

# REDEMPTION CHURCH AXIOMS

## WHY ALL-CHURCH AXIOMS?

We love our church and want to help one another live with an ongoing sense of health, connection, and commitment to our mission. As we continue to see new people join our family, we want to put in writing some things that describe who we are. Our church has a significant amount of clarity and conviction about our mission and vision that is part of our church culture. Culture is something you experience with a group of people walking together in a particular place and time. As always, our heart is to help people grow spiritually.

We are calling these statements axioms. An axiom is a clear and concise idea or statement set forward and accepted by a community. So, we want these axioms to (1) introduce new people to our culture, and (2) serve as guideposts to keep us on track as we move forward together. We think this will encourage us to live out our key commitments as a family. This also gives us a healthy place to grow as we learn new things from new friends and make course corrections as needed down the road.

These will be “living” axioms, meaning they will likely morph or change over time. It might be helpful to think of these as our current operating system, which may need changes and updates in the future. This means that we may add some in the future, and we may edit or hone others.

You will be part of learning and spreading these around in the normal life of our church: our membership process, team huddles, small groups, ministry meetings, and more. They will be used as teaching and conversation tools to keep us focused.

In the end, these ought to help us live out our mission and vision:

- Our mission is to make authentic followers of Jesus who live for the glory of God and the good of our world.
- Our vision is to help everyday people wake up to deep, meaningful life in Christ.

## 1: EVERYTHING STARTS WITH GOD.

Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.” Above everything else in life, our highest priority is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. This is why we seek to keep God at the center of all that we do. If we lose sight of God personally, we put ourselves on the throne of our lives and begin to do what seems right in our own eyes, and this never ends well. If we lose our love of God as an organization, we will become a mere social club. that holds self-help pep rallies on the weekends. We never want to be a church that does lots of good in the world only to find that we have “abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev. 2:4.) We believe Psalm 16:11 which says, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Because we believe God is more wonderful than anything or anyone else, we hunger for a personal and real relationship saying (Psalm 63): “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water...Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.” Life itself began with God, and he ordered this world in such a way that love was at the very core of our relationship with Him. Everything we do ought to flow out of our connection to God and his love. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Everything in the Christian life starts and ends with God, so we live with a sense of reverence and awe that gives our lives meaning and depth that is much bigger than we are.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . . For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.” - A. W. Tozer

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **All of life is worship.** Worship is more than singing. Every moment in every setting has the potential to be an act of worship. “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- **Know and enjoy God personally.** Develop a relationship with God that includes personal times of devotion in prayer and in God’s Word. Talk with God as you go about your day. Invest in a growing surrender to God as you get to know him better and walk in his ways.
- **Honor Christ as your Savior and Lord, Rescuer and King.** When we become Christians, we reorient all of life under his leadership. Scripture says, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God...” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- **Approach our worship gathering with God as your focus.** Pray for our people. Prepare your heart for worship. Confess your sin as before our holy God. Be attentive to God. Listen. Receive the Lord’s direction. Respond to God personally as you trust and obey God as God.
- **Deepen your doctrine.** Our beliefs are not mere formulas to which we coldly adhere or statements to which we sign our name. Our doctrine deepens our love for God and magnifies our gratitude and worship. Our core beliefs inform our perspectives on life, on our church, and on our relationship to our world. We desire to deepen our understanding of who God is and live in light of all we know about him.

- **Make God known.** When we enjoy God, we will want to share him with others. This is natural: whenever we discover a great restaurant or celebrate a monumental win by our favorite team, we find ourselves telling others about the experience. The same should happen when we discover the grandeur and goodness of our God – but even more so!

