

# Belong



REACHING OUR  
NEIGHBOURS

ADVENTURE  
CAMP 2025

CHOOSE  
LOVE

JOINING JESUS  
IN LIVING SENT



Photo: istockphoto.com

## YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCH



**GAVIN HENDERSON**  
Gavin.henderson@gracecom.church

If you grew up reading comic books you will be familiar with the phrase: “Your friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man.”

This is the slogan Spider-Man would leave around New York City whenever he left the bad guys for the police to pick up. It was his way of letting the people of his city know that he was their superhero and that what he was doing was for them.

In GCI, we want our congregations to be seen in a similar way. Not as superheroes, of course, but as essential parts of our local neighbourhoods – places where our neighbours know who we are, and that we are for them, and that they are welcome and included in our worship gatherings and events.

This raises a couple of questions. Who are our neighbours? And what do we mean by neighbourhood? For Spider-Man, it was the borough of Queens in New York City. While many superheroes would fight to save the world, Spider-Man knew his limitations, and his aim was to protect and serve his local neighbourhood. This is not to say that he never

**“CHURCHES ARE NOT CALLED JUST TO SERVE COMMUNITIES, BUT RATHER TO CREATE COMMUNITY. COMMUNITY IS A BYPRODUCT OF LOVE – LOVE FOR GOD AND LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS.”**

teamed up with other superheroes elsewhere, but he knew the importance of not abandoning his home turf.

In Luke 10:29, we read that Jesus was asked by an expert in Jewish law the question, “Who is my neighbour?”

What is Jesus’ response? He told one of his most famous parables – the parable of the Good Samaritan. The story ends with a revolutionary realisation that being a neighbour is not about class, race, or profession but about helping people around us who need help, even if they are our enemies!

This isn’t just a personal calling – it’s a congregational one. As congregations, our neighbours are those around us who need help, support, and encouragement. It is not defined by income, census data, or demographics – it is defined by Christ. As part of the body of Christ, we are called to serve and give our life for others.

Now, we may not be able to shoot webs, sense danger, or have super-strength like Spider-Man, but as Christians, we do have superpowers with which to help serve and protect our neighbourhoods: Faith, Hope, and Love.

All around the world, communities have been negatively affected by broken promises and betrayal by those closest to them. Divorces, disillusionment with our governments, and being taken advantage of by employers have shattered so many people’s lives. Into this mess, the Church is able to proclaim the faithfulness of God.

With climate change, genetic modifications, and the rise of artificial intelligence, what kind of future will our children inherit? Is the world becoming more authoritarian, and the risk of another world war increasing? Into this chaos, the Church is called to proclaim the hope that we have in Christ – hope for peace, for restoration, for justice, for life.

And the greatest superpower we have is love.

Churches are not called just to serve communities, but rather to create community. Community is a byproduct of love – love for God and love for our neighbours. So many people around us do not really understand what love is, and how else are they



Photo: istockphoto.com

supposed to learn if we do not show them? If we do not demonstrate God’s love to them by helping and supporting those who are different to us, who can’t return our kindness, and who can’t help themselves?

This year’s theme is Kingdom Culture and our call to be “friendly neighbourhood churches” is part of the way that we live out that culture on a congregational level.

As we reflect on what it means to be a neighbour in Christ, let us consider these questions:

1. Are we truly present in our neighbourhoods as a congregation?
2. How can we embody faith, hope, and love in our daily lives?
3. Are we willing to love sacrificially?

One of my favourite Spider-Man quotes is: “You have the costume; you have the power. You’re Spider-Man. Act like it.”

We have faith, we have hope, and we have love. We are the Church. Let’s act like it.

*Gavin Henderson is the National Ministry Leader for GCI in the UK and Ireland and GCI’s European Superintendent.*



Photo: istockphoto.com

## BUILT BY CHRIST, LED BY THE SPIRIT



BY DANNY ZACHARIAH  
info@gracecom.church

*“I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”*  
This statement by Jesus has long brought encouragement to his followers. Christians also take great comfort from Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit.

