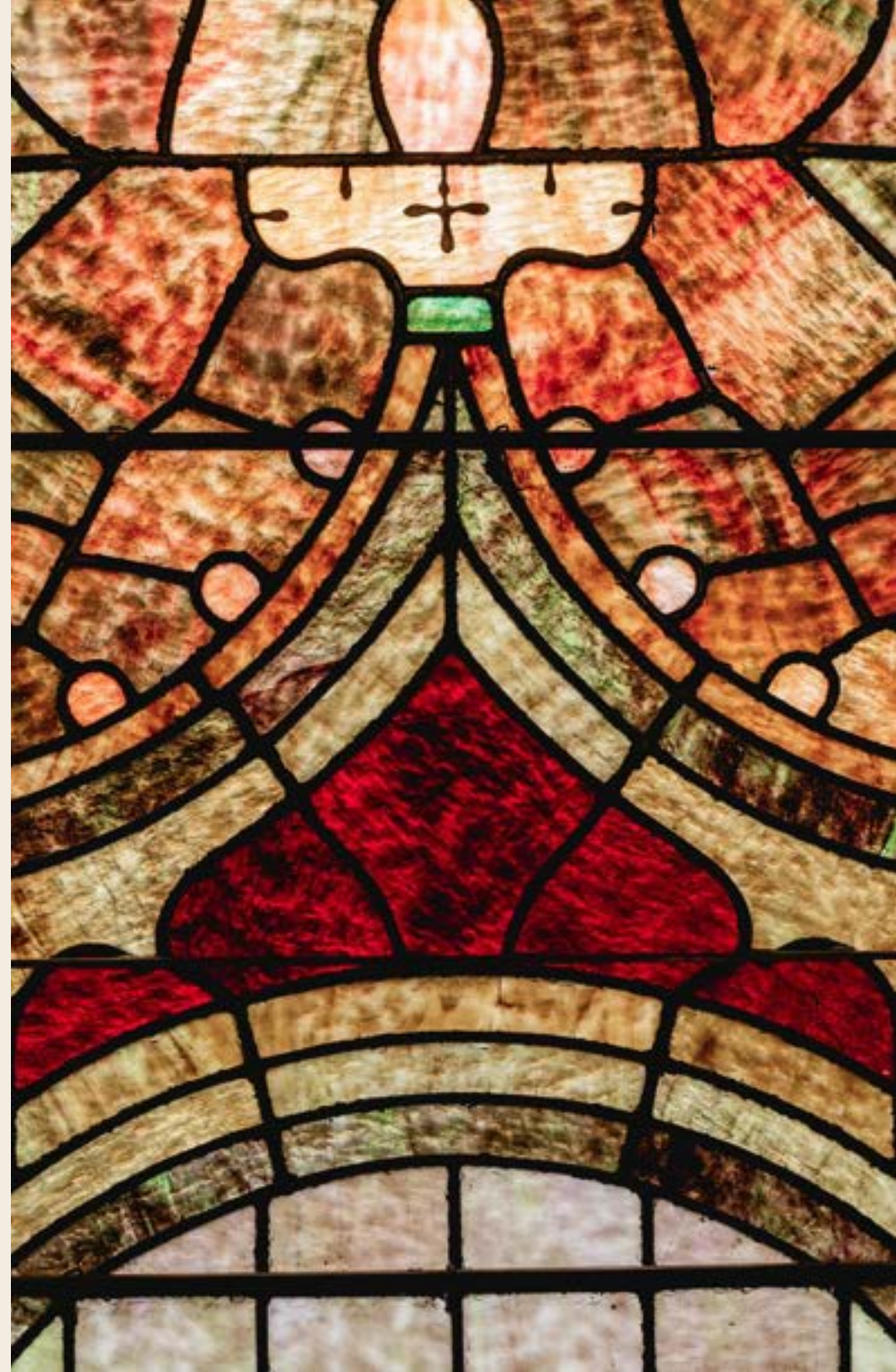




GRACE  
CHAPEL

VISION, MISSION  
& VALUES

Rooted in Grace.  
Reaching out in Love.



# Vision of Grace Chapel

To walk the sidewalks of the near south is to come under the shade and shelter of the hundreds of Elms and Oaks that line streets. These trees bring character, beauty, and shelter to the neighborhood. They are each deeply rooted and reliably present, indiscriminate in the shade they bring, and work together to form a network of life from which all benefit.

