

## A Word From Our Interim Pastor The Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh

This past Sunday was a remarkable day. It began with our youth leading worship and informing all of us on the work of partnering with God in mission work in Georgia. Following worship *Our Interim Pastor Journey Town Hall Meeting Step 3* transpired. A very open and authentic experience was had by all in attendance, approximately 99 people.

The question discussed was: ***What are Grace's strengths and additional challenges, along with declining attendance, as we move forward in evaluating worship services, emerging ministry emphases, and staffing transitions?***

The results have been tabulated. Do pick up your packet of materials, which include the tabulation of comments and a memo concerning unexpected expenditures at the kiosk or download the packet at Grace's website [mygpc.org](http://mygpc.org).

Friends nothing in your life is an accident. God has purpose for each of you. Read the benediction below (benediction, in Latin literally means, "good word") written by the late Richard Halverson, Minister of Word and Sacrament (PCUSA), and Chaplain to the United States Senate (1981- 1994). You'll be encouraged.

*You go nowhere by accident.*

*Wherever you go, God is sending you.*

*He has a purpose in your being there.*

*Christ who indwells you has something he wants to do through you wherever you are.*

*Believe this.*

*And go in his grace and love and power.*

*Amen.*

As we continue our preaching series *For Such A Tim As This*, I encourage you to read the book of Esther. There are so many parallels in the world today with those during Esther's time in the early sixth century BC.

Remember, nothing in your life is by accident. Everything is purposed by God!

On the journey of Christian discipleship and spiritual formation with you, I remain faithfully yours,

Steve

The Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh  
Interim Pastor

**Step Three in Our Interim Pastor Journey  
Town Hall Meeting and Luncheon  
Sunday, August 11, 2024**

Five Emerging Ministry Emphases. Rank importance 1-5 to the right of the alphabetical listing. (See attached spreadsheet)

- Caring
- Connecting
- Learning
- Serving
- Worshipping

Strengths of Grace Church

- Community service – IIIII.IIIII.I
- Volunteerism
- Service oriented people
- Opportunities to serve
- Discipleship
- Commitment to learning the ways of God
- Engaged congregation
- Long time members - I
- People - III
- Membership is giving
- Manageable size – small enough to be friendly, big enough to do outreach to community.
- Welcoming – IIIII.IIIII.I
- Friendliness / hospitality / friendships – IIIII.IIIII.IIIII.II
- Open to all / inclusive - III
  - Acceptance everyone
- Fellowship /Community – IIIII.I
  - God centered
  - Loving
  - Kind people - II
  - Positive community
  - Passion
  - Connectivity – II
  - Warm -I
- Generous / charitable / giving - II
- Fun, memorable traditions
- Established policies
- Meaningful worship - I
- Creative worship
- Art is meaningful and related to our studies
- Thoughtful worship planning
- Sermon – II
  - Biblical preaching
- Scripture
- Worship – IIIII.IIIII
- 9:00 service
- 9:00 music
- Joyful first service
- Pastoral care / caring / compassionate – IIIII.IIIII.II
  - We look after each other - II
- Sharing joys and concerns together
- Respectful of each other
- Location / Facilities- III
- Interim pastor leadership
- Clergy
- Friendly ushers
- Commitment of staff and lay leaders -II
  - Enthusiastic and knowledgeable lay leaders
- Deacons taking on new leadership
- Youth ministries – III
- Youth commitments
- Youth leader - I
- Mission trips - II
- Music ministries – IIIII.IIIII.III
  - Band
  - Choir - I
- Communication about what’s going on
- JLL

