



Grace Presbyterian Church
Transforming lives through God's grace

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Ministry Update – Rev. Jake, Associate Minister Engagement and Service

Grace Members and Adherents, I am writing this update about my ministry at Grace with spring sunshine making its way into the windows. Kate and I moved this past summer and have not, yet, spent a spring in our new home. Most days we take a “plant walk” – short walks along the edges of the garden beds to notice what is growing and making its way up through the earth. Our “plant walks” are a reminder of the newness this season offers.

The robins have made their way back too, singing early in the morning and late in the evening. I have been listening for the robin’s songs after an Indigenous Elder in the *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places* book study Grace hosted in February shared about how meaningful the robin’s song was to her and how it kept her connected to her identity and her being known by the Creator in a particularly difficult time in her life.

Spring is a good time to reflect on newness and new life emerging, identity, and being known by God. The information that follows, like a “plant walk”, is meant to notice what is growing and making its way through my ministry at Grace.

A starting point for reflection is looking at the past year ministry at Grace. The past year of ministry has had a number of facets, including:

- Collaboratively planning and putting together Grace’s 3 in 1 worship, then moving to the “warm-up to worship” phase and helping to figure out how to welcome people back into Grace’s building in ways that considered both the well-being of individuals and the well-being of the community, and being involved in the decision-making process around our current COVID protocols at Grace.
- Working with the Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Ad Hoc Committee in guiding Grace on taking the next steps on the journey of truth, healing, and reconciliation by recognizing our part in the legacy and effects residential schools have had on Indigenous peoples and cultures and showing a willingness to grow and learn through study, dialogue, and experience. I am incredibly appreciative for how the members of the Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Ad Hoc Committee have been companions and supports in this difficult work that has not always been met with kindness or care.
- Working with the Engagement and Service Committee to support service projects like Grace being a satellite site for the Calgary Food during the pandemic while also discussing new ideas for how Grace can continue to both engage, partner, and lend our hands with our neighbours to create supportive and caring community.
- Working with three other committees of Grace’s session (Finance, Facilities, and Governance and Planning) to help support Grace’s strategic plan.

- Planning for Dwell on Sunday mornings and watching community and connections grow where support, prayer, knowledge, and encouragement was shared. And trying to keep Dwell going as we returned to in-person worship, but ultimately letting it rest for a time in recognition and celebration of how many of the people who participated in Dwell now volunteer to help with Sunday morning worship at Grace.
- Being a part of a cohort of a program called *Seminary of The Wild* which provided readings and teachings that have been inspiring and given much food for thought, especially in regards to engaging with community around the sacredness that is all around us, including the sacredness that is within us, and the call that invites us to as Frederick Buechner has written “calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the deep hunger of the world meet.”

Here is the work that is emerging in my ministry. This is work that you will be invited to join and be a part of in the months ahead:

- Alongside the Engagement and Service Committee supporting and re-establishing programs that engaged Grace with the broader community that were suspended during the pandemic. This includes but is not limited to: English Language Learning (ELL), Brown Bagging for Calgary Kids (BB4CK), RESET Graduations, Never Too Late Graduations and Never Too Late possibly using space at Grace.
- Supporting and leading truth, healing, and reconciliation / reconcili-action efforts at Grace. This includes but is not limited to: Working with the Ad-Hoc Committee on Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation on planned events / activities, continuing to build connections and relationship with Indigenous peoples, lead Grace’s participation in Truth and Reconciliation events such as Indigenous History Month (June) and Orange Shirt Day (September). This work also includes working with the Mural Project Team in working with an Indigenous artist to transform the red paint on Grace’s door into a mural that represents truth and reconciliation as well as hosting sharing and listening circles about the mural project with Grace’s congregation and community.
- Collaborating with session, colleagues, committees, community partners, and the people of Grace to define and implement a plan for community care and engagement that includes new and faith-filled ideas. Plans include piloting a community Dwell group and planning and putting together opportunities to share and introduce what I’ve learned from participating in *Seminary of the Wild*.

I am looking forward to hiking in the mountains this summer, tending plants in the garden, floating on the Bow River, walks with friends, and pedaling my bike in and around Calgary.

I also know looking ahead there is the work of helping us remain connected, engaged, and growing in faith. I am sure there will be challenges that come with living into the vision of transforming lives through God’s grace – remembering in this vision our individual lives and our community life too are being formed and reformed by God’s grace – and these challenges will continue to stretch me, my thinking, and my understandings of ministry.

As we look to see what is emerging in the life of Grace may we each look to form deeper understandings of and ways of living into lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, speaking the truth in love and growing as disciples of Jesus Christ who value engagement, belonging, community, compassion, and service.