In a broken world that often tempts us to walk with our heads down, the trees in our neighborhood invite us to lift our heads up to consider different realities.

They lift our eyes up to the heavens and remind us of creation and the Creative Hand that made them.

As they lose their leaves in fall and stand tall in cold winters, they remind us of the resiliency of life in the midst of hard times.

When they bud and flower in the spring, they give a sense of hope and renewal.

In summer the leaves provide shade that brings comfort and shelter to the vibrant life of the neighborhood.

Quiet but significant. Somehow both blending in and standing out in a faithfully present ministry to the world. Branches always raised first in praise to heaven and then reaching down to give shade to others. Trees provide a wonderful metaphor for our hopes and dreams for our church and the individuals who call Grace Chapel home.

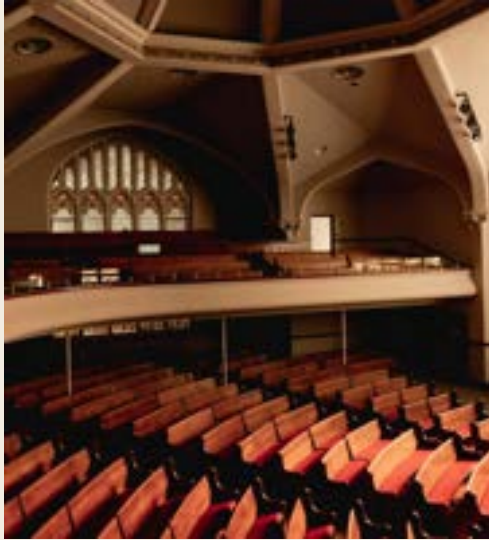
We believe that Jesus is what every human heart needs more than anything else. We also sense that it's as hard as ever to "get to him". People need the shade of a humble, patient, fruit-bearing community where they can discover Jesus for the first time or perhaps recover their faith after a season of doubt, disappointment, or hurt.

As we're called to mission in our city, our state, our country and every continent, we want our lives to look like those trees:

Rooted in Grace. Reaching out in Love.

# Mission

Our Mission anchors this extraordinary vision in ordinary life. Everything we do as a church is in pursuit of these three rhythms:



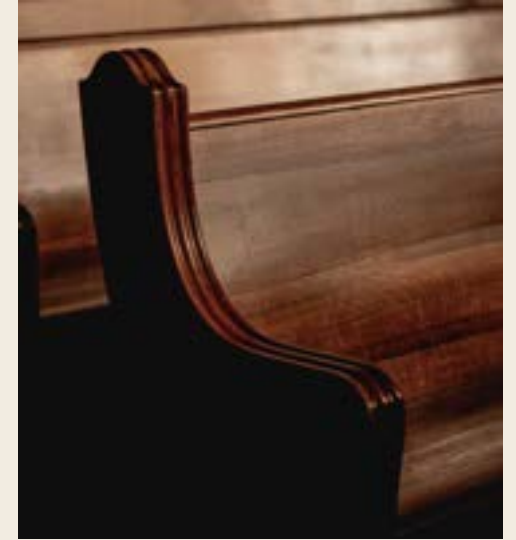
## Growing up in Christ

We are committed to always growing up in Christ together and we pray to do so in such a way that our lives might bear both the beautiful fruit of his kingdom and a stable, resilient and evergreen spirit that can endure the varied seasons and hardships of life. We want our Sunday worship and Monday chores to honor God, strengthened by an ever increasing knowledge of His love and overflowing in gratitude.



## Rooting down in relationship

Central to our mission as a church is the cultivation of a diverse and committed family of believers who care for one another deeply - a community that reflects the neighborhood that we're located in and is committed to living out the "one another's" of scripture together. As such, we are working to create a broad network of love that holds people of different perspectives together by emphasizing the main things as it relates to faith and the shared things as it relates to place.



## Reaching out in love

We are committing to reach out to our neighbor in love, extending to them the shelter, shade and support that we ourselves have found in Christ. We desire through small "mustard seed" acts of love and grace - both corporately and individually - to provide shade for those who need it. Through cultivating hospitable hearts, meaningful partnerships, and lives of service, we hope to be a faithful presence in our neighborhood and to our world to manifest the love of Christ.

# Core Values

## Grace

A generous orthodoxy that works to cultivate a compassionate, spiritually vibrant and emotionally healthy culture.

