



## **Welcome to Discovering Northstar**

We are glad you have chosen to find out more about Northstar Church. This class is the basic introduction to our church family. The goal of this class is four-fold:

1. Communicate value of uniting with the Northstar family
2. Provide information about the who's and how's of Northstar Church
3. Lead you to affirm your belief in Jesus
4. Invite you to join us on mission as we present the Gospel to our community, state and world.

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*After covering these five sections, we will make available Northstar's Membership Covenant. Those who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ and have participated in believers baptism may sign the covenant and become members of Northstar Church.*

\*Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New Living Translation.

# **Our Salvation**

**"A member has a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ."**

*"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

(Galatians 3:26-28)

*At Northstar Church, we believe that the initial step in discovering life's true purpose is to understand why God created us. In Ephesians 1:4-5, we understand that even before God made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been **to adopt us** into his own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ.*

## **The barrier to adoption**

- "All of us have strayed like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own." (Isaiah 53:6)
- "But there is a problem – your sins have cut you off from God." (Isaiah 59:2)

## **Removing the barrier – coming into God's family**

- "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:8)

## **What steps must I take to enter God's family?**

- "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from every wrong." (1 John 1:9)
- "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

## **What should I do right now to be forgiven, enter God's family and receive eternal life?**

- "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn." (John 1:12-13)

## **Becoming a Christian**

Becoming a Christian is both an event and a process. It is an *event*, a moment when you fully trust Jesus Christ as both God and Savior for your forgiveness and salvation. It is a *process* as you continue to trust Him daily for the rest of your life for growth, direction, help, strength, wisdom and power to live for His glory.

Becoming a Christian means transferring your citizenship from one kingdom to another. It is at once the most simple, wonderful, liberating and challenging decision of your life.

*"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13*

**The basics of becoming a Christian**, or a disciple (learner & follower) of Jesus Christ include:

- Repentance – acknowledging selfishness and sin that required the death of Christ
- Faith – trusting God, whom you cannot physically see, for forgiveness and life
- Obedience – a life orientation that begins at the moment of salvation to pursue Jesus' teachings, commands and ways.

## **The Importance of Baptism**

At Northstar Church, we believe the Scripture teaches that all persons who express faith in Jesus Christ should then be baptized. It is clear in the New Testament that they practiced baptism by immersion in water. Jesus himself was baptized in the Jordan River. Baptism does not *make* one a Christian; instead it is a picture of and witness to what happened to us when we entered God's family.

### **The most famous baptism**

- "One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan River." (Mark 1:9)

### **What does baptism really mean?**

"For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life." (Colossians 2:12)

### **Why do we practice immersion baptism and not another method?**

The Greek word baptize means "to dip or immerse in water." The New Testament gives a clear picture of *immersion* baptism as it was practiced.

- "After baptism, Jesus came up out of the water..." (Matthew 3:16)
- "He ordered the carriage to stop and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him." (Acts 8:38)

### **Who should be baptized, and when should they be baptized?**

In Acts it is clear that everyone who believed in Christ was baptized and that they were baptized *after* their conversion. (See Acts 2:41). **If you have decided to receive Jesus Christ today, inform the facilitator so that we can celebrate your decision and schedule your baptism.**

### **What if I have already been baptized?**

We recognize your baptism – even if it was not by immersion – as long as it occurred after your profession of faith in Christ. If you were baptized as an infant, we affirm that as an important part of your dedication to Christ by your family, but we do not see any instance of infant baptism occurring in the New Testament. Therefore, we humbly request that you seek believer's baptism by allowing us to joyfully baptize you by immersion.

### **Communion or the Lord's Supper**

*"On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, He took the cup of wine after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant between God and you sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)*

We see **Communion**, or the Lord's Supper, as an event that commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. As such, it is both sorrowful and celebratory. It's quite the paradox! On one hand, it was our sin that caused Jesus' suffering on the cross; on the other hand, it was His death and Resurrection that liberated and saved us from our sin to enjoy eternal life with Him through faith!

So we regularly observe the Lord's Supper at Northstar – in different, creative ways – in order to remember our Savior and the joy He has provided us through a love relationship with Him.

### **Summary**

In order to become a member of Northstar Church, one must have begun a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The two ordinances of the New Testament church that we practice regularly for believers only are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A person must have been baptized after conversion to join Northstar.

# OUR LOVE

**"Our members are bound to each other by love. We are a family."**

*"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."*

(John 15:12 NIV)

## Relationship

Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was by a young man who wanted to know the essence of Jesus' teachings. Jesus replied:

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* (Matthew 22:37-41 ESV)

We want to keep it simple at Northstar. *It's about love.* Our desire is to cultivate loving relationships with God and with others. Everything else falls into place when we learn to love.

***"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*** (John 14:15 ESV)

*Biblical love is guided by our joyful obedience to God and our loving submission to others.* It's through the scriptures that we learn how to love others truthfully.

## That the world will know...

You may have heard it said, "If you think you've found the perfect church, don't join it, or it will stop being perfect." The church is a wonderful organism. It's a representation of Christ's life and ministry on earth. However, because normal, ordinary folks are involved, there are no "perfect" churches. Only Jesus is perfect.

At Northstar, we seek to create and preserve biblical unity and community. We take seriously Jesus' words in John 17:23:

***"May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent me and that You love them as much as You love me."***

We see our genuine love for the body of Christ – ours and other Christ-confessing fellowships – as being one of the greatest proofs to the world that Jesus is the world's Savior. And so we seek to preserve it diligently.

## Small Groups & Discipleship

Our two-fold approach to cultivating loving relationships with God and others is through our small group ministry and discipleship ministry.

1. Our small groups exist to help individuals and families have an informal environment to grow in their love for Christ and others, deepen their faith, serve together and reach out to our community with the truth of the Gospel of Jesus.
2. Our discipleship ministry exists to help believers grow in their understanding of Jesus' life and teachings and to apply them to our lives. As we grow in Christian maturity, we embrace an intentional, daily, obedient and loving life that expresses itself in service to God and others.



## **Unity and Conflict**

We recognize that God's people will often have differences. These are *normal* because of our different backgrounds, experiences, gifts and perspectives. Yet, the directive of Jesus in John 15:12 is still clear.

***"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."***

Church unity is such a powerful witness to people who are not a part of God's family. In this section, we want to explain how that command can be obeyed and how we seek to maintain unity.

## **How do we practice love and maintain unity?**

### **1. By *choosing* to develop relationships with one another.**

*"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another..."* (1 John 4:7)

Bonds of friendship are developed as believers choose to meet together, talk to one another, share backgrounds, eat together, pray for one another and share both joys and sorrows. At Northstar, we expect our members to:

- A. Be involved in a small group of believers.
- B. Find a place to serve in the church or community.

### **2. By *embracing* our differences.**

- A. We have different spiritual gifts, and they give us different perspectives on life and ministry.

