

NORTHSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION

SUMMER 2021



*LOVE GOD, SERVE NEIGHBORS,
BE TRANSFORMED*

This belongs to:

Introduction

Our Mission and Strategy: What Motivates Us

Why we are a church of Christ...

Jesus said he would build his church and that church is his body (Matthew 16.18; Ephesians 1.22-23). To be Christ's church, then, is to incorporate his values, character and behavior into our lives as his followers individually and collectively. This principle is called discipleship (Matthew 28.18-20).

We exist to follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus and to bring others along to do the same.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28.18-20

We are Jesus' followers when we follow his teachings. As we follow his teachings, we will be changed and want others to also experience that life with us. We hope you will do this with us.

The God Who Pursues Us

God created us for relationship with him, each other and the creation.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1.26-31

God created us with the power to choose to love and obey him or to disobey.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2.16-18

But eventually...

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3.6

It went downhill from there...

"...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned..." Romans 5.12

We experienced the brokenness of sin

A broken relationship with God

A broken relationship with each other

A broken relationship with the world

God, in his great mercy, stepped in to save us through his Son, Jesus of Nazareth.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus... Ephesians 2.1-6

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5.20-21

How we can be reconciled to God.

Believe Jesus is who he said he is:

That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.”
John 8.24 (NLT)

Believers in Jesus:

Are baptized (from the Greek word, βαπτίζω, baptidzo, meaning to dip, sink or plunge).

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28.18-20

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2.38

Learn and follow the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles:

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2.41-42

Grow spiritually, experiencing transformation:

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ... For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the

eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter
1.3-11

Our Unity as a Church

This is Jesus' Church: he built it, bought it with his blood, it is his body and he is its head. Each congregation or church is only part of The Church.

The New Testament (NT) uses the following phrases to describe the Church:

Christ's body (Romans 12.4-5; Colossians 1.24)

God's Family (Ephesians 2.19; 1 Timothy 3.15)

The Holy Spirit's Temple (1 Corinthians 3.16-17; Ephesians 2.21-22)

Each Congregation is Independent and Elder-Led

Congregations, biblically, are led by elders (also called pastors/teachers, overseers, or shepherds—Acts 20.17-28, Ephesians 4.11-12, Titus 1.5, 1 Peter 5.2). We look for and train for these qualities identified by Scripture for our leadership:

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone

does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 1 Timothy 3.1-7

Northside is led by elders, each of whom have areas of responsibility in the church. All of our ministries and activities take place under the oversight of these men.

The last section of this orientation booklet lists those people and ministries.

Things Essential to Being a Church of Disciples

1. We are saved by God's grace only, created by God to do good works as an expression of our faith.
2. We are focused and passionate about pleasing Christ.
3. We forgive others as we've been forgiven.
4. We are praying for others and trust Jesus to answer our prayers.
5. We are joining God at work and intentionally sharing our lives of faith in Jesus with others.
6. We are praising the Father, Jesus and the Spirit for the transformed lives we are seeing.

What We're Asking From You

We have made it our mission as a leadership team and congregation to be unified in the essentials of the Faith. We give

liberty and grace in the non-essentials like traditions (how the Lord's Supper or Communion is served) and variant understandings of non-essential teachings (c.f. the Rapture). We try to be a place of truth and love because we believe we glorify God doing this.

We believe the following are essential elements of the Faith:

Our Core Beliefs (Essentials for Salvation)

ABOUT GOD

God is Creator and Ruler of the universe. There is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is Holy and Righteous. The only way to have an authentic relationship with God is through Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

ABOUT THE FATHER

We believe that God the Father holds all the attributes of God while exercising a unique role in the triune God. The Godhead is in agreement with the role of each: God as Father, Son as Sacrifice, and Spirit as Power. He is the father of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and yet still one with both as God. The Father adopts believers into relationship with Him as he prunes/disciplines believers to strengthen them for His glory.

Luke 1:35; Matthew 3:17; Romans 8:15-17; John 15:1-2; Hebrews 12:7-11

ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father as God. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross. He arose from the dead on the third day to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday.

