



Fall 2023 Quarterly Newsletter

Dear Northside Family,

Greetings! This newsletter was much different in its initial draft because I wrote most of it before October 7, 2023, the awful day Hamas cowardly terrorized Israel. While the uncertainty in our world grows daily, “because of Jesus” we believers should be overcome with boldness that God is in control! As I shared in my “prophecy update” message on Oct 22, it’s impossible not to see that despite all the evil, God is still marvelously watching out for Israel. When we see the widespread hate and antisemitism in the world, it is nothing short of a miracle that Israel is even still standing today and that Jews around the world are still alive. We thought such despicable attitudes and worldviews died with the holocaust. But the growing animosity seems to be worse than ever.

Of course, there is absolutely no logic behind the hate directed at Jews. But Scripture answers the “why” question. God has NOT abandoned His covenant people. He still loves Israel and promises that one day their eyes will be opened to see Jesus as their Messiah. For that to happen, He has to preserve a remnant of Israelites that will fulfill the numerous OT and NT prophecies that Israel will be saved. Yes, those of us who are believing Gentiles are grafted into Israel, and thus we share in the suffering, persecution, ridicule, etc.; but we also share the eventual triumph with our Jewish brethren that will one day come to Christ. However, the “Church” does NOT replace Israel. If that were the case, Satan would not be that interested in killing Jews and destroying Israel! In other words, if Israel is already eternally lost, why does Satan stir up all the attention around the world against such a small, insignificant number of people?

With all that is happening, I have taken a break from my 1st Corinthians series to deal with Biblical prophecy – as that seems to be on everyone’s mind now. Every believer rightly senses the potential significance of any Middle Eastern conflict involving Israel. To be sure, God uses everything toward His prophetic future. But in my humble understanding of Scripture, there are some significant things that still need to happen before we encounter the final battle in Israel. It certainly feels closer, but let us all be good Bereans (Acts 17:10-12) and study the Scriptures carefully.

I especially urge you to be very careful about what so many different known and unknown “prophecy” experts are saying (including yours truly!) – even the well-known and respected Christian personalities on TV, in books, on web pages, etc. That is not to say that any one of them is necessarily wrong. But because there are often small (and usually big) disagreements between them, they can’t all be correct! Study God’s Word yourself. Trust the Holy Spirit to open your eyes. Test what the “experts” are saying by the Word. Read and study all of the perspectives and assess how they align with Scripture. Do your best to read the Scriptures with no pre-conceived end-times theories or perspectives, and just let the natural reading guide your study.

Most importantly, let’s support our Jewish brethren – in prayer, word, and deed. Some Christians wrongly think of non-Christian Jews as castaways. I prefer to think of such as prodigals, still called by God to come back to Him. As such, we the “Church” cannot allow ourselves to repeat the mistakes made during the holocaust. Most of Christianity did nothing to stop the atrocities of the WWII era. While it is true that much of what was happening then wasn’t known until the end of the war, we in our time cannot claim such ignorance. The antisemitism throughout the world is on our televisions and social media every day and night. God is giving us another chance to stand by Israel and the Jewish people.

As I state each week, support ministries and organizations that truly help Israel as God leads. If you aren’t sure, and/or you also want to give via Northside for Israel, know that throughout this war we have chosen to support two projects facilitated by Frontier Alliance International, a very pro-Israel missions organization committed to what we call the 10-40 window (i.e. Middle East, North Africa, Indonesia, etc.). Their headquarters are in the Golan Heights (Israel), and they are already providing everyday supplies (toiletries, food, clothing, etc.) to the Israeli troops in northern Israel, and soon to the Jewish people and troops in

southern Israel as well. The second project they are spearheading is to provide/renovate bomb shelters for Israelis in northern Israel. Some 50,000 Israelis in northern Israel (where Hezbollah is a major threat) do not have access to a safe shelter when shells and bombs are sent their way – which is often. These are unique and very specific projects we know, but that is what especially drew us to assist them. They are not needs that most Christians would think about but are extremely important to the preservation of God's people. Whether you give in person or online, just notate such for "Israel" and 100% of it will go to these two projects.

So, the following is the newsletter as originally penned.

It's unbelievable how much has happened since my last newsletter. I am so thankful to the Lord for all that He is doing at Northside. And I am so thankful for each of you that call Northside home! Your ongoing prayer and support have been nothing less than miraculous. Let me start with updates on multiple issues.

