



MAPLE VALLEY
CHURCH

More God. More Love. More Life.

Mission Study

April 19, 2023

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Introduction

This Mission Study was developed by the Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) of Maple Valley Church (MVC) and approved by the Session. Its purpose is to clearly communicate the vision for MVC, acknowledging and celebrating our past and present, while looking forward to what God has in store for us with a new Senior Pastor.

The PNC was appointed by the Session in October 2022 to find our next Senior Pastor. The PNC's responsibilities are to update the Mission Study (which had been originally created in 2016), create the Church Information Form for the job posting, manage the hiring process, and keep effective communication with the congregation and Session throughout the process. We seek wise godly counsel from staff, Session, the congregation, and others. Consulting Pastor Jim Mead has been retained to provide counsel and process support to the team.

An all-church survey was conducted in January 2023 obtaining congregational input. This input was reviewed and follow up discussions were held with staff and Session, ensuring an understanding of the information and allowing us to better discern the congregation's interests and desires.

We believe God is speaking through these processes. We pray that God uses this work to further His kingdom in our community and around the world.

Our Purpose, Vision, and Mission

Maple Valley Church is guided by the following:

Our Purpose – Why we are here

Because of God's deep love for us, Maple Valley Church exists to restore people into full life through Jesus Christ.

Our Vision – How we will achieve our purpose

Live missional lives that communicate the transformative love of God, through authentic relationships and acts of compassion.

Our Mission – What we do to achieve our purpose

To help all people know God more deeply, love others more completely, and live life more fully.

At the core of our mission is a consistent call for all of us as individuals and as a church to have passion for God. To do that, we must grow closer to God; rely on God for our identity; allow the Holy Spirit to work through us; become more like Jesus; really care for what God cares for; and declare to our friends, community, and world the saving knowledge of Jesus. As we become more passionate, we'll become even better than we are now at all kinds of relationships. We strive to be people who rely on the Holy Spirit and are fully committed to living the Great Commission of making disciples. Being more passionate, more relational, and more missional will result in experiencing more of God, expressing more love, and living life more fully.

The practical implications of what this means and how it affects our future is further described in the section entitled "Our Interests, Desires, and Path Forward".

Our Beliefs and Values

In January 2014, after a long process of discernment, MVC moved from being a member church of the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) to A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), whose mission is to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ. We fully agree with and are guided by our denominational values (<http://www.eco-pres.org/who-we-are/>) and theological essentials (<http://www.eco-pres.org/essential-tenets/>). Appendix B includes the *ECO Essential Tenets & Confessional Standards*.

We believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, entirely trustworthy and authoritative for our faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only Son, fully God and fully human. We believe that Jesus Christ is the only savior of the world from our sin, and that we receive

salvation from God through Christ by grace through faith. We are a church that takes our sin, and God's grace, seriously.

As a local expression of the Church, our core values, which are consistent with those of ECO, include:

Biblical Integrity

We believe the Bible is the unique and authoritative Word of God, which teaches through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, all that is necessary for faith and life.

Intentional Community

We believe spiritual growth is a corporate experience developed through worship, prayer, study, service and accountable community; and that it is our sacred privilege to participate in nurturing the faith of the next generation. We believe Jesus calls each of us to act as peacemakers in all of our relationships.

Outward Focus

We believe in living out the whole of the Great Commission. This includes personal and corporate communication of the gospel and the application of redemptive justice and service, locally and internationally.

Who We Are

Maple Valley Church (MVC) is a medium-large congregation of A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). Through its history, the church has maintained a focused emphasis on Christian community as a foundation for discipleship; in addition to being a way to draw seekers into the church. We value strong youth and children's ministries. We come alongside parents to encourage their biblical teaching outside of church. The authority of Scripture in a reformed tradition supports all the ministries and practices of the church. In addition, our church is part of the larger evangelical community in our area.

MVC is located in the growing community of Maple Valley, Washington. Covenant partners (members) also come from the surrounding cities: Covington, Renton, Black Diamond, and Kent. Our ministries, described in Appendix A, serve seekers and followers of Jesus of all ages. Our program directors and staff provide leadership for all church activity overseen by the Board of Elders (Session). The church is financially healthy, and able to meet its financial commitments.

Our current church body includes about 330 regular attenders. We are mostly a white congregation with little recognizable racial diversity, and we economically mirror the median to upper end of the surrounding community. In recent years the communities that we serve have become more ethnically diverse and appear to be underserved by local churches. Although more needs to be done to serve all, MVC is beginning to see a subtle shift as some of our new attendees do represent other ethnicities.

Our History

Maple Valley Presbyterian Church¹ was launched in the fall of 1981. The church was the dream of six families who wanted to see a reformed church in the Maple Valley area with an emphasis of providing a Christian place for youth to enjoy community and to learn about God. The church was planted by the Seattle Presbytery of the PCUSA under part-time leadership. For the first year the church met in the home of Reba and Roger Morris, and then moved to the library of Shadow Lake Elementary School. Our first full-time senior pastor, Dr. David Diehl, arrived in January 1983, and we chartered with over one hundred members on December 4, 1983.

Pastor David Diehl came to Maple Valley Church from a college ministry position in Pennsylvania. He served as our head pastor for 38 years. Pastor David's spiritual gift was evangelism, and he used that gift in many ways, including on ski lifts and hiking trails. He encouraged attenders and members of the church to practice their testimony and learn to share it. He never shied away from seeking volunteers for the church. He encouraged outreach to the community. Pastor David never lost his enthusiasm for leading the church. Many of the members at Maple Valley Church consider him a lifelong friend. Pastor David led the ministry until retiring in early 2017.

The Covenant partners called Dr. Peter DellaSantina to be head pastor from 2017-2022.² Pastor Pete was charismatic, enthusiastic, and had a big vision for the church as a center of our growing community. He led us through the difficulties of the Covid pandemic, managing online services and adhering to state laws regarding gatherings and events.

Assistant Pastor David Miles, who has served in many areas of our church, is currently filling the position of interim senior pastor.

Cultural changes increasingly affected the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) denomination, causing a rift between leaders. At MVC, we believed the authority of the Bible was being set aside within the larger denomination; therefore, MVC formed a discernment committee to seek the will of God in exploring other Presbyterian denominations. At the conclusion of the discernment process in 2012, the decision was made to move from the PCUSA to A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). Very few members of MVC left because of the change.

Our facilities have grown over the years. In 1986, property was purchased for a church building and a ground-breaking ceremony was held in December 1987. The first building was completed in 1988. That part of the building is now the chapel and Sunday school classrooms. As the church grew, more space was needed, and a generous member built a separate youth building on the west side of the property. That same member led an all-volunteer crew to build a nursery and add office space and classrooms. As the church flourished, we needed to accommodate the

¹ In 2018 the church changed its name from Maple Valley Presbyterian Church (MVPC) to Maple Valley Church (MVC). This name change did not change anything regarding denomination or theology.

² In response to escalating management dysfunction in 2022, one assistant pastor of care and outreach and other key leaders in children's and youth ministry resigned. It was by mutual agreement with the Session of MVC and the ECO Northwest Presbytery that Pastor Pete resigned as head pastor of Maple Valley Church.

growth. This led to the decision to add a new worship space. In 1996, the building campaign was initiated, and the facility expansion was completed in 1998.

In the recent past, we have had two significant fund-raising projects. The first of these we called Generation to Generation or Gen to Gen, which ran from 2014 - 2016. The objective of Gen to Gen was to pay down our debt and update some of our church interiors. However, most significantly, we wanted to follow the Lord's leading: "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4). Gen to Gen was designed to reach those in our community who have not experienced God's love and forgiveness. Gen to Gen was successful in refreshing the building and increasing funding for our mission work. In the summer of 2021, the mortgage was retired.

The Impact Initiative is the second of these two-projects, started in 2020 just before the Covid pandemic started spreading, and still active. The objective of the Impact Initiative is to enable MVC to increase our impact in the local community. Specifically, the goal is to update security, add preschool and children's ministry classrooms, and to provide space for new and ongoing ministries. Architectural designs have been prepared and approximately one and a half years of the fundraising campaign has been completed with modest results. While the Initiative was put on hold due to Covid, we are now re-evaluating the scope of the project.

Our church has developed a variety of significant ministries over the years, as listed below. More details about current ministries are in Appendix A.

- From the beginning, MVC founders wanted the church to have a vibrant children's and youth ministry. Not long after Pastor Diehl was hired, the church sought someone who would act as youth director. A native of Maple Valley, Steve Bodwell, was hired and has continued to be a vital part of the youth program. He has a passion for Christ and young people. Steve has worked at Tahoma High School with the football team and in student leadership. Through the years, hundreds of youth and some of their family members have come to the church through Steve and his wife Suze. Steve still serves as a volunteer and mentor in youth ministry.
- Children's Ministry has been an integral part of our church since the beginning. The Children's Ministry director was a volunteer position for many years, but it is now a paid position. This department has run very popular VBS weeks for years, along with drama camps, children's choirs, and other activities.
- Under the leadership of Nancy Diehl, Pastor Diehl's wife, in 1990 a preschool was started. It has grown every year and currently serves 140 students.
- "Tuesday Night Training" ran as a midweek dinner/learning program for everyone for several years. It started as an educational program for kids, but then developed into a family program with lessons for both adults and kids. While the program ended over a decade ago, it was a significant program at that time.

- For approximately 20 years we had a Day Timers 50+ program. Day Timers met once a month for lunch, conversation, and had a speaker or other program. This program was impacted by Covid and hasn't restarted yet.
- We have a long history of mission support, giving to many mission organizations and sending all ages of people in the church on mission trips. Our youth and some adults have traveled to Cashmere, WA, to provide staff for their VBS. For many years there were youth mission trips to Mexico. We also partner with Corner of Love in Costa Rica, which was started by members of our church and serves displaced people from Nicaragua and other parts of Central America. Our mission support has evolved into a council of volunteers overseeing a budget of designated funds.
- Our Deacon board has existed from the beginning of the church, though they have grown from a 12-member group to a 15-member group over the years. They are responsible for the care and welfare of the congregation and the community at large.
- MVC has had a number of worship leaders throughout our history, and even more wonderful volunteers. We've held a variety of worship events: large Christmas musicals, dramas, orchestra, bell choir, Easter *Hallelujah Chorus* sing-alongs, children's choirs and performances, weekday worship events, etc.
- Pre-Covid pandemic MVC had been investing resources into streaming content. After the stay-at-home orders, we were able to quickly pivot to hosting worship via YouTube and our own website. On a few special occasions, in-person outdoor services were held in the parking lot to provide much needed face-to-face, although distanced, encounters. Even after many people have returned to in-person services, there are typically more than 35 homes live-streaming the service.
- A significant women's Bible study was started in the mid 1990s. There have been as many as 160 women participating. Women's Bible study has a once-a-week study in the church with some groups meeting in individual homes or online.
- The men's ministry has sponsored retreats, breakfasts, Bible studies, golf outings and attending baseball games. A group of retired men (Castle Brigade) meet weekly for breakfast and devotions followed by doing various maintenance and repair jobs around the church.
- Small group ministry started over 30 years ago and is integral to our church DNA. Small groups enable weekly Bible study, fellowship, prayer, and support.
- Extending care to church members and the community has been a focus as well. This can happen through small groups, Deacons, Stephen Ministers, Grief Share facilitators, Women's Bible Study leaders and Peacemakers.

Our Community

Maple Valley and surrounding areas are some of the fastest growing in the state. According to the 2020 census the population of Maple Valley was 28,013 with a surrounding population of 65,000-94,000. The city population currently ranks #41 out of 281 municipalities in the state. The recent census shows that 62% of Maple Valley's population is between the ages of 18-64, 34% is 17 or younger and 5% is over 65. A high percentage of residents are college educated with approximately 75% having post-secondary education. In addition, Maple Valley has a median income of \$117,706 per household (2020 Census). Home prices have followed trends of the country and have increased substantially over the last two years.

The Tahoma School District has 7,900 students pre-K through 12. The district is recognized as innovative in its development and use of curriculum. Student's test scores indicate that Tahoma students are among the top 10% on average in the state. The district provides a quality learning environment for all students including those with special needs and those who are qualified to participate in gifted education programs. Music, athletics and other extracurricular activities are also available. Tahoma High School is a class AAAA school and is a member of the North Puget Sound League for sports and other activities.

We are located along the eastern edge of King County's urban growth boundary in the beautiful Cascade Mountain foothills, providing ready access to many varied recreational and cultural activities. There is every option available when it comes to housing in Maple Valley including apartments, senior housing, townhomes, and single-family residences. Many of the developments in Maple Valley take advantage of the beautiful natural environment that the city has to offer. In the greater Maple Valley area, it is not unusual for homes to be on multiple acre sites, and some have pastoral environments with horses, cows, sheep, alpacas, llamas and emu.

In the center of the city there are multiple neighborhoods with tree-lined streets, community parks and access to much of the nature that makes Maple Valley special. Many neighborhoods have access to extensive trail systems that lead to the Black Diamond Mountain Biking trail system, Lake Wilderness Park and Arboretum, the Maple Valley Library, and that link up to the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail which leads all the way into Renton. The trail system has the potential of leading someone all the way into Downtown Seattle and it also has multiple connections to the business community.

Our Interests, Desires, and Path Forward

A survey to obtain insights into congregational opinions, values, interests, and desires was conducted in January 2023. We invited responses from all covenant partners and regular attenders, ages 16 and up. A very high response rate of 80% was received, clearly indicating that our congregation cares deeply about the success and future of MVC.

As a church body, we can be thankful for the past, which has led us to the present and our strong ministries that impact MVC and our community. Since the 2016 survey, despite staffing changes,

a global pandemic, and an ongoing level of uncertainty, the 2023 survey indicates that the church's energy and commitment to our mission and values have improved. Our church is envisioning a growing community of believers with a high level of vitality and are searching for a unified pathway that will lead us there.

The survey results provided affirming feedback on who we are as a church:

- We have a very high sense of walking with Christ on a daily basis in our personal lives. We are a theologically conservative, Bible-based community.
- We are a generous church in our financial giving, higher than the national average, even when struggling with lower numbers in attendance.
- We have clarity around what we believe and have a desire to continue to grow as followers of Christ.
- We have a strong desire to reach out to people who do not yet consider themselves believers in Jesus, or who do not currently have a church home.

The survey responses related to our church culture indicated some weaknesses. There is a hesitation to fully commit during this time of transition. We value growing as a church body, however, we have a tendency to form tightly-woven groups. This sometimes makes it difficult for newcomers to feel connected and affects the perception of hospitality in our church.

In evaluating recent goals for the church, we recognize that the focus areas recommended below ***do not constitute a significant change of direction for MVC***. It is more about building, developing, and growing out of what we already are. They are also consistent with the **feedback from the church survey** where 63% of respondents agreed that *some* change is required to realize their vision for the church. Survey respondents expressed a willingness to adapt to change. This is encouraging as we incorporate new ideas that come with new leadership.

Central to the path forward is the Great Commission that “as we go, we make disciples.” This should permeate every ministry and program of the church. We are disciples of Jesus becoming better equipped to make disciples within our families, church body, and with those who are still outside the faith. We believe that our path forward, as validated by the church survey responses, should include a renewed focus in the following key areas:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every age and stage of life.
- Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church.
- Better equip members for ministry and leadership.
- Strengthen the management and support of people in various ministries.
- Enhance the pastoral response to those in need.
- Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships.

Our Pastoral Preference

Our church survey specifically solicited input on eight critical abilities for the next senior pastor. The most important pastoral quality for our congregation is the ability to connect our church to God's Word. We have discerned that our next senior pastor should have the following demonstrated abilities:

- A strategic leader who, while working with the elders, has the capacity to cast a vision and lead the church toward the realization of that vision, which will result in growth and change in the church.
- A preacher capable of inspiring and connecting people to God's Word.
- An effective teacher who can deepen understanding, form character, and equip members with new skills and leadership.
- A shepherd who can engage people empathetically and manage a system of care for those in need.
- A head of staff with the ability to administrate, delegate, encourage and equip church staff, and navigate conflict in a Biblical manner.

We will call a pastor that can lead MVC in the direction of the path forward described in this Mission Study. This pastor must be Biblically-focused and relationally mature.

Summary

The heritage of MVC is one of strong community, both internally and externally. Small groups have formed the foundation for expressing love and care to one another. We want to build on the successes of the past and embrace the changes needed to achieve the goals God has in store for us. The bedrock of our church is its Spiritual vitality, and we look forward to new opportunities for living out our faith. We desire deeper relationships with our Savior, with one another, and with those who have yet to enter into a relationship with Jesus to achieve "More God, More Love, More Life."

Appendix A: Select Church Ministries

Worship

Our rich worship history includes a full choir, orchestra and hand bells. In the more recent years, our worship department has prioritized contemporary styles of worship while still appreciating and incorporating hymns and traditional music. For the past four years we have had a full-time worship director who led our worship team to be consistent and of high quality. That worship director and his family moved back home to Texas in January 2023. We have just hired a new worship director who has already cast a lot of vision for the worship department.

In September 2022, our worship team, called Valley Worship, released an album titled “Still Hallelujah” that is available on Spotify. Our previous worship director wrote all the songs, and our core worship team volunteers recorded their musical and vocal parts. In addition, the worship team members on the album recorded two music videos in Downtown Seattle. These music videos were professionally produced and uploaded onto MVC’s social media accounts and YouTube. Our worship team is both inclusive of all those who wish to start learning and those who are already established musicians or vocalists.

There are many worship volunteers who have built a strong foundation for the worship department. We have committed Sunday morning worship volunteers (band and vocal), Brass/Strings Trio(s), and occasionally a Worship Choir, Creative Kids (choir/drama/video K-5th grade), or Youth Worship (worship team/ video/drama 6th–12th grade). We also have a full-time production employee, with several volunteers in the Tech Team (lighting/audio/visual). Other volunteers may be added as interest arises and as fit with our evolving worship style.

Our Worship Director has been working towards helping the church understand the underlying reasons for worship, addressing technical and sound needs, and building and rebuilding teams to balance our different styles and traditions. While hymns are still used occasionally, there is an effort to bring in more modern worship music and to help our worship space reflect that blend. We have recently updated our music tracks technology, which combines the tracks, a click, an in-ear guide, and the lyric slides for vocalists and the congregation all in one, seamless tool.

Our goal is to see worship as more than just music. Worship is a time to come together to fellowship, focus on God’s Word, glorify Him, be recharged, and then sent out to live out His will through our ongoing worship during the week. Our worship team prioritizes remembering that we play our instruments and sing our songs for an audience of One. The best worship on stage happens when leaders are truly worshipping. Musical and artistic worship prepares hearts to hear the Word, attracts people through the joy of creativity and the arts, and communicates the Word in a different format. Prayer is a vital part of worship, and we have corporate prayer during the service and have prayer teams available at the altar after the service for private prayer for those who desire it.

We want to see this ministry grow and be a place for artists and musicians to thrive using their gifts and talents for the glory of God, edification of the body and to spread the Gospel. We encourage the congregation to continue to worship throughout the week.

Children's Ministry

Children's Ministry represents children from birth through 5th grade and includes support of our New Life Christian Preschool. An overview of the preschool is provided in the next section.

Since its formation, MVC has invested in our children's programs, including paid staff positions to lead the ministry area. Children's Ministry has encompassed a variety of programs, all with the intent of providing opportunities for our children to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Traditional Sunday school is a key focus area. Children's Ministry staff are working to encourage and support volunteer leaders. At this time, we have approximately 45 volunteers serving. There is full volunteer training and background checks on all leaders. We are a Ministry Safe church. MVC uses the Orange curriculum and has sent staff to the Orange Conference in Atlanta for training, when the budget allows. Currently, we only have one service. Average weekly Sunday school attendance by children ages birth through 5th grade is around 60 kids. We also offer online Sunday school material.

A communion class is offered for students in 3rd grade to attend with a parent or grandparent; including an interactive Seder meal with explanation of each of the meal elements, a traditional Hebrew dance and presentation with slides to help children understand the importance and value of communion in their relationship with the Lord. There is also congregational recognition and a designated area in the front of the sanctuary for students participating in their first communion following the completion of this class.

There are several summer programs that provide opportunities for children of church members/attenders, as well as an outreach to the broader community. These include Vacation Bible School (average attendance 150, PK-1st) and Best Days of Summer (40-50 average, K-5th). Additional events led by the Children's Ministry include Leader Meet n' Greet, Donuts with Dads, Popsicles in the Park, Family Movie Night, Family Game Night, Gingerbread, and Trunk or Treat (partnership with RISE youth group).

Maple Valley Christian Preschool

New Life Christian Preschool was established in 1990 and started as a modified co-op preschool. In 2019, we changed our name to Maple Valley Christian Preschool to better align with the church. When the school first started, parents worked in the classrooms as a teacher's assistant for the equivalent of one week per quarter. Parents also participated in class jobs, field trips, celebrations, and other special events. In 2019, we started offering a non-co-op option. Adding non-co-op to our program gave students the opportunity to be a part of our school, while lifting the volunteering aspect for their parents. If they choose the non-co-op option, the preschool provides a teacher assistant for them at a higher monthly tuition rate. Currently, we offer the following classes:

- 1 class for two-year olds (max of 10 students)

- 3 classes for three-year olds (max of 12 students)
- 4 classes for four-year olds (max of 12 students)
- 1 Junior Kindergarten class (max of 14 students)
- 1 Enrichment class (max of 14 students)

We currently have 104 students enrolled. While the preschool is intent on providing quality education for its students, it is also recognized as an outreach opportunity and service to the community at large.

We believe that our world and each person in it is a unique creation of our loving God. All staff members have an intense faith in Jesus Christ, a devotion to God's work, and a reverence for His world. These beliefs are reflected not only in what we teach, but also how we teach.

Teachers strive to help each child develop their abilities through a well-balanced variety of age-appropriate activities. They encourage social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth and development. Our curriculum includes thematic units in math, reading, writing, science, and social studies. A monthly Bible verse is taught, children attend Chapel each month, and prayer and devotions are a part of the daily routine.

Our teachers are highly qualified and experienced professionals with a love for children and God. Parents turn to their teacher for advice and guidance. Our teachers are partners in prayer with families as well.

In the 2022 school year we added an enrichment program for our students enrolled in our 4-year-old class. In this program the students stay an extra hour and half where they have lunch (parent provided), recess, and an enrichment time. This is a 3 day a week class, with a different theme for each day. One day being P.E./Music, one day a Bible study, and one day science/cooking.

Youth Ministry (RISE)

The Youth Ministry represents youth from 6th–12th grade.

MVC has since its formation invested in our youth programs, including paid staff positions to lead the ministry area. The youth ministry has encompassed a variety of programs, all with the intent of providing opportunities for our youth to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Generous support from the congregation has also allowed MVC to hire many youth for summer internship positions in children's ministry, youth ministry, and worship. Many of these interns have gone on to have careers in ministry themselves.

During the 2021-2022 school year, 66 youth were active in youth ministry. The average weekly attendance on youth group nights is 40-50 (6th–12th grades) which has held steady for the past 5 years. Our senior high numbers have fluctuated over the past several years but still average out the same at the conclusion of each year. The student population typically breaks down to be 40% high school students and 60% middle school students.

The foundation of our youth ministry programs is driven by the following mission and values statements:

RISE is relational, intentional, servant-minded, and encouraging. Youth at RISE will learn the good-news of what the Lord has done for them, how to serve those in need, and then be given the opportunity to go out and share what they've learned with those around them.

- **RELATIONAL:** RISE upholds the relational aspect of ministry exemplified by Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:42-47)
- **INTENTIONAL:** RISE develops intentional strategies for reaching youth with the love of Christ. Events, large and small, are planned purposefully to build up our youth, spread the Gospel, enjoy community, and bring glory to God. (*1 Corinthians 10:31*)
- **SERVANT-MINDED:** RISE seeks opportunities to serve those in need. It seeks to teach servant-mindedness to youth and is made up of leaders who set examples of service. (*Matthew 25:35-40*)
- **ENCOURAGING:** RISE is marked by encouraging leaders. They seek to encourage youth towards love and good deeds. (*Hebrews 10:24*)

- Current Youth Programs include:
 - Sunday School for 6th–8th graders on Sunday morning
 - 6th–12th graders on Wednesday evening (every week)
 - Youth small groups led by 2 or 3 adult volunteer leaders
 - Cashmere, WA summer mission trip: 9th–12th graders – VBS in late spring for 3-4 days
 - Past Events/Camps:
 - Vashon Island: 6th–8th graders - community service in the fall over a weekend
 - Mexico Mission Trip: 9th–12th graders during spring break
 - Depending on the year, there are multiple events and service opportunities that have happened in the past years such as: Passage Point, Trunk or Treat, Winter Ski Trips, Fair, Haunted Houses, Escape Rooms, Nerf Night, etc.

Adult Education

We have a rich history of providing opportunities for adult education. From the church's earliest days, providing classes for our members and attendees has been an important aspect of our ministry to disciple and equip.

Next U is a class offered multiple times each year. It discusses the history of our church, our values and is a required class prior to becoming a Covenant Partner (member) at MVC. After completion of the Next U class, those who choose to become Covenant Partners are introduced to the congregation during a Sunday morning service where they will pronounce their intent to become a Covenant Partner, proclaim their faith in Christ Jesus and in God's Word, and their commitment to serve in our church.

Over the years, a variety of approaches have been taken including traditional Sunday School hour, classes offered during the week, women's Bible study, men's Bible study, and seminars. Small groups have been a central part to all of this as they provide not only an opportunity to

develop relationships and build community, but also an opportunity to study the Word and grow together.

More recently, we have relied on small groups, women's Bible study, and men's Bible study as primary education methods. Women's Bible study currently includes an average weekly attendance of 60 women. Men's study averages 12-15 per week. There are currently 17 small groups that actively meet with average attendance of approximately 10-15 people each. A majority of our small groups are engaged in sermon-based studies where the sermon topic is discussed and applied through the use of study notes provided by the pastor.

Responses to the recent church survey indicate a desire that more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every age and stage of life be provided. As we look forward, it is clear that we have well-established small groups and supplemental adult ministries. However, we desire more adult education opportunities.

Missions

From its beginning, MVC has had a passion for missions and for reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus both in our local community and around the world.

The Missions Fund is used exclusively for funding local, national and international missionary ventures. This fund is not a part of the church's general budget but is a separate account where congregants designate their giving specifically to missions.

The Missions Council (which is appointed by the congregation) has the responsibility to prepare the budget for the Missions Fund, to make spending recommendations, and to track financial results. They manage these funds and determine who or what mission endeavors we will support and at what monetary level. They also oversee and communicate with the supported missionaries and communicate missions' efforts to the congregation on a regular basis. Currently we are supporting over 20 local, domestic, and international ministries with an annual budget of \$120,000.

Additionally, the Missions Council encourages and plans mission trips for the congregation to experience a mission endeavor and see how God works in and through each one of us. A variety of mission trips have now become central to the ministry of the church, which includes annual youth mission trips as well as a variety of opportunities for adults to participate in specific events or trips both locally and internationally.

Outreach

The focus of outreach is our individual calls to engage our neighbors, coworkers, family and friends with the good news of Jesus Christ through words and deeds. Our mission as a church has always been about restoring people into life through Jesus Christ. Our outreach consists of specific events and ongoing programs.

Event driven opportunities are for the entire congregation. In the past, events have included participation in community events such as Maple Valley Days, sponsoring the community Easter egg hunt, community meals at the church, and groups helping with Seattle Union Gospel Mission. On Serve Sundays we have partnered with the local school district and Vine Maple Place to complete service projects. The largest outreach event for at least the past 5 years has been Trunk or Treat which brought over 1000 people this year.

Maple Valley Church also has a strong, ongoing Stephen Ministry program, which helps support people through all types of difficult situations. Our congregation's Stephen Ministry equips several volunteers each year to provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care to individuals in our congregation and community who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Stephen Ministers are trained volunteers who support and extend the care that pastors and Small Groups continue to provide by reaching out with God's love to people who are hurting – both congregation members and non-members alike.

Another ongoing ministry is Kid Reach, which provides after-school tutoring to students from neighboring schools. The “teachers” are volunteers from the church and, after some training, are matched with a child.

Deacons

Deacons are elected officers of MVC and are 15 people who serve for 3-6 years. The deacons are a care, outreach, and benevolence ministry to the church and community. They have a separate annual budget of \$80,000. The Deacons support local charities and individuals in need.

Charities include Vine Maple Place, Passage Point, Maple Valley Food Bank, and Backpack Buddies. Assistance to individuals includes short term rent and utilities payments, in house meals, help with home projects, transportation, and connecting to other sources of financial support. Outreach managed by the Deacons includes Adopt a Highway, Vine Maple Place VBS, Trunk or Treat, Christmas Giving Tree, an annual blood drive, and Food Bank Sundays.



Essential Tenets & Key Information



Essential Tenets

Presbyterians have been of two minds about essential tenets. We recognize that just as there are some central and foundational truths of the gospel affirmed by Christians everywhere, so too there are particular understandings of the gospel that define the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition. All Christians must affirm the central mysteries of the faith, and all those who are called to ordered ministries in a Presbyterian church must also affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed tradition. Recognizing the danger in reducing the truth of the gospel to propositions that demand assent, we also recognize that when the essentials become a matter primarily of individual discernment and local affirmation, they lose all power to unite us in common mission and ministry.

Essential tenets are tied to the teaching of the confessions as reliable expositions of Scripture. The essential tenets call out for explication, not as another confession, but as indispensable indicators of confessional convictions about what Scripture leads us to believe and do. Essential tenets do not replace the confessions, but rather witness to the confessions' common core. This document is thus intended not as a new confession but as a guide to the corporate exploration of and commitment to the great themes of Scripture and to the historic Reformed confessions that set forth those themes.

The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Each member of the church glorifies God by recognizing and naming His glory, which is the manifestation and revelation of His own nature. Each member of the church enjoys God by being so united with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit as to become a participant in that divine nature, transformed from one degree of glory to another and escorted by Christ into the loving communion of the Trinity. So we confess our faith not as a matter of dispassionate intellectual assent, but rather as an act by which we give God glory and announce our membership in the body of Christ. We trust that when God's glory is so lifted up and when His nature is thus made manifest in the life of the body, the church will be a light that draws people from every tribe and tongue and nation to be reconciled to God.

I. God's Word: The Authority for Our Confession

The clearest declaration of God's glory is found in His Word, both incarnate and written. The Son eternally proceeds from the Father as His Word, the full expression of the Father's nature, and since in the incarnation the Word became flesh all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are offered to His disciples. The written Word grants us those treasures, proclaims the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and graciously teaches all that is necessary for faith and life. **We glorify God by recognizing and receiving His authoritative self-revelation, both in the infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and also in the incarnation of God the Son.** We affirm that the same Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin Mary also inspired the writing and preservation of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit testifies to the authority of God's Word and illumines our hearts and minds so that we might receive both the Scriptures and Christ Himself aright.

We confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience, but this freedom is for the purpose of allowing us to be subject always and primarily to God's Word. The Spirit will never prompt our conscience to conclusions that are at odds with the Scriptures that He has inspired. The revelation of the incarnate Word does not minimize, qualify, or set aside the authority of the written Word. We are happy to confess ourselves captive to the Word of God, not just individually, but also as members of a community of faith, extending through time and around the globe. In particular, we affirm the secondary authority of the following *ECO Confessional Standards* as faithful expositions of the Word of God: *Nicene Creed*, *Apostles' Creed*, *Heidelberg Catechism*, *Westminster Confession*, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, *Westminster Larger Catechism* and *the Theological Declaration of Barmen*.

II. Trinity and Incarnation: The Two Central Christian Mysteries

A. Trinity

The triune nature of God is the first great mystery of the Christian faith. **With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is both one essence and three persons.** God is infinite, eternal, immutable, impassible, and ineffable. He cannot be divided against Himself, nor is He becoming more than He has been, since there is no potential or becoming in Him. He is the source of all goodness, all truth and all beauty, of all love and all life, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The three persons are consubstantial with one another, being both coeternal, and coequal, such that there are not three gods, nor are there three parts of God, but rather three persons within the one Godhead. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. All three persons are worthy of worship and praise.

God has no need of anyone or anything beyond Himself. Yet in grace this Triune God is the one Creator of all things. The ongoing act of creation is further manifested in God's gracious sovereignty and providence, maintaining the existence of the world and all living creatures for the sake of His own glory. He is the Holy One, the ground of all being, whose glory is so great that for us to see Him is to die. Yet He has made the creation to reflect His glory, and He has made human beings in His own image, with a unique desire to know Him and capacity for relationship with Him. Since our God is a consuming fire whom we in our sin cannot safely approach, He has approached us by entering into our humanity in Jesus Christ.

B. Incarnation

This is the second great mystery of the Christian faith, affirmed by all Christians everywhere: that **Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human.** As to His divinity, He is the Son, the second person of the Trinity, being of one substance with the Father; as to His humanity, He is like us in every way but sin, of one substance with us, like us in having both a human soul and a human body. As to His divinity, He is eternally begotten of the Father; as to His humanity, He is born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. As to His divinity, His glory fills heaven and earth; as to His humanity, His glory is shown in the form of a suffering servant, most clearly when He is lifted up on the cross in our place.

We confess the mystery of His two natures, divine and human, in one person. We reject any understanding of the communication of attributes that must result in a blending of the two natures such that Jesus Christ is neither truly God nor truly human. We insist upon sufficient distinction between the two natures to preserve the truth of the incarnation, that Jesus Christ is indeed Immanuel, God-with-us, not one who used to be God, nor one who has merely been sent from God. Rather, in His coming we

have seen God's glory, for Jesus is the exact imprint of God's very being and in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. **The divinity of the Son is in no way impaired, limited, or changed by His gracious act of assuming a human nature, and that His true humanity is in no way undermined by His continued divinity.** This is a mystery that we cannot explain, but we affirm it with joy and confidence.

This mystery of the incarnation is ongoing, for the risen **Jesus, who was sent from the Father, has now ascended to the Father in His resurrected body and remains truly human.** He is bodily present at the right hand of the Father. When we are promised that one day we will see Him face to face, we acknowledge that it is the face of Jesus of Nazareth we will someday see. The one who, for us and for our salvation, was born of Mary, died at Calvary, and walked with disciples to Emmaus is the same Jesus Christ who is now ascended and who will one day return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead.

Jesus promised His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless when He ascended into heaven, but would ask the Father to send them the Holy Spirit as a comforter and advocate. **We are able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God only through the work of the Holy Spirit.** He comes to us as He came to the gathered disciples at Pentecost: to kindle our faith, to embolden our witness, and to accompany us in mission.

III. Essentials of the Reformed Tradition

A. God's grace in Christ

God declared that the world He created was good and that human beings, made in His own image, were very good. **The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and to evil, is not God's doing, but is rather a result of humanity's free, sinful rebellion against God's will.** God created human beings from the dust of the earth and His own breath, to be His images and representatives, conduits of God's grace to the creation. Since the fall our natural tendency is to abuse and exploit the creation, preferring evil to goodness. God also created human beings to speak His grace and truth to one another, to be helpers who are fit for one another, so that our social relationships would strengthen our ability to serve and obey Him. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to engage in relationships of tyranny and injustice with one another, in which power is used not to protect and serve but to demean. God further created human beings with the capacity for relationship with Him, with His law written on our hearts so that we had the ability to worship Him in love and obey Him by living holy lives. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to hate God and our neighbor, to worship idols of our own devising rather than the one true God.

As a result of sin, human life is poisoned by everlasting death. **No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God's design.** We are not merely wounded in our sin; we are dead, unable to save ourselves. Apart from God's initiative, salvation is not possible for us. Our only hope is God's grace. We discover in Scripture that this is a great hope, for our God is the One whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

This grace does not end when we turn to sin. Although we are each deserving of God's eternal condemnation, the eternal Son assumed our human nature, joining us in our misery and offering Himself on the cross in order to free us from slavery to death and sin. Jesus takes our place both in bearing the

weight of condemnation against our sin on the cross and in offering to God the perfect obedience that humanity owes to Him but is no longer able to give. All humanity participates in the fall into sin. Those who are united through faith with Jesus Christ are fully forgiven from all our sin, so that there is indeed a new creation. We are declared justified, not because of any good that we have done, but only because of God's grace extended to us in Jesus Christ. **In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relation with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children.**

Jesus Christ is the only Way to this adoption, the sole path by which sinners become children of God, for He is the only-begotten Son, and it is only in union with Him that a believer is able to know God as Father. Only in Jesus Christ is the truth about the Triune God, fully and perfectly revealed, for only He is the Truth, only He has seen the Father, and only He can make the Father known. Only Jesus Christ is the new Life that is offered, for He is the bread from heaven and the fountain of living water, the one by whom all things were made, in whom all things hold together. The exclusivity of these claims establishes that God's love is not impersonal, but a particular and intimate love in which each individual child of God is called by name and known as precious; that God's love is not only acceptance, but a transforming and effective love in which His image within us is restored so that we are capable of holy living.

B. Election for salvation and service

The call of God to the individual Christian is not merely an invitation that each person may accept or reject by his or her own free will. **Having lost true freedom of will in the fall, we are incapable of turning toward God of our own volition. God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy.** Each of us is chosen in Christ, who is eternally appointed to be head of the body of the elect, our brother and our high priest. He is the one who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, our divine Helper who is also Bridegroom, sharing our human nature so that we may see His glory. We who receive Him and believe in His name do so not by our own will or our wisdom, but because His glory compels us irresistibly to turn toward Him. By His enticing call on our lives, Jesus enlightens our minds, softens our hearts, and renews our wills, restoring the freedom that we lost in the fall.

We are all sinners who fall short of God's glory, and we all deserve God's eternal judgment. Apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ, we are incapable of being in God's presence, incapable of bearing the weight of His glory. We rejoice that Jesus Christ offers us safe conduct into the heart of God's consuming and purifying fire, shielding us with His perfect humanity and transforming us by His divine power. Having received such grace, we extend grace to others.

We are not elect for our own benefit alone. God gathers His covenant community to be an instrument of His saving purpose. **Through His regenerating and sanctifying work, the Holy Spirit grants us faith and enables holiness, so that we may be witnesses of God's gracious presence to those who are lost.** The Spirit gathers us in a community that is built up and equipped to be light, salt, and yeast in the world. Christ sends us into the world to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Christ has commanded us. We are now in service to God's plan for the fullness of time: uniting all things in heaven and earth to Himself. To this end, we preach Christ, calling all persons to repent and believe the gospel. We also care for the natural world, claim all areas of culture in the name of Jesus, serve the poor, feed the hungry, visit the prisoner, and defend the helpless. We do this work not with any thought that we are able to bring in the kingdom, but in the confident hope that God's kingdom is surely coming, a day when suffering and death will pass

away and when God will live among His people.

C. Covenant life in the church

We are elect in Christ to become members of the community of the new covenant. This covenant, which God Himself guarantees, unites us to God and to one another. Already in the creation, we discover that we are made to live in relationships to others, male and female, created together in God's image. **In Christ, we are adopted into the family of God and find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father.** Our faith requires our active participation in that covenant community.

Jesus prays that His followers will all be one, and so we both pray and work for the union of the church throughout the world. Even where institutional unity does not seem possible, we are bound to other Christians as our brothers and sisters. In Christ the dividing wall of hostility created by nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, and language differences is brought down. God created people so that the rich variety of His wisdom might be reflected in the rich variety of human beings, and the church must already now begin to reflect the eschatological reality of people from every tribe, and tongue, and nation bringing the treasures of their kingdoms into the new city of God.

Within the covenant community of the church, God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline. First, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the word proclaimed may indeed become God's address to us. The Spirit's illuminating work is necessary both for the one who preaches and for those who listen. Second, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs that are linked to the things signified, sealing to us the promises of Jesus. In the Baptism of infants, we confess our confidence in God's gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit; in the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God's grace can make us new creations at any stage of our lives. Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a mark of entrance into the visible church, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes this sacrament efficacious in God's time to those whom God has called. In the Lord's Supper, we confess that as we eat the bread and share one cup the Spirit unites us to the ascended Christ, so that His resurrection life may nourish, strengthen, and transform us. Third, the community of the Church practices discipline in order to help one another along the path to new life, speaking the truth in love to one another, bearing one another's burdens, and offering to one another the grace of Christ.

D. Faithful stewardship of all of life

The ministries of the church reflect the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king – reflected in the church's ordered ministries of teaching elders, deacons, and ruling elders. We affirm that men and women alike are called to all the ministries of the Church, and that every member is called to share in all of Christ's offices within the world beyond the church. Every Christian is called to a prophetic life, proclaiming the good news to the world and enacting that good news. Every Christian is called to extend the lordship of Christ to every corner of the world. And every Christian is called to participate in Christ's priestly, mediatorial work, sharing in the suffering of the world in ways that extend God's blessing and offering intercession to God on behalf of the world. We are equipped to share in these offices by the Holy Spirit, who conforms us to the pattern of Christ's life.

Jesus teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. There is no part of human life that is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God. We reject the claim that love of any sort is self-justifying; we affirm that all our affections and desires must be brought under God's authority. We reject the claim that human souls are unaffected by the fall and remain naturally inclined to God; we affirm that soul and body alike must be cleansed and purified in order to love God properly. We reject the claim that the life of the mind is independent from faith; we affirm that unless we believe we cannot properly understand either God or the world around us. Historically, the Presbyterian tradition has been especially called to explore what it is to love God with all our minds, being committed to the ongoing project of Christian education and study at all levels of Christian life.

E. Living in obedience to the Word of God

Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, which is initiated, sustained, and fulfilled by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The first response of gratitude is prayer, and the daily discipline of prayer – both individually and together – should mark the Christian life. The life of prayer includes praise to God for His nature and works, sincere confession of our sin, and intercession for the needs of those we know and for the needs of the world. As we practice the discipline of regular self-examination and confession, we are especially guided by the Ten Commandments. We therefore hold one another accountable to:

1. worship God alone, living all of life to His glory, renouncing all idolatry and all inordinate loves that might lead us to trust in any other help;
2. worship God in humility, being reticent in either describing or picturing God, recognizing that right worship is best supported not by our own innovative practices but through the living preaching of the Word and the faithful administration of the Sacraments;
3. eliminate from both speech and thought any blasphemy, irreverence, or impurity;
4. observe the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest, being faithful in gathering with the people of God;
5. give honor toward those set in authority over us and practice mutual submission within the community of the church;
6. eradicate a spirit of anger, resentment, callousness, violence, or bitterness, and instead cultivate a spirit of gentleness, kindness, peace, and love; recognize and honor the image of God in every human being from conception to natural death.
7. maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established by God at the creation or embracing a celibate life as established by Jesus in the new covenant;
8. practice right stewardship of the goods we have been given, showing charity to those in need and offering generous support of the Church and its ministries;
9. pursue truth, even when such pursuit is costly, and defend truth when it is challenged, recognizing

that truth is in order to goodness and that its preservation matters;

10. resist the pull of envy, greed, and acquisition, and instead cultivate a spirit of contentment with the gifts God has given us.

In Jesus Christ we see the perfect expression of God's holy will for human beings offered to God in our place. His holy life must now become our holy life. In Christ, God's will is now written on our hearts, and we look forward to the day when we will be so confirmed in holiness that we will no longer be able to sin. As the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus leads us along the path of life toward that goal, bringing us into ever deeper intimacy with the Triune God, in whose presence is fullness of joy.

ECO Key Information

ECO's Confessional Standards can be found [here](#).

ECO's Mission and Vision can be found [here](#).