

“WORSHIP – CONNECT – GROW – SERVE”

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Pastor

Mission Sunday
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Steel Lake Presbyterian Church
Federal Way, WA

INTRODUCTION

Today’s worship will be different because today is an exciting day in the life of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church. Today we are celebrating a new path for Steel Lake Presbyterian Church. Today we are receiving our new Mission Statement that was written and approved by the Session. And so today our worship will be all about:

- what this new mission statement says,
- what it means, and
- how best we can seek to live it out.

What we are receiving today is instructions on how we can better live out our calling from God.

- We are seeking to become a healthier church.
- We are seeking to honor God with the way that we live individually and as a community.
- This mission statement sets our priorities and helps us think about how we should set our own priorities as members of this body called the church.
- What we are recognizing today is that we have room for improvement. There are ways in which we can be more faithful.
- What we are recognizing today is that God wants something more from us. God wants to use us to build up God’s kingdom. And so today we are receiving our marching orders.

Let’s take a look at our new mission statement.

There are four main words in our mission statement:

WORSHIP, CONNECT, GROW AND SERVE

**The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to
WORSHIP God, CONNECT with one another,
GROW in faith, and SERVE the world**



WORSHIP – Mission Part 1

Leader says:

Worship – Connect – Grow – Serve

The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to **WORSHIP God**.

What do we mean by Worship?

Worship is showing our love and devotion to God through prayer, praise, and the proclamation of God’s word. As a congregation, as the people of God, we believe that God desires that we show our love and devotion to Him through prayer, praise, and the proclamation of God’s word.

This scripture passage helps us think about what it is that God desires from us. Listen to the first three verses of Psalm 34, which can be found on page four hundred and eighty in the Old Testament section of your pew bibles. Psalm 34 beginning with the first verse.

Psalm 34:1-3 (NRSV)

¹ I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. ³ O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

Meditation on WORSHIP

So this is our new mission statement. Our mission is to Worship God, Connect with one another, grow in faith, and serve the world. And the first thing we consider today is Worship—worshipping God. The road to fulfilling God’s purpose for Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is one of worship.

I like this passage from Psalm 34, because it highlights something that we often forget. Worship isn’t something that is supposed to be reserved for Sunday mornings. Worship is something that is meant to fill our days. That’s why the Psalmist says, “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes it’s boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.” Obviously these words come from someone who has reoriented their life towards God; who recognizes that all of life is lived before God; that all of life should give honor and glory and praise to God. We can worship God in all areas of our lives and at all times. Think about what happens when you walk through life in this way; when you recognize that God is with you, desiring your love and devotion and attention at all times, and that you have the opportunity to walk with God and to enjoy God all through your days.

Don’t we forget that from time to time. I know that I do. And that’s why this mission statement begins with what is most important to us—the worship of God. It’s a reminder that all of life can be lived and directed in a certain way.

The other thing that I like about this passage from Psalm 34, is what you find in verse three. It says, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” Listen to those words again. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” Yes, it’s true that we can worship God throughout our days in everything that we do. We don’t need to be in a sanctuary at a church in order to worship God. But there is something about worship that brings us together; it’s communal. It is best done in community. “O Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.” It is God who asks us to gather together to worship Him. We gather in the name of Christ. This is first and foremost what God’s people are supposed to do together. Worship should be our highest priority as a church.

Now if we are going to live out this first part of our new mission statement together, then it means that all of us, all of us together, need to make a new commitment to worship.

It means that we need to reorient our lives towards God, to recognize God’s presence in our lives, and in recognizing God’s presence, we should, each and every one of us, seek to worship God in all that we do.

The other thing that this means is that we, as God’s people, should make a new commitment to gathering together for the purpose of worshipping God each and every Sunday. It means that each of us should make a new commitment to come to worship, to worship God.

There is a difference between just coming to *worship* and coming *to worship*. You can come to *worship* and not worship. There are a lot of spectators in churches... people who feel like they are part of an audience. To them, worship feels a lot like going to the movies. We go and we sit in the theatre and hopefully we enjoy the show. At times, we can be engaged or engrossed in what we see, but still we remain spectators. That’s not what worship is supposed to be for us. That isn’t what worship is supposed to be about.

As God's people, when we gather **to worship**, we are supposed to be a part of the cast. We are the ones on the stage; the ones being watched. We're the ones who are supposed to be giving honor, glory and praise to God. We are the ones who are supposed to be listening for our cues and speaking our lines.

Consider worship for a moment from God's perspective. If God is the one we come to worship each Sunday and God is the one we are to whom we are to focus our love and devotion and attention, how does our worship look in the eyes of God?

