

Gathering of the Orders

North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church

What we hope you'll hear!

1. Ministry is very messy.
2. Ministry is really hard.
3. We have lots of gaps in our ministry.
4. We do a few things real well, a few more things good, several things average and even a few things badly.
5. We have had some epic fails.
6. We never have enough volunteers.
7. We are very resourced challenged.
8. In spite of all of this, God is changing individuals, marriages, families, business and our community.
9. It's worth it!
10. Sol Deo gloria! Glory to God alone!

Our Grace Church Story

1978-1993 Church plant to growth spurt to stable to decline

- Grew from 4 people to 650 in worship with 1000 members
- Started to decline to 500

1993-1996 Continued decline to “inspired tilling”

- Continued to decline to 350
- Fired 2 difficult “gatekeeper” secretaries
- Dismantled Ad Council
- Sent 30 people to Walk to Emmaus

1996-2004 Expansive Growth Years

- 1996 Jorge and family came to Grace Church
 - 300 in worship first Sunday
 - 2 traditional services with 3 SS classes
 - Handful of children and youth
 - \$29.16; 1.2 million debt; 20K bills; IRS letter
 - First leaders meeting; Kind truth telling
 - Preached 9 week series “The Exciting Church”
 - Established vision of Grace Church
- 1997-1999 Worship changes

- 4 years of 25 to 45% annual growth
- Added contemporary service in 1997
- 2000 Celebrate Recovery launched
- 2001 Global Focus Weekend
- 2002 Introduced UHS; took out pews

2004-2016 Growth by Adoption

- 2004 Fort Myers Shores campus adoption
 - Vision: 20 campuses reaching 10,000 people weekly
- 2007 Purchased old Winn Dixie grocery store
 - The Great Recession hit SW Florida
 - Led nation in foreclosures
- 2008 Grace Community Center opened
 - Established Playbook
- 2009 Fort Myers Central adoption
- 2015 Fort Myers Trinity adoption
- 2015 Sioux Falls, South Dakota launch
- 2016 Sarasota; closed Sioux Falls;
 - Launching FUMC, Fort Myers on July 1

2016- Fresh Expressions of Church

- Church in the valley
- Church on the side of the hill
- Mix economy of church
 - Inherited church: attractional; you come to us
 - Fresh expressions of church: missional; we come to you
 - New third places
 - Practicing the genius of the “and” not the tyranny of the “or”
 - Releases laity as bi-vocational pioneer ministers
 - Church for the nones and dones

Our Current Leadership Reality

- Grace Leadership Council
- Grace Operational Team
- Campus specific Guide Team
- Campus specific Operational Team

What model of multisite is Grace Church?

- Prototype model with centralized tendencies
- The Cape Coral campus is the “first among equals.”
 - CC campus serves the other sites
 - Make their leaders powerful
 - History, scale and history make this possible
- Role of Lead Pastor as Presiding Elder
- Role of Campus Pastor as Senior/Lead Pastor

Spiritual Leadership Inc. began coaching us in 2006. They have taught us and we have seen the benefit of living into five transferable principles.

- Results: the “what” of an organization
- Process: the “how” of an organization
- Principles: the “why” of an organization

Principle #1: Vital congregations build healthy teams.

Teams in the Bible

- David and his “Mighty Men”
- Nehemiah and rebuilders of the wall
- Jesus and the disciples
- Paul and his missionary team

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other...The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:7,12 (NLT)

- We need every part functioning well for the body to be whole.
- Churches tend to have a “big mouth”; the preacher!
- Leads to burn out

The next day, Moses took his seat to hear the people’s disputes against each other. They waited before him from morning till evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, “What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?” Moses replied, “Because the people come to me to get a ruling from God. When a dispute arises, they come to me, and I am the one who

settles the case between the quarreling parties. I inform the people of God's decrees and give them his instructions." "This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing their disputes to him. Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace." Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions. He chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders over the people. He put them in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. These men were always available to solve the people's common disputes. They brought the major cases to Moses, but they took care of the smaller matters themselves.

Exodus 18:13-26 (NLT)

- Moses is confronted by his father in law, Jethro
- Moses was being co-dependent.
- "If it's going to be, it's up to me!"
- I.e.: Our conversation with pastor in town buying mid-week food

Wesley was no 'prima donna'; he was always a team player, and he modeled for his colleagues a collaborative style of directing and decision-making.

Dr. Michael Henderson in John Wesley's Class Meeting

- Statues of Wesley on a horse
- Rode 250,000 miles
- Writing on table on horses neck
- Myth of Wesley as a heroic solo leader
- Teams of people joined him
- Bandits robbed and killed people who traveled alone

- Team of 10-12 people
- Wandering through crowds looking for people's who eyes were lit
- Invite to join a new Society the next day

Today, there are 180 million functionally secular people in the United States. They have no understanding of the Bible. The U.S. is the 3rd largest mission field on earth. It is the largest in the Western Hemisphere. Apostolic teams (and churches) are needed to reach them!

Dr. George Hunter, lecture at Asbury Theological Seminary

Video: *Michael Jordan Plate Spinner (0:48)*

Am I a heroic-solo leader or a generative team leader?

- Jorge's 3 conversions:
 - 1978: From a life of sin to a life with my Savior
 - 1992: From church as institution to Church as Body and Bride of Christ
 - 2006: From heroic-solo leader to a generative team leader
- I.e.: Wes' experience in the summer of 2006 while Jorge was on vacation

Video: *Steve Jobs: Decent and Gifted (3:26)*

- "You can be decent and gifted at the same time."

Results of heroic solo leadership

- Chronic fatigue
- Success dependent on the competence and heroics of an individual or a few individuals working independently
- Little innovation
- Fruitfulness in pockets. Processes are usually isolated, disconnected, ad-hoc and chaotic
- Characterized by a tendency to over commit, and not able to repeat past successes
- Solo, command and control leadership – "I'm the pastor!"
- Little, if any daily accountability
- The conviction that, "If it's going to be, it's up to me!"
- High frustration

Overcoming the five dysfunctions of a team

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni

- Absence of trust
- Fear of conflict
- Lack of commitment
- Avoidance of accountability
- Inattention to results

Healthy teams have...

- Trust - requires vulnerability
- Healthy conflict - to overcome artificial harmony
- Commitment - to remove ambiguity
- Standards - to overcome low standards
- Results - to move away from status and ego

Healthy church teams...

- Can create environments of high trust, unity and spiritual growth.
- Are passionately committed to making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world.
- Are able to confront difficult issues and solve problems through innovation.
 - *Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently...*
Acts 15:2 (NLT)
 - *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements...*
Acts 15:28 (NIV)
- Create a culture and system for transformation to happen and continually improve as momentum begins to grow.
- Produce Kingdom fruit.

Distinguishing between team types is essential to organizational health

- Directional teams do legislative work.
- Operational teams do adaptive work.
- Task teams do technical work.

Tools to build healthy teams

- Covenants

- Accountability sheets
 - Faithfulness to God
 - How is it with your soul?
 - Am I abiding in Christ?
 - Fruitfulness for God
 - How is it with your ministry?
 - Am I abounding in the work of the Lord?

Other things used to build healthy teams

- Operation Team day apart
- Team retreats
- Conferences
- Godly Play

How much time does it take to grow a healthy team?

- If trust is the lubricant that makes teams work, the time together is what creates trust.
- We are amazed at the number of church teams that seldom if ever meet.
- Standard is at least 8 hours per month for an Operational Team
- 40 hours per month for the Grace Church Operational Team
 - 8: Teaching team
 - 4: Stand up meeting
 - 16: 1 on 1 coaching
 - 6: Off site fractal day apart
 - 6: Miscellaneous gatherings
- 40 hours per month for the Cape Coral Campus Operational Team
 - 4: Stand up meeting
 - 28: 1 on 1 coaching
 - 6: Off site fractal day apart
 - 2: Shared ministry events

Teaching Team as a Generative Team

Historically we have thought of the preaching/teaching task as a solo exercise.

- *If there's no sweat in the study, there will be no fire in the pulpit.*
- Myth of the Super Preacher

Fundamental Premise: Even teaching can be done in teams!

What are the advantages of team teaching?

- There is significantly more input.
- There is a diversity of life experiences and perspectives.
 - Cellphone illustration on perspectives
 - 2 Hispanics, 2 Women, 1 AA, 2 Anglos on pastoral team
 - 30 to 60's ages
 - From raised in church to pagans
 - From pastors to marketplace
 - From white, blue and no collar types
- There is an increased accountability. It minimizes the possibility for "Saturday night specials"
- There is a huge amount of time freed for other leadership tasks.
- There is an exponential improvement in preaching.
- There is a sharing of media, graphic and other resources.
 - Graphics
 - Message notes
 - Bumper videos
 - Other "give aways"

How does the team teaching work at Grace Church practically?

- We developed a Teaching Team. (13)
 - Jorge Acevedo, Lead Pastor
 - Wes Olds, Campus Pastor
 - Kevin Griffin, Pastor of Transformation (CC campus)
 - Arlene Jackson, Campus Pastor
 - Shari Lacey, Campus Pastor
 - Patti Nemazie, Campus Pastor
 - Sam Rodriguez, Local Lay Pastor, Trinity campus (7/15)
 - Melanie Fierbaugh, Pastor in residence
 - Cindy Jones, Pastor of Congregational Care
 - Ed Horne, Pastor at local UMC
 - Michael Wood, Pastor in Oklahoma
 - Michael Winchell, Pastor in Oklahoma
 - Tom Kapla, Lay person who leads a service at a nursing home

- We developed a “bench” of apprentice communicators as well.
- We have two Teaching Team retreats for long-term message series planning.
 - October/November Teaching Team Retreat to plan January to June message series and initial creative elements and enhancements
 - April/May Teaching Team Retreat to plan July to December message series and initial creative elements and enhancements
- We meet weekly to plan that week’s message.
 - Monday Teaching Team meeting from 8:30 am to 10:30 am to write the message notes
 - Jorge, Wes or Kevin writes a 6-7 page manuscript and posts on *Basecamp* by Sunday evening (a week out).
 - Other Sunday morning communicators put their manuscripts on *Basecamp* by Friday night.
 - Everyone gets to “cherry pick” good stuff from the others manuscripts.
 - Rarely, Jorge calls a communicator to discuss a concern or opportunity.
- This can be done in other church settings by gathering with a group of other pastors/communicators near by or on line.
 - Call a group of pastors and pitch the idea
 - Appoint a facilitator based on gifts or rotate leadership
 - Set a weekly meeting time for every week
 - Build a covenant
 - Plan a retreat

Principle #2: Vital congregations understand their context.

From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.

1 Chronicles 12:32 (NLT)

So I arrived in Jerusalem. Three days later, I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. After dark I went out through the Valley

Gate, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate.

Nehemiah 2:11-15 (NLT)

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.

Acts 17:16 (NLT)

- Luke tells us that Paul was “deeply troubled” by the idols he saw. When I looked at it in the Greek, it was Paul’s “spirit” (pneuma) that was troubled, perplexed, stirred or agitated. The question that begs to be asked is why. Why was Paul’s spirit deeply concerned about the idolatry? Was it simply a moral thing or was it that his heart was broken at their lost-ness? I have to believe it’s the latter. Paul might have been angry but it wasn’t at the people. He was mad at how evil above, around and inside the Athenians had led them astray.
- *The heartbeat of the city is where the pain is.* Deb Hirsch

Context is a clear picture of current reality both internally and externally.

- Churches are like addicts and alcoholics. They love denial!

Key ingredients in discovering context

- Demographics
- Assessment
- Listening

Driving principles in discovering context

- To capture current reality there must be a willingness to look as objectively as possible at the current situation.
- Blaming will get you nowhere.
- Everyone has a stake in what is happening.
- If there is a problem, everyone is affected by it.
- All who have a stake in the future must participate.

Church heaven/Church hell exercise

Lifecycle of a congregation exercise

Rebirth, Reinventing, Re-vital

Principle #3: *Vital congregations have crystal clear focus.*

Where there is no vision, the people perish...

Proverbs 29:18a (KJV)

Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint...

Proverbs 29:18a (ESV)

"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!"

Revelation 3:15-16 (NLT)

- Dr. Robert Mulholland calls Jesus' speeches to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, "the good, the bad and the ugly." Sometimes he commends. Sometimes he confronts and sometimes he convicts.
- Here Jesus challenges the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm.
- The water in Laodicea that had to be piped in from a hot springs six miles away. It was only good for use to cause vomiting.
- Laodicea with all it's wealth, medical schools and rich textiles industry had adopted the values of the culture and lost their primary mission, the richness of following Jesus in mission.

What gives a congregation focus?

- Mission: what we do
- Vision: where we are going
- Values: non-negotiable convictions

Grace Church Mission, Vision and Values

- Grace Church Mission: making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world
- Grace Church Vision: to partner with God in transforming people from unbelievers to fully devoted disciples of Jesus to the glory of God

- Grace Church Values
 - Unashamedly God-centered: The triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is the One we worship and serve to His glory.
 - Passionately people-focused: People, regardless of their spiritual condition, matter to God and to us.
 - Strategically team-based: We believe ministry is best accomplished in teams of people with diverse gifts and abilities who are bound together with common purpose and covenants of trust.

Video: *Shoes of Hope 2016* (3:07)

- Wes at Cape
- Shari at FMS
- Jorge at orphanage in Ghana

At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

Nehemiah 4:6-9 (NLT)

- Halfway through the 52 days of the mission of rebuilding the wall, resistance got heavy. Nehemiah stayed on mission but changed the strategy.
- Rick Warren: “Vision leaks.”
- Day 26, Nehemiah calls for a team meeting to recast the mission.
- One of our job as leaders is to as creatively as possible recast the mission, vision and values of our church regularly.
- Picture of FUMCFM sale this week...

Principle #4: *Vital congregations have thoughtful, biblical (and Wesleyan) strategies.*

The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the Jewish leaders—the priests, the nobles, the officials, or

anyone else in the administration. But now I said to them, "You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!" Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, "Yes, let's rebuild the wall!" So they began the good work.

Nehemiah 2:16-18 (NLT)

- After seeking God in prayer and securing permission from the king, Nehemiah surveyed the ruins of the wall around Jerusalem and then after having a clear picture of his context, he gathered the people and declared a God honoring mission.
- The mission was grander than the wall. It was about the fame of God's name.
- Nehemiah was enlisting a healthy team to join him in this mission.

But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. "What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" they asked.

Nehemiah 2:19 (NLT)

- Sanballat and Tobiah immediately rise up to thwart the mission.
- A God honoring mission will always be met with resistance.
- The naysayers and foot draggers will always show up. Get over it.
- I.e. Jorge: Leadership couple telling me they are leaving the church in my first few months...

Soils illustration

- Parking lot
- Garden of Grace
- Hydroponic Garden

Why does strategy matter?

- The strategy you create will determine the harvest you get.

Did Jesus give us a strategy?

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Go: engage and welcome
- Baptize: receive and incorporate
- Teach: equip and shape

- Obey: hear and follow

Did John Wesley (and the early Methodists) have a strategy?

- United Societies: engage and welcome
- Class meetings: receive and incorporate
- Bands: equip and shape; hear and obey

George Whitfield on John Wesley's strategy: *My Brother Wesley acted wisely, the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruits of his labor. This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand.*

Steve Harper on John Wesley's strategy: *For each wave of grace, there was a corresponding formative element to connect people to that grace...this conscious alignment is one of Wesley's finest legacies to the Christian tradition.*

Grace Church Strategy

- Reach: ministries that engage and invite unchurched people in our community to experience the love of Jesus through the body of Christ.
- Connect: ministries that help people connect to Jesus and the Grace Church family.
- Form: ministries that help people have a growing and transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Send: ministries that release God's people to make the realities of heaven the realities of earth.

Grace Church Playbook

- Bible
- 1846 Doctrine and Discipline of MEC, South
- 2012 BOD
- Grace Church Playbook; 12 pages @ 12 font
- McDonald's illustration; Big Mac, Fries and shakes
- Question: "Is it Playbook or preference?"
- Pastor's job is to assure alignment around the Playbook

Video: *Venesia Baptism Live (7:24)*

Principle #5: Vital congregations practice continually getting better.

Video: *EE Baptism* (2:29)

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

Tools to help you get better

- L3 meetings
- RAD meetings

What is an L3 meeting?

- Loving God and one another
- Learning together
- Leading together

What is a RAD meeting?

- Reflect
- Adjust
- Do
- Examples
 - Selling GCC; Operational team not Guide Team
 - Moving Courtney off Grace Operational Team

Final Charge and Encouragement by Jorge

UHS from 8/13/16

An Up to Date Faith

S - "But the time is coming," says the Lord, "when people who are taking an oath will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.' Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had

exiled them.' For I will bring them back to this land that I gave their ancestors."

Jeremiah 16:14-15 (NLT)

O - Jeremiah has been called "the weeping prophet." He had a tough assignment. Assyria had already defeated the Northern Kingdom and Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple were soon to be destroyed. He was given the job of warning the people of impending doom because of their disobedience. It wasn't political power God's people needed to fear, but divine power. Repeatedly, he warned Judah to return to the Lord. Woven into God's judgment is God's promise of redemption and hope. In these two verses, God tells his people that a day is coming when they won't point back to God's deliverance of his people from Egypt's bondage but instead will point back to a fresher deliverance. They will point back to a time in the not so distant past when God returned his exiled people home. There was about 700 years between the Exodus and the time of Jeremiah. God's was promising them an up to date faith.

A - Yesterday at the Global Leadership Summit, Bill Hybels led us through three short seasons of stillness and silence for reflection about our relationship with God. It was helpful and moving to me. Now given my fatigue and stomach ailments from 20 plus hours of plane travel and two weeks on mission in Ghana, I struggled to assess carefully my spiritual condition in that moment. Was it fatigue or my relationship with God that made me feel a bit weary? It was probably a bit of both. But the question remains: how up to date is my faith? How fresh is my story of deliverance? Lately, I've been answering that question with other questions that seem to get closer to a more accurate spiritual assessment. Questions like:

1. How irritable am I?
2. How quickly do I become angry?
3. Am I hearing whispers from the Holy Spirit?
4. Am I quick to respond to the nudges?
5. How joyful and content am I? (Thank you John Ortberg and Dallas Willard)
6. Where am I finding my self-worth and value?

The answers to these questions quickly tell me if my faith is up to date. When I am "abiding in the Vine," God gives me patience in moments of irritation, his shalom in angry environments, ears to hear the Holy

Spirit, the guts to obey as well as unexplainable yet undeniable joy and contentment coupled with a confident assurance that I am a child and friend of God. When the “sap” of the Holy Spirit is running thin in the branches that is my life, I am prone to irritability, anger, dullness, cowardice, sadness, discontent and worthlessness. Dick Wills used to say, “If you cannot tell me what God is teaching you in the last 30 days, I doubt whether you have a relationship with God.” He was pointing to having an up to date faith. I deeply desire to live life that witnesses to fresh stories of God’s deliverance in my life.

P - Lord forgive me when our relationship has grown stale. I acknowledge not only my tendency to wander, but my desperate need for you. Take and seal my heart O God. Create in me a heart that hungers and thirsts for you first and most. Rid me of anything that blocks my relationship with you. Give me fresh stories of deliverance. To the glory, honor and fame of your name. Amen.