## Challenges (beyond declining attendance) facing Grace Church

- Hidden gem - I
- Evangelism / Outreach
  - Bringing in unchurched people
  - Outreach to young families (advertisement)
  - Extending invitations to new people - I
  - Invasiveness (inserting beliefs where they are not welcome/pushes people away)
  - Lack of relevance to the community outside Grace
  - Minimal impact on Wichita/neighborhood
  - More involvement in the community
  - Helping everyone serve in some way (including youth)
  - Mission
- Helping everyone serve in some way
  - Getting younger people involved in works of the church - II
  - Helpers to make it work > teaching
  - Competency to volunteer
  - Willingness to serve -II
  - Increasing engagement in community
  - 20% are doing 80% of work
  - New members to support Session, deacons, etc.
  - Volunteer shortage – IIIII.
  - Integrating new members into service - I
  - Need to train new people to take over some ministries
- Programming
  - Christian Education / Sunday school - II
  - Programs for different age groups - III
  - Loss of programs like Economy Corner
  - Missing men's breakfast, bible classes - I
  - Special programs – bring people together for fun I
  - Need more community events
- Membership
  - New members -no matter the age -I
  - Aging congregation -IIII
  - Fewer youth/children – III
  - More young families -IIII.IIIII.
  - Need more diversity – II
  - Seeking more connection with parents of youth
  - Bringing younger and older members together
  - Connecting people in both services – II
  - Hanging on to youth when they graduate
    - socialization
- Stuck in “we’ve always done it this way” – I
  - Adversity to change
- Rigidity to worship styles and liturgy
- Lack of commitment and staying the course - I
- Attitudes / Politics
  - People have other priorities
  - We don't value opinions that differ from our own
  - Christian nationalism (not a Grace specific problem)
  - Christ-centered focus as a congregation
  - Less commitment on following God
  - Less focus on learning about God
  - Remaining interested and enjoying participating
  - Politics is out
  - Political divide and inability for discussion and stating our sides
  - Different beliefs – those who embrace progressive policies and those who do not believe that indoctrination should come from the pulpit
  - Disagreements (often unspoken) between pastor or other leader and congregation
  - A stable unifying message/vision
- Staffing
  - Leaders
  - Minister - I
  - The Martin Transition - IIII
  - Staff transition
  - We need a permanent pastor – I
  - The lengthy process to get a new pastor – IIII
  - Finding a new compatible minister
  - Staff reductions
  - Weak organist
- Upkeep of facilities / too big for our needs – IIIII.I
- Grounds upkeep is a lot for the team
- Budget – IIIII.IIIII.III
  - Encouraging people to take responsibility for doing as part of giving
  - Maintenance budget -have a facility pledge drive on regular basis
  - Tithing / financial commitment -II
  - Operating and missional
  - Stable and sustainable
  - Members on fixed incomes with limited capacity to meet growing costs
  - Letting congregation know of opportunities to give
  - Burden shared by small number of people

- Communication
  - Raising awareness of Grace services
  - Improved communication among staff /volunteers
  - Awareness of volunteer opportunities for special projects
  - Further communication from leaders of committee opportunities
  - Raising awareness in the congregation of the good things we are doing - I
- External perception that we are not welcoming to those who don't look like us
- Get the message out that LGBTQ are welcome
- Advertising the church to the community in new ways - I
- Info hard to find on the webpage
- JLL and its impact on the church

## **Evaluating Worship**

### Strengths at 9:00 Service

- Engaged congregation – I
- Very interactive
- Seasonal visuals
- Sense of a worshipping family
- Community of believers
- Friendly people who know each other (no gossiping about others) – II
- More joyful than 11:00
- Participation
- Welcoming – I
  - I don't have to worry about being judged
- Meaningful worship
- Community service
- Music / Band – IIIII.IIIII.IIIII.IIIII
  - Amazing music
- Music that relates to the message
- Sermon - II
  - Clear concise messages
- Great pastor
- Lay/ Volunteer leaders - II
  - Members as leaders
  - Chance for members to participate in the ceremony
- A relaxed space (w/ coffee) - I
  - Come as you are
  - Informal / Casual atmosphere - I
  - Comfortable / acceptance – I
  - Sitting at tables
- At a good time
  - Convenient time

### Challenges for 9:00 Service (some aspirations included)

- Attendance – IIIII.I
  - Sometimes lack critical mass
  - Energy in the room (low)
- Getting finished by 10:00 – IIIII.II
  - Time management, not being rushed
  - Maintaining a good and constant pace
- Staying on topic of message, can get distracted when it goes back and forth
- Taking full advantage of flexibility in the service to do more non-traditional worship'
- Inflexibility of service order and style.
- Need more variety in message and music – II
- Too similar to 11:00 service
- Lack of certain aspects of worship at times: affirmation, confession
- More involvement in church life
- Integrate with 11:00 service more - II
- Somewhat disconnected from 11:00 people
- More children/youth needed
- Revive dancing and music by kids
- Lack of kiddo involvement
- Involvement of all people
- Band a little softer
- Greeting new people more
- Band does not always seem joyful
- The music is an either/or choice.
- Band needs to be bigger
- Sometimes too serious, we can laugh and have fun and still worship God.
- Teaching /learning (time constraints)
- Leadership consistent
- Audio
- Need to bring a friend
- Lack of donations
- Not an original place of worship (Sanctuary)

