

Introducing Grace

Love God.
Love Others.
Make Disciples.



what our church is about

- 3..our perspective
- 5..our mission
- 6..our mission focus
- 7..our values
- 8..our vision
- 9..our approach
- 11..leading people to be disciples
- 17..our story
- 19..our beliefs

For further information on Grace, please feel free to ask for
"Grace's Operational Handbook"
"Community Basics"
(Grace's Self Study Guide for Membership in the Covenant Community)

1350 Pembina Avenue
Box 1616
Winkler MB R6W 4B5

Phone: 204-325-8884
Email: office@gracechurchwinkler.com

our perspective...

What if...

...the Church existed to help people become disciples of Jesus? What would that look like? ...helping people, no matter where they were on life's journey, take the next step with Him?

What if ...

...The Church's passion was to assist you in knowing God, rather than utilizing you to work in the Church?

What if...

...as you moved along in your journey -- though the circumstances were sometimes hard and confusing, and at times you felt overwhelmed -- you discovered a "wilderness park" where you could find refreshment and renewed strength... a place where you could get perspective, direction, companionship, and hope... a place that invigorated you for the journey?

What if...

...the Church helped you simplify your life and discover what is important and what is not... challenging you to surrender the unnecessary and focus on the essential, not just the urgent?

What if...

...the Church helped you connect to others on the journey, taught you how to recognize God's shaping hand in your life, enabled you to discover His calling, and resourced you to live out that calling which always involves helping others on their journey?

What if...

...the Church was ... not more church -- with activities and jobs and programs galore - but a true Spiritual Formation Centre that was more about a relationship with Jesus and making disciples in the journey of life?

this is our desire...

We picture the journey at Grace as a wilderness park. It is a park that represents all the complexity of life with beauty, wonder and growth. 'We picture our journey as a wilderness park because overarching all our steps are Jesus words, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV).

We believe Grace exists to make disciples of Jesus. This means we don't exist to be an institution, rather we exist to journey with people and help them clarify and respond to the very personal call that God has on their lives, whether they are skeptics or life long followers.

At Grace we want people to feel they are "coming home"... an encouraging place and people for life's journey.

If this reflects your passion we invite you to consider making this a reality with us...

our mission

Why do we exist as a church?

A mission statement does two primary things for a church.

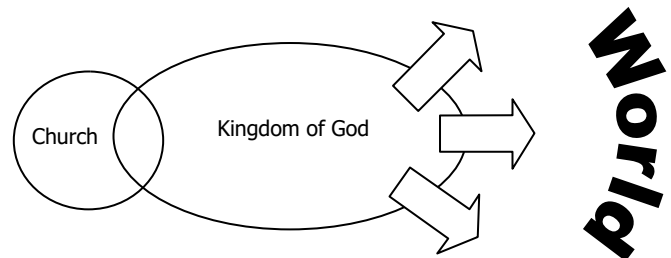
1. It helps us plan for the future with a specific focus in mind. With a clear sense of purpose, we can stay out of ruts, avoid stagnation, and grow in vitality and effectiveness.
2. It helps others who are wanting to follow Jesus answer these important questions: "Is this the right church for me? Is it going in a biblical direction? Would I like to become a member of this church?"

So what is our mission?

It is hard to admit, but it seems that in practice most churches exist to become larger. People are brought in and trained to serve "in" the church and "from" the church. We "reach out" to bring others "in." Ministry is seen as "church work". Loyalty is to the church. Without intent, the church becomes an "end in itself". In large measure, that is how we tend to "do" church and that is how the world views the church – a self-serving institution.

We believe otherwise. It isn't about a larger, greater or a more significant church. It isn't about the enlargement of the church but rather the transformation of the world! It is a means to an end not an end in itself. Jesus created the church to catalyze His Kingdom (reign) in the hearts of people here on earth and transform their lives living out his love and values in the world.

The only way this can be accomplished is if we see our primary mission as loving God, loving others and making disciples of Him. It has nothing to do with church. It is as we follow Him, living and loving like he did that His Kingdom comes through transformed lives. So we exist to...



