



A PROJECT FINANCED BY GRACE FINANCIAL

A Wide Open Door for Great Work in Winona Lake

Winona Lake Grace Church has focused its ministry on a simple conviction for more than 80 years: “We are called to love our neighbors to Jesus.” Since opening its doors in 1943, the church has understood that loving neighbors requires more than good intentions. It calls for intentionality, hospitality, and open doors where genuine connection can begin.

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This conviction led to an initiative called *Wide Open*. Conversations that surfaced during COVID prompted a fresh question: How can our building be better used to reflect our heart for our neighbors? The goal was not simply to renovate, but to transform the church building into a place that felt accessible and welcoming, where neighbors would feel comfortable dropping in. This reinvigorated the vision that originally began with the buildout of the children’s classes in 2015. With plans to open a café and offer a children’s play space, the church broke ground in October 2024 and held a ribbon-cutting in September 2025.

The heart for neighbors is not new. It has long been visible in existing programs like the English as a New Language, monthly

gas card distributions, and a long-standing annual church outreach event to meet tangible needs for families within the community called “We Care Warsaw”.

The *Wide Open* project extends that same mission of love towards neighbors further throughout the week. Through this renovation, the church has new resources to reach neighbors, including a play space intentionally designed as a bridge to families. It offers a welcoming environment where children can play while parents connect, including a sensory room added to fill a meaningful need within the community.

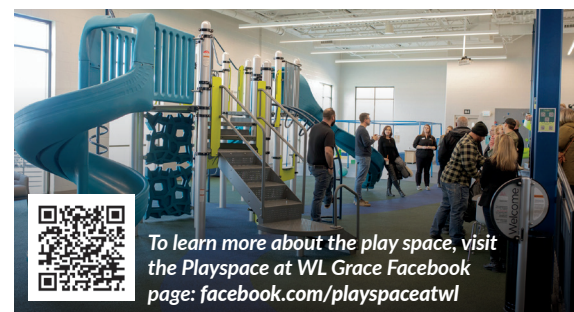
One of the church’s closest neighbors is the elementary school next door. The church has always sought to bless the school through support to the teachers, supplies to the students, and much more. Since opening the play space, the school has already engaged with the church to use the facility, reinforcing the church’s desire for the building to serve the broader neighborhood, not just the congregation.

The café complements that vision by providing a natural setting for connection. College students gather to study, parents meet over coffee, and neighbors stop in because it feels like a place designed with them in mind. These ordinary interactions serve as small moments where trust is built, and spiritual curiosity can take root.

The impact has already been tangible. Where the church once welcomed four or five new families per month, it is now seeing four or five new families per week, many first introduced to Winona Lake Grace through the play space. On Sundays, families linger longer, conversations continue, and the sense of community feels stronger.

Neighbors have expressed appreciation that the church built this as a gift to the community. Volunteers faithfully serve throughout the week, businesses utilize meeting rooms, and neighborhood families invite their friends to experience the welcome they have found at WL Grace.

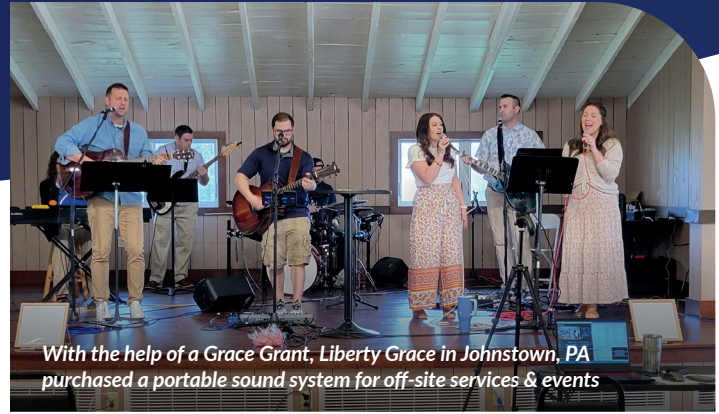
Wide Open is more than a campaign. It reflects a posture rooted in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul writes, “There is a wide-open door for a great work here”. This is the verse that inspired the campaign. By opening its doors wide, both physically and relationally, WL Grace Church continues to love its neighbors to Jesus.



To learn more about the play space, visit the Playspace at WL Grace Facebook page: facebook.com/playspaceatwl



Leesburg Grace Church in Indiana used a Grace Grant to build a disc golf course on their property



With the help of a Grace Grant, Liberty Grace in Johnstown, PA purchased a portable sound system for off-site services & events

Propelling Local Ministry Through Grace Grants

Grace Financial's *Grace Grants* program was created to help propel ministry in the local church by supporting new outreach, evangelism, and discipleship initiatives.

The program comes alongside churches that have identified a ministry opportunity and need catalytic funding to move a new idea from vision to action. Through modest, targeted grants, Grace Grants help transform practical concepts into active ministry, encouraging churches to pursue new ministry programs designed for lasting impact.

What has become increasingly clear through the first rounds of completed grants is that when given access to resources to empower ideas, Charis churches have remarkable potential to reach people where they are. Whether through deeper discipleship within the church family or creative connection with the surrounding community, congregations have shown they are ready to serve in

new and engaging ways when given the tools and encouragement to move forward.

Many of the funded efforts have centered on creating natural connection points beyond traditional Sunday settings. In several communities, churches introduced accessible outdoor and recreational initiatives, including the development of a disc golf course designed specifically to function as a welcoming third space. These environments give neighbors a reason to step onto church property for everyday enjoyment and shared experience, often long before they attend a worship service. By creating places where people can gather comfortably and return regularly, churches are building relationships that open the door to spiritual conversations and ongoing ministry.

Other projects have extended a church's presence into public settings through portable equipment and event-based outreach,

making it easier to host gatherings, serve families, and communicate clearly in community venues. Still others have focused on strengthening discipleship pathways, equipping new believers and spiritually hungry attendees with focused resources and one-on-one support so that young believers are provided with intentional opportunities for discipleship.

Together, these early stories show how practical support, local vision, and faithful volunteers combine to produce meaningful gospel influence. The *Grace Grants* program continues to accept proposals from Charis churches that are ready to pursue a new ministry venture but need help getting started. Churches with ideas for outreach, evangelism, or discipleship initiatives are encouraged to take the next step and apply. Funding remains available, and Grace Financial stands ready to partner in propelling your next ministry effort forward.



Goodwill Contributions for 2025

For 2025, Grace Financial continues its longstanding track record of giving contributions to numerous ministries within the Charis Fellowship. With a successful audit recently completed and 2025 year-end results finalized, the Board has approved goodwill contributions totaling **\$698,482**. The majority of these contributions are

given to ministries that focus on church planting and leadership development.

"We are deeply grateful for our investors, whose partnership makes our ministry possible. In recognition of the ministry values shared by our investors and Grace Financial, it is our privilege to further serve

the Charis Fellowship through our goodwill contributions," says Ryan Howell, President and CEO. "God is incredibly gracious to our ministry, and our prayer is that these funds will serve their intended purpose to propel ministry throughout Charis Fellowship."



PO Box 587 Winona Lake, IN 46590 | 574.267.5161 | info@gracefin.org

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