
Information Packet for Pastoral Candidates



Dear Pastoral Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in Grace Church Elizabethtown. We hope that the information in this packet helps you to know our history, mission, and ministry, as well as some details about our community. We know that God has a plan for bringing us a new pastor in His timing, and we look forward to seeing His faithfulness and provision at work throughout this process.

Our current pastor, David Atkisson, has had to retire recently due to health issues. He has served Grace church faithfully as solo pastor since 2007. We are asking God to keep us serving, growing, and seeking Him through the interim period.

Our church has recently started 40 Days of Prayer, guided by Scripture - helping the Search Committee and the church to focus on God's promises, provision, and faithfulness. We are already in prayer for the pastor and family that God is preparing to bring to our church.

To apply, please send a cover letter, your resume, and your Ministerial Data Form to PastorSearch@gcepca.org. If you have a potential candidate to refer to us, please send the referral form at the end of this packet to PastorSearch@gcepca.org. You may also see the church website for more information - <http://gcepca.org/>

Thank you again for your time and interest.

Seeking to bring Him glory,

GCE Pastor Search Committee
Grace Church Elizabethtown
Elizabethtown, Kentucky

Joe Baird, chairman

Mary Bruinsma

Cheryl Hill

Leigh Ann Pierce

Jeff Scroggs

Erica Searl

Luke Yates

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Mission, Vision, and Strategic Priorities

Mission Statement: To glorify God by being a gospel-centered fellowship in which we engage in *authentic worship, lovingly lead people to Jesus Christ, equip them to be disciples, and minister the grace of God* within and outside our community.

Vision: Connecting our community to the glorious God of all Grace – a place to belong for those brought to life by Him

Strategic Priorities:

- (1) **Authentic Worship:** gratefully responding to God out of reverence for His immense holiness and gratitude for His great love. We express this with prayer; the reading, preaching, and heeding of God's Word; singing; confession of sin; offering praise to God; celebrating the Lord's Supper and baptism; the giving of offerings; and the recitation and affirmation of biblical truths.
- (2) **Leading People to Christ:** we share the good news that we are more flawed and lost than we ever dared believe, and yet we can be more accepted and loved than we ever dared to hope at the same time, because Jesus Christ lived and died in our place. We share the hope that the gospel renews our hearts and moves us in faith to share this good news in the relationships and opportunities God provides.
- (3) **Equipping Disciples:** we work toward bringing Christians to maturity - discipling others, stable in their faith and full in their knowledge of the Son of God, for works of service and unity in Christ's church.
- (4) **Ministering the Grace of God:** we desire to see God's love poured out through us to those who have spiritual and physical needs and loving all whom the Lord puts before us. As the recipients of God's grace and mercy, we are compelled to extend this to others within and outside our community.

Doctrine

GRACE CHURCH ELIZABETHTOWN IS COMMITTED TO THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

The Condition of Humanity: Because of the fall (Genesis 3), we are more sinful than we could ever imagine (Jeremiah 17:9). Not only have we been corrupted by Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-19), but we are also responsible for our own sin. Our nature, in its now corrupted state, not only will not choose to obey the Gospel, it is unable to do so (Romans 3:9-20, 8:5-8). We all are sinners desperately needing God's grace.

The Initiative of God, the Father: Because of our inherent brokenness and sin, we need our God to pursue us, which He certainly does. Why does He do this? Because, while we are more sinful than we could ever imagine, we are also more loved than we had ever dreamed! In His grace, God takes the

initiative in establishing a relationship with us, reaches down, captures our heart, and invites us into a love relationship with Himself (John 6:37-39, II Thessalonians 2:13-14).

The Work of Jesus, the Son: God provided the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. (John 10:14-15, Ephesians 5:25-27). The death of Jesus was a fully effective act of redemption in which we are now called the beloved sons and daughters of the living God.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit: Through the Holy Spirit, God is in the business of transforming lives. The Holy Spirit does this by convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and by capturing our hearts with the love and mercy of God (Ezekiel 36:25-27). The Spirit of God opens our eyes to the beauty of Jesus Christ (John 6:44-45, Philippians 2:13) and of His grace and affection to our souls.

