



Grace Presbyterian Church

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(on leave)

Interim Ministers' Update to Annual Congregational Meeting, 10 December 2023

Grace-filled Words of Hope:

This is a joint update, but given that The Rev. Wendy Adams will have completed her term of service as an Interim Minister before the next annual meeting, we thought it important that the congregation also hear words of hope and faith from Rev. Wendy.

Dear friends,

What a great joy it has been to return to Calgary after an absence of nearly 18 years! In all this time I have been away Grace church has been a faithful partner in Presbyterian ministry in Calgary and across the wider church. My husband Greg and I have been blessed to come alongside of you for this interim period and participate in this important work.

In the Advent season we read about the ministry of John the Baptist and the gospel writer's assertion that he is the one spoken of by Isaiah: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Yet, for the first time, I found this verse speaking to me as a vision statement for our ministry today. How are we, as Christians in Calgary "preparing the way" and "making paths straight"?

I see this happening at Grace in many ways. Our worship, sacraments, education programs, children's ministry and pastoral care all "prepare the way" so that people can learn about and experience the presence of God in their midst. Our mission outreach programs, (especially the food bank distribution), our partnerships with other organizations and visitation and bereavement programs all make the paths straight for people who face great hardships and challenges. Grace church is a sanctuary in both definitions of the word: our facility is a sacred room in which general worship services are held; and it is also a place of refuge and protection for people who are struggling or hurting.

I come to this work each day with a profound sense of humility for the legacy of ministry that I follow in, and for the ongoing witness to the gospel that we proclaim each day. Ministry is a gift. I hope that everyone who calls Grace their home congregation is excited about the way forward that God has prepared for us. Our budget for the coming year is an ambitious document full of possibility and potential to prepare the way and make the rough places a plain. I urge everyone to search their hearts and seek out ways that they can come alongside our many teams and committees. This year, can you find new ways to offer your gifts of talent and treasure? How can we invest together in the work that God has prepared for us to do? Most important of all, please pray each day that God's mercy, inspiration and guidance will be with the work and witness of Grace church.

I want to share another memory-verse song from Ephesians 2:10 that I learned as a child:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,
to do those good deed which God planned for us to do.
Praise God, he made us and new life he gave us. Praise God, he made me.”

I do praise God for you and lift you up in prayer as we celebrate another year of work and witness in the ministry of Grace Presbyterian Church. God is making us new every morning. May God’s blessing be richly felt by each of you now and in the days ahead. Amen

Your partner in Christ,
Wendy

Outline of our shared ministry: Since the fall of 2023, the two interim ministers have been working closely with each other and congregational leaders to provide worship leadership, pastoral care, and support to Grace’s ten standing committees and various ad hoc committees.

The Rev. Wendy Adams began her appointment in June 2023 and worked through the summer, meeting with key congregational leaders, providing pastoral care and sacraments, and developing a workplan for her tenure at Grace.

The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Simmins began his appointment in September 2023 (having met earlier in the summer with Rev. Wendy and key congregational leaders).

Since September 2023, the interim ministers have shared responsibility for planning and leading worship services. They jointly prepare weekly worship liturgies and preach, sharing responsibility equally for worship preparation.

The interim ministers preached every Sunday during the fall, with the exception of September and October, when The Rev. Sabino Diok preached the third Sunday of the month.

The Rev. Wendy Adams: Ministry Focus

In addition to the shared roles and responsibilities as one of the Interim Ministers, The Rev. Wendy Adams assumed sole responsibility for liaising with Session, and also took on additional responsibilities for oversight of staff. Several large projects have been undertaken, including the September 30th Truth, Healing and Reconciliation events, New Elder Nominations, the Ministry Model, education programs for adults, the “Gift of Music” children’s program, as well as special events for Advent, Christmas and Lent. It has been a great joy to welcome many families into the life of the church through the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism and re-affirmation of their faith. It is a tender mercy to accompany families as they say goodbye to loved ones at graveside and memorial services.

Grace's teams, committees and staff work many dedicated hours in oversight of the ministry and resources. Rev. Wendy feels privileged to come alongside of all of you for this Interim period to share in this important mission. Her work with Rev. Geoffrey has been a true delight, as Geoffrey brings enthusiasm, deep wisdom and a sense of play to every thing he does. Together they have seen the hand of God do "more than we could ask or imagine" in these scant few weeks they have shared. They both also extend special thanks to our Support Services Director, Alan Facey, for his pivotal role in overseeing and advancing the daily operations of the many programs and activities that happen in the building and on the grounds. And also to all of the staff for their commitment to excellence in their work.

The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Simmins: Ministry focus

In addition to the shared roles and responsibilities as one of the Interim Ministers, The Rev Geoffrey Simmon's key responsibilities have focused on pastoral care. He offered a ministry of attentive listening to individuals experiencing grief and loss.

He has also provided ministerial liaison for Preaching Grace, one of Grace's crown jewels in terms of outreach activities. This year, which will feature the noted Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, promises to be a banner year, and Rev. Geoffrey encourages all members, adherents, and the wider circle of friends and acquaintances to attend the program.

One of Rev. Geoffrey's main responsibilities has been to work with the deacons at Grace, who are a strength and a gift to this congregation. At the time of reporting in December 2023, he is still seeking ways and means to strengthen this program. He hopes and prays that by the time his tenure ends, in June 2024, the deacons' program will have been strengthened by additional members.

Rev. Geoffrey would also like to have on record his deep appreciation for the faithful service and creative, thoughtful sermons provided by his co-minister, Rev. Wendy.

In a time of transition, we remember that Jesus promises to be with us to the end of the ages.