From that eventful day of the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and gathered people responding to the gospel proclamation, creating a community that we have come to call the Church. Just as the physical creation came into existence when the Spirit hovered over the deep dark waters, a new spiritual creation is taking shape through the breathing of the Spirit over all of humanity.

As the gospel is being proclaimed, the Holy Spirit continues to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other. As the good news of the kingdom finds its way into the nooks and corners of this world, the Holy Spirit is bringing truth and convicting hearts, captives are finding freedom, those oppressed are finding redemption. A

**“THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS DESTINED TO SUCCEED, NOT BECAUSE OF OUR EFFORTS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE SPIRIT’S ONGOING WORK OF GATHERING, UNITING, AND SANCTIFYING US.”**

new hope is dawning in many, despite difficult or even hopeless circumstances.

A unique, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the Church into communion with God by the grace of Jesus Christ and into the love of the Father. This communion with Father, Son, and Spirit then flows out into the spiritual community of the saints, bringing growth, unity, and maturity in the Body of Christ. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, reminds us:

*... Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:15-16*

For over two millennia, the Church has faced many challenges to grow and remain relevant. But the Holy Spirit has remained faithful to continue to lead the Church into all truth and transformation. In GCI, we have witnessed the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit first hand. The reformation in our own denomination is nothing short of a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

However, today, many devout followers of Jesus Christ feel a sense of crisis – disunity, confusion, or even discouragement within the broader Body of Christ. Perhaps some of us may be sensing the same. Is this bringing a sense of discouragement to us? If so, let us be reminded of the promise of Jesus. Realizing our struggles with confusion and despair, Jesus says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Jesus then declares: “... I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth...you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

Through the Holy Spirit, we experience the ongoing presence of our triune God. And the Spirit remains with us forever! This assurance should be a source of unshakable hope to fulfil the promise of Jesus: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

Let us respond to this truth with renewed faith and participation in the Spirit’s work.

1. Recommit to the Mission of the Church: The



Photo: Marinela Malcheva, istockphoto.com

Spirit empowers us to share the gospel and serve others. How is God inviting you to participate more fully in his mission?

2. Lean into the Presence of the triune God: Spend intentional time in prayer and solitude, allowing the Holy Spirit to refresh and guide you. In what areas of your life do you need to rely on the Spirit’s strength and wisdom?
3. Encourage Others in the Body of Christ: As the Spirit builds up the church, consider how you can encourage, support, and strengthen those around you. Who needs to experience the love and unity that the Spirit brings?
4. Embrace the Spirit’s Work in Transformation: Ask yourself, “What is the Holy Spirit calling me to let go of? How am I being formed reflect Christ more fully?”

The church of Jesus Christ is destined to succeed, not because of our efforts, but because of the Spirit’s ongoing work of gathering, uniting, and sanctifying us.

May we rest in this assurance and remain encouraged by the promise of Jesus Christ and the ever faithful ministry of the Holy Spirit. Let us participate eagerly and joyfully, knowing that we are part of the eternal communion of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

*Danny Zachariah is GCI’s Superintendent for Asia.*



## ADVENTURE CAMP 2025



BY SINEAD HENDERSON  
adcamp@gracecom.church

When you have a group of incredible kids, some brilliant volunteers, a beautiful space and the loving hand of God at your back then you have the perfect recipe for another wonderful church adventure camp. Mix in some new activities like the mind bending obstacle course with mental challenges and t-shirt painting with the much loved nature detectives, tunnelling and pedal karts and you bring the fun and the excitement.

Next add in the noise, the mess, the endless laughter, the delicious food including freshly made muffins every morning and it all starts to come together as one beautiful treat to be savoured.

Nothing compares to the key ingredient though, essential not only to every good recipe for success but more importantly to living our very best lives and that is Jesus. Jesus was and always will be front and centre of camp because he is why we are

there – to share him with the next generation of young believers.