### Strengths at 11:00 Service

- Music – IIIII.IIIII.IIIII.IIIII.IIIII.II
  - Accompanists
  - Music that aligns with the message
  - Music motivates to connect with God – I
  - Choir leadership
  - Meaningful and moving
  - Variety – bells, ensembles, organ, piano, etc.
  - Consistent pianist
  - Special music
- Sermon – IIIII.I
  - Thought provoking message - I
  - Pastor makes it fun and interesting to hear his perspective on God
  - Educational component
  - Enjoy a group of people doing sermons
  - Enlightening
  - A full sermon
  - Great pulpit supply – very genuine
  - Connecting scripture to real life
  - Biblical preaching - I
- Lay Leadership - IIIII.I
  - Services provided by lay people (ushers, readers, etc.) - I
  - Congregational involvement - I
  - Different people serving as readers and ushers
- Elements of worship
  - Order of worship that supports the message/theme
  - Liturgy - I
  - Prayers of the people – sharing joys and concerns - III
  - Traditional service style – IIIII.I
  - Living into the liturgical calendar
  - Bible stories
  - Engaging service
  - Use of creeds
  - Monthly communion
  - Meaningful prayers
  - Scripture treated with reverence
- Attendance
- People praise
- Familiar faces that join
- Caring congregation - II
- Beautiful sanctuary (provides respite) – II
- Visual arts – way to experience the Holy Spirit
- Visitors greeted warmly /friendly – IIIII.I
  - Including
- Fellowship - I

### Challenges for 11:00 Service

- Too long (need to be out by noon) – IIIII.I
  - Timely sermons – I
  - Start on time
- Sermons that don't connect to real life
  - Need to learn from all books in the bible including revelation
  - Feeling “out of touch” by not discussing/acknowledging difficult current topics/events
  - Connecting service to the world around us
  - Not messages that are about the same every week (need different themes)
- Too strict in following traditional order of worship
  - Lots of recitation – could any be eliminated
- Steaming tech – IIII
  - Not many watching online - II
- Knowing new people – I
  - People hurry away
  - More efforts to build community within the service
- Not enough time to greet one another (name tags) – III
- Need fewer people sitting along (join someone)
- Getting people out of same pews – II
- Service can be too low key -liturgists are less than inspiring to call us to worship and send us out.
  - Get younger people to serve as liturgists
  - More variety in lay leaders
  - Speakers need to speak slowly and distinctly and wait for congregation to stand/sit
  - Fuller participation of membership in leading
- Attendance – IIII
- Finding new full-time pastor
- Music
  - Singing unfamiliar hymns - II
  - Peppier songs
  - More traditional songs. Easier songs - II
  - Hire an organist to play organ
  - Need new music to appeal to visitors
- Not too inviting for the unchurched

- Be appealing to younger generation
- Maybe time to do away with passing the offering plate
- Providing different opportunities to participate in worship
- Joys and concerns is too casual
- Too many people talking in back – can't hear well
  - Have people stop talking and turn their thoughts to God (prelude) - II
- Bulletin inserts (need more info about upcoming team meetings)
- Feeling like a church with 2 different services - I
- Physical accessibility to lectern/choir loft
- Be nice to have the service earlier
- Lots of papers to juggle
- Commitment
- Greater biblical knowledge
- More funds
- Adult retreat (Westminster woods)
- Keeping people involved in activities
- More people able to serve
- Aging members - I
- Bring in more youth/young people – IIII.III
- Kids can be a bit noisy
- Invite a friend
- Single's group
- Competing with other events scheduled on Sunday

Recall Your Worship Service Strengths and Challenges. Other Than Attending, How Will You Serve In Each?

How will I contribute to 9:00 Strengths and to addressing challenges?

I will...

- serve on boards and committees
- serve on Trustees
- invite someone to the service – III
- invite family and friends - II
- Encourage others to enjoy the relaxed setting
- help pick up tables and clean up
- offer suggestions for improvements
- greet new people with joy
- introduce myself to people I don't know
- be more interactive with other people
- try to welcome guests and get to know new members
- invite new members to serve on boards or other teams
- (get) better sound system for hearing impaired
- Help understand and evaluate sound problems
- Help with visual team.
- Bring in more new families
- Support activities outside the service to improve fellowship
- Be joyful
- Praise with a loud voice
- Be more present
- Sing along, participate
- Lead by example
- Help set up communion
- Assist in developing a children's time at service once a month
- Support Dr. Marsh in his attempts to lighten things up
- Serve as asked. Right now it seems that serving is not open to all.
- Invite more lay people to participate / lead worship
- Serve as requested and needed. - III
- Serve by ushering.
- Serve by participating on work projects
- Be on time
- Maintaining quality of the praise group is difficult. Hopefully they don't burn out. I don't know how to help.
- I'd love to see a webpage that lists ways to serve and allows for sign up

How will I contribute to 11:00 Strengths and to addressing challenges?

