

# **The Family of Churches is Unifying Under One Name**

## **Introduction:**

This document intends to spell out the vision behind the five local churches currently known as “The Family of Churches” unifying under the name Northwest Gospel Church.

## **How We Got Here:**

In late 2023, the elders of five local churches in Clark County, WA began to explore the idea of formalizing a new partnership for the sake of the mission of the gospel in our region. At the time, these five local churches were organized under two different names, Summit View Church and Northwest Gospel Church. Summit View Church, which was birthed 30 years earlier, had locations known as Battle Ground, Heritage Park, and Westside. Northwest Gospel Church, originally planted in 1938 as Vancouver Gospel Chapel, had locations called East Vancouver and Camas/Washougal. After many months of prayer, fasting, dialogue, due diligence, and counsel, a new gospel partnership known as “The Family of Churches” was born on September 1, 2024. We organized with the hope and prayer that the unity of the church would reveal the beauty of the gospel.

## **The Family of Churches:**

As elders, one of the first questions we asked during the merger process concerned the name of the partnership that was forming. From the outset, two things were clear: 1) Organizing immediately under one name would be a sensitive subject for the many people this merger would involve, and 2) The mission of the gospel, and what the Lord was potentially bringing together for the sake of that mission, are much more important than what we decide to call ourselves. All the elders involved with these discussions agreed that we didn’t want something like a church name to sidetrack what we sensed the Lord doing among us. Though we knew we would need to come together under one name eventually, we agreed to add a third name to the mix, merging the five churches that made up Summit View Church and Northwest Gospel Church under the name The Family of Churches. This umbrella name allowed us to unify as one entity, while keeping the local church names untouched for the initial season of this new partnership.

### **One Mission—Three Names:**

While a family of churches is an accurate descriptor of what we are and will be, operating under three different names for the last eight months has been difficult (“The Family of Churches,” “Northwest Gospel Church,” “Summit View Church”). Our staff has been resilient, and our members have been gracious, as we’ve worked to merge databases, processes, policies, communication structures, assimilate church culture, and train leaders, all while gathering in five different locations, caring for nearly 3,000 regular attendees, and engaging gospel mission in our communities. We are grateful for what the Lord has done, and we believe now is the time to come together under one name. Organizing under one name not only communicates our unity, but it also provides clarity. On a practical level, one name allows us to organize our website, equip our teams, communicate with our people, and engage the mission with less obstacles. The Lord has blessed this extended church family with tremendous fruitfulness, and we are trusting the Lord together as we work toward his future for us.

### **A Tale of Two Februarys:**

In late February 2024 the elders of SVC and NGC gathered for a two-day offsite retreat to pray and discuss the possibility of a merger. It was during this retreat that we agreed that we didn’t want to allow the name discussion to cloud what the Lord may be doing in our churches together. We were more intent on asking, “What is the Lord doing among us?” than “What should we call this?” A church name is more than a brand, it’s a communication of mission, vision, values, and structure. Our shared mission, vision, values, and structure would need to be fleshed out in the months to come, and a shared name would emerge after that time. As we look back at this offsite, we see the Lord’s hand at work, as we came to unity on so many subjects, most importantly our doctrinal confessions, ministry philosophy, and shared gospel mission. Within six months, our churches would be merged.

One year later, in February 2025, we gathered a group of elders representing all five local churches for a two-day offsite to discuss mission, vision, values, and the long-term unified name. We were nearly six months post-merger at this point, all five churches now had their long-term lead pastors in place, and the months together had only further affirmed the beauty of the gospel shown through the unity of God’s people. It was a wonderfully productive two days. We solidified our shared purpose, mission, vision, values, staff core values, 10-year vision, and 3-year plan. We also voted unanimously to organize under a single name, and we chose that name together. We were able, after six months as one extended church family, to articulate

the purpose, mission, and vision of the five churches with the experiential knowledge gained through doing life and ministry together. What filled the discussion and prayer times were our shared passion for preaching God's word, making disciples, planting churches, and doing all of this through an unwavering commitment to the gospel.