Each morning we began with worship and each service was meaningful and inspiring, every mealtime was opened with prayer and not one single staff member stepped in, the kids had it covered.

Our Christian living classes discussed the concept of King Jesus, being a part of the royal family and viewing all people in the world as sons and daughters of the most high king. We closed with prayer while all the parents and visitors were present because we are proud to live for, love and serve Jesus as we minister to these beautiful children in a setting that is fun, safe and meaningful.

Please pray for these children as they move on from our summer camps – that they may have the right mix of positive relationships, helpful interactions and a sense of who Jesus is to them.





Photo: istockphoto.com

## JOINING JESUS IN LIVING SENT



BY MIKE RASMUSSEN  
info@gracecom.church

We often view life as transactional – where effort earns reward and love is conditional. Even as Christians, we can feel like there is something we need to do to prove ourselves to God, to prove we love him, or to somehow gain his love. It’s easy to project this transactional mindset onto God, seeing him as a cosmic accountant or a vending machine for blessings. But God isn’t bound by human systems of merit. He loves extravagantly, without condition. In Christ, we see sacrificial love — given freely, not to manipulate or demand, but simply for the good of the beloved. This is the beauty of true, unconditional love.

As disciples of Jesus, we learn a new way of seeing God as Father, Son, and Spirit. Seeing ourselves as God’s beloved children is foundational. It is a foundation that helps guard against legalism and a “works based” mentality.

What is a shift that changes our perspective from transactional to kingdom-minded? God does not need us; he wants us. He wants us to join him and live life together because he loves us. He is more concerned about the relationship than about our good deeds. I say “more concerned about” relationship because that it is the fertile soil the Holy Spirit works within. God is conforming us to the image of his Son, and it is by God’s presence, by relating to him, that we are being transformed to reflect his priorities, his love.

**“[GOD] LOVES EXTRAVAGANTLY, WITHOUT CONDITION. IN CHRIST, WE SEE SACRIFICIAL LOVE – GIVEN FREELY”**

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5 NIVUK)*

Apart from Jesus, we cannot bear fruit. This is vital to what it means to join Jesus in living a sent life. There is only one ministry and that is Jesus’ ministry. We can try to break it down into various categories and use different titles or labels — but when all is said and done, there is only one ministry. This is important to grasp because if we do not, we can begin to go and try to do ministry **for** Jesus instead of doing ministry **with** Jesus. The difference between the two is day and night and is crucial. Joining Jesus in his ministry means the weight and responsibility of being fruitful is on his shoulders – not ours. The responsibility of changing people’s hearts and minds is on his shoulders – not ours.

With this understanding, we are free to love people and see that God is working in their lives.

We can ask the Holy Spirit what each person needs and how best to share the good news. When we remove the weight and responsibilities from our shoulders, it changes everything! We are free to love, we are free to invite. We are free to share Jesus’ gospel and trust his timing in people’s lives. It is freeing! Jesus’ yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30).

May we be disciples who stand firm in God’s love, who trust him and his plan for all his children, who step out to join him in his amazing ministry of reconciliation.

*Mike Rasmussen is the GCI Superintendent of North America and the Caribbean.*

## UPDATE ON PETER AND JACKIE MILL



GAVIN HENDERSON  
Gavin.henderson@gracecom.church

For 11 years, Peter and Jackie Mill served the Church in an employed capacity. First Pete was a Pastoral worker with Jackie volunteering her time to support him. Later, Pete also served as Mission Developer for the National Ministry Team. More recently, Pete and Jackie had been Regional Co-Pastors for Scotland, Ireland and Northern England.

During the last 6 years, Pete has struggled at times with severe back pain and is currently on the waiting list for spinal surgery. In light of this, Pete and Jackie stepped down on the 5th of April from employed ministry to help give Pete time to recover and to spend more time with their family.

