

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

**A Church Planting Church
For Southeast Texas**

A Strategic Prospectus For A Not-For-Profit 501(c) 3 Ministry

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THE STRATEGIC SUMMARY

The mission of *Grace Community Church* is to plant innovative, Christ centered, spiritually vital, Bible based, grace oriented, culturally relevant churches in the greater Houston metro-area that will result in the transformation of the immediate community, the entire Houston metro-area and ultimately the world for Christ. Consequently, this isn't simply the planting of another church, it's a church planting movement.

We believe that the time is right and the spiritual climate is ready for such a church. We have an experienced, proven team of church planters unequalled anywhere in the nation. We have a committed, trustworthy board of reference. We have a growing unity that has led to a prayer movement that is taking place in our city. We have a team of spiritual leaders that are committed to reaching our city and seeing our communities transformed by the power of God. We see all the pieces coming together for a world-class church planting movement.

The city of Houston is dynamic and growing. It is also one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the nation. As we reach people in our city, we touch the world. With less than 1,000 vital churches in our area, we have a great need for more spiritually healthy, Bible based, Great Commission churches to reach our growing population. We envision a movement where this church will plant a number of churches that will multiply over the next 20 years so that we will saturate our region and beyond with dynamic high impact churches that will lead to the transformation of individuals, families, and the community as well as the world for the Savior.

Our strategy is to plant churches all over the Houston metro-area and ultimately the world. It's twofold. First, we will plant Grace Community Church in Cyprus, Texas, a suburb of Houston, Texas. Using it as our base camp, next we will launch other churches in Houston and beyond. The strategic objectives of the latter involve the recruitment, assessment, training, mentoring, and resourcing of the other church planters. We believe these objectives will create a vision for a dynamic church planting movement that will impact our world for Christ. Eight core values drive our ministry: Biblical teaching, God-honoring worship, authentic community, lost people, a grace-orientation to life, a mobilized congregation, and creativity and innovation.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Some pastors and church leaders have difficulty envisioning the need for more churches in the Houston-metro area or even America. With nearly 2,800 churches in our area, and 375,000 churches nationwide, they view idea of starting more churches as unnecessary if not ludicrous. However, several organizations and church leaders as well as researchers point out that 80 to 85 percent of the existing churches in America are plateaued or dying. Research by Union Baptist Association indicates that this is the situation in Houston as well. This means that there are fewer than 1,000 vital churches in our region.

The latest census data shows that the Houston metro-area has now exceeded four million people. Thus, the strong and steady population growth that has characterized the area for the last 30 years continues. Though some have planted churches, the percentage of church attenders has declined, and the ratio of churches to population is growing wider. Consequently, our region has become increasingly unchurched. This also characterizes our nation as a whole. Dr. Charles Chaney states, "America today is not a Christian nation but a mission field We should give attention to multiplying congregations among all the social and cultural segments of society." ¹

Only one vital church exists for every 4,000 plus people in the greater Houston area. If we are to saturate our area with spiritually healthy churches that implement personal and community transformation, we will need one vital church for every 1,000 people. This means we need 3,000 new healthy churches today! In 20 years our population will exceed six million. Consequently, we will need a total of 5,000 new churches over the next 20 years. And that is our goal.

At the turn of the century, only 18 percent of Houstonians attend church.² If we are to reach the unchurched, we must start new churches. Experience has shown that new churches are more effective at reaching the lost. Aggressive church planting is an essential strategy if we are serious about fulfilling Christ's Great Commission and transforming our city. Jack Dennison writes, "Overwhelming evidence shows that the single road leading to community transformation is, if properly understood, saturation church planting."³ He continues,

Saturating a community with the dynamic presence of Christ cannot be achieved by a single congregation or denomination ... Saturation church planting requires a commitment to make sure that the living Lord

¹ Charles Chaney, *Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1989), p. 19.

² Jack Dennison, *City Reaching* (Pasadena: William Carey Publishing, 1999), p. 73.

³ *Ibid.* p. 131.

is found within geographic, linguistic and cultural access of every single person ... Saturation church planting is the single most important pursuit of the church toward the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission.”⁴

To reach our increasingly diverse city, we must think strategically and plant all kinds of churches for all kinds of people. Dr. Chaney states, “America will not be won to Christ by existing churches, even if they should suddenly become vibrantly and evangelistically alive. Nor will the United States be won to Christ by establishing more churches like the vast majority of those we now have.”⁵ If we are going to fulfill the Great Commission and effect true spiritual transformation in our city, we must be serious about aggressively starting new paradigm churches. It is the hope for the future of Christianity in our increasingly diverse country.

