

**Helping people find
and follow Jesus Christ.**



Church & Community Profile



THORNAPPLE
COVENANT CHURCH

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So go and
make followers
of all people
in the world.
Baptize them in
the name of the
Father and
the Son and the
Holy Spirit.

- Matthew 28:19,
International
Children's Bible

Dear Potential Candidate:

Thank you for your interest in the Senior Pastor position at Thornapple Covenant Church. This profile presents basic information about Thornapple – our history, our members and staff, our ministries, our mission and values, as well as a picture of the community we serve.

Beyond the facts and figures, we hope this profile gives you a glimpse of the personality of Thornapple – a warm, supportive, energetic and welcoming community; a community of believers deeply engaged in using their gifts in God's service both at Thornapple and outside our doors. A community excited about what God will do through us in this next chapter of our life together. A community open to the leadership and teaching of our next Senior Pastor. A community aware of its challenges and eager (and ready) to make the changes necessary to keep growing and fulfilling our mission to help others find and follow Jesus Christ.

We are prayerfully seeking that person, and invite your openness to God's leading as you consider the information presented here.

In Christ,

Sue Smith,
Chair, Senior Pastor Search Committee

History

Since 1979, we have experienced God's blessing and grown together as a loving and caring church family.

Oct.-Dec. 1979

Charter signed to officially launch Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church.



For the first seven years our home was Pine Ridge Elementary.

Sept. 21, 1986

Congregation caravans from Pine Ridge for the first service in the new facility.



1980s

1978

Six families commissioned by First Covenant Church of Grand Rapids to begin a new ministry on the suburban SE side of the city

Steve Armfield accepts the call to serve as the Pastor of the new church.



Dec. 1983

Seven acres of land purchased at the corner of Cascade Rd. and Burton St.



Groundbreaking took place in the fall of 1985 (shown, original Sanctuary, now The Commons)

1990s

March 1996

Congregation votes to expand the facility, adding classrooms, a nursery and a new sanctuary; project completed in Oct. 1997.



(Above) Placing the spire of the new Sanctuary (left)

2000s

Through the years, we have experienced the blessing of seeing many young people and adults respond to Christ's call to ministry and leave Grand Rapids to serve in churches and missions around the world.

2010

Rob Peterson accepts the call to serve as Senior Pastor.



2010s

2016

Congregation approves building project to expand facility, adding a gym, kitchen and additional ministry/office spaces.

Always Making Room capital campaign launched to fund project and is completed in 2019.



Groundbreaking for the new space takes place in April 2018

2020s

May 2019

Dedication of new space and Thornapple Community Center.



2020

Remy Diederich accepts the call to serve as Thornapple's Transitional Pastor.

COVID-19 pandemic causes in-person ministry to pause while we pivot to offering online worship, virtual gatherings and creative ways to continue to serve and be together in community.



Staff

5 full time
6 part time
Countless
volunteers



Remy Diederich
Transitional Pastor



Andrew Vanover
Associate Pastor



Michael Weller
Minister of
Worship Arts



Lynne McLaughlin
Minister to Children
Interim Pastor of
Community Life



Peter Ek
Minister to Students



Linda Winer
Director of Middle
School Ministry



Lisa Udell
Minister to Children



Angel Baum
Office Assistant



Michelle Bennett
Communications
Coordinator



Kimberly Korpak
Pastoral Assistant



Taren Durham
Staff Accountant

Learn more: thornapple.org/about-us

Congregational Stats

623

Adults who regularly
attend (pre-COVID)

Average number of
years attending

13

380

Current
Members

Giving Units in 2020
(households)

245

270

Adults in traditional
small groups

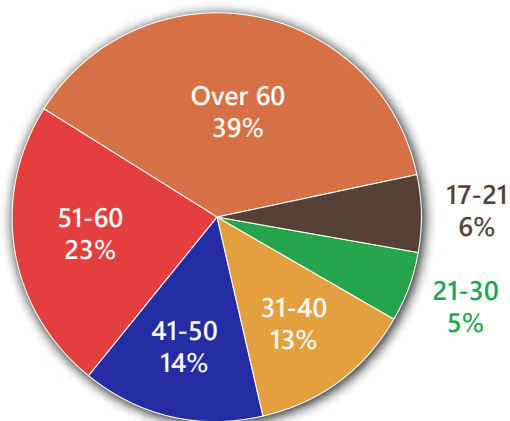


Who is Thornapple?
**“Genuine people who
live open, honest
lives for Christ.”**

- From 2020 Congregational Survey

Members + Regular Attenders

Age 17 and older



Children's and Student Ministries

Age 17 and younger

150

Birth-5th grade

55

Middle School
(6th-8th grade)

77

High School
(9th-12th grade)

Beliefs/Denomination

We are a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), a denomination of more than eight hundred churches in the United States and Canada. It was founded by Swedish immigrants in 1885 as a voluntary covenant of churches committed to working together to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Covenant churches emphasize the Bible's witness to new life in Jesus Christ expressed in a day to day walk with the Lord.



For Covenant people, our essential beliefs are summed up in six "Covenant Affirmations."