Colossians 1:15-20; Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-4, 14:6, 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He makes us aware of our need to follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He gives us guidance and leadership on a daily basis so we can obey God's Word and do what is right. He gives each of us spiritual gifts for the purpose of serving the Body of Christ. We seek to live under His control in all situations.

John 16:8-9; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 1:13-14, 3:16, 4:30, 5:18; Galatians 5:16, 25; 1 Corinthians 12:13

ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth which points us to Jesus and governs our thinking and lives. Where it speaks we listen and obey.

Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119; 105, 160

ABOUT HUMANITY

We believe that humanity, created by God, willfully sinned, and as a result is lost and without hope apart from Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 53:6, 59:1-2; Romans 3:23, 5:8

ABOUT SALVATION

Salvation is a free gift of God. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the work which saves us. We place our faith in that and then act that faith out in the way we live. Every person has sinned, but every person can also be forgiven and saved by Christ. When we're baptized, through faith in that work of God in Christ, our sins are forgiven, we're sealed by the Spirit and begin living out our faith as disciples of Christ.

Romans 3:23, 6:23; John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Acts 2:38-42; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 3:13-17

ABOUT THE CHURCH

The church is the Body of Christ on earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the task of leading others to faith in Christ and teaching followers of Christ to obey and serve Him. Involvement in a local church is critical to individual growth, fellowship, and support for life's day-to-day challenges.

Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:1-2-27; Ephesians 4:1-16; Ephesians 2:19

ABOUT ETERNITY

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God

through the forgiveness of our sin. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally with God is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places.

John 3:16; John 5:29; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18;
Revelation 20:15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-9

Our Behavioral Expectations (Essential Signs of Salvation)

ABOUT PARTICIPATION

We expect the members of our congregation to be part of the life and the work of this congregation by being involved in assemblies, classes, work days, growth groups, special events, etc. These things are designed to be encouraging and to allow each of us to encourage others. Never underestimate what God may do through you, in you or for you when you are spending time with the church family.

Acts 2.42-47; 1 Corinthians 14.1-5; Galatians 5.13-15; 1 Thessalonians 5.12-15; Hebrews 10.24-25

ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

We expect the members of our congregation to grow spiritually, both in their understanding and application of Scripture. We also expect spiritually mature people to be reaching out to help others grow in their faith. Since we all start spiritually dead (cf. Ephesians 2.1-3), we have to mature in our discipleship (e.g. Ephesians 4.12-16; 1 Peter 2.1-3). We will mature in some areas of our values, character and behavior faster than in other areas. We progress through spiritual infancy or childhood, adolescence, into adulthood. The goal in all areas, however, is Christlikeness.

2 Peter 1.5-11; Hebrews 5.11-14

ABOUT CONFLICT

We expect the members of our congregation to handle conflict biblically, following the principles of Matthew 18: speak to the person privately at first; take someone both sides trust for a second conversation if nothing changes; and, then take it to the church if nothing changes after the second conversation. We have people trained in conflict resolution that can help you.

We also expect members of our congregation to speak to and about their brothers or sisters in biblically instructed ways: to speak in ways that are helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen, avoiding any form of bitter, angry, argumentative, slanderous or malicious speech. We expect our members to be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave them.

Matthew 18.15-17; Ephesians 4.29-32

ABOUT GIVING

We expect the members of our congregation to support the work of this congregation financially. This church exists on the giving of those committed to Jesus' team. God calls us to give consistently in keeping with our income, to give cheerfully, and to give generously. We are all growing in this process of giving. Some of us are going to start giving for the first time right now. Some of us are going to begin giving consistently, and some of us are going to grow in our generosity. As we give financially to the mission, it is an invitation for God to be involved in our personal finances.