How does God feel when we aren't paying attention? How does God feel when we are distracted? How does God feel when we are thinking about other things; like where we might be going to lunch afterwards, or whether or not there is a Seahawk game today? (By the way, the Seahawks have a bye this week). How does God feel when we are simply counting the minutes before we can get out of here and carry on with the rest of our day?

When you think about it this way, going to worship is like going out on a date. And I think we can all imagine how it feels when the person we want to be with shows a lack of interest in us. We know what it's like to be out with someone who is distracted or disinterested, or can't wait until it's time to go. Is that how our worship looks and feels to God?

If we are going to begin to live out this mission statement, then first and foremost we need to make a new commitment to Worship; to gather together each and every Sunday to worship God. Amen.

Let us pray.

Prayer

Gracious and loving and ever-faithful God, we confess that there are many times in our lives when we fail to recognize your presence among us... your presence within us... your presence within this sanctuary and within our world. As we come to worship you today, help us to truly worship you. Help us to give you our attention, to give you our devotion, to show you our love. May the songs we sing today truly bring you praise... may the words of our mouths and meditations of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Come, let us worship God.



CONNECT – Mission Part 2

Leader says:

Worship – Connect – Grow – Serve

The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to **CONNECT with one another**.

What do we mean by Connecting?

We believe that God wants us to be sharing life together by coming alongside one another and participating in the life of the church.

This scripture passage helps us think about what it is that God desires from us. Listen as I read from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter four, verses one through seven and verses eleven through sixteen, which can be found on page one hundred and eighty two in the New Testament section of your pew bibles. Ephesians chapter four, beginning with the first verse.

Ephesians 4:1–7, 11-16 (NRSV)

¹ I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Meditation on CONNECT

Here is what I like about this passage from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus:

Paul understands the church to be a living organism; a body made up of diverse and unique parts. He understands that we're all not the same. He understands that as diverse as we are, we all are meant to be united with one another; that we all are meant to come together to make up one body, with Christ as its head.

Paul knows that it is God through Christ who has given each of us our uniqueness, our unique gifts and skills. And he understands that we were given these gifts and skills, these talents, to share with one another, in order to build up this body, called the church, in love. He knows that we are meant to use these varied gifts to equip one another for the work of ministry; for building up the body of Christ. He understands that all of us are needed; all of our gifts are needed. And, he says, when we use our gifts properly, the body will grow.

That's why our session, in its wisdom, says that the next part of our mission as a church is to connect with one another; to share life together by coming alongside one another and participating in the life of the church. We all have gifts to share. And they all are needed in the church. Some of us have already discovered our gifts and they are obvious. Others of us have yet to discover our gifts, they are perhaps less obvious. But what we know is that all of us are needed and wanted, all of us should be cherished and cared for.

From time to time, we have to ask ourselves about our current practices particularly when it comes to connecting with the church, connecting with others. How well do we connect with one another? Ask yourselves this: how interested are you in connecting with the people sitting around you? What are you currently doing to try to connect with those around you? And what could you be doing? How can we better connect with one another? How can we better participate in the life of the church? How can we better come alongside one another and support one another and encourage one another and inspire one another?

Think about the narthex after church. When our worship service ends, what happens out there? And what should be happening out there? Do we make a bee-line for the exits as soon as worship is done? Or do we mingle and try to connect with the other members of our church? Do we talk with the same people Sunday after Sunday, or do we seek to meet and greet and get to know different people each week? When we see someone who is new, do we go up and introduce ourselves? When we see someone who is standing by themselves, do we go up to them and give them some company... or invite them into our conversations?

I understand that this might be easier for some people than it is for others. Trust me, I know what it is like to be an introvert. But isn't this part of what it means to be the church? Isn't this part of what God is calling us to do; part of what it means to love God and love your neighbor as yourself?

If we want to be a healthier church, if we want to be healthier Christians, then we need to make a commitment, this day and every day, to our church family. We need to make a commitment to get involved and be involved; to participate in the life of the church. When there are opportunities for us to get together, whether it's a fellowship event, a special event, a bible study, or a work party, we need to make the effort to be there. Our presence, more than our work, is what we need from each other. We need to make a commitment to one another. We need to seek to connect with one another in significant ways. We need to make a commitment to use our gifts for building up this body. Amen.

Prayer

Let us pray.

O come, creating, illuminating, uniting, calming, moving Spirit. Descend upon our hearts. Enter into the currents of our lives and help these currents to wash upon the shores of other lives. Help us to connect with one another in mutual love. Push us beyond our comfort zones so that we can participate in the life of this church in ways that we never would have imagined before. Help us to discover and to use our gifts in this church that we can help build up this body.