*"There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the*

*entire church.” (1 Corinthians 12:6-7)*

Different spiritual gifts lead to different passions and priorities. What one believer sees as absolutely essential may be viewed as only marginally important by another who possesses a different gift from God. Our unity depends on our ability to appreciate another’s passion when it is not our own.

B. We are not all at the same stage of spiritual growth simultaneously.

*“And a person who is living on milk isn’t very far along in the Christian life and doesn’t know much about doing what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the differences between right and wrong, and then do what is right.” (Hebrews 5:13-14)*

Believers move from one level of maturity to the next as they come to know and practice the truths in God’s Word and live under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Understanding that people are at different levels of maturity helps believers adjust to behavior and perspectives in others that indicate a need to grow.

### **3. By *trusting* church leaders.**

*“Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say, Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” (Hebrews 13:17)*

At Northstar, we want to cultivate a high level of trust, especially in church leaders. It’s clear in the New Testament that any leader of God’s people should be a servant-leader. The leaders at Northstar are highly valued and trusted because we seek to encourage, support, and follow them as they shepherd the flock that God has entrusted to them. (1 Peter 5:1-4, Luke 22:24-26)

### **4. By *resisting* relational sins.**

Northstar is an authentic church where people are real and confident in their relationships with each other. Honesty and openness are prized. Believers operate from a desire to protect each other’s reputations and to deal with relational problems in an appropriate biblical manner. Relational sins such as gossip are seen for what they are - a threat to fellowship, unity and health.

*“Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, He abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.” (Romans 1:28-29)*

### **5. By *resolving* conflicts God’s way.**

*"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out his fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back." (Matthew 18:15)*

Problems will arise between people at Northstar in the same way they do in all other churches, religious groups, ministries and organizations. The solution we must embrace is to deal with them from a loving, biblical center. Jesus described the process of accountability in Matthew 18, and Paul gives us some instruction in Galatians 6:1:

*"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."*

As hard and difficult as it is to practice biblical restoration, it is absolutely essential for the health of the church and the glory of God. We humbly seek to practice an attitude of humility and love as we speak the truth in such instances. (Ephesians 4:15)



## **OUR BELIEFS**

**"Our members agree on the core teachings of the Bible."**

*"We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all."*

(Ephesians 4:4-6)

### **What are the core teachings of the Bible?**

At Northstar, our theology is based solely on the Word of God, the Bible. We seek to model a lifestyle of obedience to the teachings revealed in Scripture and resist a "head-knowledge" only form of Christianity which only leads to pride and stagnation.

*"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God." (1 Corinthians 8.1-3)*

We hope to be like the Bereans in Acts 17.11:

*"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*

We affirm the great theological confessions of the past including:

#### **The Apostles' Creed (ca. AD 180)**

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

#### **The Nicene Creed (AD 325)**

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.*

*Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.*

*And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

In the essential beliefs that follow, we ask agreement. In non-essential beliefs (matters relating to such issues as the timing of end-time events, how often to celebrate communion, and other debatable matters) we allow liberty. Toward those who differ with us we show love and respect.

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” (Peter Meiderlin, 1627)

## **Seven core beliefs**

### **1. ABOUT GOD:**

God is the creator and ruler of the universe. He is all wise, all seeing and all understanding. His basic attitudes toward us are love and compassion, yet He is also capable of anger and wrath. God created all people and will one day judge all people by the standards set out in His Word. God desires a relationship with us and sent His Son Jesus Christ to make that relationship possible. God is discovered in the pages of both the Old and New Testaments.

### **2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST:**

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the promised Messiah of Israel. Jesus was born in Bethlehem to a virgin and lived under the authority of his parents until he began his public ministry. He labored and taught for a little over three years in Israel, was tempted and tested by Satan, performed miracles, spoke often to the masses and selected twelve men to be His disciples. His life, lived out in dynamic relationship to His Father, provides a practical example of godly living and effective ministry for all of his followers throughout the ages. His story is told in four biographies in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot. His death was demanded by the Jewish religious leaders, and he was crucified by the Romans. He arose from the dead after three days, and later ascended to be with His

Father in heaven. By the sacrifice of His life and His resurrection, He made possible forgiveness of sin and eternal life for all who choose to believe in Him. He is the founder and head of the church. At a future date, known only to the Father, He will return to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### **3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and He is given to all who place their faith in Jesus Christ. The Spirit imparts peace, power, inspiration, encouragement, understanding and leadership to all believers who submit themselves to His working. He also gives to believers unique spiritual gifts that enable them to minister to the church family. The Spirit works with non-believers by moving and leading them to confess their sin and believe in Jesus Christ.

### **4. ABOUT THE BIBLE:**

The Bible was written by men under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Because it is God's Word, it can be trusted to be thoroughly accurate, reliable, practical and relevant to every generation and to people of all cultures. The first eleven chapters of Genesis which deal with creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, the fall, and the flood are not myth, but accurate history. Both Old and New Testaments are authoritative and instructive, and each is worthy of the believer's study. The Bible is to be read, studied and meditated upon consistently by all who wish to grow in Christian maturity. It is the basis and guide for all teaching in the church. It sets the behavioral standards for all who name the name of Christ. All of scripture was given to help us live in response to being loved - to help us understand that we *are* loved. It shows us - plainly, clearly, logically - what a loved people should do in response to such great, everlasting and sacrificial love.

### **5. ABOUT PEOPLE:**

Human beings were created by God and fashioned in his image. God's desire for all people is that they know, *love*, serve and live with Him for eternity. Because people choose to disobey God and thereby sin against Him, they are separated from God until they embrace Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for them on the cross. Brought into right relationship with God, people are capable of great creativity and highly effective ministry. Apart from God, all people are capable of the darkest evils. After death, people who have given their hearts to God in faith, trusting Him alone for their salvation, are destined to live forever in heaven with Him. Those who do not know God will live forever in hell without Him.

### **6. ABOUT THE CHURCH:**

The church is people - all who belong to God through faith in Jesus. Collectively, the church is God's primary instrument on earth to make known the good news of the gospel. The church is the chief means by which people are helped to mature in the faith, and encouraged to use their gifts in ministry. The church is a family which provides nurture, encouragement, protection,

fellowship and even correction to all family members.

## **7. ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE:**

Beliefs must translate into life; otherwise they are only words. At Northstar, we place a special emphasis on living out our beliefs in the following areas.

### **Biblically-Based Living**

We test our attitudes and actions by the Word of God. When faced with a decision, we must always ask, "What does the Bible say about this?" We encourage daily Bible reading and study. The Word of God is the guide for all we do.

### **Circumspect behavior and moral purity**

We guard our own and the church's reputation by living pure and godly lives. In our language, relationships, habits at work, and family life we refuse to do or say anything that would cause our own testimony to be harmed or would bring reproach on Northstar Church. We keep ourselves from profanity, sexual immorality and displays of any behavior that would be clearly seen as uncharacteristic of a follower of Jesus Christ. We take pains to avoid even the appearance of evil.

