

GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP

CHURCH OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN



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CHURCH PROFILE

Who We Are and How We Worship

We are a community of followers of Jesus, desiring to live out God's plan and mission for Good News Fellowship (GNF). Our inter-generational family comes together to pray, worship, and learn from God's Word. We are a community church with historic Mennonite Brethren roots, but are comprised of people from varied denominational backgrounds.

A typical worship service includes a blend of both hymns and contemporary Christian music, prayer, and Bible-centered teaching. GNF offers Sunday School classes from 9:00 AM until 10:00 AM. Sunday service time is from 10:15 AM until 11:30 AM. Typical Sunday worship service attendance is between 90 and 120 people.

We gather in a facility that includes a worship sanctuary, educational classrooms, a full service kitchen, offices, and a gymnasium. GNF is situated on a 5-acre parcel of land with large evergreen trees surrounding it. It is a beautiful setting located in a residential neighborhood.

Our congregation is comprised of all age groups presently distributed as follows:

- 4% – Birth to Preschool
- 20% – Elementary (ages 5 to 10)
- 10% – Middle/High School (ages 11 – 18)
- 66% – Adult (age 19 and above)

GNF has a rich history of youth ministry. The youth ministry has been led by both paid pastors and volunteers at different points in the church's history and has always been prioritized and well-supported by the congregation. Many students who went through the GNF youth ministry have gone on to careers as lead and youth pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders. The church's high priority on youth led the church to build the youth/education/gymnasium building in the early 1990's and has supported many youth mission and growth trips through the years.

GNF supports several missionaries from our congregation, two missionary teams from our denomination, and a number of parachurch ministries in Whatcom County.

What We Believe

Our Purpose and Mission as stated in Article IV of the GNF Bylaws (detailed version available on our website):

The purpose of GNF is to glorify God by fulfilling His will for The Church as outlined in His Word, the Holy Bible, and summarized in the following two texts.

The Great Commandment: Jesus replied: “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.’ ” (Matthew 22: 37-39 NIV)

The Great Commission: Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 18-20 NIV)

GNF expresses its mission with the following phrase:
“Reaching out, making passionate followers of Jesus Christ.”

Our Vision Statement

We envision Good News Fellowship as the hands and feet of Christ in our community when we are known by our unity, loving personal relationships, generous service, and faith in action; when we are eagerly involved in reconciling man to God through Jesus, and living as witnesses to Christ’s grace and power in our lives; when we minister freely as a priesthood of believers through intercession, godly counsel and acts of service both locally and globally; when people are coming to know Christ as Lord and there are frequent believer’s baptisms; when testimonies of His work in and through us result in continuous praise to God.

We envision our worship as genuine and honoring to God when all participants are encouraged to worship God in spirit and in truth; when the name of Jesus is upheld and proclaimed; when all aspects of our gatherings are glorifying to God.

We envision care and support taking place through relationship-building in small groups, large groups, and at ministry team functions when we are committed to growing up into maturity in Christ through the application of God’s Word, constant prayer, and mutual accountability; when spiritual and natural gifts are developed through intentional training and mentoring for all ages.

Church leadership is provided by a mature, spiritually qualified and respected team of elders and pastors, committed to equipping the body for service. Decisions are characterized by Spirit-led discernment, grace-filled wisdom and biblical truth. Programs are administered by capable ministry teams and staff.

We believe the church collectively brings glory to God by wholeheartedly loving Him, loving each other, and loving our neighbors.

Ministries at GNF

GNF provides a number of ministries in addition to Sunday Worship and Sunday School:

- Benevolence
- Prayer Ministry
- Small Group Ministry
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Women's Ministry
- Men's Ministry
- Senior Ministry

Benevolence

The Benevolence Ministry distributes designated donations for meeting emergency needs within and outside of GNF.

Prayer

The Prayer Ministry facilitates opportunities for prayer at GNF such as before and after Sunday service prayer teams, weekly emails, individual requests, corporate gatherings, and special prayer initiatives.

Small Groups

At GNF, small groups are important in developing spiritual growth and relationships. The format and location for these groups varies and is flexible depending on the schedules of the participants. Much of the church family are involved in Life Groups, gathering for a meal, prayer, and Bible study time. Other small groups include prayer groups, Bible study groups, and service groups.

Children's Ministry: GNFKids

GNF's Children's Ministry encompasses children from birth through elementary school. The vision of Children's Ministry is to equip the children of GNF to grow in their faith to maturity in Christ and to reach the children of our community with the life-changing message and hope of Jesus Christ. GNFKids classes meet during Sunday school and worship services. Several times a year, the Children's Ministry puts on special events for the congregation and community.

Youth Ministry

Our volunteer staff are committed to loving teenagers, developing relationships with them, and offering support to parents. We provide a safe environment

where teens can develop Godly character, grow in their application of Biblical truth, care for one another, and reach others with the gospel.