The Promise of the Gospel: He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it (Phil. 1:6) Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God has promised His love for you — and He will keep that promise. No matter your failure, no matter your struggle, He will never let you go. The Gospel is not about “believing in Jesus and then keeping your moral, ethical or theological ducks in a row”. We don’t become perfect just because we are followers of Jesus. Rather, we seek to conform our lives to His holiness out of gratitude for His affection for us. None of us will do this perfectly, most of us will often not even do this very well, but the grace of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus sustains us.

GRACE CHURCH ELIZABETHTOWN IS COMMITTED TO HISTORIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

We count ourselves as part of God’s “holy, catholic (meaning universal), and apostolic Church” and hold to those basic teachings which have been believed by all Christians throughout history that have proclaimed historic Christianity. These teachings have been confessed in the ecumenical creeds of the early church such as the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

GRACE CHURCH ELIZABETHTOWN IS COMMITTED TO APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE.

By “apostolic,” we are referring to those doctrines taught by the apostles in the Scriptures and so forcefully reclaimed in the Reformation of the 16th century. We believe that the Scriptures as found in the 66 books of the Bible are without error in their original writings, completely trustworthy and the ultimate authority for our beliefs and our lifestyles. We believe that salvation is only by God’s grace and is received solely by faith in Christ. We believe in the historicity of the biblical miracles, of the virgin birth, and in the reality of Christ’s return.

GRACE CHURCH ELIZABETHTOWN IS COMMITTED TO REFORMED & CONFESSIONAL DOCTRINE.

We believe that God is sovereign in all things, including salvation, and that the sacraments of baptism and holy communion as established by Jesus Christ not only represent God’s grace, but also seal and apply that grace to our lives. We are committed to a Presbyterian system of church government and to living out the implications of God’s radical grace in every area of life. We are a confessional church, affirming the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#).

Our History

- February, 1999 – a group of families met with Dr. David Dively, pastor of Community Presbyterian Church in Louisville, KY to discuss the possibilities for a reformed church in Elizabethtown, KY.
- Began meeting on Sunday evenings for Bible study and fellowship. The group adopted the name Grace Reformed Fellowship and became an informal mission project of the PCA under the oversight of the Session at Community Presbyterian Church.
- Began having an evening worship service once a month led by the Reverend Vincent Kuo, assistant pastor at Community Presbyterian Church.
- 2000 – 2001 – Began weekly evening services at the House of Prayer Lutheran Church. Changed our name to Grace Reformed Church. Petitioned Great Lakes Presbytery to gain recognition as a formal church plant. Peter Bartuska, a pastor of the Danville Presbyterian Church came weekly to preach and administer Communion.
- January, 2002 – The church began morning worship services at the Elizabethtown High School. Jerry Williams, a licensed seminary student was hired to conduct weekly services. The group expanded to 10-12 families. Fellowship dinners were started and held once a month.
- October, 2004 – GRC rented a small church building on Woodland Drive and moved to this facility. Men's and Women's Bible studies began.
- January, 2006 – Jerry Williams resigned due to a medical condition. Chaplain Bill Manning, who was serving as a chaplain recruiter without any official ecclesiastical responsibilities, agreed to serve as an interim pastor.
- Doug Hess and Ben Duncan, both Southern Seminary students and both military chaplain candidates, joined Bill in filling the pulpit on a rotating basis.
- July, 2006 – Doug's entry into the Air Force was delayed for a year, and a formal call was extended by the congregation to Doug as an Associate Pastor.
- Fall, 2006 – GRC formed a Pastor Search Committee. Doug Hess left for active duty in the Air Force. Again, Bill Manning was filling the pulpit.
- David Atkisson, missionary to Brazil with MTW, was on his scheduled furlow and was waiting to return to the mission field. During this period his mother became ill and the Atkissons moved to Elizabethtown to care for her.
- Fall, 2007 – GRC petitioned the presbytery to establish a cooperative agreement with MTW and allow David Atkisson to accept a call as Interim Pastor at GRC. He was installed as the interim pastor in January, 2008
- The pastor search committee became convinced that David Atkisson was the best candidate to permanently fill the pulpit
- About the same time, GRC pursued the action to become a particular church.
- July 27, 2008 – the Ohio Valley Presbytery conducted services in Elizabethtown to particularize Grace Reformed Church and install David Atkisson the first Pastor. Peter Hill, Mike Nelson and Mike Piscatello were installed as ruling elders of the church. Joe Baird, Don Meinshausen and Jerry Pierce were installed as deacons of the church.
- January, 2011 – the Session closed out a year long process to establish a proper mission and vision for GRC. As a part of the new vision and mission, the Session changed the name of the church to Grace Church Elizabethtown.
- January, 2016 – GCE moved to 234 W. Dixie Avenue due to increased attendance and a need for more classroom space.

