



GracePoint Church
Bismarck, North Dakota
Senior Pastor Opportunity Profile

January 2017

GracePoint Church (www.gracepoint.life) in Bismarck, North Dakota is seeking its next Senior Pastor and the timing couldn't be better to join this faithful church family as they explore how to more effectively achieve their mission: **Love God, love others and make disciples**. They are eager to call an experienced pastor and leader to guide them, encourage them and challenge them as they adventure together for continued impact in Bismarck and beyond.



OVERVIEW

Affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), GracePoint Church has a wonderful history of ministry in the greater Bismarck area. Founded in 1953, GracePoint was planted by a small group of faithful believers from Mission Evangelical Free Church in Wilton, North Dakota—a small congregation 20 miles to the north of Bismarck. The Wilton pastor had a dream to reach people that were moving into Bismarck and as a result, 22 charter members were sent out to establish a new congregation. From the humble planting team of 22 who gathered on that first Sunday, to the nearly 500 who worship at GracePoint today, this church has continued to influence and serve their community for Jesus Christ. Since the very beginning, GracePoint has embraced the values that are part of the EFCA's distinctive: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ."

Offering two Sunday worship gatherings at 9 and 10:30 a.m., services at GracePoint focus on biblical teaching with a contemporary and engaging style of worship. Along with the main services for adults, GracePoint offers Sunday morning ministries for youth and children as well as adult gatherings called "Community Groups." GracePoint also offers Wednesday evening programming

for all ages, including Awana, Youth Group (for both middle and high school) and various adult classes such as Financial Peace University.

GracePoint Church has a beautiful facility that includes a 700-seat, state-of-the-art worship center, constructed in 2004. In addition, the facility includes ample space for children and youth, and a large multi-purpose gym/fellowship area. Through faithful stewardship and financial discipline, the church has paid off the building project and is debt free.

Working alongside the Senior Pastor are four staff pastors and a number of ministry and administrative personnel. A Board of Elders serves with the Senior Pastor to lead and govern GracePoint, providing spiritual oversight, encouragement and guidance. GracePoint utilizes a modified congregational form of governance. They recently modified their governance model so that more decision-making and leadership is housed with the Elders. While this has been helpful and healthy in the rhythms of regular church operations, it is a significant change from the traditional congregational model of governance that the church had grown accustomed to over the years.

CONTEXT

Bismarck is a beautiful and growing community that has seen a 16 percent population increase over the last five years and shows no signs of slowing down. Known as “the jewel of the north,” Bismarck is uniquely located where the Midwest meets the Mountain West. There is a down-to-earth, hard working, pioneer spirit found amongst the people as well as a love for the great outdoors. Continued development in the region makes it an attractive place for families and businesses alike. With a beautiful facility strategically located in a growing part of the city, GracePoint is well positioned to make a significant Kingdom impact in the surrounding area, an opportunity that will not be lost on the incoming Senior Pastor.

GracePoint Church values its traditions and “family feel,” so the Senior Pastor transition is unsettling to many in the congregation. Pastor Bob Thune was called to the church in 2012 following the difficult departure of a pastor who had served the church for 23 years. The church felt it needed an experienced leader at the helm, and Pastor Thune had previously served several large congregations. When he accepted the call, he committed to five to seven years at GracePoint. His experienced presence brought much-needed stability to the congregation, and his knowledgeable, Bible-based preaching was deeply appreciated. Pastor Thune is gifted in directing a church toward debt retirement, and under his guidance GracePoint was able to completely eliminate its debt. Additionally, he helped the church to successfully navigate a by-laws change, governance modification and name change from First EFC to GracePoint Church.

While much was accomplished during the past five years, other aspects of the church became more dissonant. Recent years have seen growth flatten, attendance decline and giving slow. Additionally, program ministries feel disorganized to participants and appear operationally siloed. Congregants seem to lack a shared sense of identity and purpose. After many months of prayer and discussion, leadership mutually acknowledged that Pastor Thune’s work at GracePoint had been accomplished and it was time to call a new pastor to build on this good foundation and to help guide the church to the next level. While this decision was not easy, Pastor Thune departs with the love and appreciation of a grateful congregation.

Many times, the default reaction to pastoral transition is for people to “circle the wagons” and become more inwardly focused, yet the GracePoint community hopes to maintain an outward and forward-looking perspective during this challenging season. Despite the unsettledness brought on by a pastoral transition, exciting days are ahead for GracePoint Church and many express a sense of hope that the church is “on the brink of great things.”

THE OPPORTUNITY

GracePoint Church represents an opportunity that is ripe with potential for the right leader. In November 2016 the church participated in a congregational health assessment, which confirmed that GracePoint is in a recovery or “turnaround” position. A number of things need to be improved and innovated for the church to regain a sense that it is “hitting on all cylinders.” The incoming Senior Pastor has the opportunity to understand and value where the church has come from while crafting a revitalizing vision for its future: a vision that is clear, inspiring and built on the foundation of all that has been contributed at GracePoint throughout its history.

