

In 1965, four families began dreaming and praying about building a community church on the southern edge of Tempe to minister to all of the new families moving into this rapidly growing community. By the summer of 1966, the first of many miracles took place as land became available, and construction began on a new worship center. The first service was held on Jan. 8, 1967, led by Pastor Guy Davidson, and 355 people attended, 55 more than the worship center was built to seat. The next week, Sunday School for all ages began, and by Palm Sunday of that year, a second service was added. During the first month, the congregation also began its long involvement in Global Outreach by supporting the work of a couple doing Bible translation in Mexico.

Over the next several years construction continued at a steady pace to keep up with the rapid growth of the church: classroom buildings in the spring of 1967, gymnasium and additional classrooms in 1968, and a larger worship center in 1972 with seating for 1,000. While building this center, the congregation also committed to build Grace Ling Liang Church in Calcutta, India under the ministry of David and Mary Lamb.

Grace Lodge, located on Rainbow Lake, was donated to the church to be used for seminars and weekend retreats. In 1975 Grace Community Christian School was birthed, requiring additional classroom space to be built, and then in 1967 an additional acre of land east of the electrical substation became available and was added to the campus, now totaling 18 acres for ministry.

In 1979, the E buildings were completed and plans were made to build a larger worship center with additional office space and Lamb Chapel. The present Worship Center was dedicated in May 1981. In 1988, Pastor Guy Davidson, our founding pastor, resigned to become director of World Medical Mission with Samaritan's Purse, led by Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son. Franklin had earlier been ordained at Grace.

In November 1989, Pastor Larry Finch became the second pastor in the history of Grace Community Church, serving for 11 years. Grace continued its emphasis on Global Outreach in India, and Pastor Larry travelled there for the dedication of the 1,000th church of the Evangelical Church of India. The highlight of the trip was participating in the baptism of 2,200 people in one afternoon. Pastor Larry expanded the use of drama in the worship services. He also supervised the construction of the Dorsey Center, built for student ministries. The Get Out Of Debt fund allowed Grace to celebrate being debt-free for the first time in its history in March, 2000.

Upon Pastor Larry's departure in October, 2000, Grace was led by Executive Pastor, Gary Maitha. During his tenure, the Global Outreach team and the Board of Elders decided that Grace would focus its Global Outreach program on the country of Turkey. Over the next 12 years, our work there would expand to include the ministry of 15 families, making us the church with the most involvement there in the entire world.

Pastor Scott Jones became Senior Pastor of Grace Community Church in May, 2002. He introduced a program of community-based home groups. Continuing the focus on Turkey, he travelled there 3 times, and in November, 2006, he and Debi Clifton, the Director of Global Outreach, led a retreat for 18 of our Global Outreach couples in Turkey. This was the first time that Grace had ever done such a retreat overseas, and people travelled from Africa, China, India, and Europe to participate. Pastor Scott left Grace in July, 2007.

Pastor Josh Sherrard came to Grace to serve as our Executive Pastor in 2008 and was then joined by Pastor Darryl DelHousaye, the President of Phoenix Seminary, in 2010. The two of them were the primary leaders until October of 2014 when Pastor Barry Seifert took over as our Interim Senior Pastor. Pastor Barry led the church out of his 30 years of Senior Pastor experience.

In January of 2015, the congregation voted in our current Lead Pastor, Des Wadsworth. However due to the visa process (Des and his family are from England), it wasn't until June of 2015 that Des officially joined us.

On January 8, 2017 we celebrated our 50th anniversary as a church. We were honored that Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell declared that day Grace Community Church Day in the city of Tempe. Our 50th Anniversary Celebration Week from January 8-15, 2017 was a wonderful time of honoring our past and engaging the future. Many previous staff members and church attendees were present for the weekend services on the 8th and 15th, as well as for the many special events and reunions that were held during that week. A special video was put together for this celebration that tells the story of Grace, which you can view [here](#).

We are varied in age, ethnicity, and background. Sunday attendance ranges from 1000-1200 weekly. We are passionate about discipleship and seek to keep this as a main focus in all of our ministries, whether here in Tempe or around the world.