Numbers 18:6, 21, Malachi 3:7-12, Matthew 23:23-24, 1 Corinthians 9:3-10, 13-14, 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8.1-15 & 9:6-9

ABOUT FOLLOWING

We expect the members of our congregation to follow the leadership of the elders as instructed in Scripture. We do not believe any of us are perfect, but the elders have a job to do and we can make that job more or less difficult. Since a congregation has the leadership they typically deserve and prepare for, we want the best we can get—that means following the elders even when they make decisions with which we disagree. That doesn't mean we can't express our concerns or that they will never change their minds, but mad fits, protests and boycotts are unbecoming of Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5.12-13, Titus 1.5-11; Hebrews 13.7-8, 17; 1 Peter 5.1-5

Liberty at Northside Church of Christ

To preserve unity at Northside Church of Christ, we allow each other's opinion on the following topics to be heard but not a dividing point. We do not allow the discussion of these matters to divide us or become a matter of dogma; there are many different views on each and we allow each other freedom for individual understanding.

Specific Issues Where Churches of Christ Differ From Other Christian Traditions

ACAPPELLA WORSHIP

It is distinctive of our congregation and many Churches of Christ that we sing acappella - literally meaning 'without instruments' or 'in the style of the Church.' This is one ancient

practice of the Church that we strive to follow (along with the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper).

Most Churches of Christ do not use instrumental music within their worship services. While our congregational singing is acappella, we do sometimes use instrumental music in weddings, funerals, presentations during the assemblies and during non-church activities.

You can believe in acappella or instrumental worship (or both) and still be a Christian. This is not a salvation issue.

BAPTISM

The New Testament repeatedly calls believers to be baptized (e.g. Acts 2.38, 22.16) or talks about them being baptized (e.g. Romans 6) in water for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is how we're told to respond in belief to the good news of God in Jesus. It is not a work we do to earn salvation and without faith, being baptized in water does no good.

At Northside we teach that if you are baptized in obedience to Jesus, you are a Christian regardless of whether you understood all the Bible taught about baptism when you were immersed or where you were immersed. Where you were baptized or whether you understood all that Scripture said about it when you were baptized is not a salvation issue.

FREE WILL vs PREDESTINATION

Free will is the belief that God gives us the freedom to love and serve Him, and that you can turn your back on God if you desire and forfeit your salvation. Predestination is the belief that God predetermines who will be saved and who will not,

and guarantees the chosen one's salvation no matter what they themselves do or decide.

We approach Scripture here at Northside from a free will understanding. Both groups would agree that Christians are known by their fruit. We expect everyone to grow in Christ – but we are not the judge of your salvation. God's promise of eternal life is to those who receive Christ as their Lord and Savior and demonstrate that by their acts of faith.

COMMUNION (THE LORD'S SUPPER)

Communion is the remembrance of Christ's life, death on the cross and resurrection. The bread is in some way his body and the juice is in some way his shed blood. You can believe the bread and juice actually are, exists alongside of or just represents symbolically his body and blood and still be saved. Communion is offered to all believers upon personal reflection. As believers we are also to reflect on our interaction with His body the church. (1 Corinthians 11.23-28)

It is distinctive of Churches of Christ that we take communion every week. The Bible does not command us to take communion weekly but we believe we are following the practice of the early New Testament church. However, as often as you take it, you are to do so in a manner worthy of what you are doing. 1 Corinthians 11:25-28

Children at Northside typically do not participate in communion until they have understood the concept of sin and salvation and put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3.27). However, communion is a teaching opportunity to explain to our children the concepts of sin and salvation and our need for Jesus.

We do not argue at Northside about *how* the bread and juice are Jesus' body and blood or over how regularly we observe communion. These are not a salvation issues.

END TIMES

We have people with differing views on this issue in our church. This is not a salvation issue. All believe we must be ready when Jesus returns.

At Northside, we teach there will be a literal return of Christ and a judgment day. We also believe there will be a literal catching up of the saints. We do not know when or how this will happen nor do we look for 'signs' of Jesus' return. We believe the details are in God's hands and this is not a salvation issue. Being ready is.

Matt. 12:36, 24:36; John 5:22, 16:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:7; Jude 6.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We recognize there are many churches with different understandings, but at Northside we teach that we are gifted by the Spirit to build up the church in some form or fashion (the gifts spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12-14 or Romans 12). We also teach God does miracles (at His discretion) and answers our prayers; and through the work of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to serve Him and do good works.

