

# Grace Christian Reformed Church

## Scarborough, Ontario

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### Church Community Setting

**Location:** Metropolitan, Suburban

**Function:** Industrial, College/University

**Growth:** Growing (not static, not declining)

**Approximate population of community:** 500,000

### Church Staff

**Staff positions:** Pastor, Administrator, Music Director, Custodian

Currently is being served by Pastor Michael Winnowski Specialized Transition Minister (STM)

The last 3 pastors were: Rev. Bart Velthuizen (2005-2022), Rev. John Rottman, and Rev. Simon Wolfert

Classical Church Counsellor for Pastoral Search Process: Rev. Moses Kang

## A Call for a New Pastor

**Start date:** April 1, 2024

**Open to:** Male and Female pastors

**Years of experience required:** All gifted candidates are welcome to apply

**Required languages:** English

The pastor is a full-time position. The pastor serves the congregation according to the Church Order and the statement of ministry of the pastor in the Form for Ordination of Pastors. The pastor is responsible for the overall spiritual leadership of the congregation, and has the primary calling of equipping God's people for the ministry that Jesus entrusts to the whole church. The pastor has specific responsibilities in the areas of prayer, preaching, worship, teaching, pastoral care, education and discipleship, outreach, youth ministry, and administrative leadership of the council and congregation. Details of the pastor's job description, vacation, time off, sabbatical leave, and arrangements can be reviewed in Appendix A.

## Church Demographics

**Average Sunday attendance:** 70 in-person, 15 via Zoom

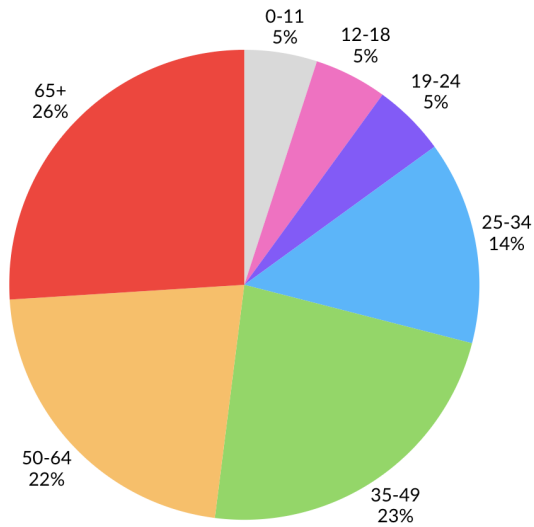
**Active adult professing members:** 104

The congregation is **multicultural** with racial/ethnic composition including (but not limited to) African, Caribbean, Caucasian (Dutch, British), Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese. It reflects the surrounding community.

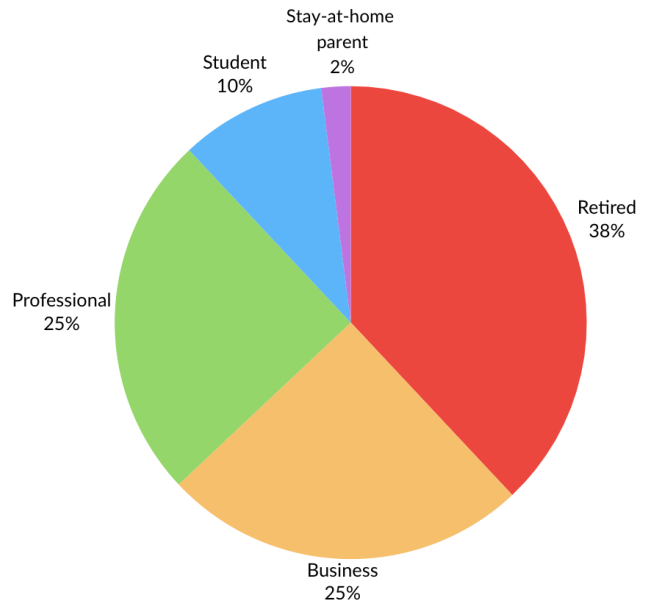
Grace Church is "mostly representative" of the economic diversity of the community

