

Gather, Grow, Go

Gather

We Gather in worship that is grounded and fresh.

Worship is the hub of the church's life and activity. It is the vision of our church that our members **gather** for worship with eagerness, participate actively and look for God's presence. When we gather for worship, we gather not only to glorify God, but also to be refreshed by the Lord: he strengthens us with preaching (Rom. 16:25); he stirs our hearts with singing (Col 3:16); he meets us at the Lord's table (1 Cor 10:16); and he gives us a new identity and purpose in baptism (Titus 3:5). Worship truly is the "privilege and primary duty" of the local congregation (EPC Book of Order 4.2)

It is furthermore the vision of our church that our worship practices be **grounded** in the historical life of the church, yet **fresh** in the way they interact with the present day. The EPC Book of Worship (2.4A) strikes this balance by instructing us to look for guidance on worship from the following three sources: scripture, the Reformed tradition, and the circumstances of the congregation. The first two arise out of the past; the latter out of the present. Looking to the past helps us overcome our own cultural blinders and grants us the collective wisdom of the larger church. Looking to the present reminds us that our worship must be globally minded and intelligible to the local church and community.

Practically, we will retain the classic practices of worship (the confession of sin for example) on most Sundays, but also look for ways to keep them fresh (perhaps by singing the words of confession). One might think of the interaction between the old and the new as a song in the hands of a skilled jazz ensemble. An established tune is the foundation for the music, but in the hands of talented musicians, the tune is also improvised and expanded, surprising and delighting those listening. Likewise, old worship practices can be made fresh through thoughtful worship planning and preparation.*

Grow

We Grow in communities of support, study, and outreach.

It is the vision of our church that all of our members **grow** in their walk with the Lord. There are many avenues towards Christian growth and discipleship. Throughout the New Testament and the history of the church, we see Christians growing as they **support** one another with prayer, counsel, and material goods (James 5:16; Prov 27:17; 1 John 3:17); we see

* Today, Gregory Jones calls this approach "Traditioned Innovation;" Constance Cherry calls it "Convergence Worship;" and Robert Webber has called it "Ancient Future Faith."

Christians growing as they **study** the word of God together (Acts 17:1–12); and we see Christians growing in their faith as they **reach out** with the good news of the gospel to others (Acts 4:29-35).

As a result, it is the vision of our church that **we grow through communities of support, study, and outreach**. Practically, we want to see the members of our church develop spiritual friendships and become involved in small groups. Not only will these small groups gather for Bible study, but also for support and outreach. Support might take the form of prayer, counsel, financial assistance, outings, or shared meals. Outreach might take place as groups welcome newcomers, meet in public places, or look for opportunities to take on an existing outreach ministry of the church or develop a new one.

Go

We Go to speak and serve in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is the vision of our church that we **go**, that we move outward in witness towards those who don't know the love of the Triune God. Jesus gave us the great commission in Matthew 28, telling us to **go** and make disciples of all nations. This outward focus is consistent with the nature of God, who intervened in our lives by sending Jesus Christ to **speak** the good news and to **serve** us by healing the sick, caring for the poor, and offering his life on the cross for our sins.

As a result, effective outreach must do two things: it must **speak** the good news of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:14-15), and it must **serve** the real-life hurts and needs of our neighbors (Matthew 25:40). As a result, it is the vision of our church **to go to speak and serve in the name of Jesus Christ**. Practically, we will especially seek out those ministries and mission opportunities that allow us to speak about our faith with others, to pray with them, and to share the hope we have in Jesus Christ. At the same time, we will love those with whom we speak, seeking to serve them by meeting physical needs such as hunger, poverty, illness, or other forms of suffering and human need.