I will...

- Bring/help attract new people - IIII
- Invite people my age to the service
- Share online service with friends
- Invite people to join a study group
- Try to sit in a new spot to meet more people - II
- Continue welcoming new people - II
- Follow up with new members - II
- Make more effort to get acquainted
- Make effort to welcome visitor and answer questions
- Greet visitors
- Sing in choir – IIIII.III
- Join Bell choir
- Serve as reader / liturgist - IIIII.IIIII.I
- Set up communion - III
- Serve communion – IIIII.II
- Offer to usher – IIIII.III
- Be a greeter – III
- Serve in visual arts team - II
- Speak up during prayer time (acknowledge current events)
- Pay more attention to the pastor
- Come in early to meditate
- Encourage preacher
- Focus on the strengths of our church
- Pray – II
- Let go of what my expectations should be for church
- Attend bible classes
- Serve on a committee/ team
- Be a sounding board for sermons
- Take a turn serving
- Help with sanctuary care - I
- Maintain building and grounds
- Offer caring and visitation for mariner group
- Handicap awareness

- Give a helping hand to those struggling with the stairs
- Help with communication: Communicate with leaders of teams to become more involved in activities
- Deacon pick up more things to help the service
- Offer ideas /suggestions
- Driving from Newton

Operating Budget comments / suggestions

- Conservation for utilities – lights off, thermostat adjustments
- Speak to this more in the service
- Ask people to join groups, projects etc. (Catherine was good at this, I think people felt honored to be asked not obligated or burdened)
- Contact non-participating members
- Raise awareness for Buckingham
- Be sure to explain these realities during stewardship
- Remind people of the importance of Grace in the community – it's some people's safe place
- Request 1-time gifts to replenish rainy day funds.
- Continue to encourage legacy gifts

## Response Tabulations by Service

<b>Service attended</b>	<b>Caring</b>	<b>Connecting</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Serving</b>	<b>Worshipping</b>
9:00	5	2	4	1	3
9	3	2	5	4	1
9	2	1	4	5	3
9	2	4	5	1	3
9	5	3	2	4	1
9	1	4	2	3	5
9	1	2	5	4	3
9	3	5	2	4	1
9	3	4	5	1	2
9	4	2	3	5	1
9	3	5	4	2	1
9	5	3	2	4	1
9	1	4	5	2	3
9	2	1	5	4	3
9	5	1	4	2	3
9	4	2	5	1	3
9	3	2	5	4	1
9	4	1	5	3	2
9	3	2	5	4	1
9	3	4	5	2	1
9	2	1	4	3	5
9	3	2	5	4	1
subtotal 9:00 worshippers	3.05	2.59	4.14	3.05	2.18



Service attended	Caring	Connecting	Learning	Serving	Worshipping
11	3	5	4	2	1
11	3	2	5	4	1
11	4	2	3	5	1
11	2	3	5	4	1
11	2	5	4	1	3
11	3	2	5	4	1
11	3	4	5	1	2
11	3	5	4	1	2
11	3	5	2	4	1
11	3	2	4	5	1
11	1	2	5	3	4
11	1	2	4	5	3
11	4	1	3	5	2
11	1	2	5	4	3
11	4	1	3	5	2
11	1	5	4	3	2
11	3	4	5	2	1
11	2	3	4	5	1
11	3	4	2	5	1
11	4	3	2	5	1
11	4	1	3	5	2
11	4	5	2	3	1
11	4	2	5	3	1
11	3	4	5	1	2
11	3	4	2	5	1
11	3	2	1	5	4
11	3	1	2	4	5
11	4	2	5	1	3
11	3	1	5	4	2
11	2	1	4	5	3
11	4	5	2	3	1
11	1	3	5	4	2
11	1	2	5	3	4
11	1	4	5	3	2
11	3	4	5	1	2
11	5	3	4	2	1
11	5	4	3	2	1
11	1	4	5	3	2

Service attended	Caring	Connecting	Learning	Serving	Worshipping
11	2	1	5	4	3
11	1	3	5	4	2
11	1	3	4	2	5
11	1	4	5	2	3
11	3	2	4	5	1
11	2	4	3	5	1
11	1	2	3	4	5
11	1	3	2	4	5
subtotal 11:00 worshippers	2.67	3.02	3.96	3.50	2.17