A focus on the redemptive work of Jesus and a desire to keep it central to everything we do.

A posture of welcome to messy hearts and messy people and messy situations because this is who we all are and God loves us.

An ability to seek the kingdom of God with people who disagree with us, with love testing all things by the Word of God and keeping to what is central.

## Place

Our neighborhood and actual neighbors being central to our calling, giving shape to our community life, outreach, worship and practice.

Outreach that believes we have as much to gain and learn from our neighbor as they do from us.

A commitment to keep our discipleship rooted in real life and relationships rather than abstracted from them.

Making room for the needs and preferences of our neighbors.

A generous hospitality in sharing the resources of our building, our space, our time, our money and our tables with one another and our neighbors.

## Pace

A freedom to dream God-sized dreams within the healthy boundaries of city streets and real people and constrained time.

A reliance on the power of God through prayer to animate our ministry as we confront our own temptation to make it happen by our own strength and wisdom and force.

A community that is comfortable with slow-and-steady over fast, meaningful connection over volume, face-to-face over efficient, people over profit.

Vibrant partnerships in ministry that thrive on collaboration, so that instead of doing everything, we can focus on the tasks we have uniquely been given to do.

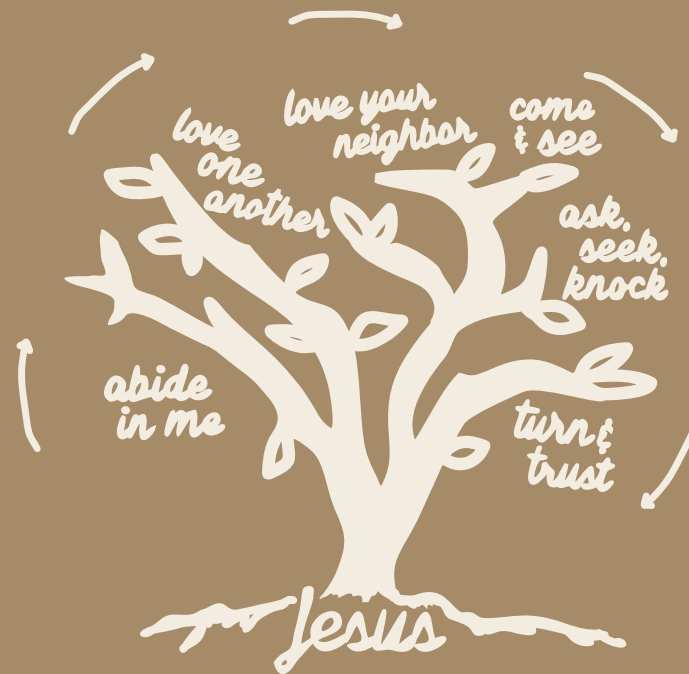
A hopeful humility that allows us to rest when we need to rest, work when God gives us work and enjoy the harvest when God gives it.



# Discipleship Pathway

What does this look like in practice? At Grace Chapel we like to think of our life together as a journey with Jesus - the destination is the vision and mission above - the path to get there depicted below.

This is our discipleship pathway. It is our way of picturing our vision, core values, and mission and putting them "into motion."



# Grace

First, notice everything here is rooted in Jesus and his grace. He is our foundation, our main thing. It may seem silly or unnecessary for a church to say such a thing - but then think about how many churches have gotten off track by having something else take center stage. Without realizing it, a personality or individual ministry or a building or ideology or political persuasion or doctrinal tradition can pull the entire church into its gravity and force all other ministries to orbit around it.

Pretty soon, folks can begin equating "outreach" to converting others to the norms of our particular tribe (our political views, our theological tradition, our dress code, our ethics, our parenting philosophy, etc.) instead of converting them to a love and adoration of Jesus. But the norms of our tribe must always be secondary to, and in many cases discarded because of, a greater vision for people to see Jesus and know Him for who He really is.

Our heart is to keep Jesus the main thing at all times. This is why we've chosen to picture our life together as a journey or path of discipleship with Jesus at the foundation. It's also why we've chosen to root the culture, worship, community, and outreach of our church around six teachings of Jesus.







## Place

The second thing we'd want you to see is that our community is not only rooted in grace but in the soil of a particular place among a particular people. For our church that place is the Near South and Everett neighborhood and the people who live and worship next to us. Remembering this keeps us from abstraction and rooted in real life.