- We affirm the centrality of the word of God.
- We affirm the necessity of the new birth.
- We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the Church.
- We affirm the Church as a fellowship of believers.
- We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ.



Learn more: covchurch.org

"We are committed to the basic Covenant tenets of 'how is your walk' and 'where is it written.'"

- From 2020 Congregational Survey

Mission

Since 1979 Thornapple Covenant Church has been called to help people find and follow

Jesus Christ (John 1:35-51). We believe this to be our main task and by the power of the Holy Spirit we participate in God's mission that all people come to faith and that all things be made right in and through Jesus our Lord.

HELPING PEOPLE
find AND *follow*
JESUS CHRIST.

As an intergenerational Jesus-Centered Community we believe we are called to know Jesus and follow him by centering our lives around him and by doing so experience his transforming presence, a transformation by which we become more like Christ, know his abundance in our lives and willingly live like Christ for the sake of others and the sharing of the good news of the gospel (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 4:19; 1 Peter 2:21).

But how should we live? What shape does our discipleship take in our daily lives? At Thornapple finding and following Jesus means we humbly commit ourselves to a way of daily living that honors Jesus and winsomely draws people to him. To that end we invite each person to practice the following missional habits.

- Bless our neighbors with God's love and the good news of Jesus (Witness).
- Look to God in prayer at all times and seasons (Pray).
- Learn Jesus through engagement with God's word (Word).
- Share our life with a small group of disciples (Community).
- Care for the poor and vulnerable as we extend the compassion of Christ (Serve).

It is our hope and prayer that as a result of our active faith we will see people find Jesus Christ, follow him with passion and maturity, and work for the flourishing of our city and world.

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Our Values

Multigenerational

We are committed to ministry and service to all generations within our congregation.

- Children are welcomed and nurtured in biblical teaching from their time in the nursery through their entry to middle school. Adult and student volunteers minister to our children and those of our community on Sunday mornings, during Vacation Bible School and through our Trailblazers on Wednesday evenings.
- Student Ministry provides outreach activities designed to attract unchurched friends, small group studies and summer mission and adventure trips. Student Ministry staff and volunteers are committed to investing in relationships designed to last throughout a student's entire time in middle school and high school.
- Adults serve within our congregation's ministries and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through affinity and age-based groups. Seniors can volunteer for VBS one day and attend Soup and Study for Prime Timers the next day.



Christ-Centered

Jesus Christ is central to who we are and what we do.

- This is evident in our Sunday worship, adult/children's Sunday school, men/women's weekly Bible studies and baptisms.
- Stephens Ministry provides a Christ-centered companionship in a trustworthy, confidential relationship.



Ministries of Thornapple



Children
Students
Adults
(small groups)
Women
Men
Young Adults
Horizons
Prime Timers

Missions
Love Mercy Do Justice (Local)
International
Care + Community
Prayer
Stephen Ministry
Marriage Ministry
Community Center (Gym)

HORIZONS

stephen
MINISTRY.



Learn more: thornapple.org/ministries

Our Values

Evangelism

Sharing the Gospel to all audiences, churched and unchurched.

- We proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God in song, in sermons, in conversations, in small group gatherings, in caring for others and in opening the doors of the Community Center to local organizations.
- We reach parents and children through various activities like VBS, family camps, mission trips, men's and women's retreats, recreational activities and community partnerships.
- We are committed to a virtual, online presence, including use of social media.



Serving Others

Responding with humility to help those in need.

We have been blessed with abundance. It is important to us to share our abundance with those in need.

- Whenever there is a specific need in our church or community, our people respond richly (e.g., preparing and delivering freezer meals for shut-ins during COVID).
- Our church body supports several local mission organizations, both financially and with hands-on help. On any given weekend, congregants can be seen volunteering their time to work on mission and outreach projects throughout the community and in their own backyards.
- We generously give our time and financial resources to meet needs within our church and beyond our walls. It is an important part of our worship to be committed to supporting local and global organizations.



**“Thornapple is a
warm-hearted, inviting,
caring, loving congregation
that is committed to
multigenerational community.”**

- From 2020 Congregational Survey



Our Values

Small Groups

The caring relationships in small groups are the heart of our church.

- They are places to build friendships, explore faith in Jesus Christ and deepen awareness of God’s presence.
- They are places of relational, spiritual and missional growth.
- On average we have 25-30 adult small groups actively doing life together.
- Other groups include Prime Timers for seniors, Horizons for middle age adults, Young Adult group, Student Ministry small groups, Men’s Small Groups, Women’s Bible Studies, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) and Moms on a Mission (moms of school age children).



Investing in Community

Our church is committed to making an impact for Christ in our local and global community,

- The recent completion of our Thornapple Community Center was the culmination of our *Always Making Room* investment, including a large multipurpose room and commercial kitchen. This addition allows Thornapple to open our building to our local community for outreach events, recreation and banquet activities, as well as hosting members of our community in need, such as Family Promise.
- The Love Mercy Do Justice team facilitates our congregation in serving and investing in local ministries such as Safe Haven Ministries, Dégagé Ministries, In the Image and Family Promise. The church has developed new collaborations with the local YMCA in pre-marital counseling and personal financial management.
- Our congregation supports global ministries through financial and prayer support of 13 individuals, couples and organizations. Our support includes traveling to the overseas homes of our international missionaries to learn about and support their work. In November each year, our congregation participates in the ECC’s Covenant World Relief offering; this past year, our donations for CWR exceeded \$29,000.



