



# GRACE

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presbyterian church (pca)

Mount Vernon, Washington  
[gracemountvernon.org](http://gracemountvernon.org)

Lead Pastor Candidate Packet

# Greetings

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We are excited that you're considering making Grace a home and using your pastoral gifts in leading our church family.

Grace was planted over twenty years ago to be a spiritual family for believers and to proclaim the good news of the gospel in the Skagit Valley. During that time, we have joined the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and have grown into a loving community committed to grace-filled preaching and worship, reflecting Christ's love in our fellowship and care for one another, growing as disciples in God's Word, and supporting missions locally and in the world.

Our founding pastor of 20+ years is stepping aside to focus on other ministry and work opportunities. We are seeking a new lead pastor who is passionate about preaching God's word, shepherding God's flock, and equipping God's people to live out and display the Gospel. He'll do this with empathy, emotional intelligence, wisdom, and a servant's heart. We are praying for you.

It is our hope this packet communicates who we are and who we're looking for.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Grace and peace be with you,

The Pastoral Search Committee:

Greg Geleynse

Beth Jones

Jono Orange

Caryn Silzer

Eric Wildman

# Who We Are

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Grace is a loving, healthy 20+-year-old congregation with strong gospel DNA. Grace is more than a word here: it is a culture, a heart, and a lifestyle of meekness, honesty, confession, and forgiveness.

Our desire is for everyone who walks through our doors to experience God's grace – in reverent and joyful worship, in preaching that transforms our desires and motivations, in meaningful relationship with others, and in being part of a community where we take God seriously but not ourselves.

We come from a wide variety of spiritual backgrounds. Some of our members have grown up in the reformed faith while others had little or no familiarity with it before coming to Grace. Our body varies in age, dress, economic circumstances, and theological maturity.



# Our Congregational Life

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Grace seeks to be a safe and healthy home for believers to learn and grow in their faith. Over the years we have often been a place of healing and refuge for Christian pilgrims coming out of difficult situations (like burnout or abusive marriages/churches). We are confident in God's sovereignty and love to carry us through hardships and heal our wounds.



Pre-COVID, Sunday worship and Sunday school were the hub for relationships, service, and growth. Additional events each month included potlucks, soup lunches, Bible studies, youth gatherings, and a women's service group. Other gatherings, including small groups, tended to be more organic.

For much of COVID we met on Zoom for Sunday worship and gathered in online breakout rooms for fellowship. We shopped for those who needed it and visited in ways that best suited each family. The women's Bible study shifted to an online format. Eventually we were able to gather in small groups to receive the Lord's Supper and hear the word preached. Happily, we started in-person worship again in May 2021, while continuing an online presence for those who aren't able or ready to attend.

Like many congregations across the country, our church family was not immune to the intrusion of cultural and political divisions during 2020-2021. We believed it was important to speak about the need for Christians to support public health guidelines, show concern regarding matters of social justice, and resist the damaging effects of Christian



Nationalism on the church's ministry and witness. We did this with pastoral concern,

gentleness, and an openness to letting the gospel challenge the idols in our society and in our hearts. Like many congregations over the past year, however, we had families who decided to leave.

While we mourn the loss of those families, our experience post-COVID is that we are more united and more focused on the gospel of grace than before. We are still rebuilding many of our rhythms and ministries that were put on hold during the pandemic, having opted to focus on the basics of Word and Sacrament in our return to in-person gatherings. We are looking forward to working with our new pastor in rebuilding and re-energizing our congregation and its ministries, especially our youth and children's ministries.

Throughout the pandemic we continued our support of several outside ministries that we feel carry our commitment to gospel grace and refuge to our community and beyond. Below is a list of some of the ministries that our congregation is committed to praying for and supporting:

- Skagit Love INC (coordinates local churches in caring for the physical & spiritual needs of people in our community)
- Clear Lake Food Bank
- Skookum Kids (an innovative approach to foster care)
- Sacred Road (walking together with members of the Yakama Nation to show them Christ's redeeming love)
- Western Washington University Reformed University Fellowship
- Apollos Initiative (investing long-term in the African Church through theological education and counseling training)



# Our Beliefs and Values

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## Beliefs

We happily affirm all the great doctrines at the heart of reformed tradition: Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone, and To God Alone be the Glory. We treasure both teaching and living out these doctrines.

## Values

It is one thing to know what a church believes. It is another thing to know what a church values. Here are some of ours:

**Provide a safe place to grow:** We seek to be a safe place where people experience God's unconditional love and can be honest about their struggles and doubts.



**Worship and preaching should be aimed at Gospel transformation:** A Christ-shaped life is not just about believing the right things. It's about experiencing transformation in our desires and actions through a deeper grasp of the Gospel.

**Young, Old, and People in Between All Matter:** We encourage doing life together while also making sure that people at every age receive the ministry they need.

**Shepherds are called to know the sheep:** God wants his people to have shepherds who care -- someone they can call when their marriage is in crisis, who will visit when they are in the hospital, or who will sit down for coffee when they are struggling with their faith.

