WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

CHURCH PLANT
PROSPECTUS

GRACE CITY CHURCH
WILMINGTON
PROSPECTUS SUMMARY

SECTION ONE: LOCATION

AREA 1 Highlights
- 10.5 square miles, population is approximately 30,000
- Close proximity provides for effective mission
- Ethnically diverse area
- Few churches similar to us (Reformed, Gospel-centered, expositional preaching)

AREA 2 Highlights
- 10 square miles, population is approximately 12,000
- Lots of new development to the north and west
- Somewhat less ethnically diverse than portions of AREA 1
- Few churches serve this area

Reasons to Plant in Wilmington
- Population expected to increase 56% by 2040
- 65,000 residents do not belong to a local church
- Few expositional pulpits; evangelical churches decreasing, Roman Catholic and Mainline Protestant churches increasing
- Highest rate of opioid abuse in the nation
- Deep racial divide; Wilmington diverse ethnically
- 400 children in an overburdened foster care system

Possible Meeting Spaces

Winter Park Elemen. School (Sunday AM) $$$
Crossway Chapel Wilmington (Sunday PM) $
Midtown YMCA (Sunday PM) $$
The Blend (Sunday AM) $
SECTION TWO: PEOPLE

- Diverse racial composition throughout the city
- Our desire is to build an intentionally multi-ethnic worshipping community
- Wilmington’s residents can be described as: spiritually apathetic, Christianity ignorant (post-Christian), progressive; some bound by life dominating addiction, some ignorant to racial divide
- There are around ten recent church plants we may be able to partner with in the Gospel

Mission opportunities

- Relationship evangelism
- Relationships through coffee sales
- Bi-vocational opportunity
- Be a Word-centered, Spirit-empowered, people-loving church
- Develop leaders
- Give to area ministries
- Plant more churches in Wilmington

Likely sustainable church size: 200-300

SECTION THREE: CHURCH PLANT TEAM

- Praying for people who are sacrificial, missional, and diverse
- Praying for around 20 adults for the church planting team
- In conversations with several singles at Crossway Charlotte
- Current team composed of three families (2 are pastoral families, 1 is already in Wilmington)

SECTION FOUR: LEADERSHIP

- Current advisory team: Joshua Earl, Aaron Beane, Mickey Connolly, Jeremy Oddy, and Mike Seaver
- Will have a total of three elders at launch, Joshua Earl and Aaron Beane, and one provisional elder (TBD)
- We will focus on leadership development
- Church membership will be implemented some time after launch (Date TBD)

SECTION FIVE: STRATEGY

- Planting with a modified “Missional Incarnational” Model
- Basic Timeline:
  - April-May: Move to Wilmington
  - June-September: Meet weekly with launch team, teach through SGC’s Seven Shared Values
  - September: Soft launch
  - September or October: Hard launch
- Basic first year budget: $69,525
- Mission statement: We exist to make much of Jesus as we gather in community and love our neighbors.
- Vision statement: Still being developed.
- Fundraising: Currently have $1,000. A couple at CrossWay Charlotte will match up to $5,000. Will soon begin fundraising via videos, one-on-one, and in local SG churches
SECTION ONE: LOCATION

SPECIFIC TARGET AREA

We are researching the possibility of planting in the area that includes portions of Forest Hills, Greenfield Lake, and Pine Valley ("AREA 1" in this prospectus). This is an area with a population of approximately 30,000 and a land area of roughly 10.5 square miles, indicated by the yellow line to the right:

Alternatively, we are considering an area south of the city, known as the Silver Lake/Myrtle Grove area ("AREA 2" in this prospectus). The center of the area is marked by the intersection of Carolina Beach Rd (Rt. 421) and S. College Rd, which locals refer to as Monkey Junction. This area has a population of roughly 12,000 and a land area of roughly 10 square miles, indicated by the green line to the right:
TARGET AREA DETAILS

We believe that AREA 1 is a strategic location for a new Sovereign Grace Church for a number of reasons:

1. **Traffic**
   
   Wilmington is currently facing infrastructure challenges as the city increases in population every year. Because of these growing pains, traffic flow is becoming a more problematic issue throughout the city. While the DOT is working to correct some of these issues on the larger roads, our desire is to establish our church within a close proximity to those in our mission field.

2. **Demographics**
   
   This area is close enough to a more diverse cross-section of the population, yet it still includes a population demographic that more closely mirrors the national average (predominant white). The location provides an opportunity for us to draw from and minister to a multi-ethnic community; and, because our leadership team currently consists of white pastors, it would allow us to build relationships with non-white individuals and families with an eye to raising up leadership from among them.

   In the map to the right, the darker orange colors indicate higher degrees of racial diversity, with the red sections being the most diverse.

3. **Churches**
   
   There are surprisingly few churches in AREA 1 that are similar to a Sovereign Grace Church in terms of doctrine, the Gospel, and mission. There are also very few Reformed churches the further one moves toward the center of Wilmington.

   On the map to the right, the **red** stars indicate churches we most closely align with in doctrine, the Gospel, and mission, and are Reformed in soteriology. The **light orange** stars indicate churches that we would not necessarily align with in practice or liturgy, but we would still share a commonality in the Gospel and may be able to partner missionally with them. The **yellow stars** indicate churches that we might agree with on the primary tenets of the Christian faith, but not necessarily in doctrine, practice, or mission.
Stepping back and looking in at Wilmington in general, there are a number of needs that compel us to plant there:

**Population growth.** The city’s population is an estimated 117,000, with an additional 48,000 people projected to move there by the year 2040. A growing population simply means that there will be an increasing need for more faithful, Gospel-centered churches to serve the people moving there.

