



PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
CAMPUSES IN NORTH LIBERTY AND IOWA CITY
© GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH 2017

Philosophy of Ministry

A Strategic Process

Opportunities and Obstacles – An Introduction
Our Church's Mission
Our Core Values
Our Strategy
Our Methods
Next Steps on an Individual Level



Opportunities and Obstacles

Before Jesus went to the cross He prepared His disciples for the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples. Jesus declared that the harvest was plentiful. The year 2017 and beyond is a time of tremendous potential and opportunity for spiritual harvest:

- Grace has grown ten-fold since moving to North Liberty in 1994. The North Liberty location was surrounded by corn and bean fields back then. By 2020 the corn and beans will be replaced by a new high school and 1,000 new homes. That school and those homes will be occupied by people who need the Gospel. God is presenting us an opportunity to reach thousands of our new neighbors with the Gospel.
- 2013 marked the launch of the Downtown Campus in Iowa City. Three years in, we have a solid ministry team and have found an excellent location for our present ministry needs in historic Old Brick Church. Grace Downtown is in the center of the busy University of Iowa campus. The Gospel is impacting families, young professionals, and both American and international students. God has placed us in a position to influence thousands of people from all over the world who will leave Iowa City to influence their communities with the Gospel.
- Both Grace campuses are surrounded by people who are, as Matthew 9:38 says, *"harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."* The community is filled with broken homes, young moms without the support of husbands, kids without mentors, marriages falling apart, addictions and families in over their heads with debt. God has placed us strategically to offer Gospel hope to hundreds of local people who are hurting and to equip other churches regionally to offer that same Gospel hope to the hurting in their communities.
- Grace draws people from over a 50-mile radius. Many of these long-distance attenders are praying for ways to reach their neighbors in communities where a strong Gospel witness is sparse. God has raised up men and women within Grace with a heart to branch out with the Gospel regionally to other communities.
- Grace is populated by a growing number of disciples who are growing more aware of the lack of a Gospel witness worldwide. Many desire to go, send and support Gospel efforts across the globe. God is calling and equipping us to influence the nations with the hope of the Gospel.



“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:32).

We stand at a crossroads in the history of our church. We see opportunities all around us but opportunities do not always translate into a harvest.

This paper is written to the end that we become the kind of church that is equipped to seize the opportunities God has placed before us. The harvest is plentiful and the seed of the Gospel must be sown, cultivated, watered and cared for so that the Holy Spirit will bring about a Gospel harvest of changed lives. Jesus knew that laborers are few. That is why He instructed His disciples to pray that laborers would be raised up. That is why He spent three years prior to the cross building into the men He sent out as laborers into the harvest. He taught and modeled for them how to make disciples who would make it their mission to labor unto a Gospel harvest. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

It is our hope and our prayer that you read this paper and catch a vision for harvest:

1. A harvest of righteousness *in your life* as you believe the Gospel and allow Jesus to make you a new creation full of life, purpose and joy.
2. A harvest of righteousness *in your home* as you love, serve and minister to those God has placed closest to you.
3. A harvest of righteousness in the communities *where you work, study and play* as your influence becomes a conduit of the Gospel to a world that is harassed and helpless.
4. A harvest of righteousness among the nations as we send, pray, and finance global missions to the end that Jesus name is worshipped by every people group on earth.

“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (Proverbs 29:18).

If we are to realize a harvest, we must grasp God’s vision for us and step out accordingly.

Our Church’s Mission

Our purpose is expressed in Jesus’ Great Commission – the command to make disciples of all nations:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Our church exists to glorify God by being and making disciples who make disciples.



What is a disciple? A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ who has been reconciled to God by faith in the Gospel and, in response to His mercy, seeks to submit every area of their life to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is the good news that God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ, to redeem fallen mankind from the effects of sin through the substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16).

The Gospel is seed sown in anticipation of a harvest, the rain that waters the soil, and the light that feeds the seedling of a new life in Christ. The Gospel is the news of our redemption in Christ and it is the means by which we grow in Christ. The Gospel is what God has proclaimed to us which, when believed, makes us disciples and enables us to make disciples. At Grace, we express our mission to make disciples as a threefold commitment to **Bring In, Build Up, and Branch Out**.