### **Outward focus**

We purposely cultivate an outward focus that makes us aware of our responsibility to people who do not know Christ. We are God's ambassadors, and in that role we develop friendships with non-churched people, invite them to church and small groups, and share, when appropriate, our own testimony of how God has been at work in our lives. In addition, we are prepared to share the content of the Gospel with all with whom we are given the blessing of influencing.

*"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."*  
(1 Peter 3.15-16)

## **Affiliation**

Northstar is affiliated with the **Southern Baptist Convention**, and our theological tenants are in harmony with those of most Baptist churches. Still, we appreciate and love those of other traditions and denominations.

# **OUR STRUCTURE**

**"We agree on the way we function as a church"**

*"But be sure that everything is done properly and in order."*

(I Corinthians 14:40)

## **What is the leadership structure of Northstar Church?**

**Northstar Church has a structure** that is different from that of many traditional churches. In many congregations, the pastor and staff are asked to carry out most of the ministry tasks of the church, while the congregation, through boards, committees and regular business meetings provides supervision and administration.

**Members as ministers:** Northstar's leadership teams seek to equip the membership to discover, embrace and use their ministry abilities and gifts to build up the church. When every member does his/her part, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church enjoys unity and the community is impacted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our people have a primary ministry role. This approach is endorsed by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4: 11-12:

*"He [Christ] is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. The Pastor and his staff's responsibility is to "equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."*

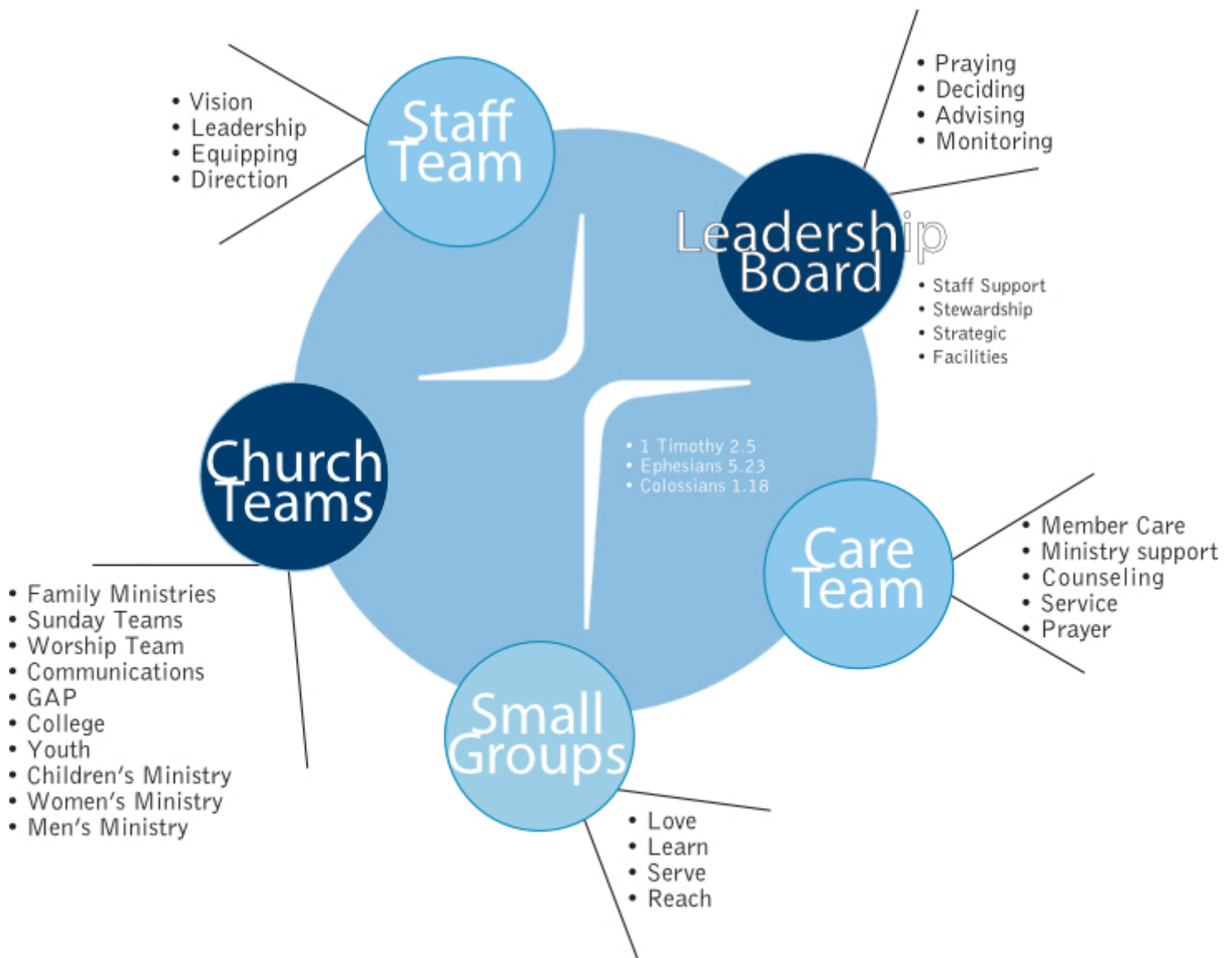
**Fellowship, harmony and voting:** At Northstar, we foster fellowship and unity through communication, flexibility and approachability. However, we do not emphasize voting. The New Testament has only one mention of voting, in Acts 27: 9-12 where Paul warned against sailing, but the majority decided against him. The voyage ended in disaster. In Acts 1:21-26, the apostles had to replace Judas. A vote would have been a likely scenario, however so foreign was this concept to the disciples, they cast lots (threw dice) to determine the proper successor.

## **Five Things church members vote on at Northstar**

1. To call or dismiss the Lead Pastor or to approve a pastoral member of staff.
2. To approve the purchase of real estate or construction of a new building or to approve the renovation of an existing church building.
3. To approve the church incurring any secured debt by the membership such as the purchase of real estate or the construction of a church building.
4. To approve or amend the Membership Materials or Constitution and Bylaws of the church.
5. To approve the church budget.

## Leadership & Ministry Structure

How We're Organized to Follow Jesus,  
Love One Another & Make Disciples of All Peoples





## **How is Northstar supported financially?**

**Tithes & Offerings:** Northstar is supported through the tithes and offerings of its members and attendees. A tithe is 10% of a person's income and is the standard set in the Old Testament and affirmed in the New Testament. An offering is what is given in addition to a tithe. It is a great joy to grow in the grace of giving, and it's a sign of Christian maturity to embrace generosity. It's a sign of a person's surrender to the lordship of Jesus.

