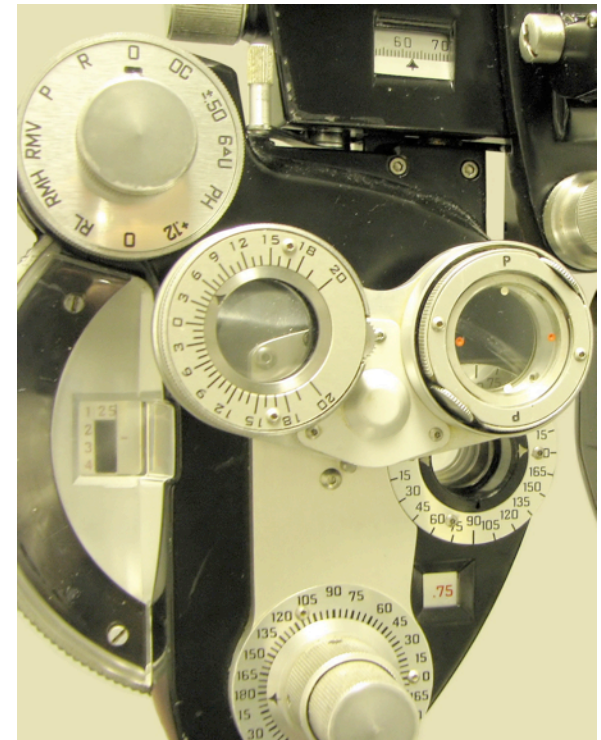


The Vision

Grace Hills Church will soon be born in Bentonville, Northwest Arkansas. **Our vision is to gather a community of people who are coming to know Jesus and serving others to bring glory to God.**

In that brief statement, God's five biblical purposes for the church are conveyed.

- To *gather* people reflects the purpose of evangelism.
- To become a *community* reflects the purpose of fellowship.
- To *come to know Jesus* reflects the purpose of discipleship.
- To *serve others* reflects the purpose of ministry.
- To *bring glory to God* reflects the purpose of worship.



The Dream

We dream of being a home for spiritually homeless people. We envision a place where people can begin and build a deep relationship with Jesus Christ and with fellow believers, where people do life together in genuine community, and where people grow spiritually in an atmosphere where the grace of God is highly celebrated.

We dream of a church where real problems are solved and real needs are met as people are drawn closer to God, where people recover from hurts, habits, and hang-ups that prevent them from enjoying meaningful relationships with God and each other.

We dream of a church where God's Word is honored as our highest authority on earth and as the source of real and abundant life.

We dream of a church that joins in a conversation with the world and community around us about matters of faith and life, that is always bringing the relevance of God's perspective to the issues that face us, and that is willing to engage with the honest questions people have about life, death, God, and eternity.

We dream of a church where people serve one another according to the way that God has shaped them, where spiritual gifts, passion, talents, and experiences are a part of how we meet the needs of others inside and outside of our church family.

We dream of a church that matters to its community, that makes a visible, noticeable, and tangible difference on behalf of Christ in the real problems that exist.

We dream of a church that celebrates changed lives, that cultivates an atmosphere of freedom to grow and serve, and that empowers people with the confidence to do so.