- This facility greatly improved the church's ability to host concerts, serve as registration host for Room in the Inn (a church-based homeless shelter ministry), participate in downtown events by distributing water, as well as hosting an annual Music and Drama camp.
- January, 2019 – David Atkisson became ill and had to step back from some of his pastoral responsibilities.
- May, 2019 – After meeting and praying with the elders, David and the elders jointly made the decision for David to retire as head pastor of GCE.
- A Pastor Search Committee was formed and is currently working to find the next pastor for GCE.

Our Current Status

GCE is located near Fort Knox, an Army post. Over the years, people have been drawn to our church from diverse denominational backgrounds for various reasons including one or a combination of the following: a specific desire for a PCA church; the reformed, biblical teaching; and the warm, friendly atmosphere.

The church community is loving and generous. People are eager to help one another and others in the community in need. Friendships are deep and strong. We have a lot of maturity and wisdom. We have a wealth of excellent teachers and volunteer musicians. We have conscientious, involved elders who manage the resources of the church well. We do not have any deacons at this time, nor do we have many children.

Over the years we have had many currently serving military families actively participating in our church. They have been loved and encouraged and taught, as well as given opportunities to lead and serve before the army has moved them to another location. They have been a huge blessing to us, and us to them. Recently, the number of these families has decreased.

As our pastor's health has declined, a large part of our attention has been focused on loving and helping him and his family well. We have missed his leadership as his physical difficulties have increased. We are grateful for the time he has invested in our congregation and the ways the Lord is leading and providing for him and his family now. We are looking forward to having his leadership position filled again.

Our church has always had a solid financial base. Since moving into our new building over three years ago, we have not gained many members, but have instead lost several families who moved due to job changes. Since we are renting, we have always considered our current location as temporary, but currently we are more aggressively pursuing different options for a meeting place.

This has been a time of reflection and consideration. We believe the Lord still has a use for us in this community and in building his kingdom around the world and are excited to welcome new leadership to help equip us for that.

Missionaries and ministries we support:

- Ben Hornback and family in Ukraine (he is a GCE member)
- A young woman serving in North Africa
- Sam Taaffe and family, RUF minister at the University of Kentucky
- Ross Lockwood and family, RUF minister at Western Kentucky University
- George Hamm and family, RUF minister at the University of Louisville
- Clarity Solutions, our local, highly effective pregnancy care center

Current Ministry Involvement:

- We have a team who leads a Good News Club in a local elementary school.
- We conduct monthly services at Elizabethtown Nursing and Rehab.
- GCE sponsors an annual Music & Drama Camp for elementary and middle school age students from throughout the community.
- We participate in several downtown events and festivals each year by setting up a tent in front of the church and handing out water, looking for opportunities to engage people in conversation about the gospel.
- We send over 100 shoeboxes each year to Operation Christmas Child, collecting items throughout the year and holding an annual packing party to prepare the boxes. We have held a yard sale the past few years to raise funds for shipping the boxes.
- We have been involved for the last several years with Room In the Inn, a local ministry to the homeless.

