

WITNESS



ASHLAND
CHURCH

Maps help us see where we are, and where we are headed.

As a member of Ashland, you are somewhere for Jesus – Richmond, Kentucky. As a church, Jesus intends to take us beyond Richmond to the ends of the earth. It's our prayer that this map helps you see more clearly why Jesus has you in Madison County, Kentucky as His witness. We also pray that you'd see where Jesus is taking us together as we commit to go with Him to the ends of the earth for His glory!

The great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon has been credited as saying, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." As a Christian who lives in Richmond, Kentucky, you must embrace the reality that God has placed you in this city to be a missionary whose influence extends to the ends of the earth.

At Ashland Church, we talk about this responsibility in light of our identity as a witness of Christ both locally and globally. We believe our identity as a witness is cultivated within the life of a local church. We believe the goal of our individual witness is to serve the overall mission of the church to plant churches around the world. Along the way, we also realize that God has given us strategic opportunities right here in Richmond, Kentucky that will have immediate global impact for which we must be good stewards.

YOUR IDENTITY: WITNESS

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

– Acts 1:8

The Spirit empowers us to witness (or tell the truth) that Jesus is God's King who died under God's wrath on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins against God. We tell the truth that, after His death, Jesus was raised from the dead three days later by God. We tell the truth that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, ruling and reigning. We announce to the world the truth that all who put their trust in Him will be accepted as an heir to His coming Kingdom and will rule with Him forever.

This announcement that Jesus is King flows from our identity in the Spirit. Notice this promise, "You will be...witnesses." The Spirit transforms us as He dwells in us. We are not given a brief command to merely do something. Rather, we are told to *become* something – His witness. We're to embrace it as our new identity.

Witness is not just what we do. It's who we are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Describe in your own words the difference between witnessing (something we do) and being a witness (something we are).

How does the understanding that you *are* a witness help you when witnessing (what you do / speak)? How does your identity effect how, when, where you share the gospel?

Where has God placed you as a witness?

- What's my city? Where do I live in this city?
- Where do I work?
- Who am I around?
- Where do I interact with people?

God has carefully placed you – and no one else – in these places and around these people to live and tell the truth of Jesus.

- Why do you believe God has placed you where He has as a witness?
- How has God equipped you to be a witness where you are?
- What are specific ways in which you must witness the gospel?
- To whom in these contexts is God calling you to witness (speak the gospel)?

OUR IDENTITY: WITNESSES TOGETHER

Our identity as a witness is not to be viewed individually. When Jesus says, “you will be my witnesses,” He is speaking collectively to His church. The Spirit comes to rest upon a *community*, not just individuals. We are all, by the Spirit, joined together with Christ to the Father as the family of God in the world. This new communal identity is intended to be fleshed out within the context of a local church in specific ways.

OUR LOCAL WITNESS

In the book of Acts, because of the presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the Person of the Holy Spirit, the church is marked out from the world by a bold declaration of the gospel of the Kingdom even in the face of sin and death. We see through their example:

- “Whatever-it-takes” gospel grit
- Christ-centered corporate worship
- Administering baptism as the sign of the Kingdom
- Celebrating our communion with Christ through the Lord’s Supper
- Generous giving of resources for the mission
- Genuine fellowship by being bound together on mission
- Cross-cultural ministry
- Radical hospitality to strangers and church family
- Suffering together for Jesus
- Using jobs, skills, and careers as and for witness
- Serving the poor
- Planting churches in strategic cities and unreached areas
- Sending missionaries to the ends of the earth

In this list we find the activity that marks out the church in the world. We find the ordinances – commanded signs of God’s Kingdom given to the church by Jesus Himself. We also find the strategy for and mission of the church.

All of this activity is driven by the presence of the Spirit of God as a sign of Jesus’ authority in the world. As individual witnesses, we must be bound to a local, corporate witness who seek to be marked out in the world through practicing and cultivating these activities in the world.

God has placed Ashland Church in Richmond, Kentucky. In Richmond, we seek to model the above activities in a variety of ministries, events, and projects. We choose to engage in structures and programs as a church that help to cultivate the aforementioned characteristics of a healthy local witness.

We never, however, want to confine our witness to our programs. Our goal, ultimately, is to witness the gospel in Richmond as individuals marked out in the world by a bold declaration of the gospel. We also long for our families to be ordered in light of the gospel, show radical hospitality to friends and strangers, be workers and students as unto the Lord, recreate (sports, rest, relaxation, hobbies, etc.) to the glory of God, steward our resources for the good of others, and live as Christ-fearing citizens who sacrificially serve our church and community in Richmond, Kentucky.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why should every church practice the following?

- Christ-centered corporate worship
- Administering baptism as the sign of the Kingdom
- Celebrating our communion with Christ through the Lord’s Supper
- Cross-cultural ministry
- Planting churches in strategic cities and unreached areas
- Sending missionaries to the ends of the earth

Why do you think the following is important for each and every Christian?

