

GRANGEVILLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

125



Years of faith, place, and people

A journey through space and time

From the Camas Prairie and the first Christian gatherings to a living church in Grangeville today.

Introduction

Every church keeps time in more than calendars. It keeps time in places moved by hand, names remembered, songs carried forward, children taught, meals shared, and doors opened.

The story of Grangeville Christian Church begins on the Camas Prairie and takes us through more than a century of worship, work, change, and perseverance. The congregation's official birthday is October 6, 1901, but its roots reach into the homes, schoolhouses, and tent meetings that gathered Christian people across the region before a permanent building existed.

This history follows that journey through space and time: from the first gatherings and early families, through war, economic hardship, building projects, changing ministers, and the expanding ministry of the church today. It is a record of a congregation that has continued to make room for faith, for family, and for the people still to come.

A special thanks to the historian of the Grangeville Christian Church. Working tirelessly for years to preserve information, photographs, and documents for coming generations.

Using computerized tools to repair old pictures, AI to colorize them to make them more friendly for the reader, and summarizing many themes to keep this publication short in size, it provides a focused journey through the story of the Grangeville Christian Church.

September 2026, Dr. Dietrich Albrecht

The Camas Prairie before GCC

The Camas Prairie and Clearwater country are part of the Nez Perce homeland, with a history reaching back long before Grangeville Christian Church.

The Lewis and Clark expedition crossed this region; later, the Spalding mission became part of the area's recorded history. Gold-rush roads and trails brought new movement through the country.

Idaho County's formation gave the region a civic frame as settlements grew. These layers of Indigenous presence, travel, mission history, and county organization preceded the congregation.

Around 1900, Idaho's Camas Prairie regions—both in north-central and south-central Idaho—underwent a rapid transition from native root-gathering grounds and open range into settled agricultural communities:

- **North-Central Camas Prairie (Nez Perce Country):** Following the official opening of surplus reservation lands to non-Native homesteading in 1895 under the Dawes Act, over 70% of the fertile rolling plateau passed into private ownership. Native meadows were quickly converted into vast wheat fields and pastures, supported by early sawmills and logging infrastructure.
- **South-Central Camas Prairie (Camas County):** Situated in a high-elevation basin near the Soldier Mountains, the region shifted from traditional Shoshone-Bannock harvesting grounds and cattle ranges into fenced homesteads and dry-land grain farming. Pioneer centers like Soldier and Corral flourished as primary hubs of commerce and community before later railroad expansion shifted business activity toward Fairfield.

The story begins before the church building

Before Grangeville Christian Church had a permanent building, Christian worship moved through homes, schoolhouses, and temporary gatherings across the Camas Prairie.

PLACE

The Camas Prairie, the Clearwater country, and the Nez Perce homeland shaped the community that followed.

MOVEMENT

Trails, wagon roads, gold strikes, homesteads, and the railroad brought people into the region.

FAITH

Early records show worship woven into everyday life before a permanent Grangeville congregation existed.

Before Grangeville had a church

The story of Grangeville Christian Church begins with a landscape already shaped by generations of Nez Perce life. The Camas Prairie and Clearwater country were part of the Nez Perce homeland.

During the late nineteenth century, trails and wagon roads connected scattered communities. Gold strikes, homesteads, and the railroad brought new arrivals, while families built the schools, homes, and gathering places that made community life possible.

Christian worship traveled with that movement. Before a permanent congregation or church building existed in Grangeville, people met in homes, schoolhouses, and tents. These gatherings created relationships and a foundation for a lasting congregation.

Grangeville takes shape

Early Roots & Founding

Before white settlement, the Camas Prairie was a seasonal gathering place for the Nez Perce (*Nimiipuu*). The 1860s gold rushes in nearby Florence and Elk City turned the meadow into a bustling supply crossroads. In 1874, local farmers created a chapter of "The Grange." After nearby Mount Idaho refused land for a Grange Hall, rancher John Crooks donated land three miles north. The community built a flour mill in 1876 powered by Three-mile Creek, and the surrounding settlement became Grangeville.