GCE has a very widespread focus toward ministry efforts and we do not generally attempt to narrow down to a target audience. An area we would specifically like to grow in is adding more young couples and families. Another group we pursue is new movers to the area, to whom we send postcards on a monthly basis. We also continue to extend our ministry to military on Fort Knox.

The church is fairly diverse, with some young families, single adults, families with older children, empty-nesters, and some older adults with grandchildren. We have a mix of socio-economic groups within the church.

Size, Leadership, and Budget

- Members and average attendance - Communicant Members: 44, Average Attendance over the last two years: 55
- Ruling Elders: four active and one on sabbatical; Deacons: 0 at this time as job changes have moved our deacons away. We have a number of candidates that have completed officer training.
- Budget \$180,000
- Ministry areas and staffing: full time senior pastor, part-time secretary, three standing committees (Worship, Evangelism/Outreach/Missions, Christian Education) and two temporary committees (Pastor Search, Property Search)

Church programs

- Sunday School for adults (usually one class studying a book of the Bible and one class studying a specific interest topic)
- Sunday School for youth, plus weekly discipleship (some families choose for their teens to attend the adult class with their parents)
- Sunday School for children
- Nursery
- Small groups meeting weekly in homes
- Wednesday night prayer meeting and Worship team rehearsal/occasional choir rehearsal
- Ladies' weekly study/fellowship
- Men's weekly study/fellowship

Pastoral Profile

GCE is prayerfully seeking a pastor who

- is ordained and has some ministry experience
- meets the biblical expectations for elders lined out in I Timothy and other passages
- holds to Westminster Confession while also understanding the varied backgrounds of the members of our church
- lives, shares, demonstrates, and clearly communicates the gospel
- is a solid Bible teacher/preacher
- has strong leadership and vision while also collaborating well with the elders and other church leadership
- is committed to teaching, equipping, and protecting the flock
- works with and through church members - carrying out the ministry of the church through leading and equipping the Body to do so
- can help individuals to realize and exercise their spiritual gifts
- promotes relationships, unity among members, and discipleship
- is a man of prayer, humility, and integrity
- has a heart for people and has an intentional plan for shepherding
- is equipped to provide counsel to the members of the congregation
- stands on his own convictions but seeks unity with all Christians

Our Community

Elizabethtown, KY is the county seat of Hardin County, located on Interstate 65 approximately 45 miles south of Louisville, KY. The population of Elizabethtown is about 30,000, with about 95,000 people living in Hardin County. Highlights of the community include proximity to several large metropolitan areas; some well-developed industry; growing commercial areas which are quite extensive for the community's size; an historic and revitalizing downtown; outdoor recreation

including lakes, parks, trails, and natural attractions (locally and regionally); a strong community college system; and a flourishing arts community. Public schools are above average for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and there are also several private schools plus a thriving homeschool community including several co-ops.

GCE Search Committee Members

Joe Baird Joe and his wife, Renée, have lived in Elizabethtown since 2006 and have three teenage sons who attend John Hardin High School. Joe is a GCE elder and leads our church's worship committee which involves planning worship, scheduling worship leaders and coordinating the efforts of our tech team. Joe has a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in mathematics and a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School in Operations Research. After retiring from active duty Army service in 2013, he has worked at Fort Knox as a civilian in the field of Army recruiting and marketing analytics. In his spare time, Joe enjoys family time, bicycling, motorcycles, playing the guitar and supporting his kids in all of their high school activities.

Mary Bruinsma Pete and Mary moved from Indianapolis to Elizabethtown in 2015. Mary attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, where she majored in English and Math. She received her master's degree in math from Purdue University. Mary is retired from teaching junior high school and high school math. She and Pete have 3 adult children; a son and family in MI, a son and family in WI, and a daughter and family that attend Grace Church. She teaches in Good News Club, volunteers for the nursing home outreach and for Room in the Inn, enjoys Women's Bible Study, and plans to help in Music and Drama Camp this summer. Pete and Mary enjoy camping and kayaking.