Love God. Love Others. Make Disciples!

our mission focus

Who has God called us to engage?

Group #1 – People with whom we are already engaged

Believers like us

They are mostly developing families of diverse backgrounds (although there are some singles and seniors among them). The majority of these individuals are middle working class and have high school graduation. They value community and support for the family.

Group #2 – People we will engage as we become intentional

Unbelievers with whom we have connections

Given who we are and the make up of our community this group will be largely composed of developing families of diverse backgrounds (although there will be some singles and seniors among them). The majority of these individuals will be middle working class with high school graduation. They will value community and support for the family.

Group #3 – People we will not find it easy to engage without a great deal of effort and prayer

Unbelievers with whom we have few connections

- Other Nations (Global Missions)
- Local Ethnic Groups
- Street People
- Prisoners and their families

Whom we engage is important but not nearly so important as how we see those we engage. How we see them will determine how we relate to them. We believe that there are at least four ways of thinking about people – boundary thinking, centred thinking, process thinking and journey thinking. Understanding these ways can have a profound impact on how we connect and engage them on the journey. We choose to have a “Journey Mindset” as you will see later in this booklet.

our values

Who has God shaped us to be?

These values were identified in congregational conversations. They are born out of our history and God's shaping of us.

Experiencing God Matters

We value a personal, experienced relationship with God through prayer, study, worship and surrender. Such experiences are marked by the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ and the power of God the Father. They confirm that God is with us.

Grace Filled Community Matters

We value loving people just as Jesus did. Life transformation takes place through welcoming, compassionate, authentic relationships guided by the Holy Spirit, not just the imparting of information. Therefore, everything we do is done from a relational grace-filled core.

The Mission of Jesus Matters

We value reaching lost people through relationships with the love of Christ. Lost people matter to God and therefore matter to us whether at home or abroad.

Developing Disciples of Jesus Matters

We value innovative discipleship of individuals that is relational and intergenerational. It results in passionate lovers of Christ, transformed by His Spirit and empowered for ministry.

Our Stories Matter

We value the faith, sacrifice and struggle of those who have gone before us. Marked by a conviction of biblical authority and the gospel of Christ they gave all and lived true to His call. Such a faith heritage provides a helpful rudder in a world that is constantly changing.

Humility Matters

We value a posture of dependence on God and submission to one another in the love of Christ. In our brokenness we need Him and each other.

our vision

Where is God leading us?

Imagine a passionate worshipping community of people who are deepening in their love for God while reaching out to others with His Good News. Filled with His transforming Spirit, captivated by His love and marked by miracles, they minister and care for people with grace, compassion and power. They are a safe people who bring the lost home to God.

- **Imagine a wonderful mix of surrendering, worshipping people who love God and others.**

They are no longer comfortable with the fleeting dreams of success and prosperity. They are captivated by the idea that this world is not about them, but all about Jesus. They are mesmerized by His story and His heart for their community. They gather to worship Him. They share with others of what He has done for them. They are risk takers, hope pedlars and grace-givers, young and old. They tell the story of Jesus and invite people to Him. They empower the poor, strengthen the weak, embrace the prisoner, seek the lost. People are being transformed because God sent them, and they are full of joy!

- **Imagine a people committed to authentic community.**

They love others as Christ loved them, sacrificially, graciously and with great joy. They have surrendered their independence for interdependence creating a place of belonging and safety. Partnership with the Holy Spirit is their posture for life. Together they learn to believe in Jesus, join others that are learning to behave like Him, and together become living examples of Him! They serve together, play together, worship together, live life together. Their community is being transformed because God sent them, and they are grateful!

- **Imagine a people empowered to fulfill Christ's mission in the world.**

They engage the scriptures together, learning of the deeper love of God and discovering the gifts and talents He has given them to give away. They are disciples, they make disciples and they grow disciples! They lovingly hold each other accountable. Equipped and mobilized they engage the brokenness and heartbreak of their community. Their region is changing because God sent them, and they are awed!

