

# Vision

What is the purpose of the Central Church of Christ? Why is Central located where it is? What makes Central different from other churches? What is God's specific mission for Central?

To begin answering these questions, we need to look at our location. Central's facilities are in the historic downtown area of Amarillo. We draw members from all over the city. We are also the oldest congregation of Churches of Christ in town and with the most prominent profile before the community. This gives us unique challenges and opportunities. We believe God wants us to capitalize on our unique history and location to serve his larger purposes. God put us here for a reason.

Central began in the downtown of Amarillo in 1908. Our chapel was constructed during the depth of the depression. We have a long history of serving the whole city of Amarillo and shaping the identity of Churches of Christ in our region of the country.

We believe it is God's will for us to stay in the downtown area. We feel God has something in store for us that maximizes where we are located. We are positioned in the perfect place to reach people across the whole city of Amarillo. We are also located in one of the areas of greatest need in the city. What does that tell us about what our mission should be? It tells us several things.

## 1 God has put us in a position to demonstrate the unifying power of the Gospel

God's purpose from creation through the coming of Jesus to this day is to form loving relationships and unity among all his children (Jn 13:34-35; Lk 19:10). Sin began when humans decided to be their own gods and broke their relationship with their creator (Gen 3). The Bible is the story of God's relentless pursuit of humanity and his plan to bring as many as possible back into a loving relationship with him (Lk 15:1-32). The Gospel is about God coming personally through Jesus his son and going to the greatest lengths possible—death on a cross—to prove God's love and create a way for us to be reconciled to our loving Father (1 Jn 4:7-12).

Our ministry call is to be God's agents of reconciliation in four distinct ways:

1. *We seek to bring God and people together in Christ through evangelism. (2 Cor. 5:11-21).*
2. *We seek to help families learn how to love each other as Christ loves (Eph. 5:21-6:4; Jn. 13:34-35).*
3. *We seek to develop cooperative relationships with believers from different Christians traditions (Jn. 17:20-23; Php. 1:27-2:11).*
4. *We seek to bring together different social classes, races, cultures, and age groups in Christ (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 15:5-13).*

It is our call from God to bring people together in the heart of Amarillo. To serve as a signpost that the Gospel can unite people in amazing ways through the cross.

## 2 Just as God brought the faith to us through those who went before us, so God calls us to continue passing on the faith to those who come after us

We seek to form each member into fully developed followers of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13). We are committed to maintaining excellent ministries with youth and children (Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:1-8, Eph. 6:4). We desire for all ages to learn from and serve each other as one community of faith (Tit. 2:1-8; Matt. 18:1-5; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 9:47).

## 3 God has positioned us to minister to some of the most needy people in our city

Jesus was known for going to the people who were least able to help themselves (Lk. 1:46-55; 4:1-21; 7:20-23). Long before Jesus, God repeatedly demonstrated his compassionate heart for the powerless, the outcast, the hurting, the oppressed and the broken people (1 Sam. 2:1-10; Is. 1:10-20; Am. 2:6-8; Ex. 1-19). Most churches have to leave their geographical location to minister to the needy. But, Central can reach them in our own neighborhood with the love and care of Jesus and the transforming power of the Gospel (1 Jn. 3:16-19; Jm. 1:27).

## 4 God has called us to reach beyond Amarillo with the Good News of God's reconciling love (Matthew 28:18-20)

Central is the sponsoring home congregation of the Continent of Great Cities ministry. CGC recruits, trains and supports missionaries for Portuguese and Spanish speaking peoples. Separate from CGC, Central personally supports Alaor and Miriam Leite and Sidney and Barbara Leite in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Central is also the supervising congregation for Ellis and Doris Long in Brazilila, Brazil.



# Who is the Central Church of Christ?

As the Central Church of Christ, we seek to become the kind of church that the scriptures describe as God's ideal. We want to be an authentic expression of the non-denominational body of Christ and family of God in Amarillo. However, we are well aware that we did not arrive where we are without having a history that shapes us. Churches are composed of human beings who live in a specific culture and have a long history with an inescapable tradition. We find it very difficult to separate ourselves from our past and present context sufficiently to hear the Word of God in a pure unfiltered form. We realize that our experiences and viewpoints shape what we see and hear. We also believe that God has worked powerfully in our past in ways that we should recognize and honor.

We are descendants of the American Restoration movement led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. We do not revere these leaders or their associates, but we do recognize that their leadership created a community that continues to shape us. Churches of Christ have become a distinct Christian fellowship with our own traditions and identity. Like those early leaders, we do not believe that members of our fellowship are the only Christians, but we do believe that Churches of Christ are the work of God. We appreciate the many contributions and insights of our restoration heritage, and we seek to stay a part of this fellowship, but not in an exclusive way.

While recognizing that tradition is unavoidable and has value, we do not feel obligated to adhere to all the Biblical interpretations and traditional practices which have characterized Churches of Christ through the years. We desire to honor our heritage, but we seek to follow God's Word and Spirit above all so that we might be the church God is calling us to be today to reach this generation.

Among the things that we have resolved to retain from our heritage are believer's immersion, weekly communion, acapella singing in corporate assemblies, respect for the unique authority of and commitment to scripture, the essential role of the church, congregational autonomy, and the plurality of elders. In addition, we seek to reach back into our heritage and revive a passion for unity lost earlier in this century. Some of these matters are, for us, unambiguous teachings of scripture such as believer's immersion, the unique authority of scripture, the importance of the church and a passion for unity in the body of Christ. Other aspects of our heritage are not so clearly defined as requirements of scripture, but are, in our opinion, most compatible with the teachings of scripture. These aspects include weekly communion, acapella singing, congregational autonomy and the plurality of elders.

Not everything passed down to us in our heritage is worthy of handing on to the next generation. Several aspects of our tradition are in conflict with our understanding of scripture and the Spirit of Christ. These aspects include a legalistic patternism, confining the Holy Spirit to the scripture thus denying a personal indwelling, sectarianism, judgementalism, arrogance and any form of works righteousness.

We struggle at times to know how to separate scripture from our traditions. But we are committed to being faithful to scripture and faithful to the work of God in our past, present and future. We are open to change in order to be more faithful and effective servants of God in our rapidly changing world. However, changes should be well thought out, and consistent with scripture. We are excited about our spiritual journey and believe that God is constantly leading us to new heights. We believe that God is active in our lives and in our world so that we can never become complacent or rigidly fixed in our routine. At the same time, we take comfort in the knowledge that our God does not change like shifting shadows and will always be the same God that we have known and served for generations. We honor where He has worked in the past and we seek to follow Him as He leads us into the future.