

Like A River Strong

2023 Report to Congregation and Community



Grace Presbyterian Church

Transforming lives through God's grace

Our Values

Engagement, Belonging, Community, Compassion, Service

Our Vision

Transforming Lives Through God's Grace

Our Mission

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we grow disciples of Jesus Christ to love our neighbours and effect social change

2022-2024 Session Strategic Plan Areas of Focus

- Provide congregational care and support, encourage engagement
- Grow community collaboration and connection
- Nurture the evolving culture at Grace

In a spirit of respect and truth we honour and acknowledge that we work, live, play, and worship on the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai Nations) the Tsuut'ina Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Metis Nation of Alberta Districts 5 and 6.



Ministers

The Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, Interim Moderator (June - Dec 2023)

The Rev. Greg Smith, Interim Moderator (Jan - May 2023)

The Rev. Jake Van Pernis, Associate Minister

The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud, Associate Minister Children and Youth (Jan - Apr 2023)

The Rev. Christian Persaud, Interim Pastoral Care Leader (Jan - Apr 2023)

Interim Ministers

The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Simmins, (Sep 2023 - June 2024)

The Rev. Wendy Adams, (June 2023 - Mar 2024)

Like a river strong, with a restless current, Spirit water rushing on to distant shore, God is charting out a channel in a new direction, Calling for an end to hate and war...like a river strong (evensongbruce, 2010).

A number of years ago, I was taught how to read a river. This is an important skill to have when you are river paddling because it helps you to keep your canoe in the flow of the current, run rapids, and not hit rocks. I guided people on canoe trips on the Brule River, close to where I grew up.

Being a guide who reads the river to help others feel, find, and stay in the current is a good descriptor of ministry. In our collective life at Grace there has been lots of change to navigate through in 2023—including my parental leave—but we made it through, bumping a few rocks, but also knowing the thrill, joy, and liveliness of the current.

For a long time, the vision shared in chapter 47 of the Book of Ezekiel has resonated with me. In the vision, Ezekiel is led through water that has bubbled up from the doorway of a place designated for the worship of God. That water grows into a trickle ankle deep, then a stream knee deep, and it continues to grow deeper and deeper, until the water becomes a wide river deep enough for swimming. The flow of the river's fresh water meets the Dead Sea and causes the salty water to become fresh and teem with life. Along the river's banks all types of trees flourish, and these trees are everbearing of fruit that is meant to nourish and heal because the roots drink from the water that flows out the sanctuary of God.

This is a beautiful image of what it means to be the church moving into the world. We are the water bubbling up and flowing with goodness, hope, peace, and the love of God. We flow out of the doors of Grace Presbyterian Church, bringing life, healing, and nourishment into places that are seemingly dry, salty, or even dead. I hope all of the materials and reports shared in this document help us to read and know that what flows from Grace is a river of life!

I look forward to continuing to be a guide and reading the river with all of you as we continue to move in the flow of God's grace and love.

Peace, Rev. Jake



Our Congregation

“At the confluence of the Bow and Elbow” is where we live, worship and serve God’s people. In the first chapter of Genesis, there is a river in the garden, and there is a river in the last chapter of Revelation in the holy city. God’s sacred story happens between rivers. As Grace, with the community, celebrates the ministries of its mission in 2023, we give thanks for God’s continued leading. Through the power of God’s Spirit, lives have been transformed through acts of compassion and generosity. With humility, as followers of Jesus, Grace has sought to be a good neighbour and be a place of spiritual refreshment. The Church, like a river, gives itself away as it gives life to others. The stories in this report illustrate the life-giving power of God, right here, right now, at the confluence of the Bow and the Elbow. - The Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, Interim Moderator

Our Church Family

In 2023, our congregation gathered together to deepen our faith, connection, and relationship with God. Our family spans generations, includes those between 0 and 100 plus years of age, who have worshipped at Grace for generations, and who are new to Grace, Calgary and Canada. Here are some quotes from the congregation on why they come to Grace, what drew them, and what they loved in the last year.