Grace Church is "strongly representative" of the ethnic diversity of the community

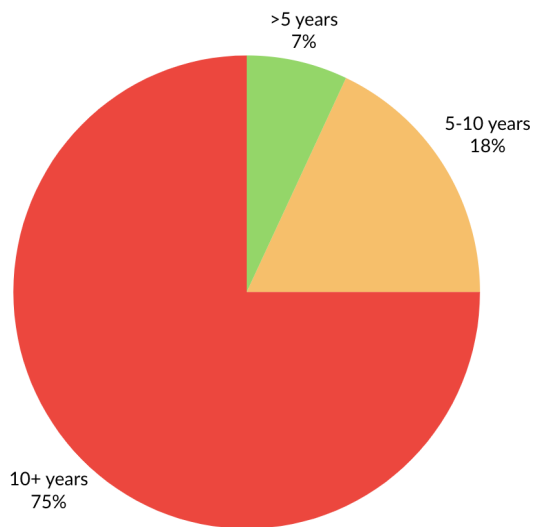
**Age Distribution (Year)**



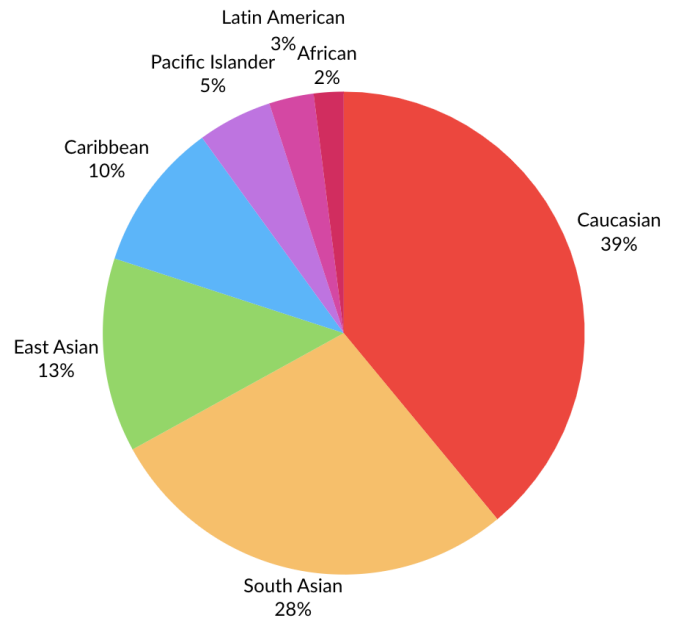
**Occupation Distribution**



**Length of Belonging**



**Ethnicities**



## Worship

### Planning the Liturgy and Worship

Below is a snapshot of our current worship practices. However, we desire and are open to innovation in worship and we remain open to any new suggestions.

#### Planning:

The Pastor shares the weekly liturgy with the music director. This includes the order of worship, all reading materials, and the sermon theme.

The music director will then choose appropriate music/songs accordingly, discuss with the Pastor and draft the Order of Worship and PowerPoint slides, and send them to the Pastor for final approval.

#### Participation:

The music director encourages members of the church - who are musically gifted and have a heart to serve the Lord - to participate in singing and playing instruments for worship services. We have been blessed with members who lead in singing, playing the piano, guitar, violin, drums, and other instruments.

In addition to participating in music, long-term and new members are involved in:

- Leading the children's message before children exit for Sunday school.
- Leading the congregational prayer (occurs every Sunday)-the leader invites those in the sanctuary and those over zoom to share items of thanksgiving and prayer requests.
- Leading the worship liturgy (which includes calling the congregation to worship and also the reading of the Scriptures)

### Worship Services

Worship services at Grace Church lean towards a traditional style with a formal liturgical pattern. However, the music and songs for the services are usually a combination of traditional and contemporary.



