



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 the 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.

Table of Contents

1. **Our Salvation:** A member has a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. **Our Love:** Our members are bound to each other by love. We are a family.
3. **Our Beliefs:** Our members agree on the core teachings of the Bible.
4. **Our Structure:** Our members understand the way we function and are organized for ministry.
5. **Our Strategy:** Our members embrace why we exist as a church.

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 Christian Standard Bible.

Our Salvation

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

"For through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus. For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since 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

- "We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way..." (Isaiah 53:6a)
- "But your iniquities are separating you from God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen." (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 comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

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

- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
- "If you confess with your mouth, '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 did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God." (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.

“For everyone who calls on 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

- “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan by John.” (Mark 1:9)

What does baptism really mean?

“When you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.” (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.

- “When Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water.” (Matthew 3:16a)
- “So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he 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

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (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:

"I am in them and You are in me, so that they be made completely one, that the world may know You have sent me and have loved them as You have loved 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.

"This is my command: Love one another 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 love one another..." (1 John 4:7a)

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.

"And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. A

manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.” (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.

“Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature - for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.” (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 the behavior and perspectives in others that indicate a need to grow.

3. By *trusting* church leaders.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (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.

“And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right. They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful.” (Romans 1:28-31)

5. By *resolving conflicts* God's way.

"If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him. If he listens to you, you have won your brother." (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 and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't 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.”

“There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope at your calling - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in 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. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it. But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.” (1 Corinthians 8:1b-3)

We hope to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11:

“[The Bereans] were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

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)

In addition to the below, Northstar Church also upholds the statement of faith presented within the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, which can be found at the following website: bfm.sbc.net.

Eight core beliefs

1. ABOUT GOD:

We believe in one God, who exists eternally as three coequal and coeternal distinct persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God, yet there is one God.

2. ABOUT THE FATHER:

The Father is the first person of the Trinity. God the Father 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. ABOUT THE BIBLE:

The Bible, in its entirety, is the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God; it is divine revelation that carries the full weight of God's authority and to which we are obliged to submit. 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.

6. 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. Adam's sin and rebellion against God the Creator severed this perfect relationship between God and his people. We believe that people are born into this sin and continue to choose to disobey God and thereby sin against Him. This sin separates us from God and is deserving of death. Salvation is offered to all who accept and 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.

7. 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.

8. 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 regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame." (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 everything is to be done decently 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:

“And [Christ] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up 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.

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)

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth [tithe] of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23)

"Bring the full tenth [tithe] into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure." (Malachi 3:10)

How is Northstar structured to handle money?

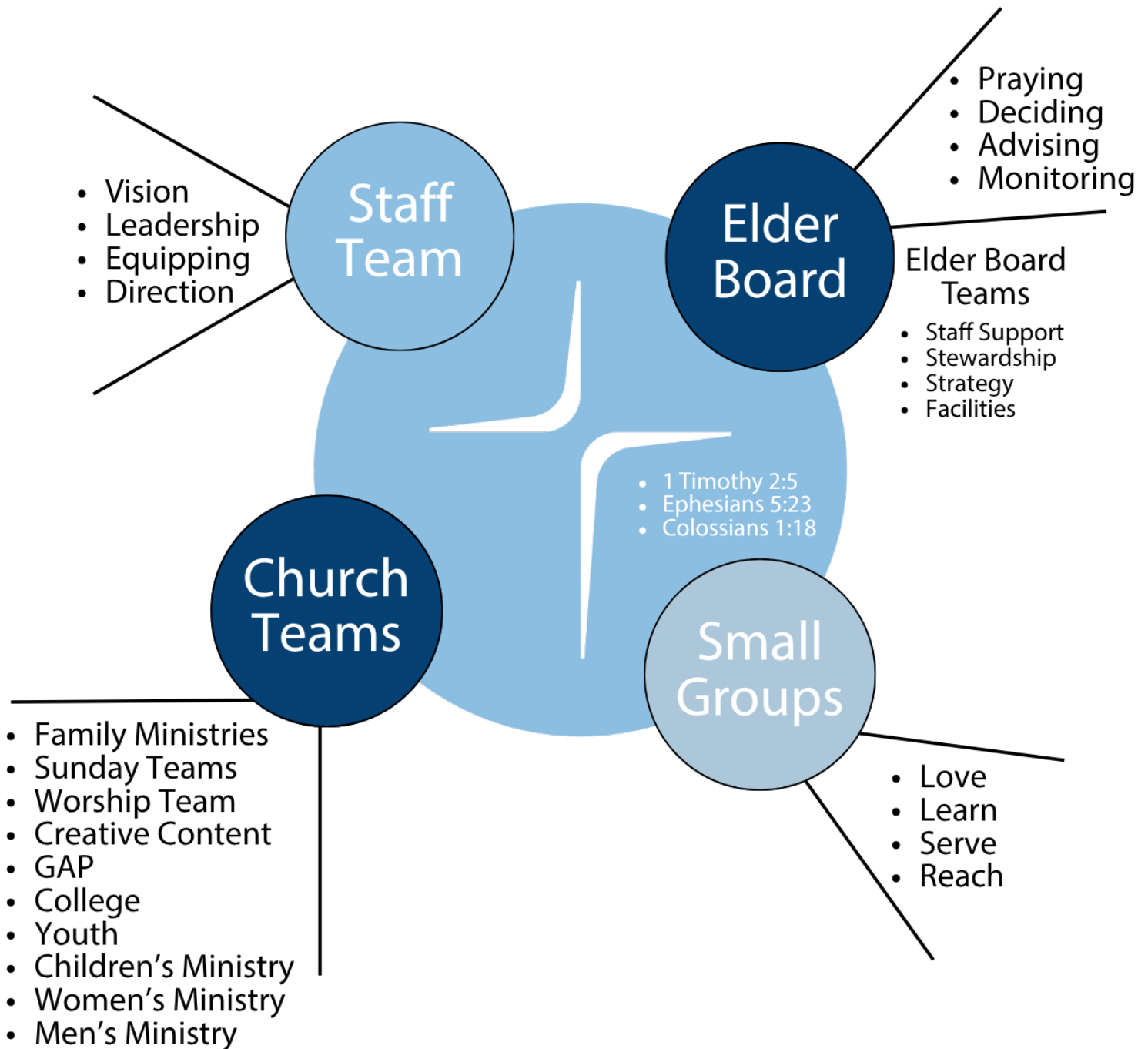
The Budget: The Stewardship Team, which is a team led by members of the Elder Board, prayerfully considers the requests from staff and members for the upcoming ministry year. A proposed budget is then presented to the church in a called Membership Meeting. A majority vote of those present in the meeting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

Leadership & Ministry Structure

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



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 NLT)

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 the 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 to 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:

D28 is the name of our discipleship ministry at Northstar. We based the name on the passages that serve as a root for our philosophy on discipleship at Northstar: Matthew 28:18-20 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 through our intentional discipleship pathway. Whether in a smaller group or one-on-one, we 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.).

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.

A PDF of the Northstar Church by-laws can be found at dontgo.be/bylaws.

THEOLOGICAL POSITION PAPERS

The following are two papers written by Northstar's Elder Board after two different research efforts led by members of Northstar in conjunction with the Elder Board. They represent the position of Northstar's pastors and elders, 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 Elder 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 (Elder Board)

Northstar Church does not believe women have been given the authority to be lead pastors or overseers (Elder 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."