**The Christian life is a repentant life:** Church is not a spiritual beauty contest where you show up to compete against other contestants. The best Christian life is the repentant life of daily confessing our sins and receiving God's grace.

# Our Worship

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Sunday worship is at the center of our church life. Worship at Grace is about doing the things which God promises will build up our faith: giving God praise, seeking God in prayer, reading the Scriptures, hearing the gospel preached, and receiving the sacraments.



Along with the careful proclamation of God's Word, we believe that the celebration of the Lord's table is a vital part of our corporate worship, and we administer it weekly.

We follow a liturgical order of worship, rehearsing the gospel story throughout each worship service. Worship services follow

the same liturgy and worship style, focusing both on classic hymns and more modern hymns and worship music.

We meet for Sunday worship in the Mount Vernon Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have rented this building for almost two decades.



# Our Numbers

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## Our Congregation

- Regular attenders: 83 (63 adults, 20 children/youth)
- Families: 35
- Ruling elders: 3 (including 1 on sabbatical)
- Deacons: 4
- Staff: 1 lead pastor + 2 part-time staff (admin and music director)

## Our Giving

- Tithes: \$233,000
- Diaconal offerings: \$11,000



# About Our Home

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## Washington

Washington State is home to spectacular mountains, diverse wildlife, bustling cities, and close-knit communities. Our amazingly diverse climate and geography, including an ocean-lined rainforest, active volcanoes, and a shrub-steppe desert, offer endless opportunities to explore:



- Two breathtaking mountain ranges featuring waterfalls and glaciers
- Outdoor sports such as hiking, biking, skiing, kayaking, fishing, and camping
- Canada to our North, Oregon to our south, and Idaho to our east

## Mount Vernon

- Located in Northwest Washington mid-way between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. We are nestled between the San Juan Islands and the beautiful and rugged North Cascade Mountains
- Largely suburban, Mount Vernon meets the country quickly where farms produce an incredibly diverse array of products including everything from tulips and berries to clams and dairy products
- 2019 Population: 36,000 people; 2019 median house value: \$310,696
- Thirteen public schools and 6 private schools (4 of which are Christian)



## **Skagit County**

- Population: 131,000 people
- Median household income: \$68,000, with approximately 11% of residents living below the poverty line
- Agriculture and manufacturing are Skagit county's largest industries, and pre-COVID job growth was at 1.6%

# Search Committee Members

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## Greg Geleyne



Greg has been a member of Grace for five years and has served on the diaconate for about two years. He and the marvelous Lavonne, his wife of 42 years, have two married children. Greg works as an Environmental Health Specialist with the Skagit County Public Health Department, working primarily in the on-site sewage (septic systems) program. Growing up in Lynden, WA Greg attended the Christian Reformed Church. He also spent many years in the Friends (Quaker) Church before coming to Grace, so Greg readily admits that he is not the staunchest of Calvinists.

## Beth Jones



Beth and her husband Tim, along with their three children, started worshipping with Grace at our very first worship service in 1999 when we were meeting in a living room. Twenty-three years later, they just celebrated 35 years of marriage and now enjoy spending time with three grandchildren. Beth and Tim, who serves as a deacon, have been an integral part of the setup/takedown ministry for many years. Over the years Beth has assisted with children's Sunday school classes and she and Tim served as treasurers. Beth grew up in Mount Vernon and has deep ties to the area. After living in Kent and on the peninsula for 13 years, Tim and Beth moved back to Mount Vernon in 1999. Beth works at Mount Vernon Christian School in the business office.

## Jono Orange



Jono and Melissa joined Grace as newlyweds 15 years ago. A talented musician, Jono serves as our worship director. He and Melissa now have three children and recently added two pandemic cats to their crew. In addition to blessing our congregation with his musical talents, Jono proved to be a fabulous Sunday school helper when his children were younger. He grew up in the Skagit Valley and now works as a commercial retail property manager.

### **Caryn Silzer**



Caryn and her husband, Jeff, began attending Grace four years ago when they and their young children moved from California. They jumped right into congregational life and add so much to our church family. Caryn has served as a Sunday school teacher, is active in Bible studies and women's ministry projects, and she and Jeff provided leadership to their Small Group gatherings. Caryn is also quick to offer support to others whether it be by bringing groceries to those who can't get out because of COVID or offering a listening ear to someone in need. She and Jeff are relatively new to PCA/Reformed theology. Their family's international experiences and exposure is an integral part of their identity.

### **Eric Wildman**



Eric and his family have been at Grace for seven years. He serves at Grace as an elder, treasurer, and ever-supportive husband of 28 years to our fantastic church administrator, Dorothy. Their son, Patrick, currently studies at Central Washington University where he proudly serves in the Army ROTC. Eric and Dorothy generally avoid feeling like complete empty nesters thanks to their spunky Corgi, Wellington. A native of San Diego, Eric and Dorothy now live in Anacortes where he works in finance at Island Hospital and spends his free time hiding behind the lens of a camera.