Service attended	Caring	Connecting	Learning	Serving	Worshipping
n/a	3	5	4	2	1
n/a	2	4	5	3	1
n/a	1	5	2	3	4
n/a	4	2	5	3	1
n/a	3	4	5	2	1
n/a	4	1	2	3	5
n/a	4	2	5	1	3
subtotal n/a	3	3.29	4	2.43	2.29

<b>TOTAL</b>	2.91	2.97	4.03	2.99	2.21
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- Top priorities  
(lowest number is top-ranked)
1. worshipping
  2. caring
  3. connecting
  4. serving
  5. learning

Memo

**To:** Congregation

**From:** Trustees

**Date:** August 14, 2024

**Subject:** Unexpected 2024 Expenses

=====

We had a number of substantial unexpected expenses this year. What follows is a detailed description of the circumstances and expenses incurred.

***Insurance***

This is the largest expense that was not expected. In March we learned that our insurance company, Church Mutual, one of the three largest church-focused national insurance companies, would not renew our policy when it came due August 1.

At that time we contacted

- A local broker, Wiggans Farha Insurance Group
- Holmes Agency, a Kansas agency that focuses on churches
- National links to the other two largest church insurance companies, Brotherhood Mutual and Guide One. Each of those companies connected a broker to us for discussions.

We received contacts from all of these representatives before the end of March.

In April the brokers the national carriers connected to us, dropped out of discussions because these national carriers either would not cover us or would cover with onerous exemptions.

Both Wiggans Farha and Holmes continued to work with us, and we filled out a lot of materials from various insurers that these brokers worked with to try and prepare quotes. No carrier would quote until June at the earliest. Actual quotes did not arrive for us until July of this year. The initial quotes for somewhat similar coverage were exorbitant.

Our total insurance cost for Property, General Liability, Protection and Crime from August 2023 to August 2024 was \$23,388. The initial quotes for Property alone for

2024-2025 were over \$119,000. To reach a manageable cost we had to make major adjustments to our coverage.

Our Church Mutual Property Coverage (at about \$18,000):

- insured the building at \$14,000,000 and
- Business personal property for \$2,000,000.
- Our deductible was \$5,000/occurrence
- Wind/Hail deductible was \$10,000/occurrence

Our new Property Coverage (at about **\$66,400**):

- Insured the building at \$10,000,000 and
- Business personal property for \$750,000
- Our deductible is \$50,000/occurrence
- Wind/Hail deductible is 5% of insured value or \$500,000/occurrence

That insurance is through Wiggans/Farha. We got General Liability coverage through the Holmes Agency.

The general liability cost was **\$6,334.50**. Last year that part of the coverage was \$5,221.

Our umbrella liability policy is **\$2,472**. Last year the umbrella policy was \$4,155.

- The big change in the umbrella policy is the amount of coverage.
- Last year it was \$8,000,000/occurrence and aggregate.
- This year it is \$1,000,000/occurrence and \$3,000,000/aggregate

There are other supplemental policies we must purchase as well. The Crime policy is **\$1,567**, and we are still working on the Nonowned/Hired Automobile policy.

This was a long road over many weeks that wasn't finalized until the last day of July, just before our insurance expired, and the coverage is not what anyone wishes it were, but that is our current reality. A lot of companies won't quote; therefore, we have our current situation. We will continue to explore our options and hope that the current insurance climate will ultimately factor in corrections. In the meantime, this is where we are. We are paying well over twice as much for **much** less coverage.

### *Nonbudgeted Items*

In addition to the insurance saga, we had numerous issues we had to deal with. Below is the list of the larger unexpected expenses, including program initiatives and replacement equipment, and the costs associated with them.

- **Justice Together: \$3,500**  
Grace joined this group, and our annual dues are 10% of our annual budget.

That is about \$7,000. Undesignated Mission paid half so the Operating Expense was \$3,500.

- **New Fire Alarm Panel & System:    \$10,000**
- **New Sewer Injector Pump:            \$4,500**
- **New Refrigerator:                    \$5,675**
- **New Freezer                            \$7,245**
- **Great Room Projector                 \$6,630**
- **TOTALS                                    \$37,550**

These Nonbudgeted expenses came from operating income, with the exception of the great room projector. You can see that we have experienced kind of a “perfect storm” of expenses this year.

We know this is a lot of detail and may feel like overkill, but we think it is important for you all to have this information about this year’s expenses.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Trustees of Grace Presbyterian Church