Pete and Jackie continue to support the Church in a volunteer capacity. Jackie is continuing to serve as Camp Director for SEP, and both Pete and Jackie have helped support the Celebrations in Scotland and Ireland this year. Additionally they will continue to speak as they are able (including on our YouTube premieres).

I am incredibly grateful for the work and dedication Pete and Jackie have shown to the Church over their employment and look forward to continuing to work with them as volunteers.





## SCOTTISH RETREAT

“So don’t ever be afraid, dearest friends! Your loving Father joyously gives you his kingdom with all its promises!”

Luke 12:32 (TPT)



This year’s Scottish Retreat was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May and we were excited to have Hans De Moei as a special guest. Hans is the National Ministry Leader for GCI in the Netherlands. It was great to hear an update on our Dutch brothers and sisters and the work they are doing in sharing the Gospel with their local communities.

The theme for this year was Kingdom Culture and in addition to presentations from Hans De Moei there were also two presentations from Gavin Henderson (one on “Aging well” and the other on “Kingdom Culture”).

The Retreat was held at our regular venue of Carronvale House and it was a great opportunity not just for our Scottish members and contacts to gather together, but we were also glad to have guests from Manchester, France and, of course, the Netherlands!

We hope you will be able to join us at our future retreats.



## Join us for our upcoming Celebrations

(For more information please email [info@gracecom.church](mailto:info@gracecom.church))

- Abano Terme - Italy (21-24<sup>th</sup> August 2025)
- Bridlington - England (11-14<sup>th</sup> September 2025)
- Mount St. Anne’s - Ireland (19-22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025)
- Hegne - Germany (25-28<sup>th</sup> September 2025)
- Paignton - England (29<sup>th</sup> Sept - 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 2025)
- Evian - France (18-25<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

## HARBOROUGH EASTER OUTREACH

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” - Henry Ford



BY GCI Staff  
[info@gracecom.church](mailto:info@gracecom.church)

We were delighted to host another neighbourhood outreach event in Market Harborough on Easter Monday.

The events are aimed at bringing isolated people together to help build friendships and to provide an introduction to Christianity.

To help with this, we provide a meal and light entertainment. In this case, it was a cream tea served by our team of volunteers and a game of bingo.

We are very grateful for all those who gave of their time to make this event happen and the next event we have planned is a summer BBQ.



# CHOOSE LOVE



BY JESÚS MOLINA  
info@gracecom.church

Living through the devastation of the Eaton fire in Los Angeles was a harrowing experience. While the smoke and ash were suffocating, my wife, Megan, and I remained safe; however, we know dozens of people who had to evacuate and know many others who lost their homes.

The most comforting thing through all of this was seeing “community” – people coming together to check in on each other and take care of each other. I saw neighbors exchanging contact info “in case of anything,” then checking in on each other with a call or text. I witnessed people opening their homes to fire refugees, and people in evacuation zones using sprinklers and hoses to protect their and their neighbors’ homes.

The biggest display of community happened in the aftermath. The city and nonprofits showered us with resources. This demonstration of love for neighbor was never more evident than when donation and evacuation centers put out notices stating they were no longer accepting donations or volunteers because they were overflowing with both and had no space/work to take in more. What better way to live missionally? What better way to live God’s greatest commandment?

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first*



*and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

I urge you, reader, when in doubt to choose love.

## Prayer

*Lord, we live in such a divided and individualistic society that it seems as though we’ve lost the art of community. Show us how to love our neighbors as ourselves without needing a natural disaster. Amen*



GRACE COMMUNION  
INTERNATIONAL



member of  
evangelical alliance  
together making Jesus known

Belong is an in house publication of Grace Communion International, 9 the Point, Rockingham Road, Market Harborough, LE16 7QU, UK

Tel: 01858 437 099  
Email: info@gracecom.church

Copyright © 2025, Grace Communion International, is registered as a charity and private company in England and Wales.

Company No. 654913.  
Charity number (E&W): 311098  
Scotland: SC040008.

All Scriptures unless otherwise stated are quoted from the Holy Bible, New International Version.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984. International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers