

Council Minutes May 6, 2026 Grace United Church

Daniella D’Andrea	Chair	Present
Joe Chan	Vice-Chair	Present
Tory Walko	Past Chair	Present
Cecily Chiles	Secretary	Present
Paul Cooper	Treasurer Outreach Committee Representative	Present
Kenji Marui	Ministry	Present
Pat Morrison	Ministry	Absent
<u>Committee Representatives:</u>		
Marilyn Barros	Region Rep	Present
Christopher Cooke	Communications	Absent
John Cooke	Property	Present
Laura Black	Ministry & Personnel (M&P)	Present
Bruce Davies	Trustees	Present
Marion Staples	Finance Committee Representative	Absent
Gord Walkling	Worship	Present
Jim Wicks	Planning	Present
Bev Walkling	Congregational Care & Growth (CC&G) Proclamation and Special Events	Present
Shirley Willis	Christian Development	Absent

The Meeting was held in person and via Zoom with 13 participants and began at 7:00 pm. There was a quorum.

1. Devotion:

Paul Cooper on behalf of Outreach offered a devotion on the theme: Overcoming obstacles.

2. Reading of Scripture, reflection on the theme *Growing in Christ; The Gospels in Action*

Reflection on *Philippians 2:4*, reflecting on how social media can make us feel very individualistic and alienated from each other. The Gospels in action can be as simple as tuning into conversations with people. Where has your attention been pulled and where could it be more selflessly redirected?

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: to approve the agenda. [John Cooke / Bruce Davies] – Carried

4. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: to approve the Council meeting minutes April 1 and special email meeting April 8, 2026 [Bev Walkling / Marilyn Barros] – Carried.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Council received a copy of the minutes from annual congregational meeting (ACM) March 8, 2026.

Motion: that Council receive the minutes of the annual congregational meeting [John Cooke / Bruce Davies] - Carried.

Discussion: Question regarding the constitutional amendment to the duties of the Finance Committee: The office administrator (Kathy) initiated the process for approval with the Region. Once the Region responds to the amendment the revised constitution will be posted to the Grace website.

B. Proposed date for congregational meeting to elect governing body, Sunday May 31.

Motion: to call a congregational meeting on Sunday May 31, to elect Council officers and the governing body. [Gord Walkling / Jim Wicks] - Carried

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6. Correspondence

- A. Inn of the Good Shepherd- Thank you card received from Lynn, staff and board of directors.
- B. Bev Walkling received an email from treasurer of AUSE, Affirm United, regarding their invoice which we expect to receive this month.

7. New Business

- A. Kitchen Renewal Project.

BACKGROUND

- Following the May 2025 fire event, the stove repair was put on hold pending justification.
- Initially the focus was on converting to electrical stoves for safety and environmental reasons.
- With a more detailed scope, this was deemed to be too costly, so the focus shifted to repair of the existing stove.
- Meal preparation with 2 fewer oven spaces was feasible but limited the meal options and made the activity less efficient.
- Property was given the responsibility to complete this repair.
- To address cleaning deficiencies in the big kitchen, a deep-clean of the kitchen facilities was completed.
- It is expected that property would put cleaning activities in-place to maintain this level of cleanliness.
- The Outreach Committee re-assessed the remainder of the kitchen facility and determined that an expanded scope to upgrade might be justified.
- Work was under-taken to define the recommended improvements and estimate the cost of the expanded scope

CURRENT STATUS

- Initial review at April council meeting. Approval in principle to have a fund-raising campaign but needed additional detail - cost and scope - for final approval.
- As each component of the kitchen was assessed, it was apparent that a simple fix may not be the best solution.
- It was also recognized that the expanded scope required a higher level of resourcing.
- This included additional resources (like a project leader) to evaluate options in addition to a financing plan.

GO FORWARD RECOMMENDATION

- Council to form an ad-hoc committee to develop a more detailed project scope. Potential cost could be in the \$50K range.
- Outreach will bring a motion to the May council meeting.
- Justification is summarized as safety (cleanliness) and an improved work environment.
- There is also the possibility that a more modern facility could attract additional kitchen use by the community.
- A more complete justification would be generated by the proposed ad-hoc committee.

Moved: That Grace Council approve the formation of an ad-hoc committee to develop a detailed plan for the big kitchen renewal [Paul Cooper / Gord Walkling]. - Carried

Discussion: several members of the outreach committee will join the ad hoc cttee. The committee is seeking a chair.