This congregation will benefit from a Senior Pastor who will take the time to get to know them, listen to them, rebuild trust in leadership, and then work with them to establish a vision and a plan for the next season of ministry at GracePoint. As a church that highly values biblical authority, the people will look for a pastor who “walks his talk” and who transparently connects biblical truth to the challenges and messiness of life. GracePoint is not looking for perfection, rather they are looking for a pastor who understands the redemptive power of Christ from personal experience and is able to share that experience with others.

The incoming pastor will have the opportunity to inspirationally communicate, motivate and challenge the people through sound biblical teaching that connects biblical truth to all aspects of everyday life. He will also have the opportunity to assess current ministry offerings and improve onramps and pathways for people to “plug into” the church family. While some congregants are hungry to be effectively mobilized into ministry, others feel over-taxed and burned out. Staff members will benefit from training and coaching to better equip and support volunteers. There is a sense the same small number of people are being asked to do a majority of the volunteer jobs, and it is taking its toll. Poor organization and little advanced planning creates a challenging environment for those who would like to contribute. A Senior Pastor who is experienced in successfully addressing these kinds of staff development and volunteer mobilization issues will find a great opportunity at GracePoint.

Actively serving and participating in the community of the church are important traditions for the GracePoint church family. For years the church offered the community of Bismarck an Easter program called *Celebrate the Life*. This was a major outreach event to the region, drawing thousands of attenders each year. Many people commented that the production value of Celebrate the Life rivaled the best venues in the country. For GracePoint Church this was more than an outreach; it was the primary way they served the Bismarck community. It was the way they introduced their church to those who may not come to a Sunday service. It was the way in which they came together as a community to do something no one person could do alone. It was the way in which new people integrated into community life in the church. People of all ages, skills and talents contributed to this annual event, and they looked forward to seeing how God would touch the hearts and minds of people through their combined effort.

Since Celebrate the Life was discontinued a couple years ago, people have struggled with their sense of purpose and identity in the church. No one is suggesting that the production return, but the incoming pastor will face the challenge of helping this congregation discover new outlets for meaningful contribution and impact. A number of new housing developments and a large apartment complex are located just across the street. The church offers an interesting twist on a Wednesday evening Awana program, but there has been little consideration of how to strategically engage the young families and single parents in those homes. This is just one example of how fresh thinking and ideation may lead to refreshed influence in the community.

The next Senior Pastor will have the privilege of working with a dedicated staff team to develop a strategic plan that aligns ministry initiatives to vision. The pastoral staff want to be led and will

welcome a Senior Pastor who brings fresh ideas and supports an empowering team dynamic. They want to be involved in the creative development and refinement of ideas. The right leader will approach strategic planning and discussion not simply as a way to tactfully get “buy in” but to practice authentic team ministry. A skilled and experienced Senior Pastor will help this team set clear goals and measure effectiveness. He will encourage new ideas, but will hold people accountable to follow through and to meet or exceed the requirements of their job. Ideally this person will set a new tone for teamwork and will cultivate a unified culture of excellence and ownership at GracePoint that will pay dividends in a myriad of ways.

GracePoint needs to improve how it tells its own story. Transparent and authentic communication and celebration of all the wonderful ways God is currently working in and through the church community will help people to feel a sense of purpose and belonging. Current communication is informational rather than inspirational. Opportunities to inspire and motivate the people simply by telling their own stories are consistently missed. Whether a mission trip, a home-building project, a service opportunity, or a powerful faith story, the incoming Senior Pastor needs to take time to foster and encourage celebratory communication so the people can hear how the church is already making a tangible difference for God’s glory. *“A rising tide lifts all the boats,”* and celebrating ministry “wins” is an effective way to help raise morale and boost confidence in the overall impact of the church. This kind of sharing and celebration will certainly help to build momentum toward a more transformational future.

Additionally the right pastor for GracePoint will enjoy people and building relationships. Culturally, GracePoint loves to come together as a “church family” to eat (food is essential to every meeting) and accomplish something together. Celebrate the Life was an example of this. “People in community, working side by side to accomplish something big, to serve the community, and to share God’s love and grace.” GracePoint is hungry for a renewed sense of what it means to be connected together as the Church. As the congregation has struggled with folks leaving “through the back door,” the incoming Senior Pastor will have the opportunity to create “sticky-ness,” by exploring ways to enhance a culture that already values connection. This might be accomplished by initiating gatherings, taking time to listen and learn the stories, or creating avenues for people to share their perspectives (without succumbing to “people pleasing”).

Originally constructed with Celebrate the Life in mind, the GracePoint worship center is a state of the art facility strategically located on 10 prime acres in a growing part of town. Some in the congregation feel the space is “over the top” while others see it as a means to serve the community if it were more fully opened up for civic gatherings, as a theater venue or for local school events. Allowing others to use the facility is seen by many as a simple yet effective way to have a positive impact on the community. It is also a means of introducing people that might not otherwise enter the building to some of what GracePoint has to offer. The incoming Senior Pastor will have the opportunity to speak into this conversation and help shape direction and decision-making around these kinds of opportunities.

