Church Introduction (11/8)

a. A Brief History of Our Church i. Church Planting Ministry Today, I would like to introduce our church. Many people say, “There are too many churches!” It is true that there are many local churches, especially in Korea and the United States. In this context, we might ask whether another church is really needed here. My answer is, “Yes! It is needed.” Asking why another church needs to exist when so many already do is a question that misses the point, much like asking why another person needs to exist when there are already billions of people in the world. There must be more churches in this world. In that sense, we must realize that First Love Church was established here because God breathed life into it.

ii. Our Church’s Theme Verse: 1 John 4:19 Our church began worshiping in Pastor Donghyuk Kim’s home in 2018, and in April 2019, we made our current location our place of worship, forming a community of Jesus ever since. As we know well, our church’s theme verse is 1 John 4:19: “We love because he first loved us.” That is why our church is named First Love Church. This is a gospel practice of loving proactively—not waiting for someone to love us first, nor loving only to the extent that the other person loves us. And the reason we must love this way is that Jesus first loved us when we were entirely undeserving of love.

b. Vision and Goals of the Church Our church has a vision. It is to daily experience the unity that the Holy Spirit brings in Christ. Furthermore, it is for First Love Church to always remain alive—spiritually awake and never asleep. Being spiritually awake means always paying attention to God’s heart and thoughts and responding to them sensitively. A spiritually alive

church stays awake and prays continually with a desire to put God's will into practice.

c. A Church That Plants Other Churches Then what is the greatest evidence that we are a living church? What is the evidence that a human being is alive? It is breathing, eating, and moving on one's own; yet from another perspective, when a healthy man and woman marry and bear children, we see the preservation of life taking place. Likewise, the greatest evidence that a church is spiritually alive is when it grows and goes on to plant another church. A church does not come alive only after planting another church while previously dead; rather, precisely because it is alive, it seeks to share the gospel, make disciples, and plant churches. The church in the New Testament era spread like wildfire. When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, churches were planted throughout the entire Roman Empire. As a result, countless people confessed their faith in Christ even amidst terrifying persecution and became faithful servants of the Lord. Because our Christian forebears continued planting churches, the church still exists today, over 2,000 years later. Even now, if you visit the Mediterranean region, ancient church sites still remain, and even amidst the strong challenges of Islam today, there are still people there keeping the faith. Because the church is a living organism, it goes through cycles of birth and disappearance. Although First Love Church was planted in 2019, it too may one day fulfill its lifespan and pass away. Therefore, our church must dedicate itself wholeheartedly to planting other churches. That is the most fundamental ministry for saving souls. For even if someone accepts the gospel through personal evangelism, their faith will struggle to grow if there is no church for them to attend.

d. Church Ministers i. Lead Pastor About seven years and six months have passed since we began worshiping together. Right as our church began, the pandemic hit, bringing many difficulties to our ministry. Yet because

everyone endured so faithfully, seven people were baptized last year and five people are being baptized this year. For a small church, this is nothing short of a miracle. After planting Dreaming Church in Ohio, I was sent out again and came to Seattle in 2018, and I am currently serving as the Lead Pastor of First Love Church. Our church carries on its gospel ministry in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). As the largest Protestant denomination in the world, the Southern Baptist Convention is deeply evangelical and very healthy, keeping the Bible at the center of its ministry. Rather than lording over local churches, the denomination fulfills its role as an institution that serves them. After graduating from Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary and serving as a full-time minister in Korea, I met my wife, Sunmi Ju. After we got married, we came to the United States for further studies, where I studied missiology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. I confess myself to be a pastor who ministers according to orthodox theology. Unlike liberal theology, orthodox theology directly inherits the spirit of the Reformation—that we are saved by faith centered on the Word of God. The biggest difference between liberal theology and orthodox theology is that liberal theology is a “theology from below,” understanding the Bible with the concept that humans are searching for God; thus, it reduces the Bible to a merely human book. Orthodox theology, however, is a “theology from above,” believing that the Bible is what God has revealed to us from above, and that the words of Scripture carry God’s own authority. Even within orthodox theology, I pursue a theology that follows the distinctives of the Baptist church. What sets Baptists apart from other denominations lies primarily in ecclesiology—specifically, how a church is governed. Baptists hold to local church autonomy, believing that each local church is the highest authoritative body capable of making all its own decisions. Unlike Presbyterian or Methodist churches, we do not believe there is a higher governing body above the local church; therefore, through congregational

polity, we autonomously decide the important matters of the church. While the broad framework of our theology follows orthodoxy, in specifics, I am a minister of a church that affirms the Baptist faith and confession and operates by biblical teachings as its guiding principle.

ii. Associate Pastor and Ministry Leaders Currently, Pastor Daniel Chong serves with us as Associate Pastor. In our education department, Sister Esther Jung serves the children's ministry, Sister Dawn serves the youth ministry, and Brother Joseph Choi serves as an assistant teacher. My wife, Sunmi Ju, serves in the Korean language school and the infant/toddler ministry.

