

# CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE



Revised 10 November 2021

**EMAIL COMPLETED PROFILE TO [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org).  
Keep a copy for your records.**

## Congregation Name and Location

Name GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BIG SANDY

Mailing address 48115 Lake Avenue

City McGregor State/Province MN Zip/Postal Code 55760

Telephone 218.426.3343 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email address ADMIN@LOGCHURCH.ORG

Congregation website logchurch.org

Seeking  Full-time pastor  Part-time pastor  Either full-time or part-time

Call will be for  Solo pastor  Senior pastor  Associate pastor

## Congregational President or Vice President

Name Walter Ford Title President (2021)

Mailing address 23011 Grouse Street

City McGregor State/Province MN Zip/Postal Code 55760

Home phone 218.426.3250 Cell phone 218.821.6794

Email address weford@frontiernet.net

## Call Committee Chair

Name Dick Rohde

Mailing address 17259 510th Lane

City McGregor State/Province MN Zip/Postal Code 55760

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone 218.429.1505

Email address rrohde@rocketmail.com

## Congregational Demographics

Number of paid staff (full- or part-time): Clergy 2PT(pulpit sup) Lay professionals \_\_\_\_\_ Secretarial 1PT

Average worship attendance 50 Average Sunday school attendance 8

### Indicate the type of community in which your congregation is located (is it small town, small city, suburban, large city, farming, industrial, etc.).

Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Big Sandy is located in rural Shamrock Township, 7 miles north of the City of McGregor Minnesota in Aitkin County. It is a rural setting with McGregor, as a small city of 400 serving the surrounding areas, and Shamrock Township as the largest township with 1215 fulltime residents. The County Seat is located 25 miles west in the City of Aitkin. We are equidistance between Duluth and Brainerd Minnesota at about 70 miles west or east and 150 miles north of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The area is rural with many lakes, cattle farms, forest and Tamarack wetlands, rivers (including the Mississippi), and two somewhat State highway thoroughfares (highways 210 & 65). The township area surrounding the church has a State Park and many lakes and rivers. There are a number of bands of the Ojibwa Indian Nation close to the church.

Major areas of employment are divided between the K-12 McGregor School District, Riverwood Health Care Clinic, a US Post Office, Service related business, and two prominent industrial businesses. Construction of boats, docks, and trailers is one business and the other uses wood supplied by local loggers to produce custom and standard wood skids for shipment to companies outside the area. A number of trucking, construction and logging firms also employ many locals. Local businesses include bakeries, hardware/lumber stores, bowling alley, plumbing and electricians, drug store, realtors, builders, restaurants & bars, gift shops, garden shop/florist, Lettering, carpentry, cabinetry, auto parts, and more.

The lake area has families spread out and many retired people who have had cabins on the lake and then retired here. The lake and forest areas also have many seasonal residents who come to recreate in the area and stay in their cabins or one of two motel/lodges, many from the Twin Cities area of Minneapolis & St. Paul. There is one remaining lake resort in the area- Hillcrest. With the exception of lake properties, newer housing stock for families and rentals is in short supply and existing housing has experienced a boom time for sellers. McGregor has a bank, a credit union, K-12 Public School, Riverwood Healthcare Clinic and a US Post Office along with a good number of service related businesses and churches. In the past, Grace was one of the largest churches. Employment for residents is somewhat limited and many drive to other locations, such as Aitkin, for job opportunities. The area is primarily blue collar low to middle class with government and healthcare offering some of the higher paying jobs. Many of our school graduates stay or return to the area to live and work.

### Describe the congregation's ethnic composition and age distribution.

The population is primarily Caucasian. There is also a significant Ojibwa Native American population in the area. The church is located in *Shamrock Township* which has a year-round population of 1,215 people. Weekends, during the summer, can jump the number of seasonal locals in the immediate area to 4,000 or more, many of which reside in cabins on the two major lakes: Big Sandy and Minnewawa and the many other lakes and rivers in the area including the Mississippi River. Significant Scandinavian (Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, & Dane) ethnic populations are present with a broad mixture of other European heritage. Ten percent of the student population is Native American. The racial makeup of the township

was 93.52% White, 0.17% African American, 5.63% Native American, 0.09% Asian, 0.09% from other races, and 0.51% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 0.43% of the population.

Age distribution for *Shamrock Township Minnesota* is skewed towards retired seniors, as noted below:

**59.1 Median age [70-79: 19%] [65 and over: 39%]**

**Population by age range**

**8%†**0-9; **10%†**10-19; **4%†**20-29; **5%†**30-39; **7%†**40-49; **18%†**50-59; **21%**60-69; **19%†**70-79; **7%†**80+

**Income Data**

**\$33,152 Per capita income**

**\$49,571 Median household income (Under \$50K: 51%)**

**7.7% of Shamrock Township population is below the poverty line**

**Note: Wealth of the senior population may not be reflected in these numbers.**

Data Source: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2700159368-shamrock-township-aitkin-county-mn/>

Does the congregation have a clear vision for mission – a clear and shared understanding of where God is leading you? If so, state it as succinctly as possible.

The vision for mission is an opportunity for the next pastor. Our previous pastor conducted focus group and congregational meetings to discuss mission and plans but this was more than five years ago. Activities for mission are not as numerous as they were ten years ago, but there is an enthusiasm for growth if we have leadership and guidance. As in many churches, a few are involved in many activities. Opportunities to attract seasonal locals staying at their cabins and other young families abound in this community. This congregation clearly wants to attract and provide a faith-based Lutheran church for this community. A recent Harvest Luncheon, sponsored by Grace Women, attracted women from the congregation and other area church women. A high point of the luncheon was discussion on future projects where they may combine mission activities and also to identify activities that Grace could begin. A successful Hunter's Ham Dinner was also held in November by the congregation for the area community with over 125 attending. The Holy Spirit continues to fill our sails and lead us to minister God's Word in this community.

What are the primary goals of your congregation?

- Rekindle the growth of our congregation and church into, again, becoming a Lutheran Community church that increasingly serves the faith journey needs of area residents and outreach with a bible-centered message and involvement in preaching God's Word.
- Our old log church has been utilized more in the past year and this will factor into future ministerial goals. Smaller services during the week and/or Saturday nights, and small weddings are potentially great opportunities to use this resource.
- The area, formerly housing the partitioned Sunday School, has been developed into a meeting area that is available for multiple use to meet mission goals. We call it *Reformation Hall*.
- Increase musical presence with organist/pianist, choirs, and other instruments
- A Technology Team is needed to develop plan proposals and stage an online presence and use of video projection to supplement or replace the hymnal during the worship service and eliminate, or limit, printing and distribution of paper worship bulletins. This is a goal to expand and accommodate our faith base.
- Collaboration with other area churches and organizations for outreach ministry and community cohesiveness.

Describe your congregation's worship practice (liturgy, hymns, vestments, music, hymnals, and frequency of Holy Communion).

The Worship & Music team at Grace has maintained a traditional Lutheran liturgy out of the red *Worship* hymnal with occasional use of the blue supplemental *With One Voice*. Vestments, Hymns, and Music all follow as traditional and the Lectionary is used for readings, psalms, and gospel lessons. Occasionally the music is supplemented with songs that are not found in the Lutheran hymnal. There is potential for trying different worship venues and approaches in this church. Note: Recently, Covid-19 affected our church service by shortening the liturgy and at critical times eliminated congregational responses and instead utilized a "leader reader" to respond. We reopened the church in February 2021 with this limited approach and required masks and social distancing with taped off pews. During this time we averaged about 25 people per service and began to grow after our vote to leave the ELCA and join NALC & LCMC. A recent Sunday attendance was at 70 participants, which we have not had in a long time.

Describe your congregation's Christian education ministry.

This congregation is currently rebuilding its Youth Sunday school base with a once per month class. Additionally, a new confirmation class has begun with 6 confirmands attending class each Sunday after the Church Service. The age span in the confirmation class is 13-43, with one parent attending. There is a desire to have Adult Bible Studies. An endowment fund for Youth is available for all youth education including their participation at Youth Assemblies and Summer Camps. A position on the Church Council is available for a Junior or Senior High School student to further their religious involvement in the church through service and leadership.

Describe the congregation's current activities for mission and outreach.

- World Hunger, money collection
- Knitting for Peace*, knit hats, scarves, socks, clothes for distribution
- Quilters- quilted blankets made for mission
- Community Dinner sponsorship and involvement
- Volunteers for the McGregor Area Clothing Closet (MACC)
- Food Shelf Collections
- Youth Education Scholarships for youth church members
- Infant blankets
- Backpack & school supplies for school children
- Cookie Packs for shut-ins

\*Note: The Grace Women group is responsible for much of the mission work with fund raising and volunteers for much of the above. Previously, a Grace Men's group also contributed extensively to the mission and ministry of Grace. This group disbanded from lack of membership and interest about 5 years ago.

The NALC is committed to moving away from an institutional understanding of the Church, to the biblical commission to be a community of followers of Jesus who focus on being disciples and making disciples. Which best describes your congregation's understanding of this movement? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

- Totally unaware
- Have heard about it
- Have been involved personally
- Some in the congregation are involved, some aren't
- Congregation understands, is on-board and involved

List the *Top Five Things* your congregation hopes for in its next Pastor

1. **A bible-centered Pastor that wants to be there.**
2. **Good communicator (able to speak in common terms, as well as a good listener) Ability to identify with all age groups in the congregation. Conduct visitations with current and potential members including shut-ins.**
3. **Be a great "supporter" and encourager. Someone who is humble and willing to empower the congregation to find new ways to explore their sense of self and purpose.**
4. **Our Pastor should be community minded. ie: Attend community functions, develop relationships with other churches, help create ways for our youth, men and women, and children to be devoted to a Christian way of life. Enhance and expand the positives at Grace**
5. **Hold Bible studies, church services at different times if needed/desired.**

What were the three most significant events in your congregation's history? Provide the years in which these events happened and why they are important to your congregation.

**The Church's beginning... with the 1936 title transfer of land from the *Eygabroad* family for \$1.00 to build Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy church and the Pine Needle Cemetery at the site of the Pine Needle school house, to paying off the mortgage with the Board of Home Missions of the Lutheran Augustana Synod in 1939.**

**Growing from the little log church built in 1940 to constructing a much larger church (1988) and parsonage (1998) to accommodate a growing congregation. Grace was, for many years, part of a two-point or three-point parish.**

**A 2021 vote to disassociate from the ELCA to join the NALC & LCMC denominations. The congregation has not had a pastor since 2019 but is now growing in excitement and membership.**

Has your congregation participated in the Congregational Workshop Preparatory to the Call Process? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

- Yes
- No

What were the three most significant results of the workshop?

1. **This congregation went through the ELCA Call Process and Ministry Site Profile application prior to exiting that denomination and joining NALC and LCMC. As such, the congregation and Call committee has already completed an introspective look at our church and what our goals are. We have reviewed and updated our results for this profile.**

Describe the nature and extent of any significant current or recent conflict in the congregation. Is this conflict resolved, or ongoing? If resolved, how was it resolved?

**A past conflict was with the ELCA and their teachings and expectations. Our resolution to the conflict was a 93.4% vote to leave the ELCA and join the NALC & LCMC.**

**A related conflict was that of trying to attract sufficient membership and subsequent giving to support our mission, which has begun to change for the positive now. We are growing again, with some former members returning, and people appear to be much happier, an indication that the conflict is resolved.**

How does your congregation handle conflict/tension? Which of the following do you think best describes your congregation? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

- As a church, we respect and listen to each other and work things through without generating divisiveness.
- As a church, we try to respect and listen to each other, but it is not uncommon for differences of opinion to be a problem and for some people to choose sides. Some have left our church because of conflict.
- Conflict hurts our sense of unity, but we tend not to talk about it.
- Painful experience with conflict has been present, but it has been worked through, and we have learned from the experience.
- We have had some painful experiences with conflict, and they linger in the background.
- Open conflict is present, and we need a minister who can help us deal with it.
- Other (describe).....

What was the nature of the relationship between your last pastor and the congregation? Positive? Struggling? Cooperative? Tense?

**The relationship was mixed. The average age of the congregation is older and the Pastor had difficulty ministering to seniors, especially senior men. The forced vote in 2014 to have gay marriages in the church continued to plague the relationship. Many members left the church because of this vote and decision. The pastor began her nine-year tenure with a good following of young families but that later became a struggle. At the end it was more of a numb co-existence for the congregation and pastor. The congregation wants to have a cooperative respectful relationship with their pastor.**

How did your council/congregational leaders work together with your last pastor? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

- Leadership is shared, with shared decision-making
- Pastor makes important decisions
- Council makes decisions with pastoral input

Council makes decisions without pastoral input

Is your pastor a member of council with: [Type an X by the appropriate response(s)]

Voice       Vote

**Congregational finances (affected by Covid shut down and no FT pastor since 3/2019)**

Total budget for last fiscal year: \$150,227 (spending plan) Actual: \$165,196 revenue/ \$130,692 expenses

Benevolence to the North American Lutheran Church: \$ 0 (WE WERE NOT MEMBERS)

Other benevolence: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total debt of the congregation: \$ 0.00

Total savings, reserves, and endowments: \$ 250,000+ Endowments

**Compensation of Last Pastor (2019)**

Salary: \$44,600      **Parsonage**/housing allowance: parsonage supplied

Social security offset: \$3,412      Pension: \$7,427

Health Insurance: \$14,424      Vacation: yes

Continuing education (time/funding): 2,000

Travel reimbursement: \$4,500

Other: Housing Equity: \$1,500

When the Congregational Vacancy List is updated, a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) is included announcing each congregation's ministry. If you wish, your call committee may compose that summary, realizing it may be edited/formatted as needed.

***Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy is anxiously pursuing a qualified NALC/LCMC rostered minister to serve in the beautiful rural McGregor lakes area of Minnesota. We enthusiastically are seeking a pastor to lead our congregation with the Word and have an opportunity to grow with our Christian family.***

**YOU-TUBE VIDEO**

A video showing our church and area is available on You-Tube: <https://youtu.be/5ORKV3LBIIE>

**Candidates:**

**Interested candidates should send a complete current resume and letter of introduction expressing their interest in Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Big Sandy in McGregor Minnesota.**

Our Call Committee and Congregation are anxious to begin this Call Process and begin interviewing those interested in our mission and location. We anticipate beginning with a Zoom or Skype interview session with prospective candidates.

Completed by: Dick Rohde, Call Chair & Council Member

Date: 10 November 2021

