



## Our Mission

Mercy Hill is a Christian community that exists to “reach the lost for Jesus through authentic Christian living.” Each of these terms is significant.

### Reach

We are called to intentionally enter into the lives of others. This other-orientation mirrors what Jesus has done for us in the Incarnation. He didn’t wait for us to come to him; He reached out to us by taking flesh to Himself, and a “true body and a reasonable soul” as one ancient creed puts it. This involved great sacrifice on his part (“not considering equality with God something to be grasped, he took on the form of a servant...”).

Likewise, we’re called to sacrifice what is familiar, comfortable, and even blessed, for the sake of those who do not yet know him. As someone has said, the church is the only organization that exists for the sake of its non-members. There is a measure of truth in this—and the “for the sake of” part of that proverb involves reaching.

Reaching includes the concept of living out, and in, the mission of God in the world. Reaching encompasses what we mean when we say we are seeking to intentionally be “missional” in the way we experience our faith.

As Jesus sent his first disciples, we believe He continues to send His people on mission into the places in which they live, work, and play. We call this living “sent” lives, or helping others to see Jesus in us, as we seek to see Jesus in them.

Reaching, and missional Christian living, implies that we as a church community are intentionally other-oriented. Older expressions of Christianity expected those who sought after God (“if you seek me you will find me if you seek me with all your heart”) to come to where Christians gathered.

In this day of widespread skepticism about the church and the claims of Jesus and the Scriptures, we find ourselves, as Christians, more and more in the minority. As such, we accept the responsibility and the calling that “reach” and “mission” imply: we are to go to where others are, meet them on their terms, and engage their questions and concerns in light of the hope that “lies within us.”

### Lost

We believe that lostness is part of what defines the human race. As the old children’s nursery rhyme goes, “In Adam’s fall sinned we all.” This sin—which is rebellion against God—caused humanity to become fundamentally lost.

We do not believe that every person is as lost as he or she could be; but that in some primary way we all are lost and separated from our Creator God.

Thus, what is needed is not just education; for it is a spiritual blindness that has created our lost condition. What is needed is a savior, a Redeemer, who by the power of God over death—and by this power alone—is able to rescue us from our lost estate into a place of blessing and favor with God.

This concept of “lostness” touches on no insignificant matter. We believe eternal life and eternal death are at stake in the ministry of the Church. There will be a Day in which some—some who are unredeemed, and because of unbelief—will forever be separated from God in Hell.

At the same time, it isn’t *only* those who do not yet know Jesus by faith who are lost. There is something

like lostness that clings to everyone, and God is clear that even our best efforts are in this life are tinged with imperfection.

We grow to be like God when we own this lostness as a *present* reality of our lives. Being lost—in that we are not yet what we wish to be—is something we have in common with those who do not yet believe in Jesus: an experience of the brokenness and fallenness and “lostness” of our everyday experiences.

St. Paul said, “I do not yet consider myself yet to have taken hold” of eternal life and the perfection of heaven. Rather, he “strived for what was ahead,” his upward call in Jesus Christ.

Knowing our lostness becomes a primary way of relating to Jesus: in humility, we constantly reaffirm that “the healthy do not need a physician, only the sick.” It also becomes an important way of knowing others. Instead of beginning with condemnation, we can begin with empathy.

### **Jesus**

There is one name under heaven whereby we must be saved: that name is Jesus. There are plenty of “salvation programs” under other names, but none can ultimately redeem a fallen person from his or her lostness, his or her sin.

As we relate to others in our various communities, we are unembarrassed about Jesus and the central place He has in our lives: both individually and together as a community of believers.

We preach Jesus crucified and risen from the dead. We “confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead.”

We honor Jesus in our behavior, in our attitudes, in our words. We follow Jesus to our own “crosses” that He, as a dying Savior, has taken up first, not only enabling us through His saving work, but setting an example for us to follow.

We know Jesus, and therefore know ourselves. We have been loved by Him, are enabled to love Him, and therefore love one another.

Since we were lost, and yet were sought out, rescued, and loved by Him, we are called to love the “least of these”—the broken, the marginalized, the weak, and the downcast brothers and sisters of Jesus in society.

We realize He is counter-cultural, even today, and we are content with the scorn and shame of the name “Christian”—a follower of Christ, the Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth.

It is Jesus’ glory that will consume our lives in eternity, and we are unapologetic about starting that process now.

We also believe that only by the person of Jesus can others experience lasting change and grace in their broken lives.

### **Authentic Christian Living**

The earliest followers of Jesus didn’t merely gather on one day a week for “fellowship” and a sermon. They were in each other’s homes, not by appointment, but by virtue of the rhythms of their lives together.

Much has changed in the world since the first century. Transportation and technology, to only name two factors, have made certain kinds of lifestyles difficult if not impossible.

Many of the advances in society have been beneficial. But the basic human need for authentic

relationships with other people that are founded upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and draw inspiration and strength from that Gospel, has not changed.

In this regard, we're seeking to place the center of gravity of our faith and discipleship on the "six days" of the week. Our gathering for worship on Sunday becomes a time of equipping and enablement, inspiration and challenge, for the more important work of the church: that of living together in scattered community on a day-to-day basis.

Most modern churches recognize this dual significance of "gathering" and "scattering." Many offer "small group" ministries. We're not trying to do anything less than a small group ministry, but we think that there is more to authentic Christian living than a small group Bible study once a week.

Our goal is that we form small groups ("crowded houses") throughout the Gloucester and Camden County areas, places in which people from all points on the spectrum of spiritual development can experience what a Gospel-shaped community is really like.

### **Conclusion**

This mission is not unique to Mercy Hill.

In fact, our mission is a merely a reflection of the *Great Commandments* and *Great Commission* of Jesus. That teaches us, in simple terms, what has been detailed here: as believers in Jesus, we should love God, love our neighbors, and to carry the Gospel to all people, in all our towns, and from here, to the nations of the world.

In this way, we are doing our part to be shaped by Jesus and the Gospel, and to summon others to join us in this journey of discipleship: living lives as servants and students of Jesus, to the end that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of God "as the waters cover the sea."