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Scott Brown is the founder and lead pastor of Grace Community Church. He grew up in Houston, Texas. He is married to Mary-a former school teacher turned full-time homemaker-and they have two children, Todd and Angie. He is a graduate of Rice University in Houston and Dallas Theological Seminary. Upon completion of his studies, in the 90’s he joined the staff of Faith Community Church-a new church in Houston that introduced him to the vision of church planting. During those years, Faith Church planted several new churches at home and abroad. Scott has served Grace as a teaching pastor and coordinator of church planting efforts. Now Grace has asked Scott to lead their next church planting team to effectively launch and establish Grace Community Church. He grew up in a business-oriented family with an entrepreneurial father who had successfully started several companies. Thus, Scott brings various gifts, knowledge, and skills that prove vital to this church planting venture. His vision is to engage in a local church planting movement in the Houston area.

Another member of the team is Bill Randolph. He also grew up in the Houston area and is a graduate of the University of Houston and Dallas Seminary. While in college, Bill successfully quarterbacked the Houston Cougars to a conference championship. He is married to Elizabeth and they have one child, Stephen. Bill and Scott met one another while in seminary where they and their wives formed close friendships. Bill has served at Faith as a gifted teacher from the pulpit. He has also led Faith’s dynamic small groups ministry, leading it to double in size in under three years. He will share the teaching load with Scott and lead Grace’s small groups ministry.

⁴ Ibid. 9. 135.

⁵ Charles Chaney, p. 18.

The third member of the team is Michael Smith. He is single and is a graduate of Georgia Tech. He, too, grew up in Houston and, since high school, has formed a number of Christian bands that have traveled and ministered not only in the states but abroad. Michael has served at Faith as an understudy and the assistant to the pastor of worship for the last three years. He will lead the worship at Grace Community and coordinate the youth ministry.

Faith Community Church in Houston, Texas, and its leadership have committed to assist the new church plant in a number of ways. First, it will serve to hold the leadership team accountable for its spiritual development and the direction of the ministry. Second, on a descending scale it will contribute to the financial needs of the new work. Third, the pastoral staff of faith will coach and advise the new leadership team. Fourth, it will encourage and use its gifted, talented congregation to aid the new church either temporarily until the church gets on its feet or permanently as partners in the new work.

CORE MINISTRY VALUES

The following are our core values. They will drive us as a ministry, influencing not only our decisions as a church, but all that we do.

Our first value is *biblical teaching*. We strive to teach God's Word with integrity and authority so that seekers find Christ and believers mature in Him (2 Tim. 3:16).

Our second value is *God-honoring worship*. We desire to acknowledge God's supreme value and worth in our personal lives and in the corporate, contemporary worship of our church (Rom. 12:1-2).

Our third value is *authentic community*. We ask all our people to commit to and fully participate in biblically functioning small groups (Acts 2:44-46).

Our fourth value is *lost people*. We value unchurched, lost people and will use every available Christ-honoring means to pursue, win, and mature them (Luke 19:10).

Our fifth value is a *grace-orientation to life and ministry*. We encourage our people to live and serve Christ from hearts of love and gratitude rather than guilt, shame, and condemnation (Rom. 6:14).

Our sixth value is a *mobilized congregation*. We desire to equip all our uniquely

designed and gifted people to effectively accomplish the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13).

Our seventh value is *creativity* and *innovation*. We will constantly evaluate our forms and methods, seeking cultural relevance and maximum ministry effectiveness for Christ (1 Chron. 12:32).

Finally, we value *excellence*. Since God gave his best (the Savior), we seek to honor Him by maintaining a high standard of excellence in all our ministries (Col. 3:23-24).

OUR MINISTRY MISSION

Our ministry mission is a broad but brief biblical statement of what we believe God desires for us to accomplish for him as a church. Its essence is Christ's Great commission as found in such passages as Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke; John; and Acts 1:8. We're convinced that our God-given ministry mission is *to make and mature believers in the Houston area and abroad.*

OUR MINISTRY VISION

We believe that God has prepared Houston for "such a time as this."

We see a brother lifting one end of a couch, helping his neighbors move into their house across the street. We overhear a sister explaining Ephesians 5 to a lady two houses down whose husband just walked out on her. We envision a husband and wife sitting around the dinner table, turning the pages of their Bible to John 3:16 as they quote it to the unmarried couple that lives next door. And we see another couple inviting their next door neighbors with whom they've spent the day to come hear a message entitled "Who You Are When No One's Looking."