*"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord... But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. (2 Corinthians 8:3, 7 ESV)*

*"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law--justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things. (Matthew 23:23)*

*"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (Malachi 3:10)*

## **How is Northstar structured to handle money?**

**The Budget:** The Stewardship Team, which is a team led by members of the Leadership Board, prayerfully considers the requests from staff and members for the upcoming ministry year. A proposed budget is then presented to the church in a called Membership Meeting. A majority vote of those present in the meeting is necessary for the budget to be approved.

**Counting Money:** At present, money is counted by designated church members each Sunday after the worship service. Those funds are deposited on Monday after registering each donation in the administrative software.

**Accounting:** Payroll tasks are carried out by Northstar's financial secretary who tabulates and records individual member's gifts and also gives the church a monthly income and disbursement statement. Northstar members are given copies of financial statements at least four times per year, and donors are sent letters by the end of January each year for charitable tax reporting purposes. The financial secretary ensures that all money matters are handled professionally and with accountability. They pay all bills and maintain all financial records.



## **OUR STRATEGY & VISION**

**"Our members embrace why we exist as a church."**

*"Jesus called out to them, 'Come, be my disciples,  
and I will show you how to fish for people!'  
(Matthew 4:19)"*

**DON'T GO TO CHURCH.**  
**BE THE CHURCH.**

### **You've heard us say it. But we mean it.**

Being a Christian is not just about "attending" church services. It's about living for Jesus Christ and growing in a love relationship with God through Him. Northstar wants to encourage and equip others to ENJOY their relationship with God through joyful, loving obedience to Him.

### **It is not difficult to talk about whom you love.**

Whether it's a child, a favorite memory of friendship or even of a cherished hobby or activity, we all can talk for hours about people and things for which we have affection.

### **Jesus is everything to us.**

We have a consuming desire to communicate to all peoples, in all nations, the joy we have in a love relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is not hard for our members to talk about Jesus and what He means to them. It's natural for us to share with one another and those with whom God gives us opportunity about what a difference it makes knowing Jesus.

### **Our strategy**

So our strategy is simple. We want **you** to *be the church*. We want you live intentionally, daily, and obediently in love with Jesus for the blessing of others. Did you catch that?

- Intentional
- Daily
- Obedient
- Love

Northstar will encourage you, pray with you, teach you, equip you, assist you and go *with* you as you follow Jesus in the many ways that He asks you to serve Him and others. When we are all following Christ, we are amazed at how He works through us and in us.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12 ESV)*

As we live for the Father's glory, He uses our witness and works to lead others to trust Him for salvation.

### **Our vision for making disciples**

We are joyfully intentional and insistent that Christians should grow in their faith. Therefore, we emphasize church membership first (so we will know who's committed to our church family) and then we pursue spiritual growth with all our members.

### **Discovering Northstar:**

We offer membership class called Discovering Northstar that meets once a month, usually on the first Sunday of the month. Discovering Northstar is designed to provide vision, information and assistance for those considering membership. After that class has been completed and a person has turned in their membership covenant, we offer a follow-up class called *Exploring Northstar* designed to help new members find a small group and place to serve in the church.

### **Large Group/Small Group:**

Northstar emphasizes the "large group/small group" principle of church life. We encourage every person at Northstar to be involved in Sunday morning worship (large group) each week. In worship, people fellowship, sing, pray and hear the preaching of God's Word. We also encourage involvement each week in Small Groups. It is in small groups that people build relationships, pray for individual needs, study the Bible together and become family.

At Northstar, we believe that a healthy church experience is achieved through maintaining the commitment to both the large and small group experience. Every staff person, team leader and small group host and leaders are asked to participate in worship *and* in a small group each week. Group leaders must be members of Northstar Church. We recognize that there will be seasons of life that make participation in a small group impossible, but in general, we desire for our members to be a vital part of a small group. Because our small groups are also a shepherding ministry, if a person is not in a small group, it is very difficult for church leaders to care, disciple and be aware of needs.

### **Discipling Relationships:**

We focus ourselves around the motto **Think 28**. It reminds us to reach people with the gospel and to help them grow in spiritual maturity. "28" comes from Matthew 28 and Colossians 1:28.



*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the*

*Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*  
(Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

*“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”* (Colossians 1:28 ESV)

Northstar is committed to encouraging and facilitating close discipleship relationships. Whether in a smaller group or one-on-one, they are encouraged to walk through life together, encouraging each other's faith in Christ. This time of discipleship is usually described by a three-prong approach consisting of:

1. Building Christ-centered relationships to facilitate accountability and growth
2. Studying and applying God's Word to each other's lives in obedience
3. Walking together in ministry activity (prayer, evangelism, serving, discipling others, teaching, etc.).

Currently we have two ways that people can get plugged into discipling relationships:

1. **D28.** The D28 ministry is a group discipleship process that last for approximately six months.
2. **Individual discipleship.** These relationships are usually one-on-one and meet for a shorter period of time.



The goal of these discipleship relationships is to help one another draw nearer to Christ, encourage faithfulness and grow to spiritual maturity. Our end goal is making more disciples through spiritual multiplication.

### **Our vision for missions and church planting**

It's not enough for us to stay in the New River Valley when Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Therefore, we have a commitment to be both a sending and going church. We partner with others in order to accomplish the task of missions and church planting.

**Affiliations:** Northstar Church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. We also partner with other local churches to plant churches in the NRV and beyond.

**Missions Giving and Missions Focus:** Northstar's goal is to exalt the name of Jesus Christ in all nations by making disciples everywhere we go. All our mission activity is evaluated by whether there is a gospel connection. While we may occasionally assist with humanitarian projects, these are the exception rather than the norm. Our hope is

to be a church that mobilizes, gives and goes to places where the gospel has not been established.

*"...I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.'" (Romans 15:20-21 ESV)*

Our desire is practice giving at least 10% of what we budget for ministry and operations to missions – through local, national and international channels. We not only give through denominational channels, but we also give gifts to individual missionaries, ministries and mission organizations. We believe in a three-fold focus to missions and disciple-making that embraces our local community, our state and country and the nations.

## **In Conclusion...**

Will you ***be the church*** with us? For His glory.

# **NORTHSTAR BY-LAWS**

*The following are Northstar Church's Organizational & Governing Principles*

## **1. Beliefs and Establishment of Governing Principles**

- A. Northstar Church, founded in Blacksburg, Virginia, is a family of believers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God as revealed by the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures.
- B. We believe in one God who expresses Himself to man through His roles as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- C. We profess that the head of our church is Jesus Christ, the Maker and Creator of the universe. (Colossians 1.15-20)
- D. We profess as our authoritative guide the Bible, which we follow as God's Word to mankind. (2 Timothy 3.16-17)
- E. The people that are members of this church are given eternal life by the Father through regeneration by the Holy Spirit. We believe that every member is called by God to discipleship, evangelism and a life of joyful obedience. Each person in this church is important to our overall life and mission.
- F. In order to respond to God's call upon our lives more obediently and creatively, the membership of the church entrusts certain roles and responsibilities in its leadership offices and teams. However, the membership itself embraces the responsibility of biblical faithfulness and spiritual obedience for each member. In addition, the membership has the responsibility for decision-making in regards to certain areas of church life and governance as described below. Matters put before the body of the membership will be decided after careful prayer, consideration and deliberation in reflection upon biblical guidelines and the rule of love.