At this time, O Lord, we pray for this body. We lift up before you now, those who are connected to us, who need our prayers.

(moment of silent or spoken prayer)

God of life and love, with thankful hearts we acknowledge our lives to be a gift of your grace, renewed every morning and nurtured every day in your tender care. Keep us faithful to the challenges this day will bring. Make us a blessing to those our lives will touch, and show us how to receive in gratitude the blessings their lives will bring to ours; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



GROW – Mission Part 3

Leader says:

Worship – Connect – Grow – Serve

The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to **GROW in faith.**

What do we mean by Growing in faith?

It means that we are deepening our relationship with God and becoming more like Christ by studying God's word and exploring our faith.

This parable as told by Jesus helps us think about what it is that God desires from us in terms of growing in faith. Listen as I read from the gospel of Mark, chapter four, verses one through nine and verses thirteen through twenty, which can be found on page thirty five, in the New Testament section of your pew bibles. Mark chapter four, beginning with the first verse.

Mark 4:1-9, 13-20 (NRSV)

¹ Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he

sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” ⁹ And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

¹³ And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²⁰ And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

Meditation on GROW

It’s not hard to notice the connection between this parable and the third phrase of our mission statement. This parable is all about growth and growing and the response of various people to Jesus as he announces and inaugurates the kingdom of God.

Jesus is telling his disciples that the kingdom he is bringing isn’t going to come in a blaze of glory like everyone expects. It’s going to be more like a farmer going out and sowing seeds, much of which appears to be going to waste because the soil isn’t fit for it; it can’t sustain it. The seed that is being sown, the seed that will produce glimpses of the kingdom is his word, his teachings, his message. Some will receive it well and many others will not. In some it will grow and bear fruit and in others it will not.

How do we grow in faith? How do we deepen our relationship with God? How do we become more like Christ? These are good questions. And the obvious answer is that we do this through prayer and study. But most importantly we do this as we embrace, as we welcome, as we study and digest and absorb and allow ourselves to be transformed by the word the God.

It was the Psalmist who said, **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path”** (Psalm 119:105; KJV). **“The grass withers and the flower fades;”** said the prophet Isaiah, **“but the word of our God will stand for ever”** (Isaiah 40:8; NRSV). It was Jesus who said, **“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.”** (Matthew 7:24-25; NRSV).

If we want to be a healthy church, if we want to be healthy followers of Christ, then we know what we need to be doing. We need to be reading and studying God’s word. We need to be reading and studying the scriptures.

We need to be doing this on our own on a daily basis. We should have our own time of personal prayer and devotion, where we read and reflect on the scriptures. This should be happening every morning or every evening or perhaps during a break in the afternoon.

And we should be doing this together. We should be gathering regularly with other Christians to read the scriptures and reflect and discuss and share and question what we find there. We should be doing this once a week.

And finally, we should be gathering together to hear God's word proclaimed on Sunday mornings through the reading of the scriptures, and through sermons, through song and other liturgy.

Our faith must be founded upon God's word and so we must be immersing ourselves in the scriptures.

Now before we turn our attention to the final scripture passage and the final phrase of our new mission statement, I want you to notice something about this parable of the sower. The word is sown for a particular reason. The purpose of planting the seed is not just so that it will grow and look pretty. The purpose of planting the seed is so that it will grow and bear fruit. That is the reason why we study God's word; so that we can bear fruit; so that we can pass it on to others and they too can grow; they too can know and love God and demonstrate the life of God's kingdom. Amen.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Lord God we pray that you would plant your word within us; that you would nurture that word and help it to grow. Work your miracle of life within us. Lift us out of our darkness and show us the light that has come into the world through your beloved Son. Bring joy to our hearts and grant us the transforming power of your presence that we might grow up into maturity into Him; that we might bear fruit, thirty, sixty or a hundredfold; fruit that will last. Help us to show our thankful praise as we tell others our stories of your love and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



SERVE – Mission Part 4

Leader says:

Worship – Connect – Grow – Serve

The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to **SERVE the world.**

What do we mean by serving?

We believe that we are to be joining in God's work in the world by serving others and demonstrating God's love.

It is through the actions of Jesus himself that we get the clearest picture of what it means to serve the world; not only his death on the cross, but also the way he served those around him. Listen to this reading from the gospel of John, chapter thirteen, verses one through seventeen, which can be found on page one hundred and one in the New Testament section of your pew bibles. John chapter thirteen, beginning with the first verse.

