



GRACE  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

# 2020 Vision

## GRACE 2020 PLANNING DOCUMENT

**“The Church is in the midst of constant change. It must never change its message, but in form, style, communication techniques, and delivery systems the Church must change if it is to remain a relevant force in the world.”**

From Moving the Church into Action, by Kent R. Hunter

### **Grace 2020 Task Force Members:**

Kevin Drury, chair

Loree Nelson

Dave Gronert

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Ardis Schmelzer

Pastor Mike

We also give our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for our time with Ardis Schmelzer as part of the Task Force. It was truly a joy and honor to work with Ardis and get to know her better. She had great insight and a passion for God’s ministry at Grace Lutheran Church. Ardis cared deeply about the future of Grace, and it is an honor to carry on her passion as we present this document and work together toward our 2020 Vision.

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Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Within these pages you will find a summary of the work that the Grace 2020 Task Force has done to date. I want to begin by saying that if you expect to find within these pages a detailed description of *HOW* we are going to move forward, you will be largely disappointed. In so many ways, the *HOW* questions are the easier questions to answer. What you will find is much more information about *WHY* we are called into the work of God's ministry at Grace Lutheran Church. This is largely covered in our Mission and Vision Statements. Later in the document, we answer the question of *WHAT* we hope to achieve in response to our Mission and Vision Statements.

There is an oft circulating video about Thomas Edison claiming that he was sent home with a letter from the teacher expelling him from school. In the video, his mother changed the letter when reading it to her young son, stating that he was a genius, too advanced for the school, and that he would have to be home schooled. The video itself is largely fiction, but within it is a truth that is even more beautiful. In a rare interview to the literary journal T.P's Weekly, the following was published November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907:

*"One day I overheard the teacher tell the inspector that I was "addled" and it would not be worthwhile keeping me in school any longer. I was so hurt by this last straw that I burst out crying and went home and told my mother about it. Then I found out what a good thing a good mother is. She came out as my strong defender. Mother love was aroused, mother pride wounded to the quick. She brought me back to the school and angrily told the teacher that he didn't know what he was talking about, that I had more brains than he himself, and a lot more talk like that. In fact, she was the most enthusiastic champion a boy ever had, and I determined right then that I would be worthy of her and show her that her confidence was not misplaced."*

We seem to have the same context laying before us. The larger cultural context around us often labels the church "addled," or confused, unable to think clearly. Much of what we do looks to the outsider as odd. At best, what we do is seen as a mystery. For many, we are just wandering around, confused. The truth is there is a hint of truth here. It is easy to get caught up in the activities and the programming as if that will bring relevance to the congregation. Sometimes we are addled by fear of not being the church we once were. We get caught up in *what* we do and *how* we do it and lose sight of *why* we are church in the first place.

The work of the Grace 2020 Task Force has always been to cast a vision of the church we hope to be by the year 2020. You will find that within these pages. You will also see truths that became known through the process. We believe the Holy Spirit is already doing some amazing things here at Grace. We see a sense of radical hospitality at work within these walls. We see a great deal of work to do together in these next three years. And as we do, we see God as the "most enthusiastic champion" a congregation ever had. We find ourselves determined to show that her confidence is not misplaced.

On behalf of the Grace 2020 Task Force, I wish to thank you for being a part of God's ministry in this place. I also want to challenge you to see within these pages the vision for *why* we are church, and the possibilities that are before us. We are in this together.

In Christ,  
Pastor Mike

## **PREVIOUS WORK – THE 1998 PLANNING TASK FORCE**

### **Expectations and Results**

1. Remodel and expand the facilities to handle current worship attendance of 300 and to grow.  
Current Situation/Result: The average worship attendance was 178 in 2016.

2. Establish La Voz de Esperanza for outreach in Hispanic ministry.  
Result: Attempted but was no longer viable. La Voz, both the ministry and its ending, caused angst in the congregation.

3. Establish Daycare as a new ministry.  
Result: Grace Kids' Care was established but has struggled financially in recent years. The relationship of Grace Kids' Care as a ministry of Grace Lutheran Church has strengthened, but there is still work to do. Some families have joined Grace, but not as many as expected.

4. Develop a community of space to move large activities out of the basement.  
Result: Mostly successful

### **Reasons for Lack of Growth for Grace from 1998 Work:**

- The building wasn't the answer, though very helpful.
- The pastor transition of almost two years left a leadership void.
- The congregation has gotten older.
- Grace lost some members because of the La Voz ministry.
- The neighborhood has become more diverse during this time.

