



TACOMA GRACE
BIBLE CHURCH

The State of Our *Unity*

The state of our unity is strong because we rest on the solid foundation of God's perfect word (Ephesians 4). The Lord is the head of this church, and we will yield to Him as He builds us into Christ-likeness. Let us all make a commitment to rest in the finished work of Christ, and yield to the teaching of the Spirit in 2022. Let us remember this verse: "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:11)." We grow in Christ by yielding to the Spirit's work. My heart's desire for this church is that we continue to grow spiritually in three areas: exultation, edification, and evangelization.

I. Exultation

A few months ago, our dear Gary Devlin announced his impending departure. We knew then that the sound of our Sunday worship hour would undergo changes, but we are certain that the Lord is head of His church and He orchestrates our fellowship for His glory. Let us praise the Lord that He leads our praise and let us yield to His leading as we prayerfully come to understand how He would have us exult Him in song on Sunday mornings.

Song is most often our first thought when we consider worship and exultation, but more important than song (though our singing is a joyful noise to the Lord!) is prayer. Indeed, our most excellent prayers can be petitions in the midst of trial and tribulation, on our knees, seeking the Lord; or it may be in moments of elation when we see the Lord's hand in our lives and turn our thankful hearts heavenward in praise. This is a praying church, and I pray that never changes. Our Wednesday evening prayer meeting is often the highlight of my week. In the few months I have been at Tacoma Grace, I have seen many answered prayers. Let us continue to seek the Lord in prayer, which is our highest praise.

II. Edification

Learning is a lifetime pursuit. Learning who God is, however, is an eternal pursuit. Thanks be to God that we will have eternity to know Him more intimately. Nevertheless, we should not waste a moment to grow in our knowledge of Him. Eternal life, you know, does not begin at death. It begins at the moment we believe (John 6:47). Moreover, we are fully equipped to know Him. The Spirit which indwells all believers is a capable teacher (John 16:13; 1 John 2:27; Ephesians. 1:13-23). The edification of the saints requires two things: the Bible and fellow believers.

God's word alone is the only infallible source of Truth. We must get to know it as intimately as we hope to know Him. The pages of His love letter to us—the Bible—should be more worn than any love letter written to us by another human, for only God is the perfect source of love. And what greater love story could have ever been written?



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Knowledge of His word is both a private and a public pursuit. We hear the word preached, we meditate on His word in our devotions, and we share His word with one another for various purposes: to teach, to exhort, to reprove, rebuke, greet, encourage, and to fellowship, etc. His word should be at the center of all we do.

For fellowship to be possible, there must be common faith. The more common the faith, the more intimate the fellowship that is possible (cf. 1 John 1). That is why I seek to preach doctrine, not morals. Morals without a foundation are flimsy, but the word of God will stand up against the fiercest enemy. I am committed to teaching and preaching from a consistent literal-grammatical-contextual-historical hermeneutic (interpretive process). This is the surest way to remove as many of my own presuppositions and allow the text to speak for itself.

I am also committed to expository preaching: chapter by chapter, verse by verse. The original authors of scripture, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had a message to convey. Their words incapsulate their meaning. My duty is not to formulate a message of my own from their words, but to exposit their words so that you can know God better through His perfect thoughts. We seek to think His thoughts after Him, not impose upon Him our own thoughts. In hopes of fostering more opportunity to fellowship with one another in the unity of His word, we are doing four things:

- 1) In our worship hour, we are beginning in the book of beginnings, Genesis, to lay the same foundational understanding that God chose to begin His revelation with. We start where He started. After the first 11 chapters, we will take a short reprieve from Genesis to study the epistles of John. John was a pastor with a pastor's heart, and his epistle is an invigorating exposition on the good, the bad, and the miraculous character of fellowship in the Age of Grace.
- 2) We are reading the Bible together this year! This is not a compulsory exercise, but my hope is that as we all wrestle with similar passages of scripture through the year, we are able to edify one another by being "on the same page" and meditating on the same passages of scripture each week. We will put each week's passages in the bulletin the Sunday before they should be read. A reading schedule will also be available in the foyer. You will not be quizzed on the reading! But you will be edified by it.
- 3) Last year, Eric Barger came to our church to deliver three messages on the state of the church in 2021. The Lord has provided the opportunity to have another guest speaker in 2022. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum will speak at Tacoma Grace Bible Church on September 16-18th, delivering 5 messages. We plan to continue hosting guest speakers as the Lord provides the occasion.
- 4) We are hosting a summer study through the four gospels to understand the Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish perspective. I encourage you all to participate. The class will be Tuesday nights at 6:00 PM, beginning March 15th and ending September 13th. Each class will run approximately one hour. This is an outreach tool, as much as a tool for our own edification.



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My prayer for this church is that we all come to know our Bibles inside-and-out, ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us, in season and out. May the Lord bless this church's systematic, consistent approach to the formal study of His word. And may He use us in the edification of His saints, our fellow believers.

III. Evangelism

As an Evangelical church, we have always actively supported foreign missionaries. And we will continue to do so! Please pray that the Lord continues to provide the financial means to support all our current missionaries, and to take on more missionaries in the future. Lord willing, our next missionary will be to the people of Israel, the apple of God's eye.

And let us not forget to be evangelists ourselves! Though our financial support to foreign missionaries helps spread the gospel to unreached and unchurched people groups, let us not forget that we are local missionaries. Let us share the good news of Christ as He leads in our daily lives. Let us pray for, and seek opportunities to reach our friends, family members, co-workers, acquaintances, and even our online community with the gospel of salvation—that Jesus Christ died to set us free from the penalty of our sins, that he was buried, confirming his death, and that he rose again, confirming our hope of eternal life in resurrected bodies. May this message continue to be the only gospel which we trust for the salvation of our souls, and let it motivate us to share life eternal with everyone we encounter.

One never knows how he might be used by the Spirit from one day to the next. This makes our continual study of God's word and edification of utmost importance. And more, this makes our daily, hourly, and minute-by-minute dependence upon the Spirit of utmost importance. The gift of the Spirit is inexhaustible and irrevocable. Let us rest in the Spirit, yielding to His moving and working in the body of Christ, to direct praise to God in our prayers and petitions, to edify the saints by building us up as workmen worthy of approval, and for the growth of His church. May we be used mightily of the Lord in 2022.

For His glory,

PASTOR E DANE ROGERS

Tacoma Grace Bible Church

(formerly Portland Avenue Evangelical Free Church of Tacoma Washington)