



PARTNERSHIP

EXPLORATION



BEREAN CHURCH

Leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you need more information or have further questions, please contact:

Dan Smith, Executive Pastor

dansmith@npberean.org

308.532.7448

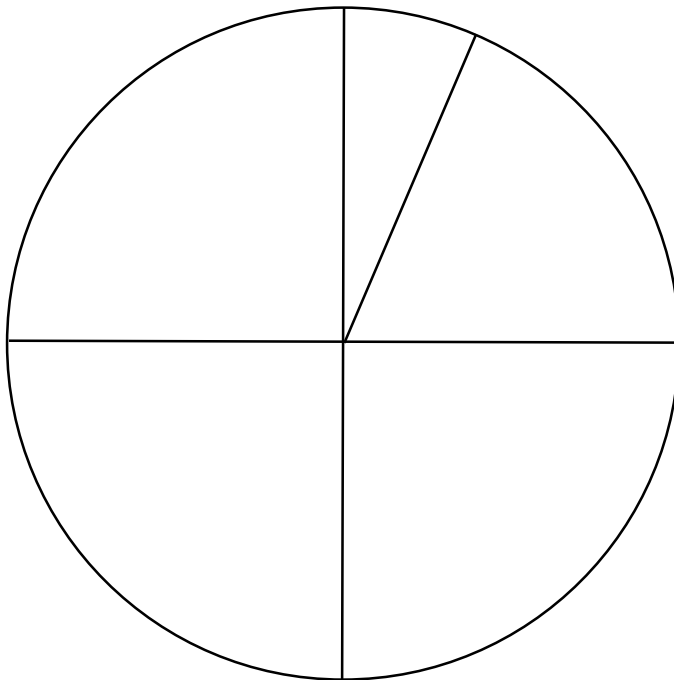


Who We Are

Our Mission

Leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

What does this mission look like practically? Our vision of a growing relationship with Jesus has four key components.



My thoughts and questions:



Partner With Us

Here are the steps you can take to link arms with us on this mission of leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ:

Step 1. Getting to know each other's stories: Begin connecting with leadership, staff, and/or other partners.

Step 2. Learning about partnership: Attend a "Partnership Exploration" with an elder, staff member, or Grow Group leader to go over the details of partnership.

Step 3. Demonstrating the partnership commitments: Connect in a Grow Group for at least one season and get regularly involved in an opportunity to serve the body, demonstrating the partnership commitments in these settings and in day-to-day life. Submit the Ministry Partner Commitment form to the office.

Step 4. Recommendation from Grow Group leader: Ask your Grow Group leader to submit a recommendation to the office. The leader will need to discuss several of the items on the recommendation with you.

Step 5. Affirmation from elders: Elders meet with you to finalize the recommendation. Upon approval, we will send you an official notification of partnership.

Our Vision

Treasuring God: We love God because He first loved us (Heb 12:2; 1 Jn 4:19). Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37). That's our top priority – loving God with all that we are, in every area of our lives (Mt 6:33; Phil 3:8). This includes listening to His thoughts, talking with Him, and walking with Him. So we read the Bible, teach one another, pray, and seek to do things His way rather than insisting on what we think is best (Jn 14:23-24, 15:5-11; Acts 2:42; Col 3:16).



In Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is like a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field, and in his great joy sells everything he has so he can purchase the field and have the treasure. When we receive God, we are receiving Him as a treasure more valuable and beautiful than anything else in life.

Being Transformed: The Bible teaches us that we become like what we behold, that what we treasure transforms us (Ps 115:4-8; Rom 1:21-32; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Jn 3:2-3). Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). This loving obedience doesn't come naturally to any of us. But Jesus died on the cross to set His followers free from slavery to disobedience (Jn 8: 34; Rom 6:16-18; Eph 2:1-3). So now, rather than seeing His commands as difficult or burdensome, we begin to see obeying as a joy and a delight! (Mt 11:28-30; Ti 2:11-14; 1 Jn 5:3-5.) We're certainly not perfect, but followers of Christ are continually being transformed into people who desire to do what He asks (Rom 12:1-2; Phil 1:6, 2:12-13).



In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus has his whole life flipped upside-down after meeting Jesus, and goes from being a greedy traitor to a generous servant. When we receive Christ as our treasure, He begins a transformation in us from being sinfully inward-focused to being lovingly Godward-focused.