- **Imagine a people passionate for others, giving all that others might live.**

They rise to impossible challenges as called by God - whether financial or personal and make a difference. They count on God to do what they cannot. New groups and "Graces" are emerging at home. People are finding Christ around the world as they send out short-term and career missionaries. In the spirit of Hebrews 11, they live by faith. They have concluded that no price is too great. The world is changing because God sent them, and they are passionate!

Who are these people? By God's grace they are and will be us!

our approach

How will we get there?

At the core of our vision **is making disciples of** Jesus. The question is, "How will we do this?" Before we can even tackle that question, we need to answer a more fundamental one. What **is** a disciple of Jesus?

Definition:

A disciple of Jesus is not necessarily one who:

- has their life together
- has been a Christian many years
- has a church ministry
- has high moral standards
- devotes many hours to the church

So then, what is a disciple of Jesus? We suggest that a disciple is a follower of Jesus. Think of a journey...

Very simply a disciple is one who is willing to take the next step with Jesus no matter where they are on the road of life.

This does not necessarily mean more activity to alleviate guilt. Taking the next step with Jesus is not necessarily more church work. It usually means more surrender. It means letting God have his way in our lives a little more. Often that means letting go of some of our wants or desires for control and risking a step of faith. Disciples do not always know the next step, but as it becomes clear they are willing to take it. However, there is one step that is clear and absolutely essential. Without wrestling with this step, a person can never enjoy a relationship with Jesus or authentically follow Him. It is the pivotal point in any pilgrimage.

What is it? It is the step that resolves the fundamental question of leadership. When Jesus presented the good news (gospel), he always confronted people with the issue of his leadership – "Will you follow me?" Whether it was the woman at the well, the rich young ruler or Nicodemus, the bottom line was the "kingdom of God" – his rule in our lives. So, to be a disciple and follow Him means we must give up our own kingdoms – whether relationships, wealth, or power – and embrace God's kingdom. Simply put, it demands that we deal with our self-indulgent desires and turn our will

and our lives over to the care of God. It means we give the control of our lives to him, letting him save us from our sins and from ourselves. The reward for taking Jesus seriously is life at a whole new level. At Grace our purpose is to lead people to be disciples of Jesus. At the heart of this are the words of Jesus himself when he said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." This surrender of our lives is nothing short of conversion.

We are all at different points on our journey. "The Spiritual Journey", a simple map on the next page is to help you discern where you are on this relational journey with God.

