

# NORTON



# Baptist Church

A VISION FOR  
OUR CHURCH

KNOWING. GROWING. SHARING. LEADING.

Norton Baptist Church family,

It is with much excitement and joyful anticipation that the leadership team (pastors and deacons) of Norton Baptist Church present to you what God has placed on our hearts as it relates to the future of our church!

After much prayerful consideration, we have come to full agreement that God is leading us to make some important and necessary changes which will lead our church toward spiritual health. The main emphasis and motivation behind this effort is to guide our church to refocus our energy and adjust our priorities to fit more closely with what God has clearly set forth in His Word. To be clear, everything that we have discussed and will discuss relates only to the methods that are used to proclaim and explain God's *unchanging* message.

The need to reach people with the gospel and to help believers grow spiritually is just as great today as it has ever been. Yet, we feel that as a church, we have grown somewhat complacent and have allowed ourselves to become distracted from doing what Christ has commanded us to do - to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. 28:19). It is our desire to see this commandment earnestly followed and lived out in and through our church.

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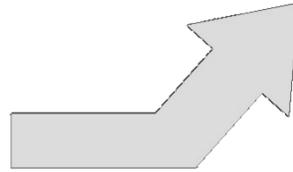
The first step that God has led us to in this process is to **set a vision**. Setting a vision will help us as a whole church to focus our hearts and minds on a common objective and to work towards fulfilling God's mission for His church.

**What are we to be most concerned about when it comes to our church?** That is the question that the leadership team has made their priority to answer. As God has led us, we have come to understand that He would have our church be most concerned about the following four aspects:

- Knowing God
- Growing in spiritual maturity
- Sharing the good news of Christ
- Leading others in discipleship

Each of the four aspects are explained in more depth on the following pages:

# 1. KNOWING



***Together we aim to know God and to know Him more.***

Knowing God is a lifelong pursuit that begins with God's pursuit of us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to us that we may know God and have a fulfilling relationship with Him. But "knowing God" does not end there. In Hosea 6:3 we read, "Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord." The Apostle Paul echoes that same idea in Philippians 3:8-10, where He says: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things...in order that I may gain Christ... -- that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection..."

Our leadership team agrees that we are to be concerned about knowing and worshipping God, and we believe that it needs to be an aim of our church to help people wherever they are in their relationship with God to pursue to know Him more. Whatever a person's relationship is with God, we should be able to provide a place at Norton Baptist Church where he/she will be encouraged and challenged to know God and to know Him more.

# 2. GROWING



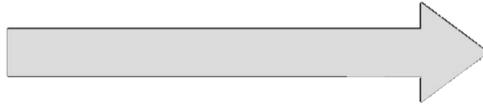
***Together we seek to grow in spiritual maturity.***

Growth is necessary for life to continue and thrive. In no other context is that truer than in the life of a church. God has made it clear that one of the purposes of the church is for the "building up" of believers (Ephesians 4:12-13). Growing in spiritual maturity is integral for a church that is desiring to follow God.

It is our desire to follow the example we find in Colossians 1:28 where we read, "[Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may *present everyone mature in Christ.*" We as church need to value spiritual growth which means we must strive to provide opportunities for everyone to personally grow in their walk with Christ.

At Norton Baptist Church, we desire to create a space where individual believers can grow with others who are also growing in spiritual maturity. Wherever an individual is in the transformation process of spiritual life in Christ, we want to come alongside and help them in their pursuit of becoming a spiritually mature follower of Jesus.

## 3. SHARING

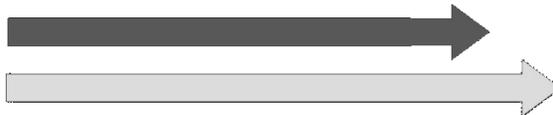


***Together we are sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.***

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave his followers a clear mission that He expected them to live out: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus also referred to His followers as His “witnesses” in the world (Acts 1:8). The good news that Jesus came and offered himself up as the perfect sacrifice to pay for sins once and for all is not something that should be kept secret. It is why God has put us on this earth – to share this incredible news with everyone we know (2 Corinthians 4:5)!

We, as the leadership team, want to stress the importance of sharing the gospel of Jesus with the world, and we believe that it starts in our own community. We desire to be a light to the lost and hurting first in the community of people around us. It’s important that we make it our aim to reach out and show the love of Christ to those who desperately need Him. We must put aside our own comforts and wants to pursue friendships and conversations that have an eternal impact. This mission is not reserved just for pastors, missionaries or the “spiritually elite;” this mission is for everyone in the church to take part in – sharing the good news of Jesus Christ *with everyone*.

## 4. LEADING



***Together we serve through leading others in discipleship.***

*The main purpose of Norton Baptist Church is to glorify God by making disciples.* Jesus told his disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus made it clear that everyone who follows Him has been given the task of discipling someone else. Paul put it this way in his letter to Timothy: “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). In another of Paul's writings – to the Thessalonians – he writes about a time after he had led individuals to faith in Christ, how he stayed with them and shared his own life with them. He modeled before them what life in Christ should look like, and he “exhorted...encouraged...and charged [them] to walk in a manner worthy of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12). He did not only share the gospel with them, he took time to lead them in discipleship.

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The leadership team is in full agreement that our church needs to be very concerned with the work of making disciples. For any true follower of Christ, there is no legitimate reason why they should not be partaking in serving God through discipling someone else. Our church exists primarily for this reason. We want to strongly encourage everyone to find someone to share life with – to model Christlikeness in front of – to guide, instruct and mentor so that they themselves are equipped to **know** God, to **grow** in spiritual maturity, to **share** the good news of Christ, and to **lead** someone else in discipleship.

Each of these four aspects of the vision are founded upon Biblical passages and principles, and we are united as a leadership team moving forward in the effort to guide Norton Baptist Church to passionately pursue these four things above everything else.

**OK. But what does this look like?**

This is another question that the leadership team is making it a priority to answer. Discussions have already begun and are expected to continue for some time. What we can tell you right now is that this is all of God - His working in us to cause us to pursue what will most effectively lead our church toward spiritual health. You may have many other questions, of which we assure you that we intend to provide answers in due time.

One way that we want to help you think through the changes that the vision necessitates is to dedicate a 4-part series of messages during the month of October (starting October 1, 2017), with each message emphasizing a different aspect of the vision. Each week will also include a time set aside in the evening to help us walk through some of the practical applications for our church to think through. Those evening sessions will also include a time for Q and A. *It would be of great help to us if you would write down any questions you have and get them to us ahead of time so that we can provide thorough and clear answers to you.*

God is at work at Norton Baptist Church – we believe that He has been preparing us for some very exciting and fruitful times of ministry in the near future. We hope that you will pray with us and do your part in seeking God’s will for His church, knowing that He can and will do great and powerful things through us if we are willing to follow Him!

--Norton Baptist Church Leadership Team