

A Strategy for Grace Church

Discipleship (Strengths)

Leaders Who Love the Lord and Seek to Glorify Christ: Our leaders love the Lord and model a consistent growth in depth and intimacy in their relationship with God. They lead by example and with integrity, humility, maturity, and grace.

Strong Leadership Team Culture That Values Leaders: Our leaders have devoted their lives to serving him. We place a strong emphasis on the importance of teams in each of our ministries, and we have a team of leaders who know each other, work well together, and that trust each other.

Ample Opportunities for People to Grow and Develop Their Gifts: Between ministry teams, special events, and P. Groups, our folks have ample opportunities to be involved and use their gifts to bless others.

Focus on Raising Up the Next Generation: From our earliest days as a church, we have placed an emphasis on empowering and training up the next generation. This happens through our Children's Ministry, Young Church, within Ministry Teams, and through the Apprenticeship each summer.

Core Conviction to Make Disciples: As a church, we are convinced of the call to make disciples and this is reflected in every aspect of church life. We are not afraid to address areas of growth, but we have also grown in love, life experience, and wisdom over the years. We truly believe that "if we're not building men and women, we're not building anything."

Commitment to the Word and Prayer: We have a deep love for the Word of God, which is reflected in our consistent teaching on Sundays, in Prayer Meetings, and P. Groups, and in our Children's Ministry curriculum. We've grown to see the indispensability of God-centered worship and prayer.

Growing in Our Personal Experience of the Holy Spirit: We've consistently heard from people that they sense/feel the Holy Spirit at work among us. We have taught more intentionally on the Holy Spirit and encouraged people to walk by the Spirit in their daily lives.

Discipleship (Areas of Growth)

Caring for Our Key Disciples: Create some margin for our most committed servants and work closely with them to ensure their pace is sustainable. With our most faithful servants, we want to ensure their cups are being filled and that they know how much their service blesses our leaders and the Body of Christ.

Inviting New People Into the Work: Be more intentional about defining opportunities to serve within each ministry and inviting people to begin by serving in a smaller, more manageable role that fits with the level of commitment that newer people are ready to step into.

Grow in the Holy Spirit's Gifts: Grow in our knowledge and practice of the Spiritual Gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-29 and Romans 12:6-8. Help people (re)discover their gifts in the season ahead encourage them to put those gifts to work within the Body of Christ.

Greater Emphasis on the Importance of Discipleship: Raise the value again on the importance of discipleship and commission/support our EDDs as they connect regularly with those they lead and speak into their lives. We also want/need to connect more consistently with each of our leaders, ensuring that we're caring for their souls and in tune with the needs within their ministries.

Clarity About Where, When, and How Discipleship Happens: Define more clearly for people what we mean by 'discipleship' and how we can effectively disciple those serving in multiple areas. In other words, how can we work more closely as leaders to ensure that each person is being encouraged and built up in their faith? We also need to provide clarity for leaders about our expectations for their involvement in the lives of others.

Agreement from Those Being Led About the Role of Leaders in Their Lives: Ensure that those we're desiring to invest in more intentionally are open to this involvement of leaders in their lives. The word that has come up frequently is 'agreement.' We have leaders that are ready to lead, but we want to ensure that those we're leading *want* that leadership in their lives.

Gospel-Centered Leadership: Consistently call our people to trust in the mercy and grace of Christ as the primary motivation for their transformation. Along with this, we want to intentionally keep Christ at the center of all we do.

Community (Strengths)

Strong, Committed Core: There is a strong sense of connection and community among our members. We spend a lot of time together and genuinely enjoy being together.

Our Core is Involved & Connected: Nearly everyone in our core is connected in meaningful ways within the Body. Our members are active in serving and we have nearly 100% participation during our small group seasons.

Very Supportive of Each Other: We are like a big family who support one another and really love one another. Our people genuinely love the Lord and actively care for each other. Our folks are generous and freely share what they have with each other.

Authenticity & Honesty: We tend to be honest and open with our struggles. We understand that others who come into our midst value this type of honesty and transparency and we prioritize 'realness' in our teaching and conversations.

Connecting with Other Believers is a Core Conviction: This type of meaningful, authentic communication is part of our DNA as a church. We place a high value on relationships with each other, which is reflected in our serving teams and our Prayer Meetings where we gather every day.

A Place Where People Can Really Belong: Although we want to grow in welcoming and integrating new people, our core is welcoming of those who visit. We have a community where people can connect in meaningful ways and really belong.

Community (Areas of Growth)

Be Willing to Take Some New Risks Again: Need complete healing from past hurt, doubt, and hesitancy to get close to new people. We feel God calling us to step and take some new risks as we move forward by faith, but we need consistent and lasting freedom from fear of 'putting ourselves out there' again.

Freedom from Judging, Comparison, and Pride: This is something we've already started to pray and speak into over the last few weeks, but this is an area we need to continue to talk about our folks. As leaders, we also need to continue to model forgiveness, grace, and understanding to those in our orbits.

Gathering Without an Agenda: The season of Open Houses this past summer was a real reminder of how important it is that we prioritize time to be together as Body without an agenda or specific ministry work to accomplish.

Simplicity and Streamlining the Church Calendar: Although we value being together, we also feel the need to bring greater simplicity to the amount and types of church/ministry gatherings we've grown accustomed to over the years. If we want to see our core folks out in the community, we need to make sure our people have the time and bandwidth to do this.

Broaden the Circle for New People: There's no doubt we have a committed core, but we need to intentionally broaden the circle and make room at the table (and in our lives!) for new people. At times, our core can be so tight-knit that it can be hard for new people to connect. We need to find ways to bridge the gap between our committed core and those looking to connect here.

Make Room for Another 'Tier' of Involvement: When new people come, there seems to be a big divide between those who are fully committed and those who are new or on the fringes. Those who aren't quite ready for that level of commitment seem to feel inadequate and don't see a place for themselves at Grace. We need to be more intentional about making room for people to connect and be involved at a level they are comfortable with.

Get Better at Celebrating Wins and Encouraging One Another: We want to do better at slowing down long enough to celebrate wins where God has moved and blessed. This includes showing genuine love and affection, speaking more words of affirmation, and looking for ways to enjoy time with each other apart from serving and the 'work' of ministry.

Leveraging the 'Engine' of P. Groups: We really believe that our small groups have great potential to be an engine for healing and growth in the years to come. We need to continue to seek the Lord about how he wants to use these gatherings to strengthen our community. We believe God may be calling us to prioritize gathering in homes more often for fellowship and outreach.

Leadership (Strengths)

Leaders Who Love the Lord and Seek to Honor Him Above All Else: Our leaders consistently seek the Lord and call our Body to do the same. They understand the importance of their roles and seek to honor God in the ways they serve. They call our Body to be active in their faith and to grow as Jesus' disciples.

Strong Community of Leaders: We have a cohesive team of leaders who connect regularly, genuinely enjoy being together, and pray consistently for the Body. Our leaders are faithful, committed, humble, and open to the ways of the Holy Spirit. They give sacrificially and model a servant's heart. Our leaders support one another and are willing to jump in and help in any way they can.

Culture That Values and Honors Leaders: We understand the importance of authority structures. We value and honor leaders and focus on leadership development as a natural outflow of our distinctives. Our Grace Church core trusts and respects our leadership team and actively follows their leadership. Over the last several years, we have articulated these core convictions in our updated Bylaws, Membership, Ordination, and Elder, Deacon, and Deaconess materials.

Encourage and Empower Those in Leadership Positions: We have a culture of training up and empowering leaders to operate in their gifts. There are many opportunities for people to grow and develop as leaders. We seek to train up our Young Churchers and give them opportunities to step into new roles. This is especially true of our summer Apprenticeships, Prayer Meeting teachers, and EDD ministries.

Leaders Are Growing in Grace and Lead by Example: Our team of leaders consistently model a life of selfless service to those they lead. Our leaders believe in the importance of serving alongside those on their teams and leading by example. Our leaders are growing in grace and love and we're learning to better express gratitude and love to those we lead.

Take Care of Details and Execute Very Well: Our leaders ensure that projects and special events are done very well. This ranges from the events we plan as a church to the ways we host others in the community and serve them in any way we can. We are detail-oriented and consistently ensure that our teams are prepared for gatherings, meetings, retreats, and other special events.

Leadership (Areas of Growth)

Find More Ways to Pour Into Leaders at All Levels: We know leadership is important, but oftentimes we stay so busy with the 'work' of the ministry that we forget to step back long enough to encourage our leaders, pour into their lives, and care for their hearts. The growth of our EDD ministry has been a great first step, and we want this intentionality to filter down to leaders at all levels.

Commissioning Our Leaders and More Clearly Transferring Authority: This is something we've recognized and talked about over the last several months, but we really want (and need!) to be much more intentional about commissioning those in leadership roles at every level and giving them new freedom and autonomy to grow their ministries, try new things, and shepherd those God has entrusted to their care.

Inviting Others into the Joy of Serving: While we recognize that many of our leaders could probably benefit from doing a little less, there are others in the Body who would be encouraged and strengthened by the opportunity to step in and serve in new ways. As leaders, we're often quick to take on too much of the load and responsibility, opting to 'just do it ourselves' rather than inviting others in and giving them an opportunity to use their gifts and share in the privilege and responsibility of serving.