Women's Ministry

The mission of the Women's Ministry is to develop programs and activities for women which foster spiritual growth, demonstrate unconditional love, and provide opportunities for fellowship and service. In addition, they host special events for the congregation.

Men's Ministry

Men's Ministry focuses on encouragement, discipleship, service, and fellowship. Activities include men's retreats, prayer breakfasts, serving at the Ferndale Food Bank, and attending recreational events.

Seniors Ministry: J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth)

Seniors (55+) meet regularly for events such as potlucks, meals, and outings, to encourage, provide spiritual support, experience fun activities, and fellowship.

Ministries Beyond GNF

Many GNF attendees live out their faith through service opportunities such as:

- Child Evangelism Fellowship
- Ferndale Food Bank
- Light of the World Prayer Center
- Lighthouse Mission (homeless shelter & rehabilitation center)
- Louisa Place (assisted living)
- Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse)
- Promise 23 Ranch (equine ministry to victims of human trafficking)
- Rebound of Whatcom County (ministry to at-risk children)
- Ten Thousand Villages Gift Festival
- Whatcom County Pregnancy Center
- Young Life

How We Operate

Our paid staff positions presently include a lead pastor, a church secretary, and a pastoral intern. In the past, the church staff has also included associate and/or youth pastors. In addition, a number of volunteers lead the various ministries of GNF.

GNF is a member of the U.S. and Pacific District Conferences of Mennonite Brethren Churches. Our congregation is led by a local Elder Team (presently eight on the team). The Lead Pastor is an equal member of this team. Each Elder oversees areas of congregational ministry. GNF is responsible for hiring our own staff and has total financial responsibility for our staff and facilities.

Contributions are all voluntary; no assessments or per member requirements are given. On occasion there is an appeal for additional funds as needs arise that are

not part of the budget. Very early in our history, it was decided that as a church we would not borrow funds to build facilities. Our mortgage-free buildings are a testimony to God's faithfulness in providing for the needs of the church and GNF has never carried any debt.

Where We've Been

Good News Fellowship Church of the Mennonite Brethren started from humble beginnings. Desire grew in the hearts of various individuals who saw the need for a Bible-teaching fellowship in the North Bellingham/East Ferndale community. In August of 1977, the Pacific District Board of Home Missions of Mennonite Brethren Churches sponsored a demographic study in this area confirming the potential of establishing a new church. An existing M.B. church in the area, Birch Bay Mennonite Brethren, continued to pray for God's specific guidance.

In mid-1979, the Birch Bay congregation voted to give support to establish a 'daughter' church. A Steering Committee was formed and a small group of interested families began meeting weekly in a home Bible study setting, studying God's Word, sharing personal needs, and spending time in prayer. In July 1979, Harold and Susan Schroeder of Visalia, CA were called to give pastoral leadership.

On January 6, 1980, GNF met for their first Sunday at the Laurel Grange. The Grange became the church home for the next eleven months with 44 people attending the first service. Founding members continue to actively participate in GNF today. The initial meeting facilities were built on the present site during the first year and dedicated in 1981. GNF has completed five more building phases since that time.

Pastor Harold was a true shepherd and a man of prayer. Under his leadership, GNF became an established and respected institution in the community. His legacy is that, to this day, GNF is known as a church comprised of "People Who Care." He served until he was taken home to be with the Lord on December 7, 1993. An interim pastoral couple filled in after Harold's passing. Susan continues to be an active member of the church.

In the summer of 1994, Skip and Denise Sues from Lodi, CA, accepted the call to pastoral leadership. During Skip's tenure as Lead Pastor, GNF transitioned to the current model of shared leadership. This included identifying the ***Core Values*** of GNF and refocusing our ***Mission Statement*** of "*Reaching out, making passionate followers of Jesus Christ.*" Pastor Skip served at GNF for 13 years until he was called by God into full-time counselling ministry. He and Denise continue to be active in the church.

In 2008, Bill and Darby Koogler from Dallas, Texas, accepted the call to pastoral leadership. During Bill's tenure as Lead Pastor, emphasis was placed on individual and community outreach. This included service projects and special events led by individuals or small groups, resulting in people coming to Christ. In

the summer of 2015, Bill communicated to the congregation that he felt he had led GNF as far as God wanted and that he would be stepping down. For the next year, the elder board led GNF while pastoral responsibilities were provided by an interim pastoral couple.

In the summer of 2016, Tim Johnson was called to Good News to be the fourth lead pastor in the history of GNF. Tim's passion is to see people come to faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ and mature to become passionate followers of Christ. The means to this life long quest is through Biblical discipleship. Discipleship takes place as we equip believers for the works of ministry, obey God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit, and build up the Body of Christ through service to others and ongoing actions of love. Pastor Tim continues as GNF's lead pastor and is excited to see the church growing its youth ministry.

Where We're Headed

GNF has gone through periods of growth and challenges. People have come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and many have experienced spiritual growth as God has blessed this church. Through the years, God has been faithful and shown His love in many ways. The founding group was given this charge as they were being challenged to go out: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13 NIV). We trust God will continue to work at GNF as we come to Him and seek His face.

GNF has reason to be excited for what God will do in and through our church, including a variety of hopes and dreams regarding specific programs, ministries, and characteristics we desire as a church. GNF sees the hiring of a youth pastor to help revitalize our youth ministries as the next big step God has for our church.

For Additional Information

The GNF website contains additional detailed information on our church, our doctrinal statement, and the Mennonite Brethren conference at www.goodnewsfellowship.org. Additional information on the Mennonite Brethren conference can be found at www.USMB.org and information on the Pacific District can be found at www.pdcmbc.org.

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COMMUNITY PROFILE

Although this Community Profile focuses on the city of Ferndale, GNF also ministers to people outside the immediate area. A number of members, attendees and visitors reside in Whatcom County communities such as Custer, Lynden, Blaine, Everson, and Bellingham.

HISTORY AND LOCATION

The city of Ferndale, which prides itself on its small-town friendliness, is situated in the northwest corner of Washington State, in Whatcom County, and is bisected by the Nooksack River. It was once named “Jam” because of its location next to a two-mile logjam on the Nooksack River, and was renamed “Ferndale” by a pioneer school teacher who used the term to describe the lush ferns that surrounded the original school house. Ferndale is located on the I-5 corridor approximately 100 miles north of Seattle, 6 miles north of Bellingham and 13 miles south of the Canadian Border.

For sports and outdoor enthusiasts there are many nearby attractions including Mount Baker, the San Juan Islands, numerous lakes and rivers, Birch Bay, and at least fourteen golf courses in the surrounding area. Ferndale summers are pleasant and comfortable. The “liquid sunshine” that often prevails in the winter keeps Ferndale lush and green. Ferndale was officially incorporated on March 10, 1907.

FERNDALE STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Ferndale is a fast-growing community of over 13,403 residents (as of 2017); the median resident age is 36. Ethnicity reflects the diversity of our community. Approximately 70.3 percent are White Non-Hispanic, 10.8 percent Hispanic, 5.8 percent Other Race, 3.4 percent two or more races, 1.8 percent American Indian, 1.6 percent African-American, and 6.3 percent Asian. 17 percent of the population is non-English speaking with the most common other languages being Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. The 2016 median Ferndale household income was \$59,171 and 16.1% of the population live below the poverty level. 36 percent of Ferndale residents are renters. The median home cost in the Ferndale area (zip 98248) is \$252,600. Ferndale Police Department monthly activity reports show that DUIs and drug related theft are crime concerns for Ferndale. Domestic violence is also an ongoing problem. Some social service organizations currently functioning in Ferndale and Whatcom County are Ferndale Boys and Girls Club, Young Life, Whatcom County Pregnancy Center, and the Ferndale Food Bank.

EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Ferndale is approximately 5% (U.S. average is 3.9%). Farming (Whatcom County is one of the leading producers of blueberries and raspberries in the U.S.), fishing, logging, construction, smelting, refining, and the service industry are the primary occupations of the Ferndale community. The largest employers in Whatcom County are St. Joseph's Hospital, Western Washington University, Bellingham School District, BP Cherry Point Refinery, and Ferndale School District. Whatcom County continues to grow in population and, for many years, Whatcom County has been a highly desirable family and retirement destination.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ferndale's award-winning school system has a history of community support. Ferndale schools have a reputation for excellence and provide students with many opportunities in academics, student activities, music, and athletics. In May 2017, there were 4,817 students enrolled in Ferndale public schools. 45% of Ferndale's students receive free or reduced-price meals. There are six elementary schools (K-5), two middle schools (6-8), and Ferndale High School (9-12). High school graduation rate is 75%. Further information can be found at <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>. In addition, several private schools serve the community. Home schooling is popular in the area and is generally accepted and supported. Western Washington University, Trinity Western University, Whatcom Community College, and Bellingham Technical College provide post-secondary educational opportunities for residents. The Ferndale Public Library is part of the Whatcom County Public Library System, providing over 400,000 volumes of material to the community.

WORSHIP CENTERS AND SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

There are approximately eighteen Protestant churches in the Ferndale area (6.3 sq. miles). A majority of these churches are located on the west side of I-5. Good News Fellowship is located on the east side of I-5 in an area with fewer churches. According to several studies, the Pacific Northwest (which includes Whatcom County) has the lowest percentage of church attendance in the U. S.

There are significant resources available in Whatcom County that serve to support and expand the ministries of local churches. Among them are:

- **Light of the World Prayer Center** in Bellingham, enlisting some 41 churches in a continual prayer vigil, covering several "spheres" of activity: churches, schools, businesses, government, family, media, health and strategic missions.

- **Youth With a Mission** (YWAM) has established a training center and dormitories in Lynden for persons who are committed to world outreach.
- **Christian conference centers** in beautiful settings provide opportunities for pastoral and/or congregational renewal. Cedar Springs in Sumas and The Firs in Bellingham are well-known throughout the Northwest and British Columbia.