You can believe that all, some or none of the gifts are for today or not and still be a Christian. This is not a salvation issue. However, we do not provide a place in the assembly for the public demonstration of speaking in tongues.

Remember, for those who believe that the gifts are present today, the Spirit of God does not work contrary to the Word of God. Scripture gives specific guidelines on how the gifts (especially tongue speaking) should be used.

Specific Issues Internal to Churches of Christ

One of the driving forces in Churches of Christ is typically called “pattern ecclesiology,” a way of doing church governed by some kind of pattern or blueprint seen in the New Testament. Basically, the “pattern” is anything the New Testament church did, or was commanded to do (or not do), or something deemed necessary in order to carry out a command. This developed into the phrase, “We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.”

This way of thinking unfortunately created many divisions as people disagreed about what was allowed or not allowed, especially things about which the Bible was silent.

Consequently, churches split over:

- instrumental music,
- supporting orphans’ homes from the church treasury,
- having an organization other than a congregation overseeing mission work,
- having multiple containers from which to drink communion juice or wine,
- having kitchens or eating in church buildings,
- having church buildings,
- Bible classes for children or for anyone,
- praise teams, etc.

Sometimes silence is seen as permission; sometimes it is seen as prohibitive. People disagree as to which is which.

Sometimes church tradition is the governing authority when the Bible is silent.

At Northside, we strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Therefore, we do not argue about these things.

We encourage you to discuss your concerns with the leadership. To prepare for that discussion, ask yourself these questions: What does the Bible actually say about the issue? How will this practice interfere with your discipleship? What will you do if the leadership doesn't agree with you?

A person who is following Jesus will not be divisive or argumentative (2 Timothy 2.24). Neither will they try to recruit others in the congregation to their way of thinking.

However, you may need to continue looking for a home congregation if these issues are non-negotiable for you.

Hand Clapping and Hand Raising

At Northside you have the freedom to clap during a song or raise your hands in worship if you wish (and it's appropriate to the song). This is not a salvation issue.

Holiday Seasons

At Northside, we have the freedom to observe holidays "in the name of Jesus." Everyone can participate or not at their discretion. However, even though Christmas Day is not the actual birthday of Jesus, our practice is to decorate or celebrate in recognition of the season. Any decoration or celebration we do will be done in a way that does not imitate the secular nature of Christmas as it's currently celebrated in the United States.

Since Jesus' resurrection is the major event upon which Christianity stands or falls, we celebrate Easter. Again, participation is up to each person.

Observing or not observing a holiday is not a salvation issue.

Women (and girls) Participating in the Assembly

The Elders at Northside believe the Bible gives responsibilities to both men and women in the church, but not all roles are given to both. For instance, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 describes a responsibility for men while Titus 2:3-5 describes a responsibility for women. Sometimes culture dictates how those responsibilities are carried out. As our society changes, we're re-examining biblical teaching and our traditions about women's participation in the assembly.

Traditionally, men have lead the assembly in the Churches of Christ, even those not specifically mentioned in Scripture (e.g. serving communion, song leading or making announcements). The command to married women to ask their husbands at home about their questions and be silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) and the prohibition against women teaching or taking authority from men (1 Timothy 2:11-12) have been used to exclude women from any vocal or visual participation in the worship service other than singing.

At Northside, we believe the Bible gives women more freedom than these traditions have allowed based on texts like Acts 2.17-18, 1 Cor 11.2-6. We believe women may confess faith or sin, share testimonies of God's work in their lives, participate in praise teams, serve communion, make announcements, introduce guests, give reports, read Scripture aloud, in the assembly. We do not believe standing

in front of the assembled church is necessarily a “position of authority” nor of “spiritual leadership.”

We continue to pray for wisdom and study God’s word to understand both the limits and the freedoms God has given. However, we do not believe the freedoms currently practiced at Northside are salvation issues.

