



## VANCOUVER, WA

Rev. Chris Coleman

### Jesus compared the kingdom of God to what happens to "a grain of mustard seed" (Mark 4:30, ESV).

We can learn, at least, two truths from Jesus' parable. First, Jesus' simile teaches us that we should not be surprised if the church, "appears unimpressive." Second, this parable gives us confidence in God's promise: "my Kingdom will grow!" (see Mark 4:32) At Peace URC in Vancouver, WA (USA) we have witnessed both of these truths.

First, to the watching world what happens at Peace URC every Lord's Day "appears unimpressive." Yes, our singing would not be worth recording. Yes, we gather twice on Sundays to listen to sermons from the Bible and a 450-year-old Catechism. Yes, we eat pieces of bread and drink from cups of wine together in remembrance of our Savior's death and resurrection.

We continue to do what appears to be unimpressive, because our Great Shepherd has called us to do it! It is through these unimpressive means that he promises to grow and strengthen his kingdom in this present evil



age. (See Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 65)

Second, we have witnessed God growing His church! This year we baptized four new members. We also welcomed nine adult members. This December I will conclude a membership class of

fourteen attendees. The Lord is causing a small and unimpressive seed to grow into a large and fruitful garden plant! (Mark 4:32)

The Lord has also been growing the saints of Vancouver, WA in other ways. This past July, God called, and we ordained one of our brothers to the office of elder. We, and you with us, have been praying a long time for more men who are qualified to fulfill this high calling. This past year our average morning attendance was 51 souls and our average evening attendance was 33 souls. During 2023, we have also grown in our knowledge of God as we were shaped by the teaching of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Proverbs, and now the Gospel of Mark. The Lord is using his Word to grow and shape us into the image of Christ.

Yes, God has been faithful, but as a growing church we do have three needs you can pray for: (1) that the Lord would provide a permanent worship space, (2) that the Lord would continue to raise up qualified and ready men to serve as elders and deacons, and (3) that the Lord would be pleased to bring unbelievers to our doors.

You can also help spread the word about Peace URC by liking, sharing, and following us on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

Chris Coleman



### CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS TRAINING 2024

The dates for the CCMT 2024 are May 18 - June 15! If you are 18+, this month-long training will give you an opportunity to learn from experienced missionaries and pastors in how to share your faith more effectively across nations and cultures. Applications are now being accepted, but space is limited.



**We are living in a unique cultural and historical moment.**

In so many countries in the world it is unheard of that Christians and Muslims would gather together to talk about their respective faiths; it would be unthinkable that a group of Muslims visit a local church to hear an explanation of corporate Christian worship and observe a worship service. Yet the Lord has privileged us to sow Gospel seed in these very settings in the Greater Toronto Area.

This summer we were privileged to host over thirty men, women, and youth from the local Ahmadiyya Muslim community at Salem URC of Bowmanville. At our invitation, they came to observe our evening worship service. To make our guests feel comfortable and to give them an idea of what takes place in our worship, we invited them to beforehand for a time of hospitality and to hear an explanation of corporate Christian worship. Questions from our guests streamed forth during Q&A time:

- What instruments are permitted in worship?
- How much are Christians required to tithe?
- Do you fast?
- How can we have true peace?



During the worship service, many of our Muslim guests could be seen moving their fingers along with the lyrics as we sang. (We had explained how following lyrics in our Psalter Hymnal is different than reading words in a book!) And they heard a clear, pointed sermon from 1 Timothy 2:5-6 on how Jesus is the only mediator who can resolve the dispute between God and man.

This fall we were also privileged to co-host an interfaith event with a Muslim organization called *Bridging Communities Canada*. A mixed group of about fifty

Christians and Muslims gathered in a local community centre to enjoy light refreshments, friendly conversation, speeches from Pastor Brian Zegers and Imam Maaz Ibrahim on *Why the Concept of a Creator is Important for Society*, and a Q&A session. The audience was attentive, particularly the Muslim women as Pastor Brian spoke on how God created men and women as equals. Eve was taken from Adam's side to come alongside him as helper, not to be over him as head or under him as servant.

The fact that we can host events like this are the fruit of years of getting to know the Muslim communities surrounding us. We pray that the Gospel seeds that have been sown will lead to faith in the hearts of many who heard.