Quotes from the Congregation

I came to Grace after just moving to Calgary because I was looking for community and soon after I was looking for a way to give back to the community I found. Volunteering with the Engagement and Service committee, writing for the newsletter and occasionally helping out with the food bank has been the spiritual nourishment I'd been seeking for a long time. - Ben

We always enjoy a visit from Richard Topping from Vancouver and were fortunate to catch him on his last visit. - Marlene and Don

I enjoyed seeing and chatting with the people and kids at the church. That was my highlight at Grace last year! - Alexis

I was first drawn to Grace through music. Over time, I have become more and more involved. I enjoyed Mission to Mexico, as a way to connect with church youngsters. I also love to sing and welcome English Language Learner students to Canada. - Sandy

Grace Leadership

Session Elders:

- Jim Campbell
- Mark Durieux
- Janet Hyde
- Mary Jardine
- Joanne Kellough
- Anne Mohtadi
- Jiebieni Nyajwok
- Okwayi Obang
- Shirley Philips
- Iain Robertson
- Mary Lil Rozsa de Coquet
- Cindy Stephenson
- Len Wolstenholme, Clerk of Session

Land and Facilities Committee

Oversees the upkeep, maintenance and future planning of Grace's indoor and outdoor space.

Governance Committee

Oversees the implementation of effective governance practices and organizational structure, monitors Session's key outcomes, impact, and alignment to Grace's vision, mission and values. Also responsible for the development of policies.

Pastoral Care and Connection Committee

Seeks to be responsive to the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling needs of all God's people. We are responsible for the spiritual and physical needs of those within, and just outside our doors, who seek pastoral care. We love one another because we are loved first by God.

Engagement and Service Committee

Identifies service opportunities in Grace's community, encourages congregational involvement, and develops strategic partnerships with other organizations. Also raises awareness of major social issues and works to facilitate Grace's involvement in addressing those issues from a faith-based perspective.

Service Elders:

- Dave Caldwell
- Fran Cormack
- Bill Cruickshanks
- Marlene Doherty
- Bob Ermtter
- Carol Evans
- Margot Kellough
- Richard Kim
- Bonnie Noyce Faust
- Les Wilson

Minister Resource and Presbytery Relations

Supports Grace's ministers and coordinates with the Presbytery.

Spiritual Growth Committee

Explores options for music ministry and liturgy for corporate worship that appeal to a broad range of age groups. Continues to develop and implement strong programs for faith formation of children, youth and families.

Gratitude and Giving Committee

Encourages a culture of gratitude and generosity in the contributions of time, talent and treasure.

Financial Management Committee

Manages and stewards Grace's financial resources and reports regularly on the financial position.

Deacons

Deacons are congregation members with specific training and gifts in pastoral care. They work with ministers to provide additional care for those in hospital or hospice, those who are experiencing bereavement, or those who are homebound.

- Deacon of Homebound Care: Margot Kellough
- Deacon of Hospital Care: Nancy Connors
- Deacon of Bereavement: Elizabeth Cressman





Mission in Motion: Committee Conveners Share Highlights

Highlights from the Spiritual Growth Committee

In 2023, the Spiritual Growth Committee highlights:

- We welcomed the Rev. Wendy Adams and the Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Simmins as interim ministers.
- Church School for Grace Kids and Grace Youth took place throughout the year. Over the summer months 25 kids and youth gathered together for Summer Sunday School. The Journey of Hope Walk taken by Grace families at Confederation Parks raised \$1,200 for Presbyterian World Service & Development. A Christmas Eve Children's Pageant delighted all!
- Book and Bible Studies: A Lenten Bible Study was shared by Grace's ministers. A study on "All Our Grievs To Bear" by Joni Sancken, Grace's 2023 Preaching Grace Speaker, was led by Elizabeth Cressman. There is also a participant-led Bible Study called God's Grace in Scripture that happens throughout the year.
- Congregation and Community engagement: A Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper fed members of Grace and members of the community, and the Halloween Trunk N Treat event attracted 200 community members.
- Music: Open Mic Nights welcome members of Grace and the community to share gifts of music, poetry, and dance. The Foothills Brass shared music on Remembrance Day. Grace hosted seven choirs at the "All is Calm, All is Bright" Advent concerts raising \$2, 000 for the Calgary Foodbank. A new group called Camerata for instrumental musicians was started in December. The Rose Baltrusaitis Scholarship was awarded to four recipients.

- Lorna McNeil and Carol Latter, Co-Conveners

Highlights from the Pastoral Care and Connection Committee

In 2023, the Pastoral Care Committee continued to develop and became the Pastoral Care and Connection Committee. In 2023:

- We said farewell to the Rev. Christian Persaud and welcomed the Rev. Geoffrey Simmins
- Grace Bethany met monthly from October to June, offering faith, fellowship and learning
- The Grace Quilters met regularly, held a Christmas sale, and gifted quilts to graduates from RESET (Rapid Exit from Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking) Society, to Mexican families building new homes, to those at Grace experiencing challenges
- Grieving in God's Grace met weekly to support those on a grief journey
- An All Saints Day service was held November 1 to honour the lives of those who have died
- An Advent Luncheon attracted people from 0 to 98, with shepherd's pie and angel food cake
- A new photo directory is being created by a team of volunteers. Photos were taken in the fall and shared at Christmas - the directory is coming soon!

- Nancy Connors, Convener

Mission in Motion: Convener Highlights



Highlights from the Gratitude and Giving Committee

In 2023, the committee was formally established as a standing committee of Session, with the mandate to “develop and implement strategies to identify, nurture, celebrate and pursue Christ-centred stewardship at and through Grace Presbyterian Church, focusing on relationship development, encouraging a culture of gratitude and generosity in contributions of time, talent and treasure”. The Gratitude and Giving Committee:

- Gave thanks to specific volunteers each week in the bulletin and shared opportunities to serve
 - Recognized volunteers with a luncheon and a message reflection on “Grace and Gratitude”
 - Encouraged contributions to the restoration of the stained-glass windows in the sanctuary, with over \$90,000 contributed
 - Organized and hosted a workshop with financial professionals on Planned Giving
 - Established the Legacy Fund to provide long-term support for the ministries of Grace
- Cindy Stephenson, Convener

Highlights from the Land and Facilities Committee

The Land and Facilities Committee works to make the church a safe, comfortable and functional building. A lot of love, care and maintenance goes into maintaining a 100+ year old sandstone building! Work undertaken in 2023 includes:

- Repair and restoration of the stained-glassed glass windows in Grace's Sanctuary.
 - Front door painting and restoration.
 - Renovations in Grace's Chapel and preservation of the colorful cut glass window in this space.
 - Addressing lighting needs in the sanctuary.
- Robin Telfer, Convener

Highlights from the Governance Committee

The Governance Committee works to ensure Session and its committees are functioning well, following policies and mitigating risks. We organize the annual leadership retreat where the strategic ministry goals are refreshed, and committees consider their work for the coming year. In 2023:

- The Governance Committee conducted a review of using the "new" Session Committees organizational structure for five years. The results of the review were: development of new committees and a re-focusing of others.
 - The annual retreat was an orientation for the interim ministers and a refresh of the final year of our strategic plan. Initiatives such as leadership development, deepening connections with our Sudanese and Anyuak congregants, and deliberate stewardship, were highlighted along with outreach to members which was critical to update the roll and allow Grace to proceed with calling a new Lead Minister.
 - We also held two congregational meetings with community spokespeople from English Language Learners and Connaught School. The stories these spokespeople shared highlighted the long-lasting impacts of Grace's faithful and collective work.
- Mary Lil Rozsa de Coquet, Convener



Highlights from the Lead Minister Search Committee

The Lead Minister Search Committee was commissioned on December 9, 2021 and launched a Lead Minister search. The committee:

- Reflected on the needs of the congregation as well as the needs to move forward in Grace's vision, mission, and values.
- Received training from consultant Rev. Dr. Graham Standish.
- Prepared the Congregational profile and Lead Minister position description. Engaged the congregation in the approval of these documents and created a video highlighting Grace for applicants to view.
- Began searching for a new Lead Minister in April 2022, advertising the position widely and proactively reaching out to ministers in Canada and the United States.
- Reviewed more than 80 applications with careful and prayerful screening. Followed this by connecting with potential candidates.
- Invited four candidates for in-person interviews and had presented one candidate, the Rev. Dr. Christopher Joiner, to the congregation to preach for the call.

The Lead Minister Search Committee meetings included prayer, reading scripture, listening, sifting through information, and addressing the opportunities and challenges that arose during the process. Throughout the search process, the committee has been upheld by the faith prayers and encouragement of Grace's Session and congregation. This truly has been a Spirit-led process of discovery.

- Janet Hyde, Co-Convener of the Lead Minister Search Committee



Our Community Impact

Grace engages with its community in a number of ways. Grace's Chapel becomes a satellite site for the Calgary Food Bank on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A number of rooms at Grace become classrooms where people who are new to Canada learn conversational English through an English Language Learners (ELL) program. Grace uses its spaces to support safe family gatherings and Canadian cultural experiences by sharing events with the community like Trunk N Treat and Reconciliation, Reconnection, and Resilience on Orange Shirt Day.



Grace has added a second day as a satellite site for the Calgary Food Bank to meet increasing need in the area.

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Stories and Stats from the Grace Satellite Food Bank

A family with a one month old baby from Ukraine came for a hamper. They have four other children at home. They fled Ukraine in December, 2023 when their small town near the Russian border was completely destroyed. This family lost their home and everything in it. The grandmother of the family arrived from Ukraine yesterday, having lost her home as well. They were so grateful and may even look at volunteering with us. - Mary Jardine, Grace Satellite Food Bank Volunteer

By the Numbers

In 2023, the Grace satellite food bank handed out a total of 1,029 Hampers to families, which has impacted 1,990 individuals. So far in 2024, the Grace satellite has handed out a total of 417 Hampers. The addition of a second distribution day at Grace has doubled the Food Bank's reach in the area and we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Grace in such a high need area! - Calgary Food Bank



English Language Learner Program

There has been significant immigration to Calgary since 2022. Newcomers are motivated by a number of factors including: seeking safety for family, employment opportunities, health, and overall well being. The first step to achieving these goals is language.

I work with dedicated volunteer teachers who provide English conversation but also assist the students in their quest to belong. We hear stories of flight from danger, shortage of food and necessities of life, desire to see children have economic opportunities. Classes in three levels, beginner, intermediate and advanced, meet once per week.

Online resources are available for the teachers as they prepare for each session. My favorite time is the coffee break where the students share their conversation, culture and in some cases, their faith. Training for new volunteers will be provided – so join us.

- Shirley Philips, ELL Coordinator

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English Class Students on the Impact of the Grace English Language Learner Program

I can meet a lot of people and make new friends. I learn a lot about Canada. I am a preacher and like to come to a church. - Joshua, ELL student

I can make new friends and learn how to talk to teachers for children. I think that is very good. I come to this program so I can get a job, meet new people and improve my English. - Maple, ELL student



Many Faces of Grace

South Sudanese Community at Grace

We hope to come together and grow a future for God's people so we can get to know God. We want to help the community - you can see people are in need. In the future, we can all be together and be with God. -Jiebieni Nyajwok, Session Elder and South Sudanese community member

Anyuak Community at Grace

In 2023, Rev. Olul and a delegation traveled to Gambella, Ethiopia, Africa to provide training to Christian leaders in the area. They also brought translated Bibles to leave behind.

Interim Minister Messages

On the Move

Jesus and his disciples were constantly moving, seeking new opportunities to make people aware that the promises of God were coming true before their eyes. I wonder whether it was distressing to see Jesus come and go. Some of those people would probably have liked it had Jesus stopped and stayed a while. Churches can be like that, too, don't you find? A leader we have gotten used to moves on to other places and different tasks. Many of us don't adapt all that well to change.

From a spiritual perspective, it is good to remind ourselves that God is with us amid all the seasons of our lives, throughout all our changing circumstances. Life flows on and we are better to go with the flow rather than trying to stand and stop things from changing. May as well stand in the middle of the stream and try and stop the water from flowing by. Accepting change as inevitable, going with the flow of life, is a strategy that is both wise and spiritually positive. - The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Simmins

The Flow of Grace

In the long history of Grace Church, leaders come and depart again, like tributary streams entering a larger river. Each tributary contributes to the flow, bringing fresh ideas and insights. Each entry offers opportunity to recast the vision, and take the organization in new directions. Canadian songwriter Bruce Harding carries the metaphor in this hymn from 2003 (evensongbruce. 2010, February 6. Bruce Harding - Like a healing stream [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltPR1r4o_qU):

Like a healing stream in a barren desert, Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,
God is trickling through our lives as in a dream unfolding,
Promising revival and rebirth...like a healing stream.

Sometimes, new entry can cause disruption and stress to the system, as they steer the organization. Grace church's founding vision originated with three Calgary women in 1904, when Calgary had 12,000 people. Permission was requested to launch a Presbyterian Mission Church and Sunday School. They were told that if they found children to form a Sunday School, it would be so. Children were found and Grace was born.

What a joy it was for me to be at Grace in mission for 10 months. How wonderful to return to Grace, after 16 years, and discover the congregational commitment to education and mission continues unabated. Worship here has a level of excellence. Children's education remains a strong priority. Service to the community is broad, with food security and social isolation being top priorities.

I wish you God's richest blessings. May the Spirit of the Lord disturb the waters of Grace Church, so that you may continue to meet emergent needs, while caring for one another. May the waters of your baptism be a reminder of God's enfolding love, and the promise of salvation. May Jesus, the living water, refresh our souls for the good works which God has called us to do. - The Rev. Wendy Adams

The Congregation



The Congregation: The Roll 2023

- 376 Professing Members; 162 adult adherents
 - Total: 538 adults
- 11 Baptisms in 2023

Worship Participation: In-person and Online

- In-Person Participation: 2023 Approximately 125 per week
- Online Participation: average views/week 72

Online Congregation and Community

1,435 users on social media in 2023:

- Social Media Presence (Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, YouTube): 1,435 fans and followers;
- \$1,214.12 spent on social ads; Grace appeared 100,679 times to 50,000 users
- YouTube Subscribers: 235 (+50 in 2023)
 - Online worship: Average 74 views per week; 1,754 hours of watch time; Who is watching online? The data shows: 77% of viewers have not yet subscribed (Grace has 235 subscribers - so this could grow)
 - Who is viewing online? The data shows online viewers are:
 - 82% between the ages of 55 and 64; 16% are 65+; 83% men
- Website: Visitors: 15,983 (2022 Visitors: 14,192)



The Church: Facilities 2023:

- 1,641 Events, Meetings and Activities, in-person and online, for congregation and community



Stewardship: Time, Talent and Treasure

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above (James 1:17)

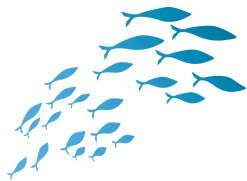


Time and Talent:



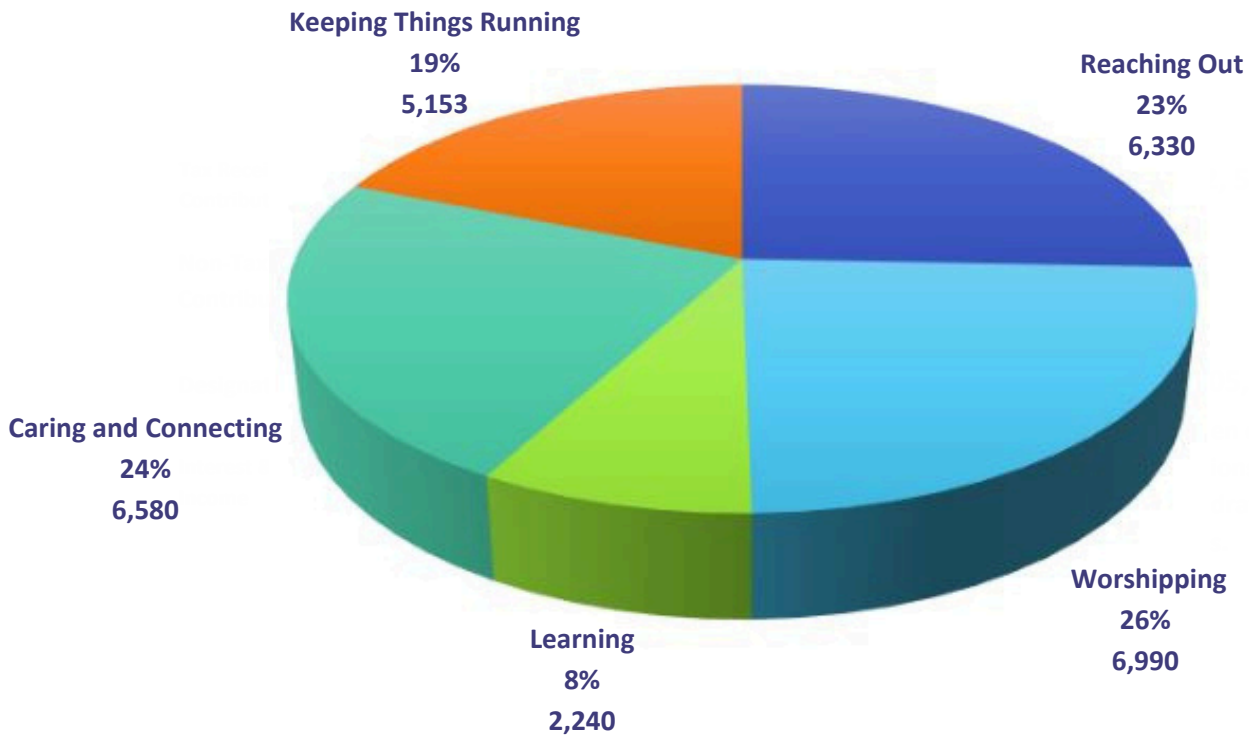
- 27,300 Hours (21,200 in 2022)
- 3,640 workdays
- 202 volunteers (190 in 2022)
- 334 volunteer roles (290 in 2022)

Treasure

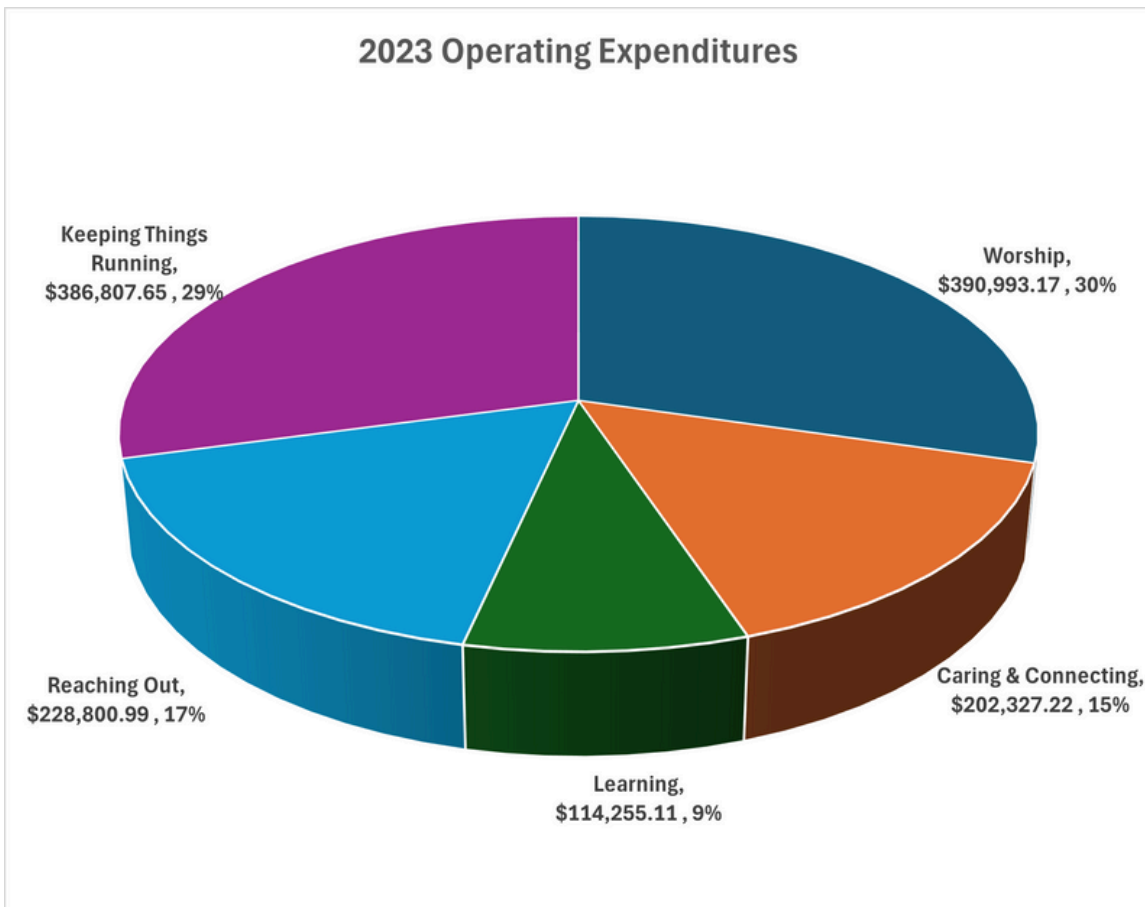


- Giving Trend: More people giving; People giving more
- 2023 rentals 32% over 2022 for \$95,980
- Investment trends: Investments in the PCC Portfolio have increased