### **Grace 2020 Assumptions for the 2017 Plan:**

- There is a desire for more connectedness in the neighborhood. (Per the D.M. police department neighborhood liaison and the Merle Hay Neighborhood Association president.)
- In general, it takes 3-5 new giving members to offset the loss of one significant giving member. Grace will continue to lose significant giving members due to age and other circumstances.
- Grace, and all churches, are in a post Christendom era – In addition, organized religion is becoming more suspect as the world is changing.
- The role of the church has changed...it needs to be driven by mission. Fewer folks no longer go "because you should".
- The church can still be social center.

### **Grace Lutheran Church needs to be open to change!**

## **GRACE 2020 TASK FORCE GOALS**

1. Determine what Grace should look like in 2020.
2. The plan will be the framework for future planning, activities, and programs. It should serve as a barometer for current programs.
3. The plan should be accessible for public consumption, create energy, be understandable, challenging, but yet obtainable.

## **OVERALL THEMES**

1. Growth with a purpose. Committees have permission to purge programs. Plan equally for those seeking God and those that are members already.
2. Relationships with God, each other, and ourselves. Practice discipleship and prayer in our lives.
3. Communication in all forms is necessary to get the word out.

## **OUR STATEMENT OF MISSION**

**Grace Lutheran Church is a community of faith, centered in worship, held in Grace, strengthened in love, sent forth in mission, in Jesus' name.**

We have prayed our mission statement at nearly every worship service for the last five years. This congregational prayer, written by the Congregational Council, has become not only our prayer, but a guidepost for the church we hope to be. The Grace 2020 Task Force and Congregational Council both agreed that it would be wise to develop a new mission statement as we move forward toward the 2020 Vision. After much effort, we realized that it was in front of us the whole time, in the form of a prayer.

It is important for the congregation to continue to hold its mission and vision in prayer. This is God's mission at Grace Lutheran Church. Our mission, is the same as our congregational prayer:

**“God of love, have mercy on us. Center us in worship. Hold us in grace. Strengthen us in love. Send us forth in mission. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.**

## OUR VALUES

Grace Lutheran Church's values are Discipleship, Community, Acceptance, Prayer

### What do we mean by Discipleship?

We view discipleship as living a Christ-Centered life. By grace, God comes to each one of us through faith in Christ Jesus. We are called to be followers of Christ. As someone is baptized, we are all reminded of the responsibilities of discipleship.

In baptism, we are **welcomed** into the body of Christ and **sent** to share in the mission of God. We are called **to live** among God's faithful people, **to hear** the word of God and **share** in the Lord's supper, **to proclaim** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, **to serve** all people, following the example of Jesus, and **to strive** for justice and peace in all the earth.

### What do we mean by Community?

We receive Christ through the community gathered in his name, the Body of Christ. Christ is seen, received and known in community. We cannot love Jesus if we cannot love each other. This becomes our calling. We are to bind ourselves to one another in the love of Christ, supporting each other and bearing one another's burdens. Although it is possible to experience spirituality and the love of God on your own, it is only fully known as it is experienced in with others.

### What do we mean by Acceptance?

We view acceptance as our call to live into the example of Christ. Jesus gave us an example of radical hospitality, welcoming on with the love of God, and invites us to offer that same welcome. We view this as a central and foundational aspect of the Christian Church. Not only are all welcome at Grace, but we strive to live that hospitality in the whole of our lives. No matter the labels others may place upon you, or the labels you may place upon yourself, here at Grace you will find a home among friends in need of a Savior.

### What do we mean by Prayer?

We believe prayer to be our connecting and communicating with God. Sometimes that is speaking, and at other times it is listening. We believe that although Christ is made known in community, our communication with God is done as a gathered community, and as families and individuals. To live out our faith in a Christ Centered Life, we are called to find ways to pray that are sustainable and build our relationship with God. One does not have to pray perfectly, or with eloquence. What God asks of us is our presence in prayer.

## **OUR VISION**

We see our vision as guiding people to live differently through Christ.

### **What do we mean by “live differently?”**

The Good News of God’s love and grace leaves us changed people. As Martin Luther writes about faith in his “Preface to Romans,” he writes, “Faith, however, is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God” and later writes “Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times.”

The world is full of various “narratives.” Many of these narratives are filled with fear and judgement. The church has a different narrative, one centered in the Good News of God’s love and grace, made known to us in Christ Jesus. As a Lutheran Church named Grace, we cast our vision as guiding people to encounter faith in the way that Martin Luther describes, and to have our lives changed by faith in God’s grace. In short, to live differently through Christ.

### **How do we do this?**

There are five key areas, or “pillars,” to our approach to living differently through Christ: Worship, Outreach, Education, Well Being, and Finance. Each of these pillars helps us accomplish our mission and theme of “Growth with a Purpose.”