- **Bring In** – Bring people into a personal relationship with Jesus through the declaration and demonstration of the Gospel to the world.
- **Build Up** – Build one another up to become mature followers of Jesus through the declaration and demonstration of the Gospel to one another within the church.
- **Branch Out** – Branch out to the community and world by supporting and or sending some of us to other communities around the world who lack a Gospel witness or need a stronger Gospel witness.

Our Core Values

What makes a disciple a disciple? What makes a disciple mature? How do we know if we are becoming like Jesus? A mature disciple is known by what they value. A disciple is characterized by their love for God and the things which God loves. This love is an outflow of a life transformed by belief in the Gospel.

“And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37–40).

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42–47).

Belief in the Gospel leads to three Gospel values will always be present in maturing disciples.



Gospel Truth - We are committed to the truth of Scripture, and believe that its central message is the Gospel; the message of God's gracious work to redeem sinners. Before we believed the Gospel, we defined our own "truths" and we lived accordingly. Now we believe that Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father except through Him.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6).

A disciple who is committed to Gospel Truth will demonstrate that commitment by:

- Believing the Gospel and being baptized.
- Developing a personal habit of prayer.
- Developing a personal habit of reading and abiding in God's Word.
- Developing a personal habit of applying (obeying) God's Word.

[*View Statement of Beliefs*](#)

Gospel Community - We are committed to knowing, loving, and serving one another as brothers and sisters united in Christ. Before we believed the Gospel, we viewed other people as a means or hindrance to our own personal happiness. Now we see others as people made in the image of God and we seek to love and serve them as Jesus loved and served us.

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:1–11).

A disciple who is committed to Gospel Community will demonstrate that commitment by:

- Serving and speaking truth to those who are part of Grace.
- Serving and speaking truth to those in the community who worship elsewhere.
- Serving and speaking truth to those who are followers Jesus across the globe.



Gospel Mission - We are committed to declaring and demonstrating the Gospel to our neighborhoods, our cities, and the nations. Before we believed the Gospel, we viewed those who did not share our beliefs and values as strangers to be avoided or enemies to be fought against. Now we see those who do not understand or share our beliefs as those we are called to love through the declaration and demonstration of the very same Gospel which saved us.

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:16–21).

A disciple who is committed to Gospel Mission will demonstrate that commitment by:

- Praying for those in the community who are unreached.
- Serving those in the community who are unreached.
- Sharing the truth of the Gospel with those in the community who are unreached.
- Praying for global missions and the unreached people of the world.
- Supporting global missions financially.
- Raising up and sending disciples to the unreached people of the world.

Our Strategy

Simply knowing what a mature disciple should be and do does not make one a mature disciple. Believing the Gospel saves us from our sin in an instant, but our values develop over time as we continue to believe and respond to the Gospel. Discipleship is a Gospel-driven process where God takes people from where they are to where He wants them to be.

Discipleship – A Gospel-Driven Process

Discipleship occurs when God’s people declare and demonstrate the Gospel to one another daily. It is God’s work to transform a baby disciple into a mature disciple but that disciple must feed on the Gospel if they are to grow. Discipleship without a strong daily reminder that salvation and sanctification are God’s work becomes a list of things to check off and do and quickly becomes legalism. Yet, the Gospel without discipleship is an oxymoron and will lead to unchanged lives and empty faith.



- The Gospel is God's good news declared to people who are powerless to do anything for themselves spiritually.

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4–7).

- The Gospel is God's once for all triumph over sin and death.

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:54–57).

- Discipleship is what God's people do as they endeavor to believe, declare, and demonstrate the Gospel to one another and the world.

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." (Colossians 1:28–29).

- Discipleship is the believer's ongoing struggle to continue to believe, remember, and be transformed by the truth of the Gospel and to encourage others to do the same.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:23–25).

- The Holy Spirit supernaturally transforms a disciple into a person who is increasingly committed to Gospel truth, Gospel community, and Gospel mission as the Gospel is believed and acted on in faith.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1–2).

- Discipleship is a lifestyle. Discipleship is not a weekly event. The role of the local church is to equip believers to understand their great salvation and exercise the gifts they have been given so that the whole body would be built up and the Great Commission is fulfilled.

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:11–16).