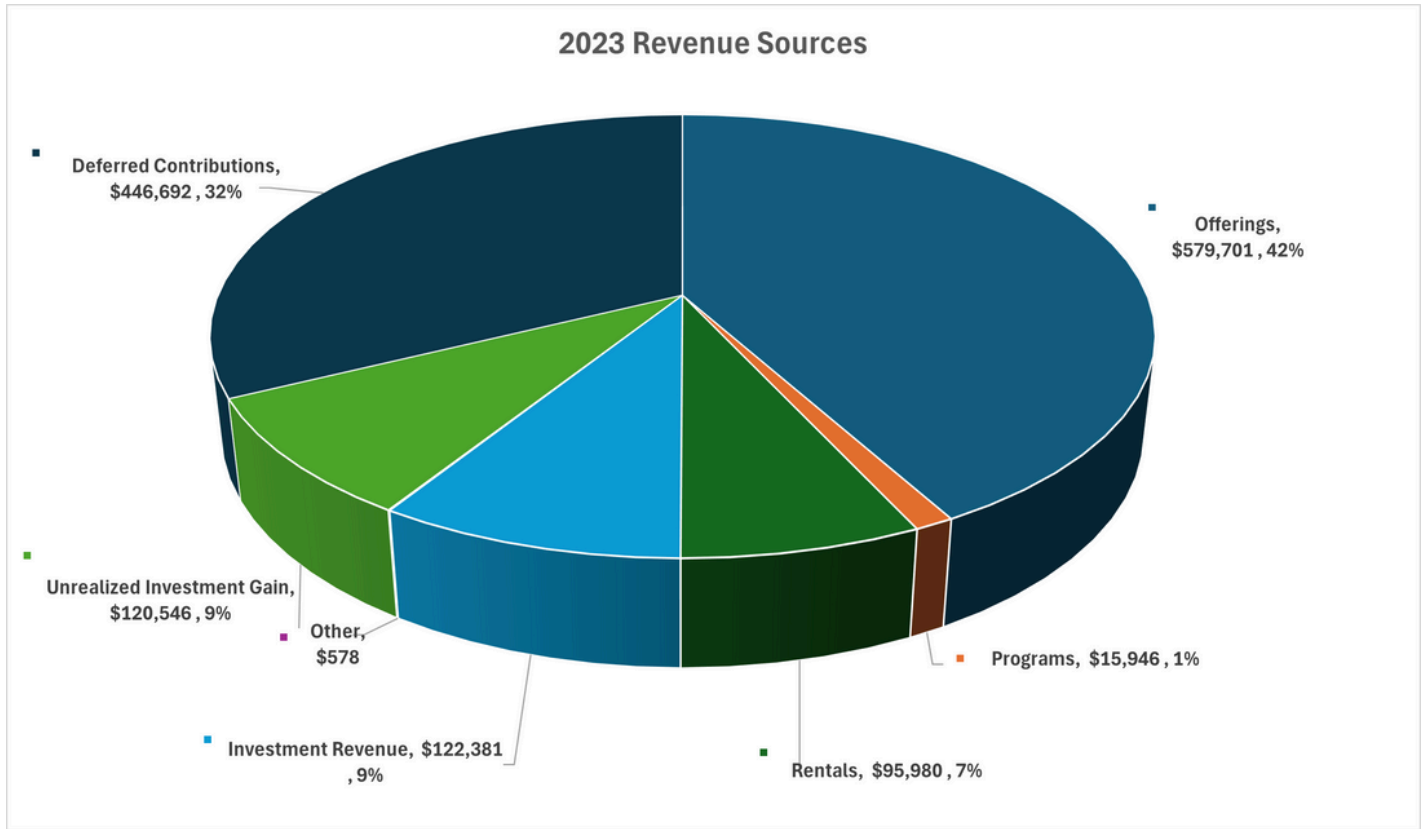
Total Volunteer Time and Talent - 27,300 Hours



Total Operating Costs: \$1, 323, 184.14



Total Revenues: \$1, 381, 824



Deferred Restricted Contributions

Grace receives some contributions designated by donors for specific purposes – the use of the funds is restricted. If the funds are not used during the year of donation, they become deferred restricted contributions. Deferred restricted contributions are drawn down as expenditures matching the restrictions or conditions of giving are incurred. The overall difference of deferred contributions was an increase of \$66,515 in 2023 (deferred funds were spent and replenished).

- **The net change in 2023 was an increase of \$66,151 (in 2022, there was a decrease of \$46,603)**



Join the Journey

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Grace Presbyterian Church
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