On Sunday morning, we see ourselves driving to church followed in their car by Bill and Dana, two of our lost, unchurched neighbors, and their one-year-old son Jeremy. When we drive into the parking lot of the school where we meet, we smile and wave at several of our friends as they signal our two neighbors where to park. As we leave our cars and walk toward the church facility, we have to wait for Bill and Dana because one of the attendants is making sure that they know where to go. As we approach the facility, we can see groups of people

standing around some tables with attractive informational brochures and several signs that direct our visitors to various classes as well as the worship service. We also see some people that we know, walking these people toward their classes or the nursery.

When we walk into our rented facility, we hear the sound of children in their classes, singing about God's love. We see Dana's face relax and smile as one of our child care workers embraces Jeremy, points to another child his age playing in the corner, and he stops crying. As we walk through our facility, we see young people in various rooms, sitting on the floor or slumped in chairs, examining tattered Bibles and discussing opportunities to serve the Savior in the community.

As we walk into our Adult Bible Fellowship, several of the people come over shake our hands and introduce themselves to Bill and Dana. We can see them begin to relax as they spot several others that live on our block, and as several in our ABF visit with them but don't overwhelm them. We are surprised as Bill and Dana listen and interact with the lesson, and he even asks a question of our teacher.

We feel excited as we walk with Bill and Dana into the auditorium where we have our worship service. We see numerous folding chairs wall-to-wall and a central stage with several attractive arrangements of flowers, partially circling a set of drums, a keyboard, and several guitars.

As the worship service begins, we sense that God has something special in mind for us this morning. The air is electric as God uses the words of the songs to challenge our very souls. We don't see Bill and Dana singing, but they appear focused during the worship time and seem to listen carefully to the words of the songs. The look on their faces tells us that they sense something special is taking place, that whoever God is, they might be in his presence. Eventually, the music stops and Scott Brown steps up on the stage from his seat in the audience. He opens his Bible and talks about how husbands and wives can relate as Christ and his church relate to one another. We are amazed at his insight into the Scriptures and take notes as he talks about some practical applications for our marriages. He always finds a way to weave the gospel into the service, whether it's the message, the worship time, or the announcements. We think that perhaps for the first time Bill and Dana have heard the gospel. After the service, while walking to our cars we overhear Bill saying to Dana that he would like to come back next Sunday to which she eagerly nods her head.

We sense from the response of the community that God is doing something huge in our part of Houston. Every Sunday we see lots of new faces, many of which

return the following Sunday. We hear from our friends how that people they work with or that live in their communities are visiting our services, going on one of our retreats, or attending one of our many Bible studies in their neighborhoods and getting saved. We hear of marriages that are being saved and entire families coming back together because someone in our church cared enough to take the time to minister to their friends and neighbors.

We have observed that not only are these people coming to the Savior, but we see them sitting in our classes for new believers or participating in classes on ministry involvement, listening to the teacher talk about their spiritual gifts and talents. We've noticed that some of them are serving in the nursery, serving as parking attendants, and several that were saved last year are new apprentice teachers, working alongside some of our veteran teachers.

Most important, we envision them making a difference outside our church. We see them raising their neighborhoods, businesses, corporations, schools, and civic organizations to a higher standard of ethics. We see the spiritual temperature rising and receptivity to biblical truth increasing. We see individuals, families, and communities being transformed through the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

Every chance they get, Pastors Scott and Bill cast their vision of starting two churches every year—one at home in the Houston Metroplex and one abroad. They dream about some day sending out hundreds of career missionary church planters both at home and all around the world, accompanied by thousands of our people on short-term mission projects to assist them. And we believe that God will honor this dream. The reason is that every time after casting this vision in a service, several groups of people gather on their own without prior planning to excitedly discuss the vision among themselves and how they can be a part of it. In addition, we've overheard conversations or been involved in some meetings called by influential people in our church that have a passion to see this dream become a reality.

A number of us have also begun to dream and talk about the need for a permanent place to meet. We envision at least fifty acres of land where we'll build a church planting church for the Houston metroplex. We can see beautiful, yet simple facilities where we worship together, teach the Word, share our faith with thousands, pray together, and train lay ministers and church planters, all set in a peaceful, inspiring garden landscape.

