

# MissionNorthwest

Resourcing and developing churches that connect people with Jesus Christ

## Mission Northwest Statement Issued by the Region Board

-----

### **“Urging Unity and Christ-like Goodness Within Churches”**

The Christian church has never existed in a vacuum. It always finds its home in a particular culture at a particular time. Thus, what is happening in the world around the church inevitably effects what is happening inside the church. When the church is at its best, it affirms evidences of common grace present in the surrounding culture, such as joy, hope, peace, love and a zest for life. The church has the opportunity to reinforce these by being the salt of the earth as Jesus calls it to be. By way of contrast when death, despair, violence, and hatred threaten, the church sets an example of a better way.

As followers of Jesus we are concerned about the growing divides within our nation that are invading the church and undermining its witness for Jesus Christ. The lack of common civility in the public square has crept into many churches. Sadly, personal viewpoints are often expressed with hostility and anger. Some church members insist the church adopt their stance on various hot button issues without regard to how their demands disrupt the body.

The issues that are causing division are commonly known, yet we identify these as being predominant during this current season:

- Some divisions are rooted in politics.
- Some divisions are the result of divergent views over theology.
- Some churches are divided over pandemic related matters such as wearing masks; whether to follow a governor’s health guidelines; how many people should meet in a worship space; when and if to gather in person; and whether to employ virtual meetings.
- Some divisions have simmered underground for years, but now through outside cultural influences have erupted in volatile forms threatening churches’ health and unity.

Pastors and church leaders are struggling to navigate these choppy waters. Some have been unfairly maligned for making difficult decisions in the midst of opposing voices. Some pastors are so discouraged they are leaving the ministry. Many are heartbroken by hurtful attitudes and words expressed by church members toward fellow brothers and sisters.

Christians can and will have different viewpoints. This has been a reality since the inception of the church. We will have differing views of theology. We will have differing views on politics. Christians will have conflicting viewpoints in response to COVID-19. In reality, the church's beauty has always been seen in its diversity—as people from varied backgrounds and viewpoints come together under the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

When we hold more strongly to our personal views on particular divisive issues than we do to Christ's prayer for unity among his people (John 17), we miss our opportunity to further God's diverse, grace-filled, expansive kingdom during this most unusual season.

With this statement we are not taking a stand on any hot-button issue. Rather, we are encouraging the pursuit of Christ-like goodness, or holiness, within the church during these challenging days. We believe holiness in word and deed takes precedence over any position, whether political, theological or otherwise.

In light of this stated goal we encourage congregations to take to heart the following Scriptures. These texts urge Christ-like behaviors that if heeded and lived out will lead to unity, peace, holiness and winsome witness in the church. We are calling for a renewal of goodness in the church characterized by the traits of Jesus Christ Himself as they are embodied in His people. A renewed church, pursuing holiness, will exemplify the lifestyle of our Savior and King, in word and deed. A holy, Spirit-filled church holds promise for being salt and light to a hurting world that needs the Good News entrusted to it. May our churches be filled with love, peace, unity, joy, blessing and mutual concern for all as we pursue a Christ-like holiness, to the glory of our Living, Triune God.

(NOTE: Each body of Scripture is prefaced with a brief statement summarizing behaviors that are expected of Christ-followers.)

### **1. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to work together to attain unity in the church.**

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called.”  
Ephesians 4:3-4

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”  
Romans 14:19

For further reflection see John 17:22-23, 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:12b-13, Philippians 2:1-2, 4:2-3a and Titus 3:10-11.

### **2. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to pursue peace in the body of Christ.**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” James 3:17-18

For further reflection see Matthew 5:23-24, Colossians 3:12-15, 1 Thessalonians 5:13b and 1 Peter 3:8-9.

**3. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to honor the convictions of others, to bear with the “weak” and to avoid being judgmental.**

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Matthew 7:1-2

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself ...” Romans 15:1-3a

For further reflection see Romans, 14:1 & 13 and Romans 15:7-9a.

**4. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to die to self and serve others following the cruciform life of our Savior and Lord.**

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own  
advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death –  
even death on a cross! Philippians 2:3-7

For further reference see Ephesians 5:21.

**5. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to speak only words that are wholesome and build up others.**

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” Ephesians 4:29-31

For further reference see James 1:26.

## **6. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to love others unconditionally.**

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

For further reference see Colossians 3:12-15, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 1 Peter 1:22b-23a and 1 John 4:8-12.

## **7. The Scriptures urge all Christ-followers to pursue goodness and holiness as expressed in behaviors (sometimes described as the fruit of the Spirit) that reflect the person of Jesus Christ.**

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:15-16

“So I say, live by the Spirit ... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” Galatians 5:16, 25-26

For further reference see 1 Peter 2:1, Colossians 3:12-15, 2 Corinthians 12:20, and 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

-----  
November 5, 2020