The Nez Perce War (1877)

By 1877, Grangeville had roughly 35 residents. When the U.S. government ordered non-treaty Nez Perce bands to move to a reservation, violent clashes erupted along the Salmon River. Fearing attack, local pioneers fortified Grangeville's Grange Hall with 16-foot logs and flour sacks. On June 17, 1877, Nez Perce warriors decisively defeated U.S. troops nearby in the Battle of White Bird Canyon, initiating Chief Joseph's 1,100-mile fighting retreat toward Canada.

Expansion & Modern Era

Following the war, the military presence at Camp Howard stimulated the local economy. A subsequent mining boom in the 1890s led to Grangeville's incorporation in 1897. In 1902, voters officially transferred the Idaho County seat from Mount Idaho to Grangeville. The 1908 completion of the Camas Prairie Railroad solidified the town as a regional commercial hub for timber and agriculture. Today, Grangeville serves as the Idaho County seat and a gateway to the Nez Perce National Forest and Salmon River.

The Nez Perce War and its aftermath

The Nez Perce War of 1877 was a profound and painful turning point in the region's history. It involved Nez Perce communities and the United States government, with consequences that continued well beyond the military campaign.

As the prairie changed through settlement and county formation, Indigenous people remained part of the region's history and present. Remembering the church's later story responsibly means recognizing that its community developed within a homeland already shaped by Nez Perce life.

The Nez Perce War of 1877 began in mid-June when mounting tensions between white settlers and the Nez Perce erupted into violent conflict. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the Nez Perce had a peaceful history with the U.S. military, having aided the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804 and Captain Benjamin Bonneville in the 1830s. The war's first major engagement occurred at the Battle of White Bird Canyon in Idaho Territory, where Nez Perce warriors secured a decisive victory against U.S. Army troops. Led by commanders like Chief Looking Glass and Chief White Bird, a few hundred Nez Perce warriors successfully evaded thousands of U.S. soldiers throughout the summer and early fall. Seeking refuge, Chief Joseph helped lead his band on a grueling 1,500-mile journey from their homeland in Oregon's Wallowa Valley toward the Canadian border. The Nez Perce maintained their retreat while traveling alongside many noncombatants, including women, children, and the elderly. Despite having no formal military training, the Nez Perce consistently demonstrated remarkable tactical skill against Civil War-veteran U.S. Army officers.

By October 1877, severe winter weather, depleted supplies, and constant pursuing forces brought the Nez Perce to a desperate state. The conflict culminated in the Battle of Bear Paw Mountain in Montana Territory, fought between September 30 and October 5, just 40 miles short of the Canadian border. Realizing further battle was futile, Chief Joseph formally surrendered to General Nelson A. Miles and General Oliver Otis Howard on October 5, 1877, uttering his famous declaration, "From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever." Although General Miles promised the Nez Perce a safe return to their native Wallowa Valley, higher political authorities overruled the agreement, forcibly exiling the survivors to Kansas and Oklahoma before allowing some to return to the Pacific Northwest years later.



Chief Joseph, Nez Perce leader, pictured in an 1877 portrait.

Faith travels by home, schoolhouse, and tent

1882

At the Adkison home

Edward A. Chase conducted a Restoration Movement service at the Adkison home west of Grangeville.

1895

At Fairview schoolhouse

Meetings formed the first Christian Church congregation on the Camas Prairie.

1895

A tent meeting in Grangeville

The gathering left a deep impression, even before an organization was formed.

c. 1899

Windy Hill Christian Church

The church at Winona began around 1899 and later joined Grangeville.



Christian Church picnic, early 1900s.

Tents, homesteads, and new connections

The 1895 tent meeting in Grangeville came as homesteading brought new families to the prairie. The meeting left a strong impression before the congregation was formally organized.

Railroad development added another connection to a region already linked by trails and wagon roads. Families arrived with their own journeys and hopes; Doc and Loulie Jesse's story became part of the church's early history.

