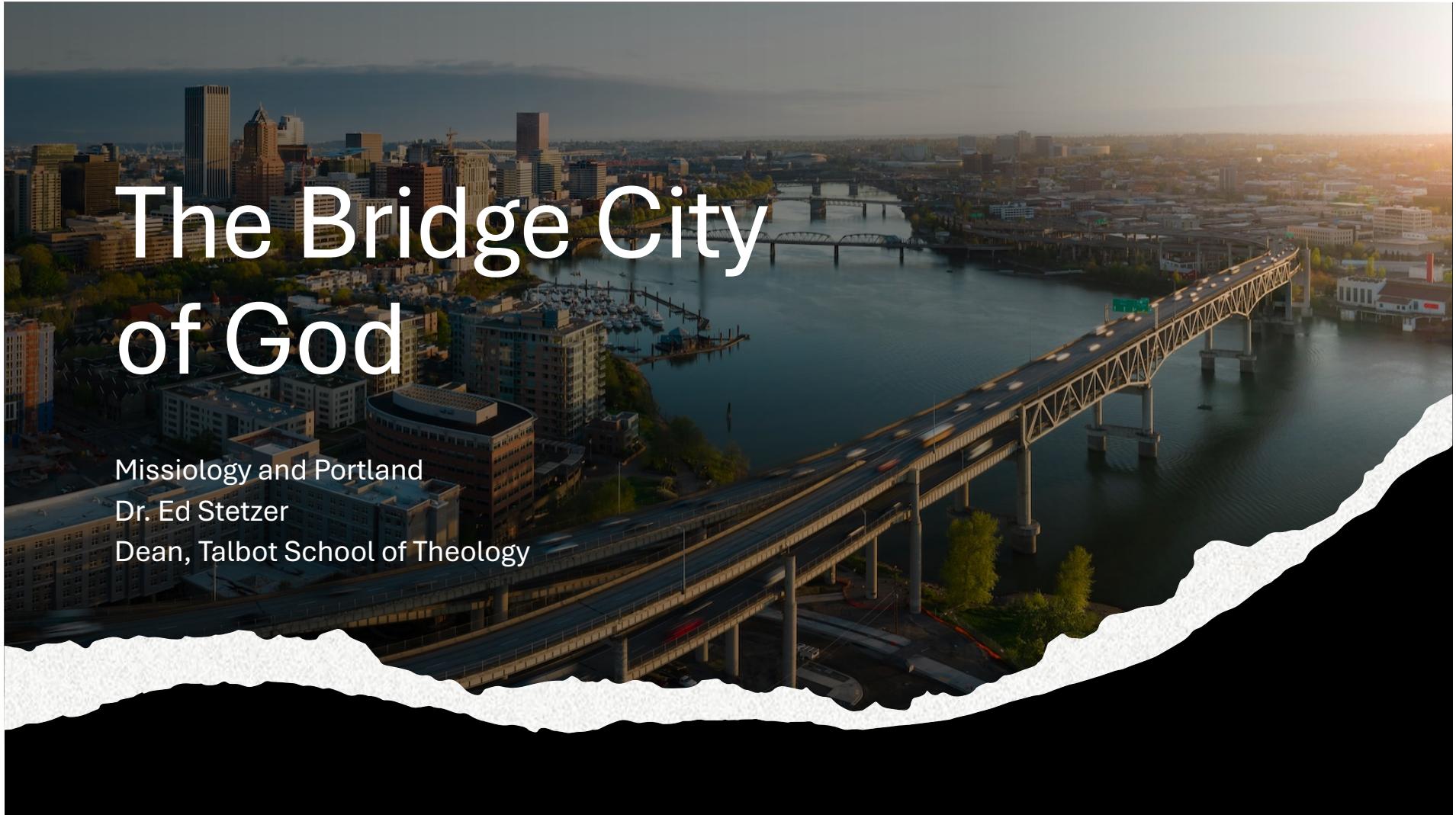


# The Bridge City of God

Missiology and Portland  
Dr. Ed Stetzer  
Dean, Talbot School of Theology



# The Nature of God

Trinitarian theology:  
The Son and Spirit proceed from the Father

The Father sends the Son  
The Father and Son send the Spirit

The word “mission” comes from the Latin word for “send”  
(*missus*)

A blurred background image of a city skyline at dusk or night, with lights reflecting on water in the foreground.