These are just some of the possibilities that GracePoint could tap into as they anticipate what God might do in and through them. Like many congregations, this is a church with challenges and flaws, but there is also vast potential that is waiting to be realized. They look forward to the day when an effective leader with a clear vision will unify and inspire them toward God’s preferred future for their church. With the right pastor in place, that day is fast approaching!

THE CANDIDATE

First things first: Those who thrive in the Bismarck area love the outdoors. If you love hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, backpacking, camping or other back-to-nature activities then this opportunity is for you!

The ideal candidate for GracePoint is an experienced and inspiring communicator who not only expresses a passion for God's Word but also can motivate people to make real life change by taking next steps in their faith journey. With a preference for an expository approach to preaching, the right candidate will "start with Scripture" and be genuine and transparent while communicating. This pastor will bring biblical truth to a practical level that connects with people of different backgrounds and generations, striving to contextualize it to the nuances of North Dakota culture. The right pastor for GracePoint will be well known as a person of integrity who exhibits a humble confidence and authenticity that may be grounded in a story of personal brokenness. As one who readily turns to Scripture and prayer for guidance, he will engage the hard truths of our current cultural with sensitivity and compassion but not compromise.

Personable, warm, and approachable, the ideal Senior Pastor for GracePoint will genuinely care about people and possess a high level of relational and emotional intelligence. An ideal candidate will be adept in "reading the room" and will perceive not only what is said but what is unsaid. The right leader will easily connect with people from all walks of life. He will be known as someone who is down-to-earth with a good sense of humor. As a person who is interested in others, his reach will extend beyond the church and into local community in a manner that actively draws people toward participation.

GracePoint desires to call a leader and developer of other leaders who understands how to effectively recognize, develop and deploy talent. He will manage the staff by aligning, mentoring, developing, and holding them accountable to standards and outcomes. The Senior Pastor will ensure effective ministry leadership and organization-wide communication. He will refresh pathways for open and consistent communication throughout the church. Ideally he will be self-aware and able to draw out complementary strengths that optimize the team so that leadership is responsive, improving, balanced and vitalized.

Working with others, the incoming Senior Pastor will thoughtfully assess current strengths, gaps, needs and opportunities in order to gain a balanced, cohesive and strategic understanding of current offerings. Once he has a clear understanding of the current state of ministry, he will move forward at the "speed of trust" being careful to ensure that change doesn't outstrip relationship, yet still able to "move the ball down the field." As a leader who clearly and effectively communicates rationale for decisions, the incoming Senior Pastor will build trust by helping people feel informed and aware of the active state of the ministry.

As the "face" of the church, this pastor will be a visible representative of GracePoint without seeking to "make a name for himself." He will learn and embrace the culture of North Dakota and of the greater Bismarck region, and will work to improve evangelism and missional connectivity with the area immediately surrounding the church. With a passion for effective outreach and evangelism that is balanced with a desire for deeper discipleship, this pastor will help the church grow in health, energy and impact. With this type of leader in place, the future for GracePoint church looks exciting and bright!

Preferred Candidate Qualifications

- Master's degree required, M.Div. degree preferred
- Theologically aligned with the EFCA (www.efca.org)
- At least 10 years of progressing ministry experience
- Spiritually mature and emotionally intelligent
- Experience leading teams
- Effective communication and organizational skills
- Experience in a multi-staff setting

- Significant experience in quality preaching/teaching/communicating with a preference for expository preaching as the predominant style.

Inquiry Process

If after reading this description you have some interest in the Senior Pastor position at GracePoint Church and you feel you meet the qualifications for the role, you are invited to submit the following information for consideration:

1. Your resume or CV (**in Word doc format only**)
2. Electronic links to audio/video of your teaching/preaching (2-3 examples, please)
3. Results of any personality or strengths assessments you have taken in the past three years (StrengthsFinders, DiSC, Myers-Briggs, etc)
4. A current headshot photo of yourself, a current photo of your family, and family bio (**in Word doc format only**)
5. Five references, including: One supervisor or overseer (could be a board member), two or three staff associates, with at least one from someone you have supervised, and one or two personal. NOTE: *These references will be contacted later in the process and only with your prior approval.*
6. Written responses to the following questions (**in Word doc format only**). We believe that one can learn only so much from a resume. Your responses will help us to gain a more complete picture of you and your leadership.
 1. Describe your faith in Jesus Christ. Tell us how you came to personal faith and something about your journey into ministry. How do you spiritually stay refreshed in the midst of ministry demands?
 2. What is it about the opportunity at GracePoint Church that attracts you to this position?
 3. What are two or three of your core strengths? Please share two or three examples of situations where you utilized your core strengths to move forward the church or ministry you were leading.
 4. What values and experiences guide and shape your philosophy of ministry?
 5. What are the key factors that you believe should be present in your next church and ministry in order for you to be most effective?

Please submit your information to:

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