WHY CREEKSTONE?

AN OVERVIEW OF CREEKSTONE'S DISTINCTIVE PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

A GRACE-DEPENDENT REASON FOR BEING

Creekstone's reason for being, or mission, is simple and focused: *Creekstone Church exists to glorify God by helping people come alive to the wonder of the gospel.* Our mission is focused on the gospel because it is the grace of God that is the power that reconciles people to God and motivates and empowers the entire Christian life. We agree with Tim Keller, who says, "The gospel is not just the 'A-B-C' but the 'A to Z' of the Christian life... The key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal and revival is the continual re-discovery of the the gospel." As a result, spiritual life and continued vitality hinges on the Spirit of God bringing a conscious wonder of His grace alive in our hearts through faith. We want to be facilitators in that process. Therefore, helping people come alive to the wonder of the gospel is at the very heart of our vision to glorify God.

CREEKSTONE'S CORE COMMITMENTS:

Pervasive Grace, Authentic Community & Organic Mission

#1- <u>Pervasive Grace</u> - *we define ourselves by the cross*

We want the radical message of grace to be the central theme that permeates everything about the church, from teaching, to worship, to prayer, to life-on-life discipleship, to vocation, to marriage, to parenting, to education, to leadership, to stewardship, to mission, etc.

In order to see this become reality, we *continually* must distinguish the gospel from religion. Religion says that if I obey and sacrifice, then I will be accepted and blessed. But the gospel tells me that I am accepted and blessed because of the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus. These are two utterly different things. Since the radical grace of the gospel is counterintuitive to the moralistic, religious mind, we must hear the gospel in depth and believe it in depth over and over again.

As a grace-centered church that prizes, pursues and teaches sound, impassioned, reformed orthodoxy, we will emphasize that theological knowledge is not the end, but is a means for knowing God and growing in intimacy with him.

#2- <u>Authentic Community</u> - *we live life together as peers before the cross*

As an implication of the gospel, we want to cultivate the kind of community that is defined by authenticity and vulnerability. We long for a grace-saturated atmosphere that communicates to people, "This is a safe place to be real. We are all broken, sinful people who desperately need Jesus."

On this note, we will acknowledge that human weakness is not a liability, but a reality that drives us to dependent prayer and to derive supernatural strength and ability from God. In the words of Jack Miller, "Grace runs downhill."

We believe that true humility is beautiful, and may be the most compelling virtue that attracts nonChristians to the gospel. Consequently, we really want to live as if the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

As we focus on community as a core value and commitment, we will emphasize the importance of intentional, life-on-life discipleship, and that the church is not primarily a place, but a people.

Furthermore, as a community, we will affirm that every believer has been endowed with spiritual gifts that he or she is to exercise so that the the body will be healthy and effective in fulfilling its purpose in the world. In this sense, every member is a minister. Leaders are not called to do all the ministry, but to equip the believers to exercise their unique gifts.

Concerning leadership, we desire and value leaders who are pacesetters in living the grace implications of the gospel, particularly manifesting qualities such as genuine humility, sincere repentance, cheerful generosity and dependent prayer.

In John 17 Jesus prays that the church would manifest unity as an apologetic that the gospel is true. We trust that we will have a diversity of people attending worship and participating in the community. It will be our bond in the gospel that serves as an ever present reminder of our essential unity, even amidst our diversity.

#3- <u>Organic Mission</u> - *we invite friends to the banquet of the cross*

We will encourage all the folks in the church to see themselves as missionaries, word and deed ambassadors of the gospel.

With that missional mindset, we will emphasize what it means to be "salt and light" in the context of our organic, relational spheres of influence. As Marva Dawn says, "Being Church means following a way of life... Evangelism happens as we go about our daily lives—to work, to the grocery store, to school, to the neighbor's house for tea—we live the gospel. We speak it freely... We incarnate it. We display a joy in following Jesus and his Way that invites our neighbors to consider the truth of his life in us."

But mission is never merely a personal endeavor. And so as we gather for worship, we desire for the service to be accessible to non-Christians. In fact, whoever preaches or teaches will assume there are non-Christians in attendance, and will speak in a way that addresses their questions, fears, and doubts in language that they can understand.

As part of this commitment, we will encourage non-Christians to "belong before they believe," letting them know that they don't have to change their belief systems or lifestyles to participate in the community as they investigate the claims of the gospel. This is because we recognize that coming to faith is often a process, as is growing in grace as a disciple of Jesus.

Therefore, we will not view non-Christians as enemies, but precisely as the people to whom we are called to serve, love and offer the living hope of God's transforming grace.