**Unchurched residents.** According to the Association of Religious Data Archive (ARDA), 56% of Wilmington’s population is unaffiliated with a local church. Based on current estimates, this number equals 65,520 Wilmingtonians. Additionally, our visits there confirm the spiritual void among the residents. Many of the people we have interviewed lack even a basic understanding of the Christian faith. Once called the “City of Beautiful Churches,” the culture has increasingly become post-Christian. This creates in us a deep sense of burden for the people there, and a desire to bring the Gospel to bear on the culture there. We have also consistently heard that there is spiritual apathy among fathers and husbands that belong to the church.

**Few expositional pulpits.** An area of concern we are hearing from other pastors is that Wilmington is home to few churches that preach expositionally. Several of the larger churches there preach mainly topical messages. We feel that a new Sovereign Grace Church there would serve the community with consistent, biblical truth that is faithful to follow the themes and contexts of the biblical text.

**Substance addiction.** According to a recent study, Wilmington has the highest rate of opioid abuse in the country. Opioids are painkillers that are available as prescription medications such as hydrocodone, morphine, and oxycodone, as well as illegal drugs such as heroin, and are highly addictive. Prescription abuse occurs mainly in residents who are 50 and older, but drug addiction affects all walks of life there. While we are not experts in drug rehabilitation, our desire is offer Jesus Christ as the source of hope and deliverance for those bound by addiction and other life-dominating sins.

**Racial division.** This is one of our greatest burdens as we pray for our city. Since the late 1800s, there have been several key events that have taken place there that have enflamed the racial divide that pervades at least some segments of its culture. Given the greater ethnic diversity, we have chosen this target area with the hope of building relationships with non-white people, as well as asking questions and listening to how we as a church can become an agent of reconciliation in Wilmington.

**Fatherlessness.** We learned from one source that there are over 400 children in the foster care system in Wilmington, but only around 100 foster families. Our desire is to be a church that cares for the orphan and widow as a tangible expression of the Gospel (James 1:27).
RELEVANT HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Wilmington is situated on a peninsula in New Hanover County, N.C. The region was initially inhabited by Siouan-speaking Native Americans (possibly the Waccamaws) until the 17th century. Following is a basic timeline of Wilmington’s history:

**Pre-1600**: Cape Fear Indians (probably Waccamaw)

**1650 to 1850**: Increased European settlements, official colonization. The town’s proximity to the Cape Fear River and Atlantic Ocean transforms Wilmington into a busy port community. Wilmington becomes a major political hub in the south and a strategic city during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

**1850 to 1900 (Reconstruction Era)**: Wilmington becomes a predominantly African American city and leads the nation in a progressive political and social transformation. Many of the city’s politicians are African-American.

**1898**: Wilmington Race Riots occur. A mob of white men force officials and community leaders out of the city and kill many black residents. This event becomes the roots of the Jim Crow era and changes the course of American politics until after the Civil Rights era. It went largely veiled in North Carolina history books until recently.

**1900 to 1950**: Wilmington’s shipbuilding industry booms during World Wars I and II.

**1950 to Present**: Wilmington’s tourism industry grows but population stagnates somewhat until Interstate 40 opens in 1990, connecting Wilmington to Raleigh and inciting a population boom. The city continues to annex portions of New Hanover County and the downtown area undergoes a steady gentrification and revitalization. More racial conflict in the 1960s has further widened the racial divide.

**Future Trajectory**: In terms of land area, New Hanover county is the second smallest county in North Carolina. Wilmington and New Hanover county, however, are projected to grow by 56% by the year 2040; and Brunswick county immediately west of Wilmington was the second fastest growing county in the United States between 2015-2016. These factors present an ever growing infrastructure problem which city officials are ambitious to address. A growing population means economic growth, but it also means an increase in the need for churches that are willing to engage Wilmington’s residents.

GEOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNMENTAL BOUNDARIES

Economically, AREA 1 varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. Generally speaking, neighborhoods have increased in median household income from 2006 to 2015.\(^1\) Household income in AREA 2 has decreased somewhat, but this number is difficult to average accurately since a large amount of new homes have been built in the past several years there, in particular to the west of the area.

Public schools in Wilmington have mixed reviews, as with any city. The elementary schools near the northern portion of AREA 1 have lower ratings than the schools in the southern part, but nonetheless have generally positive reviews from parents. The one middle school there and the two high schools nearby have higher than average ratings.\(^2\) The schools in AREA 2 have higher than average ratings.

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\(^1\) Source: city-data.com and justicemap.org

\(^2\) Source: greatschools.org
Religiously, Wilmington as a whole is becoming less evangelical, is maintaining a consistent mainline Protestant population, and is becoming more Roman Catholic. From 1980 to 2010, Evangelical Protestant adherents decreased by 11.5%, while Mainline Protestant adherents increased 2%. Roman Catholicism increased 326% and the Mormon Church grew by 86%. We have counted around 7 churches planted within the last several years, all of which we would align with on the Gospel and mission.

These factors, along with Wilmington’s drug, crime, and racial issues all necessitate more faithful Gospel preaching churches. The pastors we have met in Wilmington are enthusiastic about a Sovereign Grace Church in Wilmington.