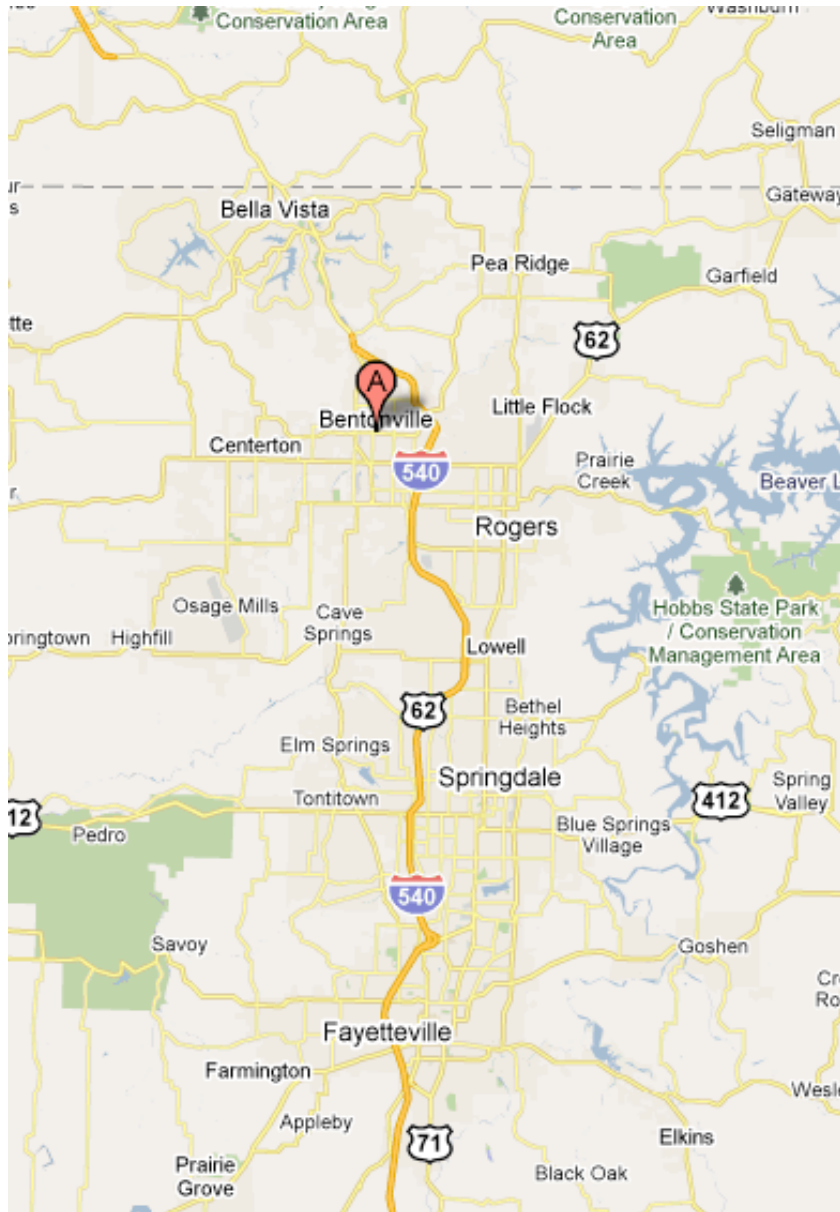
The Place

Bentonville, Arkansas, in the 1960's was home to just a few thousand residents, one of whom was Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart Stores, Inc. From the 1980's onward, Bentonville's population blossomed as a result of the growth of the headquarters of the world's largest retailer. In the 1990's, Walmart began requiring vendor companies to have offices located in Bentonville to conduct business. Because of this new policy, the community has been transformed into a rather diverse community.

Bentonville saw even more explosive growth during the last decade with an amazing 78.9% increase (adding 15,571 residents to the previous headcount of 19,730 in the 2000 Census). This record percentage increase brought the population to **35,301 total people** and propelled Bentonville into the top 10 incorporated places in Arkansas from a 19th position only 10 years ago!

Individuals and families have relocated to the area from all over the United States to do business and Bentonville has grown to a population of around 30,000. Bentonville is also surrounded by numerous neighboring towns such as Bella Vista (to the north with a population of 20,000), Rogers (to the east with a population of 38,000), Springdale (to the south with a population of 45,000) and Fayetteville (with a population of over 60,000 and home to the University of Arkansas). These and other smaller communities make up the I-540 corridor. Benton and Washington Counties have a combined population of around 320,000.





One of the questions that frequently arises is *why plant a church in a community that has many good churches already?* There are several reasons.

First, planting new churches is a matter of obedience to the great commission. In fact, it's the fastest way to fulfill the great commission. New church plants typically grow faster than established churches and usually reach people who are not and perhaps will not be reached by the existing churches in a community.

Second, Grace Hills will be very intentional about serving a population within the northwest Arkansas community that is not currently integrated into any church family. There are many thousands of people with no church home (as much as 60% of the community) who need one. We will be very intentional about reaching the disconnected.

Third, God is calling us to do so. Therefore, it's ultimately a decision to obey the call of God to expand His Kingdom in this way.

