



# CONSULTING REPORT

PREPARED BY  
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BRACY CONSULTING

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# COMPANY OVERVIEW

Bracy Consulting is a 3-year-old firm based in Portsmouth, Virginia. With Kimberly D. Bracy at the helm, KDB serves the Mid-Atlantic Region and with the continued advancement of electronic communication, also has clients across the country and abroad. Bracy Consulting envisions, communicates and delivers marketing messages in a direct, strategic and creative way. Our graphic and web design solutions include: brand development with logos and guidelines, print ads, sales collateral, brochures, direct mail, annual reports and publications, trade shows, website design and development, hosting, website maintenance, email marketing and email newsletters.

Our years of experience with government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare, telecommunications, fashion, and non-profit organizations continue to expand to new spheres of design for communication with style and impact.



PR & MARKETING SERVICES

## CLIENT LIST

New Horizons Regional Education Centers

Rivers Casino Portsmouth

KMK Productions

Portsmouth Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Portsmouth (VA) Chapter of The Links, Inc.

Mile High Kids Organization

L.E.V.O.C. Family Services

APM Spine and Sports Physicians

Styles by LamontC

Uzuri Foundation

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# OUR TEAM



Bracy Consulting is pleased to present our Consulting Report to Grove Church of Portsmouth, VA. Our reports includes our findings on your current Marketing and Digital Communications Strategy. After a thorough review of your website, social media strategy, Crisis Communications Plan, and Strategic Communications Plans we delighted to present some recommendations to assist with accomplishing your Marketing goals.

## Meet our Team:

Kimberly D. Bracy, President and COO, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations and minor in English from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. I have over 25 years experience in Public Relations having worked in senior corporate communications roles with International Paper, KapStone Paper and Packaging Corporation, GTE, and Halifax Regional Medical Center.

# GROVE MISSION AND VISION

## Mission

Grove Church's mission is to meet the needs of people by spreading the Word of God, to make and equip disciples for holistic ministry.

## Vision

Vision 2018: Emerging Holistically (Upreach, Inreach and Outreach)

Encouraging believers to become biblically literate and spiritually rooted in the transformative Word of God.

Seeking opportunities to express our sincerity in building appropriate relationships within the church and the world.

Enhancing our spiritual and practical infrastructure to improve and identify our best practices (i.e., communication, staff support, and streamlined procedures without minimizing necessary accountability).

Increase quality and effective use of social media and technology.

Strategic preaching/teaching and witnessing, that attracts and adds to the local core values of our ministry.

Engage our youth and young adult community in the joys and triumphs that many mature Christians have and still are experiencing.

Build competent and passionate organizational leadership teams that foster transparency and transference, while being true to our traditional biblical standards and maintaining transgenerational relevance.

# THE LEGACY OF GROVE

What began in 1840 as a one-room, wooden structure warmed by a pot-belly stove, has evolved into one of the largest African American churches in Portsmouth, earning a reputation for serving the needs of people. Today, Grove Church—now 177 years old—remains in its original location, bordered by three Hampton Roads' cities—Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Suffolk.

Serving as a beacon of hope in the Churchland community, Grove Church stands on the shoulders of its ancestors, exuding the same principles, fortitude, perseverance and strong community-focused leadership. Some of Grove's rich and vibrant history is documented in books and articles archiving the headstones that remain in the church's cemetery, dating back to 1840. From 1840 to 1866, the pastor of Grove's mother church—Sycamore Hill Baptist Church—preached to the Grove Church congregation until after the Civil War because Virginia laws prohibited Blacks from assembling without a Caucasian present. After the Emancipation Proclamation, Grove called its first African American minister, Reverend Thomas Washington, a native of Matthews County, VA.

Grove Baptist Church was destroyed by fire in 1953 and a special Building Fund Committee raised funds to rebuild the church, with assistance from The Citizens Committee of Churchland Baptist Church. Grove moved into its new sanctuary in 1955. Since then, twelve other ministers have pastored this great church. Currently, Dr. Melvin O. Marriner serves as Grove's 13th and longest serving Senior Pastor. Grove extended the call to Dr. Melvin O. Marriner of Chesapeake, VA in September 1989. Under his leadership, Visions of Truth Ministries (VOTM), a banner under which a number of holistic ministries evolved, was formed.

To accommodate the church membership boon from 300 in 1989 to more than 2,700 by 2000, Grove completed a \$1.7 million expansion of its facilities, which included a 1,000-seat sanctuary and educational space in 2000. Desiring to better meet the needs of the community, Grove purchased all properties on the left side of the church and, in 2004 purchased three office condominium units on West Norfolk Road, which are used for ministry expansion. Grove also acquired and has paid for nearly 33 acres of land at 4745 W. Norfolk Rd. Construction is currently underway on the Dr. Melvin O. Marriner Family Life Center—a 23,000-square ft. facility that will house a gymnasium, Marriner Christian Academy, a commercial kitchen, internet café and offices.

"Grove Church is more than its square footage or the brick building located in the heart of Churchland. We stand as a monument of hope, carrying a message of love. Our desire is to share God's message of redemption and demonstrate the love of Christ by actively engaging with and being a part of this community. One of the ways that we communicate that message is by serving our community—in any way that we can—to make it better. That's one of the primary reasons why we are breaking ground on our Family Life and Youth Center. We want our youth to have a safe place to gather and socialize. We want families to have a place to come to access services, programs and resources in a 'one-stop-shop' manner, and we want people in the community to know that we are a part of THIS community.

*"In this world, we witness and experience a lot of hurt and pain, but we are here to turn the world upside down. We are a victorious people..and we are walking, talking, living, breathing, miracles.. each and every one of us!"*

# MARKETING ASSESSMENT INTRODUCTION

My primary contacts for the Christian Organization Consulting Project at Grove Church, Portsmouth, VA, were Berlyn Best, Director of Marketing, and Kanitra Hatton, Marketing Coordinator. I have selected Grove Church. The purpose of this report is to provide Grove Church with recommendations to help further develop their framework to foster relationships with members and prospective (disciples) members. The pastor, Dr. Melvin O. Marriner, refers to members and prospective members as disciples. The church's existing strategy for building relationships starts by building a positive reputation and trust throughout the target marketing area so that people will be more likely to respond to a specific invitation to a church event/activity.

This project was launched with review of the church's online presence to include their website and social media platforms. At the onset of my research I was thoroughly impressed by Grove's Marketing Team's efforts and thoughtful execution. Additionally, I reviewed the church's existing Marketing Plan. The goal of this report is to provide some viable recommendation to help reach some of the goals of the church. The church is in the process of preparing to welcome members back to sanctuary with the lifting of restrictions previously imposed by the Governor of Virginia. Once the church reopening plans began, the church officials had limited time to offer support on the Consulting Project. This presented some challenges with providing the level detail I desired.

Lastly, I requested results from church surveys and other information that would provide church demographics (race, age, geographical info, socioeconomics); access to this information was not granted.



# INTERVIEW WITH MARKETING DIRECTOR



Berlyn Best, Grove  
Marketing Director

## **What is Marketing vs. Evangelism?**

While there may be many views on both church evangelism and church marketing, we will use the following as a basis for ministry. Evangelism is taking Jesus Christ and the Gospel to people, organizations, neighborhoods, and various communities. The main goal of Evangelism is that someone hears about Jesus Christ and has an opportunity to choose to accept Jesus Christ Personally. Marketing is providing information as to bring people into our church or towards our ministry so that they can experience the ministry and services of our church. We believe that we have the best product in JESUS and we want people to come and experience Christ, the love of Christ and discover ways to promote Christ themselves, all by coming to our location.

## **Why Market?**

We market because we believe we have a great product. Jesus Christ and good news. Jesus is well known but not always easily accessible to people to get for themselves. The Good News on the other hand is often rare. We market because we want to be good stewards of all that we have been given in resource, facility, personnel, skills, training and more. It is not good enough to have Christ and impactful ministry if no one knows about it. We market so that people can come and experience Christ. We could do evangelism only and take Christ out, however, there are some things that we can do at home, in our church on our campus that may not be mobile. For that reason, we suggest that we market our ministry, we market Christ, and we market that we have a place for others to belong and volunteer to maximize their potential.

## **Where to Market?**

We fulfill 1 Cor 9:22 and become all things to all people so that we might save some. With this in mind we will market via text, audio, video, data transfer, mobile application, and conferencing platforms. The details of each can be found under our strategy concepts.

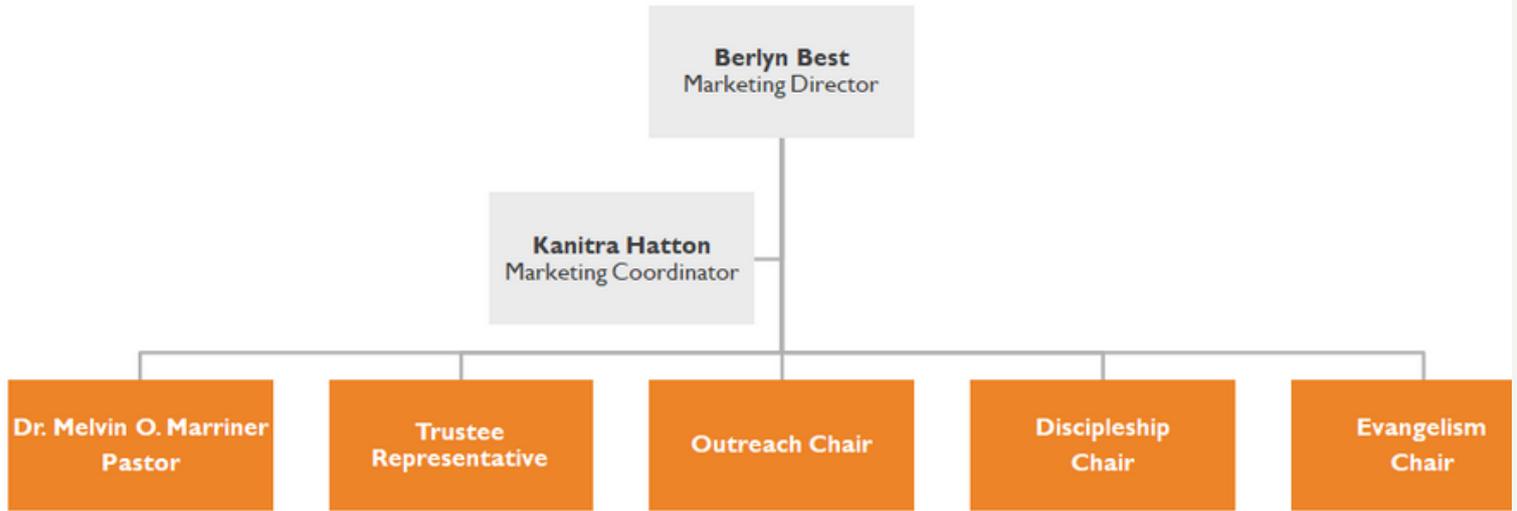
## **How to Market?**

We will market daily and consistently, while also placing emphasis on larger campaigns. Our marketing will match our quarterly goals.

## **Who does Grove Market to?**

We will be intentional about each marketing medium. Our goal is to be evangelistic and market to those who have not yet come to know Christ. However, we will also market internally to our congregation and those we do believe. We will target multiple age groups, gender demographics, locations, and economic tax statuses. Our goal is to be laser focus with each campaign but broad in our overall pitch.

# GROVE MARKETING TEAM



# #1 MARKETING GOAL

TO BRING PROSPECTIVE DISCIPLES INTO THE CURRENT MINISTRY PROGRESSION.



# THE NEW WELCOME MAT

The first impression that many prospective visitors have of Grove Church are based on visiting the website. Yes, websites are the new welcome mat for churches and businesses. My review of the website was that it was very content rich to include text as well as images. Personally, I prefer very directed content and not layers of pages and links. However, the information found would be helpful the target audience. There is so much information my concern would be the time it would take to locate what is needed. I am from the school of thought that, "less is more" and this can be applied to websites as well. The site is was vibrant, the navigation bar serves as the launching pad for the large volume of information on the site. "As anyone who has built a website knows, there is much more to think about than just the content" (Scott, 2017, p. 42).

Across the top of the page there is main navigation bar with seven links and an additional, smaller navigation bar with four links. Just below the main navigation bar, there is information scrolling with the latest events. One of the newer links on the site is "Coronavirus". Even though we are in a different stage in the pandemic than last year, this information is still critical. According to Ministry Brands, "One of the most impactful ways to stay connected with your church during this time is by leveraging technology," (covidchurchresources.com, p. 2). The information provide on Grove's website was very comprehensive. I was impressed by the Life Groups, text messaging platform, prayer requests and other resources. While the church's worship-style is contemporary in nature, there are subtle details that serve as reminders of the churches rich history. You will find references about the church's start and growth in in several locations. The website is mobile-friendly and information on how to attend or watch services live or on-demand is easily accessible.



# LET'S GET SOCIAL



**@grovechurchva**

**Likes: 17,117**  
**Followers: 20,823**  
**1-2 Posts Per Day**



**@grovechurchva**

**Following: 8**  
**Followers: 231**  
**No Posts since 2019**



**@grovechurchva**

**Followers: 1609**  
**Following: 275**  
**Posts: 1,327**  
**Pictures and Videos**

**Grove Church**



**Subscribers: 31K**  
**Views: 737**  
**Weekly Services**

While Grove Church has a strong digital presence, there are opportunities for improvement and further development. Content is updated regularly on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The Twitter account has not been updated in well over a year. In Scott's list of "The Old Rules of Marketing", he stated that advertising needed to appeal to the masses and ad agencies designing to win awards instead of new customers (p. 20). That is partially true as it relates to Grove's website. The appeal is to the masses, award-winning it is not. In the "New Rules of Marketing and PR" it seems to focus more on practicality, less glitz and glamour. "People want authenticity, not spin" and "Marketers must shift from mainstream marketing to the masses to a strategy of reaching vast number of the underserved audiences via the web" (p. 37). That is demonstrated through the owner's introduction on the website.

## GROVE CHURCH SWOT ANALYSIS

**S**

### STRENGTHS

- Brand Recognition
- Social Media Presence
- Website Content-Rich
- Graphic Design Concepts

**W**

### WEAKNESSES

- Slow response time to inquiries
- Social Media Content
- More robust Twitter Strategy

**O**

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Revamp Twitter
- Measurement Tools
- Add Tech to Team
- Add volunteer with exp to team
- Streamline website
- SEO

**T**

### THREATS

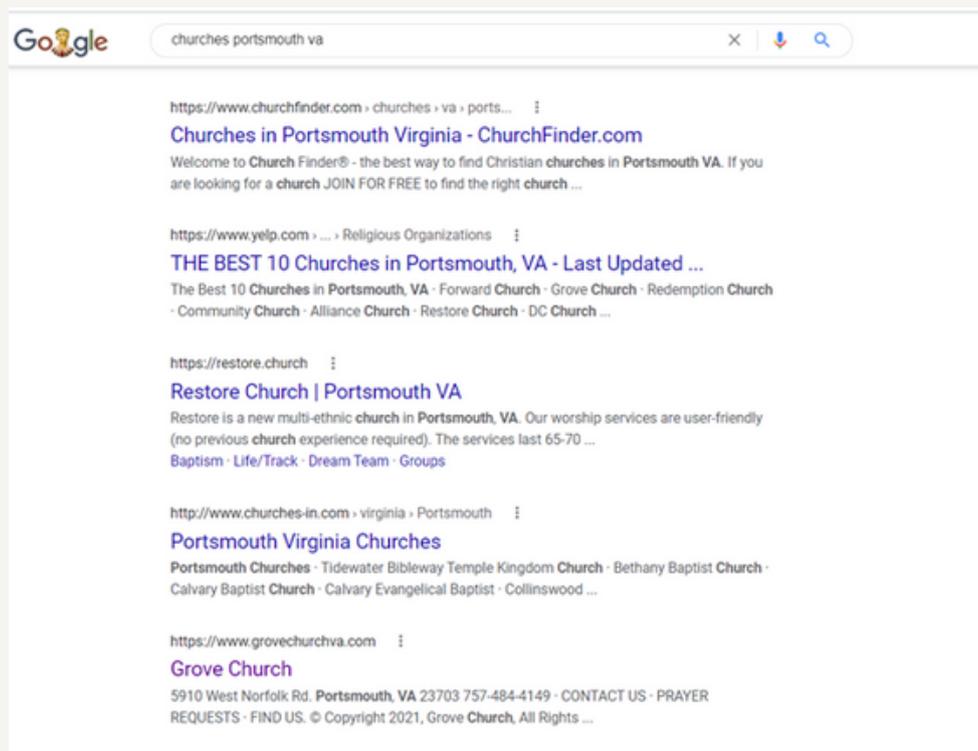
- Size of the church
- Similar churches in area
- Migration of Members

# RECOMMENDATIONS

I commend Grove for their vision for seeing the need and forming a Marketing Department. This is a very important step branding and communicating to your target audience. However, some of the challenges I encountered during this process revealed the need for better communications and structure of the department. Grove has a large volume of information on their website and social media platforms but it lacks strategy. I could tell a content calendar was used but there did not appear to be a rationale to reinforce it.

In looking at the organizational chart I designed (p. 8), I believe a member of the Technology Team should be included. Additionally, adding a volunteer to the team with PR and/or marketing experience. I also would suggest that a redesign of the website to streamline the information. There are grant opportunities available to assist churches with their websites. While you can pull analytics from your website and social media platforms, I believe feedback from the church members on the marketing efforts would be helpful. There were no survey conducted in recent years.

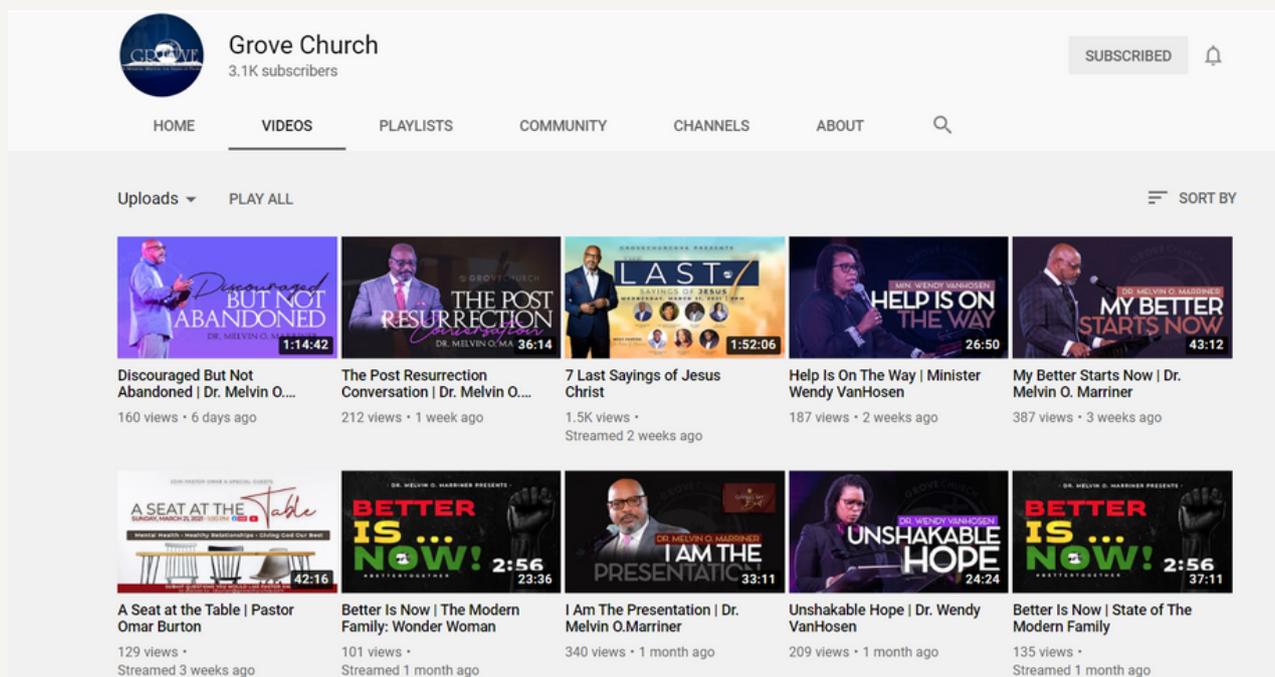
Grove has over 3,000 members and on most of their platforms the engagement is strong. The Twitter needs to be evaluated and a strategy needs to be implemented. If the account is no longer feasible it should be deleted. There have been no new content in two years. They have a formidable ranking on Google search, continued SEO is recommended. I also would recommend exploring Google Ad campaigns for their Foundation. There are also opportunities on the backend of the website with the with the audience overlap metrics and data from Alexa and PageInsights (see Appendix). Pastor Marriner is well-respected in the community as a Spiritual Leader and Social Activist. His experiences and thought would provide great content for a weekly blog. There is a link on the website called Marriner's Moments. Currently, it appears videos is the intended comments for that section; a world replace the information with the blog. There is a blog link in the I'm new section, however, the content is three years old.



# VISUAL STORYTELLING

Visual storytelling is an important component of social media and website content. Regardless of the size of a church, the ability to tell a compelling story through videos and pictures will resonate with your audiences. Grove uses a lot of videos featuring sermons or performances from the Music Ministry. They have a very diverse offering of ministries and worship opportunities. For each of these opportunities there are stories that need to be told. These stories have the ability to bring others to Christ because they see themselves in the stories, there is a connection.

Grove hosts several series and offer numerous life groups. I believe these stories can be tastefully and packaged on YouTube and Facebook. With the impact of the pandemic, many people are still watching services from home. Click [HERE](#) to learn about their First Touch Ministries. The ability to connect with members and visitors is imperative at this time. Instead of posting a large volume of flyers and announcements, this material can be reimagined and used across platforms.



The screenshot displays the YouTube channel page for Grove Church, which has 3.1K subscribers. The page is organized into sections: HOME, VIDEOS, PLAYLISTS, COMMUNITY, CHANNELS, and ABOUT. The 'VIDEOS' section is active, showing a grid of video uploads. Each video thumbnail includes the title, speaker, and duration. Below each thumbnail, the video title is repeated, followed by the speaker's name and view/viewer statistics.

Video Title	Speaker	Duration	Views	Time Ago
Discouraged But Not Abandoned	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	1:14:42	160	6 days ago
The Post Resurrection Conversation	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	36:14	212	1 week ago
7 Last Sayings of Jesus Christ	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	1:52:06	1.5K	Streamed 2 weeks ago
Help Is On The Way	Minister Wendy VanHosen	26:50	187	2 weeks ago
My Better Starts Now	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	43:12	387	3 weeks ago
A Seat at the Table	Pastor Omar Burton	42:16	129	Streamed 3 weeks ago
Better Is Now   The Modern Family: Wonder Woman	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	2:56 / 23:36	101	Streamed 1 month ago
I Am The Presentation	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	33:11	340	1 month ago
Unshakable Hope	Dr. Wendy VanHosen	24:24	209	1 month ago
Better Is Now   State of The Modern Family	Dr. Melvin O. Marriner	2:56 / 37:11	135	Streamed 1 month ago

# BIBLICAL RATIONALE

There is no better model for a person or organization to follow than that of God. The bible serves as a blueprint for our life providing guidance on any situation we may encounter in digital media marketing.

God is the ruler of us all whether it is our business or personal lives. Our biblical principles help us to recognize what is prudent. This applies to what we post or content we create for marketing purposes. According to Colossians 1:16-17 (English Standard Version), "For by him all things were created, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." God has authority over us, an organization's image, reputation, and the manner in which we approach managing crises. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all to the glory of God." In all things we must glorify him. This applies to our image as an individual or company, establishing our reputation, evolving and making adjustments as needed to better meet the needs of our stakeholders. Specifically addressing verifying content in a biblical sense is very important. We should be able to be trusted in the way that we present ourselves and the validity of our work. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth," (English Standard Version, 2 Timothy 2:15).

# GROVECHURCHVA

## GET READY FOR

READY YOUR HEAD, HEART AND HANDS FOR SUNDAY

# Worship

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 4:1-15

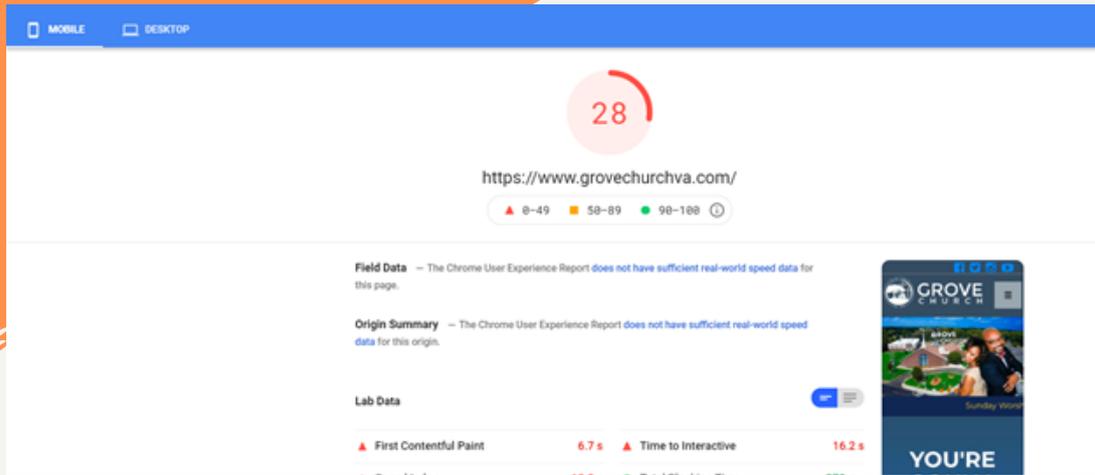
**PRAISE SONG:**  
*Lord, I Love You - Todd Galberth*

**PREPARATION SONG:**  
*Victory Belongs to Jesus - Todd Dulaney*

*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure, you use it will be measured back to you.*  
- Luke 6:38

# APPENDIX

Mobile Version Data-PageInsights.com



▲ Serve images in next-gen formats	27.54 s	▼
▲ Efficiently encode images	21.36 s	▼
▲ Defer offscreen images	12.18 s	▼
▲ Enable text compression	11.4 s	▼
▲ Remove unused JavaScript	8.49 s	▼
▲ Remove unused CSS	4.95 s	▼
▲ Reduce initial server response time	3.93 s	▼
▲ Eliminate render-blocking resources	2.85 s	▼

The screenshot shows the PageInsights.com desktop interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'MOBILE' and 'DESKTOP' tabs, and a 'ANALYZE' button. The main content area features a large circular performance score of 64. Below the score, the URL 'https://www.grovechurchva.com/' is displayed. A legend indicates score ranges: 0-49 (red), 50-89 (orange), and 90-100 (green). The 'Field Data' section notes that the Chrome User Experience Report does not have sufficient real-world speed data. The 'Origin Summary' also notes a lack of sufficient real-world speed data. The 'Lab Data' section provides a summary of key metrics:

Metric	Value
First Contentful Paint	1.2 s
Time to Interactive	2.7 s
Speed Index	4.3 s
Total Blocking Time	30 ms
Largest Contentful Paint	2.4 s
Cumulative Layout Shift	0.476

### Lab Data

First Contentful Paint	1.2 s	Time to Interactive	2.7 s
Speed Index	4.3 s	Total Blocking Time	30 ms
Largest Contentful Paint	2.4 s	Cumulative Layout Shift	0.476

Values are estimated and may vary. The [performance score is calculated](#) directly from these metrics. [See calculator.](#)

Performance score.

Opportunity	Estimated Savings
▲ Serve images in next-gen formats	4.55 s
▲ Reduce initial server response time	3.8 s
▲ Efficiently encode images	3.48 s
▲ Remove unused JavaScript	1.8 s
▲ Enable text compression	1.42 s
▲ Defer offscreen images	1.34 s
■ Minify JavaScript	0.42 s

# SEO, Traffic, & Audience Data-Alexa.com

The screenshot shows the Alexa website analysis dashboard for grovedunthwa.com. The top navigation bar includes the Alexa logo, navigation links for SOLUTIONS, TOOLS, and PRICING, and a START YOUR FREE TRIAL button. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Top Keywords:** A table showing search traffic and share of voice for keywords related to the site.
- Audience Overlap:** A bar chart showing the overlap score for similar sites that share visitors and search keywords with the target site.
- Alexa Rank:** A section displaying the site's global rank and the time period over which the data was collected.

Keyword	Search Traffic	Share of Voice
grove baptist church	20.84%	8.76%
grove church	16.26%	6.8%

Similar Site	Alexa Rank
calvaryperformouth.org	10.0
groveaw.com	7.4
valgrovetc.net	7.2
grove.org	6.0
discovercentral.org	5.6

**Alexa Rank** Estimate

This site ranks: **# 9,248,375** In global internet traffic and engagement over the past 90 days

The screenshot shows the Site Metrics section of the Alexa dashboard, focusing on engagement and linking in data for the past 90 days.

**Site Metrics** Estimate

All visitors to this site

Engagement Past 90 Days

<b>1</b> Daily Pageviews per Visitor	-	-
Daily Time on Site	?	Bounce rate

**2** Total Sites Linking In

Start free trial for all sites linking in

# Disability Score (ADA Compliance)

WEB accessibility by Level Access

Enter URL to test a page\*  
http://grovechurchva.com [Test](#)

Home Tools Resource Library Contact

## Results

<http://grovechurchva.com/>  
Tested: 4/17/2021 9:22:36 PM



- 25 violations identified
- 204 automated tests run
- 78 additional tests available

[Get a Free Premium Test](#)

82%  
Compliance Score

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