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8. Pastoral Team Reports and Teaching

A. Kenji Marui

- Flexing work schedule to coincide with Kai's training at Starbucks
- Visits to hospital and hospice
- Completed training in advanced suicide intervention, done through Women's Interval Home
- Will send a Pastoral Letter to Rev. Jon Forbes and Camlachie United Church
- Scheduling debrief with St. Luke's United re: shared Good Friday service and PIE day
- Couple of jazz worship services remaining in our spring schedule
- Working as an adult advisor to the National Youth Council visioning group
- Spring term as preaching lab instructor concluding next week
- Sabbatical is coming up, more formal details will be forthcoming

9. Key Ministry Committee Reports

A. Worship

- Kenji's Leave Coverage: All weeks of Kenji's leave are now covered. Debra McGill (13 Sundays), Marilyn Townsend-Smith (6 Sundays), Jon Forbes (3 Sundays) and Lauren Morrison (1 Sunday) have all committed to preach over this time period.
- Pulpit Supply May 24 and June 28: Marilyn Townsend-Smith will preach on May 24 and Andrew Koornstra will preach on June 28.
- Communion: The committee is exploring a move back to traditional ways of celebrating communion. Factors such as public health concerns, preparation of the elements and identifying volunteers will all be part of the committee's considerations.

Gord Walkling

B. Christian Development

- CD committee met last week. Looking for one additional person for leadership.
- Appeal from the pulpit, Pat is working with high school graduates to make an appeal to the congregation.

Shirley Willis

C. Outreach

- 112 clients served at the IOGS in April. 143 pounds of food taken to the Inn in May.
- Progressing details of the kitchen renewal project.
- Over \$2000 raised for the Lambton Centre at the April 19th soup luncheon.
- Next soup luncheon will be on September 27, 2026. Reviewing potential beneficiaries.
- Discussed requirements for the Scott Woods concert when using Grace facilities on December 19, 2026.

Paul Cooper

D. Congregational Care and Growth

- Communications has asked the committee to write a description of the work and purpose (why you should join) the committee. This will be posted on the website. Working on a response.
- Easter flowers – several of thank you notes received.
- Shortfall for expenses for PIE Day. Waiting for the invoice from AUSE for Grace's portion.
- People were recommended for confirmation and new members celebrations.
- Large donation made from Benevolent fund.

Bev Walkling

E. Proclamation and Special Events

- Exploring the idea of holding a trunk sale in parking lot.

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- The committee is hoping to arrange and host a meet and greet for candidates in the municipal election. Consulting with the office administration to establish a date. This has been an important event for community outreach. Municipal election date is Oct. 26, 2026.

Bev Walkling

10. Governance and Support Committee Reports

- A. Planning
- B. Planning is attempting to locate the document that was prepared for the pastoral search for Kenji that describes the Grace United Church in many details such as demographics, and vision and goals. Anybody?
- C. Advised Property on a number of Project proposals including:
- a) Narthex door automatic opener
 - b) Administration office window replacement
 - c) Large Kitchen Renewal
- D. Reviewed "Planning Giving Workbook" following update from Chris Cooke
- a) Workbook prepared several years ago to assist individuals considering making a donation to Grace from their estate
 - b) Itemizes the giving opportunities
 - c) Suggestions for financial advisor, accountant and discussions with family
 - d) **Follow-Up:** Jim to provide a copy to Trustees for their input considering there are some legal aspects included
- E. Continue to progress our approach to refining our Vision for Grace
- a) Are reviewing the content and recommendations in the 2008 Planning Committee Report on visioning
 - b) The effort engaged key Committees asking the following questions:
 - i) What's coming down the road?
 - ii) What's truly important?
 - iii) What are our past and present strengths?
 - iv) What ministry opportunities await us?
 - v) What do we build to get there?
 - vi) What will leaders need to transform the church?
 - c) The following Committees were engaged:
 - i) Newcomers (*Confirm current committee*)
 - ii) Worship
 - iii) Christian Development
 - iv) Caregivers (*Confirm current committee*)
 - v) Proclamation and Special Events
 - d) **Follow-Up:** Jim to provide copies of the relevant content within this report to current committees with the request that they review and update/comment on how things are today versus 18 years ago. This provides useful information to Planning as we structure our current Visioning efforts

Jim Wicks

- B. Finance
- Operating budget data for Q1 2026 communicated to the congregation via the weekly e-mail. No major surprises.
 - Marion got a new knee on May 4th. Everything went well. The healing process will last at least a few months.
 - Thanks to Bob Newman for backfilling for Marion with the assistant treasurer duties.
 - Annual report received from Sarnia Community Foundation. The annual grantable amount for 2026 is about \$5700 (if we choose to withdraw the max).
 - Will start CRA report in May, Dead-line for filing is the end of June.
 - Still looking for new members for the finance committee.