## 2: PEOPLE ARE THE MISSION.

After giving the first and greatest commandment about loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, Jesus told his disciples that the second great commandment is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This second command, like the first, is grounded in love. We see this focus everywhere in Jesus' mission: When he called the first disciples he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19) Later, he would say, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21) With this simple statement, he sent us to people with whom we are to carry on the work he came to do. This gives direction to all of our efforts. When we sit down in church, we engage with those around us. In our role on a serve team, we serve as we would want someone to serve us. In our small group, we connect with the people around us to make a difference in their lives. In our city, we love others as Christ loved us. We are a church that loves people.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **Welcome everyone as if this is our only chance.** We will initiate with a smile and a warm welcome with everyone we see. Let's assume God put us in their path to be an encouragement. This may be our only chance to share God's love with them.
- **Everyone has a story.** Each person who walks into our church is valued as someone created in the image of God. We seek to engage them where they are, listen to their story, and invite them into God's redemption story.
- **Our mission drives our ministry.** We make disciples of Jesus. We will utilize buildings and programs to accomplish this mission, but we seek to keep the focus on people. Programs and facilities are tools to help us reach and disciple people, and we will make changes to these if we can better serve people another way.
- **Make things better.** Because people are so important, we do the best we can. As leaders and as a church we will make mistakes, so we are always seeking to make things better. Part of learning is experimenting, failing, and improving. We will try things that will end up not working. We will have to "tweak" things on the fly. This is normal and expected and healthy.

### 3: WE WILL BE AN AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY.

We will be an honest, healthy, together community. Jesus prayed a powerful request for all who would follow him by faith, praying: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21) In Jesus’ evaluation, unity is paramount.

The most honest and healthy place we can find ourselves is in seeing what God sees. We will seek truth, knowing that sin and weakness are places for God to shine and provide witness to Him both within and without our church. We will trust God’s grace together in our brokenness. This requires humility and transparency on our parts, which feel like a deep personal cost but lead to a meaningful and maturing reward for ourselves and our church family.

To walk in this vulnerability, we need to be a community that is marked by love for one another. We read about this kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13. We will not do this perfectly, so we admit when we are wrong and say, “I’m sorry.” We forgive one another because love keeps no record of wrongs. We see conflict as an opportunity to grow together in grace and understanding. We listen. We choose to believe the best about one another. We get help from others when things seem too difficult to manage. We fight to be a healthy family.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **Our beginning place is admitting our brokenness.** Jesus outed us all as sinners when he gave his life for us on the cross to pay for our sin. By definition, calling ourselves Christians is an admission that we are sinners in need of a Savior.
- **Unity is huge.** An authentic together community means a united team with an imperfect program always beats a divided team with a perfect program. As a team, we each have different strengths and weaknesses as well as different roles and responsibilities, yet we succeed and fail together. We will not all agree on every decision, but we commit to work through differences together in a respectful way.
- **We lean into the tension in the room.** We are committed to being peacemakers, so we see conflict as an opportunity to clarify differences and deepen trust on our team. That means we talk to one another rather than talking to others about tensions we are feeling. We will be honest as we lean into the tension.
- **Flex on peripheral issues.** Healthy Christians approach various aspects of church life (e.g. styles, programs, preferences) with grace and flexibility. Peripheral issues will not become central. We will seek to love and care for all, but inflexible individuals will not hold our mission hostage.
- **We listen to the vulnerable.** We invite all to voice concern over any potential abuse or inappropriate engagement to our deacons, staff, pastors, and/or elders. Abusers will not be tolerated in the pews; enablers will not be tolerated in leadership.

## 4: DISCIPLESHIP IS FOR EVERYONE.

A disciple is a follower, a learner, a student. It's a general term which means that you could be a disciple of a famous economist, a writer, a pop musician, a politician, or basically anyone. We're constantly absorbing things from outside influences which can make us disciples, whether intentionally or unintentionally. As Christians, our first and deepest influence is Jesus. God sent Jesus to right the wrongs of sinful humanity and usher in a new kingdom where all would flourish as God intended. Jesus' work won't be completed until he returns in the future, but we all are invited to live under this good King and to learn to walk in his ways.

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). To take up one's cross is to deny one's self and learn a new way of living. The Bible describes this journey in several ways: we repent of our old ways and trust Jesus to give us new ways; we learn to "put off" the old self and to "put on" the new self; we cease walking in the flesh and start walking in the Spirit. Christians call this life-long growth process "discipleship." To that end, every gathering, group, team, friendship, and conversation is an opportunity to help one another learn to live the way of Jesus. As a church, everything we do is informed by Jesus' call to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **The stage is not our primary focus.** We deeply value the gathering of the church together, but we want more for each other than mere Sunday attendance. The church equips all Christians to be representatives of the King we serve. A church that grows together is always seeking others to bring along in the process of becoming authentic disciples of Jesus.
- **We grow best in face-to-face relationships.** Discipleship happens in the context of community where we experience challenge and correction, encouragement and admonishment, care and community. While the truth of the gospel is the same for all, how we experience God and his grace is unique to each of us. Different seasons will lend themselves to different availability and needs, but we always need others to help shape our formation.
- **We want transformation, not just information.** We seek to be doers of the Word, not just hearers of the Word (James 1:22-25). That means we study the Bible in order to apply the Bible to our lives.
- **We want whole-life discipleship.** We balance the love of biblical truth, the beauty of Christ-like character, and the strength of Christ-like service. Like a three-legged stool, each is essential to our discipleship.

