

Advancing Church Ministries

Association of Pastors, Leaders and Intercessors

WELCOME

WHO WE ARE

We are an association of Christian pastors, leaders and intercessors who have recognized the highest goal in life is to know Jesus Christ and, in knowing Him, be conformed to His likeness. We come from many backgrounds, bringing with us the best of our church heritages and the strengths of our cultural distinctions. We are men and women of God from nations around the world. While cognizant of our personal weaknesses, we are not letting our imperfections keep us from pursuing and possessing the heart of Christ (Phil 3; Rom 8:28–30; Luke 6:40; 1 John 2:4–6; Eph 4:15–16, etc.).

We also recognize that, as our love for God’s Son matures, we are learning to love what He Himself loves. Thus, we are compelled by the Holy Spirit to love Christ’s church and to work with the Holy Spirit to see true holiness and genuine spiritual unity restored among the born again. While we are committed to the singularity of Christ as our source of virtue and power, we are also committed to accept and serve the many unique ways Christ reveals Himself through His people.

The other great passion of Christ to which we are committed is His love for the lost. We fervently believe that God has not finished pouring out His Spirit upon the nations. Because we believe that “nations shall come to [His] light” (Isaiah 60:1–3), we maintain faith, prayer and passion to see the lost of every people, tribe and tongue come to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

We are a people united and compelled to bring as many people to heaven as we can, and to empower each person to become as Christlike as possible. Such is the DNA of our fellowship.

DEFINING OUR FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

We believe that what we become in our relationship *with* God is more important than what we do *for* God. Jesus, as a carpenter fulfilling common tasks, awakened the Father’s pleasure (Matt 3:17). If we gain the Father’s endorsement, we believe He will back our efforts with heaven’s power. Thus when we speak of becoming like Christ, we have the following definitions in mind:

CHRISTLIKENESS

Our first common foundational value, as stated above, is pursuit of Christlikeness. Since nothing pleases the Father more than His Son, it is our desire to be genuinely conformed to the character, power and love of Jesus Christ. We believe this is God’s vision for humanity: to create us in the image of Christ (Gen 1:26; Rom 8:29). Thus, we measure our success not by what we become before man, but how truly Christlike we become before God.

Christlikeness means we reach for faith like Christ’s, we share His vision of redemption, and we embrace His love. We consider His Word and Spirit to be the architect and builder of our lives.

HUMILITY

We are convinced that all spiritual progress is the result of God's grace. However, while God's Spirit may be poured out on all flesh, He gives grace (or the capacity to be changed) only to the humble. Therefore, we esteem humility as the first and most important virtue. For it is humility that enables us to hear God concerning our sin, and it is humility that honestly accepts where we still lack Christ's virtues. In seeking to truly become like Christ, we remember His command, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29).

PRAYER (REDEMPTIVE INTERCESSION)

We believe we have been placed on earth to reveal God's mercy. Thus, when we are made aware of someone caught in sin, or when we see evil prosper in our world, we believe our first response is redemptive prayer (1 John 5). We are a people committed to sanctifying our tongues that we might keep our hearts from participating in gossip, slander or destroying others with our words. Rather, we purpose to intercede, correct, heal and redeem. When rebuke or discipline is required, we determine to do so in meekness, looking to ourselves lest we too be tempted (Gal 6).

CHRIST-CENTERED UNITY

We believe a time will come when, because of mature Christ-centered unity, Jesus' prayer in John 17 will be fulfilled. Therefore, we believe it is the Father's intention, not only to fulfill Christ's prayer as He prayed in the first century, but to bring unity to the church throughout the ages so that all "who believe . . . may be one" (John 17:20–21). As those who are experiencing the effect of the Father's answer to Christ's prayer, we are committed to unity with other Christians. Our unity may manifest in many ways: friendships, individual or corporate prayer, acts of kindness, enduring forgiveness, financial assistance, compassion, citywide outreaches or dozens of other expressions. Where we differ on peripheral doctrines with other born-again Christians, we purpose to maintain the "unity of the Spirit" until we all come to the "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:3,13).

REACHING THE LOST: A DIRECT RESULT OF WALKING IN OUR FOUR STANDARDS

Within the scope of our vision—whether it is in our personal pursuit of Christlikeness or engendering unity in the church, whether we are praying for our nation or helping to paint a neighbor's house—our spirit is always mindful of reaching the lost. We seek a pure heart so that "sinners will be converted" to God (Ps 51); we desire unity, that "the world may believe" (John 17); and, we humble ourselves and pray that God might turn and "heal [our] land" (2 Chron 7:14). Just as the unsaved are always on the mind of God, so we are ever mindful of Christ's heart to seek and to save the lost.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ADVANCING CHURCH MINISTRIES

Advancing Church Ministries and In Christ's Image media and training resources are inter-denominational in nature. As such, we support both denominations and independent churches. Our expressed goal is to help churches heal historic divisions that have left them isolated and disconnected from one another, and to support them as they reach to redeem their communities. We accomplish this by focusing our energies on the centrality of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished for us on Calvary, and also by obeying His call to conform us to His nature. Our materials have helped bring unity to citywide church communities that previously were ethnically, generationally and theologically divided.

While we can be relied upon to supply foundational resources and spiritual experience, those who lead

this association on a local level are the individuals in each city who seek to model the maturity of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus spoke to the seven (citywide) churches in Asia, and each city church was independently accountable to Christ (see Rev 2–3), so our goal is to build the church in each city. God has ordained that *local leaders* would receive grace to see their communities shaped into the unique vessels for God's glory. Thus, we honor and esteem denominations and other church associations, and seek only to build Christ-centered unity among all who call upon the name of the Lord. Indeed, we do not want to minimize the importance of denominational strengths and resources; we simply seek to serve Christ's mandate that we would all be one.

While we will often be available to offer advice or resources, at this time it will not be our practice to settle disputes or administer church discipline. As stated, our goal is to see a mature, united pastoral leadership in every city provide direction and guidance for their communities, thus allowing the unity of the citywide church to rise to its biblical ascendancy.