

NRBC Elder Position Paper on Church Growth
Adopted by the NRBC Elder Council on May 11, 2026

Over the last few years, our church has experienced varying levels of numerical growth. This growth has caused us to ask some important questions as we both respond to the current growth of our congregation and hope to act proactively in anticipation of possible future growth. The intention of this paper is to establish a clear line of thinking concerning the subject of church growth and to establish some ecclesiological boundaries and priorities as we move forward.

From the outset, we want to recognize two truths about church growth. First, numerical church growth does not necessarily equate to church health. For any number of reasons, a healthy church may not grow numerically. For just as many reasons, a growing church may be a very unhealthy congregation. So we cannot gauge the health of our church simply by looking at the increase in worship attendance or membership. Similarly, numerical growth and spiritual growth are also not the same thing. As the old adage rightly observes, “a church can be a mile wide but only an inch deep.” Because our mission is to “make disciples that make disciples,” our primary focus must be on the health of our congregation and the spiritual growth of our members and not on numerical growth.

However, a healthy church with a membership that is growing spiritually will often also grow numerically. As we fulfill the Great Commission together, it stands to reason that the lost will be saved, the saved will be discipled, and the Lord will add to

our numbers (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:47). This type of church growth should be valued by our congregation because it is a sign that the Lord is using us in the advancement of the gospel. This does not, however, minimize other ways our church may grow. For instance, because there are many young families in our congregation, we experience some level of growth each year by the Lord blessing these families with new children (Psalm 127:3–5). We love and cherish this type of church growth. Additionally, healthy churches often see growth as believers move to the area looking for a church. We are happy to welcome these likeminded believers into our fellowship. Finally, some growth is from local Christians who have grown dissatisfied with poor doctrine or unhealthy practices at another church. While we are always welcoming to those who come into our church because of this, we are clear in our desire to not be seen as a church that is looking for transfer growth at the expense of other local congregations.

As we grow numerically, we believe there are some theological discussions and best practices that are best had and established before they are needed. Our desire is not to be reactionary to growth, but to have a plan in place for when it happens. What follows for the rest of this paper is our elder council's thinking on certain subjects pertaining to the theological and practical aspects of how we will respond to growth in the future.

Every time we add members to our congregation, which is typically every third month when we meet for quarterly members' meetings, we change the makeup of our

church. Our median age goes up or down, the length the average member has been here adjusts, and our ethnic and socioeconomic demographics change slightly. At least four times a year, our family changes just a little bit. However, we cannot allow this regular change in membership to affect the established gospel culture of our church. What makes our church who we are is what our members have agreed to hold in common. Therefore, our Member Covenant, represented in our Core Beliefs, Core Values, and Core Competencies, must remain central to our covenant family. To ensure this is a reality in the long-term, we must prioritize the clear communication and affirmation of our Member Covenant by all members— old and new. The doctrines, priorities, and practices contained in our Member Covenant, when rightly understood, held, and practiced by all of our membership, will serve as guardrails against mission drift and doctrinal compromise as we grow.

Common modern-day practices to address or even encourage numerical growth are the multisite and multiservice church models.¹ While we can remain in broader conventional fellowship with churches that implement these models, they are not strategies we desire to utilize in addressing church growth at NRBC. In particular, we view the multisite church model, where a local church gathers in two or more permanent locations, as incompatible with the doctrines and practices of our church. The idea that one local church can exist in unity across geographical distances runs contrary to historic Baptist beliefs and has only been practiced in Baptist circles for a

¹ See Jonathan Leeman, *One Assembly: Rethinking the Multisite & Multiservice Church Models* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020) for a detailed biblical critique of these models.

few decades, being popularized in the twenty-first century. We believe it is essential for our church to have one location for our gatherings.

As for the multiservice model, we believe it is less detrimental to church health than the multisite model, but we still view it as a less than ideal way to address numerical church growth. While somewhat older than the multisite model, there are very few examples of Baptist churches, or really any evangelical protestant churches, having identical Sunday morning services prior to the early to mid-twentieth century. It seems to us that our forebearers were following rightly held biblical convictions when they insisted that the local church is best represented in a single gathering of the church's members. For a time during the Covid-19 pandemic, out of necessity, we implemented this model. We do not believe it was wrong to do so as a response to those circumstances. Likewise, if we experienced a sudden surge of Sunday morning attendance that could not be addressed in any other way, we might consider multiple Sunday morning services as a short-term solution. If this were to happen, we would prioritize other, long-term solutions as quickly as possible that would allow us to return to one assembly.

Since we desire to be a church that is able to all meet together for worship on the Lord's Day and for members' meetings, our ultimate limitation to growth will always be the size of our largest room. Growing that space, which is now our worship center built in the late 1990s, would be very difficult and expensive. Doing so should not be an idea that is considered "off-the-table" in the distant future, but is highly impractical for

the foreseeable future. Because of this, we must strive to ensure that the size of that space is then our only limiting practical factor. This means we must proactively address pressure points and areas of need to maximize space on our campus. As of the writing of this paper (2026) our lobby, preschool space, and areas of Next Gen dropoff/pickup are greater restrictors of our ability to grow than our worship center seating capacity. Also, without the willingness for more small groups to move or be started off-campus, our adult small group space is also a significant area of concern. While the intention for this paper is to be “evergreen” in most respects, the pressure points and areas of need may change over time, but these examples serve as current problems that demonstrate the need for proactive solutions.

With these priorities established, the long-term solution to numerical growth is church planting and church revitalization. For this to become an ongoing reality for our church, we must continue to emphasize certain aspects of our mission. First, we must see that a legacy of God’s ongoing faithfulness that outlives us is best left not by us building as big of a church as possible on this corner of Bridge Road, but by planting healthy churches and strategically revitalizing stagnant or even unhealthy ones. Second, we must continue to raise up men in our church who can plant these new churches or pastor existing churches towards church health through revitalization. The path to planting and revitalization leadership will most naturally run through our elder development process. When it comes time to take on another church plant or revitalization work, our elders will first consider the men already recognized as spiritual

leaders in our congregation before looking elsewhere. Finally, this will require members from our church to be ready and willing to be sent out as new members of these church plants and revitalization efforts. We should not send out shepherds alone, but faithful sheep must go with them to accomplish the work of ministry. By regularly sending out members in this way, we not only create new outposts for the gospel, but also make room in our own church for continued growth.

None of us can speak with surety about what tomorrow holds. We can, however, look at how the Lord has blessed our congregation in the past and be prepared for Him to continue to do so in the future. Prayerfully, the boundaries and priorities established in this paper will help guide our congregation for years to come.