**Geographic Boundaries**

**AREA 1**

AREA 1 is bordered by South College Rd and Kerr Ave to the east, 17th St and Independence Blvd to the south, Carolina Beach Rd (Rt. 421) to the west, and the CSX Railway line to the north.

The railroad tracks form a prominent social boundary, dividing a majority black population from a majority white population. This is especially true where Oleander Dr crosses over the tracks heading west. In the graphic to the right, the darker colors indicate a majority black population. The blue line represents the CSX railway line. Heading toward the university to the east and Carolina Beach Rd to the west, there is a noted increase in African-American population. The northwest portion of AREA 1 (where Carolina Beach Rd crosses over the railroad) is also a particularly poverty-stricken area of town.

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3 Source: thearda.com
AREA 2

AREA 2 is somewhat less defined geographically than AREA 1. The northern segment includes the Monkey Junction area, the east is bordered by Myrtle Grove Rd., the south extends to Cathay Rd., and the west is bordered by the Cape Fear River.

It is also somewhat less ethnically diverse than AREA 1, but with the addition of new neighborhoods around older neighborhoods, this area is becoming more diverse, especially as the city grows outwardly.

POTENTIAL MEETING SPACES

Wilmington has an increasingly socially progressive culture, but it is still influenced by its southern religious history. For this reason, churchgoers generally still prefer to attend church on Sunday mornings. This cultural mindset therefore affects how we pursue finding a meeting space. At the same time, though we would love to be able to gather on Sunday mornings, we are open to wherever the Lord leads us in terms of facility use. It may be that we begin meeting on a Sunday evening due to space availability, but keep our eyes open for a place where we could meet on Sunday mornings.

Options in the Area

- **Schools** - We have been in touch with the Facilities Use Coordinator for the New Hanover School District and are in discussions about meeting at Winter Park Elementary School. This is just outside AREA 1, but is in close proximity.
- **YMCA** - There is a YMCA facility in the Monkey Junction area that could possibly be a meeting place. It would require us to meet on Sunday afternoon, however, since another church already meets there Sunday morning.
- **Storefronts** - There are storefronts available in most areas of Wilmington. We learned, however, that plazas with a Food Lion, Harris Teeter, and Publix will not lease to churches because these stores have stipulations in their leasing contracts that prohibit churches (churches bring less business to the plaza). Storefronts are typically more expensive than schools and other meeting spaces.
- **Dying churches** - This option requires more research on our part, but we would be open to building relationships with an older church that desires revitalization.
Potential Meeting Spaces
1. Crossway Chapel of Wilmington - We have been given an offer to use Crossway’s building on Sunday evenings for an inexpensive rate. This is our first option if we can find nowhere else to meet on Sunday morning. This location is well to the east of AREA 1.
2. Winter Park Elementary School - An elementary school on the eastern fringe of AREA 1. This location would allow us to meet on Sunday mornings and would cost us around $500 per month. This is our most expensive option.
3. Midtown YMCA - A busy YMCA that we could meet in on Sunday evenings. It would cost us around $400 per month. It’s proximity to AREA 1 makes it an appealing meeting space.
4. The Blend - A space outfitted as a coffee shop and ministry center, owned by Southside Baptist Church. It is located in the Monkey Junction area (AREA 2). Matt Morehead (the pastor of Crossway Chapel) suggested the space as an option to us since Crossway has used it in the past and it is unused on Sunday mornings. This location would allow us to meet on Sunday mornings. Monthly cost is TBD.

CHURCHES/MINISTRIES IN THE TARGET AREA(S)
Following are some of the churches we are researching within the two areas that may have an affect where we choose to plant. One noticeable need in Wilmington is the need for expositional preaching churches. This is changing with some of the new church plants, but in general our two target areas lack churches that emphasize the preached Word.

AREA 1
• St John's Episcopal Church (top orange star) is within our target area. We align with them on the Gospel and would be glad to partner with them, although we would have differences in liturgy and some areas of doctrine. There is also Live Oak (red star), Impact Church (red star), and the Refinery (light orange star). These churches would align with us in the Gospel and in mission. Two other churches, the Bridge and Redemption Church (red stars) are reformed, Gospel-centered churches to the north of AREA 1.
• There are a number of older SBC churches, a Church of God, several PCUSA churches and a number of other liberal churches. In the southeastern portion there is a larger attractional church (LifePointe) and a number of charismatic churches. These are churches that we would likely not align with too closely in mission, doctrine, and practice, but still desire to meet their pastors.
• The middle and southern areas along 117/Shipyard Blvd (blue circle) seem primed for a biblically faithful Sovereign Grace Church.
AREA 2

- Christ Community Church (northern fringe) is a solid reformed church. We had the privilege of meeting their college director and hear his heart for Wilmington and his desire to partner with other Gospel-centered, like-minded churches to reach the city.

- The remaining churches in the area are few in number. There are two churches (an SBC church and a Pentecostal church) that we would align with on the major tenets of the faith (yellow stars). The orange star is Myrtle Grove Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a Reformed church we would agree with on the Gospel and in mission, but not on some ministry practices. There are a few Pentecostal and Mainline churches here, as well as an Islamic center on the southern fringe.

- This area would be a prime location for a Sovereign Grace Church.

RISKS AND OBSTACLES TO A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH PLANT

There are few location-specific risks, but there are several potential obstacles we need to consider looking at Wilmington in general.