Cheryl Hill Cheryl and her husband, Peter (a GCE elder) are charter members of GCE. They moved to Kentucky in 1994 before there was a reformed church in the area and have helped the church grow since the beginning. They have 3 grown children and one grandson and live on a small farm in Meade County. Cheryl is a retired school teacher and enjoys using her teaching skills in Sunday School and Good News Club. She also volunteers at the nursing home outreach and Room in the Inn. She is the Operation Christmas Child coordinator for our church and organizes the donations and packing of the shoe boxes. Cheryl likes to garden, read, crochet and do all sorts of papercrafting.

Leigh Ann Pierce Leigh Ann is wife to Jerry (a GCE elder), and mom to 4 adult sons. Leigh Ann has a Piano degree from Auburn University and enjoys many opportunities for music ministry within the church and the community. These opportunities have grown since her youngest graduated from homeschooling in 2015. Since her family moved to Elizabethtown in 2007 she has developed a regional choral program for elementary through high school (Classical Christian Choir of Central Kentucky) which meets at the church during the school year. She plays the piano for GCE services, is a member of the Worship Committee, and does some of the weekly worship planning. She loves teaching children's Sunday School, helping to coordinate the Women's Ministry, teaching at Good News Club, and directing a Music & Drama Camp which GCE sponsors each summer. She is also a volunteer with Clarity Solutions (Hardin County area pregnancy care center).

Jeff Scroggs Jeff and his wife, Amber, have lived in Elizabethtown since 2007 and are currently homeschooling their 3 children. (Well, 2 children and an infant...) Jeff works in IT with Apologia Educational Ministries. He enjoys working with and discipling the youth at church, teaching Sunday School, and also leads worship and preaches occasionally. With degrees from Georgia Tech and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he enjoys both engineering/math/science and reading. Some of his favorite authors are Jonathan Edwards, John Knox, Ken Ham, Larry Burkett, and Richard Baxter. In his spare time, he enjoys role-playing games, board games, reading, designing websites, hanging out with Amber, and playing with his kids. He has been an elder at GCE starting in 2017.

Erica Searl Erica, her husband, Chuck, and their five children moved to the Elizabethtown area in 2007. They were at Fort Leonard Wood, MO from 2010 to 2013, but maintained connections here and returned in 2013 when Chuck (a chaplain endorsed by CBAmerica) was medically retired from the Army. Erica grew up in Montana and has a degree in math from Montana State University. She has worked as a systems analyst, teacher and musician. Currently she teaches online for Veritas Scholars Academy, coaches debate and teaches in a local homeschool co-op. She loves to read and study and is looking forward to more time to pursue that as her last son starts high school this year.

Luke Yates Luke and his wife, Hannah have been married for two years and live just outside Elizabethtown.. Luke has lived in the Elizabethtown area his whole life. He works as a salesman at Cecilia Auto Sales of Elizabethtown and is a graduate of Boyce College. Luke regularly leads worship at GCE and serves on the Evangelism, Outreach, and Missions Committee. Luke has preached, taught adult and youth Sunday School, and is currently serving as a small group leader. He also enjoys leading worship monthly at a local nursing home and occasionally leads devotions during their worship services. In his spare time, Luke enjoys reading, playing music, and spending quality time with Hannah. Luke is currently serving under the care of the local session of GCE to discern a call into full time ministry and is looking to start seminary in the near future.

Candidate Referral Form

Grace Church Elizabethtown
243 W. Dixie, Elizabethtown, KY

The following form can be filled out by anyone who wants to recommend a prospective pastoral applicant for Grace Church Elizabethtown. Please send the form to the Pastor Search Committee (PastorSearch@gcepca.org). The committee will review the referral and may pursue further consideration of the candidate using the contact information provided here. Please use discretion and maintain a confidential approach when recommending a candidate. This committee will do the same as we contact potential candidates.

Your Name: _____

Your Email & Phone: _____

Candidate's Name: _____

Candidate's Email & Phone: _____

Candidate's Current Church, Location, & Position: _____

Please provide a brief summary of the candidate's history, qualifications, & ministry focus:

How did/do you know the candidate and for how long? _____

Have you discussed with him the prospect of his candidacy for GCE's pastoral opening?

Additional comments:

