



Leadership News & Vision Update – 07.16.2017

It is with great pleasure that we announce Presbytery has formally voted and accepted our call for Patrick Lafferty to become the new Lead Pastor for Grace Mills River. We look forward with great anticipation to Patrick joining us in September.

As we look forward to a positive future, it is important to reflect on the last 18 months at Grace Mills River (GMR) church and recall the evolution of our new church vision.

With the departure of Dave Desforge in the fall of 2015, the session, staff and congregation have asked many questions of ourselves. We've looked inwardly to this church's identity and values – we have looked at things we have not done well and areas we felt called to but had not meaningfully participated. This led us most importantly, to turn outward to Christ, asking for his help and guidance.

Early, 2016, session and staff identified three key values that would serve as a foundation for our future vision:

1. Community & Care – Serving those inside our church
2. Missional Living – Serving those outside our church in our community
3. Collaborative Leadership – Having session, staff, diaconate and congregation working together towards a common vision

A Planning Team was formed in the spring of 2016 (consisting of 5 elders and 5 staff) charged with developing structure and plans to incorporate these values and to articulate the vision. The team looked at different church models and organizational structures and presented a recommendation to the session on the basic model and approach most fitting for Grace Mills River. The session accepted and agreed to that recommendation. January 2017, Grace held several Town Hall meetings to communicate clearly the vision for Grace Mills River. Key components of this vision include:

1. A move away from a model where GMR would be at the center, surrounded by many Grace church plants to a newer model where GMR would be part of a network of similar gospel-driven churches in our area. (*See network diagram on page 4*) Within this network, we will develop and share worship & discipleship tools, training, missions, events and even some staff and communications. Over time, this will lead to greater efficiencies across all the network churches and bring a broader spectrum of tools and programs to our church.

You may have noticed that we have been referring to our church as Grace Mills River. From now on, we will be using this name to more clearly delineate this church from the other churches in the new network. Our new website and outside sign will be modified to reflect this change as well.

2. **Reflecting the missional living value we identified earlier**, our focus will be to spread the gospel in our immediate community (Mills River, Fletcher, Arden, South Asheville, etc.) through worship, discipleship, community involvement and activity. We will be looking for specific programs and opportunities to get more involved in all aspects with our local community. This would include leveraging our facilities for community events and activities – such as having plays, concerts and frequent community group meetings like Girl Scouts Troop meetings, potential financial seminars and other community activities.

3. **The optimum size of Grace Mills River** will be between 600 to 800 members and would maintain a two Sunday service schedule. We will have a planned, deliberate church plant program in place that would target planting new churches in the outer circles of our immediate geography (e.g. Brevard, Fairview, etc) on a periodic basis. As you are aware, Brian Land will be planting a church in the Brevard area in the fall 2017 and Ben Seneker has been hired as the first Church Plant Pastor within the new network area. In addition to preaching at Grace Mills River until Patrick arrives in September, Ben's responsibilities will include assisting Brian as he launches Grace Brevard and preaching occasionally at other network churches, such as Grace Blue Ridge. This is all part of the training and exposure for him to develop skills and experience to launch our next church plant in the intermediate future.