In other words, when Jesus says, "Love your neighbor" we have faces and names to point to in our own neighborhoods and around the Near South. When he says "love one another as I have loved you" we don't have to wonder who he's talking about - it's the person sitting next to you in the pews.

Remembering this keeps our apprenticeship to Jesus rooted and grounded in real life and relationships. As important as the worship service and classroom are, our neighborhood and community is where discipleship is put into practice. It was that way with Jesus' disciples - they learned tenderness by watching Jesus be tender with others. They didn't learn patience in the classroom, they watched Jesus be patient with others and were forced to wait while he healed large crowds. We believe that real discipleship happens in these earthy contexts. We learn as much or more about the way of Jesus by having to be patient with a brother and sister in a small group setting, or by inviting a neighbor into our home for a meal, than we do from studying the book of Romans. Another way to say it is, "What good is studying Romans if it doesn't have an impact in our living rooms, workplaces and neighborhoods?"

We are a people working to cultivate a faithful presence with one another and our neighbors.

## Pace

Thirdly, notice that the image itself is of a growing tree. A tree's growth is barely perceptible, slow and steady - certainly not flashy or fast. Still, the final product is beautiful and profound.

We believe that most of the good things that will grow out of our community will take that kind of time: Community takes time. Love takes time. People take time. Grieving takes time. Sanctification certainly takes time. Making a difference in a neighborhood takes time. As a church, we're committed not to rushing things. Following Jesus requires a tremendous amount of patience. The growth sometimes won't even be noticeable - it certainly won't be flashy or fast. Still, the results are powerful and undeniable. We try to nourish a pace of ministry and life together that is sustainable and lifegiving.



# A Mission Shaped by the Teachings of Jesus

Finally, notice the six teachings that make up the path. These are the heart of what we are trying to “do” as a church. They are the path we are walking together. They serve to keep us on track as a church and are intended to inform everything we do. We desire for them to serve many purposes in our community including:

Each command guides individuals at Grace Chapel in their personal walk with God. We believe that these commands are so basic to the Christian life that you could sit down with a new believer and walk through these core commitments and to share what a life in Christ is and requires.

In the same way, a person who has been following Jesus for decades is still walking this path. In fact, on any given day, you can look at this pathway and prayerfully talk to God about where you are. Do you need to “come and see” him? Are you struggling with what it means to “love one another” as he has loved you? Is there a burning question that you need to “ask, seek and knock?” In all of your “going and making” have you lost what it means to “abide in him”? A great way to start and end your day is by paying attention to where you find yourself on the path and looking to Jesus to provide the grace you need to take the next step. Each day, this is the path we are all on and are walking.

Each saying uniquely informs our liturgy and worship. We desire that our Sunday morning worship itself be “formative.” In other words, we want worship to be more than a good sermon and/or songs that we really connected with that day. Rather, we hope that the structure of the service itself would be communicating something core and basic about our life with God.

To accomplish this, we’ve tied each element of our Sunday morning service to one of these commands so that we are in some symbolic way “walking the path” in worship on Sunday morning and being shaped by these words of Jesus week in and week out. Each week we’re being reminded of what it means to be a disciple even as we’re receiving the means of grace that help us put one foot in front of the other.

# A Mission Shaped by the Teachings of Jesus (continued)

Each saying also says something true and tangible about our church culture, i.e. our way of being and leading. It's the idea that a place that's really living into these commands will have a certain kind of "feel" to it. It's hard to "come and see" if a place doesn't accept you as you are. It's hard to "ask, seek, and knock" if our core questions are never addressed. It's hard to follow me if you have to do it perfectly. On the other hand, it's hard to grow if no one is ever willing to speak hard words of truth. It's hard to confess your mess if you don't feel safe. It's sure hard to love if you don't know anybody. It's hard to abide if everyone is too busy to slow down and be quiet. In all of these we hope to embody not only Jesus' words but his ways as we become a hospitable, gracious, faithful, contemplative, familial, and missional/outward faced community.

Lastly, each saying informs and shapes the way we love and interact with our Grace Chapel community and Near South/Everett neighborhood. As much as these inform our way of being inside the church, we believe that each gives direction and shape to the way we reach out to others.

We hope that in walking through these commands with eyes open to these 5 areas you will get a sense of who we are and what we are all about and be able to determine whether you want to join us on the journey.