Since COVID, we have maintained a hybrid worship service, where those who are worshipping online are welcomed by an e-greeter and have opportunities to contribute to announcements and to share items for our congregational prayer.

Volunteers from the congregation lead much of the service, including the call to worship, Scripture reading, announcements, and congregational prayer.

Worship services reflect our sense of community, especially during the congregational prayer, where everyone is invited to share items of thanksgiving or prayer requests, which are then included in the prayer.

Another constant in our worship services is the Lord's Supper, which we celebrate once a month. The Lord's Supper is led by the Pastor and prepared and served by the elders and deacons.

Grace church congregants enjoy participating in a variety of gatherings every Sunday, including pre-service prayer, the service - where we love to sing to the Lord, a time of coffee/tea/snacks and fellowship following the service, and a Berean hour of discussion

- Recruiting new leaders to lead the songs can be challenging
- Technology (projector, sound system, live recording) can be challenging at times, and this affects our worship experience. Fortunately, we are currently working on improving the technology.

### Discipleship Practices for Members and Attendees

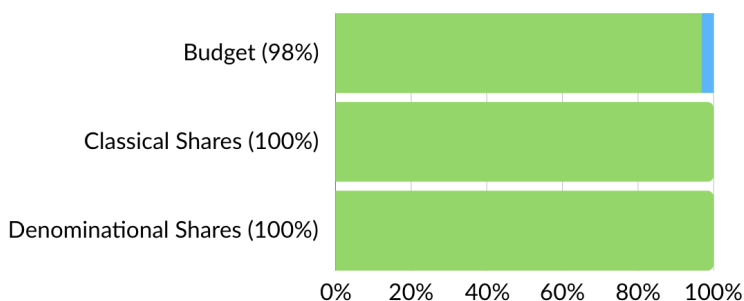
As a church family we are committed to following Jesus' teachings and to equipping each other to spread the good news and serve others. We foster this through numerous activities, including small group Bible studies (in person and online), Catechism classes, Sunday School classes (in person and online), Gems & Boys Club, Alpha, Christianity Explored, and Vacation Bible School.

## Financial Position

### Percentage of financial obligations met (last complete year reported):

Present annual budget: \$332,000

Last year's annual budget: \$315,00



## Building and Facilities

Our church is a one-storey building situated on a 5 acre parcel of land, shared with Immanuel Child Care Centre in a separate building. We are located in Scarborough, which is in the North and East section of the City of Toronto. Our church is situated on a street directly off of, and visible from, McCowan Rd, a main north/south road. It is one block north of the 401, a major highway that runs through Toronto. Our church is close to public transportation and has ample parking. (See Appendix B for land use suggestions)



Our Sanctuary holds about 400 people; a fellowship hall with a kitchen is located just outside the sanctuary. In 2000, additions were made to the building, consisting of 3 staff offices, an administrative office, a large nursery area, an expansion of the fellowship hall, 4 meeting (class)rooms, a library, and 5 bathrooms. Our facilities are wheelchair accessible, including a ramp to the sanctuary and one accessible bathroom. We also have a gymnasium located in Immanuel Child Care Centre, which we use for dinners and social gatherings.

## Church Characteristics

Grace Church's ministry is primarily focused towards its current members and participants, most of whom are believers, and as such the services are planned and conducted with this in mind. The style of music used in the worship service is mostly contemporary accompanied by piano and a small group of instrumentalists. Some traditional hymns are sung each week and the pipe organ is occasionally used.

Grace Church leadership is generally shared and provided by the lay leaders and pastoral staff, with spiritual growth being encouraged through ministries for most groups.

Grace Church is unique in that we are comprised of believers from many nations around the world. We seek to foster a warm and inviting atmosphere for all visitors and members alike.



Beyond the initial welcome, we strive to engage guests so that they continue to worship with us and eventually make Grace Church their home. As a congregation we are aware of the need to further develop cross-cultural relationships so that newcomers and long-standing members can worship and praise God together.