The Region Our Church Serves The region our church serves is Western Washington, specifically focusing on three cities: Covington, Maple Valley, and Black Diamond. The reason we planted our church in these three areas is that, unlike other areas such as Tacoma, Federal Way, Bellevue, or Lynnwood, there were no Korean churches here. Covington borders Kent and is one of the fastest-growing cities in King County. Population growth is happening so rapidly that there is even a Costco here. Located right along Highway 18, it offers convenient transportation while easily blending with nature. Covington has a total population of about 22,000, with a median income of $127,500. College graduates make up about 34.6%, Asians account for 9.4% of the total population, and the poverty rate is about 4.7%. The City of Black Diamond has a total population of about 5,700. Its median income is $140,000, and college graduates make up about 57%. Asians account for about 8% of the population, and the poverty rate is around 2.3%. Maple Valley is a fairly large city. Well known for its strong school district, it has a total population of about 37,480 and a median income of $152,261. College graduates make up 49%, Asians account for 7.7%, and the poverty rate is 5.2%. Washington State as a whole has a population of about 7,900,000, with a median income of $101,460. College

graduates make up 41.4%, the poverty rate is about 10%, and Asians account for 6.9%. Across the United States as a whole, the median income is $84,780, the higher-education rate is 37.4%, and the poverty rate is 11.8%. What these statistics tell us is that the area we serve is not an impoverished region, but one where the standard of living and level of education are well above average. What does this mean? Because people enjoy a high standard of living, they lack very little materially. Last summer, I went on a refugee mission trip where distributing school supplies and food to children was a vital part of church ministry. However, we can conclude that the area where we live does not particularly need economic or material aid. Then what kind of needs exist in such affluent, highly educated neighborhoods? Though not captured in these statistics, high divorce rates are tearing families apart, and an increasing number of their children are wandering aimlessly. In other words, spiritual confusion strikes even more severely here. Do we not know all too well that spiritual decay often accompanies material abundance? Material problems can be restored to some degree through aid, but how can spiritual problems and broken relationships be restored? Working in a prison, I know firsthand how difficult it is to reform a human being. When we trace the root of the various struggles people face, we must recognize that they are connected to the spiritual realm. On the surface, the issues facing a couple considering divorce may look like personality differences or love growing cold, but beneath the surface, they are deeply tied to self-centered sinfulness and spiritual disobedience—an unwillingness to submit to God's Word. Conversely, when our spiritual lives mature—that is, when our relationship with God is restored—marital relationships and parent-child relationships are naturally restored as well. Therefore, while there are many needs in our community, our church must be prepared to help with the brokenness caused by sin. Our church has the mission to help people

meet Jesus through us, have their sin problem resolved, and build healthy families through a healthy life of faith.

Application Our church is a healthy church where Jesus Christ is the Head, and all of us are His body, obeying His guidance. And the One who makes this possible is the Holy Spirit. Those who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed through God's Word, the Bible, confess their sins, and believe in Jesus come to belong to the Kingdom of God—becoming children of God. And the gathering of God's children is the church, which is heaven on earth. Furthermore, the reason God established ekklesia, the assembly of His people, on this earth is so that they might break the gates of hell and proclaim the gospel. Our church was specifically planted in this region, and we must do our utmost to serve and transform this community with the gospel. To do so, we must first love this region with the love of Jesus. The very first step is to pray together for this community. Specifically, we must pray for broken marriages and families to be restored. Families must be firmly built on faith in Jesus Christ. Fruits of repentance must be borne. Through this, the church must experience revival. And as a result of that revival, another healthy church must be planted—because that is the clearest evidence that we are healthily alive in Christ. May we be a church that faithfully fulfills this mission, I bless you in the name of Jesus.

Testimony of Salvation

Duck Hee Lee

Before Christ, I was lost. I was carring the wieght of generational trauma and trying to naviiagte life with a distorted worldview. That path of brokeness naturally led me toward destruction. eventually landing me in a spiritual ‘pit’ But right there in one of the darkest place in my life, Jesus Christ met me. God gracefully led me to First Love Church of Seattle, where my spirit is being completely renewed as I dive back into the Scriptures.

To be able to call on the name of Jesus is an absolute blessing for me. I believer Jesus Christ died for my sins as it is written in 1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross…” and conquered death through His resurrection as stated by Paul, in Roman 6:9 “We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again….” I hold fast to the promise of the resurrection.” that my old, sinful nature is nailed to the cross and I am raised into a brand new life with Christ. Like it is written in 2 Cor 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come…”

Understanding the gospel and placing my trust in God has filled my heart with peace and joy. I used to spend a lot of time crying and pondering why I had to endure such misfortunes that most people cannot even imagine., But now, I find true comfort in Jesus and my heart is full of gratitude. I thank God for my Savior Jesus Christ, who is with me while I suffer and through Grace, also raises me up and fills me with the Holy Spirit.

Moving forward, I pray that I may follow a life instructed by the words of Jesus like for example, “ Jesus replied, Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your sould and all your mind… Second… love your neighbors as yourselves.” Matthew 22:37 and 39.

Adding on, I would like to live my life bearing fruits of the Holy Spirit with (Christ who is the power and wisdom of God according to 1 Cor. 1:24) being my center. I thank God for His Grace and also surrounding me with good people.