- **Financial** - With Wilmington’s population growth comes an increase in property value. As the pastoral team we are learning that living within the city limits will drive up home prices, as well as location rental/lease cost.

- **Crime** - Typically speaking, crime in the city increases closer to the downtown area (lighter blue indicates a higher crime rate in the map to the right). We are conscious of this as we choose an area to live, particularly if it is within AREA 1.

- **Transient Culture** - Because Wilmington is located near the ocean and is also a college town, we need to be mindful that we may only be able to minister to certain individuals for short seasons of time.

GOOD PEOPLE TO KNOW IN WILMINGTON

Following are some of the people we have met in Wilmington. We still desire to meet more people in the local government, as well as real estate workers and community leaders.

**Pastors**

- Matt Morehead - Lead Pastor, Crossway Chapel Wilmington
- Eric Moulton - Pastor, St. John’s Episcopal Church
- Geoffrey Banks - High School Coordinator, Port City Community Church
- Josh Lawrence and Shawn Bynum - Pastors, The Bridge Church
- Sam Kennedy - Pastor, Christ Community Church
- Joe Perry - Worship Pastor, Scotts Hill Baptist Church
Wilmington Residents

- Dan and Alex Hatcher - married couple with history in Wilmington
- Jordan Spillers - lifelong resident, attends Boyce College in Louisville, KY but wants to return to Wilmington
- Aaron Marshall - Director of Ratio Christi at UNC Wilmington
- Jay Denton - Director of Reformed University Fellowship at UNC Wilmington

THOUGHTS FROM THE PLANTERS’ WIVES

Michelle, wife of Joshua Earl

“My thoughts regarding Wilmington are hopeful and filled with joy and anticipation. The city’s projected growth in population will provide an even bigger need for the Gospel since the city is largely unchurched. I think that coming into the city now will, Lord willing, establish us as a church body and enable us to know the area and people so that we may best serve them. I am also grateful for my husband’s and Aaron’s desire to be involved in racial reconciliation in a city whose dark racial past is in need of people willing to have conversations and bring to light what seems to be in darkness.

One thing that burdens me is the city’s deficit of foster care providers. There is a great number of children in need and not many people to handle it. This number will only grow if the church does not get involved. This also scares me a little to get involved with such a responsibility when we have our own children and seemingly already a full plate, but we are praying about what caring after orphans would look like in our city that has a definite need (James 1:27).

Things that seem the most challenging personally is relocating to a new city, which essentially means starting life over again. Meeting new friends (which seems to get a little bit more difficult the older you get), intentionally engaging a new community, and finding schooling options that fit the needs of my three growing children can overwhelm me at times. Also sometimes I think about the pressure church planting can put on a family and marriage, especially in the beginning growing years. However, I am hopeful because I know God is calling us to Wilmington. I know Jesus is building His church there and this gives me faith and rest.”

Andrea, wife of Aaron Beane

“Most often in our greatest challenges lies great opportunity! Opportunity to grow and opportunity to see God move in ways we had not seen before serves our souls and increases our faith in Him, who controls all things. So as I consider the challenges ahead, I’m also, by grace, seeking to consider the opportunities.

As I consider the opportunities, there are some specific categories that come to mind:
- **Housing** - to buy or rent? We have had some challenges securing loans and finding rentals in the past, however we have never been without housing because God has been faithful to us.
- **Jobs** - Where? What? Who? Aaron’s criminal past and lack of experience limit job opportunities for him, although God continues to provide for us. We are also unsure if we can afford for me to remain home with the kids, although that is a matter we have been praying diligently for.
• **Schooling** - If I can remain home I will homeschool. If not we will likely have to put the kids in public school system. I have not learned about the school system in Wilmington but I do know if our children are in the public school system it will create an opportunity to meet people we would not otherwise meet. Having been in public school I know that there are many opportunities we will have to teach and instruct our children.

• **Time management** - Keeping first things first in this busy season of church planting, I feel the greater challenge will be for Aaron as he tries to balance pastoral ministry, working, and family. This is definitely an opportunity to hone his organizational and time management skills learned at the Pastors College.

• **Mission** - Being intentional in hospitality means stepping out in faith that God will supply me with what I need with three small children (physically, emotionally, spiritually, and with the necessary resources).

• **Wilmington’s Drug Problem** - Having been delivered from enslavement to drugs ourselves, this is an area that is near and dear to mine and Aaron’s hearts. There is much heartache and disappointment when ministering to people struggling with addiction, but what an opportunity to show our kids that nobody is out of God’s saving reach!

• **The Foster Care System** - Aaron and I desire to take in orphans or kids who need love, stability, and the love of Christ. We do not foresee doing this right away, however, and it could be years down the road.

• **Serving the Church** - I know we will all be stretched and wearing many hats until God sends us brothers and sisters to join us and help disperse the load. I pray He would send help sooner rather than later! I imagine the strain on family and marriage will be great and we must be intentional in caring for our first ministry first.