OUR MINISTRY STRATEGY

How will we accomplish our mission and see our vision become a reality? The answer is a Christ-honoring, disciple-making strategy. Our strategy is twofold.

First, it presents who we are attempting to reach for Christ. Then, second, it articulates how we plan to reach and grow them to spiritual maturity.

Who will we reach?

In Acts 1:8 Jesus instructed the church to be his witnesses to those in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. We believe that the Great Commission has geographical implications. Our Jerusalem is the Rockwall community located near Cypress, Texas. This is a newly growing area outside Houston that is only 1 percent churched but is open to the gospel. In particular we desire to reach Rockwall Ray and his family. He is a young professional with a working wife and two children under 5. He is employed in a high tech industry and combined with his wife's salary makes close to \$150,000 a year. Ray also enjoys sports and spends his Saturdays coaching his two sons soccer team, and then plays golf on Sundays.

As we reach Rockwall Ray and his family, we will also focus on those in the community who are ethnic (Samaria). First, we will hire an Asian pastor to reach out to our predominantly Asian community. Initially he will use our facilities and resources to help accomplish this. However, the plan is to plant several Asian and eventually Hispanic churches in our Samaria.

While reaching Rockwall Ray and eventually our Samaria, we will be involved in missions. That is, we hope to support the planting of at least one church per year in beginning in western Europe and eventually all over the world (see below).

How will we reach them?

You will recall that our mission is *to make and mature believers in the Houston area and abroad*. Second, our strategy presents our strategic and creative thinking on how best to accomplish our mission-mature believers. We believe that a mature believer has four characteristics that we have summarized under the four C's that articulate our four strategic objectives.

The first is *conversion*. In moving people (target group) from prebirth to maturity, first they must first come to faith in Christ as personal Savior (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47). This is evangelism. It is our aim to win lost, unchurched people to Christ. We will accomplish this both corporately and individually. Corporately, we will have a seeker-sensitive service during which the gospel will be given. Individually, we will train our people in how to witness to their friends, especially their neighbors, using the current methods that God is blessing across the world. Peter Wagner has said that church planting is the

most effective way to accomplish evangelism. Since we desire to be a church planting church, our efforts will also support evangelism.

Second is *community*. In moving people from prebirth to maturity, the next step after they come to faith in Christ is community. This is a time when new converts are very fragile and could fall away from the faith (Matt. 13:20-22 and the book of Hebrews). They need to be a part of a small group that cares about and ministers to them. They need individual attention-to be followed up. Otherwise, they could fall through the proverbial cracks. It's critical that a new believer becomes part of a safe community of believers who care for, look out for, teach, encourage, confront, hold accountable, correct, and love him or her. We desire that they be in a small group as long as they are with us.

Third is *commitment*. In moving people from prebirth to maturity, the third step after they come to faith in Christ and are part of a biblically functioning, spiritually mature community of caring believers is commitment (Romans 6 and 12). The new believer should be growing toward maturity and its time for them to make the strongest of commitments to serve Christ. This is where they place themselves under the lordship of Christ. This is also necessary if the new believer is to become a contributing disciple-those who seek to contribute must first be committed to Christ or it will not last. We believe that biblical teaching and preaching along with contemporary worship and small groups involvement are the primary ministries that will help our people to become committed to our Lord.

Fourth is contribution. In moving people from prebirth to maturity, they come to faith in Christ, are part of a caring community, and have made a strong commitment to serve Christ. The final characteristic is contribution (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Rom. 12:3-8; Matt. 13:33). Up to this point, the new or established believer has primarily been ministered to and thus has been on the receiving end of ministry. Now it's time for him or her to minister to others. We want them to implement the three S's: serve the body, share their finances, and seek the lost. If they're leaders, we want to train them to be leaders in the church.

Another aspect of contribution is encouraging and sponsoring church planters to start churches at home and abroad. Therefore, we desire to raise up future church planters from our own congregation as well as the community. We will commit to five objectives: To recruit, assess, train, mentor, and resource them as they move out to plant churches in our Samaria but all over the world.

The first objective is recruitment. Through vision casting and personal challenge we will recruit people from our own congregation to be church planters. However, we plan to have a presence in our community that will encourage and attract others to consider serving Christ through a church plant. Thus, we will

conduct seminars on church planting and other related topics and invite key people to attend and even participate in these times.

The second objective is assessment. Not everyone is wired to plant a church. Our experience has taught us what to look for in future church planters. Thus, we will involve potential church planters in assessment. Either we will conduct this assessment “in house” or we will send them to an assessment center with whom we’ll work closely.