More information about Bentonville is available via this [interactive online brochure](#).



The Foundation

Core values can be thought of as the characteristics that shape a church's culture. These are the values that will be talked about often among staff members and church members.

We value **biblical truth** as the only foundation for the identity and mission of the body of Christ. So Scripture will be held in high regard and will be the basis of all that Grace Hills teaches.

We value **developing leaders** and will invest time and resources into relationships and opportunities to see people grow in influence.

We value **creative thinking** and will give people permission to create, to try, to fail, and to attempt impossible things, using the imagination to dream big dreams for God.

We value **messy ministry** and are willing to be involved in the lives of people with real needs and problems, in a spirit of love, on behalf of Jesus who modeled this principle throughout His ministry on earth.

We value **strengthening families** and will seek to equip husbands, wives, Moms, Dads, and kids of all ages to relate to each other in love and harmony in a culture that often poses resistance to family strength.

We value **dynamic worship** in which people feel the freedom to connect and communicate with their Creator in praise, and in which seekers can observe in an understandable way the presence of God within His people.

We value **every-member ministry** and will seek to empower the entire membership of the church for a ministry to each other according to their God-given SHAPE as well as a mission in the world. Volunteers are the real heroes!

We value **cultural relevancy** in terms of using new technologies to build bridges between the church and the world around us, and also in terms of learning and speaking the heart language of our community.

We value **ethnic diversity** and will see every individual as an equally valuable member of the human family, as evidenced in the price of God's Son for every person and His gathering of a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to Himself.

We value **global thinking** in terms of tackling enormous, global issues in Christ's name as well as **church multiplication** and will seek to foster a church planting movement that grows far beyond the Grace Hills family.

Our statement of faith is available at <http://gracehillchurch.com/about/beliefs/>



The People

Grace Hills will endeavor to lead every member into a fulfilling ministry according to how they are uniquely and individually SHAPed for ministry. This SHAPE profile includes:

- Spiritual gifts.
- Heart.
- Abilities.
- Personality.
- Experiences.

Furthermore, Grace Hills will function **as a body, not as a business**. This doesn't mean we will not uphold wise business practices. On the contrary, we will seek to excel in this area and be as effective or more effective than a secular business in the areas of strong ethics, fiscal responsibility, and organizational strength.

We will function **as a flock, overseen by shepherds**. Grace Hills will be “governed” by the leadership of the Holy Spirit, but we will be led by Pastors and Elders, who have biblically been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the flock.

“Voting” is essentially a call to divide over a question. Decisions about the direction of Grace Hills won't be decided by a vote, by consensus, or by popular opinion. They will be made by spirit-filled, prayer-empowered leaders who are careful to be accountable to each other and to God for the heavy responsibility of doing what is best for the glory of God and the good of God's people.

Administration will be handled, as much as possible, by the church's staff so that the congregation is free to serve and minister to one another and to the community.

We will also function as a **family**, and will realize that we are a family of diverse human beings with sometimes sinful and selfish tendencies. Rather than having an expectation of perfection, we will seek to receive one another, accommodate one another's differences, and support one another in every way possible.



The Plan

We will arrive in Bentonville in early July 2011 and will immediately begin to focus on building relationships with a launch team of people who will prepare to launch Grace Hills publicly in January of 2012.

- Taking the launch team through membership, maturity, and ministry classes, casting the vision, and painting a picture of the future of Grace Hills on a regular basis, since “vision leaks.” (Andy Stanley)
- Finding new friends, building relationships, and networking with community influencers by being involved in community events and happenings as well as serving our neighbors.
- Being visibly present in the community to meet real needs in ways that are “remarkable.”
- Finding and selecting staff, particularly a Worship Leader who can help with the faith-raising efforts (another term for fund-raising) and embrace the entrepreneurial culture of the church plant from the earliest possible stages.
- Establishing a church “office” as a point of contact with members of the community.
- Utilizing social media and a variety of other promotional strategies to spread the word about the fact that Grace Hills Church is “coming soon.”
- Locating and security facilities adequate for a first public worship service with up to 300 attendees.