• **Relationships** - Initially the temptation will be to do what’s familiar and comfortable by spending all our time with the Earls, but we definitely want to step outside into the community and build relationships there. We will battle missing family - especially during holidays that require us to remain local in order to serve the church - but I am hoping that our proximity to the beach will be an incentive for family to visit often! As it stands now we do not have any mature, seasoned Christians coming with us and it is very much my prayer that God would send us older couples that can not only help us serve the church but can pour into us as well.”
SECTION TWO: PEOPLE

PEOPLE GROUPS IN TARGET AREA

Wilmington is a diverse city ethnically, socially, and economically. According to 2016 census estimates, about 72% of Wilmington’s population is white, 18% is black, and around 6% is Hispanic. Even though there are concentrations of various races in specific areas, we have seen that given Wilmington’s small land area (41.5 sq. miles) and infrastructure challenges, there seems to be a fairly diverse racial composition throughout the city, especially among the median to lower home value neighborhoods that pepper all parts of the city.

Additionally, the city’s geographic size allows for residents to travel from one area of the city to another in a relatively short amount of time. Although increased traffic is making this more difficult, our church will still have access to a wide array of people groups, wherever we may ultimately meet. For these reasons, our desire is that our church reflect most closely the broader community of Wilmington. Once we are able to find a permanent meeting place, we hope to reach the people in the surrounding neighborhoods.

PRIMARY TARGET GROUP

Our desire is to reach a wide demographic in Wilmington. Because we are in our 30s, white, married, and have children, we predict that we will naturally draw people in this similar demographic.

UNC Wilmington is there, which enrolls around 15,000 students. While we hope to eventually have a presence on campus, our primary target will not necessarily be students initially.

Also, given the racial divide, our desire is to build relationships with non-white residents and allow the beauty of the Gospel to permeate our city.

THE MAKEUP OF WILMINGTON’S POPULATION

There doesn’t seem to be such a thing as a “typical Wilmingtonian.” We have met young professionals, college students, “Old Wilmington” residents (older folks whose families have lived in Wilmington for generations), surfer guys and gals, as well as people of various ethnicities. Among these, we have met some with Christian upbringings and some who are more “spiritual” than religious. Wilmington has a progressive, post-Christian feel, though it is located in the “Bible belt.”

Many we have met, however, seem to have little understanding of the Christian faith and biblical teachings. We have had a number of conversations with people who can recall some basic facts about Jesus, but fail to understand who He really is and what He came to earth to do.
There is also a sizable population of dechurched and unchurched residents who once belonged to a church but no longer attend. Fifty-six percent of Wilmington’s population, or about 65,000 residents, does not belong to a local church. These are the people we hope to reach.

**SPECIFIC NEEDS THAT COULD BE MET BY A CHURCH PLANT**

As already alluded to, residents of Wilmington could be identified by any of the below categories.

**Spiritually apathetic.** These are professing Christians who are content to “go with the motions” of the Christian life. They may attend church and participate in church activities, but there seems to be little visible fruit in their lives. Many of these are husbands and fathers.

**Christianity ignorant.** Most of the folks we meet fall into this category. These are people who may have a nominal grasp of the Christian faith, but are largely ignorant of Christ, the Gospel, and the Bible’s teachings.

**Those bound by life dominating addiction.** Because Wilmington is number one in the country for opioid abuse, there is a cross-section of people addicted to pain killers and other drugs.

**Those ignorant to racial divide.** Sadly, Wilmington has a long, dark history of racial division. Today, it seems as though this divide continues to separate races in Wilmington. Ignorance of a real problem seems to be present among Wilmington’s white population.

**Children caught in the foster system.** According to one source, there are at least 400 children in Wilmington’s foster care system.

We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, its implications both taught and exemplified as we gather in community and love our neighbor, has the power to waken sleeping souls, generate affection for the Savior, break bondage due to sin, heal racism, and offer hope to “the least of these” in our city. We will not arrive in Wilmington with a large team, but we will arrive with a mighty Savior who is redeeming the world to Himself and making all things new. Herein lies our hope for our church!

**COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF A SOVEREIGN GRACE CHURCH PLANT**

As far as we can tell, there are at least twelve church plants that have been planted within the last decade or are soon to be planted. They are:

1. Crossway Chapel of Wilmington  
2. Christ the King Church  
3. Christ Our Hope Church  
4. Live Oak Church  
5. Impact Church  
6. The Bridge Church  
7. Redemption Church Wilmington  
8. Christ Community Church  
9. The Refinery  
10. Compassion Church  
11. Life Community Church  
12. City Life Church

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*Not yet launched.*
Of these churches, we would align with most of them doctrinally, in the Gospel, and in mission. Ten of the first 12 would likely be churches we could partner with in the Gospel, though we would still enjoy meeting the pastors of the remaining two and seeking for common fellowship.

Of those we have thus far spoken to (about 4 or 5), all of them seem to be really open and happy that we are coming. We also have the realistic view that most people are indifferent to the Gospel until they start smelling the sweet aroma of those who follow Jesus.

Also, though we have not met them yet, there may be some in Wilmington who have a poor view of Sovereign Grace due to the accusations that have been lodged at our family of churches in the recent years. This has generated a lot of discussion in the pastoral team (Joshua and Aaron) over the name of our church plant. Because we are most concerned to be a church that places no obstacle in anyone's way, we feel that the name Grace City Church best reflects our mission and vision for Wilmington. We are still a proud Sovereign Grace Church, but hope that our name identity will provide an open door for believers who may not otherwise enter into our fellowship, as well as provide us with the opportunity to have meaningful conversation with them about any misconceptions they may have of Sovereign Grace.

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

As of right now we still know very few people in Wilmington relative to the city's population. As we move our families there, our primary strategy for church growth will be to build relationships with people nearest to us. For this reason, we hope to move into different neighborhoods so that our reach can extend beyond just one. The average neighborhood there is arranged such that any home is within a close proximity to a dozen other homes. And even though a parish model may not be suited for Wilmington (again, since the city is quite densely populated, the whole city is a parish), we see a great opportunity to reach the people around us.

Following is a basic ministry model based on what we currently know.

Build relationships in our neighborhoods (relationship evangelism)

- Make every effort to buy a home within the area we desire to reach. We want to live and move among the people in our mission field.
- Travel around the neighborhood and visit our neighbors until we know all by name and some basic facts about them.
- Create and place flyers about our church in every mailbox within our target area.
- Organize and plan community events that involve our neighbors.
  - i.e. block parties, cookouts, trash pickups, etc.
- Build one on one relationships with our neighbors by inviting them to participate in the things we do (have dinner, watch football games, exercise, walk our dog, etc.).
- Invite them to our community group and introduce them to others in the church.
- Look for opportunities to share the Gospel with them.

Utilize Two Guys Coffee

We hope to continue roasting coffee in Wilmington and use it as a source of income. Our plan is to visit restaurants/businesses, offer our Two Guys’ coffee for sale, and build relationships with people.
Bi-vocational opportunity
Aaron will be working with a company that does pressure washing and home renovation, so he will be given lots of opportunity to meet people and build relationships. I (Joshua) also have the option of working some part-time hours in an optical shop, if necessary.

Focus on building a Word-centered, Spirit-empowered, people-loving church
- This means we will keep God's Word central to informing our practice and liturgy as a church. It also means we will place an emphasis on expositional preaching every Sunday.
- We will constantly ask the Lord to fill us with His Spirit in order that we might boldly go to our neighbors and speak the Gospel with joy (Luke 11:13, Eph. 5:18).
- We will emphasize hospitality (both by modeling and instruction), looking for every opportunity to care for those in need around us - and all the more so as God adds to our number.

Develop leaders in the church
A big part of our mission will be to look for and raise up leaders in our church. Our prayer has been that God would send us qualified men, especially of non-white ethnicity, in order to help us care for the church and reach all kinds of people.

Give to area ministries
We want to be a church that gives out of our poverty or prosperity. We want to prayerfully invest in ministries God is using in Wilmington (for example: Vigilant Hope, a homeless ministry; ministry to substance abuse addicts; pregnancy care ministries), as well as support missionaries (domestic and foreign) and church plants.

Plant more churches in Wilmington
We feel that being in the city is strategic for our long term mission. There are a number of places in Wilmington and in the surrounding towns ripe for a Sovereign Grace church. If God would be pleased to grow our church, we desire to send out people to plant other churches in Wilmington and beyond.

LIKELY SUSTAINABLE CHURCH SIZE
Two to three hundred would be a healthy, sustainable church size.

Though we will likely have some transfer growth, our greatest desire is to reach those in Wilmington who are unaffiliated with a local church or are “de-churched.” From the beginning of the church plant we want to create a culture of evangelism as disciples who make disciples. We recognize that those who are looking for a church home might not want this level of commitment. But we do hope to be an “attractional” church, in the right sense of the word. We believe this will happen as we live our lives in devotion to Christ, which will spread a fragrance of Christ in every place we live.

As we neared this number we will already have been thinking about planting out.
SECTION THREE: CHURCH PLANT TEAM

THE IDEAL CHURCH PLANTING TEAM

Given the mission opportunities in Wilmington and considering the kind of church we desire to be, the ideal church planting team would be

- **Sacrificial** - This person recognizes that a new church plant will require them to serve (and give, if possible) in ways they may not be accustomed to in an established church.

- **Missional** - This person recognizes that people all around them are going somewhere when they die. He or she understands that their neighbors are image bearers and broken, and for that reason, is always looking for opportunities to share Christ with them.

- **Diverse** - Given the need for the Gospel to break into the racial divide in Wilmington, the ideal launch team would include African-American (and/or non-white) believers who can both teach us and help us reach our non-white neighbors. We also desire to have folks join us who are older than us, both to offer their wisdom and to care for the younger people in our church.

People likely to accompany us based on prior relationship

As of right now, Aaron and Andrea Beane and their three young children. Aaron will serve as one of the pastors of Grace City Church. The Beanes are members at CrossWay Community Church in Charlotte, NC.

People likely to participate in the church plant based on current residence in Wilmington

Dan and Alex Hatcher (no children) recently moved from Woodstock, GA, where they attended (not members) SGC Woodstock. They lived in Wilmington in the past and desired to return there to be a part of the plant.

People likely to move from CrossWay (sending church) or another SG church

While we have had a number of conversations with individuals from CrossWay Community Church and Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, we currently do not have definitive commitments from these folks. We are praying this will change the closer we come to launching the church.

Ideal church planting team size

As I’m sure everyone else says, “as many as we can gather!” As of right now we only have our two families (4 adults + 6 children =10), as well as the Hatchers (2 adults). We would love to have 20 adults and however many children they have. Again, we are praying for a diverse team in age, background, race, class, and everything in between.

Specific gifts, talents, or skill sets that would be helpful to launch the church

- We are looking first for those who are mature followers of Christ, who are passionate about the Gospel personally and who want to make it known publicly.

- We desire people who love the local church and who want to learn more about how it plays a front-and-center role in advancing God’s Kingdom in Wilmington.
• We desire people who steward their gifts and talents as they are on mission in all of life.
• We are asking God for musically-gifted people who can help us sing joyfully to our Savior. Specifically, we are praying for men who can both shepherd the people and lead in song.
• We are looking for those gifted in evangelism/discipleship and have a vision for reaching their neighborhoods.
• We desire those who are administratively gifted who can help us implement the church’s vision and see it come to fruition for God’s glory.
• We also see the great need for older saints to undergird and stabilize a young church plant for the purpose of healthy maturation. We know that marriages and parenting will be greatly supported by the wisdom and discernment of these older couples.
• In the same vein, we are praying for older women to come alongside the younger women and older men to come alongside younger men - all for the purpose of walking out Titus 2.
• We also see the need for those with skills in finance and who can advise in budgeting, legal issues, taxes, etc.
• We desire those who are willing to give sacrificially of their time, money, and resources so that Christ’s church will be built in Wilmington.

PROCESS TO ENGAGE CROSSWAY TO RECRUIT LAUNCH TEAM

From the beginning of our church planter residency at CrossWay Community Church in Charlotte, it was understood that we are not an official church plant being sent out by CrossWay, but they are rather “hosting us” as we prepare for the plant. In doing so, the pastors at CrossWay have made every effort to care for our families while we are in Charlotte, offer instruction and model for us the pastoral ministry, give us “face time” before the church so that we could cast vision and build relationships, and encourage us in our endeavors and pray for us.

As part of our residency, they have opened up many avenues for us to pursue the people of CCC. For example, they have:
• Invited us to participate in community group life and in one-on-one relationships with members, which has allowed us to share our story, our vision for the church plant, and express our needs as we prepare for the plant;
• Prayed for us a number of times in the pastoral prayer, asking God to provide for our families, to stir people’s hearts in CrossWay to pray about coming with us to Wilmington, and for guidance as we prepare for the plant;
• Allowed us to utilize the City platform for communicating with the congregation, to give updates, and to encourage participation in the church plant;
• Encouraged us to set up a table in the lobby on every third Sunday so we could talk one-on-one with people who have interest in the plant;
• Asked me to preach (which I did on January 21, 2018), and for both Aaron and I to do the Call to Worship on every third Sunday; and
• Allowed us to have an informational meeting on October 23, 2017, where we shared our story and vision for the plant.

We also laid out 4 ways for the members of CCC to be involved in the church plant, which are:

1. Care - We shared some of our temporal needs while our families are here in Charlotte (i.e. babysitting, handyman services to help get my house ready to sell, etc.), inviting people to care for us in these ways.
2. Pray for the church Plant, guided by our monthly updates we send out in our e-newsletter;
3. **Give** financially to support our families, since we are not in a paid residency; also asked for contributions toward the $10,000 we need to raise; and

4. **Go** - Encouraging people to come with us. We also gave a general outline of what it would look like for them if they joined us in the plant, and we also encouraged them to meet with us and/or a pastor if they had further questions.

We have had a number of meaningful conversations with several folks at CrossWay (in particular, young singles), and are continuing the conversation with them and praying for and with them about how they may serve the plant.
SECTION FOUR: LEADERSHIP

GRACE CITY’S INITIAL ADVISORY TEAM

According to North Carolina state law, a board of directors for nonprofits need not exceed one member:

“A board of directors shall consist of one or more natural persons, with the number specified in or fixed in accordance with the articles of incorporation or bylaws.” (Chapter 55A, Article 8, Section 3, Non-profits)

However, because we desire the input of more experienced elders, we will draw upon the wisdom of other men and will maintain a minimum of three elders on the board.

Our current advisory team:

• Joshua Earl - Lead/Senior Pastor, Grace City Church Wilmington
• Aaron Beane - Associate Pastor, Grace City Church Wilmington
• Mickey Connolly - Regional Leader, Mid-South Region; Pastor at CrossWay (Charlotte, NC)
• Jeremy Oddy - Pastor at CrossWay
• Mike Seaver - Chairman, Mid-South Church Planting Committee; Joshua’s church planting coach

After we legally establish the church as a non-profit entity, we will assess which individuals would be valuable to an advisory team going forward. These individuals would be called upon for prayer and wisdom, and as a third “voice” in making certain decisions as the pastors see fit.

PLURALITY OF ELDERS AT GRACE CITY

Initially there will be two pastors, Joshua and Aaron, and we will add a third provisional elder from within Sovereign Grace. Our long term goal, however, is to raise up elders from within the church that would be valuable for the longterm growth and health of Grace City Church.

CARE FOR OUR FAMILIES AS WE PLANT

The Earl and Beane families have been developing a personal care strategy during our residency that will enable us to care for each other when we are in Wilmington. It is as follows:

• Joshua and Aaron meet weekly for discussion, mutual care, accountability, and prayer.
• Michelle and Andrea meet several times per month for the same
• As families, we gather together at least once per month for dinner and fellowship.
• Both couples take turns caring for the other's children so the parents can have dating times.

Because we will not be within close proximity of other Sovereign Grace churches (the closest is Sovereign Grace Church of Apex, about a 2 hour drive), it will be important for us to develop relationships locally where we can receive such care. There is at least one pastor (who is married) we know of in Wilmington that we both look up to and respect, and would feel comfortable discussing personal matters with.

We also anticipate the care of our advisory team and of our pastors in the region.
LOOKING TOWARD BECOMING A FUNCTIONING CHURCH

Even though our current launch team is small, our team will begin meeting upon our arrival in Wilmington (around June 2018) every week. As we build relationships throughout the summer, we hope to see new attendees added to our number. We will also spend time working through Sovereign Grace’s Seven Shared Values as a way of building our team into the DNA of the church. Lord willing, we will officially launch in September/October.

APPROACHING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AT GRACE CITY

Our hope is that after we officially launch we will begin having membership classes, that is, once we feel that our people have embraced the mission, vision, and values of the church. There are specific reasons why we would like to establish membership early on. Below are four helpful guidelines as we think about membership in a new church plant.

1. **Membership calls people to solidify their commitment levels.** It also removes ambiguity about their relationship to the congregation.
2. **Membership increases accountability and requires commitment.** It clarifies in biblical terms what it means to be a part of the church and what it looks like to follow Jesus on mission as disciples.
3. **Membership helps church planters identify the sheep that we are responsible for.** Though all the people who attend our gatherings are important, membership will help us to know which souls we are to watch over (Heb. 13:17).
4. **Membership enables a church plant to fulfill its biblical responsibilities.** Without church membership, there are a number of things that could hinder the overall health of the church. For example, we would not experience the beauty of partaking the Lord’s supper and celebrating baptism as a covenant community. It would also be difficult to practice church discipline; and since church attendees would have no formal oversight, the biblical command to obey their leaders (Heb. 13:17) could be seen as inapplicable to them.

The above said, we will approach membership carefully and prayerfully after we launch.
SECTION FIVE: STRATEGY

CHURCH PLANT MODEL

Because we will not go into Wilmington with a large team and a large budget, and because we believe this model most closely exemplifies the kind of ministry we hope to do in the city, Grace City Church will likely launch using a modified version of the “Missional Incarnational” (MI) model of church planting.\(^5\)

We would adopt the MI model for a number of reasons:

1. **We want to be highly relational.** We want our church plant to be built on relationships with our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and members of the larger surrounding community. We want to “build bridges to the community’s people, businesses, and organizations, as well as the local government,” and as much as possible, “have favor with all the people” around us (Acts 2:47).

2. **We want to incarnate in the community.** Just as our Lord dwelt among us, revealing His glory, and is full of grace and truth (John 1:14), we desire “to be present in the everyday rhythms of the community” around us.

3. **We want to engage in a holistic mission.** As much as we are enabled to the with resources we have, we want to “be a blessing to the city” of Wilmington, bringing the Gospel to bear on all the various kinds of needs people have, whether spiritual or physical.

4. **We want to grow into a church of new disciples.** Because we will be small from the beginning, our first order of business will be to establish relationships with people in our community. In this way, people may “belong” to our community before they “become” followers of Jesus. From there we hope to disciple our friends so that they become covenant members of our church community.

Our church plant model, however, is a modified MI model because we will do things that the traditional church plant model does. For example, we will begin having Bible studies through the summer time, sing together, and essentially, gather together as a church before we officially launch. We will also consider having a “soft launch service” (based on our number at the time) in preparation for an official “hard launch” date.

TIMING

Following is a basic timeline that depicts how we move from the approval of the plant to launch Sunday.

- **April 24-26:** Mid-South Regional Assembly of Elders, church plant approval and ordination
- **April-May:** Move to Wilmington, settle into a house
- **May 27:** Sendoff Sunday at CrossWay in Charlotte
- **Early to Mid-June:** Begin meeting with our current team, which consists of the Hatchers and our two families

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Late June - September: Meet weekly on a specific day for fellowship, prayer, worship, and to work through a teaching on Sovereign Grace’s Seven Shared Values throughout the summer. During this time we will be doing heavy marketing (place flyers in homes and hand out business cards to let people know about the church).

September: Soft launch on a date TBD

September or October: Hard launch on a date TBD

BUDGET

Following is a bare bones sample budget for the first year at Grace City Church. This budget would change drastically depending on where we are able to meet for worship. If we meet at Crossway Chapel, we will not need to purchase any sound equipment, many supplies, a pulpit, etc. If we meet in a school or a coffee shop on Sunday mornings, these things will need to be purchased and our budget would need to be shifted around.

Initial expenses/needs

**Sunday:** A/V equipment, music equipment/instruments, podium, communion supplies, coffee maker/supplies, bathroom items, nursery toys/supplies, kids’ classes material, cleaning supplies, folding tables, chairs

**Marketing:** Inside decorations/banners, outside signs/banners, outreach materials, fundraising supplies, postage

**Office:** Printer/copy machine, office supplies

Joshua will begin taking a salary on September 1, 2018.

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<td>Regional and national grant</td>
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<td>Elders and Leadership Expenses</td>
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<td>Fellowship</td>
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MISSION STATEMENT
We exist to make much of Jesus as we gather in community and love our neighbors in Wilmington.

VISION STATEMENT
Our vision statement will be developed more specifically in the next several months, but hopefully much of our vision for Grace City Church has been portrayed in this prospectus.

FUNDRAISING
We have already raised around $1,000. We have been given a generous offer from someone at CrossWay that will match up to $5,000.

Our plan is to put together some video content, asking people to give. This video will also be useful as we petition members of our region’s churches to give as well. My desire is to travel to some of these churches prior to launching and ask the members to give, as well as ask them to pray about joining us in the plant.

We will also make effort to meet with people one-on-one, asking them to give financially to support the plant in its first year.

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**Total Grace City Expenses - First Year**

$69,525.00