

Hope Fellowship Vision Statement

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
Jesus to his disciples at the last supper

We are a community of disciples:

- ▶ **Seeking** to follow Jesus
- ▶ **Sharing** the confession “Jesus is Lord”
- ▶ **Affirming** our ecumenical unity with the worldwide body of Christ
- ▶ **Identifying** ourselves as part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement within the Christian family

Jesus leads us to ...

Church as Daily Life

Hope Fellowship is our life together – it is not a building, a worship service, or a collection of programs. We try to organize our lives so that we have daily contact with each other in a variety of ways. Some of us live close to or work with each other, share childcare or living space, and find ways that our paths will cross whether for praying, socializing, or meetings (Acts 2.46).

Diversity

We worship and meet in Spanish and English. The body of Christ should be a “new humanity” (Eph. 2.15). We know that God may call us to yet greater diversity in our body.

Shalom

Jesus has called us to be peacemakers and to love our enemies (Matt. 5.9, 46). How to live peacefully, non-violently, and promote justice in our world is a perennial topic in our church’s life.

Love and Sharing

Everything else is worthless if we do not love and forgive each other and live as brothers and sisters (1 John 3.14). We have affirmed that no member of the fellowship should be in need (Acts 4.34).

Service to Neighbors

Individually and collectively we are called to love our neighbors as our selves (Matt. 19.19). Collectively our membership has made major commitments in energy and finances to the ministries of World Hunger Relief and Habitat for Humanity.

Mutual Discernment

We believe that God speaks more clearly to the church than to any one of us as an individual. We work at finding ways to seek the counsel and discernment of brothers and sisters in decisions such as job changes, moving, marriage, and schooling (Rom. 12.2).

Membership

Membership is open to baptized believers in Jesus Christ, who confess him as Lord, and are willing to share life with the community.

We ask those interested in membership to:

- ▶ worship with us
- ▶ attend a set of classes
- ▶ participate in discipleship
- ▶ live life with us for a while

Members are officially welcomed at a point when they and the church recognize together that God has joined us in Christ’s body. This process may take up to a year or even more.

Members are called to:

Worship actively and regularly with the body and to grow individually in prayer and devotion
Confess sin and grow in discipleship with brothers and sisters
Serve willingly and joyfully as able with the church in ministries and other tasks
Tithe to the corporate treasury of the church and **share financially** with each other as needed
Love, support, forgive, and respect each other
Mutual discernment in major personal and church decisions

Neighborhood

A number of us enjoy the blessing of living close to each other in the neighborhood of North Waco where our current meeting house is located. As a location for our worship service, this non-university, lower-income, diverse neighborhood helps keep us mindful of Jesus' calling for his people to be of and among those on society's margins. From its very inception, Hope Fellowship has had members who live outside of this neighborhood and are faithful in their commitment to shared life. Hope Fellowship affirms and seeks to support the formation of other geographic clusters of members.

Doctrine

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3.11).

The focus of doctrine is living the life of discipleship to Jesus Christ. We affirm historical creeds of the church.

We believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We accept Jesus Christ as God's son, the full revelation, the heir of all things, and the exact representation of God's being (Heb. 1.2-3). We are thankful for God's inspired words through the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, wonderfully preserved through the ages, that point us toward salvation and life in Jesus Christ. With glad and grateful hearts we accept God's continued leadership and ministry through the Holy Spirit.

Baptism

We accept any previous baptism claimed by a believer seeking to join us. We practice only believer's baptism after a time of guidance and instruction and do not baptize children below the age of accountability.

Communion

We share communion as a celebration of unity by the whole Christian family of Jesus' resurrection, and we welcome all with a common confession, including children, to join us.

Marriage

Marriage within the body of Christ is a voluntary commitment between two people centered in mutuality – of respect, love, and care. We affirm both marriage and singleness as paths of faithful discipleship. We seek to resist simple divisions of the body of Christ based on disagreements about gender and sexuality and to practice instead a commitment to patient dialogue and charity toward one another. We welcome one another in order to bring glory to God (Romans 15:7).

Leadership

Christ is the head and ruler of our church. Congregationally we seek to move forward in unity. We see no scriptural basis for dividing God's people into clergy and laity. All are to minister and to serve, and the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church through individuals regardless of gender or sexual identity. We believe that God provides the leadership needed for our church from among the brothers and sisters of our church. We have affirmed several in positions of church wide leadership as pastors and ministry leaders in worship, stewardship, evangelism, and fellowship. We believe that God provides leadership in multiple arrangements and that we should avoid excessive authority being invested in any one individual. Leadership is occasionally reviewed by the membership.

Relationships

We have affirmed relationships of support, accountability, and joint mission with:

- Shalom Mission Communities
- Texas Mennonite Convention

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