

WE EXIST TO INVITE ALL HUMANS TO BECOME **AWAKE TO GOD**

BY MAKING DISCIPLES, MULTIPLYING HOUSE CHURCHES
AND PLANTING CITY-CENTERED CHURCHES

GRACE MIDTOWN
MEMBERSHIP

gracemidtownchurch.com

OUR VISION :

WE EXIST TO INVITE ALL HUMANS TO BECOME AWAKE TO GOD.

OUR MISSION :

MAKING DISCIPLES, MULTIPLYING HOUSE CHURCHES, AND PLANTING CITY-CENTERED CHURCHES.

OUR VALUES :

- REAL RELATIONSHIPS
- DISCIPLESHIP & EMPOWERMENT
- ROOTED IN THE SCRIPTURE
- MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT
- AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY
(multi-ethnic + multi-generational expression of God's Kingdom)
- HOLISTIC RENEWAL

MAKING DISCIPLES :

Disciple : a learner and follower of Jesus

Discipleship : the process of a person or group receiving a life on life investment by another person who is further along in the journey of following Jesus.

Disciple Maker : "Disciples Make Disciples" - every disciple should learn how to invest their life into another, with the purposed intention that they will then invest their life into another beyond themselves, continuing the process of discipleship.

KEY SCRIPTURES :

Acts 2:42-47 : They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Jeremiah 29:7 : Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

Isaiah 58 & 61 : The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago. You will revive them, though they have been deserted for many generations. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes.

FOR THIS CITY AND THE CITIES OF THE WORLD

FIVE YEAR GOALS (2014 - 2018) :

- **DISCIPLE 2000** NEXT GENERATION LEADERS
- **MINISTER TO & MOBILIZE** THE WHOLE FAMILY
- **MULTIPLY 100** HOUSE CHURCHES
- **PLANT 3** CITY-CENTERED CHURCHES

LARGE GATHERING :

WHAT? The regular gathering of the local church to hear Biblical proclamation and to respond in worship.

WHY? Throughout the Scripture and the history of the Church, the large gathering has been a platform for teaching and apostolic vision that moves the body of Christ into mission and worship.

WIN? The gathering results in fueling, uniting, equipping, and leading to occur in our community so that our body has the resources and momentum to bring the Kingdom to the city.

HOUSE CHURCHES :

WHAT? A community of roughly 20-50 people who meet regularly and grow toward becoming an “extended family” on mission together that brings life to those within the group and draws others who are not yet part of the community toward Kingdom living.

WHY? Everyone needs a family of believers with whom they can live, pray, laugh, suffer, and serve in freedom with.

WIN? People are naturally becoming more united with one another in authentic relationship and are discovering their calling in the Kingdom together.

(Acts 2:42-47)

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS :

WHAT? A group of people who are seeking to live like Jesus by following and learning from one whose life they desire to imitate.

WHY? To become like Jesus in every area of life.

WIN? Disciples are being transformed into the likeness of Christ and are maturing toward the unique person God has created them to be.

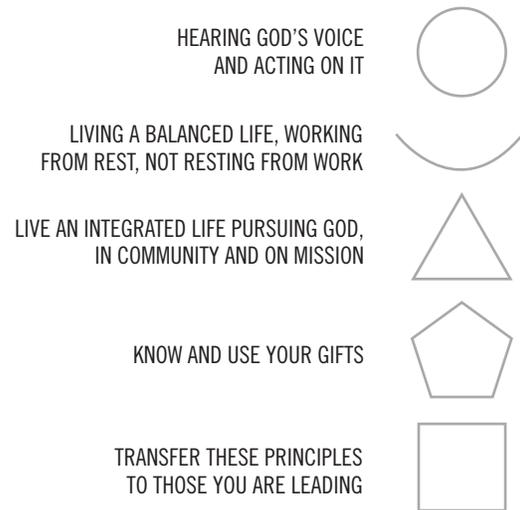
(Matthew 28:19)

HUDDLES :

WHAT? A group designed to help coach and support leaders.

WHY? To empower leaders through consistent communication, accountability and tools.

WIN? Healthy leaders who effectively reproduce new leaders and groups.



THE CONNECTION PATHWAY :

A clear pathway of engagement for anyone looking to enter into Grace Midtown’s ministry and to identify entry points for community and spiritual growth.



We believe God created the cosmos to be good, beautiful, and full of purpose. In the midst of this world, God made a man and a woman—Adam and Eve—to be His unique representatives on the earth, bearing His name and extending His reign while living in dynamic relationship with Him. (Genesis 1-2; Psalm 8:1-9)

Adam and Eve, however, chose to sin when they heeded the voice of evil and betrayed God, hurling all humanity and the good world in which they lived into devastating cycles of shame, guilt, and fear—culminating in death. (Genesis 3; Romans 8:18-25)

But God chose not to abandon His rebellious creation. Instead, He graciously called another couple, Abraham and Sarah, to lead a faithful family and promised that through them all the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12, 15, 18; Romans 4:1-25, Galatians 3:1-29, and Hebrews 11:8-22)

Throughout history, God has continued to work toward redemption through His people in spite of their habitual inability to live according to His ways. (Exodus 32-34, the books of Judges, Amos, Hosea, John 8:31-59, and Romans 3)

We believe that in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus Christ, His eternal Word and true Son, into the world as a man to announce and embody the presence of God's restorative reign—His Kingdom breaking into brokenness. Furthermore, Jesus invited a new group of followers (called "disciples") to imitate his way of life and learn to love both God and neighbor. (Luke 5-1)

This same Jesus was crucified like a common criminal, surrendering his sinless life as a ransom for many and drawing all evil onto himself in his death. (Further understanding about Jesus' death as a ransom (the "price of release") can be found in Isaiah 52-53, Matthew 20:26-28, John 11:45-53, 2 Corinthians 5, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 9-10, 1 Peter 2-3.)

On the third day, however, God raised Jesus back to life as the victor over evil and the physical firstfruit of God's future for His cosmos. (For stories of the resurrection and insight into its meaning, see Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20-21, and 1 Corinthians 15. For more about Jesus' victory over evil, see Psalm 110, Matthew 12:22-29, Ephesians 6, Colossians 2:13-15, Hebrews 2:14-18, 1 John 3:4-10)

We believe Jesus is now at his Father's right hand, reigning from heaven as the true King. He is inviting all people everywhere to trust Him for forgiveness and freedom from shame, guilt, and fear because He is our unique source of life both now and forever. In addition, He has given His Spirit to supply direction and power so that we might live fully in the special identity and destiny He has prepared for each of us. (John 13-17, Acts 1-3, Romans 8, and Ephesians 2-3)

Today, we live as a community of God's people on mission together, seeking to love God and follow Jesus by making disciples in the neighborhoods, nations, and next generation around us. By relying upon the unfailing, active grace of his Spirit and upon his entirely trustworthy Scripture, we embrace the often challenging but always hopeful adventure of sacrificial love, selfless generosity, and healing kindness to which He calls us. (Matthew 28 contains Jesus' definitive commission to make disciples, and the book of Acts shows a generation of the early church's efforts to obey that commission. Passages affirming the trustworthiness of Scripture include Matthew 5:17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and Hebrews 4:12. Likely the clearest description of a life of love, generosity, and kindness can be found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.)

We also believe life in God's Kingdom is joyful, so we like to laugh. (Deuteronomy 14:26, Isaiah 55:12, Romans 14:17, Philippians 4:4-9, Revelation 5:1-14)

One day in the not-so-distant future, we believe Jesus will return and remake the world, judging and removing every last trace of evil in order to complete the new creation that He began on the first Easter. (For glimpses into God's good future for the cosmos, see Isaiah 60-66, 1 Corinthians 15, and Revelation 21-22)

THE ESSENTIAL ISSUES

1 WHAT IS OUR VIEW OF THE BIBLE?

We believe the Bible is God's entirely trustworthy, inspired, and authoritative Word to his people, and we take seriously its numerous commands to read, memorize, discuss, teach, and obey it. Of course, doing this well means engaging the text prayerfully and carefully. We believe that God's inspiration worked through human authors whose character and context profoundly shaped the Scriptures we read today. Therefore, we labor to link the living Word of the ancient text to the dynamic circumstances of our daily lives. Ultimately, this means following all of Scripture's prose and poetry as it flows like rainfall toward a single, infinitely deep well of living water: Jesus Christ.

2 HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND MISSION?

Just after his resurrection, Jesus walked into a room full of his own frightened followers and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). How, exactly, did the Father send Jesus? We could respond in many ways, but perhaps the best answer is found at the beginning of John's Gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). Theologians call this the "incarnation," and we are amazed that God's eternal, divine Word would embrace the lowliness and limitation of human flesh. God chose to stoop and serve us in this way that we might know the glory of his grace. God continues to be present and at work in the world, and our goal is to join God's mission by listening to, imitating, and obeying Jesus. And so we stoop and we serve, going and accommodating and contextualizing without compromising our convictions so that others might have the opportunity to see Jesus clearly and-- upon hearing this Good News--determine their own posture toward his universal Lordship. This means becoming students of other cultures, just as the Apostle Paul "observed" the people of Athens (Acts 17:23), so that we might discover ways to communicate as effectively as possible. Moreover, in the same way that Jesus' impact was both verbal and substantial, we believe that entering into the mission of God means both inviting people to join the great story of God's love and demonstrating that love through practical, non-coercive contributions to the common good. When we talk about "bringing the Kingdom of God," then, we are referring to the humble hospitality that welcomes the work of God into our neighborhood, the nations, and the next generation.

3 WHY DO WE VALUE THE MUSLIM WORLD?

Ever since the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, we have felt a very strong call as a church family to prioritize relationships with Muslim communities precisely because many people-- especially Christians--do not. Rather than "interfaith dialogue," we hope to build multi-faith relationships with Muslim communities in which we acknowledge the very real differences between our faith traditions even as we continue in friendship. We hope to see our friends in the Muslim community come to follow Jesus, and we pray for the day when God's Spirit will heal the current division and antipathy between our faith traditions. Toward that end, we are committed to learning and appreciating the truth many of our Muslim friends already possess even as we seek to discover more truth together. Our weekend intensive "Jesus and the Qur'an" is offered several times each year across the Grace Family and explores these subjects in much more detail.

4

WHAT IS THE VIEW OF MARRIAGE IN THE GRACE FAMILY?

Across our churches, we affirm the biblical design of marriage from the beginning as being a covenant between one man and one woman, and that sexual intimacy is reserved for the marriage relationship. At the same time, we face very real and very complex ministry contexts in which we are learning how best to share the Good News of Jesus with every person, regardless of sexual orientation. All people live in our beautiful but broken world, and all people long to discover love and relationship and wholeness. We unapologetically believe that Jesus is the way (and the truth, and the life) toward that wholeness, and so our primary focus is meeting Christ so that he can be the one to speak into and heal the wounds that are common to human experience.

5

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND GOD’S HEART FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP?

For us, a fundamental truth of the Bible is that spiritual gifts are not gender-specific. In other words, we believe that the Holy Spirit releases gifts of leadership to both men and women. Our challenge, then, is to disciple and empower both men and women in the areas of their gifting within local contexts for maximum impact for the Kingdom of God. Practically, this means each church in the Grace Family values the God-given capacity of women to lead without limitation even as we humbly evaluate the best empowerment of that leadership in each local situation.