



Frequently Asked Questions

What are we about at North Platte Berean Church?

- Our mission:** Leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ
- Our weapons:** the Word, prayer, and community
- Our formation:** GROW groups

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.



FAQ (cont'd)

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, 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 *spectators* who are 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. (*cont'd on next page of FAQ*)



FAQ (cont'd)

(cont'd) 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.

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.

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.



FAQ (cont'd)

How do I become a partner?

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.