

July 2008

Dear North Shore Fellowship,

How might we structure ourselves to best accomplish the vision of NSF?

This time last year we encouraged **fellowship groups** in neighborhoods or areas of the city we now call **parishes**. Chrissy and I have thoroughly enjoyed hosting our **fellowship group** this past year in part because everyone *walks* to our house! Now, not every group lives on one square block like ours, but moving toward this “where you live” model has helped us *triple our participation* in fellowship groups in only one year!

Fellowship means participating together in the gospel. This includes giving and receiving care in all kinds of ways. God’s rich love for us in His Son is always the best reason to meet one another’s needs. Being in fellowship *in local parishes* greatly enables us to embody Christ’s love and compassion to one another. It’s simply more likely for a North Chatt cat to take a meal from Mississippi Ave to Maryland Ave than one of our members from Dayton to meet a need for another member in Dalton! **Fellowship groups are the centerpiece of our plan to provide real care and ministry direction for our whole body.**

In the past year, we have initiated having a **parish elder** provide spiritual oversight for each parish. Now we are introducing a **parish deacon** (or deacon apprentice) for every parish. Do you realize the first deacons had no buildings to maintain and no bulletins to pass out? What did those deacons do?! They lead believers to meet one another’s needs so their merciful and generous Savior would be glorified in their midst (see Acts 6:1-7). Our **parish deacons** will aim in the same direction—to stir up mercy and generosity within our parishes. Eleven deacons will help **fellowship groups** in their parishes see and meet needs in our body and among our neighbors. Each parish deacon stewards funds to *help you meet needs where you live*. Please view them as *your partners in ministry*, available to help you see and meet needs with grace and wisdom.

Structuring ourselves like this helps us realize our original vision. The original vision for NSF was to be a part of a church planting network around our city. Shared ministry with one another in our local parishes and with our neighbors in mind will help us discern where to plant new churches. The original vision for North Shore was to fill a hole in North Chattanooga for a gospel-centered church for those who live here. Our members who live in North Chatt are our front line for outreach to this part of the city. As they partner with one another to build relationships with the people and institutions of North Chatt, they open doors for all of us to embody Jesus here.

Enclosed with this letter is a breakdown of our parishes, the fellowship groups in them, the parish elders and deacons serving, and the area pastor responsible. On the flip side is a brief article about a man named Thomas Chalmers who revolutionized Glasgow, Scotland 200 years ago with a similar approach to ministry. I hope reading it will inspire you to wonder what our city will become as we continue to partner with one another to enjoy and embody Christ Jesus to the glory of God.

Serving you,

Robby