Who We Are

Loving Others: Loving God naturally flows into loving others (1 Jn 4:7-12, 19-21). Jesus said the greatest commandment has a second like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39). He calls us to love not just other Christians but everyone – even our enemies who hate, curse, and abuse us! (Lk 6:27-36.) By sharing Jesus through our actions and our words, we want to be a hopeful encouragement in the world, spreading His love across North Platte, greater Nebraska, and to the ends of the earth (Mt 5:13-16, 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Don’t miss that this love requires both actions and words – we love people by doing the ministry of reconciliation and speaking the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21; 1 Pt 2:12).



In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus famously tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. It’s a model of radical love and the essence of what it means to love your neighbor – costly, yet freely-given love that extends across barriers. This is how God loves us, so it is how we love one another.

Pursuing Unity: Jesus prays for His followers to be united in Him “so that the world may know that you [Father] sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (Jn 17:20-23). This unity is particularly visible as we, by the Holy Spirit’s power, grow in things like praying for, bearing the burdens of, sharing resources with, practicing hospitality toward, honoring, serving, loving, and forgiving one another (Jn 13:35; Rom 12:13; Gal 5:13-16, 6:2,10; Phil 2:1-8; Col 3:12-15; Jas 5:16; 1 Jn 3:16-18). As Jesus’ family and body, we pursue unity not because we’re so great, but because Jesus is, and we want Him to be seen by all! (Mt 12:46-50; Eph 2:19-22, 4:1-16; Phil 2:14-16.)



In Matthew 20:20-28, Jesus teaches that those who desire to be great should strive to be the servant of all. When we are saved, we are saved into a community of believers – the Church – and our earnest desire is to love each other unconditionally, serve each other sacrificially, and connect with each other deeply.

Why do we dedicate babies rather than baptize them?

Our belief is that baptism, according to the Bible, is a public witness intended to reflect an internal reality – that the person has passed from death to life by trusting in Jesus alone for salvation. Therefore, baptism is to be pursued by those who have experienced God’s salvation. We do not believe we should baptize a person until they are capable of declaring that this reality has taken place in their heart.

We do, however, practice family dedication. We dedicate our babies or children to God as a testimony of our dependence upon God and our belief that they ultimately belong to Him. We dedicate our parents as stewards of God’s treasure who are called to raise our children in a way that is pleasing to Him. We also, as a body of believers, dedicate ourselves to partner with parents to raise this generation of children to love God and serve Him.



Frequently Asked Questions

(cont'd) We encourage people to attend regularly and ask which of the three above groups they fall into, seeking the Lord as to whether/when they should identify themselves as partners with us on this great mission we've been given! We care about and offer opportunities for people anywhere along the spectrum, and we particularly hope for people to move toward partnership.

What do we believe about water baptism?

We believe water baptism is a public witness intended to reflect an internal reality – that the person has passed from death to life by trusting in Jesus alone for salvation. We do not believe the Bible teaches that baptism is a necessary work for salvation, but rather it bears witness that salvation has already been experienced. We believe salvation is not by works or religious rituals but is simply received when we embrace Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for our sins. We believe baptism by immersion most clearly reenacts the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which we identify with as believers.

What do we believe about communion?

We believe the elements of communion represent the shed blood and broken body of our Savior Jesus Christ. We do not believe these elements are the actual body and blood of Jesus, nor do we believe they become the actual body and blood of Jesus. It seems evident, since Jesus was physically present with His disciples when He commanded them to eat the bread and drink the cup, that the elements were intended to be symbolic. We also practice open communion, meaning anyone who has trusted Jesus as Savior is invited to join us in partaking of the elements.

So how do we actually make this vision for a growing relationship with Jesus a reality in our lives? God has given us three means by which we can see these four aspects become evident in our lives – the Word, prayer, and community (Acts 2:42-47).

Our Means

The Word: We can't have a relationship with someone we don't know. Thankfully, God has made it possible for us to know Him through His written word – the Bible – and the Living Word it reveals – Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27; Jn 1:1-2, 1:14, 5:39-40; Heb 1:1-2). By His Word, God creates, leads, loves, and gives life to His people – life that lasts (Gn 1:26; Ps 1; Ez 37:1-14; Jn 10:10, 12:44-50, 17:3; 2 Ti 3:14-17; Heb 4:12). This is why God's people across the ages have written, spoken, and even sung about how precious His Word is (Dt 6:4-9; Ps 1, 19:7-11; Col 3:16; 2 Ti 4:2).

Prayer: We also can't have a relationship without communication. Prayer is our ongoing conversation with God, in Jesus, by His Spirit – a conversation marked by both awe and intimacy (Lk 11:1-13, 18:1-10; Jn 14:13-14; Rom 8:15-16, 26-27; Eph 3:14-19). In prayer, we adore God, confess sin, give thanks, and ask Him to shape us and the world around us to be increasingly in line with His will (Mt 6:5-15; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Thes 5:16-19; 1 Pt 5:7; 1 Jn 1:9).

Community: God did not save us merely to live as individuals; he saved us into a family – the church (Eph 2:18-22). It's a family that functions like a body, with many diverse parts all united under one head, Jesus Christ (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12; Eph 1:22-23). A family marked by love, self-sacrifice, and generosity. A community, committed to each other, pursuing the Lord together wholeheartedly and joyfully (Acts 2:42-47; Gal 6:1-2; Jas 5:16).

The Word, prayer, and community connect us to the power source needed to change us – Christ and His gospel. This is why everything we do here at North Platte Berean centers on and leads to Christ and His work. A church that pursues this vision is a church that is flourishing in the goodness of the gospel. This is our aim. This is who we are. This is North Platte Berean Church – leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.



We Believe...

...in one God who is infinite and personal, eternally existent in three persons revealed as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

...Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, Creator of the universe, became fully man to fulfill God's promise to send a Savior to redeem the world back from sin. We believe He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified for sin, was buried, and rose again and returned to the Father awaiting His return.

...the Holy Spirit is fully God and dwells within the heart of every believer. We believe it is the presence of the Spirit in us that empowers us to fulfill our God-given call to be part of building for God's Kingdom today that will find its fulfillment in the New Earth to come.

...the Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God.

...every person is made in the image of God. We believe that all are sinners by nature and desperately in need of a Savior. We believe that our significance and value flow not out of our ability to perform for God or others, but out of being rightly related to God through Jesus Christ.

...there is only one way of salvation, and that is by God's grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. We believe salvation is through Christ alone and not of any religious works we have done. It is a gift from God. We believe salvation is far more than merely a ticket to heaven, but rather is an invitation to enjoy a personal relationship with God now and forever. We believe salvation includes the redeeming of all creation and the ultimate triumph of God's vision for the world He has created.

with linked arms, are moving toward a unified goal of leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

What if I don't want to become a partner at NPBC?

We would love to see everyone who joins our gatherings on Sundays and in Grow Groups identify themselves with the mission of leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. However, we realize not everyone is ready to take the step of becoming a full partner in this mission.

To better understand, let's use the analogy of a football game. In football, coaches create a game plan and lay out the strategies or plans for their team. In our church the coaches are the leaders of the church – the elders and staff. The game plan is our mission of leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Our plays and our strategies are the Word (God's truth in the Bible), prayer, and community. The team is made up of people who attend our church and are actively involved in pursuing this mission or game plan. But not everyone who attends is interested or ready to link arms and move toward this mission.

Some people who attend are like **spectators**, mostly just checking out what is going on at NPBC. Spectators are important because they give the game energy, and we're excited to have the opportunity to interact with them. These people may be new to our church or to the faith, and for whatever reason they're just not ready to engage in the activities of the church.

Other attenders are like **players** on the field who want to help in reaching the goal, but aren't quite ready to commit to partnership. They may become involved in the work of the ministry through service and small group connection.

Partners are like **player-coaches** who understand and are committed to the game plan and are therefore actively seeking ways to encourage other teammates even when there is personal cost.

(cont'd on next page of FAQ)



Frequently Asked Questions

Is partnership the same as church membership?

Yes and no. Historically, churches have encouraged regular attenders to take a step into greater connection with the local body. This has traditionally been called membership, and it has served the church well for many years.

In our culture today, however, we often hear the word membership used in the context of country clubs, fitness places, or credit cards – contexts where one pays a fee and then expects certain perks, privileges, or benefits. Clearly our partnership in the gospel is not like this! In the Kingdom of Jesus, our “privilege” is to deny ourselves for Christ’s sake, to sacrifice our own desires, and to spend our time, talents, and treasures to spread the fame of Jesus Christ regardless of the personal cost.

To help avoid misunderstanding, NPBC’s elders began prayerfully searching the Scriptures for another term that would convey more clearly how we relate to one another in the gospel. They found that partner is a biblical term Paul uses in a way that really resonates with our purposes here – to indicate an ongoing and active linking of arms to accomplish our mission (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 1:4-6; Phm 1:6).

Many other churches still use the term membership. Are you saying this term is wrong or unbiblical?

Not at all. In Paul’s letters, there are several places where he uses the term “members” to refer to people who have placed their faith in Christ. He uses this term to illustrate the fact that each part in Christ’s body – each body member – has a particular function that is critical for the Body to accomplish its tasks (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12). Since, however, the word “member” can easily lose this meaning in our culture today, we have chosen to focus on “partnership” – we love the imagery of a group of people who,

...every believer has been set apart for God’s good purposes. As believers yield to the Spirit, they grow in moral purity, though this process doesn’t reach completion in this life.

...the Church is made up of all who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. We believe God has ordained that His Universal Church find expression in local churches around the world to rightly represent Christ to the world. We affirm and celebrate the wonderful diversity of the local church in the world today but affirm and celebrate more that we are one Church – Christ’s Body, His Bride – forever.

...in life after death. We believe those who have trusted Christ as Savior will experience eternal joy in the New Heaven and Earth and those who reject Jesus Christ will suffer eternal judgment as a result of God giving them over to their desire to be their own god and satisfy their own desires.

...Satan and his demons are real and oppose God in every possible way. We believe Christ-followers battle the world, the flesh, and the devil daily, but greater is the Spirit in us than the spirit of the enemy.

...Christ will return soon – literally, visibly, publicly – to usher in the judgment of the living and the dead and the bodily resurrection of all people, some to eternal life and others to eternal death.

Note: The statements above are a summary of our full doctrinal statement, which can be found on the Berean Fellowship of Churches’ web site at weareberean.org/welcome/our-doctrine-statement. For even more on what we teach and our positions on other important topics, visit npberean.org/following-jesus.



Frequently Asked Questions

What are we about at North Platte Berean Church?

Our mission: Leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ

Our vision: Treasuring God, Being Transformed, Loving Others, Pursuing Unity

Our means: the Word, prayer, and community

Why should I want to be a partner?

Do you believe this is the church God has called you to be a part of right now? If so, partnership is for you! This commitment is a great way for us, as followers of Jesus, to be intentional about our relationships with one another and with Jesus Christ Himself, growing in these relationships as we support, serve, encourage, and provide accountability for each other.

And while you can participate in many ways prior to partnering here, there are a few opportunities only for partners – taking on a leadership or teaching role within our various ministries and voting on matters specified in NPBC's constitution (currently, if we were to call a new lead pastor). Clearly, in these cases, it's important that those involved are all on the same page and committed to NPBC's mission, weapons, and formation.

Partnership doesn't make you more right with God. And it's not a list of dos and don'ts that makes you a "better Christian" (we're all total sinners who are saved only by grace). However, there are incredible benefits to our own personal spiritual life as we enter into partnership for the gospel with one another. Immersing ourselves in the Word, prayer, and community will help us grow in our own relationship with Jesus Christ.

So, what exactly am I committing to if I become a partner?

The Ministry Partner Commitment details the commitments that partners are making to one another within the church. In short, we're committing to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22). This partnership does cost us time, talent, and treasure. Please "count the cost" (Lk 14:28-30) by reading over the commitments carefully and prayerfully.

What if I can't keep the Partnership Commitments perfectly?

NONE of us will! That's yet another reminder of why we desperately needed Christ to pay the penalty for our shortcomings – we are not righteous in ourselves!

When we're committing to do something regularly, we understand that it will be done as we're able. There may be times in life when we are more or less able (physical limitations, job responsibilities, family obligations) to do something. The regular commitments of partnership are designed NOT to be a list of requirements, but rather an indicator of what is happening in our heart. Be careful that you don't read it as a legalistic checklist, but a call to holy living within the grace offered by Christ.

We realize that we all stumble in many ways (Jas 3:2), and we all experience ebbs and flows in our spiritual life. By agreeing to partnership, we are not agreeing to follow Jesus perfectly (it can't be done!), but rather to enter into community with one another and allow others to graciously meddle in our lives when we're struggling.

As partners, we should desire to fulfill the partnership commitments, but we can rest in the grace of Christ and the care of other partners when we inevitably fall short.