

Harpeth Community Church

Philosophy of Ministry Statements

Vision Statement

“We love the lost and hurting world by leading people to Christ and helping one another become more like Him”

Mission Statement

“We will make biblical disciples in relational environments.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

HCC Discipleship Definition

A Biblical Disciple (defined by Matthew 28:19-20) is a person who is:

- ✓ committed to Christ (by baptism),
- ✓ seeking to obey all the teachings of Christ,
- ✓ relying on the spiritual presence of Christ, and
- ✓ helping/leading others to follow the same journey

Keys to Effective Disciple Making

Key #1 - An Leader

- ✓ One who understands the game (Christianity)
- ✓ One who can evaluate or recognize where a person is at in the process of growth
- ✓ One who can create an environment that produces growth

Key #2 – Relational Environments — a Small Group

- ✓ Jesus, the greatest disciple maker in history, only had 12 disciples. Why?
- ✓ Jesus came to reveal a model of discipleship that we could follow
- ✓ The first disciples used the same model for discipling that Jesus did

- ✓ Shepherding (especially in the early stages) Ezekiel 34
- ✓ Love (the “love one another statements in Scripture)
- ✓ Real teaching with Q&A, modeling, and stories (Mt. 13:6,16:13; John 13:14)
- ✓ Authenticity (James 5:16)
- ✓ Accountability (Hebrews 3:12)
- ✓ Guided practice (Luke 9:1-12; Acts 6)

Key #3 - A Simple Growth Process

Accept, Connect, Serve, Lead

HCC Values and Discipleship Process

*With intentional love, we lead people through the **Accept, Connect, Serve,** and **Lead** phases of our discipleship path.*

- **Accept:** accepting a relationship with God grounded in both His Grace and Truth, as revealed in the Bible.
- **Connect:** connecting in personal relationships with God’s people and God.
- **Serve:** serving the extended church family and the lost world.
- **Lead:** leading and discipling others in the discipleship path

Theological Beliefs

Briefer Summary Statements on the website.

We believe that the leaders of the local church are responsible to uphold God's teachings, while recognizing that Christians can honestly differ with integrity on certain matters. We believe it is important to uphold both the essential and the important (but non-salvation) teachings of the Bible, while encouraging love and respectful dialogue in non divisive ways.

1. The following are *essential and important* elements of our faith and are non-negotiable for what is to be taught and upheld at Harpeth Community Church.

God. We believe in one God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. We believe he was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now acts as the only mediator between God and people. He shall come again, personally and visibly, to complete His saving work and to consummate the eternal plan of God.

The Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit applies to people the saving work of Christ. He brings conviction of a person's need for forgiveness and he leads that person to Christ. Those who truly embrace the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith are regenerated by and baptized in the Holy Spirit. He regenerates their heart and permanently indwells them. His ongoing work is to guide, lead, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

Humanity. We believe that people were created in the image of God for a loving relationship with God in His eternal kingdom. However, people have rebelled against God, actively or passively choosing to go their own independent way. Thus we are alienated from God and suffer the corruption of our nature because of our sin. The effects of this fall from our intended relationship with God can only be reversed through faith in Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and life in God's eternal Kingdom.

Salvation. We believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from separation from God and the eternal penalty of sin. At the end of the age, the bodies of the dead shall be raised. Those saved by Jesus Christ shall enter into full possession of eternal bliss in the presence of God, and the lost shall be condemned to eternal punishment and death. No amount of good works or human effort can restore us from our state of eternal alienation from God. It is only by God's free grace that we are saved from this state of alienation, and this grace is appropriated by personal faith, through a change of heart toward God's leadership in our lives, by reliance on Jesus and His cross to forgive our sins, and a commitment to follow God through him. The normative Biblical way for expressing one's personal decision to place faith in Jesus Christ, turn from sin, and commit oneself to the

path of being a Christ-follower (disciple) involves a verbal confession of belief and water baptism by immersion, which re-enacts the burial and resurrection of Christ. Baptism is the concrete means by which we entrust and commit ourselves to God through Christ in a visible, historical, and covenant making moment.

Faith. Those with genuine faith in Jesus Christ are known by their warm heart for God and faithfulness to God's commandments. Love for others displayed in ministering to the poor, reaching out to those who are eternally lost, service, the practice of forgiveness, and the like are all signs of the presence of God's kingdom and ministry of the Holy Spirit within a person. In short, those with true faith are known through the demonstration of faithfulness and Christ-likeness.

The Bible. We believe the 66 books of the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, were given by God's inspiration as the authoritative Word of God for the church of all time. We believe the Scriptures originated with God but were written by the instrumentality of people and thus speak with the authority of God while reflecting the backgrounds, formats, and vocabularies of the human authors. They are the uniquely supreme, reliable, and the final authority on all matters of Christian faith and practice.

Relationships. We believe that God made us for relationships, with God himself and with our fellow human beings. We emphasize the greatest commandments which are to love God with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love others as oneself. Specifically, Our love for each other, as Christians, is the clearest demonstration to the world that we are true disciples. Love is the answer to our deepest problems: God's love for us and our love for others, as God loves and empowers us.

The Church. We believe that there is only one true Church universal composed of all people who have been regenerated and forgiven by Jesus Christ. Discipleship is the fundamental ministry of the local church which facilitates the development of Christ-like people. The diversity of all believers working and serving together, using their gifts to build up one another, form the parts of the body of Christ, the Church. The scripture commands believers to gather together for the teaching of God's Word, fellowship, prayer, encouragement, and those things which enable the people to glorify God. There is benefit in partaking of the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis, as we are constantly brought back to Christ, his atoning death, his future coming, and God's grace. Wherever God's people meet in obedience to these commands, there is a local expression of the church. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the obligation to seek to appoint godly male pastors/elders and preachers, who lead her, as they rely upon God's wisdom and daily guidance.

2. HCC statements on how we allow freedom on potentially divisive or disputable matters.

In regard to the application and practice of both essential and important teachings, there can also be differences and divisions, especially in the realm of personal opinions. The

mission of the church is “biblical discipleship,” which is mostly practical. To avoid unnecessary division and needless theological debate, the following statements clarify the standards which the leaders of HCC uphold of these matters.

	Baptism	Eternal Security	Leadership	Spiritual Gifts
<p>Non-negotiables</p> <p>(in terms of what is to be taught and upheld through HCC)</p>	<p>Must be by immersion and must express a commitment of the heart to trust Christ/His cross, and to follow Him.</p> <p>Normative method for committing oneself to God and receiving his forgiveness.</p> <p>God is not bound by baptism, but we are.</p>	<p>Two healthy positions possible – these do not constitute or make a salvation issue.</p> <p>Genuine Faith is key – it is revealed by a pattern of growth and faithfulness and fruit.</p>	<p>Leaders will be appointed and function according to biblical criteria and roles.</p> <p>Certain roles – the elders and the main teachers in the Assembly - are only for qualified men.</p>	<p>Different views are held, but the subject does not constitute a salvation issue</p> <p>We do believe God does miracles and answers prayer, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, draws and empowers us to serve Him and do good works.</p>
<p>Behavior that unifies</p> <p>(behavior to be upheld at HCC)</p>	<p>We uphold baptism by immersion, not the sinners prayer, as the norm.</p> <p>Requirement before formal affiliation with HCC</p> <p>There are circumstances where God saves people apart from biblical baptism</p>	<p>We teach salvation by grace through faith, with faithfulness as the fundamental mark of genuine faith</p> <p>We all are to reach out to all who seem to be losing their way.</p> <p>We show respect for both Arminian and Calvinistic perspectives at this church</p> <p>We will not allow the discussion of non-salvation issues to become divisive or destroy the Lord’s work</p>	<p>Only qualified men may assume authority and teaching roles for the entire congregation</p> <p>The best leadership will be given by men who are committed to serving like Jesus and who receive input from women and who discuss things with the congregation before important decisions are made</p>	<p>We do not encourage tongues in any of the gatherings or groups of the church</p> <p>We do not discourage the use of tongues, when used as a private prayer language for edification.</p> <p>We will not allow the discussion of non-salvation issues to become divisive or destroy the Lord’s work</p>

	End times	Communion	Church Discipline	Divorce/Remarriage
<p>Non-negotiables</p> <p>(in terms of what is to be taught and upheld through HCC)</p>	<p><i>We believe and uphold:</i></p> <p><i>1) the resurrection of the dead</i></p> <p><i>2) a literal return of Christ</i></p> <p><i>3) the final judgment by God,</i></p> <p><i>4) hell and</i></p> <p><i>5) heaven.</i></p> <p>Other related doctrines are clearly non-salvation issues.</p>	<p>It is a memorial and proclamation of God's Grace, a sign of the new covenant between God and humans.</p>	<p><i>We have a special responsibility to our church family members to address ongoing sin.</i></p> <p>Healthy discipline and accountability is one hallmark of a faithful church – we follow Matthew 18: 15-17.</p>	<p>Marriage is not a human-made custom but a divine institution established by God</p> <p><i>God's will is for marriage to be permanent and life-long, but remarriage after divorce for adultery and dissention by a non-believer is allowed.</i></p>
<p>Behavior that unifies</p> <p>(behavior to be upheld at HCC)</p>	<p>We emphasize the 5 key doctrines and then the talk about the related matters on End Times teachings in ways that show respect for various interpretations.</p> <p>We will not allow the discussion of non-salvation issues beyond these five keys to become divisive or destroy the Lord's work</p>	<p><i>We take communion every week at the church because it brings us back to Grace and follows the example of the early church.</i></p> <p>It is for believers.</p> <p>We recommend Children not take communion until they can understand sin and salvation, and have accepted Christ. However, communion is a teaching opportunity to explain the concepts of sin and salvation, and our need for Jesus.</p>	<p>We practice discipline only with a desire to restore.</p> <p>HCC Elders are responsible to God for the church family. As such, discipline issues are only applicable for the church family.</p> <p>Discipline is handled according to Matthew 18</p>	<p><i>We accept divorced members and do not wish to cause further pain or condemnation to people who were out of step with God's Word in the past. However, to ensure obedience to biblical teaching, we ask all Christians who have been divorced within two years of coming to HCC, to meet with an elder before membership to debrief the situation with the elders.</i></p> <p>We encourage restoration and reconciliation.</p> <p>When divorced/ remarried people become members, they are encouraged to participate fully in church life, and move forward in the grace of Christ.</p>

HCC statements on potentially divisive or disputable matters

Baptism— we believe that baptism by immersion is to becoming a Christian, as the wedding ceremony is to getting married. In both, the genuine commitment of the heart is the focus, while the form for making the covenant is important. We believe that expressing faith in Christ through baptism is the normative mode given by God so a person can receive God's promises in Jesus and commit himself or herself to the path of discipleship. We emphasize two things: God looks at the heart and his teaching on baptism is to be upheld by the local church. So, we acknowledge on the one hand that scripture binds us to uphold this normative biblical teaching before membership in this church, and on the other hand, we also acknowledge that God looks at the heart, He is sovereign, and He saves people as he sees fit.

Behavior that Unifies

- We uphold baptism by immersion, with confession of faith is the normative method which enables a person to give his or her heart to God, trust Jesus, and become a Christ-follower (disciple) at this church.
- We uphold baptism is a requirement before formal affiliation with this church family.
- We emphasize that God is sovereign and looks at the heart, so we acknowledge and believe that there are circumstances where God does save people, apart from the normative mode of biblical baptism.

Eternal Security: Some believe that when God saves a person, they can never be lost. These believers usually hold that those who are truly saved are known by the fruit of their lives or their faithfulness. Others believe that when God saves people, they still have free will that can lead them to become apostates who turn their backs on Jesus. These believers hold that a person is saved by grace through faith and we can know we have a saving faith by the fruit of our lives and a pattern of faithfulness. Both perspectives affirm that genuine Christians can live with ongoing sin struggles. In the end, both believe that the church must reach out to those who seem to be losing the way – some question whether these persons were ever saved; others question whether these persons are in danger of turning away from Jesus. At this church both perspectives can be united if we commit to uphold the necessity of faithfulness as the mark of genuine faith and we agree to reach out to all who seem to be losing the way.

Arminian Perspective:

- Arminians believe salvation can be gained and lost.
- Arminians do not believe that a bad decision means you lose your salvation.
- The way you can tell a person is a Christian is by their fruit.

Scripture References: Luke 15; Romans 11:22-23; Hebrews 6:4-7; 2 Peter 2:20

Calvinist Perspective:

- Calvinists believe God chooses some to be saved and some to be lost.
- Calvinists believe salvation cannot be lost as it was given by God.
- Calvinists do not believe you can do whatever you want and be a Christian.

- If a person is not showing fruit and growth, then they were likely never saved to begin with.

Scripture References: John 10:28; Romans 8:29-30; 1 John 2:9

The Non-Negotiables at this church:

- We do not believe that this subject constitutes a salvation issue.
- You can believe the Arminian perspective and be wrong and still be saved.
- You can believe that Calvinistic perspective and be wrong and still be saved.
- We uphold that genuine faith is revealed by showing fruit and growth and faithfulness.

Behavior that Unifies at this church:

- We will teach and uphold the importance of salvation by grace through faith, with faithfulness as the mark of genuine faith.
- With love and concern, we will reach out to all who seem to be losing the way.
- We will show respect for both Arminian and Calvinistic perspectives at this church.
- We will not allow the discussion of a non-salvation issue like this to come up in a divisive way or to destroy the Lord's work.

Leadership – we believe it is important to appoint leaders according biblical criteria and roles. The local churches of the Bible had a common structure, designed to be a lasting format, and put in place so that churches could carry on, as God intended, without the apostles (1 Timothy 3:14-16).

1. Minister-Evangelists – these are the lead ministers in a local church. Timothy was an evangelist who worked with the church in Ephesus. The apostle Paul wrote two letters to him, outlining his role as an evangelist and how the church should be structured (1 & 2 Timothy). Titus was another evangelist who also received a letter with similar instructions for his work on the island of Crete (Titus). Until the church is mature enough to appoint elders, it is to be led by an evangelist.

2. Elders- After the church have been established, it will reach maturity and elders are to be appointed. These are older and wiser Christian men called "elders", "pastors" or "overseers" – these three terms all refer to the same group of men (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). These men are given the responsibility of "watching over," "protecting," "guiding," "leading," "teaching," and "equipping" the church. According to the Bible, some of the elders are paid (1 Timothy 5:17), but most work as volunteers.

We believe that the Bible teaches male servant leadership in the home and in the church. In The Church -- In many ways the church is a larger community which reflects the family. Here God has ordained that only qualified men should assume authority and teaching roles for the entire congregation. We understand congregational authority to refer to formal leadership decisions and policies which lead and set direction for the congregation (elders). We understand congregational teaching to be teaching which leads and sets direction for the congregation (Evangelist/Minister/Elders). We also believe that the best leadership will be

given by men who receive input from women and who discuss things with the congregation before important decisions are made (1 Corinthians 11: 3-16; 14: 33-36; 1 Timothy 2: 8-3: 12; Titus 1: 4-9).

Spiritual Gifts – Few areas of theology within the church have caused more division than the subject of spiritual gifts. Some in our church believe all of the spiritual gifts spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are for today. Others believe some of the gifts are for today. And, there are those who believe none of the gifts are for today. You can see the potential problems.

The Non-Negotiables at this church:

- We do not believe that this subject constitutes a salvation issue.
- You can believe some of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be saved.
- You can believe that all of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be saved.
- You can believe that none of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be saved.

Remember, for those who believe that the gifts are present today, the Spirit of God does not work contrary to the Word of God. The following are Scripture references for churches where the gift of tongues and prophecy are used.

- If someone speaks in a tongue, it will be one at a time. 1 Corinthians 14:27,33,40
- There must be an interpreter. 1 Corinthians 14:28
- There must be one who discerns whether it comes from God. 1 Corinthians 14:28-33; 1 John 4:1
- If it is a prayer language, there is a place to pray. Matthew 6:6
- All the gifts must be used to edify the church, not the individual. 1 Corinthians 14:4-5,26
- No one has all the gifts, but the church is to be a body. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30

Behavior that Unifies at this church:

- Because this is a non-salvation area of contention between believers, we will not encourage tongues in any of the gatherings of the church.
- We will not allow the discussion of a non-salvation issue like this to come up in a divisive way or to destroy the Lord's work.
- We do believe God does miracles and answers our prayer and through the work of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to serve Him and do good works.

End Times – there are some key areas where all faithful Christians must agree in regard to the end times and other areas where faithful Christian disagree with each others. We believe we must be united in our belief in 1) the resurrection of the dead, 2) a literal return of Christ, 3) the final judgment by God, 4) hell and 5) heaven. We believe people will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is eternal death in Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life in Heaven. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. We also believe there will be a literal rapture (a catching up of the saints). How

and when this will happen has been a source of great debate. We believe the details are in God's hands and this is not a salvation issue.

Scripture References: Matthew 12:36; John 5:22, 16:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 6; Revelation 20:11-15.

The Non-Negotiables at this church:

- Beyond the five key end times beliefs described above, we do not believe that this subject constitutes a salvation issue.
- You can believe the pre-millennial, post-millennial, a-millennial positions and be wrong and still be saved.

Behavior that Unifies at this church:

- Because end times teachings beyond the five key doctrines listed above is a non-salvation area, we will teach on these matters in ways that show respect for the those who differ with us.
- We will not allow the discussion of a non-salvation issue like this to come up in a divisive way or to destroy the Lord's work.

Communion – we take communion every week at the church because it follows the example of the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17ff) and because it reminds us, on a weekly basis, of the foundational teachings of our faith, in the death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus.

Communion at the church is defined as Scripture defines it.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV) For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- Communion is a **memorial**.
- Communion is a **new covenant**.
- Communion is a **proclamation**.

It is a distinctive of our church that we take communion every week. But we do not believe you have to take communion every week; it is our choice.

Who should take it?

- Only those who believe.
- With regard to children, we believe a child should not take communion until they can understand the concepts of sin and salvation, and have accepted Christ. However,

we do believe communion is a teaching opportunity to explain the concepts of sin and salvation, and our need for Jesus.