1. **Worship.** To live differently through Christ, we gather as community in worship. As we gather in worship, we gather in the midst of our imperfections and brokenness, and meet God there. This church opens wide her doors with a welcome from Christ for all people. As we gather, we share in worship that aspires to be inspiring and relevant to the context in which we live, strengthening us in our daily lives.
2. **Outreach.** To live differently through Christ, we share God’s grace through words and actions. This church does not exist solely for itself or her membership. We are active in the world around us through a variety of ministries. We proclaim the good news of God’s grace made known through Christ Jesus.
3. **Education.** To live differently through Christ, we grow in our faith and knowledge of God’s grace. This church has educational opportunities for people of all ages and Biblical knowledge. We believe in lifelong learning. Discipleship, or following of Christ, is not a one-time decision, but rather a life long journey. This church will meet you where you are at on that journey and then guide you to live differently.
4. **Finance.** To live differently through Christ, we are generous with the gifts God has given. This church is a pledging church. Grace Lutheran Church’s programming, operations, and benevolence budgets are based on pledged income. We are not able to carry out our mission and vision without your financial support. Grace is committed to growing our ministries to help support the needs of our own members as well as those of our community.



5. Well Being. To live differently through Christ, we strive to be in balance. This church promotes a culture of well-being with special attention to the areas of spiritual, physical, financial and mental well-being. Grace is committed to both provide direct education and services in these areas and the building of partnerships with other agencies to meet the needs of the community.

### **We Believe:**

That God is the Creator of all things present, past, and future. This God has chosen to be made known through the Holy Scriptures and the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Christ.

That the Holy Scriptures are a Living Word, not only speaking to the historical context, but are both relevant and needed to live gracefully in an uneasy world.

That Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus taught in a way that teaches us how to live as disciples and followers, and then endured sin and death, so that all will be welcomed into the company of saints in light through the resurrection.

That the Holy Spirit is not only a gift from God through Christ Jesus, but also alive and active in the world today. The Holy Spirit gives us faith, and strengthens us as we continue to strive to follow Christ and live gracefully.

### **We Further Believe:**

That all of us fall short of the glory of God, but are forgiven and invited to share in an abundant life in this world and the world to come.

That God has given each of us unique gifts. It takes each and every one of us to see most completely the picture that God has for us. We strive not only to discover these gifts, but to empower people to use these gifts in daily life.

We live in a complex and stress filled context. To live differently through Christ is to live gracefully in an uneasy world.

## GRACE 2020 TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION

### GRACE 2020 PLAN PILLARS

- Worship
- Education
- Outreach
- Well-being
- Financial

#### A. WORSHIP GOALS

1. Worship attendance will average 210 in 2020. This is approximately a 5% annual increase from our current average attendance of 178.
2. Mechanisms will be created to educate members about worship. Explain the “what’s, how’s, and why’s” of the worship service to create more understanding and meaning.
3. Worship services will be created that are more meaningful, inspiring, and authentic with an emphasis on uplifting and inspiring music.
4. Create more welcoming, “user-friendly” entrance to the church.
5. Establish a “starter service” for new families and those with “modern and messy” lives.

#### What if...?

- “Church spotlight” in the bulletin or Friendly Visitor explaining parts/areas of the church and/or the worship service i.e. location of baptismal font, hymn education, etc. “Why do we do what we do?”
- Spotlight a new “Hymn of the Month”
- Work the mission statement into the beginning of the service
- Revisit the offering process...take offerings forward while going to communion?
- Change the welcome
- Reformat the closing prayers to be more authentic and current, more meaningful
- Replace the pews with padded, flexible seating...makes the church less traditional and gives worship and use flexibility
- What other ideas do you have?

## **B. EDUCATION GOALS – “Growing Disciples”**

1. Equip and inspire members to be disciples by providing comprehensive learning materials for all ages and all stages of faith journey focused on living differently in Christ.
2. Learning opportunities will be delivered in traditional and non-traditional ways with appropriate technology (i.e. Facebook, website, webinars)
3. Member participation, Involvement and impact will be monitored and modified as needed to meet current and relevant education needs.
4. Leaders/volunteers will be developed, trained, and supported.

What does it mean to grow disciples? At its simplest, discipleship is a relationship with God. Our aim is to grow and become more and more Christ-like and live differently. This pursuit flows from the promises we made in baptism to “live among God’s faithful people; hear the Word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper; Proclaim the Good news of God in Christ through word and deed; serve all people following the example of Jesus; and strive for justice and peace in all the earth”. This is a life-long endeavor and is lived out through these seven faith practices---

Pray, Study, Worship, Invite, Give, Serve, and Encourage

These faith practices are the gifts of a life of discipleship. In the general framework of our education program the primary focus will be **Pray, Study, Serve, Encourage**. In making plans and decisions for the education opportunities at Grace Lutheran, these practices should be considered and included. Also keep in mind that we are focused on one of five pillars and the hope and goal is that all pillars and faith practices will be integrated in the life of the congregation.