How Discipleship Works at Grace

Grace is not a building, set of programs, weekly event, or institution. Grace is a local expression of the Body of Christ. We are a people. We are a family of believers united by a common faith in the Savior and a common mission for the glory of that Savior. Our mission to be and make disciples happens as we declare and demonstrate the Gospel to one another daily.

One Church Two Locations

Grace is one church with multiple areas of local missional focus. Therefore, our weekly services are held at two locations: one in North Liberty and the other in Downtown Iowa City. We believe we should love the communities we live in enough to share the Gospel with them. Therefore, we seek to take the Gospel geographically and culturally to where people are instead of expecting them to find and join us so they may hear and believe the Gospel.

Each location is led by a team of campus Elders committed to serve and equip the believers to demonstrate and declare the Gospel to the community they are located in. Both locations share a common vision, coaching system, resources, and equipping opportunities as overseen by a team of Elders representing both locations.

Our Methods



Church Planting

Our commitment is to declare and demonstrate the Gospel to communities without expecting the community to come to us. Therefore, we are committed to raise up and send church planting teams to the various communities represented within Grace.

Community Groups • [Check out Community Groups Online](#)

Discipleship requires two ingredients: Gospel truth and people who demonstrate and declare the Gospel to one another. Without a daily infusion of truth, believers cannot mature. Believers immersed in truth without regular interaction and encouragement from other believers cannot mature. We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ should change and shape every part of our lives throughout our entire week and in all of our relationships. Grace seeks to provide Gospel-centered community through a network of Community Groups that meet throughout the week in homes wherever Grace attendees live. These Community Groups are small groups of people who team up together to live a Gospel-centered life while caring for the city around them. Community Groups are the primary way to connect to others at Grace and live life out on mission together.

The Weekly Services • [Service Times & Locations](#)

The Sunday services are a time where the church comes together in larger groups to praise our Savior together and be encouraged through the proclamation of the Gospel through preaching of the Word of God. The weekly worship services serve to encourage the body through a clear and compelling exposition of the Word of God. This time of preaching and praise seeks to sing and proclaim the majesty of Jesus and His work, encourage and equip the believer, compel the unbeliever to believe, and give a unifying vision for the people of Grace week to week.

The weekly service is not the church. Rather the weekly service is an event the church comes to weekly to celebrate and soak in the wonder of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Each week we proclaim the truth of the Gospel to the community created by the Gospel, the church, so we might be encouraged to go forth and live out a Gospel mission.

Thrive and Equipping Conferences • [Classes Open for Registration](#)

Becoming a mature disciple means that we submit every aspect of our lives to the Lord Jesus. That requires that we understand what the Word of God has to say about every aspect of life. Thrive classes and equipping conferences are venues where disciples or inquirers can come and be taught what the Word of God teaches on all matters that pertain to life and faith.

Biblical Counseling and Training

Biblical Counseling or intensive discipleship is an integral part of making disciples in our church. Combining biblical equipping with biblical community we understand biblical counseling to really be intensive discipleship. Biblical counseling is a part of most every



ministry area at Grace: from our children's ministry through our adult ministries and community groups, we use biblical counseling to help make disciples. We have an extensive training program and lots of written resources to help our leaders and congregation play an active role in applying the Gospel, God's Word and community, to individuals who are struggling with suffering or sin. We are a counseling station where people can be equipped with Gospel truth, and experience and practice Gospel community in order to be on Gospel mission to make disciples

Mission Trips

We believe that a disciple has a responsibility to participate in making other disciples locally and globally. It is not sufficient to simply remind disciples what the Bible says about making disciples. We must also provide opportunities for disciples to serve and share their faith with those close to home and across the globe. To that end, we seek to provide quarterly opportunities to serve on mission trips.

Who are the Field Staff that Grace supports?

The Leadership Pipeline

Ultimately it is the Lord of the harvest Who raises up laborers, but it is the local church that is given the task to pray for and train them. Our Leadership Pipeline is a coaching and equipping track that every Community Group leader and other leaders are placed in. This pipeline seeks to combine coaching and teaching leaders to the end that they will become better equipped to grow in character and skill. The pipeline seeks to address areas of mission, counseling, shepherding and doctrine so that each leader will be better equipped to equip others and potentially branch out as future pastors and missionaries in new pioneering works regionally and globally.



