



# AHCC Philosophy of Ministry

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Arbor Heights Community Church (AHCC) is a diverse community of people, all of which are on a spiritual journey with Christ. While some have known Jesus for decades, others are now investigating the claims of Christ for the very first time.

In order to be intentional with the culture and ministry of our church, we find it important to present a clear vision of the style of ministry and type of community we strive to be. While this ministry perspective is somewhat wide in scope, it provides a framework and tangible direction to the church we are, and the church we want to become in the future.

## **DISCIPLE-MAKING**

All Christians, by virtue of their salvation in Christ, have been called to participate in the mission of God through evangelism and disciple-making.

At AHCC, we define a disciple as “Someone who wholeheartedly submits to the person, work and teachings of Jesus, seeking to obey all His commands and spreading the gospel by loving God and loving people.”

We desire that all AHCC members experience an increasing submission and obedience to Jesus in every area of their lives. We are each called to “grow up” in Christ and help others reach their full potential in Jesus.

We are equally committed to making disciples through evangelism, missional living, instruction, correction, modeling and encouragement. These disciple-making efforts can and should take a variety of forms—ranging from formal and structured methods (classes, discipleship groups, etc.) to less-formal and organic practices (sharing meals, spiritual conversations, etc.)—all directed at helping others follow Christ.

Because all people are in need of the gospel, and because Christ is worthy to receive glory and honor from all, we want to evangelize and make disciples “of all nations”—both locally and globally. This means living with missional intentionality in our everyday lives and relationships. We do not believe in “additional” ministry but “intentional” ministry; being intentional and redemptive with every moment of our day.

In disciple-making, our central message is the gospel of Jesus Christ, our primary tool is the Scriptures and our sole power is the Holy Spirit.

Scriptures: Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 11:17; Luke 24:47; John 4:39; Acts 1:8; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 5:20; Col 1:21-22, 28-29; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:1-3, Rev 5:9-10; 7:9

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

God defines the church as a family, and in order for any family to be healthy and thrive, it needs godly leadership. The Bible also commands us to raise up men and women to take the truths of God's word and pass them on to others.

In order to effectively lead the church and make healthy, reproducing disciples of Jesus, we train leaders. We walk them through our Leadership Development program, called "Thrive", to train them to listen to God and lead out of their gifting and skills for Jesus. We also have a youth Student Leader Program that raises up the next generation of youth leaders. We take seriously the call to develop and train leaders and seek not only to teach competence, but more importantly, Christ-like character.

Scriptures: Exodus 18:13-27; Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:1-13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:1-2; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:1-4

## **MISSIONAL**

We believe missions is not just a program through which we are engaged, but a lifestyle by which we are defined.

When Jesus was leaving our world to join the Father in John 17, he told his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." All Christians have been sent by God into their homes, neighborhoods, schools, work, world and areas of play to join Jesus in His mission to make disciples of all nations.

The church is not a building, business or location; it is the redeemed people of God. Therefore, we do not go to church or locate church, we are the church. Wherever we find ourselves, we are the visible representation of God to our world.

Our church exists not as a fortress from the culture or refuge from the world, but as a community of people boldly engaging and penetrating the culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has sent us to both the neighborhoods and nations to proclaim his kingdom. All our ministries, plans, events and strategies are done in a way to connect with non-believers.

Therefore, we equip all people to be on mission for Jesus in six main areas:

- Our home
- Our neighborhood
- Our work
- Our school
- Our world

- Our play

Scriptures: Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 9:37-38; Matthew 13:38; Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 14:23; John 1:14, John 3:16; John 20:21, Acts 1:8; Acts 8:4, Acts 17:16-34; Ephesians 4:11-13

## **SUNDAY SERVICE**

Our weekend service is both attractational and missional. It's attractational in that we want the people in our community to 'come and see' what Jesus is up to. We desire our church family to invest in their friends and invite them to our weekend gathering as part of their spiritual search. In doing so, we commit to share Jesus and the Gospel in an engaging way that will resonate with them. Our worship will be edifying to God, compelling and inviting to both believer and non-believer. Our messages will be relevant to both mature believers and those just starting their spiritual journey. Each weekend, we'll challenge, inspire and motivate people to take their next step, whatever that is for them, in order to become a more mature follower of Jesus.

At the same time, our weekend service is also 'missional'. We want our church to not just 'come and see' but 'go and be'. This means we put a high value on disciple-making and incarnational living at every level of ministry. Our end goal is to develop Christ-like disciples growing in head, heart and hands through everyday gospel living. We want to raise up an army of people who are able to serve Jesus both inside and outside the church walls. This means our service is aimed at equipping and disciple-making rather than just "putting on a show".