Stepping Out to Shepherd and Lead Beyond Ministry Tasks: Along with commissioning our leaders, we need to encourage them to step into lives and be more active in their leadership and shepherding. Many of our leaders are leading in more of a managerial/administrative way, but we need to raise the value again of discipleship and entering into people's lives beyond completing the tasks of ministry.

Encouraging Our Leaders to Enter Into Longer Periods of Rest: We want to do better at ensuring our staff and key leaders are prioritizing soul care. As a church that always seems to have another event, gathering, or project on the horizon, our most trusted leaders can find it hard to take the time and space needed to replenish their souls. Not only is this important for our leaders, it's essential for the rest of the Body to learn these rhythms for themselves while also gaining a better appreciation for those who give so much.

Continue to Wait on the Lord: We have grown so much in this area, and we just want to keep encouraging each other to listen for the Holy Spirit's leading and ensure that we're doing God's work in God's way. As leaders, we know that we can 'get it done,' whatever 'it' is! We just need to continually seek the Lord and ask '*God, what do you have for us?*' Praise God for so much growth and progress in this area.

Multiplication (Strengths)

Foundation of Prayer: As much as we long to see more people reached with the gospel, we've learned to depend on God and pray consistently for God to move. Our desire to reach people is reflected in our conversations and prayer in many different settings.

Outreach is at the Core of Who We Are as a Church: First and foremost, we are a people who love God and live for him. We are convinced of the call to make disciples and desire to see the gospel extend to "other sheep who are not of this fold" (John 10:16). This is reflected in the unique opportunities for new people to connect (Twelve17 Coffee Ministry, Race for a Reason, Blood Drives, etc).

Mission-Minded and Desire to Reach the Unreached: We have made missions a priority in terms of sending folks from our Body and short and longer-term stays, and we support those in other parts of the world who are reaching the unreached, particularly through donations that have come in as part our Twelve17 Coffee Roasters Hospitality Ministry. Our heart to reach the unreached is also reflected in our Children's Ministry curriculum.

Genuine Desire to Grow as a Church: As of late, there is a growing sense of readiness and hunger to reach new people. We are generally very welcoming to those who are new or visiting and we are growing in boldness to invite others. We genuinely want to grow as a church!

Great Capacity to Give and Serve: We have so much to offer to our community, both in terms of genuine love and fellowship, but also in the practical ways we are equipped to serve in so many different ways. We have the spaces, equipment, and servant's heart to bless and serve others in our community. Over the last several years, we have laid a strong foundation for growth in terms of our prayer life, facilities, leadership team, and ministry structures.

Multiplication (Areas of Growth)

Trust God With the Outcomes: Ultimately, God has been showing us that it's not primarily about us. While our natural instinct may be rooted more in striving and effort, we are learning to depend upon the Holy Spirit and trust God for the outcomes. We believe God is calling us to look to him, get our eyes off of our past mistakes and failures, and trust him to open new doors in the season ahead.

Need to be "Out There" and in the Community More: We believe it is time for us to shine, which means we need to step out by faith and be less guarded in our outreach. In order to reach more people, we believe we need to be out in the community in natural and living-giving ways. This will require us to coach people in how to be intentional in their relationships with others, as well as a little more freedom to get 'out there.'

Clarity on Who We're Trying to Reach: We feel it's time to get a little more specific about who it is we're trying to reach and take some practical steps to move in that direction. Part of this process is discerning where we see God already at work and agreeing on some ways we can join him there. In order to grow, we need to actually see some new people saved and integrated into Body life!

Make Room in Our Church Calendar for People to Reach Out: We need a little more margin in our church calendar to free people up to reach out, have some new people over for dinner, etc. We have so many good/strengthening things going on in all of our different ministries! It's hard to imagine *not* doing some of these things in order to simplify/streamline in different seasons throughout the year in order to free our people up, but this is something we feel is especially important as we plan for 2022.

Allow More Room for People to Grow at Their Own Pace: We know that those who are new to the faith, drawing near to Jesus for the first time, or new to Grace Church will connect with the Body differently than those who have been committed for many years. As we grow, it's important that we 'make room' for people at all different stages in their spiritual journey by welcoming them and giving them a pathway to deeper connection.

Simple and Specific Training About How to Share Our Faith: As we encourage the Body to reach out in new ways, we also want to ensure we're equipping them with the skills they need to share their faith in ways that are both simple and sincere. We need our people to be 'on mission' in all of the places God has called them in this season, and we need to continually encourage them to look for ways to engage people spiritually. We believe it's especially important that we model this as a leadership team and that we're ready/able to share from personal experience.