Evangelism strategies and methods are generally planned. Grace Church responds with compassion, mercy, and justice to local and global missions. We support those in need through church-based giving and personal action.

## Grace Church Narrative

### Ecumenical Activities

Grace Church enjoys ecumenical participation. Recently, we have been partnering with Shiloh Pentecostal Church to host Alpha. In the past, pastors from other churches in the Agincourt Ministerial Association (our local community) have preached at our church. We are involved with ACSA (Agincourt Community Services Association) by participating in the Out of the Cold programme, the annual prayer breakfast, and the winter coat drive for refugees. We have rented our facilities to numerous other congregations. At present, three other churches are worshipping here: Filipino Seventh Day Adventist Church, Jesus is the Answer, and Manna Christian Fellowship.

### Grace Church's Strengths and Gifts

Grace Church is a unique Christian Reformed church in that our ethnic diversity reflects the community around us. Our congregation, including the leadership, is made up of many cultures from around the world, and this gives us a different perspective from a traditional CRC church. Our members frequently bring to our attention situations and the needs of Christian believers in their countries of origin. Also, during our worship services we invite anyone in the congregation or over zoom to come to the microphone and share their praises, their prayer requests, and to pray aloud. This builds a strong sense of community that we take with us throughout the week. We seek to reach out to our community through various activities, such as a walk for the Lighthouse, an annual "community clean up", and a door to door distribution of herbs (Food for Thought). We also have a regularly scheduled Games Night/BBQ where we invite members from the community. Sunday School and Catechism happen every Sunday. We encourage newcomers to share their gifts, such as music, singing, technical abilities etc so that they immediately feel that they are welcome and valued.

### Passions as a Church

Grace Church is passionate about outreach to the community, but we recognize that we can do more.

Grace Church is passionate about providing a welcoming space for everyone.

Grace Church is passionate about utilising everyone's gifts in our church life and worship services, such as with worship leading, music, and congregational prayers.

Grace Church is passionate about making prayer a focus of our church.

Grace Church is passionate about enhancing our worship during services.

Grace Church is passionate about discipleship and we host several weekly Bible Studies, as well as the Alpha program.

Grace Church is passionate about the word of God and members expect scriptural instruction in every sermon.

These passions have come about as a result of a church-wide revisioning a few years ago. (Appendix C)



## Congregational Struggles

The following struggles are the top three problems Grace Church currently faces:

1. Declining membership, especially among youth and young families
2. Ageing congregation
3. Evangelism to the community

## Most Interesting and Challenging Event In Recent History

As with most churches, the pandemic was, and continues to be, a great challenge for Grace Church. At the onset of the pandemic we quickly pivoted to successful weekly Sunday Services, and a wide variety of other online activities ( Sunday School, Catechism, Bible studies, prayer groups, and council meetings). At present, we continue to live-stream our weekly service, and many of the aforementioned activities are still offered online/hybrid.



However, fellowship is vitally important to our congregation and it was challenging to maintain meaningful connections during the height of the pandemic. We continue to work on re-invigorating fellowship in this post-pandemic new normal. In the midst of the pandemic, our pastor of 17 years retired, which added extra questions, concerns, and uncertainty for the congregation.

## Major Goals

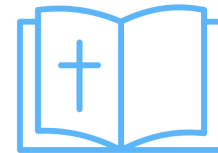
### 1. To increase our attendance by:

- Continuing our current programs (youth, Gems/Boys club)
- Promoting evangelism in our local neighbourhood
- Being relevant to all generations



### 2. To be spiritually mature by:

- Discipleship
- Prayerful church
- Fellowship



### 3. Develop a strong sense of community by:

- Making our church feel that everyone belongs (a safe haven)
- Continuing to share each other's burden and equip one another
- Looking forward to what the new pastor will bring