An Approach to Leading People to be Disciples of Jesus

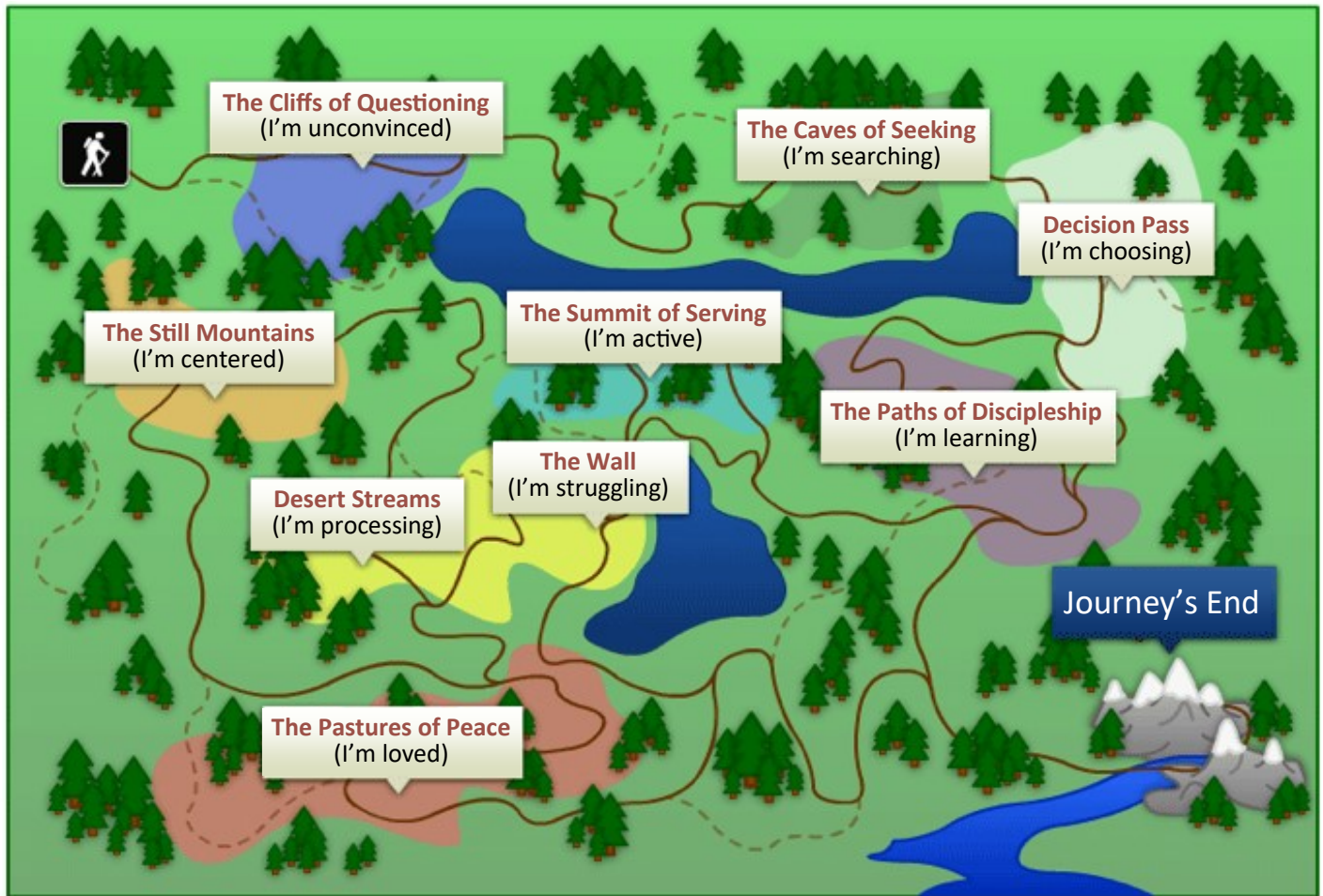
Grace doesn't complicate your life it actually simplifies it and helps you discover what is important and what is not. It challenges you to surrender the unnecessary and focus your life. It connects you to others on the journey, helps you understand how God is shaping you, enables you to discover His call on your life and resources you to live out your calling which always involves helping others on their journey!

This is Grace! It's not more church, more activities, more religion for the church's sake – it's more of a relationship with Jesus and his followers on the journey of life.

It's a place we believe Jesus would like. Grace doesn't give burdens – it lightens the load!

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

where have you been? where are you going? how will you get there?



leading people to be disciples of Jesus

Question #1 What do we do?

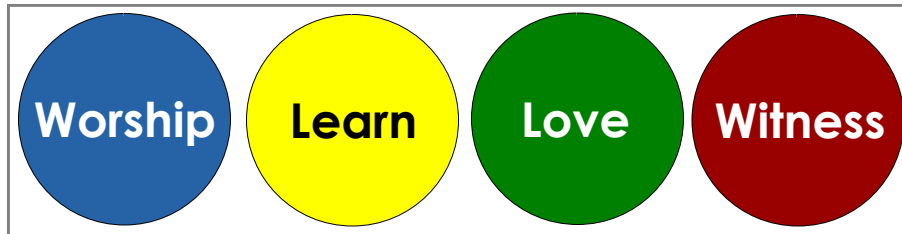
Question #2 How do we do it?

Question #3 How do we lead it?

Question #4 Who will do it?

We help people take their next step with Jesus! We have the mindset that the church is a living organism - the very body of Christ. We are his hands and feet. We love God and are committed to loving and reaching others as He did. Therefore, our witness and discipleship are not mechanical but incarnational.

As the living body of Christ, our church has a ministry DNA, core functions of a disciple that will permeate everything we do - whether in corporate worship as the church gathers or dispersed in group gatherings, ministry teams or smaller home groups and discipleship triads or partnerships through the week.



