

Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church Philosophy of Ministry
First Principles Applied

I. Definition and Purpose of the Church

“House and Family of God” “Gathering and Perfecting of the Saints...[and] their children” (Vertical and Horizontal. Gospel. Outreach and In-reach. Covenant Promises of God.)

A. Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 25, *Of the Church*)

I. The catholic or universal Church, which is **invisible**, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

II. The **visible** Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; **the house and family of God**, through which men are ordinarily saved and union with which is essential to their best growth and service.

III. Unto this catholic and visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the **gathering and perfecting of the saints**, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

B. Biblical Summary

1. Foundation and Call

Matthew 16:16-19: Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

*Apostolic testimony a miracle of Father. Christ the foundation. Christ the builder. “The church shall **never** perish!” Genuine authority given to true church of Jesus Christ.*

28:18-20: And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Crucified and resurrected Christ has **all** power. Therefore Christ’s **sole** kingship over the church. (Church is safe!) Great Commission is two-fold. Gathering and Perfecting. Reaching and Equipping; Extensive and Intensive: **1) “Go and make disciples”** (Gathering; Reaching; Extensive— evangelism/missions); **2) “Baptizing them... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** (Perfecting; Equipping; Intensive). Church should always seek to widen (reach) and deepen (equip) at the same time. Exalted Christ goes with us every step of the way!

2. Biblical Means of Grace

Acts 2:42-47: And they devoted themselves to **the apostles' teaching** and the fellowship, to **the breaking of bread** and **the prayers**. And *awe came upon every soul*, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had *all things in common*. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with *glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people*. And *the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*.

Westminster Shorter Catechism # 88:

Q.What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption? B.The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the **word, sacraments, and prayer**; *all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation*.

Acts 2:42-27: beautiful portrait of true church life. Devotion together to Word, Sacraments and Prayer as believers in fellowship with God (vertical) and other believers (horizontal). Includes covenant children (2:39!). All centered upon the Christ who poured out his Spirit at Pentecost. A shared life together in the Gospel. *My house is your house*.

3. Offices of Elder and Deacon and General Office

i. Elders oversee **word** ministry; 1 Timothy 5:17: Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 3:2: “able to teach...” Acts 6:4: But we [apostles] will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

ii. Deacons oversee **deed** ministry; Acts 6:1-4: Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of

God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

iii. General Office. Every Christian is a prophet, a priest and a king in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every member has responsibility to Christ and his people. Ephesians 4:15-16: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom **the whole body**, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly**, *makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* cf. 1 Peter 2:4-6. Living Stone. Living stones. Built up as a spiritual house. Offering spiritual sacrifices!

iv. Summary: Elders, Deacons, General Office and God. 1 Peter 4:10-11: As **each** has received a **gift**, *use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:* [every member ministry!] 11 whoever **speaks** [Word ministry], as one who speaks *oracles of God*; whoever serves [Deed ministry], as one who serves by the *strength that God supplies*—in order that in everything **God may be glorified through Jesus Christ** [Gospel!]. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

II. How Do We Carry Out Our Ministry? Philosophy of Ministry (I am very indebted here to my years of training and ministry with Reformed University Fellowship for these materials.)

Overview

Our goal: Elders, Deacons and Congregation committed to warm, vibrant orthodoxy in life and doctrine (deed and word) under our common Chief Shepherd. God-centered, Christ-centered, warmly relational and outward-facing. Committed to short term concerns and training of present covenant children and to long term health of ministry for future generations still to come. I.e., We ask questions as we make decisions: Does this decision benefit unborn generations of this church? Are we standing for truth and against error in both life and doctrine?

A. Ministry Purpose (Great Commission): Reaching people for Christ (Gathering) and Equipping them to Serve (Perfecting).

B. Ministry Program: 1. Corporate Worship and Gatherings 2. Small Groups 3. One to Ones

1. Corporate Worship and Gatherings

- a. Sunday morning worship
- b. Sunday evening service and prayer
- c. Sunday School
- d. Evangelistic gatherings (Conversations that Matter; Neighborhood Outreach Dinner)
- e. Children's chapel

2. Small Groups

- a. Bible studies
- b. Prayer gatherings
- c. Small groups (Shepherding groups) and other fellowship gatherings
- d. Covenant Kids catechism memory
- e. Ministry to our youth.
- f. Ministry to our college and young adults.
- g. Special Events

3. One to Ones

- a. Evangelistic relationships
- b. Discipleship/Counseling relationships
- c. Mercy care
- d. Fellowship

C. Ministry Goals: What do we expect to accomplish? How will we know that our purpose is being fulfilled through our program?

We measure these questions with open Bible and the Reformed theological standards to which church officers have taken vows before God.

1. Growth in Grace: Our ministries should foster deepening personal appropriation of Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Are we coming under fresh conviction of sin? Are we learning the blessing of fresh repentance and the joy of forgiveness of sins? Are people growing in their appetite for worship privately, in families and together as the church? Do we hunger and thirst for righteousness and therefore for God's Word? Are we learning to pray? Are husbands loving wives more consistently? Are parents engaging their children more consistently? Are children maturing and demonstrating spiritual initiative? Are single people understanding their identity in Christ and thus living with stability midst unique temptations? Are we patient in affliction? Are we growing in emotional stability and conformity to Christ? Are we caring for the weak? Are we demonstrating a Christian work ethic as fruit in keeping with repentance? Are people processing their past sin and suffering? Do we engage in counseling ministries where necessary? Do all of our ministries find their anchor in Jesus Christ and his Gospel?)

2. Evangelism and Missions: Our ministries should engage the lost here and around world, and equip believers to reach the lost. (Are we praying for the lost? Specifically, for whom are we praying? Developing relationships with the lost? Being bold to speak the Gospel to the lost? Caring for our neighbors? Praying for the worldwide church and missionary laborers? Is God raising up pastors and missionaries from within our church?)

3. Fellowship and Service: Our ministries should involve multidimensional relationships with other Christians, and both word and deed servant-mindedness. (Are we living in genuine

community with one another? Are we avoiding isolationism? Are we avoiding co-dependency/insular tendencies? Do we live Good Samaritan lifestyles? Do we care for the poor?)

4. Biblical World View: Our ministries should cultivate in our people a world and life view which relates God and His word to all of life. All of life under the Lord of all! (Are we taking every thought about everything captive and making it obedient to the Christ of the Scriptures? Are we avoiding spiritual compromise in our thinking and lifestyles? Are we avoiding self-righteousness? Are we living “in the world but not of the world?” Are we honoring Christian liberty and therefore refraining from adding commandments which go beyond God’s Word? I.e., Do we honor the truth that the Lord alone is Lord of the conscience and we therefore must not stipulate anything beyond his Word?)

D. Ministry Principles: What is the heart of what we are trying to communicate to our flock? (Again, the blessing of open Bible and our theological standards which set forth a summary of the system of doctrine in God’s Word.)

1. Supremacy and glory of God. God-centered life and doctrine. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

2. Supremacy and authority of God’s Word. *Sola Scriptura.*

3. Supremacy and glory of Jesus Christ. God’s Word is about the Gospel of God’s free grace. Gospel is about Jesus Christ. Gospel (justification and sanctification) demands personal repentance and faith. *Solus Christus.*

4. Absolute necessity of prayer. Invisible work of the Holy Spirit.

E. Ministry Presuppositions/Assumptions: What guides our actions, attitudes, and activities?

1. Biblical-Theological: Bible is true and sufficient. (Reformed theological commitments as taught in God’s Word.)

2. Ecclesiological: Church is God’s ordained means for ministry.

3. Providential: God is at work! (He got to Tampa before we did! 😊).

4. Individual: *Creation. Fall. Redemption.* Every person created in the image of God. **Pre-Fall:** In Adam and therefore “very good.” **Post-Fall:** In Adam and therefore very bad; guilty and corrupt (totally depraved). Every person in history of world (and whom you will ever meet) is either *in Adam (covenant breaker)* or *in Christ (covenant keeper)*. **No third group of people! No neutrality.** Nothing will rot the church faster than an alleged neutrality in our doctrine of man. Only Gospel of God’s Word applied by Holy Spirit can bring sinner from being *in Adam* to being *in Christ*.

5. Pedagogical: The learning process involves lifetime of layers and investment. When we stop learning, we are in spiritual harm's way. No one in the church should be in spiritual *coast* mode.

6. Demographical: Our awareness of our environment of ministry. What circumstances are notable as we minister the Gospel here?

F. Questions/Assessment:

1. What are we doing? Why are we doing it? (Do our ministries cohere with our theological principles?)

2. What am I doing? Why am I doing it? (Is my life changing as a result of my involvement in the ministries of this church?)

3. What aren't we doing which needs to be done? (What aren't I doing which needs to be done?)

Conclusion

Some Ministry Categories

Extensive Growth (People outside of our church)

Transfer Growth:

Outsiders who are growing, healthy Christians; involved with other churches/ministries. In certain circumstances, such people may be helped by engagement with our church.

Conversion Growth:

Outsiders who are not yet Christians or who are unhealthy Christians and who are not involved with our church. Such people need to receive Christ become involved with a local church.

Intensive Growth (People inside our church)

Discipleship Growth:

Insiders who are growing, healthy Christians. These need to grow further and develop their gifts for service.

Renewal Growth:

Insiders who are not yet Christians or who are unhealthy Christians. These need to repent and/or come to genuine commitment to Christ.