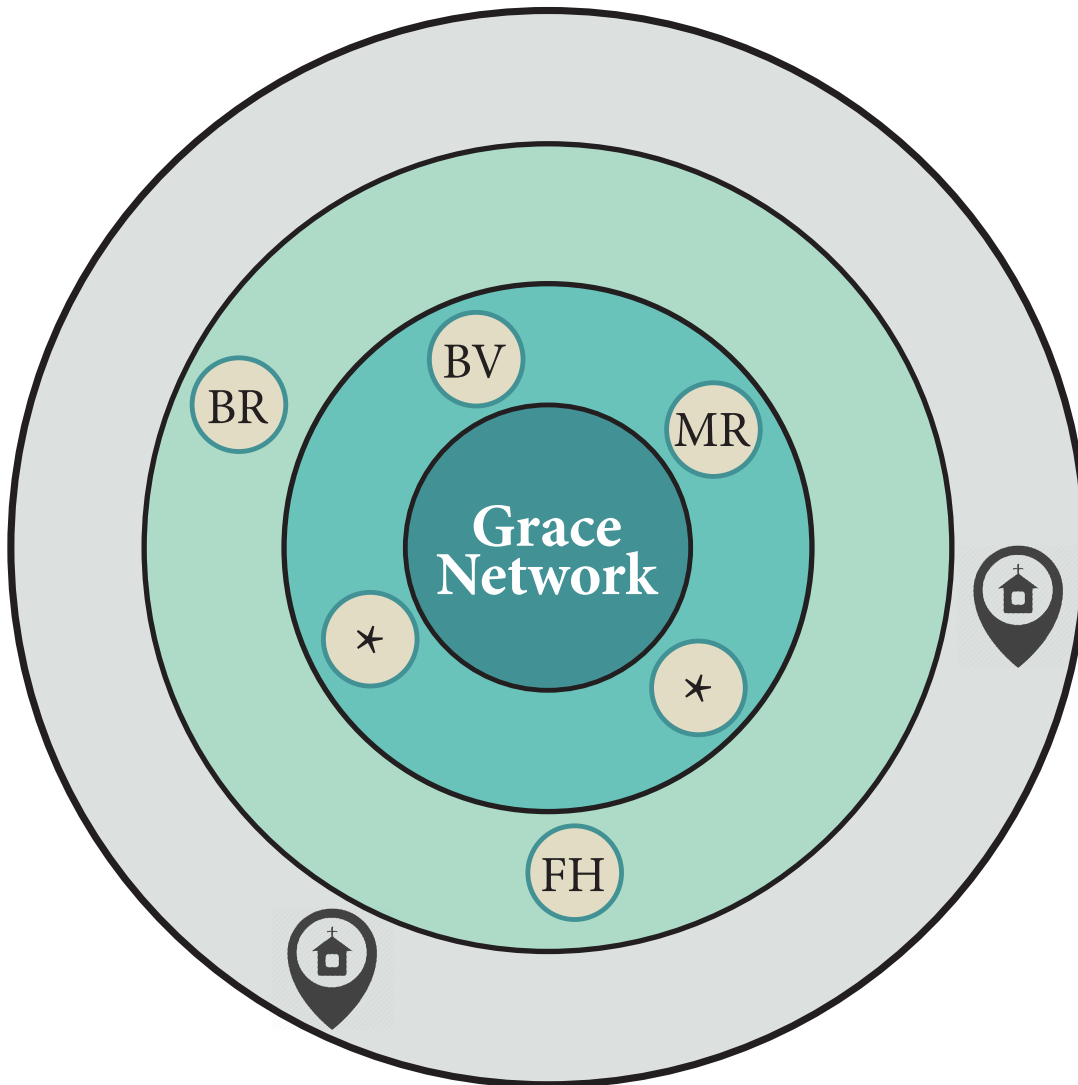
4. **Our ministries will be refocused into five areas** and their programs will reflect our core values:
 - Worship and Arts
 - Discipleship
 - Children
 - Youth
 - A new area, Outreach, which includes Local and Global Missions as well as Missional Communities. To support this area, Amanda McLamb has joined our staff as the Outreach Director. She will focus on developing community groups that care for one another and reach out to serve and love the community around them. She will also be supporting our Global Missions Team and will be instrumental in developing support for local community outreach programs.


The budget for our next fiscal year beginning in September reflects the network and internal structure for Grace Mills River to support this new vision.


5. **We have formally initiated the Shepherding Ministry.** This program is directed for Grace Mills River to better care for our congregation and keep us in better touch with the needs of our church family. Letters and emails were sent to members two weeks ago introducing shepherds and members. On Sunday, July 9, Tony Giles preached on Shepherding. A link to his sermon is provided in the Leadership News & Vision section of the website.


Our prayer is that as the church moves forward the gospel and grace message would continue to go out and expand God's Kingdom.

Grace Network Model



 Inner circle, closest to Network: sharing ministry, staff, resources and planting

 Middle circle: sharing broader ministries, such as missions and events


 Outer circle: shares broader community events

 MR Mills River

 BV Brevard

 BR Blue Ridge

 FH Foothills

 * Future Church Plants

 Local Churches