Paul Cooper

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C. Property

- Investigating lighting upgrades for the parking lot.
- Brian Eagleson replaced the blind in Pat's office.
- Initial estimate to repair the Sanctuary soffit/eaves is \$20k. Looking at alternatives and other contractors.
- Collaborating with Kathy to resolve the insurance issues for a few rental groups before the fall renewals.
- The Main Kitchen Stove repair was started by installing a new oven thermostat. However, the contractor was unable to source the oven on/off valve. The right-side oven remains out of service while the contractor searches for the valve we need. Jim Wicks is working on signage and training materials to enhance safety and clarity for operation of the stove.
- As reported previously, the automatic opener on the Narthex N inside door failed in March and must be replaced. A project proposal was submitted to Planning, and they advised this should be treated as a mandatory project to maintain accessibility. 3 estimates were obtained and we propose to engage IRS Locks to install the new equipment. The exterior door opener is also close to end of life.

Moved that: Council approve replacement of the automatic opener on the Narthex N inside door at a cost of \$3k + tax. Costs to be directed to the Capital Replacement Fund. John Cooke / Jim Wicks] - Carried

- The Administration Office Window cracked last year, and we propose replacing the window before further problems develop. Kathy requested that we install a sliding window so she can let fresh air into the office. Several options/suppliers were considered, and a project proposal was submitted to Planning for comment. We could replace the glass only (\$683) but we would recommend installing a new fixed unit at a cost of \$1035. The slider option is an additional \$110. Our preferred supplier is Matheson.

Moved that: Council approve replacement of the Administration Office Window with a new slider window at a cost of \$1137.79 + tax. Costs to be directed to the Capital Replacement Fund. [John Cooke / Marilyn Barros] – Carried

Discussion: Questions were raised regarding the security of the office window and any possible interference with heating and cooling. The office is monitored by the building security system. The existing heating/cooling system does not cycle fresh air into the office.

John Cooke

D. M & P

- No report.

Laura Black

E. Communications

- No report.

Chris Cooke

F. Regional Council

1. Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion – livestream and in person – Saturday, June 13 from 9- 1, featuring Adrian Jacobs of the Turtle Clan, Cayuga Nation. A sharing of the Spiritual Covenant, a reflection on land, relationship and reconciliation. It is held at Six Nations Polytechnic, Oshweken, ON. It includes lunch and Communion. (Approx 2 hours from Sarnia) Registration deadline, June 1, 2026.
2. April 29, 2026 – attended Zoom ARW town hall regarding Toward 2035 – discussion points posed:
What does your COF need from itself, neighbours, regional council and National church.
 - Common themes seemed to be, the better you get to know other Communities of Faith in your area, the more apt we are to collaborate with each other or perhaps have specific gifts that we can acknowledge. Perhaps this is an opportunity for Grace to talk about how the Regional governing body could be helpful in a way that helps us see God at work in our community.

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3. President of ARW, Richard Auckland has a message on the website. – He has been to several of the congregations in the region, speaking on Sunday mornings. He has shared his experiences as the President of ARW, regional governance information and concrete examples of what is happening within the region as we look ahead.
4. The Inventions of Summer – a worship resource including 4 weeks of resources with themes as follows:
 - Sunflowers – Pronouncing a Blessing, Receiving the day and affirming Goodness.
 - String Beans – Taking Up the Offerings, Thanksgiving and returning blessing to Earth.
 - Mosquitoes – Praying Through Hard Times, Honest prayer when life irritates or wounds.
 - Fireflies – Praying for Others, A practice of carrying others in Love.
5. Moosehide Campaign – recognized on Tuesday, May 14th. The Campaign is more than a day; it is a mobilization against the national crisis of racist violence facing Indigenous women, girls, and 2S-LGBTQIA+ people. How can you participate? - Wear and share a Moosehide pin; virtual workshops; Fast for the day; join local marches, a national rally at Queen’s Park in Toronto at noon the United Church of Canada contingent will be present.
6. The ARW Discipleship and Justice Commission is encouraging all communities of faith within our region to explore becoming an apartheid-free community. UNJPPI (United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel)

To read current ARW newsletter

- <https://arwrucc.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ee15470ca4eab124ea964929b&id=a1f95bccd5&e=8325eff85f>

Marilyn Barros

G. Trustees

- No report

Bruce Davies

H. AOTS

- Plumley Scholarship fund process is underway. Applications from graduating high school students will be received until the first week of June.

John Cooke

11. Reflection and Closing Prayer

Reflection on Devotion.

Meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

Kenji led a closing prayer

Next Regular Council Meeting: Wednesday June 3, 2026.

Daniella D’Andrea, Chair

Cecily Chiles, Council Secretary

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Sunday Lock-up Responsibility		
2026	January	Communications
	February	Outreach
	March	Property
	April	Planning
	May	Trustees
	June	Worship
	July	CD
	August	CC&G
	September	M&P
	October	Finance
	November	Communications
	December	Outreach
Devotional at Council Meetings		
2026	January	Regional Council
	February	Communications
	March	Finance
	April	M&P
	May	Outreach
	June	Trustees
	July	na
	August	na
	September	na
	October	Planning
	November	CC&G
	December	Property