deeply about and for one another. We believe that the love of Jesus Christ should not only be shared among our congregation but should inspire us to engage the community around us and seek out the lonely, vulnerable, and those who are in need. We have an active Deacons Board that provides member care in the way of calls, in-person visits, home communion, and events. As a congregation of 'doers', we are passionate about our Wichita community and societies abroad. Many members volunteer to maintain our building and grounds, provide extracurricular events outside of worship and our church building, and support projects giving back to the community. Some of the community service programs that we offer or participate in are:

- Providing worship space each Saturday and Sunday for the South Sudanese Presbyterian Church.
- Providing meeting space for free or at a low cost to local organizations such as Gamblers Anonymous, the Girl Scouts, PEO, and Delta Kappa Gamma, to name a few.
- The Bus Ticket Ministry provides free bus tickets, prayer, coffee, and toiletries to riders in need of a little extra help.
- Refugee Team – a group of members who work directly with our local International Rescue Committee. Some volunteers help raise funds, collect household items, or teach English, and some have even housed families who have been displaced here in Wichita.
- Justice Together – We are one of 35 faith organizations that have come together to launch a local multi-faith justice organization that works with city and county governments. This organization is making a big impact on mental health services and homelessness in our community.
- Good Neighbor Team – This team of Grace members assists homeowners in our community who are at risk for a court date or facing fines for code violations. Projects include yard cleanup, shed demolition, and minor repairs.
- On a broader scale, we have supported adult teams in outreach in Kenya, Haiti, and Cuba over the years, with whom we have built lasting relationships.

Pastor Profile: What We Are Seeking in our Next Pastor

At Grace, we are driven by the Greatest Commandment: We seek to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul and to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. We hope to find a pastor who is caring, compassionate, and approachable. We seek someone who will help us continue to be known as a warm church that shares the love of Jesus Christ, making everyone feel loved, valued, and seen.

We seek a candidate who leads collegially and not in a top-down approach. As a congregation, we have decided that the best professional responsibilities that fit our congregation's needs are the following, in order of importance: leading worship, building community within our congregation, caring for those in our congregation, modeling service in the community, and finally teaching/educating beyond Sunday worship.

When leading worship, we are seeking a pastor who can deliver thought-provoking, engaging, and well-organized sermons that have application for young and old alike while connecting scripture to real life. Effective time management is important to us during worship to allow for more interactive and less hurried services. Our new pastor will be supported by an active worship team and other lay leaders eager to assist. Grace is also in the process of developing and strengthening a service preparation team. In a Sunday worship service, the congregation seeks to be educated, challenged, and, above all, strengthened in our faith.

We desire a pastor who can help build community within our congregation of diverse ages, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds. An ideal pastor will create a sense of connection between members of our distinct worship services. One of the most important attributes of the next pastor of Grace will be an ability to *connect* people to one another and the church's broader mission. There is a strong sense that Grace is made up of dedicated, talented, service-oriented members who simply need to be invited into the greater story of God's work in Wichita. An ability to recognize and call out people's gifts will be key.

It is important to our church that the pastor cares for those in our congregation. Our ideal candidate will be comfortable visiting members going through hard times while also encouraging our church's continued

effort to make all members feel loved and valued no matter their circumstances.

There are many members who seek teaching and education beyond Sunday worship. Currently, there are different Bible study groups within our congregation. However, our church has expressed considerable interest in a pastor providing in-depth education about Biblical history and context. This continued education will give us a greater understanding of the Bible and our faith as a church.

Our church continually strives to improve the ways in which we serve God and each other. A pastor with fresh ideas for attracting new members and young families will be critical to Grace's ability to thrive in a new and changing landscape. We seek a pastor who shares our members' passion to become better followers of Christ.

To continue our service to those around us, we seek a pastor who will help us model our service in the community. We recognize we have areas we need to improve and strengthen as well. Working with other churches is an opportunity for us to do good and better use resources. We seek a pastor who will assist in increasing our outreach to youth through our Young Life/WYLDlife partnership. Ultimately, we're seeking a pastor who will maximize our gifts and talents and help us reach the community, youth, and other churches.

If you are driven by God's love and compassion, we would like you to consider our church.

Demographics

Kansas is commonly known as a “flyover state” with nothing to give. If you believe this, we have some ruby slippers to sell you, friend! Kansas sure has its farmland, cattle grazing lands, wind farms, and just about all the agriculture you can handle, but it is also thriving communities with living histories, breweries and distilleries, dinners with friends, historical theaters where international acts DREAM to perform, arts, entertainment, lakes for fun and fishing, a multitude of museums, and so much more!

Kansas is easily located in the middle of the action! If life must take you anywhere, why not start centrally located? Speaking of centrally located, Wichita is the gem in south central Kansas! With a whopping 400,000 people located within city limits alone (the Metropolitan Statistical Area adds another 250,000 in population in the surrounding suburbs), you would think that we would be crawling over each other, but due to our location and brilliant planning, we are widespread without the looming issue of “build-out” like other major metropolises in the country.

Wichita is home to several different colleges and universities, with more options mere hours away. Wichita boasts a high level of well-educated citizens. Of people over 25, in Wichita, 25.4% have only a high school or equivalent degree. That means about 75% with some college under their belt; nationwide, it is about 61%. Wichita is also proud of its diversity, with 35% self-identifying as nonwhite, whereas 76% statewide identify as white. The median household income in Wichita is \$61,281, and it is one of the most economical places to live in the US at 15-20% under the national average cost of living. Over half of our rental units (houses, apartments, etc.) are less than \$1,000 a month, with 59% home ownership and half of those homes under \$200,000.

As resilient a city as we are, we have our fair share of challenges; for example, our poverty rate is about 4% over the state’s average. This presents Grace members with opportunities to assist those within our community. Our church congregation is blessed to be filled with middle-class, hard-working people in a middle-class, hard-working neighborhood. However, God’s love, grace, and kindness know no borders, and neither do we!

Suggested Strategic Initiatives for the Five Emphases of Caring, Connecting, Learning, Serving, and Worshiping

From the data gathered in town halls 1-5, we suggest five possible strategic initiatives based on the one-five ranking, with one being the highest priority and five being the lowest priority.

Number One, Worship: Investigate ways to be even more creative in our two worship services by placing some musical and order components from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and 11:00 am to 9:00 am on a regular basis.

Number Two, Connecting: Investigate ways of creating opportunities for community building between the attendees of the two distinct services before and after worship time on a regular basis.

Number Three, Caring: Investigate ways to better welcome and care for members and guests (areas of improvement- entering and exiting services, interacting with the parents of our youth ministry families, and supporting homebound or hospitalized).

Number Four, Serving: Investigate ways to increase Grace's participation with local outreach agencies, mission partners, Presbytery of Southern Kansas congregations, and our own outreach programs.

Number Five, Learning: Investigate ways to improve growth in small groups, children/youth education, adult education, the new member experience, and special speaker formats.

It appears clear that the pastor will take primary responsibility for equipped congregant engagement in emphases (One, Two, and Three) and secondary responsibility for equipped congregant engagement in emphases (Four and Five).