Our purpose: To glorify God  
Our mission: By equipping the church to be the church  
Our vision: To fill our region with gospel churches

We exist to glorify God, by equipping the church to be the church,  
to fill our region with gospel churches.

We believe the reason the Lord brought these churches together at this moment and for this purpose was because the unity of the church shows the beauty of the gospel.

### **One Name:**

After the February 2024 offsite, the name discussion was intentionally put on the back burner until after the merger was finished. We couldn't discuss a name when one of the congregations didn't even have a long-term lead pastor. After the merger was complete in September 2024, our leading priority was to solidify the local lead pastor at SVC: Heritage Park. That position was filled by Stephen Collins in early November of that year. As 2024 wound down, the five lead pastors took up the issue of the long-term name, approaching it with open hands and fresh eyes. The February 2025 offsite was the conclusion of the dialogue and prayer that began a few months beforehand. We all knew "The Family of Churches" was a good descriptor of the partnership, but only a temporary name.

As we looked at the names Summit View Church and Northwest Gospel Church, two things were clear. First, regarding the name Summit View, we wanted to make sure we honored the Summit View legacy and communicated the value of our history, particularly in the local church currently known as Summit View Church: Heritage Park. Second, we wanted the name we agreed upon not only to resonate with us, but to communicate vision, mission, and structure. As that vision, mission, and structure came into fuller view, we decided that the name Northwest Gospel Church communicated it with clarity.

**Northwest Gospel Church:**

What resonates with us about the name “Northwest Gospel Church?” How does this name communicate our mission, vision, values, and structure?

We are in the Pacific Northwest. The Lord has planted us here. We labor in this harvest field, not because it is easy or popular to serve Christ in this region, but because we believe that God will be glorified by this region being filled with gospel churches.

We are a Christ-centered people, and to be centered on Christ is to be people of the gospel. We believe the mission of the gospel is the reason these five churches came together. The gospel is good news, an announcement, of a work that has been finished. It is good news we have received and that we believe. It is good news that we pass on to others. The gospel is the good news of what Jesus has done to make sinners like us right with God.

We are a church. The Greek word *ekklesia*, translated “the Church, a church, assembly, congregation” appears over 100 times in the New Testament. We believe the local church, a gathering of his people, is a localized manifestation of the Church Jesus is building all over the world. We are not a club, a business, or a faceless entity. We are a people Jesus is building to be a dwelling place for God by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:22).

Because of these three realities, we believe the name Northwest Gospel Church is a name under which we can unify. We also believe it is a name through which we can communicate our mission and vision with clarity.

**The Five Churches:**

Though we will organize under one name, all five of our churches will have specific local identifiers to distinguish them from one another. These local identities allow us to contextualize the local church in its location or based upon its unique history. This is how we will honor the legacy of Summit View Church. The local church currently referred to as “Heritage Park” will now be called “Summit View.” The five churches will be called:

Northwest Gospel Church: Summit View (formerly “Heritage Park”)  
 Northwest Gospel Church: Battle Ground (formerly: “SVC: Battle Ground”)  
 Northwest Gospel Church: Eastside (formerly “NGC: East Vancouver”)  
 Northwest Gospel Church: Camas/Washougal (name remains same)  
 Northwest Gospel Church: Westside (formerly “SVC: Westside”)

## Conclusion:

We have a graphic presentation that will explain the new logo, and distinguish each local church not only by name, but also by color. The entire branding and design scheme is new to all five churches. The new logo is intentional, as the narrative in the presentation shows. An open Bible is topped by an image of mountains. These mountains remind us not only that we are in the northwest, but that we have a summit view from many places in our region. The open Bible communicates our commitment to preaching God’s word, which is the foundation upon Christ is building us—together.