## 5: WE NEED BOTH BRIDGES AND BARRIERS.

As Christians who live in a complex time, it can be confusing how to think and feel about our world. On the one hand, we see brokenness that leads to frustration. On the other hand, we see beauty in people made in the image of God, and we are filled with compassion. As followers of Jesus, our goal is to see others as God sees them. To help us visualize differing aspects of these realities, we've chosen to talk about the need for both bridges and barriers. We want to build bridges to connect in love, and we need to build barriers to protect truth. As we seek to reach out to our friends and neighbors, we will need to build bridges inviting all to experience the life of flourishing God desires for us. At the same time, life under God's care and direction necessitates establishing healthy moral, doctrinal, and spiritual boundaries to guard the health of his people. This is a tension we will navigate as a church committed to engaging our world for both the good of others and the glory of God.

For 2000 years, the church has wrestled with this tension, sometimes effectively and sometimes less so, and we can learn much from the many Christians who have come before us. From the apostles in the book of Acts to our current time, the church has set boundaries (or barriers) around the life of the Christian. With the Bible as our authority, the historic confessions and conduct of the Church provide deep roots which shed light on our current cultural moment. With the Spirit's help, we inhabit a living faith that we inherit from the past and pass down to future generations. When we speak of building bridges, we mean that we are purposefully and passionately inviting new people to cross over from unbelief to faith in Christ through gospel conversion and new life in a new community called the church.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **There is a difference between becoming and belonging.** As people explore faith in Christ, we want to create space for them to experience a healthy church first-hand. Without personal knowledge or relationship, this may create some uncertainty about who is "inside" and "outside" the faith. We believe this is a necessary tension for people to truly and freely explore what faith in Christ is all about. To that end, some roles and responsibilities are great for all who are seeking to become more of who God created us to be, while other roles or responsibilities are more appropriate for those who belong to our church by faith and conviction. Both are welcome, just in different places in a season.
- **We commit to the long game of relationships over reactions.** In our current cultural moment, we will pursue the longer conversation surrounding tough issues in lieu of hasty, reactionary responses. We will not shy away from truth-telling as revealed in Scripture, but we won't feel the pressure to respond to every social upheaval in real time. The work of becoming conversant instead of cursory will, we believe, help us seek to enter the fray, offer hope and direction, and collectively grow towards maturity in Christ. We choose health over hurry.
- **We will address the brokenness of both religious sinners and irreligious sinners.** It is easy to view the sins of others as worse than our own sins. Too often, the church has overlooked things which were viewed as more "acceptable" sins within a church culture (i.e. pride, greed, gluttony, etc) while harping on supposed "larger" sins which were more visible outside the church (i.e. sexual sin, gambling, drug addiction, etc.). We want to be like Jesus who routinely confronted religious sinners at least as directly as irreligious sinners.

- **We will invest in the good of our city.** We will participate in civic or community events that are non-church events outside the walls of the church. Sometimes, this means participating and partnering with those who do not share our viewpoints, moral convictions, or faith in Christ. It is helpful to view these as bridge-building events for the purpose of making a relational investment with the people of our community. In these events, we assume a posture of humility and generosity, seeking to give a gift to the city, but knowing that we cannot control all that occurs in such a setting.



## 6: JESUS FLIPPED LEADERSHIP UPSIDE DOWN.

Everything in Jesus' life and ministry seemed to be exactly the opposite of what people expected. This is captured beautifully in Philippians 2:1-11, where we read, "though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." This is the most shocking and mind-blowing leadership move in history: God over all became the servant of all to the point of sacrificing his very life for the good of all.