We think the church in the New Testament was both attractational AND missional. AHCC will strive to keep a balance of both, knowing that without the 'missional' aspects of our ministry, we would have the tendency to become inward focusing and existing only for ourselves; and without the 'attractational' aspects of ministry, we would miss out on our calling to gather as God's people to encourage, comfort and motivate each other in our pursuit of Christ.

To maintain this balance, we work as a team. Our Lead Pastor, Elder Board and Leadership Board are constantly evaluating ministry outcomes and strategies so we stay 'on mission'. We also seek to regularly communicate with our staff, lay leadership, and attenders the value of our "both/and" strategy.

Scriptures: Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:42-47; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:25; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9-10

## **PREACHING**

The foundation for all preaching at AHCC is the Bible. We wholeheartedly believe the Bible is God's Word and is inspired, inerrant and infallible. We do not put ourselves above God's Word, nor equal with it, but under it. We submit to it for all life and doctrine.

The aim of our preaching is transformation, not simply information. We're not just interested in a data dump of biblical facts or principles; we're interested in our lives being transformed through God's Word in the power of His Spirit into the very character and likeness of Christ.

To accomplish this, our Sunday messages are:

- **Christ Saturated** – Just like the entire Bible tells the story of Jesus, our messages are always anchored and centered on the person and work of Christ.
- **Gospel Centered** – The gospel of Jesus, and all its implications, are woven, whether explicitly or implicitly, into every message.
- **Relevant** – We are missionaries in a post-Christian and post-church context who must continually contextualize the gospel to connect with our culture. Our messages equip Christians to live as missionaries in everyday living.
- **Aimed for Disciple-Making** – The goal of our preaching is not to make converts, but disciples; meaning our preaching is meant to invite full-surrender to Jesus and to equip, train and mobilize for full-time ministry and mission.

Scriptures: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16-17; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:17-21; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:1-5

## **AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY**

We believe all Christians are called to live in authentic community where they share their lives with brothers and sisters in Christ. The New Testament includes 92 commands to “one-another” in such areas as love, forgiveness, carrying burdens and speaking the truth. It is a biblical oxymoron to speak of a lone-ranger Christian.

Therefore, we primarily gather in two specific ways; on Sunday mornings at our large gathering and in community groups throughout the week. We also encourage people to volunteer as a way to use their talents and build community with an AHCC Team.

Scriptures: Genesis 2:18; Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Acts 2:42-47; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:10; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:13; James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7

## **RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

We believe ministry is best accomplished through relational environments. During Jesus three years of public ministry, he invested his life relationally in 12 disciples who in turn invested their lives in others. Throughout the beginning of the church, described in the book of Acts, ministry primarily took place through groups, gatherings and relational connection. We believe this relational framework for ministry was not just a product of the 1<sup>st</sup> century culture, but a template for how we should be the church.

Practically, this means the majority of our ministry will take place through fellowship, relationships and community versus programmatic events. Our primary place for relational connection and disciple-making is in a community group.

Scriptures: Luke 10:1; Ephesians 4:11-13; Acts 1:8; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:26-40; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:8

## **EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY**

We believe it is the Lead Pastor, Elders and Leadership Team's responsibility to equip the church for ministry. Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches that the job of pastors, Elders and church leaders is to equip the church for ministry and acts of service.

Therefore, we do not believe in "professional" ministry positions who do all the work while the congregation stays in the bleachers. We believe every Christian is called to leave the bleachers and play in the game. All Christians have been called to full-time ministry, whether at a school, office, job site, home or any other location.

This means we expect all Christians to own their discipleship, join Jesus in His mission, share the gospel through proclamation and presence and actively seek to make disciples. Our goal is for each person to be equipped to:

1. Win people to Jesus
2. Disciple that person in Jesus
3. Send that person for Jesus

Scriptures: Acts 4:31; Romans 12:4-8; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:11-13

## **SIMPLICITY**

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave a simple command to his disciples; go and make disciples wherever you go. This discipleship consisted of finding identity in Jesus Christ, baptizing, teaching others about Him and obeying His words. We believe Jesus meant what He said so no need to overcomplicate things.

At AHCC, you'll not find disconnected programs or miscellaneous ministries; you will find a singular focus and simple pathway for believers to know Christ, grow in Christ and go in Christ.

Scriptures: Micah 6:8; Matthew 18:20; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:33; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 4:32

## **SUMMARY**

Our Philosophy of Ministry statement comes out of our steadfast commitment to obey and apply all of God's Word for His glory. We realize this is a 'living document' that will need to be consistently evaluated and tweaked to ensure this main goal is kept in balance and focus.