## **2. Establishment of Leadership Structure & Processes**

- A. The membership establishes four ministry areas of leadership that will help guide the church in areas to accomplish its goal of bringing honor and glory to Christ. We organize ourselves into the following teams at this time in order to best serve the needs and purposes of the church.
- B. These are briefly defined as follows in this section with further definition and explanation in the sections below:
  - o Staff Team
  - o Leadership Board
  - o Ministry Team
  - o Church Teams
  - o Small Groups

### **(1) The Staff Team**

- (A) The Staff Team consists of any paid and/or unpaid position that meets regularly and serves under the supervision of the Lead Pastor. Each member of the staff assists the Pastor in performing the work of the

church as defined in this document and described in the ministry description for the position.

- (B) Our Staff Team must seek to equip the members of Northstar to serve and extend the kingdom of God as described in Ephesians 4.11-13. They are called and empowered to lead the Northstar membership into service and not do all the work themselves. The Staff Team will seek to create a culture of grace, cooperation, teamwork, learning and love in Northstar.

1) Lead Pastor

- a. The Lead Pastor must meet and continue to maintain the qualifications as given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. He must model servant leadership and seek to build up the church as described in Ephesians 4.11-13.
- b. The Lead Pastor is called by God to the church to lead the church, proclaim scriptural truth, conduct the sacraments of baptism and communion, administer the church staff, nominate leaders for the Leadership Board, preside over Membership Meetings and joint meetings of the Ministry Team (except in cases below\*), increase the faithfulness and discipleship of the congregation, and equip the congregation and members to reach out to the community and beyond through mission and evangelism. The Pastor must have been ordained either previous to his calling to this church or by this church.
- c. The Lead Pastor shall assist in the recommendation and selection of leaders for the Leadership Board and Ministry Team as well as work in conjunction with the LB and Staff Team to select leaders for the Church Teams. They do this through soliciting nominations from the church body, individual recommendations, and prayerful selection.
- d. If vacant, the position of Lead Pastor will be filled by a 2/3 secret ballot vote of the membership present at a duly called and ordered membership meeting.
- e. The Lead Pastor shall preside over Membership Meetings and meetings of the Leadership Board except in cases where the Team or membership is approving the terms of the Pastor's compensation package. (In that case, a member of the Leadership Board, elected by the team, shall preside over the meeting) Also, he may choose not to preside over a meeting if he has selected another leader or facilitator to do so. The Lead Pastor will not vote at membership meetings, except to break a tie.

2) Staff Leaders

- a. The guide for all staff leaders (including the Lead Pastor) is the principle of servant leadership established by Jesus (Mark 10.42-45, 1 Peter 5.1-4). As spiritual leaders, the staff will be measured by their growing faithfulness to the principles of

leadership mentioned in Titus 1.6-9.

- b. The Lead Pastor will fill paid and unpaid positions of the staff team as well as determine needed staff positions. The Lead Pastor will provide a ministry description for the position in a document presented to the Leadership Board, and the LB will assist the Lead Pastor in an interview of the potential staff designed to encourage the potential leader and inform the leaders in the LB of the staff member's personal testimony, evidence of giftedness and heart for ministry. (Centering upon Bill Hybels' helpful qualifications for leaders of: Character, Competence, & Chemistry.)
- c. The compensation for any staff member will be determined and approved by the Leadership Board's Personnel Team. Upon approval, the Leadership Board's Stewardship Team will include the compensation in the annual or revised budget that must be approved by a majority vote of the church membership.
- d. The Lead Pastor has authority over matters pertaining to staff including their hiring, evaluation, discipline, and dismissal with the following exceptions:
  - 1. Any full-time, paid ministry staff member will be asked to participate in at least one regular Sunday worship service and be approved with a 2/3 secret ballot vote of the membership present at a duly-called and ordered membership meeting as presented in the bylaws which shall be held within a reasonable time subsequent to that service. (This shall not include interns or office staff.)
  - 2. If a staff member is to be disciplined by the Lead Pastor, it must be done in consultation with the leader of the Leadership Board's Personnel Team and in accordance with biblical standards (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6.1) and Virginia law.
  - 3. If a full-time, paid staff member is to be dismissed by the Lead Pastor, it must be approved by a majority vote of the Leadership Board and in accordance with biblical standards and Virginia law.

## **(2) The Leadership Board**

- (A) The Leadership Board exists to provide spiritual oversight and practical governance to the church by fulfilling the following roles:
  - 1) praying
  - 2) monitoring
  - 3) advising
  - 4) deciding
- (B) In conjunction with the Staff Team, the Leadership Board will lead Northstar Church, seeking to ensure:
  - 1) That Northstar is healthy spiritually and rooted in the gospel of

Jesus Christ and

- 2) That Northstar's staff are healthy spiritually and rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They will provide encouragement, counsel and assistance to the Staff Team in the following areas:
  - a. Staff Support
  - b. Stewardship
  - c. Strategic Planning

1. Staff Support Team

- A. This team exists to ensure that our staff, both paid and volunteer, are provided with all the support - prayerful and practical, emotional and spiritual - that we can creatively give them as a church. They will seek to proactively and consistently communicate love, encouragement, value, and honor to our leaders who labor in the Lord to minister to and equip the body of Christ.
- B. The Staff Support Team will additionally be focused on the support, encouragement, and accountability of the pastor, while assisting the pastor with the accountability of the staff.

2. Stewardship Team

- A. This team exists to ensure that the money the Lord provides for us as His people through His people's joyful obedience is spent well, directed wisely and is used with the overall purpose of extending His kingdom and making His name great.
- B. The Stewardship Team will review and submit yearly budgets and work with the staff to assess the needs of the church and resource allotments.
- C. The Stewardship Team will receive recommendations from the Staff Support Team about personnel salaries, benefits and appreciation efforts.

3. Strategic Team

- A. This team exists to assist the Staff with planning and preparing for significant projects and growth needs of the future such as facilities, land, and other goals identified by church leadership. It may serve in an ad hoc capacity.