## Alternates

### Jeff Silzer



Since moving here from California four years ago, Jeff and Caryn have been very active in the life of Grace. Together they helped provide leadership for their Small Group, and Jeff has been active in the music ministry and participated in men's Bible studies. The son of foreign missionaries, Jeff was born and raised in Indonesia. He now enjoys the perks of working from home as a software engineer and being part of a multi-generational family now that his parents live just down the road.

### Sharon Westra



Sharon and her husband, Paul, have been at Grace for thirteen years. Sharon is co-leader of our Prayer & Service ministry, and she and Paul serve on the setup/takedown ministry. Sharon has also served as a Sunday school teacher and taught women's Bible study. Prior to moving to Grace, Sharon gained valuable experience as a Sunday School Superintendent, VBS co-director, and director of a church girls' club. She and Paul have been married for 43 years and have three married children and seven beautiful grandchildren. Sharon grew up in Everett, WA. She works as librarian at Mount Vernon Christian School.

# Who We Need

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## Lead Pastor Role

The Lead Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church serves as the moderator of the Session, leads in shepherding the hearts of the congregation, and loves the Skagit community by manifesting Grace's core values and beliefs. The role of Pastor Includes:

- Skillful and accessible preaching and teaching of the Scriptures in a Gospel-centered, transformative, and non-partisan manner.
- Leading Lord's Day worship to engage the hearts of all who attend with the Gospel.
- Ministering the word of God through shepherding, visiting, and caring for the Grace family.
- Promoting a culture of grace rather than a culture of performance without diminishing the deadliness of sin.
- Making disciples and cultivating leaders by living humbly and sacrificially while coaching, guiding, training, and admonishing with a servant's heart.
- Modeling Christ's life through prayer, commitment to the Scriptures, and sacrificial living.
- Helping congregants translate their gifts and aspirations into sustained, actionable service both within and outside the congregation.
- Developing structures to intentionally support specific gifts and talents within the congregation rather than creating structures and programs and filling them with people.



- Connecting Grace to the Skagit community by discerning when to encourage individual action, when to act as a whole body, and when to partner with other organizations.
- Regularly meeting, praying with, and seeking counsel from other pastors locally and in the Pacific Northwest Presbytery.

## Pastor Attributes

The Pastor at Grace will exhibit the following attributes:

- The qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- Loves both Christians and non-Christians and is passionate to equip the saints and reach the lost with the Gospel.
- Embraces the Reformed tradition and is committed both to cultivating the culture of grace that it encourages and resisting the blind spots and distortions that can grow there.
- High emotional intelligence in shepherding the hearts of the congregation as demonstrated by an intuitive grasp of complex interpersonal situations, an understanding of implied meaning in conversations, and the ability to see to the heart of the person beyond the issues or problems they present.
- Flexes easily when ministering to a wide variety of individuals and families in diverse life-stages.
- Encourages people to use their gifts and talents in kingdom living.
- Knows how to lead through change patiently and wisely by articulating purpose and building consensus in a way that unifies people around the gospel.
- Possesses a winsomely Reformed ethos, including an ecumenical spirit with other Christians.



- Enjoys working as a team with the session and develops honest, loving, and personal relationships with them.
- Is committed to the PCA theological standards and form of government, and the general framework of liturgical worship principles established at Grace.

## **Experience**

The Pastor will have at least five years of experience ministering in a similar context. He should have experience collaboratively forming vision and leading either a small (under 100) or medium (sustained existence at 200 or above) congregation with a commitment to the Reformed tradition. Familiarity with the western United States culture's joys and challenges will be helpful.

## **Compensation**

Salary is commensurate with experience, and benefits and relocation expenses will be assessed based upon needs. Grace's 2021 projected income is \$233,000, which has been stable during the COVID recovery period. While the Grace body is one of fairly modest means, generosity is a major strength of our congregation.

# Applying

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## Questionnaire

We want to get to know you, your heart, and your life with Christ. In addition to your resume, PCA Ministerial Data Form, and cover letter please provide a response in no more than a paragraph or two to each of the following questions:

- Briefly describe your spiritual journey.
- What part of serving the church energizes you? What drains you?
- How have you shown empathy to those in your church family?
- Tell us about a failure in your pastoral ministry and what you learned from it.
- How would you have shepherded Grace through 2020?
- How have you engaged people in service while avoiding burning them out?
- What is the greatest danger to the peace of the local church?
- What is the greatest danger to the purity of the local church?
- How would you situate yourself in relation to the various flavors or emphases that exist within the PCA?

## Application Requirements

Our ministry partners at Flourish Coaching are assisting with our search. Please send your materials to [robert@flourishcoaching.org](mailto:robert@flourishcoaching.org) and you will be contacted with next steps which may include requests for additional information or scheduling conversations.

- Cover Letter
- Resume
- PCA Ministerial Data Form
- Completed, typed out responses to the questionnaire

Please use the following format to label all attachments:

- JohnSmith\_CoverLetter
- JohnSmith\_Resume
- JohnSmith\_MDF
- JohnSmith\_Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in Grace. We look forward to hearing your story and exploring God's plans for you and your possible relationship with our church family.