“As the Father has sent me,  
I also send you.”

John 20:21



God's church doesn't have a mission.  
God's mission has a church.

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



## *Creation*

God sends humanity to “fill the earth”(Gen. 1:26-28)

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



## *Rebellion*

God seeks the lost.

“Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9)

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



## *A Chosen Nation*

“all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3)

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



*Incarnation*

“The living Father sent me” (John 6:57)

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



## *Great Commission*

“Make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:18)

“I send you” (John 20:21)

“You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8)

# The Biblical Plotline of Mission



## *New Creation*

Humanity from “every tongue, tribe, people, and nation” gather around the throne (Rev. 5:9, 7:9)

# The Biblical Practice of Mission



Share  
Proclamation  
Word

Show  
Demonstration  
Deed

“Jesus continued...preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.”

Matthew 9:35

# The Biblical Practice of Mission



Share  
Proclamation  
Word

Show  
Demonstration  
Deed



"Talk has a short shelf life here."

— Portland Marketplace Executive

“Jesus continued...preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.”

Matthew 9:35

# Tensions in Portland

Portland is known as a “livable city”

but many experience Portland unevenly and unequally,  
and Portland’s housing situation has been in crisis.



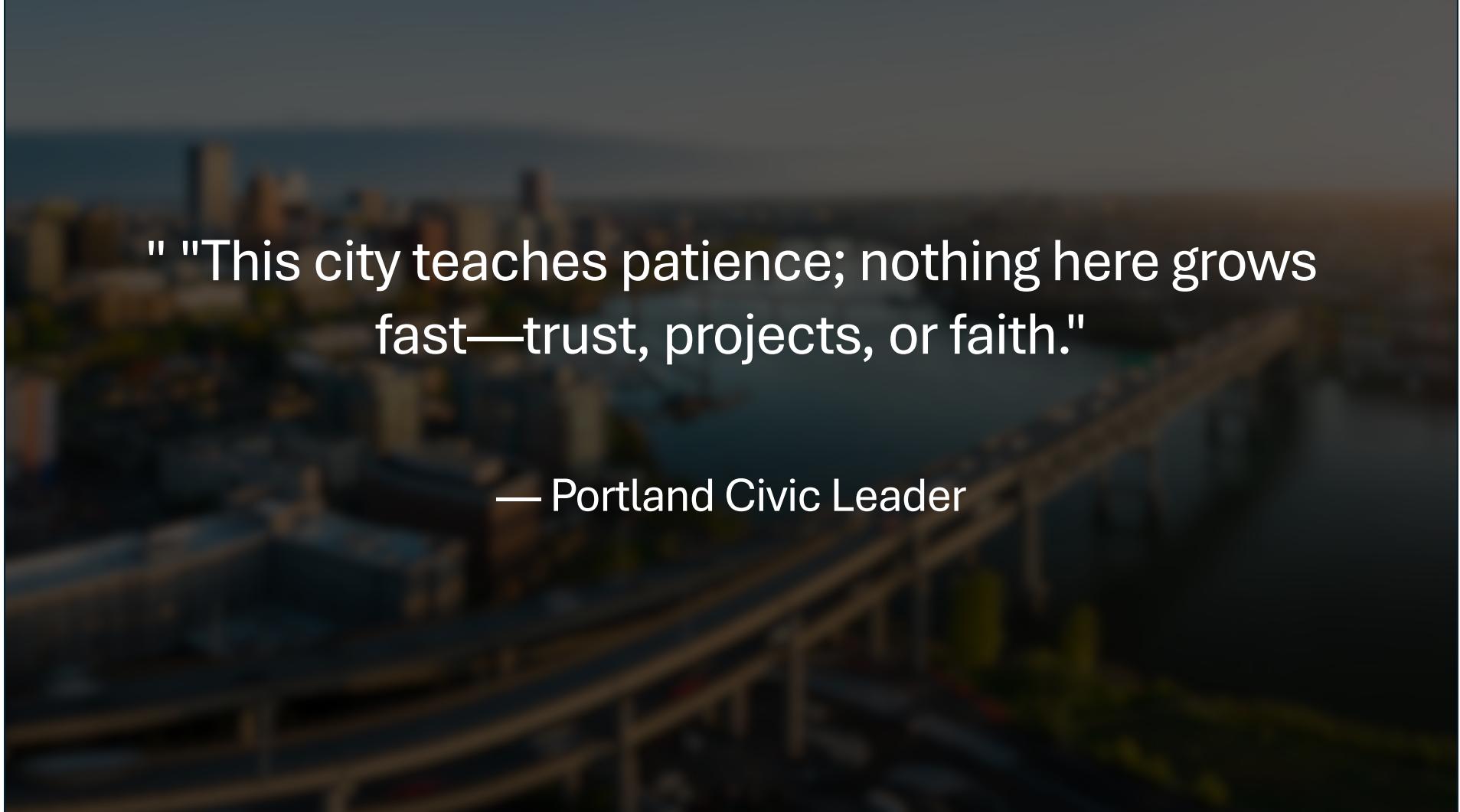
"God keeps sending us to the same broken places  
until we love them."