# Ask, Seek, Knock

When people heeded the invitation from Jesus to “come and see” they came with a lot of questions. Some brought doubts. Some brought dilemmas. Some brought problems. Jesus received them all. One of Christ’s most famous teachings is his invitation to bring all of these kinds of burdens, questions and quandaries to him:

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (cf. Matthew 7:7-8)

This beautiful invitation to bring our seeking hearts and honest questions to Jesus is also an invitation to prayer - in other words to find our answers in the context of relationship with him. In our secular, post-Christian society - we believe folks need a safe place to express their doubts and honest questions and a church that asks, seeks and knocks with them, gently pointing the ways to Jesus.

In our worship services that means we’re assuming that everyone in the room has questions. We make space in our sermons to try and humbly address the questions that folks are asking. When addressing such questions, we try our best to avoid trite answers. When the Bible speaks clearly, we try to speak clearly. Where there is mystery, we embrace that as well.

We try to say “I don’t know” when we don’t know. We aren’t afraid to let unanswered questions hang in the air. We also have quiet moments in our services for you to offer your question to God. So often the need we have is for healing, or help or direction. We always have a prayer team out front that would love to come alongside you in prayer.

In our personal lives, that means cultivating an honest prayer life and inviting people to address the doubts that they have.

In our youth group, this means investing a season in apologetics (i.e. being able to winsomely communicate why we believe what we believe).

In our small group communities, the discussion questions that make up the majority of each evening’s content are not simply for us to grow in head knowledge but crafted so that each person is invited to vulnerability, to share the deepest parts of themselves with other Christians, particularly the doubts and questions they’re wrestling with.

In our neighborhood, this means addressing the questions that people have about Christians with our life and witness and also regularly interceding for them in prayer.





## Turn and Trust

The people from the crowd that stuck around Jesus and stuck with him were the ones that knew they needed more than just answers to their questions, they needed rescue and salvation. They were soul sick and they needed a physician. They were the broken hearted that came to believe that Jesus was the one who could put their lives together again. People who felt lost in the world but found their way in him. People who had made a wreckage of their life and who thought the idea of a fresh start and new birth were all good news. They had given their lives to trying to find meaning in money, or beauty, or success or power and it had left them empty and hurting.

In Jesus they found what they were looking for. He described what he had to offer in many ways: salvation, new birth, living water, friendship with God, abundant life, but the call was always the same - to turn and trust in him - or as he put it, to repent and believe the good news. In other words, to stop trying to save ourselves, and rest in all that he's done for us. This is the rescue we all need.

In our worship service and church culture, we try to keep this good news of Jesus central to everything we do. We use old school words like repentance and sin and forgiveness - even though those things are going out of style. We talk about eternal destinies and death and life and resurrection and a new heavens and new earth. We talk a lot about grace and how all these things cannot be earned but are received freely from the hand of God.

Formally in our liturgy there is a time to turn and trust with the confession and absolution. For new believers baptism is the entrance into the Christian life and the formal time when they turn and trust. Individuals baptized as infants have this formal moment when they are admitted to the Lord's Table.

In our small group communities, we invite every member to a season of sharing their stories, the good, the bad and the ugly. We are vulnerable about our failures in the context of these safe relationships while at the same time testifying that there are no parts of us that the mercy of God can't reach and redeem for his purposes.

In our individual lives it means daily cultivating humility, remembering the grace that we need everyday, and learning how to preach the gospel to ourselves daily.

As we reach out to our neighbors we remember that we are not another social service organization. The thing that sets us apart is Jesus and he is the thing that people need most of all. We serve as explicitly Christian people and in appropriate spaces we share the good news about Jesus with people eagerly and joyfully.









# Love One Another

The Scriptures show us that we were created by God to live in community and not in isolation. When God had created Adam and the rest of his good creation, he remarked that Adam being without an ally, a companion, was “not good” and so created Eve (cf. Genesis 2:18). We see this in the New Testament as well. To become a Christian is to instantly receive a new family with fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters who are united to one another not by blood, but by the sacrifice of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins in his name (cf. John 1:12-13).

In our individualistic and digital age, it’s so easy to be connected but still utterly alone. The increasing epidemic of anxiety, depression and suicide sheds light on how Westerners are neglecting a foundational part of what it means to be a human - which is to exist in relationships with others.