These movements created a setting in which worship could travel between homes, schoolhouses, and temporary gatherings.



A tent becomes a church home

During the 1901 evangelistic meetings, the Fenn home and a tent served as important gathering places. A reed organ was carried to the tent, bringing music into the outdoor meetings.

Sixteen people were baptized during the meetings. The baptistry was made with cold water, a practical detail remembered from the congregation's beginning.

On October 6, 28 charter members organized Grangeville Christian Church. Among those baptized was eleven-year-old Keith Fenn, alongside a woman who was 75.

28

charter members

Six weeks of evangelistic meetings in August 1901 led to 16 baptisms and a church of 28 charter members.

A CONGREGATION ACROSS GENERATIONS

Keith Fenn, age eleven, was baptized alongside a 75-year-old woman.

A TEMPORARY HOME

The congregation first met in Odd Fellows Hall while its own building took shape.

October 6, 1901 is remembered as the official birthday of Grangeville Christian Church.



The first building moved, and the church kept growing

A BUILDING IN MOTION

The original building stood on the north side of town, was enlarged in 1904, and moved across Grangeville in 1908.

A MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH

Doc and Loulie Jesse were married there in 1903 and became part of its long life of service.

“Good interest, good people, good crowds, good prospects.”

By 1909, the congregation had 245 members.



Grangeville Christian Church building, 1916.

A building moves as the railroad arrives

In 1908, the church building was moved across town using a horse-drawn pulley system. The move carried the congregation's meeting place into a changing Grangeville.

That same year, the Camas Prairie Railroad reached Grangeville, linking the town to wider routes of travel and commerce. The church's own movement and the railroad's arrival mark a year of transition in the community.

A congregation takes root

In 1882, Edward A. Chase held a Restoration Movement service at the Adkison home west of Grangeville. Meetings at Fairview schoolhouse formed the first Christian Church congregation on the Camas Prairie in 1895; a tent meeting in Grangeville that year left a deep impression. Windy Hill Christian Church at Winona began around 1899 and later joined Grangeville.

On October 6, 1901, 28 charter members organized the Grangeville congregation. Six weeks of evangelistic meetings helped establish its early life. The first church building was moved as the congregation grew.

Ministers of the founding era

C. T. McDonald (1901–1908); H. H. Hubble (1906–1910), first full-time salaried minister;
D. Lloyd Morgan (1909–1913);
A. F. VanSlyke (1914);
Walter Callison (arrived 1916);
J. A. Pine (arrived 1917).

Care became infrastructure

KEITH AND MINA FENN

They preserved the church's early memories and records, keeping the first years legible to those who followed.

DOC JESSE

His carpentry made service tangible, joining skill and care to the places the congregation used.

THE LADIES AID

Organizing, teaching, music, youth groups, and shared meals gave the congregation a life beyond Sunday worship.

Generations of teachers and workers turned ordinary acts of care into a lasting church.



Doc and Loulie
Jesse's 1903
wedding.

Doc and Loulie
Jesse, later in
life.

Through war, flu, depression, and loss, the church stayed present

Public meetings and church services stopped during the Spanish flu epidemic in the fall of 1918. The Great Depression placed spiritual and financial pressure on the congregation. Members remember pastors, teachers, and families who showed up in hard seasons.

“I have seen the church through its ups and its downs—and it never stays down.”

Velda Fairbanks

War, influenza, and economic strain

World War I touched the community, including through the loss associated with the Tuscania. In the fall of 1918, the Spanish flu led to the closure of public meetings and church services.

The Great Depression brought further spiritual and financial pressures. Through these years, memories preserved by Velda Fairbanks and Frank Higgins describe pastoral care and a congregation that continued to show up for people.

“I have seen the church through its ups and its downs—and it never stays down.”

The account holds hardship alongside the everyday work of care.

