

Philosophy of Ministry

CROSSWAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

What is a philosophy of ministry?

The word “philosophy” here refers to a set of principles upon which a set of practices are based. Thus, a philosophy of ministry is a set of ideas, values, priorities, and convictions that are intended to serve as the guiding principles for behavior and decision-making in ministry. Looking downstream, it is the grid through which ministry decisions are made. It is something of a rudder for ministry. It provides focus and criteria for ministry decision-making. Looking upstream, it presents the rationale for each of these ministry decisions.

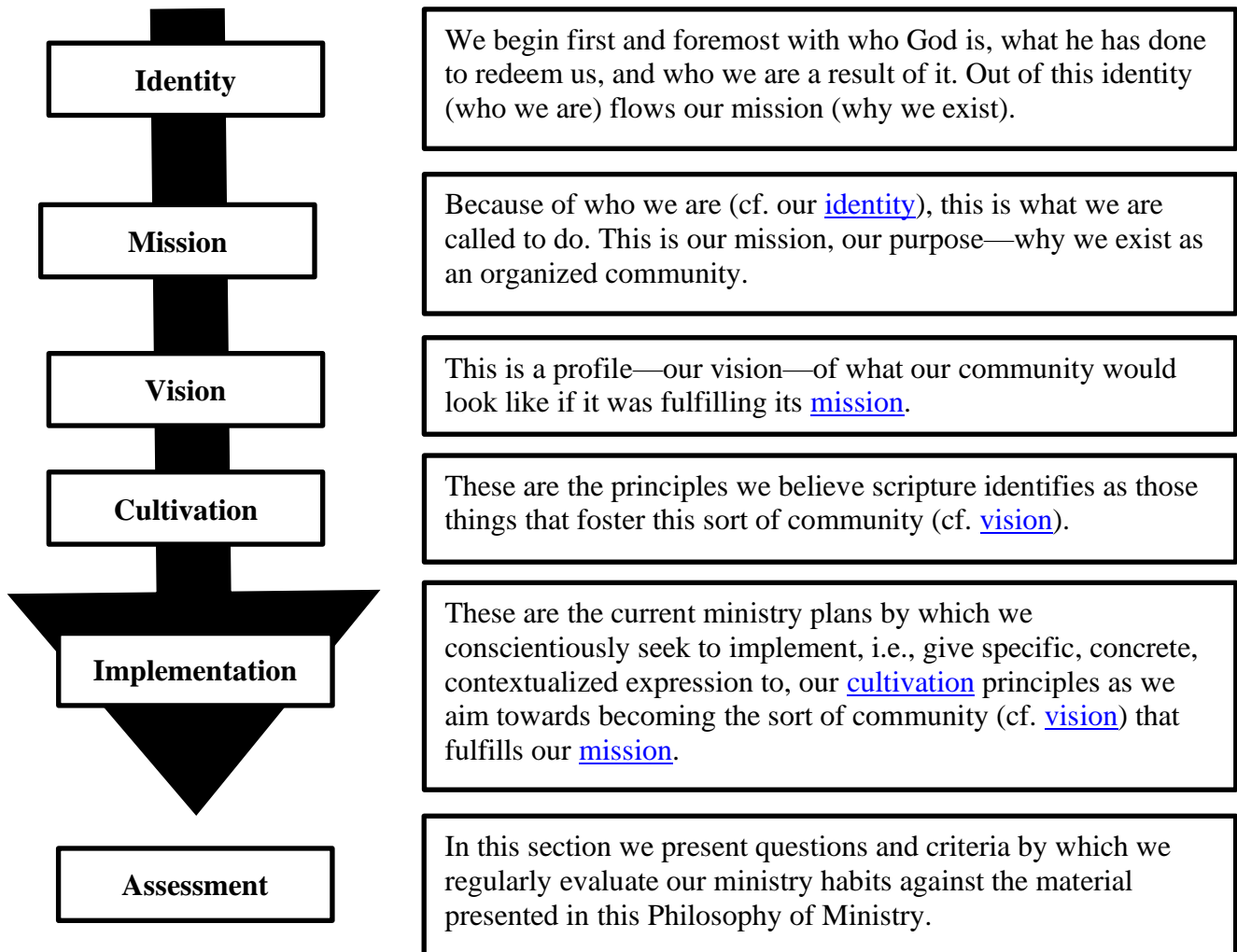
In addition, a well-composed philosophy of ministry does more than gather together and list the various values and convictions that serve to guide ministry decisions; it also elucidates their logical, sequential relationship to one another. Grasping these successive relationships brings further clarity to rationale behind specific ministry implementation and decision-making.

Why have a philosophy of ministry?

1. The exercise of composing a philosophy of ministry forces leaders to engage in in-depth consideration and examination of the “what” (priorities) and “why” (rationale) of the church’s life and ministries. Every church has a philosophy—whether it is articulated or assumed, thought-through or unconsidered—that guides its ministry decision-making. Thinking through and articulating our philosophy of ministry helps us ensure that ours is both intentional and sound.
2. By identifying and laying out our priorities and rationale (the “what” and the “why” of our ministry), a philosophy of ministry provides a map for ministry decision-making.
3. Not only so, but an articulated philosophy of ministry allows this ministry-map to be shared by the church community, especially its leaders and decision-makers. It provides a unified ministry philosophy amidst a plurality of ministry leaders.
4. The philosophy of ministry serves as a helpful tool for introducing individuals, especially new church members, to the church’s DNA—its mission, vision, priorities, and philosophy for ministry decision-making.
5. The priorities and rationale of the philosophy of ministry serve as a helpful tool for ministry/church-life assessment, evaluation, and regular recalibration. It creates criteria and standards by which we can evaluate our current ministry practices.

Philosophy of ministry map

The benefit of a well-crafted philosophy of ministry is that it not only identifies various dimensions of a church—its values, priorities, activities, and convictions—but also that it systematically brings them together, showing their relationships with one another. By presenting these dimensions in their logical relationships, one is better able to grasp the significance of each dimension in terms of its role in shaping ministry decisions.

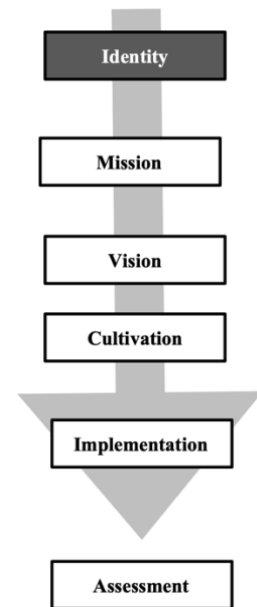


IDENTITY: WHO ARE WE?

Our [mission](#) and, by extension, our entire philosophy for carrying out that mission (aka, our [philosophy of ministry](#)) is born out of our identity—who we are. And to rightly understand who we are, we must begin, first and foremost, by understanding who our God is, what he’s done to redeem us, and who we are as a result (our identity).

- **God**

In the beginning the all-wise, all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal, holy, loving, gracious God created all things. All things were very good, and man and woman dwelt with God in perfect harmony. Indeed, they lived wholly for the glory of God—believing in God as he truly is, worshipping him alone, enjoying him in and above all things, trusting God in all that he declared true, joyfully obeying God in all that he commanded, and displaying him as they interacted with one another and with the created world. However, sin quickly destroyed that, as man rejected God as King and therefore deserved God’s judgment. Since God is holy and just, he would remain righteous if he condemned all sinners to eternal damnation. But in his kindness, he had other plans: a plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory, and a plan to redeem a people for his own possession.¹



- **Redemption**

God’s plan to spread his glory and save a people come together and intersect in the Gospel. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on flesh and died in the place of sinners, taking their punishment and reconciling back to God all who trust in Jesus and worship him as king. This salvation is offered to people of every tribe and tongue: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But this initial redemption is not the end of the story. God intends to bring ongoing renewal to his people during their pilgrimage on earth.²

- **The Church**

This mission of God – to spread his glory, redeem a people for himself, and renew them - could easily be accomplished by God alone. But God has chosen to accomplish his plan through his people, the church. This means, God’s plan to redeem the lost, and to bring

¹ Ex 19:1-6; Hab 2:14; Rom 3:23; 6:23; 2 Thess 1:9.

² Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 4:6, 16; Col 2:13; 3:10.

ongoing renewal to his people, flows through the life and ministry of local churches; and these churches display God's very glory in the world! Our identity as a church, therefore, is specifically that of a redeemed people called and caught up into God's mission. his mission precedes ours; and our mission exists only as an extension of his. Our mission is God's mission.³

Conclusion:

In short, our identity is this: we are a local church; we are a local, temporal expression of that larger, global, trans-temporal people whom God has rescued through the saving work of his Son, Jesus Christ. But we do not exist for ourselves. Out of this identify (who we are, more specifically, who God has made us to be through the Gospel) flows our mission (why we exist; what we are called to do). We have been saved in order that we may in turn become ambassadors of the very same message by which we ourselves have been saved. In other words, as a church, we are not merely the product and recipient of the Gospel, but we are now also its God-appointed agent—the vehicle through which he announces his message of reconciliation to the world around us.⁴

³ Eph 3:10; 5:25-32; Mt 16:18.

⁴ Mt 28:19-20; Lk 24:47-48; Jn 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor 5:18-20.

MISSION:

WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO DO?

Because of what God has done and who God has made us to be as a result of it (our [identity](#)), this is what we are called to do—our mission, our assignment from our Lord and Savior. This is why we exist as a community.

Mission: *To make maturing followers of Jesus by the power of the Gospel.*

Breakdown:

- ***Followers of Jesus***

The church was created and exists for the glory of God—to display his wisdom, make known his worth, unveil his beauty, and spread a passion for his greatness. The church is not a mere a social club or support group. Rather, we excitedly declare that we seek to make *followers of Jesus* who worship and glorify the risen and reigning King.

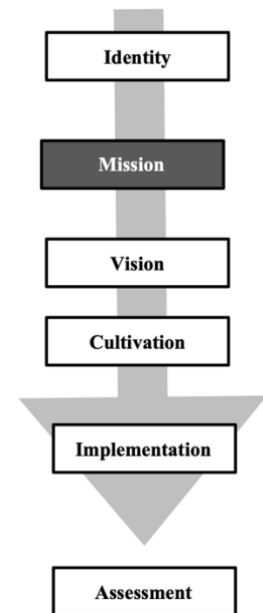
- ***Making and Maturing***

The church glorifies God then primarily by fulfilling this commission to *make* disciples of Jesus—seeing people come to faith in Christ and transformed into *maturing* followers of Him. And this call of discipleship under Jesus is not one that simply ends when one enters the family of God by faith. Rather, as *maturing disciples* we now strive to grow and live out this faith to the glory of our God. Therefore, as a church, we aim to be a people where this growth is encouraged and most probable, by intentionally pursuing our Lord as well as each other.

- ***By the Power of the Gospel***

Finally, the church fulfills this commission to make disciples *through the Gospel*—the only message that is powerful to save and transform people into fully devoted followers of Jesus. And this Gospel is not merely our point of access into God’s family (justification, salvation), but is also the everyday, necessary source of our continual conformity into the image of Christ (sanctification, transformation).

Means & traits: While we believe this is the mission of all Christians (and any truly Christian organization), as a church we believe Christ calls us to fulfill this mission through the following overlapping ministries, tasks, functions, or traits:



- **Ecclesial organization and government** – Maintaining and practicing healthy and Biblical church membership and governance.⁵
- **The ministry of the word** – Ministering God’s word, especially the Gospel, to one another.⁶
- **The ordinances** – Faithfully administering Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.⁷
- **Corporate worship** – Regularly assembling together to read scripture, hear it expounded, practice the ordinances, pray, confess our faith, and collectively respond to God through song.⁸
- **Prayer** – Communing and communicating with God.⁹
- **Community** – Engaging in intentional relationships of accountability, mentorship, and companionship.¹⁰
- **Edification** – Using our various gifts for the sake of each other’s encouragement and maturation.¹¹
- **Church discipline** – Protecting one another by not tolerating unrepentant sin.¹²

⁵ Mt 18:15-17; Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:3-6; 14:23; 1 Cor 5:3-5, 13; 6:1-5; 2 Cor 2:6; 8:19; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:9, 17; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 13:7, 17; Js 5:14; 1 Pet 5:2-3.

⁶ Rom 15:14; Eph 4:15; Acts 2:42; 20:20; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:15-4:2.

⁷ Acts 2:38, 41-42; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 20:7; 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 1:13-17; 10:14-22; 11:17-34; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21.

⁸ Acts 2:42; 20:7, 20; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 5:4, 11; 11:17-18, 20, 33; 14:23; 15:1-4; 16:2; Eph 5:19-20; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 3:15-16; 4:16; 1 Cor 14:14-17, 26-33; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:13; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 3:15-4:2; 1 Thes 5:27; Heb 10:25; Js 5:16.

Although we acknowledge that the scope of Christian worship includes all of life, we use “worship” here in a popular, narrowed sense.

⁹ Acts 2:42; 20:20; 1 Cor 14:14-15; 1 Tim 2:1-2.

¹⁰ Rom 12:10, 13, 15; 1 Cor 12:26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:2; Heb 3:12-13; 10:25; 12:15-16; Js 5:19; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 3:18.

¹¹ Mt 28:19; Rom 12:6-8; 15:14; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:12, 26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:11-16; Col 2:19; 1 Thes 5:11, 14; Heb 10:24; 12:15; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Jude 20.

¹² Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Tim 5:19-21; 2 Thes 3:14-15; Js 5:19-20.

- **Multiplication** – Actively engaging in evangelism and mission (multiplying disciples), church planting (multiplying churches), and identifying and raising up leaders (multiplying leaders).¹³
- **Giving** – Giving financially and materially for the sake of others and the spread of the Gospel.¹⁴
- **Social concern** – Serving and engaging the needs of our church and communities.¹⁵
- **Partnership** – Appropriately partnering with other churches and Christian organizations in order to increase our ability to fulfill our mission.¹⁶

¹³ Mt 28:19-20; Lk 24:47-48; Jn 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 14:23; Rom 10:14-17; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Col 4:2-6; 1 Thes 1:8; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5; 1 Pet 3:15.

¹⁴ Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; Rom 12:13; 15:25, 31; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 6:9-10; Phil 4:18; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Heb 13:16.

¹⁵ Gen 1:26-27; Lev 19:15; Deut 15:11; Prov 19:7; 31:8-9; Isa 58:6-12; Jer 22:3, 13-17; Ezek 16:49-50; 22:29; Amos 5:11-15, 24; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9-10; Mt 7:12; 22:39; 25:31-46; Mk 12:31; Lk 4:18-19; Gal 2:10; Js 1:27; 1 Jn 3:17-18.

¹⁶ Acts 15:1-35; 1 Cor 16:1-4, 10-11; 2 Cor 8-9; Phil 1:15-18; Col 4:16; 3 Jn 5-10.

VISION: WHAT WOULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

The following characteristics and actions identify what our church community and its members would look like if they were realizing our [mission](#). It is the profile of a community that embodies our [mission](#)—a community of Christians *in* whom our mission is being fulfilled (they are being matured as followers of Jesus) and *by* whom it is being fulfilled (they are increasingly making and maturing other followers of Jesus by the power of the Gospel). In so doing, this vision gives precision and concreteness to our disciple-making [mission](#).

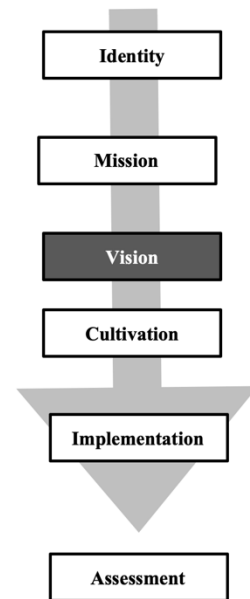
In summary, a healthy church community composed of Christians realizing our mission would be characterized by *progressive, wholistic transformation expressed in every relationship*, the nature of which can be detailed as follows:

Progressive...

The maturation of followers of Christ is *progressive*. Believers have been made new and freed from the domination of sin on account of regeneration in Christ. And yet there remains in believers the propensity to sin and a constant, ongoing battle with the “flesh.” Complete renewal for the Christian, in other words, is not instantaneous, nor will it ever be fully realized this side of glory, but is a continual and gradual process of grace-empowered transformation that occurs across one’s lifetime.¹⁷

This means that as we consider this [vision](#) for our church, we want to make clear that our expectations are not *perfection*; but rather our concern ought to be with “*direction*,” i.e., continual and gradual progress that always moves us closer in the *direction* of this “wholistic transformation” outlined below.

Practically speaking, this means that a healthy church is a community wherein we champion and celebrate all progress, no matter how small, we show and receive grace when we encounter setbacks, and we constantly encourage one another as we push forward. The healthy church is a family where self-righteousness is foreign and members are safe to be vulnerable, open, and transparent about their need for growth, where members live authentic lives before one another, confess sins, and seek help without shame.



...Wholistic Transformation...

- **Understanding**

¹⁷ Rom 6:1-7:6; 8:1-14; 2 Cor 3:18; 5:17; Gal 5:16-25; Eph 4:15-16; Phil 3:12-14; Col 3:1-10; 1 Pet 2:2-3; 1 Jn 2:28-3:10.

The mature Christian is theologically mature. He or she has a firm grasp of the central tenets of the Christian faith. His or her beliefs are marked by soundness, i.e., faithfulness to scripture, and conviction, i.e., he or she not only assents to Christian doctrine but also firmly believes it.

The mature Christian is theologically proficient and astute. He or she is able to exercise Christian discernment, reflection, and evaluation. He or she can assess matters from consistently Christian convictions and understands how Christian theology applies to various contemporary issues.

Finally, the mature Christian is theologically impacted. His or her worldview is wholly and consistently Christian. The truth of scripture has been apprehended, embraced, absorbed, and internalized. His or her imagination has been arrested by the portrait of reality presented in scripture.¹⁸

- **Affections**

The mature Christian's loves, joys, desires, emotions, passions, and affections are shaped by what is true, right, and beautiful. He or she loves what is pure and hates what is evil.¹⁹

- **Character**

The mature Christian is loving, kind, compassionate, patient, peaceable, empathetic, slow to anger, self-controlled, sober, blameless, submissive, teachable, truthful, honest, wise, faithful, diligent, disciplined, responsible, hard-working, joyful, humble, and meek. His or her values, attitudes, and motivations are pure, sound, and God-honoring.²⁰

- **Lifestyle**

The mature Christian is characterized by holiness, i.e., a concrete separation from sin and dedication unto God, servanthood, hospitality, urgency, diligence, commitment, sacrificial living, and habits of rest.²¹

Frugal living & generous giving. The mature Christian views money as a means of serving God and loving one's neighbors. He or she lives simply, not in excess, and

¹⁸ Ps 1:1-3; Ezek 3:10; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 3:1-2; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10; 1 Tim 1:10-11; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 1:13; 3:15-17; Tit 1:13; Heb 5:11-6:2; Js 1:22-25; 2 Pet 1:19.

¹⁹ Ps 94:19; 97:10; 101:31; 119:24; Prov 22:11; Amos 5:15; Rom 12:9; 2 Cor 7:10-11; 1 Tim 1:5.

²⁰ Mt 5:2-12; Rom 12:9-21; Gal 5:19-24; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:12-15; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Thes 3:10; 1 Pet 3:8; 1 Jn 4:7-12.

²¹ Mk 6:31-32; 8:34-37; 10:42-45; Rom 12:1-2; 13:11-14; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:3; Tim 2:3-6; Heb 12:1-2, 14; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 2:11; 4:9.

generously and eagerly contributes to the needs of others and the advancement of the Gospel.²²

...Expressed in Every Relationship

- **Relationship to God**

The mature Christian is marked by a sincere love, adoration, awe, and reverence of God born out of an intimate, relational knowledge of him. As such, he or she demonstrates a gladful willingness to submit to him. He or she has a passion and affection for God, delighting in and treasuring him above all else.

These qualities are expressed through a vibrant and consistent dialogical relationship with God in which the believer receives God's word through regular engagement with scripture and responds to God through prayer, worship, confession of sin, and full-hearted obedience to him.²³

- **Relationship to the church**

Relationship in community. The Christian life is communal, not solo. God saves persons, not as islands, but as members of his redeemed community. God created humans as relational beings. And, thus, one dimension of God's saving purposes is to restore us back into proper relationship with one another. The mature Christian manifests this reality through involvement in healthy relationships in the church.²⁴

Service & ministry. The mature Christian is both competent and actively involved in ministering to and edifying fellow church members. He or she faithfully prays for his or her fellow church members. He or she utilizes his or her spiritual gift for the sake of building them up. And he or she graciously ministers God's words to them—encouraging, rebuking, equipping, challenging, exhorting, or counseling fellow Christians through the prayerful application of God's word.²⁵

²² Ps 62:10; Prov 11:4; 22:9; 23:4-5; Ecc 5:10; Mt 6:24; 13:22; 19:23; Lk 18:22; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 20:35; Rom 12:13; 15:25, 31; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 6:9-10; Phil 4:11-13, 18; 1 Tim 6:6-10, 17-19; Heb 13:16; 1 Jn 2:15-17.

²³ Ex 15:11; Ps 128:1; Mt 22:37; Lk 6:12; 18:1-8; Jn 8:31; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 16:27; 2 Cor 16:22; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2-4; 1 Thes 5:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12; 12:28; 1 Jn 5:3; 2 Jn 6.

²⁴ Ps 133:1; Jn 13:34-35; 15:12; Acts 2:42, 44-46; Rom 12:4-5, 10, 13, 15-16, 18; 13:8-10; 14:1-4, 10, 13, 15, 19-21; 15:5; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12-31; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:2-6, 15, 25; 5:2; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:14; 1 Thes 4:9; 5:14; Heb 6:10; 10:24-25; 13:1, 3, 16; 1 Pet 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 Jn 1:7; 3:11-14; 4:11, 20.

²⁵ Mt 28:19; Acts 14:22; Rom 12:6-8; 15:14, 30; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:12, 26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 3:14-19; 4:11-16, 25; 6:18; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9; 2:19; 3:16; 4:3; 1 Thes 5:11, 14, 25; Heb 3:12-13; 10:24; 12:15; Js 5:16; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Jude 20.

Diversity, reconciliation, & unity. Through the Gospel, Christ not only reconciles us to God, but also to one another. The Gospel creates a community composed of people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, nationalities, socio-economic statuses, genders, ages, marriage or relationship statuses, and disabled or nondisabled statuses. The Gospel relativizes these differences and unites such people through a common Savior, eliminating hostility. We believe the church is called to reflect this God-designed and Gospel-created unity, diversity, inclusion, and embrace, resisting past precedents and sinful tendencies towards exclusion, marginalization, and segregation that fail to reflect what Christ has accomplished through the Gospel.²⁶

- **Relationship to the family**

As seen in scripture, God created the family unit as a foundational institution in human society. As such, the mature Christian contributes to the health of his or her family and engages in proper relationships to its members.²⁷

Husbands are to love their wives.²⁸ Wives are to respect their husbands.²⁹ Those parents blessed with children are commanded by scripture to instruct, discipline, train, and mature them in a manner obedient to and consistent with scripture.³⁰ Parents are specifically instructed to teach their children of God's redemptive acts, which are now most climactically expressed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³¹ Children are to honor and obey their parents.³²

- **Relationship to society**

Evangelism & missions partnership. The mature Christian actively participates in both local and global evangelism. He or she is marked by a heart-felt concern for the lost, diligently prays for their salvation, is intentional about sharing the Gospel with them, and partners in international mission efforts via financial support in order to reach them.³³

²⁶ Mt 28:18-20; Jn 15:12; Acts 10:15-16, 34-35; 1 Cor 10:17; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11-22; 4:2-6, 32; Phil 2:1-2; Rev 5:9; 7:9.

²⁷ Gen 2:24; 9:1, 7; Prov 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31; Ecc 9:9; Song of Songs; Mal 2:14-16; Mt 5:31-32; 19:4-6; Mk 10:6-9; 1 Cor 7:1-16; Eph 5:22-31; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; Heb 13:4; 1 Pet 1:3-7.

²⁸ Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7.

²⁹ Eph 5:22-24, 33; Col 3:18; Tit 2:4-5; 1 Pet 3:1-6.

³⁰ Josh 24:15; Ps 78:1-8; 127:3; Prov 1:8; 6:20-22; 13:24; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; 1 Tim 5:8, 14.

³¹ Deut 6:4-9; Ps 78:1-8.

³² Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20.

³³ Mt 28:19-20; Mk 6:34; Rom 9:1-3; 2 Cor 5:11, 18-20; Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 3:15.

A sense of vocational worth. The mature Christian has a profound sense of the value of his or her work and, as a result, works with God-honoring excellence. He or she recognizes the goodness of human work as a part of God’s good purpose in creation, and, in contrast to a false sacred-secular dichotomy, understands that the whole of our lives, including our working lives, is brought under the sphere of ministry—serving God and serving others.³⁴

Civic integrity. The mature Christian is a good citizen. He or she prays for governing officials, submits to them, respects and honors them, and sincerely appreciates them, recognizing them as expressions of God’s grace. At the same time, the mature Christian avoids excessive nationalism, maintaining a penetrating awareness of his or her supreme—and, in many respects, expectedly conflicting—allegiance to Christ.³⁵

Social engagement. The mature Christian participates in critically-considered, distinctively Christian, Gospel-motivated social engagement. The Christian faith involves social implications, entailments, and duties. Therefore, the church must be a community that loves its neighbors by engaging in critical reflection about social and political issues and engaging in the promotion and advocacy of justice in our society, caring and intervening for the vulnerable, and pursuing human flourishing.³⁶

- **Relationship to creation**

Human beings were created by God as his image-bearers to have dominion over his creation as his stewards. As those renewed back into that image through Christ, the ultimate divine image-bearer, Christians are restored back to a proper relationship of care for God’s creation.³⁷

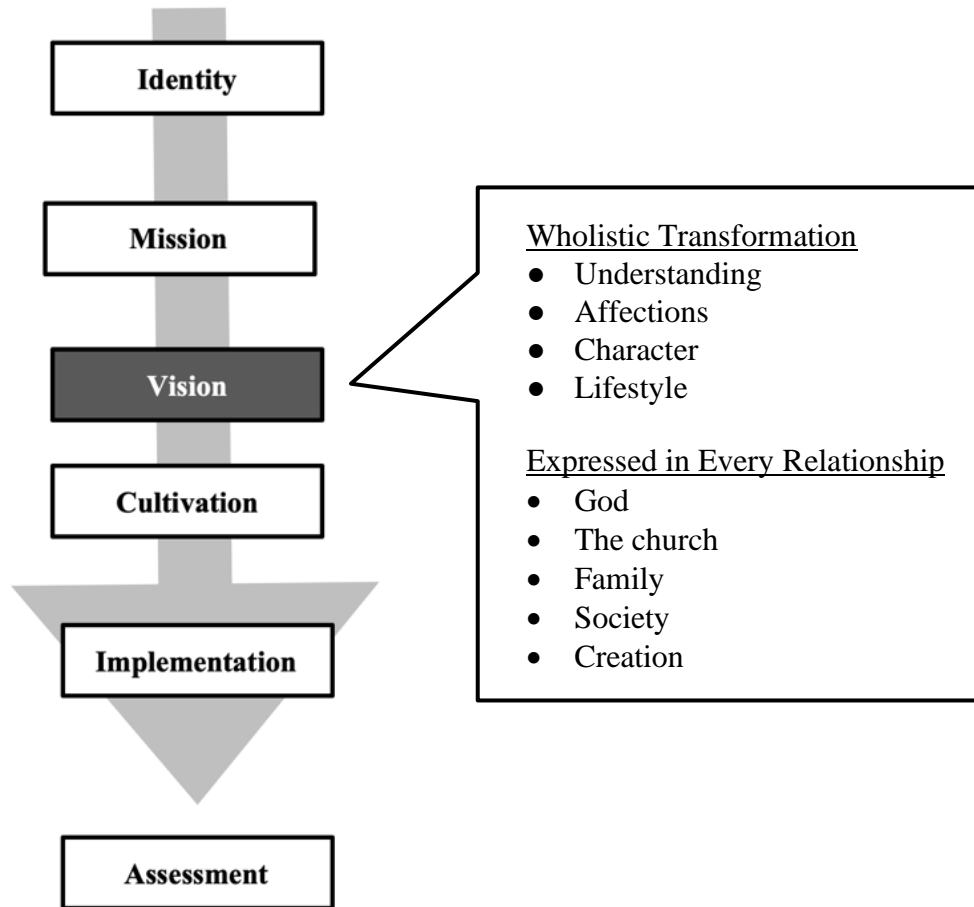
³⁴ Gen 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:23-24.

³⁵ Ex 22:28; Jer 29:7; Mt 22:15-22; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Rom 13:1-7; Phil 3:20; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13-17.

³⁶ Gen 1:26-27; Lev 19:15; Deut 15:11; Prov 19:7; 31:8-9; Isa 58:6-12; Jer 22:3, 13-17; 29:7; Ezek 16:49-50; 22:29; Amos 5:11-15, 24; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9-10; Mt 7:12; 22:39; 25:31-46; Mk 12:31; Lk 4:18-19; Gal 2:10; Js 1:27; 1 Jn 3:17-18.

³⁷ Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8:6-8; 24:1; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 4:24; Col 1:15; 3:10.

RECAP: VISION



CULTIVATION: HOW SHOULD WE PURSUE THIS?

These are the principles we believe scripture identifies as those things that foster the sort of community envisioned in the [vision](#) above—a mature and healthy community able to fulfill its [mission](#), a mission born out of its [identity](#). It is our desire that these ordinary means of grace, or principles of cultivation, would shape our ministry decisions.

- **Sound doctrine and fidelity to scripture—the foundation of discipleship**

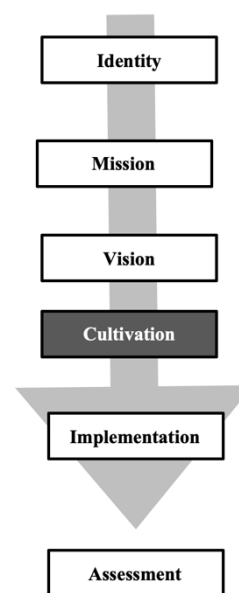
Sound doctrine.³⁸ Theology is the church’s task of critically examining God’s word in order to form right thoughts and moral judgments after God. When done diligently and faithfully, theology yields sound doctrine.

Sound doctrine matters immensely. Everything is theological; and all theology—whether it is sound or not—will work itself out practically. Our doctrine will manifest itself in beliefs, attitudes, emotions, actions, and—particularly relevant for our purposes here—our ministry practices.

Because of this, the church must diligently hold to sound doctrine and guard itself from error. Maintaining sound doctrine ensures that our ministry is based on truth—that we engage in the right sort of ministry practices and thus cultivate the right sort of community. Unhealthy doctrine will inevitably manifest itself in terms of unhealthy ministry practices resulting in the cultivation of an unhealthy community.³⁹

Fidelity to scripture. Sound doctrine is achieved through vigilant fidelity to scripture. Because scripture is God’s word to the church, the church maintains fidelity to God through fidelity to scripture. As such, the church must ground itself in and conform itself to scripture. It is the supreme authority for the church’s faith and practice, for what is true and for what is right. This means that the church must devote itself to seeking God’s will through the diligent examination of his word.⁴⁰

This commitment has several implications or outworkings worth highlighting.



³⁸ See [2 Statement of Faith](#) in our [Constitution](#) for an outline of what we believe this sound doctrine involves.

³⁹ Mt 7:24-27; 1 Cor 3:10-17; 1 Tim 1:10-11; 4:6, 16; 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3-4; Tit 3:8.

⁴⁰ Ps 127:1; Rom 15:4; Gal 1:6-9; 1 Thes 2:13; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Jude 1:3.

Conviction. Fidelity to scripture entails convictionality. The church is to stand unapologetically, unashamedly, and unwaveringly on the truth of scripture.⁴¹

Continual reformation. In line with the Reformation principle *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda* (“the church reformed and always reforming”), the church must give due diligence to continual reformation according to the word of God. This entails remaining critically self-reflective and diligent to reform when necessary.⁴²

Exposition of scripture. A primary means by which the church does this is through a specifically expositional method of preaching and teaching, by which we mean a method of preaching and teaching that attends to the meaning and significance of the Biblical text in its literary, historical, and theological context, allowing God himself, through his word, to set the agenda and address the church.⁴³

Elders’ ongoing theological development. Because elders hold the primary teaching office in the church, and because elders must hold to and teach sound doctrine, we believe pastoral responsibilities entail spending substantial time and effort pursuing further theological education and refinement. As a church, we value and encourage, and expect this discipline of our elders.⁴⁴

- **The ministry of the Word⁴⁵—the means of discipleship**

God’s Word is to be cherished as a gracious gift through which the Spirit sustains and nourishes his church. God nurtures and matures his church through formal ministries of the Word (e.g., the public reading and preaching of scripture), but also through the informal ministry of every member engaging each other with God’s Word—encouraging, rebuking, equipping, challenging, exhorting, and counseling one another by prayerfully applying the truth of God’s Word to each other’s lives.⁴⁶

This ministry of the Word ought to include several dimensions and characteristics:

The public reading of scripture. As a community defined, nourished, and sustained by

⁴¹ Acts 4:20, 29; Gal 1:6-9; 1 Thes 2:13; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Tit 3:8; Heb 4:14; 10:23; 2 Pet 1:20-21.

⁴² 2 Kgs 22:8-23:25; Eph 4:14; 5:10; 1 Thes 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1.

⁴³ Isa 55:10-11; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 1 Thes 2:13; 1 Tim 3:14-4:2; 2 Tim 4:2.

⁴⁴ Acts 20:29; Gal 1:6-9; Eph 4:14; 1 Tim 1:3; 3:2; 4:11, 13, 16; 5:7; 2 Tim 2:15, 24-26; 4:2; Tit 1:9; 2:1; Js 3:1; 2 Pet 2:1-3.

⁴⁵ By “ministry of the word” we refer to that ministry in which one speaks the truth of God’s word to another.

⁴⁶ Acts 4:31; 20:20, 32; Rom 15:14; Eph 4:15-16, 25; 6:4; Phil 1:7, 14; 4:3; Col 3:16, 23-24; 4:6; Heb 3:12-13; 1 Pet 2:9; 3:15; 4:10-11.

scripture, the church must devote itself to the reading of scripture in its gatherings.⁴⁷

The public preaching and teaching of scripture. The preaching of God's Word by gifted individuals is a primary means by which God nourishes, strengthens, and preserves the church and guards her from error.⁴⁸

EXCURSUS: PRINCIPLES OF OUR PHILOSOPHY OF PREACHING

- We are committed to an expositional method of preaching and teaching, by which we mean a method of preaching and teaching that attends to the meaning and significance of the Biblical text in its literary, historical, and theological context, allowing God himself, through his word, to set the agenda and address the church through his word.
- We believe that preaching the significance of the text entails sensitivity to the diverse aims of scripture (e.g., our joy, emotion, belief, trust, obedience, thoughts, etc.), which are related to the diverse forms of scripture, meaning that our sermons ought to conform and be suitable to the aims and forms of the text itself.
- We are committed to a preaching and teaching ministry that attends to the full-range of literary forms, voices, aims, and theological emphases that comprise scripture, believing that each has a vital contribution to make in the life of our church.
- Given the nature of scripture as a testimony to the history of redemption centered in Christ, we are committed to redemptive-historical, Biblical-theological, and Christ-centered preaching which exposit texts of scripture in light of the broader redemptive-historical, Biblical-theological, Christ-centered movements to which they relate and contribute.
- Giving our church's commitment to Gospel-centrality, we strive for Gospel-centered preaching in which we allow the truths of the Gospel to penetrate our handling of every text.
- Finally, we believe the ultimate aim of preaching is to set forth a vision of God, and particularly his work through Christ in the Gospel, that produces in the hearers a sense of awe, delight, gratitude, and worship, which alone can empower Christ-exalting, God-honoring obedience.

Wholistic Christian education. The well-being of our church depends on a conception of Christian education in the Word that is wholistic—not merely the transferal of information, but the transformation of the whole person. It involves the cognitive (thoughts, understanding, knowledge, and beliefs), conative (behavior, choices, and skills), and affective (emotions, affections, and loves), as well as ones character (virtues, values, attitudes, and motivations).

⁴⁷ Col 4:15-16; 1 Thes 5:27; 2 Thes 3:14; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Pet 3:15-16.

⁴⁸ Acts 2:42; 20:7, 20, 25; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:2; Tit 2:15.

As such, we might define teaching in the context of our church as leading and facilitating obedience to the truth of scripture. To teach is to create space in which submission to the truth of scripture is effected, in which the truth of scripture is more clearly perceived, considered more judiciously, embraced more passionately, obeyed more faithfully, and embodied with greater integrity. Correspondingly, a proper gauge of theological maturity is not mere comprehension but soundness and conviction.⁴⁹

A right orientation to engaging the Word. The health of our church’s ministry of the Word depends on our attending to the proper aims of that Word, lest we subvert or distort its very purpose. We do not examine scripture as an end in itself—an exercise of merely examining scripture for the sake of examining scripture. Rather, our engagement of scripture must share the very equipping-ends for which scripture itself was given.

These equipping aims can be divided into the following five dimensions:

- Theological (directed towards our knowledge of and relationship with God), answering, “How does this text enhance our knowledge of God and foster an appropriate relationship with him?”
- Doxological (directed towards our worship of God), answering, “How does this text fuel our worship of God?”
- Mathetical (directed towards our Christian living), answering, “How does this text form us as disciples (*mathetes*)?”
- Ecclesiological (directed towards our life as a church), answering, “How does this text shape us to realize our particular calling as a church?”
- Missiological (directed towards equipping us for mission), answering, “How does this text equip us for mission?”⁵⁰

- **Regular administration of the ordinances—the symbols of discipleship**

The ordained rites of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are faith-nourishing signs that tangibly portray Gospel realities to believers. As such, they are not to be neglected, devalued, or misused, but, rather, are to be guarded, administered conscientiously, and cherished as gracious gifts from Christ.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ps 51:10; Ezek 3:10; Mt 28:20; Rom 6:13; 12:1-2; 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 4:23; Phil 4:4; Col 3:1-17; 1 Thes 5:23; 1 Pet 3:8.

⁵⁰ Mt 7:24-27; Lk 8:21; 11:28; Jn 5:39-40; 13:17; Js 1:22-25.

⁵¹ Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-27; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21.

- **Diligent and persistent prayer—the lifeblood of discipleship**

The church is completely dependent on God for its existence and success. Because of this, the church is called to devote itself to prayer. As such, our church is committed to fostering a church culture where prayer is the air we breathe.⁵²

- **Passionate, truth-driven worship—the fuel of discipleship**

We believe our personal and communal discipleship is fueled by regularly assembling together for collective worship. In corporate worship, we encounter and engage God through the reading and preaching of his word, the observance of his ordinances, the confession of our faith, and by responding to him through prayer and song—expressing to him our praise, thanks, awe, trust, petitions, and hardships. Encountering, engaging, and responding to the truth of God in this way forms us as his worshipers. And by engaging in the act of worship together, we encourage, edify, and support one another.⁵³

Because of the importance of worship for our church’s health and maturation, we are committed to excellent and conscientious worship practices. In particular, we are committed to theologically sound, lyrically excellent, culturally sensitive and appropriate, historically informed, community-involved, emotionally-engaged, scripture-saturated, Gospel-focused and driven, Christ-exalting, God-glorifying corporate worship.

- **Spiritual disciplines—the habits of discipleship**

Although we can in no way earn God’s grace or experience it apart from him freely giving it, scripture indicates that one of the ways that God’s grace takes effect in us is through our own personal effort, an effort that he himself produces in us by his grace. Scripture recognizes various disciplines by which believers exercise this striving towards further sanctification.

Thus, for the sake of the maturation of our church and of its individual members, we desire that each member be habitually and actively exercising these disciplines in his or her own life and, as a church, will pursue this end by identifying, teaching, modeling, and encouraging these disciplines.⁵⁴

⁵² Ps 145:18; Mt 7:11; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 14:14-15; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thes 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1-2, 8.

⁵³ Acts 2:42; 20:7, 20; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 5:4, 11; 11:17-18, 20, 33; 14:14-17, 23, 26-33; 15:1-4; 16:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:19-20; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 3:15-16; 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:13; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 3:15-4:2; Heb 10:25; Js 5:16.

⁵⁴ Deut 11:18; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3; 119:11; Dan 9:3; Mt 4:1-2; 6:5-13; 6:16-18; 14:23; Mk 6:31; Lk 18:1-8; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23; 1 Cor 7:5; 9:24-27; 15:10; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 6:18; Phil 2:12-13; 4:6, 18; 1 Thes 5:17; 2 Thes 1:11; 1 Tim 4:7; Heb 4:16; 5:14; 12:14; 13:21.

- **Every-member ministry; multiplying ministers—the unleashing of discipleship**

We believe the mature and healthy church is best cultivated (1) when it is the expectation that all members engage in ministering to others⁵⁵ and (2) when the church, particularly its leaders, are intentional about equipping its members for ministry.

Mobilization. It is the Biblical expectation that every believer is to use his or her God-given gifts to minister to others in the local church. Correspondingly, we do not view our elders as the select individuals tasked with doing the ministry, but as mobilizers—those with unique ministry responsibilities, which include training and equipping all members of the church to engage in ministry themselves. This vision involves the decentralization and delegation of ministry.⁵⁶

Raising leaders. In particular, we believe it is the local church’s task to raise up new elders. Specifically, it is the responsibility of our current elders to identify and train qualified men—entrusting to them the Gospel and the Christian faith—that they too may serve and equip our church community for ministry.⁵⁷

- **Community & relationship—the context of discipleship**

Our maturation as Christians is inescapably relational. In God’s wisdom, he saves us as part of a community—the church. And the relationships that make up this community are the God-appointed context and means by which he nurtures and preserves his people. They are the incubator and catalyst of our discipleship.

Modeling relationships. In particular, scripture depicts Christian discipleship occurring in the context of intentional modeling, mentoring, and imitation relationships in which the Christian life is more ‘caught’ than ‘taught,’ in which the Christian life is ‘learned’ by following the examples of mature Christians and observing their way of life.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ In some churches, “getting everyone involved in ministry” may mean nothing more than plugging individuals into certain committees or tasks that do not involve directly ministering God’s word to others. Without diminishing the importance of these sorts of activities often referred to by churches as “ministries,” for our purposes here in this section, by “ministry” we are deliberately including the activity of engaging others with God’s word—encouraging, rebuking, equipping, challenging, exhorting, evangelizing, or counseling another by prayerfully applying the truth of God’s word to someone’s life. We believe it is the responsibility of every Christian to engage in this sort of ministry in the context of the local church. This is an essential dimension of the sort of ministry to which we refer when we say “every-member ministry.”

⁵⁶ Joel 2:28-29; Acts 4:31; Rom 12:3-8; 15:14; 1 Cor 12-13; 15:58; Eph 4:11-16, 25; 6:4; Phil 1:7, 14; 4:3; Col 3:16; 4:6; 2 Thes 1:11-12; Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25; 1 Pet 2:9; 3:15; 4:10-11.

⁵⁷ 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5.

⁵⁸ Mk 3:14; 1 Cor 4:15-16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thes 1:6-7; 2 Thes 3:9; 1 Tim 4:11, 15; Tit 2:3-5, 7-8; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3.

This would seem to be a significant reason why most of the requirements laid down for elders pertain to character and lifestyle—traits elsewhere expected of all believers (1 Tim 4:15; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3).

As such, our church must value, pursue, and foster the Biblical traits of Christian community: unity, care, support, intimacy, involvement, friendship, encouragement, accountability, confession, and mentorship.⁵⁹

- **Biblical church organization and government—the facilitator of discipleship**

We believe that the Biblical model of (1) church organization—namely, an understood membership—and (2) church government—namely, that the local church be served by deacons and led by a plurality of qualified elders⁶⁰—is incredibly significant to the maturation and healthy functioning of the local church. For example, when the offices are functioning as they should, this helps ensure that the church’s needs are accounted for and addressed. Or again, a church’s government—particularly its elders—serves as something like the rudder for its ministry decisions. As such, a healthy polity and healthy leadership significantly contribute to the cultivation of a healthy church.⁶¹

A healthy, Biblical polity and leadership has several dimensions or features worth noting:

Church membership. The Bible assumes and expects that all believers join and submit themselves to a local church with whom they will regularly gather and to whom they faithfully serve and are accountable (e.g., church discipline).⁶² Thus, we are committed to seeing this vision of the normal (healthy) Christian life realized in our community by (1) fostering a culture and (2) observing a practice of membership that expects this of all believers in our midst.

We believe it is vital for the health and well-being of our church that our church be able to identify its boundaries and constituencies. First, this identifies those for whom the church—and particularly its leaders—have formal responsibility to watch over. Second, it maintains clarity—and avoids a dangerous ambiguity—regarding whom the church has publicly recognized as believers. And, third, it guards the testimony of the church by specifying who actually constitutes the church.

Church membership is the necessary contemporary application of this Biblical principle of being able to identify who is a part of the church.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ps 133:1; Jn 13:34-35; 15:12; Acts 2:42, 44-46; Rom 12:4-5, 10, 13, 15-16, 18; 14:1-4, 10, 13, 15, 19-21; 15:5; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12-31; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:2-6, 15, 25; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:14; 1 Thes 4:9; 5:14; Heb 6:10; 10:24-25; 13:1, 3, 16; Js 5:16; 1 Pet 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 Jn 1:7; 3:14; 4:11, 20.

⁶⁰ Cf. [2.2.10 Church Organization](#) under [2.2 Church Affirmations](#) in the [2 Statement of Faith](#) of our [Constitution](#). See also the various statements pertaining to our polity and by-laws in our [Constitution](#).

⁶¹ Acts 6:1-6; 20:28; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:2-3.

⁶² Mt 18:15-17; Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor 5:1-13; Heb 13:17; 1 Jn 2:19.

⁶³ Mt 18:15-17; Acts 2:47; 5:14; 16:5; 1 Cor 5:4, 11; 11:18, 20, 33; 14:23; 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim 5:9; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3.

A properly functioning deaconate. The deaconate is responsible for serving the church community by caring for its various temporal and physical needs.⁶⁴

Because of these important responsibilities, it is vital to our church's health that its deacons reasonably meet the Biblical qualifications given for their office.⁶⁵

A healthy pastorate. The elders' responsibilities in shepherding the church towards health and maturity involve leading the church by example, with gentleness and not compulsion, caring for the saints and equipping them for ministry, preaching and teaching the word, guarding the church from error, devoting themselves to prayer, overseeing the well-being and activity of the church, raising up leaders, and attending to their own spiritual condition.⁶⁶

Because of these important responsibilities, it is vital to our church's health that its elders reasonably meet the Biblical qualifications given for their office.⁶⁷

A plurality of elders. We believe a plurality of elders (or pastors) is crucial for the healthy governing of our church. Not only do we believe that this plurality-of-elder led polity—as opposed to a single-elder led or lead-pastor model—is Biblical,⁶⁸ but we believe there is incredible wisdom in it. For example, a plurality of elders provides the following benefits: (1) it provides a fuller vision to the overseeing office of the church, ideally covering the blind spots of each individual elder; (2) it supplies more gifting to the overseeing office, covering each individual elder's weaknesses; (3) by recruiting more to pastoral care, it better—and less strenuously/more sustainably—ensures the fulfillment of pastoral responsibilities; and (4) it provides a network of accountability for the pastorate.

Financial support. Scripture teaches us that the church is to provide financial support to those elders who labor in primary teaching roles within the church. This practice allows these elders to dedicate themselves further to the work of the ministry, and, as such,

⁶⁴ Acts 6:1-6; Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13.

⁶⁵ 1 Tim 3:8-13.

⁶⁶ Acts 15:2, 6, 22-29; 16:4; 20:17; 28-31, 35; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:16; 5:17; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 13:7; 17; Js 5:14; 1 Pet 5:2-3.

Although not specifically responsibilities of the pastoral office, we believe it is important to include here that it is our pastors' responsibility (and pleasure) to maintain a healthy ministry-work-life balance and to attend to their spouse and children (if they have any). As a church, we commit to facilitating, encouraging, and supporting this lifestyle among our elders.

⁶⁷ 1 Tim 3:1-7; 2 Tim 2:24-25; Tit 1:6-9.

⁶⁸ Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 6, 22; 16:4; 20:17, 28-31, 35; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5; Heb 13:7, 17; Js 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-5.

promotes the health and maturation of the church.⁶⁹

- **Church discipline—the guardrails of discipleship**

In its broadest sense, church discipline involves all that the church does to disciple its members, and is thus proactive, preventative, and formative. But, in particular incidences, church discipline is intervening, responsive, and corrective, i.e., when the church intervenes to seek to deliver particular members from unrepentant sin.

Church discipline is the church’s wonderful and gracious responsibility of guarding its members from unrepentant sin and steering them towards maturity in Christ. It is a means by which the church protects itself from the polluting effect of sin as well as a marred testimony to the outside world. As such, church discipline is not to be neglected, but valued and practiced with wisdom.⁷⁰

- **Gospel-centrality—the source of discipleship**

The Gospel is the good news that through his death and resurrection Jesus accomplished God’s rescuing and restoring purposes for all those who place their trust in him. It is the only message that ultimately addresses our human predicament, its grace is the only thing that empowers true, God-honoring life-transformation, and the task of advancing it is entrusted to the church. As such, keeping the Gospel clear, explicit, and central is vital to our church’s ability to fulfill its mission of seeing people embrace the Gospel and through it becoming fully transformed followers of Jesus.⁷¹

Gospel-centered preaching. One of the primary ways we do this is through Gospel-centered preaching in which we preach all of scripture in light of its redemptive-historical relationship to Christ, the truths of the Gospel penetrate our handling of every text, and the imperatives of scripture (our response) flow out of the indicatives of scripture (what God has done).

- **Apprehension of God’s greatness and beauty—the captivating vision of discipleship**

We believe a genuine apprehension of the greatness and beauty of God—of his nature, character, and works of providence and redemption—is vital to our church’s health because that vision, when truly perceived, will capture our hearts and minds and effect in us a

⁶⁹ 1 Cor 9:6-14; Phil 4:15-16; 1 Tim 5:17-18.

⁷⁰ Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Tim 5:19-21; 2 Thes 3:14-15; Tit 1:13; Js 5:19-20.

⁷¹ Rom 1:16; 16:25; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Eph 3:16-17; Phil 1:5, 27; Col 2:22-23; 2 Thes 2:13-15; 1 Tim 1:8-11; 2 Tim 1:8; 2:8; Tit 2:10-14.

profound sense of awe, reverence, delight, gratitude, and worship, which alone can empower Christ-exalting, God-honoring obedience.⁷²

God-exalting worship & preaching. A primary means by which we exercise this principle is through deliberately God-exalting worship, preaching, and teaching that sets before us a captivating vision of our God.

- **Centralizing people, not programs—the subject of discipleship**

Ministry centers on the discipleship of *people*, not the realization or maintenance of programs. Thus, although we recognize that certain programs, events, or structures may at times prove beneficial in facilitating or creating space for discipleship, the target of our ministry efforts and the center of our ministry decisions must always remain people. Maintaining this ministry orientation guards us from diversions and is thus vital for the health and maturation of our church.

- **A strong sense of mission—the orientation of discipleship**

Focusing and concentrating on our mission cultivates a healthy, mission-fulfilling church. It produces intentionality about fulfilling our mission and prevents us from losing track of our purpose, aim, and goal as a church.

However, alongside these obvious advantages come a plethora of beneficial side effects.

It has been said that if you aim at a strong sense of unity and community, you likely won't fully achieve it. But when you aim at mission, unity and community are the natural by-products. Disunity, distractions, and diversions occur when people lose sight of the mission. In contrast, a vision towards mission motivates and excites.

Having a strong sense of mission helps us identify the most important things and not confuse the peripheral with the essential. It helps us evaluate our ministry habits and ask, “Are these really furthering our mission or are they unnecessary, mere relics, or, at worst, distractions?”⁷³

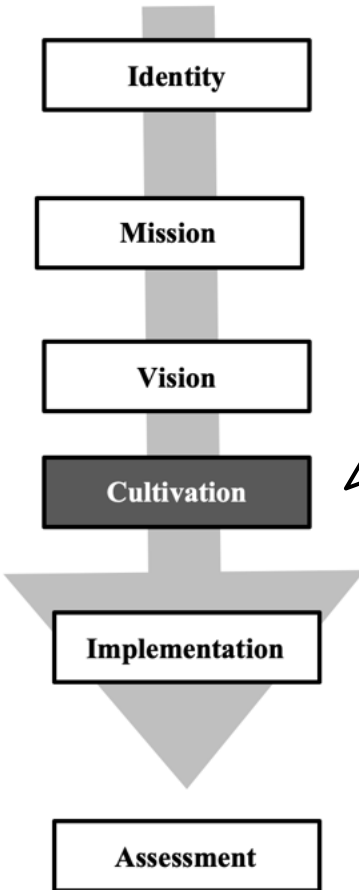
A sense of urgency. As a corollary to our aim of mission should come a profound sense of urgency. This culture of urgency is vital to the well-being of our church because it makes us not only willing but eager to live radically, make great sacrifices, and change or grow when faithfulness and expediency demand it.⁷⁴

⁷² Psalms; Isa 40:9-31; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 3:14-19.

⁷³ Mt 28:19-20; Jn 4:35-37; 2 Cor 5:18-6:2; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Tim 4:2; 2 Tim 2:2-7, 23; Tit 3:9; Heb 12:1-2.

⁷⁴ Mt 9:37-38; 25:14-30; Rom 13:11-14; Eph 5:15-16; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Tim 4:1-2; Heb 12:1-2; Rev 3:11; 22:20.

RECAP: CULTIVATION



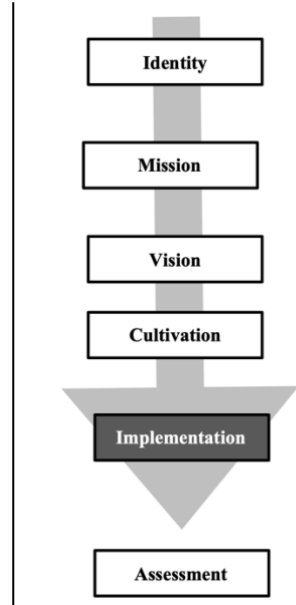
- Sound doctrine and fidelity to scripture
- The ministry of the Word
- Regular administration of the ordinances
- Diligent and persistent prayer
- Passionate, truth-driven worship
- Spiritual disciplines
- Every-member ministry; multiplying ministers
- Community & relationship
- Biblical church organization and government
- Church discipline
- Gospel-centrality
- Apprehension of God's greatness and beauty
- Centralizing people, not programs
- A strong sense of mission

IMPLEMENTATION: HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?

Here we come to outworking of the above philosophy ministry—the plans and actions by which we, in conjunction with due consideration of the needs, hurdles, and opportunities of our particular ministry context, conscientiously seek to implement, i.e., give specific, concrete, contextualized expression to, our [cultivation](#) principles as we aim towards becoming the sort of community (cf. [vision](#)) that fulfills our [mission](#).

Although the particulars will often change depending on unique situations, seasons, and contexts, examples of such implementation might include classes, small groups, mercy ministry, outreach events, evangelistic efforts, children’s education, the ins-and-outs of our Sunday morning gatherings, how we spend our money (e.g., annual budget), as well as our organization’s leadership (e.g., deacons, elders, ministry coordinators, etc.) and operations (e.g., policies and polity). In short, [implementation](#) consists of the entirety of our ministry practices and how we “do church.” And, therefore, everything we do as a church comes back to our underlying philosophy of ministry.

The details of our current ministry implementation can be found in our [Ministry Action-Plan](#).



ASSESSMENT: HOW ARE WE DOING?

We desire to use the above Philosophy of Ministry as a tool to evaluate the state of our church. The [mission](#), [vision](#), and [cultivation](#) principles presented in this Philosophy of Ministry will serve as criteria for our regular self-assessment.

- **Mission**

Is our mission being accomplished? How or how not? Have we gotten off track in any way? Do all of our current ministry practices (cf. [implementation](#)) help us fulfill this mission? Are our current ministry practices the *best* for accomplishing our mission? Can they be altered to better realize this outcome? Should any be replaced or discontinued? Are there other/additional strategies that could be implemented?

- **Vision**

Is our vision of a healthy church being realized? If not, where is it lacking/weak? On what dimensions of this profile ([vision](#)) should we be focusing our attention?

- **Cultivation**

Are we being faithful to our convictions about what cultivates a mature Christian community? In which cultivation principles are we strong? In which are we weak? Do our current ministry practices (cf. [implementation](#)) attend to all of these cultivation principles, or are any neglected? On which cultivation principles should we be focusing our attention?