- There seems to be an increasing comfort level for people to come forward for prayer and ministry each week. God has honored such with some amazing, answered prayers. But other needs and prayers still remain, and I love to see us come together to pray for one another for such. God is always the correct answer and the only One that can respond in His endless ways of supernatural answers and provision!
- We also continue to see steady growth and now routinely average 100 precious adults, youth, children, toddlers, and infants each week. We have officially departmentalized our youth (6th-12th grade) and kids (K-5th grade) ministries.
- Pastors Karen and Randy continue to amaze us with the leadership they provide to Kidz Club. God is growing the kids, numerically and especially spiritually!
- Pastor Jason Hemby, with periodic assistance from Madison Welter, conducts youth group for our teenagers after P&W time. We are seeing new faces; God is moving!
- Pastor Sandy has started a Sunday class for any teenagers whose parents attend an adult Sunday School class.
- And our nursery and toddler numbers are increasing and require different ministry approaches and lessons for different ages. Pastor Jillian is doing an amazing job with this growing ministry!
- Those of you who have been around long enough should be able to recall my deepest conviction a few years ago that Northside desperately needed kids and youth. We are seeing that miracle grow every week!
- Equally exciting has been the P&W ministry that Pastor Brianna leads. New faces have been added to the team, and I love how we have such a variety of personnel week to week. That too is an answer to prayer and fulfillment of a vision for that ministry!
- Pastor Kathe's oversight of our finances is nothing short of extraordinary. She actually likes all of this accounting stuff (crazy I know!). Her commitment to detail and integrity has no doubt triggered an even greater spirit of giving amongst our Northside family. God blesses good stewardship.
- And what more can I say about Pastor Cali?! She has taken on more responsibilities and leadership in areas too numerous to cite. She is a blessing beyond words to the entire Northside family. I would have burned out long ago without her servant leadership.
- Although I mention it often, I don't really spell out details because that becomes time-consuming. But if you were in my shoes, watching how God moves at just the right time to provide for whatever we need, you would be singing praises constantly! (But you do that now anyway, right!?)
- A specific example is our finances. Not only is the total to date amazing (over \$254,000 given to date, which already exceeds our annual projection by almost \$53,000), but the timing is always perfect. We have had three months this year when our total giving exceeded \$33,000 each of those months! Not only is that a Northside record – each time – but the timing was God-ordained because it matched major contracts we would sign to continue our required facility upgrades and repairs. No one will ever convince me that we can't trust the Lord to do things debt-free in His timing! (Apply that to your personal finances and life as well! It is a blessing beyond words.)
- The future preschool ministry continues to go forward in development. While most of the emphasis and need right now is on facility upgrades to comply with local, state, and federal safety requirements, much

more behind-the-scenes advancement is also taking place. Just keep praying, giving, and promoting as God leads! Fall of 2024 is still our goal.

- One project that especially benefits the entire church (well, the little kids mostly) is our playground. That has been a very arduous process primarily because of all the underground fire sprinkler infrastructure that needs to be installed first. We do finally have all the permits to get that contractor started. We are just waiting for the city to install the required tap and fire hydrant. So, while it will still be several months before we see that nice green playground turf installed, we will at least see some progress on the underground work soon enough. If you haven't been back there lately, check it out. The concrete work and fencing are all in. Baby steps yes, but any progress is still progress!
- Especially exciting this year has been the increased missions and outreach giving we have been able to channel. Not only have we added a few AG missionaries to our ongoing monthly support list, but many of you have taken on further monthly support of those God has specifically put on your heart. And when we have asked for special gifts to support specific needs (VBS, A Woman's Choice, Loving Hands, disaster relief, missionaries, the NLE school outreaches, etc.), your response is always cheerful, abundant, and God-led. In total, because of your direct giving and increased tithes and offerings, over \$27,000 has been given directly to missionaries, missions, and outreach so far this year! And that doesn't include the many items you have donated for specific projects, nor the outreach volunteer hours that so many of you have conducted. Thank you!!

Request for Next Several Months

Allow me to reiterate a request I have mentioned from the pulpit a few times. I recently sat down and did a detailed cash flow projection for the next six months to get everything completed in our first phase of facility upgrades. As you know, I have stated that I would really love to NOT have to tap into some CD's we have in savings as they are each making over 5% APY interest. And as you know, liquidating CD's before their maturity date also triggers penalties.

So, here is the math. Assuming every one of us continues, or improves, our current level of giving (tithes and offerings), here is our extra need over the next six months (October – March) to avoid needing those CD's prematurely. If everyone who calls Northside home (and is currently giving) simply gave an extra \$10 per week for the next six months, we would avoid using the CD's early! Now, I fully realize that would be very difficult for several of you. On the other hand, many of us could easily do more than an extra \$10 per week for six months – thus helping to offset those who can't do the full \$10. Guess what I am going to encourage!? As always, everyone do what God speaks to your heart! If we ALL do what He says, it will all come – even more than enough (like the Tabernacle and Temple giving accounts in Scripture). What would also help tremendously would be if those of you who currently haven't supported Northside financially would begin to do something on a regular basis. No condemnation intended. But yes, that is a personal challenge, supported by Scripture! I am a firm believer that you should tithe where you are fed.

Business

Just in case you were not aware, on September 10, 2023, the membership unanimously voted for a few tweaks to our Constitution and Bylaws to better foster the needed future amending process. There are now five major areas that we need to edit in our official organizational documents. Summaries of each of the five major issues are stated below. We are working with a Christian law firm to make sure we do everything correctly, and we are going through every word and line of our Articles to make sure everything is in alignment with each other. Your task (members especially) over the next several months is to read the many edits we are proposing on the editing copy we have posted on our webpage.

