



2012 Year In Review

CALLED TO GROW

Dear Grace Downtown Family,

A year ago, Grace Downtown's pastors and elders discussed going deeper with God so that we could become more present to one another and reach wider into our city. As a community, we have lived out this idea of developing stronger branches and deeper roots over the past year:

We began deepening our roots by studying 1 John, mining the book for guidance on "Knowing God." At our fall retreat, Brian Habig presented wonderful teaching on how to live out the Bible's "one another" passages. Our Winter Term had record attendance and focused on topics like The Heart Matters, Walking with Jesus, The Man I Never Knew.

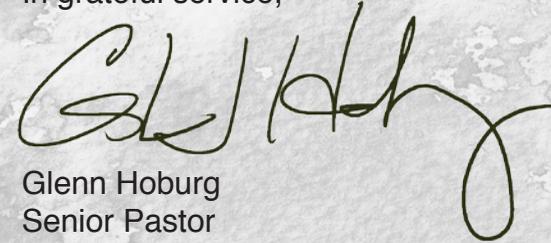
And we have sought ways to extend this inward growth outwardly: Community Groups, Fourth Friday Dinner and Eat & Meet continued to thrive as places where we went deeper with one another and welcomed newcomers. The Diaconate equipped our community to be more present to our city through classes and forums on mercy and justice, financial stewardship, the history of the Black Church in DC and Civic Engagement. Faith & Work events challenged us to be present to God beyond Sundays.

As we take time to remember the year, let us take care to recall how God has remembered us. As King David sang:

Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

If we were able to recount every act of God's faithfulness, mercy and kindness over every moment of this past year in the lives of every individual in our community, indeed, they would be too many to declare! But as you read our 2012 Year in Review, I hope you'll take time to think about how God has worked in your life and the life of our church over the past twelve months, reflect on how you have grown, and thank him for the wonders he has done. This Year In Review is just a sampling of God's great work among us.

In grateful service,



Glenn Hoburg
Senior Pastor



Financial Update

At our annual Congregational Meeting in June, we shared that giving had been below projections throughout the 2011–2012 ministry year, and as a result we expected to end the year close to \$50,000 behind budget.

However, thanks to our community's generosity in the final weeks of the year and our staff's efforts, we ended up closing over half of that expected gap, ending the fiscal year within 2% of our projected budget, making up the rest from our cash reserves.

While our Diaconate works hard to ensure that our projections are reasonable and our budgets are responsible, this year was an encouraging reminder that God is sovereign over our community's finances and that his work in this city is not limited by our resources.

CALLED TO GROW TOWARD GOD

Because digging for a more robust understanding of who God is, what he has done and what he wants for us is essential for maturing in the Christian faith, we kicked off our ministry year with a sermon series on “Knowing God.” As a community, we responded by seizing opportunities throughout the year to know God better:

During our second annual **Winter Term**, guest teachers Paige Brown and Rev. Joel St. Clair joined our pastors and Diaconate in leading three weeks of classes on understanding and expressing our place in God’s story. Overall, 40% more people attended Winter Term 2012 than the year before. (For some, Winter Term was their first exposure to Grace Downtown at all!)

As the **Book of the Bible** cycle finished its first rotation, class attendance rose. On average, 50% more people went to Book of the Bible classes this year than the year before. Many who came to these classes didn’t just



“...the further into the week we get from the sermon on Sunday evening, the further the eternal realm can seem. I know God is fully with me every day and all the time, but these email tools have been excellent reminders.”

leave with more knowledge about the Bible—they found ways to let that knowledge spur them on to a greater love for God.

Take-home devotionals like our Advent and Holy Week guides, and **email tools** like Six Ways to Approach the Bible and our Summer Reflection Series, helped many in our congregation connect with God more deeply throughout the week.

We also offered a number of **additional classes** on how to approach dating, marriage, finances and our work from a godly perspective.

“I appreciated visiting some of the core Christian beliefs. The class made me really evaluate what I think about sin, heaven, God, the coming Kingdom, and how that all impacts my daily life.”

CALLED TO GROW WITH ONE ANOTHER

If we are truly growing in Christ, we will also grow closer in relationship with one another. (In fact, the Bible goes so far as to describe growing in the Christian faith as learning to become one member of a larger body rather than an independent cell!)

Guest speaker Brian Habig reminded us of this when he spoke at our **Fall Retreat** ten months ago. Through his three talks at the retreat, he challenged us to take seriously the Bible's commands to encourage, support and be vulnerable with one another.

"People seemed so much more open at the retreat," one attendee said. "Everyone's guard was down and people were willing and ready to meet other people."

That spirit of community and hospitality continued to grow throughout the year: Our **Summer Picnic** was one of the best-attended (and longest-lasting) that we've ever had. On any given month, 10 to 15% of the people who attend Sunday worship went to a **Fourth Friday Dinner**. People who have been part of our community for years continued to host and attend **Eat & Meet** to ensure that it remained a welcoming entry point for newcomers. And every week, 25 members of our church gave of their time to help nurture our congregation's children in the **nursery and Children's Church**.



Social Events Team

Hundreds of Grace Downtown members and attendees participated in events coordinated by the Social Events Team this year. Highlights included:

- Fall Scavenger Hunt in September
- Apple & Pumpkin Picking in October
- Christmas Caroling in December
- Babysitting for families in December and March
- A Grace Downtown Kickball League throughout the spring
- Kayaking in May
- Over 50 other house shows, concerts, museum visits, and baseball games coordinated through the new Social Events Team listserv.

"We just had one of the best, most engaging Eat & Meets I've been to in a few years. Four of the attendees had started attending Grace Downtown within the last few months. One first-time visitor had just accepted Christ last month, after a more than 10-year spiritual journey from his Muslim roots in Asia. Great conversation and super food. Very glad we did this even though it was Super Bowl Sunday!"

CALLED TO GROW FOR OUR CITY

If we are to live out the gospel story faithfully in our city, we need to welcome and honor Washington, DC's rich cultural diversity. In a year that saw major demographic milestones in our city, we renewed our commitment to understanding, engaging and expressing the District's heritage.

In the spring, we held two heavily attended **service roundtables**: Our Diaconate's Civic Engagement roundtable featured a panel of local and municipal staffers who presented a primer on the structure and operation of the institutions that shape our neighborhoods. Our two-part Black Church Roundtable led attendees to a new appreciation for an influential force on our city's character.

This year we again partnered with Washington Community Fellowship to host a **Vacation Bible School** for kids from Capitol Hill and throughout the city. It was the biggest VBS we've had yet, with 75 to 80 children attending each evening.

Our **partner ministries** did not have an easy year, but our community gave time, help and resources generously. Our annual Baby Bottle Fundraiser helped ease the tightest spot Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center has been in in years. Grace Downtown members were also key parts of Anacostia Gracious Arts Program's events this year, teaching classes and playing a key role in finding and recruiting the organization's new Program Director.

“The women at N Street Village recognize us (and know which of us cook best!). We are not strangers in their home, but welcome servants. The newer women in the shelter see the old-timers greet us by name, and the dynamic is very friendly.”

Over 100 people attended **Faith & Work forums** this year, opening new opportunities for healthy, redemptive dialogue with DC's professional culture. Speakers included Welby Leaman, Trade Counsel for the House Ways and Means Committee; Hans Hess, founder of Elevation Burger and co-founder of EnviroCab and visual artist Deb Dayhoff. In addition, an average of nearly 200 people read our weekly **Faith & Work reflections** on Facebook.



Meridian Hill

2011 was Grace Meridian Hill's first full year of Sunday worship services. Highlights included:

- The Lord bringing friends and neighbors to faith through conversations, Brewing Belief discussions and Community Groups.
- 250 neighbors enjoying face-painting, egg coloring, games, free health check-ups and great conversation at their annual Neighborhood Easter Party.
- Celebrating Black History Month with testimonies from African-American members about being a black Christian and learning about African-American culture through music and visual art.
- Building relationships with local kids at the Columbia Heights rec center, Summer Bible Club, Cardozo High School and sponsoring a new basketball program for young men.

LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout the coming year, we will pursue a deeper understanding of what it means to approach Jesus as a gracious king who has promised to breathe renewed life into every corner of our city.

We will see this loving kingdom expand through our **next church plant**. Our goal has always been to see the Grace DC network manifest God's kindness in every corner of our city. God allowed us to take a step toward that vision when we planted Grace Meridian Hill. In the coming year, we'll take the next step when pastor Russ Whitfield transitions into preparing full-time to plant the Grace DC network's third congregation.

We will renew our devotion to Christ and his kingdom in the year to come. Our just-launched **28.19 Discipleship Catalyst** is equipping servant-leaders to guide, support and encourage us in our faith. We hope that God will instigate a cycle of discipleship in our church that spills over into our city. We will also be adding a **new Children's Church class** each Sunday for our growing population of 8- to 10-year-olds.

“I think the 28.19 Discipleship Catalyst is going to yield lots of good fruit. We're all already experiencing our relationships deepen as we think about how God might use our various gifts to strengthen and encourage the Grace Downtown community.”



We are asking God to provide opportunities to be part of the mercy, justice and reconciliation that characterize Jesus' reign. Our Diaconate has started a new **Mercy Team** to assist them in their work caring for the city around us in practical ways. We are also beginning a **new partnership with The Porch**, a local ministry teaching God's love to teens from around Capitol Hill. Our Prayer Team is planning focused trainings in **intercessory prayer and prayer for urban centers**. And our upcoming **roundtable discussion on incarnation and culture** will help us embrace the means by which our King engages us here and now.

Kingdom Prayer

Please support our community in prayer as we learn how to be a constructive part of God's healing kingdom in our city throughout the coming year:

Expansion

Pray for Grace DC's new church plant in a number of ways: raising funds for the work, finding a worship venue, development of the vision and team, transition for the Whitfields into this new calling, transition at Grace Downtown and hiring of Russ' replacement.

Devotion

Pray that a culture of disciple-making would take root, strengthening our congregation and our city.

Reconciliation

Pray for the Holy Spirit to stir a passion in us to reach outside of our cultural boundaries for the sake of sharing and better understanding God's character and work through Jesus Christ.



in & for the city

www.gracedc.net