— Portland Faith Leader

# Tensions in Portland

Portland is known as a “green city”

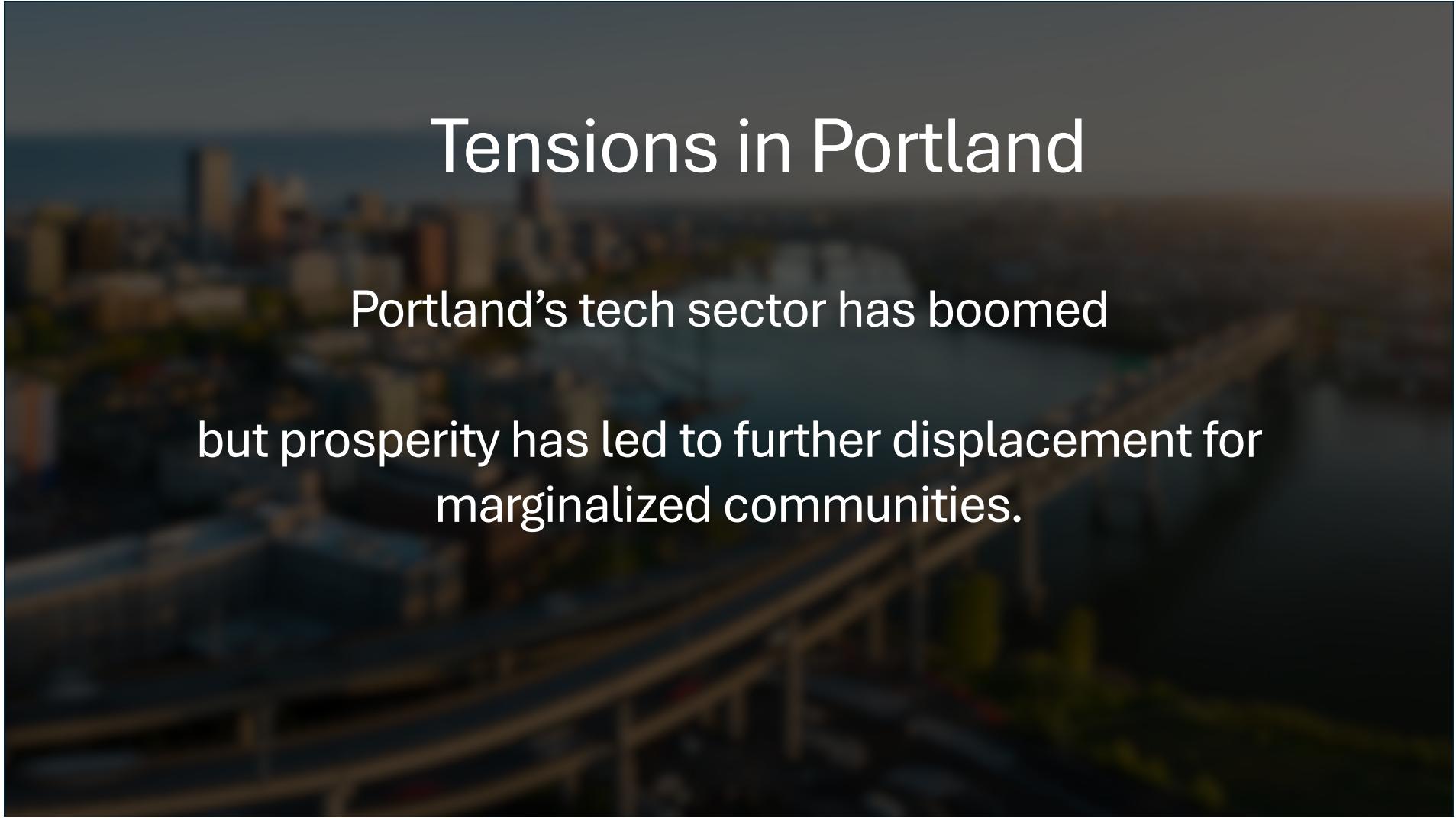
but many experience Portland in wide stretches without tree cover, and in heat zones.