We will be voting on these edits at our January 2024 Business Meeting. That gives you several months to come and talk with me and/or board members about any questions you have, further suggestions and/or edits, and/or any additional wording you think would be wise. The board and staff will continue to research, edit, and if necessary, tweak language. The most recent proposed version will always be posted online. The final edited version will be posted at least two weeks before the January 2024 meeting.

Please do NOT come to the annual business meeting unprepared! I promise you, it will be VERY frustrating to your fellow brothers and sisters if you bring up concerns or issues about any of the edits if you have not even read and studied them ahead of time and previously discussed them with us prior to the annual meeting! Communicate ahead of time, please. If you do not have computer access, or for whatever reason cannot work with downloaded documents, ask someone for help. If that still doesn't work, let a Pastor know and we will provide you a hard copy. But please know that we are trying to eliminate as much paper and copying usage as possible as that gets very costly and time-consuming for our small printers.

1. The most important issue we have been talking about, which needs editing, deals with what happens to our church and property in the event the church votes to dissolve (i.e. close the church) or to disaffiliate with the AG denomination (if in the future any unbiblical doctrines and/or cultural practices were adopted or accepted by the denomination – i.e. LGBTQ+ credentialing, same-sex weddings, anti-Israel policies, pro-abortion, etc.) We are NOT anticipating nor advocating for either!! But being proactive now rather than reactive in the future is the better Bible way. You will see in the edited version what the current language states and what we are proposing to fix that. The problems and solutions should be self-explanatory – and I have stated it several times from the pulpit. Please come see us if you are still unclear on the exposed risk we are under if we do not edit some language.
2. A second issue that needs addressing is what to do about board membership as it relates to pastoral staff. The current handbook only addresses the Senior Pastor – presumably because that has been the primary staff position of the past. Per the Bylaws, Article II automatically makes the Senior Pastor the board president and a board member but is silent on other full-time pastors. Additionally, nothing clear is stated about part-time pastors/staff serving on the board. You will see our recommendations in the added language on the edited copy.
3. A third issue was our departmental growth and opening of a preschool. There is nothing definitive about either in the current Constitution and Bylaws. You will find that added language in the Bylaws.
4. The fourth issue is a newly added section to provide an avenue for Northside church members called to various types of non-church ministries to obtain credentials to do such. Many Christian organizations exist that are not traditional churches, so denominational licensing and/or ordination is not required. But they do desire/require their “employees” to be credentialed by a Christian church in order to serve. What we are proposing should be fairly self-explanatory, and it is a very common practice in AG churches.
5. Finally, you will note several small edits in various Articles that the board wanted to edit. Much of this was simply to make sure everything aligned with each other throughout the Constitution and Bylaws. Other specific areas were added because of legal advice. Many of the minor tweaks you will see here and there are to bring our language more in line with current AG policies, procedures, practices, and requirements. For example, and this will be a surprise to many of you, many of the requirements that Northside Assembly details may sound like dictates from the AG denomination, but they are not! The best explanation I received from an AG official to understand the whole sovereign church with denominational affiliation was as follows:

The local church is sovereign and autonomous, and as such they govern themselves, own their property and buildings, conduct their own affairs, support whomever missionaries and projects they desire, etc. There are no fees or giving requirements on the church toward the AG District or National offices. (It is not like the federal versus local government in the sense that the Federal government controls and trumps everything.) The churches in the AG denomination are described as a “fellowship” of like-minded but autonomous churches. This is one of the reasons you will see so much variety in different AG churches in terms of names, worship, ministry, departments, functions, etc.

On the other hand, the individual credentialed AG minister IS, in a sense, “owned” by the denomination. (Side note, myself, Pastor Cali, Pastor Brianna, and several of you who are AG

credentialed as a minister do have specific requirements to the AG District and National offices – including regularly giving a significant amount to them financially.) *So, in a practical sense, the AG denomination works with and for the AG-credentialed ministers. They have local and national conventions to discuss issues, vote on language and policies, decide on positions and responses, etc. Churches can send only a few delegates to these events based on their size. In essence, the conventions are largely for the AG-credentialed ministers to operate the denomination.*

Hope that all made sense and provided a little more context behind our proposed edits. Again, come see us if you need to talk anything through, or have questions/concerns.

Now on to other news

- Please take advantage of the services online, especially if you are homebound for any reason, on a trip, etc. They are available via the website <https://www.northsidelakeland.com/sermons>. Please also subscribe to our YouTube channel as we post past services there as well. https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCJeQ3QBZ0Hw_xIKPkFss7mQ
- Regarding the videos of our service, we recently made some updates to upgrade the sound quality of those speaking. Let us know if it is any better or still the same on your end. It works best if you watch them on a device with a boosted sound system, sound bar, etc. We will eventually upgrade the recording system even more. However, our higher priority right now is to get our preschool open, and that will require a lot of facilities, fire, and safety upgrades; those projects will take financial priority right now. Thank you for your patience!
- I promise, as long as we are still here, I will eventually return to my series on 1st Corinthians as the Lord leads! With all that is going on right now, I want to make sure all of your questions (and my questions!) are dealt with so that we can pray and minister to/for Israel accordingly.

Blessings!

Doug Roth

Dr. Roth - Pastor