In the history of the church, this approach to life has become known as *the way of the cross*. It stands in contrast to *the way of glory*, which describes the typical approach to power and leadership that we see in the world. Thus, following Jesus means rejecting worldly approaches to leadership, which are often concerned with power, celebrity, significance, and status. We choose Jesus' upside-down way of the cross rather than the world's way of glory.

This is so important that Jesus commanded us to embrace his approach to life, building our lives on this upside-down approach to life and leadership. After washing the filthy feet of his disciples, Jesus said "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Leaders say, "Follow me as I follow Jesus." We walk in the path of humble service, self-forgetfulness rather than self-promotion, strength through weakness, grace over guilt, sacrificial love. We cannot effectively lead someone until they know we love them.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **We are all called to lead-somewhere.** The call of Christ to lead by serving affects all relationships: work life, marriage, parenting, etc. These relationships should experience gospel transformation as we learn to walk according to the upside-down kingdom values.
- **We are a team.** Like any team, we will have different strengths and weaknesses as well as different roles and responsibilities. Team members interact with honesty, transparency, and accountability to others. As we grow together in Christlikeness we may take on different roles and/or responsibilities within our teams, but we never outgrow the highest values of love and service to one another.
- **Church leadership roles are chief servant roles.** Elders, deacons, and others who lead are Christ-like examples for the church who do so in humble and sacrificial ways rather than domineering or compulsive ways.
- **We invite in, build up, send out, and cheer on others.** Leaders are called to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-16). We seek to outdo one another in honoring and celebrating others, looking out for their interests above our own.
- **We live for a King and a kingdom.** When we get leadership wrong, it usually means we want a kingdom without a King. But Christ already earned the right to the only throne in this kingdom, so we gladly submit to him and learn to live his upside-down way as a servant.

## 7: PRAYER IS THE PATH TO SPIRITUAL VITALITY.

Prayer is as counter-cultural a thing as we can do in a hyper busy, success obsessed, image aware, & media overloaded suburban culture. “American culture is probably the hardest place in the world to learn to pray. We are so busy that when we slow down to pray, we find it uncomfortable. We prize accomplishments, production. But prayer is nothing but talking to God. It feels useless, as if we are wasting time. Every bone in our body screams, ‘Get to work.’” (A Praying Life, 15)

This is actually why prayer is so important! Prayer forces us to look beyond ourselves. Jesus himself showed us the priority of praying to our Father in heaven: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35). Jesus modeled for us the way of union with God through prayer. Spiritual growth is fueled by a vibrant prayer life as we discover how to walk with God in real friendship that restores and re-centers our lives.

When we pray, we say, “I am not made for myself, and I was not intended to manage all of life on my own. Right now, I need God’s love, joy, grace, guidance, and help.” We seek a regular rhythm that balances (1) our confession of our need for God in our lives / church / world, and (2) our commitment to trust God with our lives / church / world. In prayer, whether individually or together, we seek God’s praise and presence, as well as his provision. We pray expectantly to our Heavenly Father who loves us and never leaves us.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **Prayer is more caught than taught.** Like riding a bike, the best way to learn to pray is by praying. There is no way to download, absorb, read, or podcast a prayer life. It’s something you learn through doing the thing rather than observing something else doing it. The best way to grow a healthy prayer life is to pray.
- **Prayer is not a performance.** Don’t dress it up with impressive or “spiritual-sounding” language. Just talk to God like you would speak with your most trusted friend.
- **Praying fosters joy, hope, and strength in the Christian life.** Prayer is talking personally to God, and we grow through going directly to God ourselves. Over time, we discover an intimacy with God that we enjoy as he meets us in prayer, fellowship, and deep dependence upon him.
- **Prayer takes different forms for different purposes.** We need a well-rounded approach to our prayer lives that includes praying in a church gathering with a large group, praying in small groups of spiritual friends, praying alone. We need to pray silently, and we need to pray out loud. We may experience kingdom prayer, abiding prayer, intercessory prayer, moment-by-moment prayers, daily rhythms or discipline of setting aside times for prayer and solitude.