The Scriptures also show us the breadth of experiences that occur in community. We are deeply hurt by others, even in the church. Consider Psalm 55:12-14.

[12] For it is not an enemy who taunts me—  
then I could bear it;

it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—  
then I could hide from him.

[13] But it is you, a man, my equal,  
my companion, my familiar friend.

[14] We used to take sweet counsel together;  
within God’s house we walked in the throng.

The fact that the church can be just as dangerous of a place as any tempts us into unhelpful ways of relating in order to protect ourselves from further harm. However, God has made it so that healing and restoration come about through these same messy relationships as we vulnerably open ourselves up to give and receive love. This takes courage, right? Thankfully, our Lord didn’t command us to do anything that he himself wasn’t willing to do himself. He made himself vulnerable, came to a world he made but that didn’t want him and emptied himself by serving us in his death on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:1-11). In loving one another, we’re imitating and following in the footsteps of King Jesus who loved us so radically first.

## Love One Another (continued)

Lastly, we believe that Jesus' Church fulfilling the command to love one another is our greatest apologetic to a world that finds it increasingly difficult to love, let alone be in the same room as, people who are different from them. Jesus said to his disciples on the night he was betrayed: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). The diverse, radical, servant-like love of the Church as it imitates Christ is what will convince our neighbors that we belong to him.

What does it look like for Grace Chapel to fulfill this command to "love one another"?

In our personal lives, it means adopting a generous posture towards our time, treasures and talents. While it is tempting to hoard these things, instead, we open our hands in response to the generous lavish love of God and provide for the spiritual and physical needs of our brothers and sisters in Jesus.

In our church culture, among various things, our diaconate faithfully works to equip the congregation to meet one another's physical and material needs.

In our liturgy and worship, loving one another is most practically expressed when we pass the peace. We take 2-3 minutes before the sermon to greet one another in the name of Jesus. This can be frightening for some, but it's a chance to stretch ourselves and extend the love of Jesus we've received to someone else.

This command to love one another is the main motivation for our small group communities. We view these smaller gatherings around Lincoln as the "gymnasium" of our faith, the place where we get to practice love with one another. We have ample opportunity to do this in our shared life together: providing meals, a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, babysitting or moving help. Beyond these physical and emotional needs, we give and receive what we've been given by the Lord. We forgive one another, offer a safe place to be known in the ways we've messed up and remind one another of the grace we've received in Jesus.





# Love Your Neighbor

This teaching of Jesus is the “upside down kingdom” in action. A heart that has encountered Christ, that has found its great strength and joy in him, now gets to pour out for others. Like a pool of water that keeps its health by both receiving and then giving, our souls are meant to be ever-replenished and freely given to our neighbors.

The command to love your neighbor as yourself is rooted in God himself. It can be found explicitly as far back as the teachings of Leviticus (19:9-18) where Yahweh gives his people a list of practical ways to care for others, ending each point with “I am the Lord.” It’s as if neighbor love is so integral to who God is that to deal justly and care for the poor and sojourner is to declare God’s existence to the world!

The disciples got to watch Jesus do this all the time. He didn’t just talk about love, he showed it. His earthly ministry perfectly joined word and deed, which meant that the crowds around him were touched and healed and fed. Following Jesus now looks the same. We love our neighbors when we say true things to them about God’s beauty and his salvation in Jesus. We love our neighbors when we choose, by our proximity and by our integration in their lives, to meet physical and emotional and relational needs.