## Being Christians of Reformed Accent Means:

- Jesus is at the core of everything we believe and do (**Christ alone**)
- All of creation is under the sovereignty of God, and we are all in need of salvation. We cannot earn our salvation as it is only by God's grace that we are saved (**Grace alone**)
- Salvation does not depend on our efforts (**Faith alone**), but on God's desire empowered by the Holy Spirit and founded on the sacrificial obedience of Jesus (**to God alone be the glory**)
- We want to hear the pastor preach the Bible. God's word is our only reliable source of truth and life (**Scripture alone**)
- We are called to take care of this creation and spread the gospel (evangelism and creation stewardship are both part of our witness)
- We serve our worldwide community and our local neighbours
- We support Christian education
- Being Reformed means continual spiritual growth in a world of constant change (we are Reformed, and always being re-formed: "**Semper Reformanda**")

## Grace Church's Understanding of the Relationship between the Local Church and the Christian Reformed Denomination

- Comforts us in knowing that Grace Church is not an "island" floating alone, but has the support of the denomination.
- Equips us with resources (The Banner, Safe Church, Learning Cohorts, coaching, curricula, and denominational grants)
- Fosters healthy relationships (Safe Church, Office of Social Justice, Pastor Church Resources/Thrive)
- Allows more "reach" to meet the needs of those around the world
- Allows us to help people in dozens of countries in an effective way
- Allows us to join other congregations to do a more complete/comprehensive job
- Holds us accountable to follow the denomination
- Provides resources to help churches meet their needs – STM, pulpit service

## Grace Church's Identification of the Cultural Challenges Facing Christians and Christian Churches Today

**Multiculturalism:** As a very multicultural church, Grace Church faces the challenges related to embracing the various aspects of different cultures:

- We do a good job of embracing people of various nationalities, but we still need to push ourselves to keep growing. For example, at food fellowship events we need to keep challenging ourselves to go outside of our comfort zone, and not just stick with people, foods, and languages that are familiar to us. It's a work-in-progress.
- Music choices and ways of responding to the music are tied into cultural practices
- Embracing different worship styles can be a challenge, but is welcomed (raising hands in worship, spontaneous solo singers, clapping to the music, singing songs in different languages.)

**Social media:** has been a good tool for our church, as many new people have found the church through the website. However, social media also presents a challenge for us to keep young people engaged in church as social media can monopolise their time and draw them in different directions.

**Youth Engagement:** Making church relevant to the younger generation is a constant challenge.

**Inclusivity:** A looming challenge is how to truly welcome and love people of various sexual identities while still remaining faithful to God's word. We have not grappled with this issue as a church.

**Cost of Living in Toronto:** Grace church is located in an exciting big city with a cost of living that is somewhat higher than neighbouring communities. This setting can present challenges of financial affordability. However, this has not deterred our congregants from maintaining their continued commitment to Scarborough- where God has placed our church.

Many of our congregants now live in communities within a short commutable distance. This allows them the opportunity to continue to be part of the Grace Church neighbourhood, where we aim to be salt and light in the Scarborough community.

### **Three Most Important Events in the History of Grace Church**

1. Celebrated 60th anniversary in November 2023: Throughout the years, Grace Church experienced many changes in the community and the church congregation.
2. A shift over time from a white Dutch immigrant population to a multicultural population.
3. The closure of Immanuel Christian School which led to the opening of Immanuel Child Care Centre. (This was due to declining attendance at the school as families moved away from Scarborough). It was hoped that families from Immanuel Child Care Centre would become involved in the church, but such is not the case.

### **Leadership**

The number of full council members is typically 15 who meet 2 to 3 times a year. The length of terms for council members are: Executive Elders = 4 years, Pastoral Elders and Deacons = 3 years.

The Executive Council handles church business matters and meets once per month. The Pastoral Council deals with pastoral care and meets once per month. The Diaconate deals with financial and social needs and meets once per month. In addition, there is a combined Pastoral and Diaconate team, called the Ministry of Care, which meets once per month and deals with church visitation and membership matters.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Pastor's Job Description
- Appendix B: Toronto Metropolitan University Land Study
- Appendix C: Church Revisioning Document