

## The Place Community

# Church Community Profile

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The Place Community meets in Victoria, BC, the traditional territory of the lək'wəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples. We acknowledge with respect the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations communities, whose relationship with the land continues today.

## Identity & Values

The Place is a church community rooted in the Christian tradition and guided by core values of beauty, orthodoxy, community and engagement. Our beliefs are eclectic and our practices informed by the teachings of Jesus, the stories of sacred Christian texts and their many interpretations, and the lived experience of community members. Most importantly, we seek to reflect the love of God both individually and communally by practicing grace, authenticity and hospitality.

We embrace critical engagement with theological and spiritual questions, holding space for uncertainty and complexity and avoiding biblical literalism and easy answers. We recognize that the Church, its leaders and its teachings have caused harm to God's children, and are working to uncover our own harmful beliefs and practices in order to make our community safer for all.

We welcome, include, and affirm people of all ages, abilities, ethnic and cultural identities, genders, and sexual orientations as representative of the fullness of God's beautiful image reflected in humanity. Our community members, residing throughout the Greater Victoria area, include children and youth of all ages, as well as single and partnered adults and elders. Our membership is around 60-70 adults (who bring with them many children), with current in-person service attendance of approximately 30-50.

## Structure & Governance

The Place is registered under the BC Societies Act and has Charity status under the Income Tax Act. We are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that are elected by and accountable to Society membership. Our Board holds responsibility for both legal administration and spiritual leadership of the community. However, our church identifies deeply with the values of congregationalism and strives to be community-led in practice. Pastoral staff manage the activities of the church and share responsibility for spiritual leadership. Currently our community has one staff pastor, Pamela Welle, and is seeking a co-pastor to work alongside her. At this time, The Place is not affiliated with any formal or informal denominational group, but we have been considering the question of denominational belonging and will likely be continuing this conversation going forward.

## Activities & Operations

The church's activities are intended to support the spiritual connection and growth of our members and attendees, and to foster a community of faith in which to find a sense of belonging. Sunday services include teaching, music, prayer and liturgical elements such as monthly Communion, as well as opportunities for social interaction. Various other events and activities are organized based on community need and interest, including communal meals, seasonal celebrations, outdoor social gatherings, small study and discussion groups, and spiritual retreats. The Place rents facilities from Grace Lutheran Church, and has developed a mutually supportive relationship with Grace's community. Members of The Place have expressed a desire for the church to connect further with the local community by supporting charitable organizations and engaging in community service activities.

## Past, Present, Future

Beginning in the late 1990's as a congregation of Lambrick Park Church (LPC), The Place has evolved through a number of very different seasons in its journey thus far. The early years were characterized by high attendance, a youthful demographic, and an abundance of creative energy. This season was followed by a period with lower but more consistent attendance, during which demographics diversified and a deep sense of community identity and connection emerged.

Eventually, led by our commitment to ever-deepening engagement with our core values, The Place community made the decision to part ways with LPC and become an independent church. After a time of transition during which community members invested generously of their time, energy and finances, The Place Community Church was born and became one of the first officially Queer-affirming independent churches in Victoria. Meeting in its new location at Grace Lutheran Church, with front steps painted in rainbow colours, our small but passionately inclusive community began to grow.

The last couple of years have seen our community weather the same challenges as many others, navigating the unfamiliar landscape of online services while trying to stay connected and support one another. As we emerge from this difficult season and look to the future, we continue to be committed to working out our faith together and following Christ's example of continually making more room at the table.

## COVID-19 Policies at The Place

The Place is committed to following the current public health orders and we are doing our best to maintain the health and safety of our community. Right now, that looks like mask-wearing during our services and asking all who attend services to be fully vaccinated. We continue to update our policies in accordance with public health orders.

## Appendix

### **Want to hear directly from The Place? We asked our congregation “Why is The Place your church home?” Here are some of the answers the community gave.**

“Because we have grappled.

It’s easier (not to mention trendier and more palatable) to gloss over heart-wrenching differences and deep-seated challenges to a life of faith by standing apart underneath a banner of Christianity... but it is a far grittier, wilder, and redeeming ride to explore and proclaim - together - our ever-imperfect understanding of “God is Love” and everything that that entails.

And I never want to stop grappling.”

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“because being a part of this community helps me grow spiritually-the practical and insightful teaching and encouragement to engage in spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, contemplation) have kept my faith evolving and growing when it could have petered out.”

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“I have found a group of people that are honest, sincere and open. We are all growing together, learning to love God and all people.”

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“Because we desire an evangelical style church that is affirming and inclusive and progressive in theology but still conservative in basic doctrine, and the Place fits these criteria!”