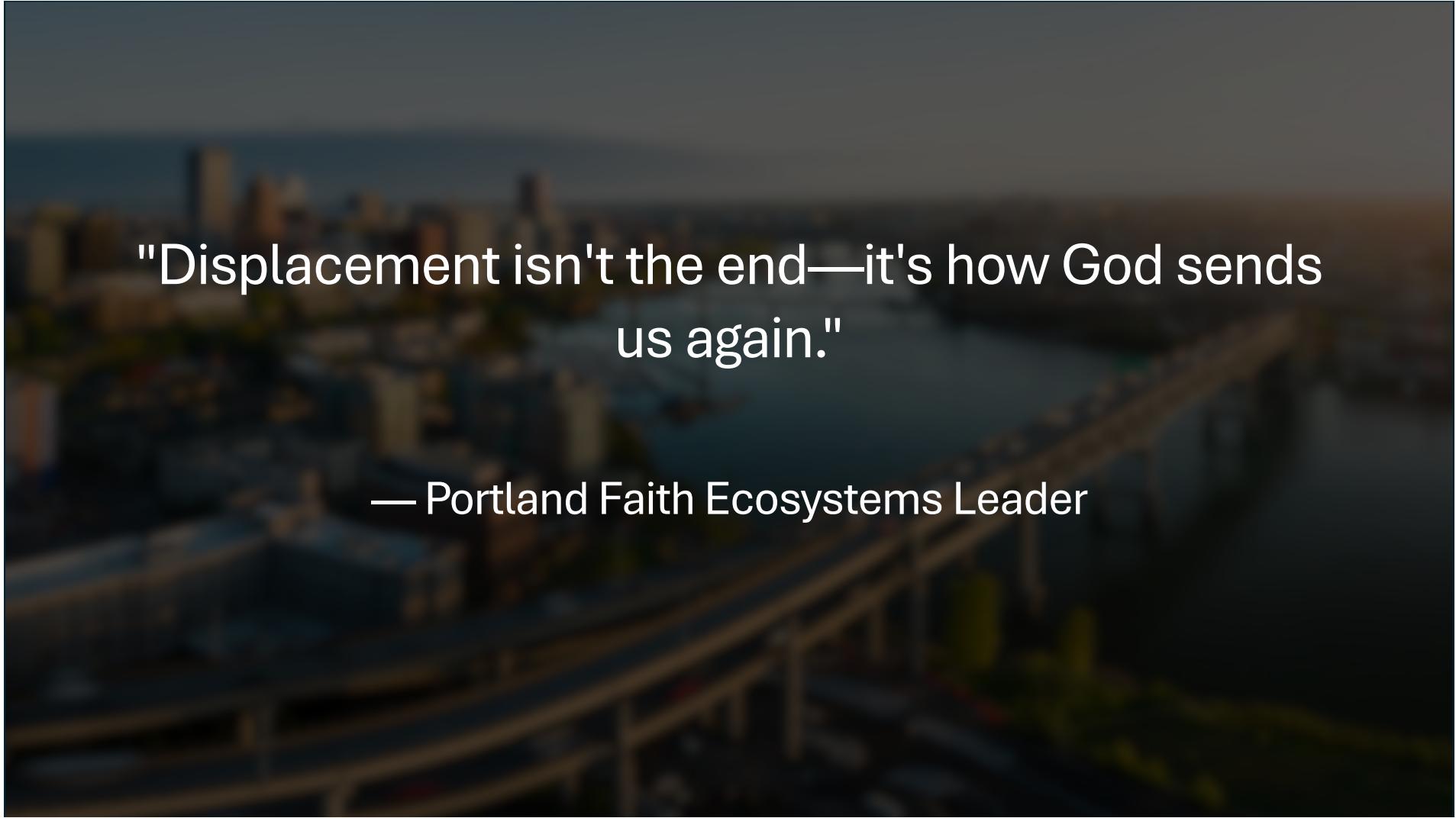
" "This city teaches patience; nothing here grows fast—trust, projects, or faith."