We will plan to host at least three public “preview services” from October to December with a tentative launch date of January 15, 2012. After launch, our immediate goal will be to follow up with launch service attendees, offer a membership class, baptism, and small group opportunities.



The words “traditional” and “contemporary” are overused and have all kinds of baggage attached to them. We won’t use either in describing our approach to worship. Instead we will approach the issue of style as people who are *bound* by what will bring honor to God, but *free* to express that honor in a variety of creative ways. And in more plain language, there will be bands, including drums, and other elements that may not create the most comfortable atmosphere for people who are bound by non-biblical traditions, but our greater concern will be communicating the gospel in a way that is culturally relevant and understandable to non-believers and new believers as well as “veterans” in the faith.

Disciple-making happens as the church gets intentional about taking people on a journey toward spiritual growth. We want to clear the pathway for people to take steps forward in their faith. This means we’ll be offering classes designed to introduce people to the faith and to introduce believers to new levels of spiritual maturity.

Disciples aren’t simply people who are increasing in their understanding of biblical doctrine. Disciples actively serve and reproduce themselves by bringing others into the family of God. We will define spiritual maturity in terms of our intimacy with God as well as our activity for God.

We will provide opportunities for fellowship, friendship, and community through an ever-expanding network of small groups, and in the context of these small groups, discipleship will happen as we mutually sharpen one another and dive deeper into God’s Word together.

When we launch, we will immediately be offering ministries for children, especially quality childcare. But ministries to children and youth will expand as God provides us leaders. Rather than creating “holes to fill” with volunteers, we will empower people to initiate new ministries as needs and opportunities arise.



Endorsements

"I count it a privilege to know Brandon Cox as a friend a co-worker in the Kingdom of our Lord. Brandon is uniquely gifted in the area of leadership. He is a man of God who not only loves the Word, but enjoys sharing it with others in an exciting way, and applies it to every area of his life. He is truly is an authentic Christian. He is a man of godly wisdom and extraordinary ability to lead people in the work of God. I know he will do well as a lead pastor of this new church plant. I give him my whole-hearted endorsement."

- Grady Higgs, Former Pastor & Executive Director of Missions for the Baptist Missionary Association of America

"It is with great joy that I recommend Brandon Cox as a Lead Pastor in this new Church Plant. I have known Brandon for several years. His integrity, innovation and desire for excellence will serve him well as he begins this new journey. His love for Christ, His Church and His Word will make him blessing to people seeking a relationship with God. Brandon has my full endorsement as a Church Planter and a Pastor."

- Donny Parrish, Director of Conference Ministries, DiscipleGuide Church Resources & Staff & Worship Pastor, Fellowship Baptist Church, Forney, TX

"Brandon served dozens of other pastors at the 2010 Iron Sharpens Iron conference. His heart to invest wisdom and love in other pastors and churches was apparent in all of my communication with him leading up to the event. We were so blessed because of his involvement!"

- David Macer, Lead Pastor, Shepherd of the Hills, Antelope Valley, CA

"Brandon Cox is highly gifted at resourcing and equipping Christians on how to best utilize the Internet for ministry. He also has a knack for letting the Christian family know about some of the best resources available for spiritual growth and service. I commend him and his work."

- Frank Viola, Author, Speaker, and Blogger:
<http://www.frankviola.org>

"Brandon is a bright, thoughtful Christian leader. He is passionate and knowledgeable about finding new ways to introduce the Gospel to people who aren't currently even thinking about Christ. Brandon is innovative and connected. He'll make an excellent church planter."

- Ron Edmondson, Church Planter & Co-Pastor, Grace Community Church

"Brandon is a faithful and tireless worker for the Kingdom of God. I have watched him as he has been a pioneer of a new ministry to the world of the internet at Saddleback Church and I have seen how he just won't quit! ..."

- Dave Holden, Director of International Training at Saddleback Church

"Brandon is always looking for ways to include others in the cool things that he's doing. He's also been so helpful, way beyond the call of duty. On top of everything, he's one of the most connected leaders I know, including and helping far and wide."

- Mark Howell, Community Life Pastor at Parkview Christian Church

More endorsements and references are available on my [LinkedIn Profile](#).