Defining our Discipleship DNA

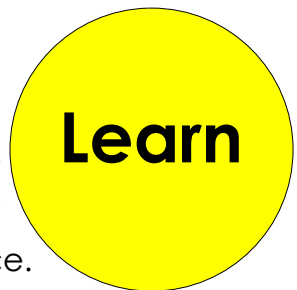
Worship: Disciples worship!

Worship is an all-of-life response to who God is for us in Christ (Romans 12:1; John 4:21–26). Just like breathing, worship can't be limited to one portion of our day or one day of our week. We're always doing it. In the old English, the word meant "acknowledgement of worth". We are responding to his "worth" in our lives every moment of every day. Elements of worship include bible reading, prayer, communion, songs of praise, silence and service. Whenever we gather at Grace, in large groups or small, we worship.



Learn: Disciples learn!

Learning is the process of acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, values or preferences about God, life and relationships. God's Word is foundational to this whether we are deepening our relationship with Him, discovering new truths about Him or equipping and supporting each other in service. Whenever we gather at Grace, in large groups or small, we learn.



Love: Disciples love!

Love in the scriptures is exemplified in Jesus' relationships with us. It is clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 13 and is to mark our relationships with God and others. This love chooses its object with decision of will. It is not necessarily motivated by feelings and it is totally committed to seeking the person's highest good no matter how they may respond. This form of love is totally selfless and does not change



whether the love given is returned or not. Love is at the core of the gospel and the ethos of what Grace is about. Whenever we gather at Grace, in large groups or small, we love.

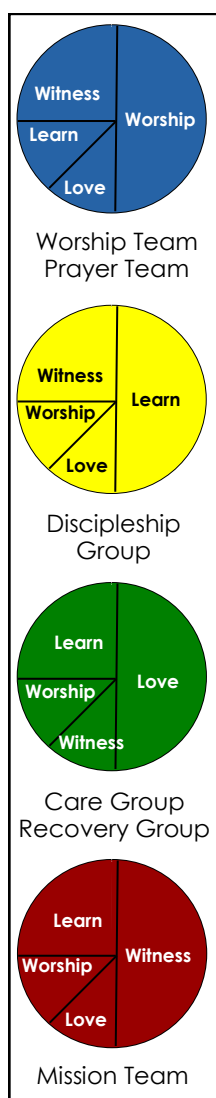
Witness: Disciples witness!

A **witness** has knowledge of (an event or change) from personal observation or experience. They live and speak from their personal experience of Jesus and his gospel. They share with others how Jesus has changed their lives and given them hope and a future. Whenever we gather at Grace, in large groups or small, we witness.



Witness

leading people to be disciples of Jesus



Question #1 What do we do?

Question #2 How do we do it?

Question #3 How do we lead it?

Question #4 Who will do it?

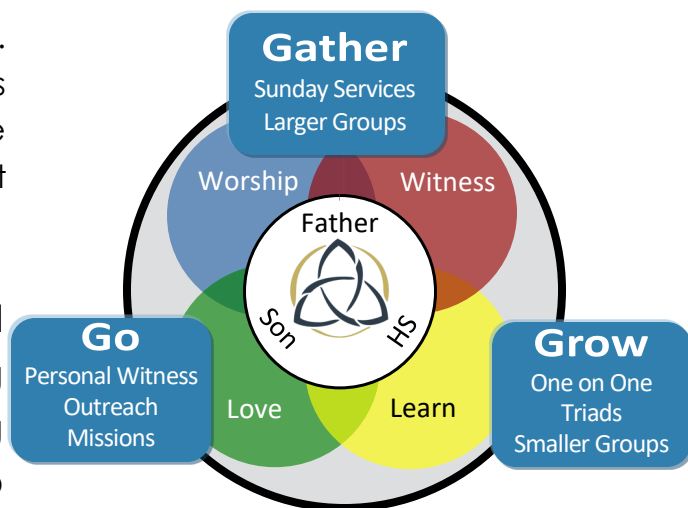
So, how does this work? (Living out our Discipleship DNA?)

Our services are comfortable for the first-timer and intentionally directed towards equipping and empowering everyone right across the entire discipleship continuum. Services are marked by this DNA. The atmosphere is inspiring and welcoming. People feel at home regardless of background. Newcomers begin to belong as they meet others and are welcomed by them. An intentional connection is made with them to assist them in finding their “way in” and ideally into smaller groups or other personal connections.

The Discipleship DNA also marks the gatherings of people throughout the week in smaller groups, discipleship partnerships and triads, departments or ministry teams. The amount of time and effort given to each of the components determines the kind of entity or small group... e.g. a care group, a ministry team, a discipleship group, an alpha group.

Even the church board is a small group. The time given to each function is always different depending on the ministry or group but the DNA must always be present!

Our worship, loving, learning and witnessing are all about loving God, loving others and helping one another take their next step with Jesus!



leading people to be disciples of Jesus

Question #1 What do we do?

Question #2 How do we do it?

Question #3 How do we lead it?

Question #4 Who will do it?

The leader of Grace Church is Jesus Christ. We long as a church to hear his voice and live out His purposes in our community and world. We realize that our greatest question, is where is Jesus going and how can we follow him?

On a human level, three groups of people lead the ministries of Grace. These groups are The Lead Team, The Ministry Team and the Ministry Leaders.

Lead Team:

The New Testament is clear that the church is to be led by a plurality of men and women. Their authority is expressed in servant leadership, not in "lording over" those placed in their charge. The leaders are members of Grace who have been commissioned to give this leadership, oversight and care.

They are to use their wisdom, discernment and shepherding gifts to ensure the church remains on "true north" biblically. They are the "keepers of the vision" and as such lead the church in major decision-making and strategic initiatives. In this regard they:

- Consult with the congregation as they facilitate the overall philosophy, vision, and direction for the church in the context of conversation, prayer and Scripture. (Acts 6:4)
- Oversee the shepherding to be sure that we are effectively achieving our mission of Loving God. Loving Others and Making Disciples.
- That the body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching. They determine what are the major issues or essentials for Grace to uphold, while avoiding needless controversy over minor issues (Titus 1:9).
- That the church is protected from harmful influences by confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or who are continuing in patterns of sinful behaviour. In doing so, they are to keep closing potential entrances for Satan so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community. (Matthew 18:15-17)
- That the life of the church is being well managed with the assistance of other competent and godly leaders. As legal trustees for the church, they oversee legal and financial matters, and set the church management policy. Our legal documents (Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) detail their governance duties.

Ministry Team:

The Ministry Team under the Lead Pastor mobilizes the church for ministry. They coach and support each ministry leader. Through the Ministry Team, each ministry or department within the church has the opportunity to have their views expressed and issues addressed.

Role of the Ministry Team:

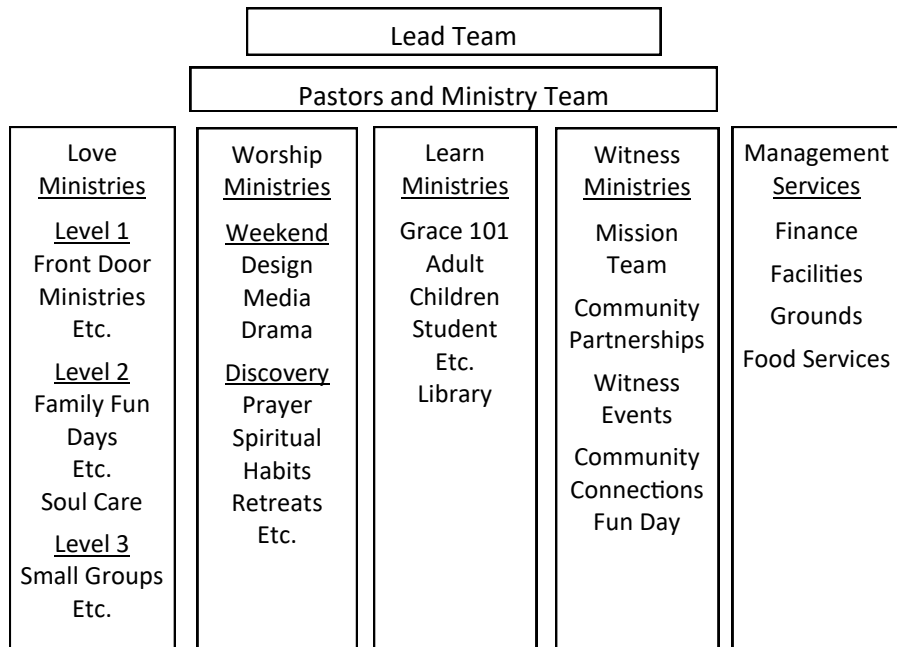
- Oversee and support the ministry leaders under the direction of the Lead Pastor
- Resource the ministry leaders in ongoing development of vision and future direction
- Develops key lay leadership in their personal relationship with Christ
- Coach key lay leadership in the development of their ministry teams and planning

Ministry Leaders:

The Lead Team will establish, empower and encourage new and existing ministries as necessary to carry out the purpose and vision of the church. Those that lead these ministries are Ministry Leaders. They are responsible for leading their ministry

and are empowered and coached by the Ministry Team for their own personal development and effectiveness.

We have a very simple structure based on the core functions of Worship, Learn, Love and Witness. Instead of traditional structures based on Christian Education, Adult Ministries, Outreach etc., we are suggesting ministries based on our core functions. The following diagram is not meant to be definitive.



leading people to be disciples of Jesus

Question #1 What will we do?

Question #2 How will we do it?

Question #3 How do we lead it?

Question #4 Who will do it?

Very simply God will do it through the people of Grace.

We are a committed community of people, empowered by the Spirit of God, to follow Jesus. We are led by individuals whom we recognize as chosen by God (Lead Team) and we are coached and equipped for our mission by staff whom we have released to work full time among us - not to do all the ministry themselves but to resource us to do the ministry of Christ as we live out his call in our lives. (Ephesians 4:11-16).

We are marked by the following commitments.

1. We are committed to the **beliefs, values and mission** this community of faith holds to. This means we have personally accepted God's grace and surrendered our lives to Jesus, demonstrating our willingness to follow Him in believer's baptism.
2. We are committed to following Jesus as described in our **Church Covenant**
3. We accept the Leadership Structure of Grace and willingly participate as we can to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

These commitments are critical for us. We have learned that without a high level of care and commitment, we don't experience community, because shallow commitments lead to superficial relationships. Therefore, membership in Grace's Covenant Community is not your name on a roll or roster. It is our way of saying, "Count me in. I'm not just a spectator; I'm on the team now. I identify with the mission of Grace

our story

Our Journey

Our mission, values and vision are no accident. They are a result of God's shaping us through the years.

Our roots go back to the Anabaptist spiritual renewal movements of the Protestant Reformation. In spite of intense persecution, men and women were baptized on confirmation of their faith. Their desire to follow God and impact their world was so strong that hundreds gave their lives as martyrs. This passion and commitment drew thousands to follow Christ and marked the early Mennonite movement in Europe. They were marked by a desire to change the world by sharing the good news of Christ. They resolved to live at peace with all, never bearing arms. They were persecuted for their faith and it drew them even closer to God. Their impact has been felt around the world. It was from this group that the founders of our movement and our church came. With them came their dependence on God born out of the years of difficulty and their passion to truly follow Him and make a difference.

In 1961 Grace Church was begun as a response to the need in our community for English speaking ministry. The desire of the founding members was to bring across into the English language the Evangelical Anabaptist vision of the church. Up until that time German had been the dominant language of worship in our area. There was a strong desire to make disciples of the non-Mennonite English speaking families of our community.

Our first meeting place was the Winkler Bible School. (The site was opposite the current Winkler Elementary School) It was here that our original thirty-two charter members met, formed a church, had their first baptisms and called their first pastor, Bernie Loeppky. He served us faithfully until 1971.

These were exciting, innovative times. In 1962 the first building was built (960 Pembina). Construction began in late September and people literally worked day and night! The building was dedicated ten weeks later on December 16! We stretched the boundaries of what was acceptable not only because we spoke English but because we embraced women in leadership and even had member meetings on Sunday afternoons! Some have said, "We might have been a touch arrogant!"

Children and youth were a rewarding part of our ministry. We were a young church and the enthusiasm of our people was contagious. We took seriously the challenge of making disciples of Jesus.

In 1971 Pastor Bernie left. John Krahn came that summer and brought with him his personal warmth for God and others. This deepened the sense of acceptance and belonging that marked our church. Many are here in our congregation today because of his warm invitations.

He also encouraged us in our stewardship. There was an unwritten understanding that 50% of all our giving should go to missions beyond the geographical borders of our church. Even when we embarked upon an education wing in the mid-seventies, our concern for lost people around the world was not forgotten. During these years a number of our congregation served and have continued to serve with MCC and other mission agencies. Our church continued to grow under his leadership. An associate pastor position was added, and the church doubled in membership. With this growth and the arrival of our third pastor, Chris Arney in 1984 we dedicated our current building to the glory of God.

Children's programs, choirs, pierogi fundraisers, care groups and dynamic youth groups marked our experience. Our youth ministry emphasized discipleship and grew to be city wide. We enjoyed solid leadership with Lead Pastors Arnie Neufeld and Herb Franz.

But all was not well. Although the church was full we seemed to lack a common vision. Some thought we should build, others thought we should plant a church. Youth felt separate from the church. Passion for God seemed to be diminishing. We were divided over our denominational affiliation. Our following of Jesus tended to be more a matter of keeping appearances and doing the "right" thing rather than a vibrant relationship with God in which we worked with him to change our world. So, as we entered into 2014 people began leaving. Saturday Night Grace (SNG) concluded (our service for contemporary worship) and division was experienced over pastoral leadership. With Pastor Keith's departure we stopped and realized we needed to get serious about listening to God.

In late 2017, under our Transition Pastor's leadership, we as a church took time to look back and re-surrender to God's call on us. He has taken us back to our roots. Today there is no question in our minds. We must be a community of grace marked by love, mercy and truth where searching people find hope in Jesus and those who have found Him discover their place in the larger story of His "wild" love.

our beliefs

Our Confession of Faith

The following beliefs are at the heart of all we say and do at Grace Church. We believe in the historic Christian faith, reflected in these statements:

1. We believe in the one living and true God, perfect, infinite and eternal, existing in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; John 15:26; II Corinthians 13:14)
2. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, born of the Virgin Mary, in His perfect humanity, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection from the dead and His personal triumphant return. (Matthew 16:16; Luke 1:31-33; I Peter 3:18; Luke 24:6, 39; Acts 1:11)

3. We believe that the Bible was given by divine inspiration and, in the original manuscripts, is the infallible Word of God. As such, it constitutes the only trustworthy guide in all matters pertaining to Christian faith and conduct. (II Peter 1:20, 21)
4. We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state determined by divine judgment. (I Corinthians 15:54-57; I Thessalonians 4:13 - 18; Revelation 20:12)
5. We believe a Christian is one saved by grace, whose life is transformed into the likeness of Christ by His atoning death and the power of His resurrection, and who will seek to obey the Biblical admonition of non-conformity to the world. (Ephesians 2:8 - 10; II Corinthians 5:17; I John 1:6, 7; Romans 12:1, 2) Further, we believe that there is "salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved". (Acts 4:12)
6. We believe in the Holy Spirit who is one with the Father and the Son and who by means of the Word applies to our hearts the things of God. (John 14:16, 17, 26; John 15:26; John 16 7-14)
7. We believe in the scriptural teaching of peace, love and non-resistance as it applies not only to carnal warfare, but to every area of the Christian's social life.
8. We believe in the church as the body of Jesus Christ, a community of believers, gifted by the Holy Spirit, responsible to God and to each other. (Ephesians 4: 11-16)
9. We believe in the practice of Scriptural Church discipline. (Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1)