

our gospel ministry | *Discovering Grace Church*

Jesus joins us together to be a worshipping, ministering, and declaring community. We could think of this ministry in and through the church in a few ways, each of which are fully biblical and vitally important.

our ministry philosophy

> **CHURCH “INSTITUTIONAL”** is the people of God as organized into local churches as recognized by certain essential “marks”. Historically, those marks have defined the church as “the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered” (Augsburg Confession, 1530).

- Right Preaching of the Gospel: essential to our ministry task is the sacred call to guard and proclaim of the good news of God’s grace in Jesus Christ (Gal. 1.8, 1 Tim 6.20, 2 Tim 1.14)
- Right Practicing of the Sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper (or communion) are the two sacraments given by Jesus to the church “until he comes” (Mt 28.19, 1 Cor 11.23-32). They are vital ways we celebrate what he has done (1 Cor 11.26), and even enjoy a fellowship with him (1 Cor 10.16) by his Spirit.

"Baptism and the Lord's Supper also serve as 'membership controls' for the church. Baptism is the means for admitting people into the church, and the Lord's Supper is the means for allowing people to give a sign of continuing in the membership of the church - the church signifies that it considers those who receive baptism and the Lord's Supper to be saved." – Wayne Grudem

Related to rightly preaching of the gospel and practicing of the sacraments is a third mark: the practice of redemptive discipline. This is a process Jesus gives to care for and seek to “gain” a believer who may be straying into a serious and harmful pattern of sin (Mt 18.15-18, 1 Cor 5 – **see addendum 1**)

These “marks” provide our essential job description as a church. We may not do a great number of things ministry-wise and still be a fully authentic church, but we *must* have these marks if we are to be a church.

> **CHURCH “ORGANIC”** is the reality that we are also a body of individual believers in Jesus. This means there are many ways individual believers might minister or serve in their community that the church does not do “institutionally” – and, sometimes, even should not do “institutionally”. Thus, a member need not wait for an official church program to minister in a particular way, but is encouraged to minister or serve in many ways to people all around them.

This distinction helps shape a general philosophy of ministry that would include the following categories:

- Simple Structures: As a general default we want to “under-program” the church so that members has space in their lives to live out their God-given vocations in this world, as well as invest in and minister to fellow believers, spouses, children, and unbelieving friends. .
- Empowered People: We value God’s empowering in the spiritual gifts he gives and in the ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit to be and to do all God desires (e.g., 1 Cor 12.4-11, Eph 5.18ff). We desire to see all of God’s people used as Spirit-empowered ministers and missionaries – doing works of ministry all around them (Eph. 4.11-12).
- Outward Hearts: Since the gospel also moves us outward, we want to resist the inevitable gravitational pull of our hearts away from God’s mission. We believe that our outward gospel mission should not just be a segment of our church but should permeate all that we do as a church.

our ministry rhythm

Given our vision of seeing the gospel *functioning* as our center and moving us **upward in worship, inward in community, and outward in mission**, our basic ministry rhythm could be summed up as:

> **GATHER FOR WORSHIP** in our weekly **Sunday service**. The Sunday service is our most important ministry context as we gather visibly as a body to exalt God's name and encounter his nearness through:

- Song (Eph 5.18-19)
- Scripture (1 Tim 4.13, 2 Tim 3.16-4.2)
- Sacrament (1 Cor 11.23-26).

By song, Scripture, and sacrament we sing of Jesus, study Jesus and "see" Jesus. Therefore, central to our ministry is our corporate worship gathering – when we see and savor the glory of God in Christ together!

> **GATHER FOR COMMUNITY** mainly (though not exclusively) through our **Home Groups**. Our home groups are small groups of people who gather regularly for the ministry purposes of:

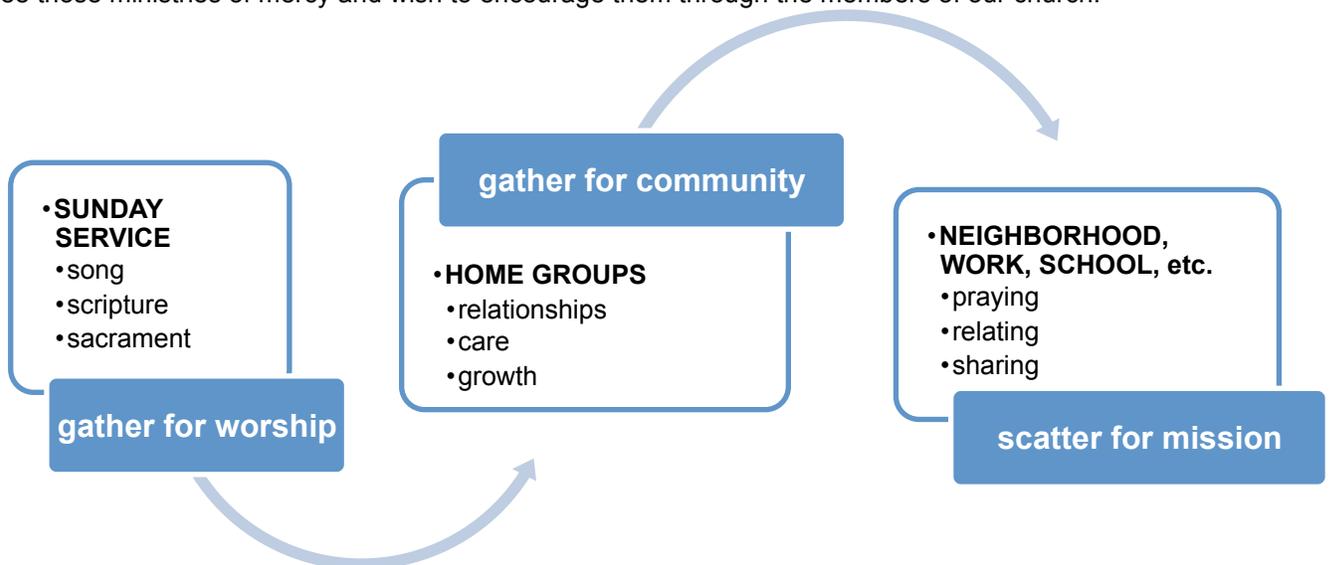
- Relationships that are genuinely reflect the work of Christ are essential to real community
- Care should happen in many ways, since we are people distinguished by love (John 13.34-35)
- Growth in our discipleship is pursued as we build our lives together around the word of God

We also want our following of Jesus in community to include being salt and light to our community. Home Groups can help facilitate this by: *praying* for unbelievers, *inviting* unbelievers to meetings or other contexts, and *ministering* to needs in the community for Jesus' sake.

> **SCATTER FOR MISSION** in our **neighborhoods, work places, schools, etc.** Those places are the mission fields to which God has sent us in our lives. We want the overflow of our amazement at God's grace toward us in Jesus to be the ministry of this good news to those around us. That includes:

- Praying for specific people who don't yet know Jesus
- Relating to them with love, as we build genuine friendships
- Sharing the good news about Jesus, and inviting them to repent and believe

This means we are not simply seeking to attract people to meetings, but want to go to them as we join God on his mission to our community, and around the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). We also desire our gospel witness to include reflections of the mercy of God through practical acts of mercy toward others. We desire to see those ministries of mercy and wish to encourage them through the members of our church.



our ministry structure

In addition to the vital role of every member, a leadership structure is described in Scripture that both provides ministry to God's people and equips them for works of ministry themselves. For us, that structure could be summed up in the following ways:

> **THE CHIEF SHEPHERD** is Jesus Christ, our risen and reigning King. As the "*Chief Shepherd*" (1 Pet 5.4), Jesus is the one who, by his Spirit, ultimately leads, feeds, cares for, and protects the people he purchased with his own blood. He is therefore "*the head of the body, the church... that in everything he might be preeminent.*" (Col 1.18).

- This means that, by his word, King Jesus must be setting our agenda and directing the means by which we pursue his agenda. We want to order ourselves under his authoritative word that we might bring honor and glory to him (2 Tim 3.16-17).
- Thus, Jesus alone is the One to hold our highest allegiances and the One to whom we gladly submit the entirety of our lives.

> **THE ELDERS** are fellow sheep who serve as under-shepherds of the flock – leading, teaching/feeding, caring for and protecting the flock of God on behalf of the Chief Shepherd (Acts 20.28, 1 Tim 5.17, 1 Pet 5.2-3). The elders are to be men who are qualified in character and gifted to "shepherd" (pastor) God's people (1 Tim 3.1-7, Titus 1.5-9). The elders are not to be the primary "ministers" themselves; instead, they are to "*equip the saints for the work of ministry*" (Eph. 4.12).

> **THE DEACONS** – deacon simply means "servant". You could think of the deacons as those who minister as a "lead servants" to help organize and administrate ministry. In this way, deacons serve to release the elders to focus on their shepherding and teaching ministry (Acts 6.1-6). The deacons may be men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Tim 3.8-13.¹

> **THE CONGREGATION** is not only called to ministry in real ways (see above), but it's also to have real involvement in the essential affairs of the church (implied in Matt 18-17-18, and modeled in Acts 6.1-6).

Such congregational involvement should happen *informally* as the elders pursue the input and counsel of the congregation on a variety of matters that the elders might regularly "*listen to advice*" (Prov 12.15). But congregational involvement also occurs more *formally* through the following:

- Congregational vote on potential elders and deacons
- Congregational affirmation of the annual budget (and any large or unusual expenditures)

In summary, we hope that you see the ministry in and through the local church is multi-faced and dynamic. It happens in many ways through many different people, including you. God wants to use you to create a ministering community in our midst – for his glory, the good of his people, and the proclamation of his gospel!

¹ We have formulated a position paper as to why we believe both men and women can serve in the office of deacon. This position paper can also be downloaded from our website.