(C) Requirements for Leadership Board Members:

- 1) Leadership Board leaders must be members of Northstar which includes participation in the Northstar membership group (currently called "Discovering Northstar") and affirmed/signed their



- membership covenant in the most recent covenant renewal service.
- 2) It is preferred that Leadership Board leaders have been a member for at least one year, but upon recommendation by the Lead Pastor and a majority vote of the existing Leadership Board, they may be approved.
  - 3) In view of the reality of spiritual leadership necessitated by this team, LB leaders should be considered in light of the biblical requirements for a church leader described in 1 Timothy 3.1-7.
  - 4) A church member must nominate potential Leadership Board leaders during an identified selection process:
    - a. The Lead Pastor and Leadership Board will announce the beginning of a leadership selection process during a normal worship service.
    - b. Nominations will be opened up to the church body and specifically solicited from Staff Team, Ministry Team, Church Teams Leaders, and Small Group Leaders for an identified period, which will include at least two Sundays.
    - c. The Lead Pastor and Leadership Board then select the Leadership Board leaders.
    - d. The new Leadership Board leaders will be presented at a duly called membership meeting and affirmed by church membership through a time of prayer and dedication.
  - 5) The terms of service for Leadership Board Members will be three years.
    - a. At the end of three years, the Leadership Board member will meet with the Lead Pastor and LB leader, and if all are in agreement with continued service they may serve another three-year term.
    - b. After two consecutive terms, an Leadership Board member must take a year off before returning to Leadership Board service.
    - c. Ideally, the LB members will enter into service in staggered terms. The rotation of these terms is to be determined by the sitting Leadership Board.

(D) Responsibilities of the Leadership Board

- 1) Pray for the congregation, pastoral staff and themselves.
- 2) Oversee the church's spiritual condition.
- 3) Produce and authorize overall written church policy related to the following areas:
  - a. Policies governing the board itself.
  - b. Policies governing the Lead Pastor.
  - c. Policies governing the Leadership Board's relationship to the Lead Pastor.
  - d. Policies reflecting the church's theology and practices.
  - e. Provide supervision of, accountability for, and protection of the Lead Pastor.

- f. Responsible for church discipline.
- g. Responsible for doctrinal clarification.

**(3) The Ministry Team**

- (A) The Ministry Team of Northstar exists to provide ministry assistance to the Leadership Board in accomplishing regular and irregular functions of church ministry.
- (B) The Ministry Team will be composed of men and women who are voting members of Northstar.
- (C) The Ministry Team members will serve in two-year, renewable terms.
- (D) Qualifications of the Ministry Team
  - 1) Members must be involved, giving members of Northstar.
  - 2) Members must meet the spiritual requirements for leaders mentioned in 1 Timothy 3.8-13.
  - 3) Members must serve with an attitude of worship and love for God and people.
- (E) Responsibilities of the Ministry Team
  - 1) Serving the body of Northstar in various ministry needs as identified and prioritized by the LB and Staff Team.

**(4) Church Teams**

- (A) Church Teams at Northstar exist to help provide avenues of ministry service for both members and guests alike. Our Church Teams encompass a broad spectrum of activity.
- (B) By providing a flexible structure for Church Team formation, we will encourage creativity in the use of church members' talents for service. Church teams may be permanent or temporary, in order to meet current needs.
- (C) Current examples of Church Teams include the Connections Team, Guest Follow-up, Sunday Setup, Worship Team, Hospitality, and Missions.
- (D) Church Teams will be comprised of Team Leaders and Team Members.
- (E) Requirements for Church Team Leaders:
  - 1) Church Team leaders must be covenant members of Northstar.
  - 2) Church Team leaders must be willing to practice biblical submission to the Staff Team who will be ultimately responsible for the ministry effectiveness and impact of Northstar's teams.
- (F) Selection of Church Team leaders will be by a prayerfully considered process:
  - 1) A Church Team leader may be recommended by a leader on one of Northstar's leadership teams: Staff, Leadership Board, Ministry Team, another Church Team or Small Group leaders.
  - 2) Potential Team Leaders will be interviewed by a Staff Leader and approved by staff.
  - 3) The guidelines for selection will follow the "Three C's" of leadership, as defined by Bill Hybels:

- a. Character - they have the inner spiritual desire and maturity needed
  - b. Competence - they have the skills and abilities, as well as the self-discipline to lead
  - c. Chemistry - their personality and attitude mesh well with other leaders
- (G) Church Team Leaders (MTLs) fall into two categories:
  - 1) Leaders of a new team and
  - 2) Leaders replacing other leaders
- (H) Responsibilities of Church Team leaders
  - 1) Providing training for team members
  - 2) Recruiting team members
  - 3) Developing future team leaders
  - 4) Ensuring that the Church Team fits into the overall vision and guidance of Northstar
- (I) Qualifications for Church Team Members:
  - 1) Membership may or may not be required, depending on the nature of the Church Team. In consultation with the Staff, each CT will decide whether covenant membership is a requirement for that Church Team.
  - 2) A legal background check will be required for ministries working with children, youth, or college students.
- (J) The goals of the Church Teams are to:
  - 1) Meet needs in the church, local community, or global community
  - 2) Mobilize people to use their unique gifts for service
  - 3) Promote obedience to Christ through good works
  - 4) Extend the kingdom of God
- (5) **Small Group Leaders Team**
  - (A) Northstar's Small Group ministry exists to build authentic, Christ-centered communities of believers focused on the "four priorities" of:
    - Loving
    - Learning
    - Serving
    - Reaching
  - (B) Our Small Groups are "where ministry happens," and we will seek to make our Small Groups our primary strategy for outreach and community discipleship. Every leader at Northstar will be actively involved in a small group unless they receive approval to sit out for a time.
  - (C) The qualifications for a Small Group Leader are:
    - 1) Small Group Leaders (SGL) must be members of Northstar which ensures a relationship with Christ and indication of alignment with Northstar's core beliefs.
    - 2) SGLs must demonstrate devotion to Christ and His church and be affirmed by based on testimony of small group leader and/or staff

member.

- 3) SGL must embrace the small group culture at Northstar by consistent involvement in a small group for at least 3 months (SGL may be approved for leadership sooner if they meet the guidelines for selection below.)
- (D) The selection process for SGLs is:
  - 1) Identification as potential SGL by Staff member or current SGL
  - 2) Interview of potential leader by the Small Group Team Leader (may include other leadership or staff as deemed necessary)
  - 3) After interview, SGTL makes recommendation to staff to either proceed as new SGL, wait for further growth time and training, or to cease pursuit as SGL.
  - 4) If recommended, the staff will formally dedicate the new SGL through a special time of prayer either during service or in a more private setting.
  - 5) The new SGL and SGTL determine time, target audience, and location of the new small group and when to start gatherings (SGTL will announce new group and aid in recruiting)
  - 6) Ideally, SGLs would be involved in an existing small group for at least 3 months before serving; however, if they have previous small group leadership experience or are approved by the staff after the interview, they may begin to serve sooner.
- (E) Small Groups will have the following accountability and structure:
  - 1) Small Groups Leaders will report to the overall Small Group Team Leader who will be a member of the Staff Team.