### **What if...?**

- If we were starting from scratch, what would education look like at Grace?
- Weekly educational lessons by email for families/kids
- “Family” Sunday School for all ages
- Christianity 101 for Adults
- Partner with other churches to bring in speakers/programs
- Mini-vacation bible school during the year
- Students teaching others
- Drake/Grandview students or Teacher Academy at Central Campus interested in teaching kids?
- Develop a marketing plan for education...needs to be communicated.
- What other ideas do you have?

## C. FINANCIAL GOALS

- **Restructure** Grace’s current financial approach to support our mission, values, and vision, which in turn will support our theme of Growth with a Purpose.
  - Establish some sort of debt reduction plan for the Endowment Fund with a timeline.
  - Consider other giving options and **educate the congregation** about them. Some ideas are:
    - ❖ Thrivent Choice Dollars for Thrivent members.
    - ❖ Electronic giving options, such as auto pay through banks.
    - ❖ Consider different ways to collect offering during the Sunday service.
    - ❖ Consider donating Required Minimum Distributions from IRAs directly to the church – tax free donation.
    - ❖ Memorials and bequests—emphasize and educate the congregation about how to go about this.
- **Develop** a financial system to ensure that property is properly maintained and updated so as to support Growth with a Purpose (perhaps a separate property fund?).
- **Look** at establishing a fiscal year that is more in line with our programmatic year. Ideal would be 7/1- 6/30.

## D. OUTREACH GOALS

- **Examine** current programs to see if they are sustainable – needs to have a significant volunteer base and determine if the program is financially viable.
  - If a program is deemed sustainable, does it conform to the Growth with a Purpose theme?
  - Does it promote discipleship?
  - If a program is NOT deemed sustainable or conformant, can it be adapted? If not, then “permission to purge!”
  - Develop criteria and process for new groups/programs to be approved and/or established.
- **Establish** better mechanisms for volunteering.
  - More/better ways to sign up for projects.
  - Canvass the members for areas of volunteer interest and mine the data in order to match up programs or possible programs with interested parties. Then **educate the membership** about these programs.
  - Don’t limit participation in these programs to the church members. Invite the community at large.
- **Develop** an Evangelism plan.
- **Develop** an “outreach identity” or “brand” for Grace Lutheran Church (i.e. “The Hunger Church”)
  - What do we currently do?
  - What else can we do?
  - Publicize volunteer opportunities. What additional options are there? Electronic? Media? Signage?
  - Be sure to invite the neighborhood and the community!

### What if...?

- Time and talent sheets – electronically
- Online sign-up for events
- Local and regional-based service and mission trips
- Members are expected to perform “x” hours of public service every year
- Re-visit or re-connect with those that haven’t attended for a while
- Transportation – help folks get to church
- What other ideas do you have?

## **E. WELL-BEING GOALS**

**How do we develop opportunities for people to improve their well-being to live differently through Christ?**

### **Well-being Components**

- Spiritual
- Financial
- Mental
- Physical

1. Build a culture at Grace where people are comfortable talking about and are willing to talk about these well-being topics.
2. Every activity will have some faith-based component to it...i.e. prayer, discussion, etc.
3. Develop an atmosphere/culture where it is safe to engage in community dialog.
4. Develop a support system for those with mental health concerns.
5. Build internal and external partnerships to enhance financial, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

### **What if...?**

- Host a 5K
- Winter bowling league
- Create a “safe space” or “safe time” to talk about “hot” topics of the day
- Discounted memberships for Grace members in area gyms
- Technology training for older folks or those that feel behind the curve in technology
- Tax training/resources
- Medicare classes/information
- Taking care of parents – “The Sandwich Generation”
- What do we do when the kids are gone – “Empty Nesters”
- Learn how to pray
- What other ideas do you have?

## **FUTURE STEPS**

There are currently task forces working on the goals set for each pillar. This work will include a timeline comprised of the various steps necessary to achieve the goals imagined by the Grace 2020 Task Force. There will also be an action plan on how to go about this vital work within each of these pillars.

This step is to be concluded by the end of the summer, 2017, with working groups commencing this Fall.

If you find yourself inspired in any of these areas, please contact one of the members of the Grace 2020 Task Force, or Grace Lutheran Church Staff

### **Grace 2020 Task Force**

Kevin Drury, chair

Loree Nelson

Dave Gronert

Tracy Justice

Pastor Mike

In addition to the work of the task force work with each pillar, the Grace 2020 Task Force recommends that Grace initiate a time of intentional congregational discernment at some point during this three-year process. During this time, Grace Lutheran Church would spend time in prayer, and also assess its activities and align all facets of Grace toward our Mission, Vision, and Values.