— Portland Civic Leader

# Tensions in Portland



Portland's tech sector has boomed  
but prosperity has led to further displacement for  
marginalized communities.



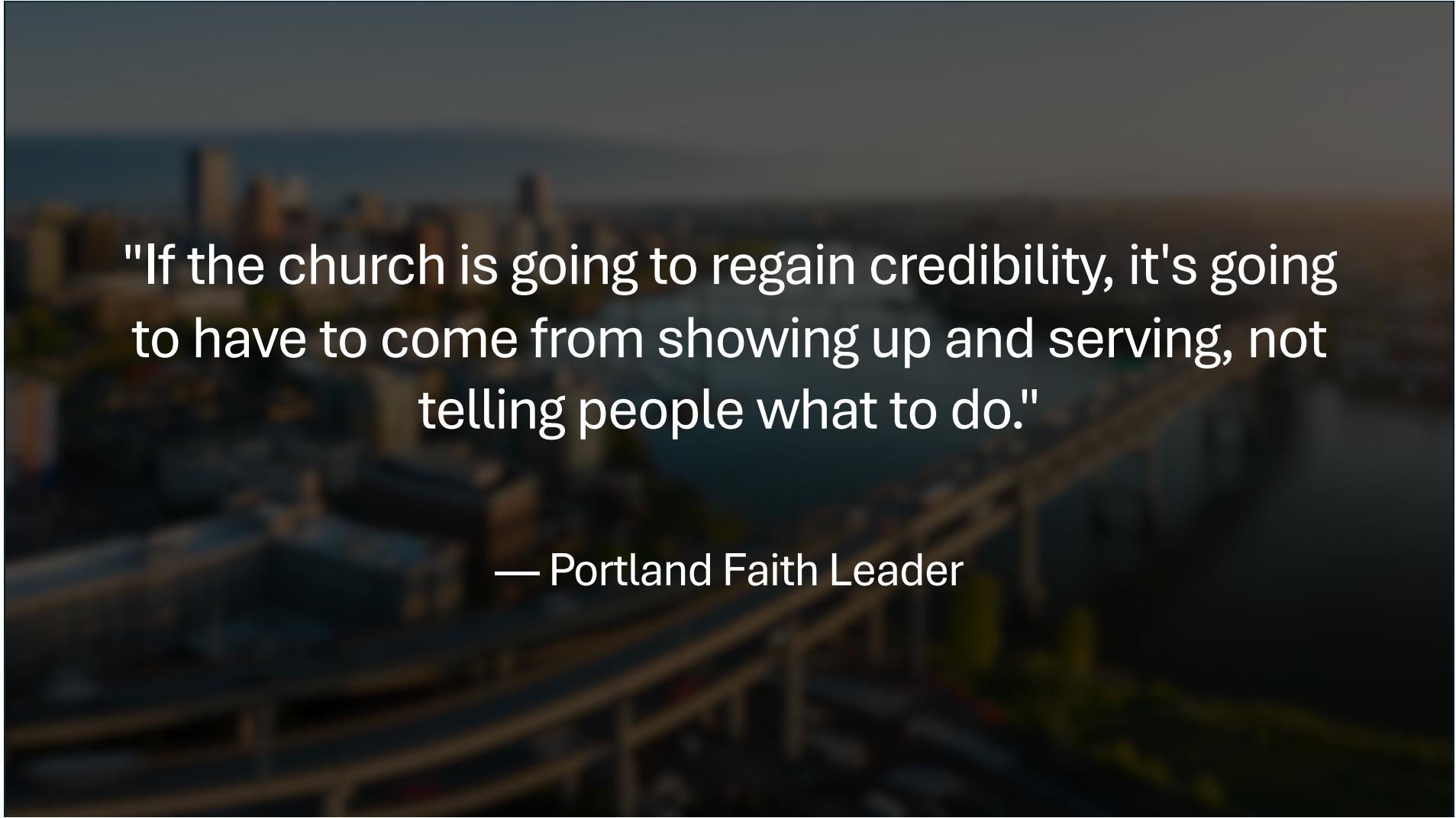
"Displacement isn't the end—it's how God sends us again."