### 3. **Northstar Membership Roles and Responsibilities:**

- A. Recognizing that Northstar Church is a local expression of the universal church of Jesus Christ, we seek to function with Jesus Christ as our head and in submission to Him and the leaders that He places in authority over us as called, equipped and empowered by Him to accomplish His work on earth.
- B. With the intent of maintaining a meaningful membership that is consistently in tune with the mission of Christ in our world, we establish our membership as a Covenant Membership.
  - (1) The requirements for a Covenant Membership of Northstar include:
    - a. Participation in the approved membership group (currently called "Discovering Northstar.")
    - b. Signing the Membership Covenant (included below).
    - c. According to the Northstar Membership Covenant, anyone who is to be considered to be a Northstar member must:
      1. Have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and undergone a believer's baptism. (See the Northstar Membership Notebook for a statement about believers' baptism.) Candidates for membership who have not been baptized as believers shall be baptized by the Lead Pastor or his representative.
      2. Candidates for membership who have been previously baptized

- meet the requirements for membership through satisfactorily completing a membership class.
3. Be in agreement with Northstar's values, strategy and leadership structure as defined here and in the Membership Materials.
- (2) Covenant Membership is renewed annually in a celebration known as "Covenant Renewal Sunday." It is a day in which all current members reaffirm their membership by turning in a newly signed membership covenant.
- C. We recognize that leaders are given to the church for the building up of the body to maturity and to equip its members for works of service (Ephesians 4.11-13), and the membership establishes certain leadership positions and tasks them with certain roles and responsibilities as defined above in Section I.
- D. The membership also retains for itself certain roles and responsibilities to the exclusion of all other leadership positions. The membership may approve, by a vote at a duly called and conducted Membership Meeting, all or any of the following:
- (1) To call or dismiss the Lead Pastor or to approve a pastoral member of staff. Approval required is 2/3 majority. Voting will be by secret ballot.
  - (2) To approve the church incurring any secured debt by the membership such as purchase of real estate or the construction of a church building. Approval required is 2/3 majority. A majority vote is necessary for approval of the renovation of an existing church facility.
  - (3) To approve or amend the membership materials of the church. Approval required is 2/3 majority.
  - (4) To approve the church budget. Approval required is a majority vote.
  - (5) *Members must be at least 18 years of age to vote.*
- E. The membership will meet at regularly scheduled times in "Membership Meetings" during the year to hear updates on vision, direction, leadership and ministry news from the different leadership teams of Northstar.
- (1) These Membership Meetings will be presided over by the Lead Pastor or his designated representatives.
  - (2) When voting is called for at Membership Meetings or other approved gatherings of the church membership, a "majority vote" is defined as a majority of those present for the meeting, as a 2/3 vote is also defined as being 2/3 of those present for the meeting. Voting in absentia is not allowed unless approved by the Staff Team and Leadership Board before the meeting.
  - (3) We recognize that due to our struggle with sin and spiritual warfare that there will be times necessary for individual members and/or leaders to be approached about issues of sinfulness. The following are our guidelines for this process:
    - a. Summary principles of member discipline:
      1. Discipline is a community responsibility. As such we invest our Staff Team and Leadership Board with the authority for pursuing the process of member discipline, but we each as members recognize the need to individually initiate and participate in the process

- before bringing it to the Staff's attention.
2. We will seek to follow the biblical guidelines for the process as found in Matthew 18.15-18 and Galatians 6.1.
  3. Our goal in member discipline is restoration, not rebuke.
  4. We recognize and affirm that "no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12.11)
  5. Discipline consists of exclusion (withdrawal from the fellowship).
  6. Discipline is exercised over the significant not the trivial.
  7. Discipline is reserved for contaminating sins.
  8. Discipline should be addressed in context of Galatians 6 and following.
  9. Here is a possible list of things that we may expect to receive conversation and discipline regarding:
    - A. Sexual immorality (adultery, molestation, homosexuality, abuse
    - B. Wrongful divorce proceedings
    - C. Legal proceedings against you for capital crimes or initiated by you against other Christians for civil offenses
    - D. Heresy (repudiation or denial of core Christian teachings)
    - E. Violence, abuse, malicious slander, or consistent gossip
  10. If discipline is to be focused on a pastoral leader, we seek to follow the guidelines of 1 Timothy 5.19-20: "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."

## **THEOLOGICAL POSITION PAPERS**

The following are two papers written by Northstar's Leadership Board after two different research efforts led by members of Northstar in conjunction with the Leadership Board. They represent the position of Northstar's pastors and elders (LB), but they are not to be construed as binding.

However, it is important for a person considering membership at Northstar to understand that these positions were arrived at with much study, collaboration and seeking humility. We believe that defining these two areas of culture and life from a biblical viewpoint will ensure unity and continued vitality and blessing of our church.

We are grateful, first of all, for the redemption that we have in Christ Jesus. We are humbled by the challenge of guiding and blessing His church. As leaders of Northstar Church, the Staff and Leadership Board, affirm the following positions.

As is quoted in our Membership Notebook, in the Beliefs section:

At Northstar Church, our theology is based solely on the Word of God, the Bible. We seek to model a lifestyle of obedience to the teachings revealed in Scripture and resist a "head-knowledge" form of Christianity, which only leads to pride and stagnation.

The Membership Materials state our belief in the Bible this way:

The Bible was written by men under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Because it is God's Word, it can be trusted to be thoroughly accurate, reliable, practical and relevant to every generation and to people of all cultures. The first eleven chapters of Genesis which deal with creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, the fall, and the flood are not myth, but accurate history. Both Old and New Testaments are authoritative and instructive, and each is worthy of the believer's study. The Bible is to be read, studied and meditated upon consistently by all who wish to grow in Christian maturity. It is the basis and guide for all teaching in the church. It sets the behavioral standards for all who name the name of Christ.

In addition to the above statement, it should be noted that the Bible is our guide, and we embrace its teachings in faith as we apply those teachings to a culture that many times disagrees with them. We seek to practice the best methods of interpreting scriptural teachings. In addition to sound exposition of doctrine, we seek to understand the most loving way to *apply* and *communicate* scriptural truth as to be obedient to Ephesians 4.15-16:

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together

by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Our hope is to glorify God by making much of His Word and assist in the growth of His church by bringing our members to spiritual maturity and our community to trust in Christ alone for salvation.

We understand that there are other churches – a few who may even be Southern Baptist like us – who may interpret the following areas differently. It is not our wish to alienate, only to define our perspective in a loving, biblically-based manner, so that each current member and all future members of Northstar will be informed about the positions we take on the following societal issues.

## **NORTHSTAR CHURCH POSITIONS**

### **1. POSITION 1: Sexual conduct, gender, and purity**

We embrace the biblical teaching of creation and the relationship of marriage that God established as a gift to humanity through Adam and Eve. Genesis states:

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”* (Genesis 1:27 ESV)

Western culture in the 21st century has become more and more antagonistic toward the biblical teaching about human sexuality, gender, and the expression of them. Northstar seeks to *clearly* and *graciously* communicate biblical truth to topics that are difficult to discuss and are therefore often left unaddressed.