Making room by hand

Year	Work of the congregation
1937	The Winona congregation joined Grangeville, bringing its pews and pulpit.
1935-1940s	A south-side annex, fellowship hall, kitchen, and Who-So-Ever classroom followed.
1948-1950	Members dug a basement under the main building with shovels and wheelbarrows.
1953	A new parsonage and remodeled church were dedicated in September.

Expansion was not abstract. It was measured in rooms, tools, labor, and shared effort.



The church building in 1937, the year the Winona congregation joined Grangeville.
Winona pulpit (archive photograph).

Rooms for learning, worship, and music

The Winona congregation merged with Grangeville in 1937, bringing its pews and pulpit. A south-side annex and the Who-So-Ever class extended space for fellowship and learning.

From 1948 to 1950, members dug a basement by hand with shovels and wheelbarrows. The congregation also added a bell and a parsonage; a remodeled church and new parsonage were dedicated in September 1953.

Music remained central to congregational life. Jasper Havens's 1944 reflection described the church's riches as “found in the harmonious music of the soul.”

Ministry through uncertain years

The archive records successive ministers through years marked by war, influenza, economic hardship, and loss. The existing history describes a church that remained present through these disruptions, continuing its work of worship and care.

Some entries give an arrival year rather than a complete term. Two ministers have no dates in the archive; their service is included without assigning a guessed timeframe.

Ministers recorded for this period

E. R. Black (dates unknown);
Oscar Cooper (arrived 1922);
O. A. Ishmail (arrived 1924);
Ernest I. Mitchell (arrived 1928);
F. R. Jamison (arrived 1932);
Hubert E. Sias (arrived 1935);
Jasper Havens (arrived 1942);
G. W. Lawson (dates unknown);
Lew Brown (arrived 1944).

In 1944, Jasper Havens described the congregation's riches as "found in the harmonious music of the soul."

"Our riches are found in the harmonious music of the soul."

Jasper Havens described a small pioneering church whose wealth was found in education, worship, community, and music.

The line captures a congregation that built culture as carefully as it built rooms.



Left to Right — Mrs. Velda Seger, Rev. Jasper C. Havens, Mrs. Lila Hollingshed, Mrs. Marcelle Higgins, Organist.

A church that kept making room

Properties were purchased for parking and future expansion.

Teachers, elders, musicians, and families carried the work across changing decades.

By the mid-1980, the original sanctuary was bursting at the seams, leading to multiple worship services and renewed building plans.



Adult Bible class, 1960.



Christian Women's Fellowship.



A wood stove from the church archive.

Teachers, music, and changing leadership

Sunday School teachers and music ministry helped carry the church's life across generations. Property purchases provided parking and room for future expansion.

The congregation marked its 60th anniversary in 1961. In 1969, a church float joined Grangeville's Border Days celebration, making the congregation visible in community life.

Leadership changed over these decades, while teachers, musicians, elders, and families sustained the work. By the mid-1980s, growth had brought the original sanctuary to capacity.



The congregation marked its 60th anniversary in 1961.



The church's Border Days float, 1969.



Jack Pinkley and family, 1972.

Leadership through decades of growth

The postwar decades brought a changing sequence of settled ministers and interim leaders. The church continued to make room, serving people across generations and undertaking the work of care and new facilities reflected in the existing history.

William Harris (arrived 1946); Jim Updyke (1948–1950); Glenn Warner (1951–1955); Dorsey Dent (arrived 1956); John Stotsenberg (arrived 1957); John Strong (1958–March 1960); Vern Hunt (1960, interim); Richard W. Hake (1960–1963); Marion McQuary (October 1963–February 1964, interim); Robert A. McDonald (1964–1968); Darrel Johnson (1968–1971).

Jack Pinkley (August 1972–July 1977); Dr. Carlton Buck (August 1977–1978, interim); Richard Butler (1978–1980); Don Johnson (arrived January 1981); Dewey Kooy (1981, interim).

“Arrived” dates are identified as such, not expanded into assumed end dates.



Bob and family Woods, 1982.