## 8: YOUR WHOLE LIFE MATTERS TO GOD.

Every aspect of your life matters to God. Jesus said we find life that is really life when we “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.” His point is not so much for us to break things down into categories as it is to show us that everything we are and do is connected to our love of God. To live this way, we will actively pursue Christ personally as an active participant in the full life of the church. We often learn about the forgiveness of God from relationships with others, as we receive forgiveness from others and offer forgiveness to others. Our spirituality is lived in the context of our vocational, social, emotional, physical lives. These wider connections and everyday applications of lived truth are essential to spiritual flourishing. We value spiritual health above spiritual performance, and we see this through an emphasis on being as well as doing. In other words, our private and personal walk with the Lord is inseparable from our corporate connections and public usefulness to the Lord. We acknowledge that much of the spiritual health we experience as a church depends on our commitment to our spiritual well-being in everyday life as individuals. Our regular gatherings and rhythms of worship and service are enriched by our pursuit of God as well as his pursuit of us. Our faith influences all of life.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **We seek to grow our minds.** We're all theologians, whether we know it or not. We want to cultivate biblically-grounded, gospel-motivated, culturally-engaged minds as we navigate the complexities of our world in God-honoring ways. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God.”
- **We need wholeness and holiness.** We are called to be set apart as God's people in our worship and in our personal lives. The fruit of the Spirit yields new character and attitudes in our lives (Galatians 5). Among other things, this means that (1) we won't be spiritually mature and emotionally immature, and (2) we won't pursue deep doctrine at the expense of seeking Christlike morality and character. So, we encourage a wisely applied, wholistic approach to care including such things as: spiritual practices and prayer, gospel community and relational connection, medical doctors and medication, wise counselors and therapy, physical health and diet, and the like.
- **We appreciate the mystery of our souls.** We are not materialists who believe our lives are predetermined by matter and chemistry and natural desires. God created us as complex beings, including both material and immaterial. We believe God transforms lives, and his work includes both body and soul. This is some of what it means to walk by faith, not (merely) by sight. When we walk through seasons of questioning, dryness, sadness, frustration, and sorrow, we trust that God has not abandoned us but is teaching us to trust him with another aspect of our souls.
- **Our physical presence makes a difference.** Jesus' incarnation highlighted the importance of a physical body – he did not just appear to take on flesh but became fully human. This means that our physical bodies and full participation are spiritually significant. So, we encourage attendance at our worship gathering whenever health permits. We value one another in physical presence, seeing a human good in hugs and high fives, singing together, sharing communion and baptism together. Digital engagement is a valued helpful resource, but should typically be secondary to personal presence when possible.

- **Our vocation matters to God.** Women and men alike are called to honor God in their work, home, and citizenship. We value involvement in these normal institutions of worldly life. This means that all responsibilities – whether we feel they are the most glorious or most mundane tasks – are part of our worship. “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23).
- **All of life is worship.** Even in a fallen world, life is good. This means that ordinary things like laughter, hikes, queso, and mowing the grass are meaningful as we express gratitude to our Creator for the life he’s given to us. Our darkest days still carry glimmers of grace and the glory of God. Our brightest days are a foretaste of our future life in the new heavens and earth, rejoicing together in all the grandeur of God’s world and God himself.

## 9: WE SERVE AND GIVE SO THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE.

Jesus taught his followers about his mission, saying, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This verse has become an anchor verse for our church family that we return to time after time to remind ourselves both of Jesus’ costly sacrifice for us and of Jesus’ costly call upon our lives. Christ’s mission comes with a sense of urgency – because eternity is at stake for people all around us. Our church is an outpost for the Gospel in a city that needs to hear and experience what life with Jesus is all about.

We began as a grass roots, all-in, every person makes a difference church, and we want to keep that pioneering spirit. As we move into our new building, it may be easy for people to back away from serving with their gifts (*being* the church) and lean more on the paid staff to make church happen (*attending* the church). In order to maintain our passion, we must continue to call and equip people to a lifestyle of service.

This means we choose *contending over consuming*. The church serves like an army committed to the common cause of the gospel. Our cause is worthy of whole-hearted sacrifice and life-long investment. We will equip ourselves for Gospel ministry at every connection point. Everything we do should motivate an evangelistic focus and passion to see the mission advance. We desire to see others come to faith in Christ and spread the glory of God in our world. As Charles Spurgeon said, “It is not enough to maintain, we must advance.”

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **We give generously, cheerfully, systematically, passionately, and sacrificially.** We believe that God owns everything, and we are his money managers. Giving is a normal part of church life, with Scripture providing clear guidance about how and what to give. We give as an act of faith and trust in God in response to his grace and goodness. As 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- **Church is an “all y’all thing.”** Our ecclesiology (or belief about church) says that a church is healthy when every member sees himself or herself as a vital part of the whole. Romans 12 depicts the church as a single body made up of many parts: “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Ephesians 4 takes this image further to show how the church grows through the efforts of each person doing work: “when each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”
- **We seek to know and grow our spiritual gifts.** God has given gifts to every believer which are to be used for the common good. While different people have different gifts, we each share inclusion in the same body and importance to the same mission. God gives us gifts for a purpose: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” (Romans 12:6). As we move toward maturity, we should grow in understanding of how God wants us to use our gifts, talents, personality, and experiences for his purposes in the church and world.

- **Sacrifice is normal.** Rather than thinking, “How does this church meet all of my needs?”, we ask, “How can I meet the needs of others?” Philippians 2 tells us to cultivate a Christ-like mindset: “in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

## 10: WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Our mission statement says we seek to be authentic followers of Jesus who live for the glory of God *and* the good of our world. This simple statement contains two enormous goals. The first is a vertical aspect focusing on proclaiming God's name throughout all creation (Psalm 67), and the second is a horizontal aspect focusing on making a difference for human flourishing on earth (Romans 12:9-21). We need both to fully embrace the mission given to us in the Bible. We should always sense a spiritual thrust upward to glorify our God and outward to serve and reach new people (John 3:16). So, we gather to worship the Lord each week, and then we scatter to be salt and light in our city and world.

We want to "go make a difference" in our world in the name of the Triune God we love and worship. We seek to be a church where each person seizes the opportunity to be a life-giving presence in our community. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world..let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). This means we want to do good for its own sake (Jeremiah 29:4-7), specifically to love and serve the least, the lost, the lonely, and the left out through ministries of mercy and compassion (Matthew 25). While we want to be a blessing in all kinds of ways that benefit our world, we recognize that the gospel is the greatest good we can offer. Jesus "came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). As Christ-followers, evangelism should always be at the forefront of our mission. All of this is grounded in God's command to love your neighbor as yourself – we surely want everyone to receive the amazing grace of God that we have come to know and trust and love.

Here are a few of the practical ways this works out in our community:

- **We minister within our context.** We seek excellence at every point that a guest experiences us. If we don't do things with excellence and consistency, they won't trust us when we invite them into conversations about doctrine, service, suffering, worship, etc. We view the large gathering (Sundays) as the best opportunity we have to influence the greatest number of people, so we place a high value on the quality of Sunday mornings to our church and mission. Sunday morning is the "front door" to life at Redemption. This is an entry point for future discipleship.
- **We are all called to "missions."** Mission is something we all live with intentionality and purpose in our everyday lives. While some are called to go overseas as "missionaries," and we want to support such endeavors, we don't "outsource" the call of being missionaries wherever God has placed us. We will, however, value mission trips, support missionaries, and invest in church planting to see all peoples reached with the gospel.
- **We invest in all kinds of good in our world.** In a sense, all of life is missional as we live as the hands and feet of Christ in our world. We seek to offer encouragement, compassion, and mercy in word and deed. We seek to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). Jesus taught us to care for all people, saying, "as you did it until the least of these, you did it unto me (Matthew 25). We live this out practically through participation in services like feeding the poor, tutoring students, medical care, home repairs, and more.
- **The Gospel is the greatest good.** Evangelism is a primary calling for Christ's church. We are each sent out as gospel witnesses to Jesus and his kingdom. So, we are committed to befriending our friends, neighbors, co-workers and classmates in real ways, and we want to share both our story and the gospel with them. We want to see people meet Jesus for the first time, celebrate their baptisms with us, and grow towards maturity as new creations in Christ.

- **Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.** When considering the needs of the entire world, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the immense demand for help everywhere we look. We fight despair through winning little battles of care for those around us. We can't meet every need, but we can each do something to help. Everyone has a circle of influence, and the ripple effect we create as we care for those nearby are worth the investment.