In short, Northstar’s position on human sexuality is as follows:

**Sex and human sexuality are good gifts from God, given to be enjoyed within the boundaries of biblical marriage, between a man and woman.**

This statement will serve as an outline for the remainder of the paper.

#### **A. Gift from God**

Human sexuality is, first of all, a great gift from a loving God. Since the first man and woman, sex has been a gift given with multiple benefits. In marriage, sex brings physical and emotional intimacy and closeness. Biblical writers even describe the results of sex as melding two people into one. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:16:

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”



God has also given human sexuality as the mechanism of bringing about the great gift of new life. It's through our sexuality that God has chosen to create the children that he blesses us with. God even commands sex when he tells Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:28)

## **B. Boundaries for Sexuality**

All good gifts are beneficial and enjoyable in the context in which they are meant to be used. Human sexuality is no different and God has given us clear directions on how and in which way human sexuality is to be expressed. Like a loving parent showing their child how to use a new toy on Christmas morning, God directs our use of his gift for our enjoyment and His glory.

Followers of God are provided with extremely clear guidelines on appropriate ways to express our sexuality within the confines of biblical marriage. God established the first marriage, and His Word consistently uplifts it as a special relationship given to humanity.

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)*

In fact, God thinks so highly of marriage, that the analogy of marriage is used to describe the relationship of Christ to the Church. Ephesians 5:22-33 describes how the marriage of a husband and wife is given honor by painting a picture that is analogous of the relationship between Christ Jesus and his people, the Church.

Marriage is esteemed, and therefore, sexuality is also given boundaries. God expects our sexuality to find its proper consummation in marriage. Any sexual activity outside of marriage is considered sinful in both the Old and New Testaments.

*"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (Hebrews 13:4)*

## **C. Man and Woman**

Because of the clear description of Scripture, Northstar defines marriage as between a man and a woman. Northstar upholds the biblical guidelines that the practice of homosexuality is sinful.

*"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error." (Romans 1:26-27)*

The Bible consistently teaches that marriage, established at Creation, is to be between a man and a woman. Where it is not explicitly taught, it is always implied as such. Jesus Himself quoted Scripture on marriage in Genesis when asked about divorce, but He also anchored marriage in *how men and women were created*:

*He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)*

#### **D. Sexual Immorality**

Northstar teaches its members that any expression of our sexuality outside of biblical marriage is sinful. This includes adultery, the practice of homosexuality, premarital sex, foreplay and even the intentional temptation towards improper sexual thoughts (teasing between dating singles, intentional flirtations, pornography, etc.).

There are a variety of temptations for men and women related to our sexuality. It's important to understand that we are constantly called to "not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16) and to practice self-control related to our sinful natures.

*"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18 ESV)*

*"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Ephesians 5:3-5, ESV)*

Willingly indulging in sexual immorality is not a characteristic of God's people.

#### **E. Conclusion**

Despite ever-changing waves of opinion in culture, Northstar is and will continue to be unapologetic about upholding the teaching in God's Word concerning His guidelines for human sexuality.

We will do so in a spirit of grace and love. Human sexuality is a beautiful gift. We want to uphold the dignity of all people in this sensitive and often misunderstood area while esteeming God's commands and mandates. They are given to us as from a loving Father. He desires that His people enjoy his gifts as they were intended. Indulging in God's gift of sexuality outside of His guidelines only brings hurt, heartache, and

brokenness. We worship and serve a God who is a great gift giver and desires the good of the people He loves so dearly.

*"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)*

The **manner** in which we will uphold God's Word in this area of our lives is best described in this way:

*"Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV)*

## 2. **POSITION 2: Women's roles in church leadership**

Women have been and always will be an integral part in the life of the church. Northstar has a history of encouraging and equipping women in the church's ministry. The Bible is very specific about certain leadership roles in the church and generic about others, and we want to explain those roles in this brief paper.

This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive explanation of Northstar's position. There are countless resources available, and they have been researched to help gain perspective and understanding on this topic. This paper is a summary of that research.

It's also important to note that this is a position about gender *roles* in church leadership. This is not a position about gender *equality*. The Bible is very clear, and Northstar believes, that all people, regardless of gender, are created equal.

### A. Lead Pastor and Overseers (Leadership Board)

Northstar Church does not believe women have been given the authority to be lead pastors or overseers (Leadership Board) of the church based on the study of the following scriptures:

*"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?" (1 Corinthians 14:33-36 ESV)*

*"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to*

*teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” (1 Timothy 2:11-14 ESV)*

*“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV)*

*“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:5-9 ESV)*

We understand that some would interpret the above verses as applying only in past cultural situations. However, we believe that it's clear the positions above were not based on cultural expectations but on the unique nature of men and women at Creation. The Bible also provides a *pattern* of behavior that we use as an example of how to pattern church leadership. In the New Testament, women were not given the authority to lead the church. They were not selected as Jesus' first disciples. The pattern of the first church (and in the Old Testament) demonstrates that although Christianity was radically counter-cultural for its day, it did not practice or place women into positions of spiritual authority.

#### **B. Ministry Team Leaders (Deacons)**

Northstar Church does support women as Ministry Team Leaders (or deacons as described in the Bible). Scripturally, deacons supported the Apostles and Overseers of the early church in various roles. Northstar Church supports this same structure and bases the requirements of a Ministry Team Leader on the following scripture:

*“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them*

serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV)

There is a pattern of behavior in the Bible that supports having *mostly* men in this role, but there are biblical examples of women acting in this role (Phoebe in Romans 16:1; 1 Timothy 3:11 could be interpreted as referring to women deacons). There are no scriptures that prohibit women acting as deacons as outlined in Timothy 3:8-13 noted above. Please note, Northstar Church’s use of the term deacon and Ministry Team leader is interchangeable. The role of the Ministry Team is described in our Membership Notebook, in the Structure section.

### **C. The Manner of Leadership**

We understand that such an articulation of theological belief may alarm some of those considering membership at Northstar. We think it necessary to state that male spiritual authority in no way is to be practiced in a belittling or abusive nature. Scripture is very clear that leadership is to be ruled by love, and that the best leaders are also servants. 1 Peter 5:1-4 captures this holy stewardship of a leader well:

*“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”*

### **D. Good Company**

If you’re interested in knowing other churches or Christian leaders and pastors that adopt a similar theological position about women in leadership in the church, we offer this list of names and resources for your information.

- The Village Church, Pastor Matt Chandler
- Bethlehem Baptist Church, Pastor John Piper
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Pastor Tim Keller
- Stonebriar Community Church, Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Finally, the *Baptist Faith and Message* of the Southern Baptist Convention (of which Northstar is a member) states:

*“While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”*