Learn more: thornapple.org/missions



Community Center Use,
The First Nine Months
(Prior to COVID)

- Community Open House
- Dedication
- Church Potlucks
- School Standardized Testing
- Church Security Training
- Hymn Sings
- LEGO Camp
- Vacation Bible School
- Women’s Self-Defense Class
- Children’s & Student Ministry Gatherings
- Adult Small Groups, Ministries & Meals
- Men’s/Women’s Special Events
- WholyFit & Pickleball
- Community Basketball
- Wedding Events
- School Sports Banquets
- Game Nights
- MOPS Consignment Sale
- Fall Fest
- Youth Workers Conference
- Thanksgiving Social
- Family Christmas Parties

About Our Community

Michigan

Michigan has something for everyone: We're the home of the Motor City, MoTown records, Mackinac Island, Sleeping Bear Dunes and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshores, and Faygo pop. Ask a Michigander what they love about Michigan and you're bound to hear a unique and moving personal testimony about "The Mitten." We're thankful to call the Great Lakes state home, and we believe you'll love it, too.



Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area/Kent County

Grand Rapids is the second largest city in the state. It is the dynamic and thriving hub of West Michigan, contributing to the exceptional quality of life experienced throughout the region. Traditional values of hard work, philanthropy, entrepreneurship and learning characterize the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. It is a vibrant and fun place to live, offering diverse local restaurants, the Grand Rapids Griffins, the West Michigan Whitecaps, ArtPrize, Meijer Gardens, parks and miles of bike trails.



Cascade/Forest Hills/Ada

Thornapple is in Cascade Township, conveniently located 10 minutes from downtown Grand Rapids and less than an hour from the beaches of Lake Michigan. Cascade is an upper middle class community featuring great services, outstanding schools, shopping, dining and recreational opportunities.



West Michigan Links and Resources

- **The Right Place** (rightplace.org) | The primary economic development organization in West Michigan, The Right Place has excellent resources on the local demographics, cost of living information, statistics, and an overview of the economic health and vitality of the region.
- **Experience Grand Rapids** (experiencegr.org) | ExperienceGR highlights local attractions; outdoor recreation; cultural events and institutions; the culinary and craft beverage scene; and family fun options. It's a great resource to get a glimpse of what to do and what's going on in West Michigan.
- **Hello West Michigan** (hellowestmichigan.com) | The best one stop shop for those considering relocating to West Michigan from why it is a great place to live, work, and play as well as a resource for trailing spouses.

Local Community Info and Resources

- **Cascade Township** (cascadetwp.com) | Our immediate local county division where many of our families live
- **Forest Hills Public Schools** (fhps.net) | A majority of Thornapple youth attend Forest Hills Public Schools
- **Ada Village** (adavillage.com) | Beautiful village minutes from Thornapple, home to favorite local hangouts and a hub for community activities, including our men's softball league
- **Kent County** (accesskent.com) | County resources and information

“Thornapple has an earnest desire to understand how God wants us to influence our community.”

- From 2020 Congregational Survey

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Challenges/Aspirations

All congregations have challenges; we are no different. We see our challenges as opportunities for growth. Our leadership is aligned and focused on building on these opportunities. We pray for discernment as we enter our next chapter and seek our next Senior Pastor.



Post-COVID Reality

What is the lingering impact of a global pandemic?

The church around the world is asking: "What now?" "How do we regather?"

"Does a post-pandemic environment offer new opportunities for ministry?"

"How do we serve our congregation, our community?" "How do we 'do church'?"

We want to be a church that is well-prepared to welcome people, both in person and virtually.



Unity In Christ

We value a body that exhibits a rich diversity in individual history, viewpoints and worship preferences. What unifies us is our love for Jesus.

Our over 40-year history has shown this to be a strong value woven through many joys and obstacles. But, over the last four years, we have seen significant struggle in keeping this value alive and well. As the worldwide body of Christ is showing increasing divisiveness, we are seeing that mirrored in our congregation.

This is not who we want to be.

We want to be a church that agrees on the main principles of Christianity and does not let the world divide us.

"The reason we have called Thornapple home for so many years is because of the PEOPLE."

- From 2020 Congregational Survey

Aging Congregation

As our congregation ages, we have seen falling numbers in younger adult/family attendance.

The largest demographic percentage of our congregation is over 60-years-old but we see an opportunity for growth in serving those 40 and under, particularly young families. In attracting younger people, we don't want to alienate our long-time members, instead we want to engage them and partner with them in reaching out to our community to minister to the children, youth and young adults that are searching for a church body to call home.

We want to minister to all ages and be a vibrant church everyone can call home so we can continue to grow and minister to our greater community.