Growth, new roles, and long service

Ministry at GCC included education, associate, youth, and senior-focused roles alongside pastoral leadership, broadening the ways the church served people at different stages of life.

Bob Wood (1982–1989); Lydia Jones Grubb (1984–1985, Minister of Education); Kevin Hill (1987–1989, first associate minister); Bill Miller (arrived 1989); Dr. Newell Morgan (1991, interim); Dr. Carlton Buck (1992, returned as interim); Chris Blair (August 1992–July 1998).

Kevin Duden (1994, youth minister); Coby Tefft (1995, youth minister); Ken Prather (1998, interim); Harold Gott (February 1999–June 2018, longest-serving minister); Brian Carter (2001–2003, associate pastor); Lloyd Pounds (December 2013–June 2016, associate and youth pastor); Tom Helmick (2013–June 2019, Minister to Seniors).

Harold Gott's nearly two decades of service extended across a substantial span of congregational life. Tom Helmick's listed service continued through June 2019.



Kevin and Jennifer Hill.



Kevin Hill's ordination.

Stepping out in faith

\$500,000

Phase One building fund goal

The work

The new educational wing, fellowship hall, kitchen, and offices took shape through volunteer labor and shared commitment.

April 11, 1992

The first worship service in the new building was held on Easter.

1994

The original church building was demolished, but its bell, stories, and memories were carried forward.



Phase One construction (archive photograph).

The bell and cross were removed in 1994 as the original building came down.

Prayer, work, and a new sanctuary

2008

Groundbreaking

Phase Two broke ground in March.

2008-09

Shared commitment

Members gave money, time, labor, and prayer through auctions, special offerings, and fundraising.

Easter
2009

Worship beneath the cross

The congregation gathered inside the unfinished sanctuary beneath the emerging cross.

2011

Dedication

The new sanctuary was dedicated with no debt remaining on the project.



Groundbreaking for Phase Two, 2008.



Easter worship in the sanctuary, 2009.

From crowded services to a debt-free dedication

As attendance grew, the church held multiple worship services. Easter worship at the school became part of the transition while plans for expanded facilities took shape.

Phase One brought a new educational wing, fellowship hall, kitchen, and offices. The congregation moved gradually from the old building; the original structure was demolished in 1994, while its bell and memories carried forward.

Phase Two began in 2008.

Volunteers gave labor alongside gifts, special offerings, auctions, and prayer.

At Easter 2009, worship took place in the unfinished sanctuary beneath the emerging cross.

The new sanctuary was dedicated in 2011 with no project debt remaining.

Worship found a way

When the pandemic closed schools and meeting places, worship moved to the drive-in theatre. Families gathered in cars and pickups while preaching came from a flatbed hay trailer. By June, services returned to the sanctuary in two smaller gatherings.

The church keeps serving across generations

1995

Noah's Ark Preschool

It began in 1995 and continued for three decades.

TODAY

Children's Church

It now averages 50–60 children each Sunday across four classes.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Many forms of gathering

The building hosts Bible studies, prayer, small groups, youth gatherings, and community activities.

The mission is still clear

Growing in Grace.

Celebrating Christ.

Changing Lives.

A welcoming, Bible-based church where faith and family thrive.



Transition and ministry today

Recent ministry has included pastoral leadership, associate ministry, interim service, and administration. The existing history notes that when schools closed during the pandemic, worship found a way.

Dave Sanchez (August 2018–August 2024); Freddy Chacko (February 2020–August 2023, associate pastor); Clay Boyd (January–July 2024, interim associate pastor); Stephanie Jordan (August 2024–present, administrator); George Lichti (arrived March 2025, current pastor).

These dates preserve the distinctions in the roster: some describe a span of service, some an arrival, and some a current role. Stephanie Jordan's administrator role and George Lichti's current pastor role are both part of the present-day ministry record.

The story continues through the people who gather, lead, serve, and care for one another in Grangeville.



Harold Gott at the 2001 centennial gathering.