— Portland Faith Ecosystems Leader

# Tensions in Portland

Portlanders trust churches  
for demonstration but not proclamation

The Church can lead with “showing”  
but cannot neglect “sharing”



"If the church is going to regain credibility, it's going to have to come from showing up and serving, not telling people what to do."

— Portland Faith Leader

## SECTION 1

### MISSION AS COVENANT REPAIR



#### Core Claim

Mission is not an add-on program for the church. Mission is covenant faithfulness — the lived outworking of God's ancient promise to bless His people so that they might become a blessing to others.

From the beginning, God's mission unfolds through paradox: He chooses a particular people for the sake of all peoples. This pattern threads through Scripture—from Gen 12 to Matt 28 and Rev 7.

### 1.7 Moving Forward: From Blessing to Repair

The foundation is laid; the question now becomes: How do we live this out faithfully in Portland's particular fractures? Mission will demand patience, imagination, and courage—the slow work of reconciliation that turns theology into presence.

#### Preview — What Comes Next

**Section 2 — Reading Portland Biblically:** discerning the city's story within God's story.

**Section 3 — Missional Ecclesiology:** living the covenant vocation together.

**Section 4 — Paradox as Calling:** holding power and weakness in tension.

**Section 5 — Cultural Exegesis Toolkit:** practical tools for discernment and repair.

**Section 6 — Geography and Theology:** mapping faithfulness in place.

**Section 7 — Stories of Hope:** testimonies of covenant repair in practice.

**Section 8 — Concrete Practices:** sustained habits of shared blessing.

**Section 9 — Practices of Renewal:** sustaining covenant repair in everyday life.

#### Reflection

- Where is God calling your community to begin the repair?
- Where have you already glimpsed covenant repair in your context?
- What small faithfulness could God multiply next?

## SECTION 2

# READING PORTLAND BIBLICALLY



### 2.1 Portland as Theological Text

Cities carry memory in their streets, their bridges, their gaps. As Harvie Conn observed, "The city is not merely a context for ministry but a text to be read" (Conn, 1994, p. 89). Portland's text is written in broken promises and resilient communities, in progressive rhetoric and persistent inequality, in religious rejection and deep skepticism. The city's theology is not written only in sermons or statutes but in concrete, zoning maps, and river crossings.

As historian Carl Abbott noted, "Portland's citizens have made choices among park and highway systems, among styles of neighborhood and housing... decisions set in concrete and shingles for later generations" (Abbott, 1983, p. 2). The city's moral imagination is literally built into its design; its bridges and boulevards function as civic liturgy—visible expressions of what the city believes about beauty, order, and worth. Abbott would later describe this self-belief as