The third objective is training. Church planters are unique individuals who need specialized training as “missionary” pastors. Through research and experience we have identified the most critical character, knowledge, and skills components needed by church planters. We will not only focus on information and skills, but also on issues of personal maturity and relational effectiveness. We hope to provide other learning opportunities for church planters as well such as seminars, workshops, learning summits, and for some seminary training. We also hope to create internships opportunities for future church planters to gain necessary experience and skills.

Our fourth objective is mentoring.. Experience has shown us that those church planters who have the greatest effectiveness and satisfaction are those who train with a Godly, competent mentor. We hope to mobilize a corps of our most effective church planters to become mentors to future church planters. We also hope to provide peer group opportunities for coaching and encouragement.

Our final objective is resourcing. We intend to assist church planters by networking them with other sponsor churches, denominations, and additional sources, so that they will have the necessary financial resources for the planting of their churches. We also desire to provide our church planters with coaches that will be available “on call” to encourage, pray with, and advise planters as they navigate their unique challenges

OUR FACILITIES

We do not believe that it is wise to purchase property at the time of the initial planting even if we can afford it. The reason is that the size of a facility dictates the size of the congregation. Since we do not know how big we will become, we will wait to purchase and build or remodel a facility.

In the meantime, we have found a school in the area that is willing to rent its facilities to us on an annual basis.

OUR FINANCES

Our first year operating budget for this ministry is \$180,000. The budget allows for the salaries of all three staff, one administrative assistant, and a part-time secretary. It also covers expenses for facilities rental, liability insurance, computer equipment, and other necessary start up expenses. Contact us if you desire to see a full-blown budget

Faith Community Church has committed to contribute toward this budget. And the core group will give as well. However, that is only a start. It is our hope to raise the funds for this ministry through gifts from initial investors such as yourselves and other organizations that are committed to church planting. Our desire is not only to raise the \$180,000 annually for the operation of this ministry, but to also identify sources of funding to assist the churches that are planted in the Houston area and beyond. The operating goal of \$180,000 can be realistically achieved through annual commitments of \$200, \$400, \$600, \$1,000, or even \$5,000. It is our dream that God will raise up believers to support church planting in substantial ways as unbelievers support social and even secular causes. Thus, our prayer is that God will raise up \$10,000, \$25,000, or \$50,000 from some of our people

It is our hope that you will find this vision so compelling that you will want to partner with us financially on an on-going basis. We also hope that you will join us in prayer for a dynamic spiritual movement to take place not only in Houston but around the world through planting healthy, Great Commission churches.

ENDORSEMENTS

Scott Brown has a deep passion and a powerful vision for seeing Jesus' mission for all His churches (the Great Commission) become a reality not only in Houston and Southeast Texas, but the world. Based on his past experience and knowledge of church planting, I can think of few leaders alive today that I would give a higher recommendation to than God's servant, Glenn Smith. What Christ's church needs in North America is more leaders like him.

Dr. Aubrey Malphurs, Professor of Field Education, Dallas Theological Seminary

and

Author of *Planting Growing Churches for The 21st Century*

God has been preparing Bill Randolph for this assignment all of his life. Bill brings the gifts, passion, skill, and maturity to achieve this vision. Based on my ministry with him and what I know about God's activity in this city, he is the right person in the right place at the right time for this new church initiative.

Jim Jones, Executive Director of Union Baptist Association, Houston, TX

God has gifted Michael Smith to lead his people to his throne through a vibrant, Christ-honoring style of worship. Not only is he an excellent guitarist with an outstanding voice, he knows how to work with people as God moves in preparation for worship that on Sunday morning honors Him. He is more than a musician and a leader of worship, he loves Jesus Christ and has a passion for planting churches that bring honor to his Savior

Dan Smith, Worship Director, Faith Community Church, Atlanta, GA

I wholeheartedly believe in and endorse Scott Brown and his team for two reasons. First, Scott is God's man to lead this spiritual assault on Houston. He is passionate about new churches and thinks way outside the comfort zone. There is no one I trust more with this enormous challenge than Scott Brown. Second, Bill and Michael not only are excellent at what they do, but they join Scott in their love for and desire to reach and minister to people in general and lost people in particular. God is moving in a powerful way to start new churches that have a passion for cities as well as communities, and this church is one of them.

Senior Pastor of Faith Community Church, Atlanta, GA