Pastors and ministers • 1963–2026

1946–1981 • continued

Marion McQuary (October 1963–February 1964, interim); Robert A. McDonald (1964–1968); Darrel Johnson (1968–1971); Jack Pinkley (August 1972–July 1977); Dr. Carlton Buck (August 1977–1978, interim); Richard Butler (1978–1980); Don Johnson (arrived January 1981); Dewey Kooy (1981, interim).

1982–2018

Bob Wood (1982–1989); Lydia Jones Grubb (1984–1985, Minister of Education); Kevin Hill (1987–1989, first associate minister); Bill Miller (arrived 1989); Dr. Newell Morgan (1991, interim); Dr. Carlton Buck (1992, returned as interim); Chris Blair (August 1992–July 1998); Kevin Duden (1994, youth minister); Coby Tefft (1995, youth minister); Ken Prather (1998, interim); Harold Gott (February 1999–June 2018, longest-serving minister); Brian Carter (2001–2003, associate pastor); Lloyd Pounds (December 2013–June 2016, associate and youth pastor); Tom Helmick (2013–June 2019, Minister to Seniors).

2018–2026

Dave Sanchez (August 2018–August 2024); Freddy Chacko (February 2020–August 2023, associate pastor); Clay Boyd (January–July 2024, interim associate pastor); Stephanie Jordan (August 2024–present, administrator); George Lichti (arrived March 2025, current pastor).



George and Christina Lichti, serving GCC since March 2025.



Dave and Dee Sanchez, serving GCC from August 2018 to August 2024.

Pastors and ministers • 1901–1981

1901–1918

C. T. McDonald (1901–1908); H. H. Hubble (1906–1910), first full-time salaried minister; D. Lloyd Morgan (1909–1913); A. F. VanSlyke (1914); Walter Callison (arrived 1916); J. A. Pine (arrived 1917).

1918–1945

E. R. Black (dates unknown); Oscar Cooper (arrived 1922); O. A. Ishmail (arrived 1924); Ernest I. Mitchell (arrived 1928); F. R. Jamison (arrived 1932); Hubert E. Sias (arrived 1935); Jasper Havens (arrived 1942); G. W. Lawson (dates unknown); Lew Brown (arrived 1944).

1946–1981 • part one

William Harris (arrived 1946); Jim Updyke (1948–1950); Glenn Warner (1951–1955); Dorsey Dent (arrived 1956); John Stotsenberg (arrived 1957); John Strong (1958–March 1960); Vern Hunt (1960, interim); Richard W. Hake (1960–1963).

A living church, a continuing story

For 125 years, Grangeville Christian Church has gathered people across generations in a changing community. Its story began in homes, schoolhouses, and a tent, became a congregation with a building, and continued through growth, care, and periods of challenge.

The ministry roster makes that history personal. Ministers arrived, served for a known term or an unrecorded span, and in some cases returned as interim leaders. Education, associate, youth, senior, and administrative roles show ministry shared across many kinds of service.

Today the archive lists George Lichti as current pastor, arriving in March 2025, and Stephanie Jordan as administrator from August 2024 to the present. The present-day story also belongs to the congregation: the people who worship, serve, welcome neighbors, and carry the work forward.

As the existing e-book's closing chapter says, the next chapter belongs to the people who are here. The invitation is to keep making room, keep serving, and remain attentive to where faith leads next.

The next chapter belongs to the people who are here.

The story of Grangeville Christian Church is a record of ordinary faith made visible through rooms built, meals shared, children taught, worship sustained, and neighbors welcomed.

Today, Grangeville Christian Church is a growing, open church led into the next century by its current pastor, George Lichti.

GCC reaches thousands online each Sunday and during the week through its streamed sermon service, website, and streaming channels, with sermon highlights and notes available alongside the stream.

At the Christ-centered church in Grangeville, Idaho—where clear, expository Bible preaching transforms everyday life, worship lifts your heart toward Jesus, and every generation is embraced.