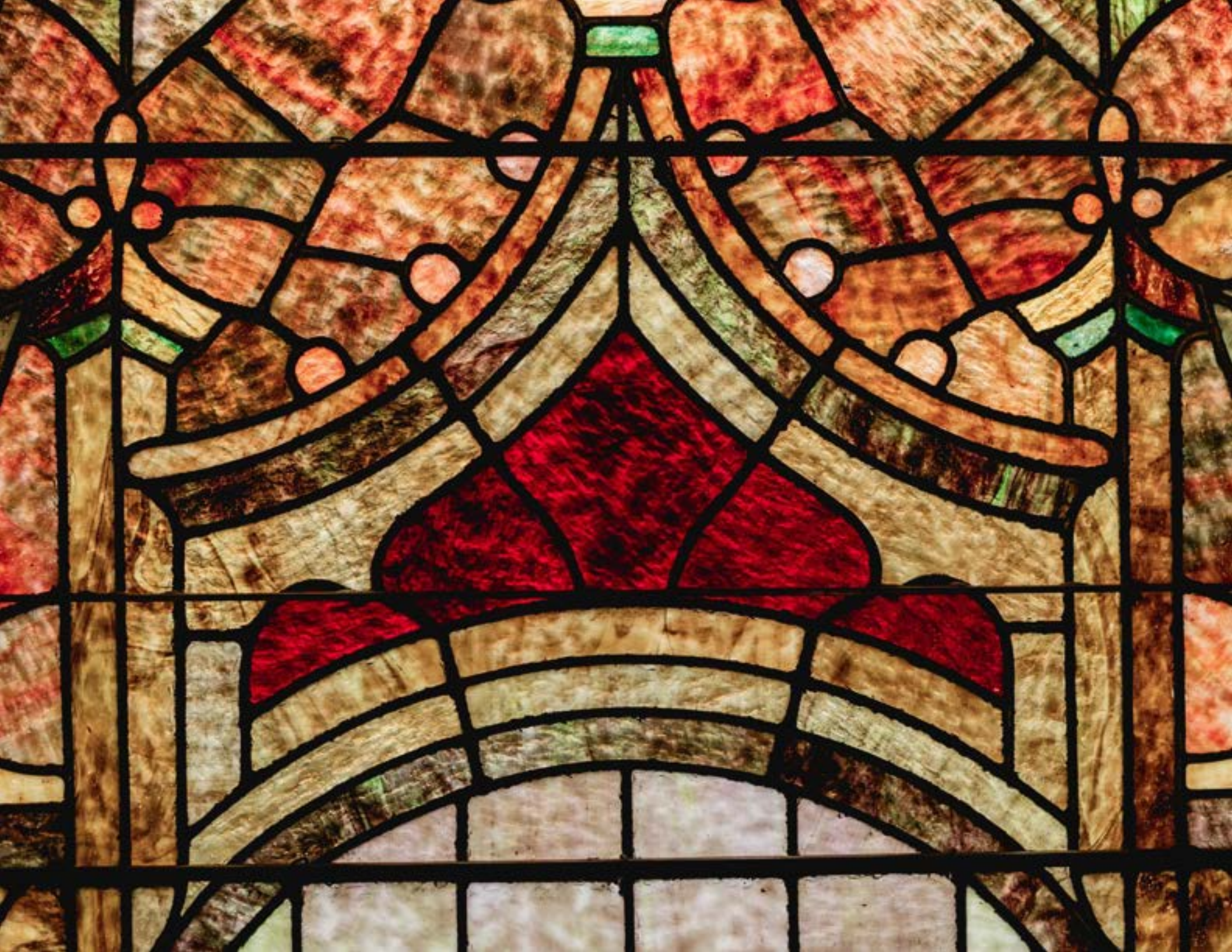
At Grace Chapel, we love our neighbors in practical, simple ways. In terms of the culture of our church, we consider who our actual real proximity-to-our-house neighbors are and ask, “What do they need? How can we love them?” We think of our church building as being for the neighborhood, working to make it a place that the Near South and Everett neighborhoods see as hospitable and eager to welcome them.

We pray for our neighbors and seek to make their joys and pains our own. We collect their prayers in the Neighbor Prayer Box at the corner of 16th and A. We partner with neighborhood churches and organizations doing good work by resourcing and volunteering and befriending. Through their knowledge and leadership we are helping to resettle refugee families, mentor at-risk youth, distribute free groceries, provide counseling and spiritual care, and much more.

## Love Your Neighbor (continued)

In our individual lives we ask for spiritual eyes to see the people we already come into contact with, the people who live and work and play with us. The person who bags your groceries, the teller at the bank, the parent at the basketball game, the lady at the park - these are neighbors who can be loved in Jesus' name. We consider the relationships we have already been given, believing that we are already representing Jesus' love and life to them. And we consider the neighbors that we have been given by moving to the Near South as a church. How might we intentionally integrate our lives into the physical spaces and beautiful people of the Near South and Everett neighborhoods? We encourage one another to shop, play, invest and spend time here, looking for those we might be good neighbors to.

In our liturgy and worship, we express this call to love our neighbors in the time of offerings when we give our resources to facilitate the ministries to the neighborhood. And we are reminded of Christ's call to love in the benediction at the end of the service when we are sent out into the world as little Christs. We leave with God's blessing upon us. We leave with more bles





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