John 13:1–17 (NRSV)

¹ Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus

answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”⁹ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.”¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Meditation on SERVE

I was debating earlier this week whether we should be reading this passage from John thirteen or whether we should be reading the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke chapter ten. But I think this is the right choice and here is why.

We know who Jesus is. We know that Jesus is the name above all names. We know that he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We know that he is the word made flesh, who was God and is God. And yet, on the night he was betrayed, Jesus took off his outer robe, wrapped a towel around himself, poured water into a basin and washed his disciples feet. Their rabbi and their master demonstrated what it means to be one of his followers; to live according to the values of the kingdom. To follow Jesus means to become a servant of others. He said, “I have set for you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.” And he gave his disciples a new commandment. He said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.”

Jesus asks all of his followers to become servants. Jesus asks all of us to serve.

And notice in this passage who Jesus serves. Yes, it’s the disciples; his followers and his friends. But even more telling is the fact that Judas, the one who was about to betray him, to have him arrested and tried and killed, is among them. And yet, Jesus still shows him the same courtesy. He is even willing to wash the feet of his betrayer.

Now most of us would be willing to go to great lengths to help out others in this congregation. And many of us have. But are we willing to go to such great lengths for strangers, for people we don’t know, for people who are our enemies? Jesus said, “Do unto others as I have done unto you.” He said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.”

If we are going to be healthier church, if we are going to be healthy followers of Christ, then we must be willing to get down and dirty, we must be willing to humble ourselves as Jesus did. We must be willing to do whatever it takes to serve others. And not just our friends.

We believe that God wants us to join in God’s work in the world by serving others and demonstrating God’s love. God wants everyone here at Steel Lake to find ways that they can serve the world. There should be an air of service in and among us. In everything that we do, we should take on the humility of Christ and seek to serve rather than be served.

Think about the difference this would make, not only in this community, but also in this church.

Imagine if we came to worship with this attitude. Imagine if we came to worship in order to serve rather than to be served. Rather than thinking about what we’re supposed to “get” out of worship, we are more focused on what we are giving to God.

Imagine if we took this attitude into our connecting. Rather than seeking to be served, we were someone who sought to serve. We were someone who sought to know others not because we want them to do something for us, but because we want to do something for them. Or we get to know others and invest in the lives of others not because we want to get the greatest return on our investment, but because we simply want to be a blessing. Didn't Jesus say, "If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them"?

Imagine if we took this attitude into our programs and opportunities for spiritual growth. Imagine if we went into our bible studies and our Sunday school classes with the attitude that we are there to serve others rather than be served ourselves. What if we went into those opportunities in order to give more than we expected to receive. What if we joined a bible study, not because we need it, but because the people needed us; they needed our companionship, our wisdom, our thoughts and our questions. Think of the new vitality this would give to our Bible studies.

Imagine if we took this attitude to the world. What would happen if we sowed these kinds of seeds of love and compassion and justice and humility and service into the fields of Federal Way? Wouldn't it be awesome to watch them bloom and grow?

This is the vision of our leadership. We want to be a healthier church. We are determined to live as God's people and to join in God's work. And the pathway to accomplish this is through worshipping God, connecting with one another, growing in faith, and serving the world. Amen.

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

During this time of prayer, you are invited to share aloud your prayers for the world. After you have lifted up your petition, you are invited to say, "Lord in your mercy", to which we will all respond, "Hear our prayer." Let us pray.

It is overwhelming to us, O God, to think that we live our days on this earth reflecting your likeness into the world around us. Forgive us that the reflection is so often blurred and the image so often distorted. Keep us close in our companionship with our Lord Jesus, where the reflection of your love is to be found in all its fullness. Hear us now as we pray for the world around us:

Moment of prayer for the world

And hear us now Lord as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:
 Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

CONCLUSION

So this is our new mission statement.

**The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to
 WORSHIP God, CONNECT with one another,
 GROW in faith, and SERVE the world.**

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An easy way to remember it is like this:

Hold up your hand and look at your thumb. Your thumb is the most important finger on your hand. And so your thumb represents God. At Steel Lake Presbyterian Church, we want to place God at the center of all that we do.

The next most important finger is your index finger. And so this finger represents WORSHIP. We are to WORSHIP GOD.

The next finger represents CONNECT. We are to CONNECT with one another.

The ring finger represents the rings of a tree, it represents GROWTH. We are to GROW in faith.

The last finger is our smallest finger. It represents humility and service. We are to SERVE the world.

Using our fingers, let us say it together:

**The Mission of Steel Lake Presbyterian Church is to:
WORSHIP, CONNECT, GROW, and SERVE.**

Amen.

Please join hands together.

***May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more. Amen.***