

Spiritual DNA

Grace Covenant Church

Austin, Texas



Austin & the Spiritual DNA of Grace Covenant

Grace Covenant Church (www.grace360.com) is a dynamic and rapidly growing conservative evangelical church in the northwest section of Austin, the sixteenth largest city in the United States. The city of Austin has a population of 700,000 and a metropolitan population of over 1,400,000.

The character of Austin is reflected in Grace Covenant Church:

- ◆ Austin is home of one of America's largest universities—[The University of Texas](#) at Austin has over 50,000 students. At Grace, these attributes are reflected in penetrating biblical sermons that reach the heart, mind, and intellect. Members are trained in a strong Protestant tradition—to read and understand the Bible for themselves. A very large number of adults have collegiate and graduate degrees. Relating to families, Grace has a large number of private and home-schooled children.
- ◆ The city government of Austin calls itself “[the live music capital of the world.](#)” Grace's three “contemporary” worship services contain teams of outstanding musicians, many of whom have professional music careers outside of church. Grace has recently hired Mike Gould, an “authentic worship leader” for our contemporary services (see www.mikegould.org).
- ◆ Austin is the [seat of the government](#) for the state of Texas—with a feeling of influence beyond the city borders. At Grace, local and international missions are important, having a ministry to those beyond our church grounds.
- ◆ Austin has a motto to support city business and culture, “[Keep Austin Weird: collaborative fission of coordinated individualism.](#)” Grace has what few churches have—an openness to diversity—accepting people for who they are and how God is drawing them to Himself. Much of Austin's businesses are “high tech,” spawning many affluent and upscale residents. Many businesses are “start-ups,”

giving the city a flavor of entrepreneurial risk-takers. To help reach this community, the church is re-designing its website to be interactive with “web 2.0” and to include a new logo, colors and branding. On April 24, 2005 Sr. Pastor Matt Cassidy preached a now classic message “[Grace is Weird.](#)”

A church is called to model its ministry and ministers after Christ—at Grace each believer is a minister. A church is also called to be relevant to its society, “to seek and save the lost.” Grace tenaciously holds to its biblical beliefs and core values.

Vision of Grace Covenant

Every church needs to have a vision statement that answers the question, “Why do we exist?” Grace filters every program, budget request and idea through its vision statement. If whatever is planned doesn’t help meet the vision, then it isn’t done.



Grace Covenant Church exists to glorify God by leading people to Christ and presenting each believer mature in Christ. Grace desires to be “a courageous church, where every believer is a minister, equipped and united, to impact people for Christ, for the glory of God.”

- ◆ Our lives and ministries are to be Christ-centered, reflecting the following values in balance:
 - The Bible: we desire to hold and teach Biblical truth unequivocally. (Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18-19)
 - Prayer and Worship: we desire to have a deep personal and congregational relationship with God through meaningful prayer, praise and worship. (Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 22:37; Psalm 63:1-6; John 15:7)
 - Community: we desire to relate biblically and with love toward one another using our Covenant of Fellowship as our basis and incorporating the principles of *The Peacemaker* book by Ken Sande. (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 1:3; Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - Evangelism and Global Outreach: we desire to share the Gospel boldly by life and by word. (John 17:24; 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 1:8; Matthew 4:19; Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19-20)

Grace Covenant uses a “3 Cog” motif for explaining how members learn in different sized groups. The first cog is “Worship,” where every member can participate in corporate worship—which can be continued in private and family worship. The worship services are designed for believers in Christ to worship the triune God. Seekers and “de-churched” people are welcome to see how Christians worship in Word and Truth. The second cog is “Learning.” The medium-sized Adult Learning Communities are vital to the growth of members, prayer and fellowship. The third cog is “Connection.” These small groups emphasize study of the sermon, relationships and doing ministry together.



The Organization

The church emerged from a home Bible study in 1968. The first study was on the biblical covenants, culminating with the “grace covenant” and so the name of this independent Bible church. In 2004, the ministry celebrated its 35th year. Early pastors were Dick Flaten and Max Anders, followed by Jim Rose. Matt Cassidy became the fourth Senior Pastor in 2002, having served on the staff for 13 years in other positions.

Today, the community of Grace Covenant includes over 2,000 adults. The three contemporary worship services at 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00 am draw more than 1,100 people each week; the new worship center will seat 1,800. There are over 360 children in Children’s Education and 250 youth in *The Attic* (7-12th grades). Midweek AWANA attracts over 200 kids. There are over 35 home study groups, called Impact Groups, which continue the study from the Sunday sermon. Fourteen Adult Learning Communities and ten Introductory/Equipping Classes allow people to gather on Sunday morning in medium-sized groups for study, prayer and fellowship. Local and International Missions are also important at the church, with a significant amount of people and funds being invested each year.

Strategic Priorities

Grace Covenant is a church on the move—literally. After two years of careful study, in 2004 the leadership set forth a master plan to build or rebuild almost every building on the church campus. The goal was to accomplish this Herculean feat with the minimal use of long-term debt. Over eight million dollars were pledged for the first phase of the project: a new office building for staff, renovation of the Cornerstone Building for Children’s Ministry and a new 1,800 seat worship center.

- ◆ In the spring of 2005, the congregation pledged \$8,000,000 for the new building. An adjacent office building was purchased for staff offices and renamed the Grace360 building.
- ◆ In the summer of 2005, the staff moved from the Cornerstone building into the Grace360 building.
- ◆ In the summer of 2006, renovation was completed on two floors of the Cornerstone building. This created new Early Childhood facilities.
- ◆ In the spring of 2007, the old Children's Education building was demolished.
- ◆ In the fall of 2007, the new worship center broke ground.

Grace is a church that is planning for the future—including the staff needed as the church grows.

Grace is launching several new ministry strategies. With an established Stephen Minister program, the church wants to expand its care in a new direction. Grace will launch Celebrate Recovery in the fall of 2007.

In a desire to help people resolve conflict biblically, Grace set on a far reaching strategy of changing its spiritual DNA to include “peacemaking.” This began with the intentional design of the Elders, followed by a series of messages in the fall and winter of 2006-07. The church desires to have a regular sermon series on biblical conflict resolution and to develop a “culture of peacemaking.”

To reach men in the congregation and community, the church is setting its strategic priorities for a “Men's Ministry for the 21st century.” Leadership development is important for the church, and Grace feels that leadership development needs to be offered to key men and women. The process of integrating men and women for leadership development, a men's ministry and a women's ministry, are the current critical thinking areas for church leadership.

Dedicated to Giving

Few churches have a history of such dedicated giving. The leaders of the church have made a commitment to give ten percent of their income to Grace Covenant. The percentage of donations by members/attendees is among the top one percent in the United States.