- Christ-centered corporate worship
- Administering baptism as the sign of the Kingdom
- Celebrating our communion with Christ through the Lord’s Supper

Among the New Testament believers empowered by the Holy Spirit, we see the following characteristics:

- “Whatever-it-takes” gospel grit
- Generous giving of resources for the mission
- Genuine fellowship by being bound on mission together
- Cross cultural ministry
- Radical hospitality to strangers and church family
- Suffering together for Jesus
- Using jobs, skills, and careers as and for witness
- Serving the poor

How do you specifically see the people at our church living out these traits?

Be specific. List their name.

How have you seen the Spirit cultivate these traits in your life and family?

Which of these traits do you find lacking the most in your own life? How will you commit to cultivating these things in your life?

Why is it important for a church to have programs for individuals to cultivate their local witness in the world?

How can a church make their witness too programmatic?

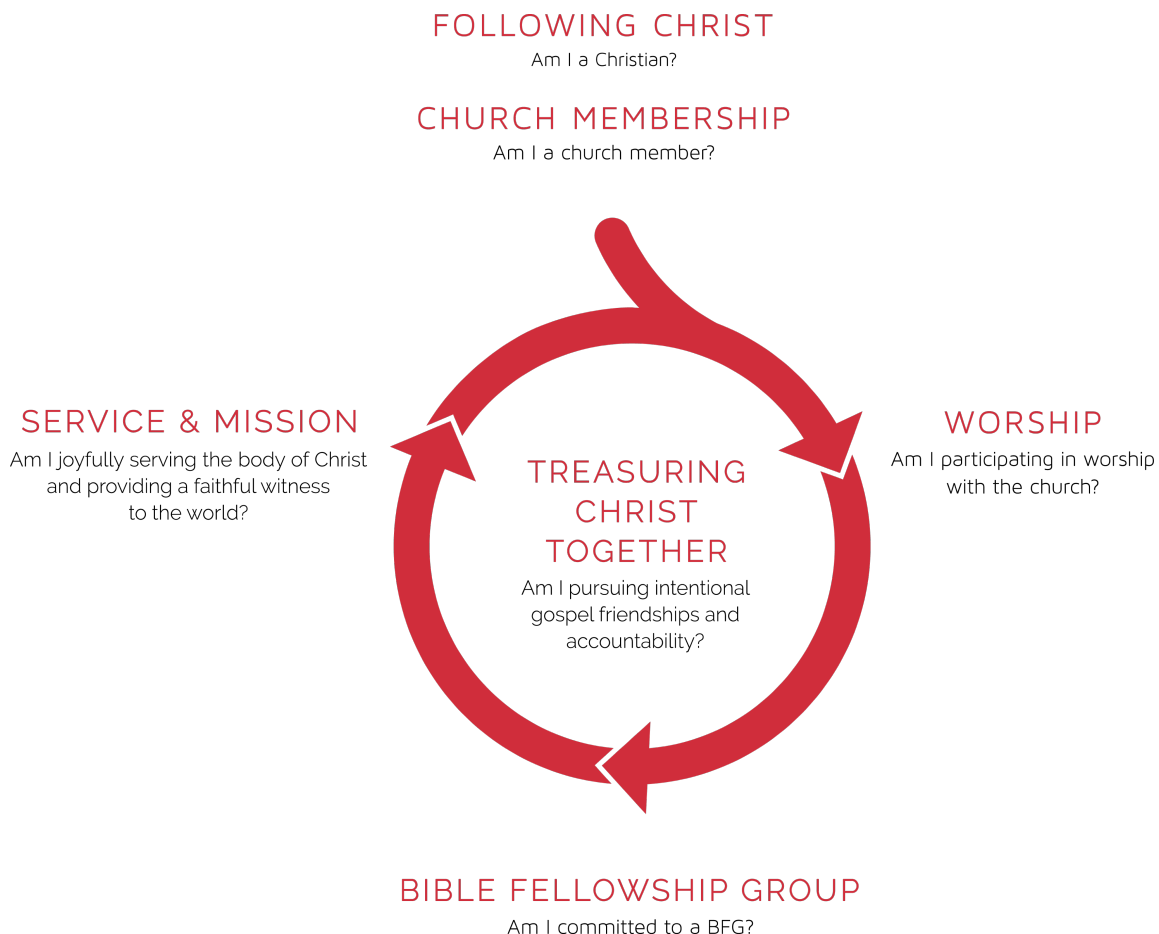
What are ways you can flesh out your witness that may not fit into a “program” at our church?

ASHLAND ESSENTIALS

How do we cultivate the characteristics of a healthy witness together? While there are a myriad of tools, programs, and resources that help us cultivate our witness at Ashland, we first focus on what we call the Essentials. Here we seek to help you make sure you are cultivating your identity as a witness in Richmond. The Essentials focus most on the context *where* you cultivate your identity as a witness (church membership, worship, small groups, and friendships).

The emphasis of the Essentials is the direction you are headed, rather than the destination. All of us are, at all times, headed in a direction toward Jesus. We never want to communicate that serving in certain ministry programs and doing certain activities mean you've reached a destination. These things only help us move further toward Jesus.

The Essentials bind us together on mission around the gospel. If you are engaged in the Essentials, you will naturally serve and be on mission as a part of our church's witness. The emphasis of the Essentials is the local church, where we find the accountability to practice the ordinances and necessary ministry of a healthy witness for Jesus.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ARE YOU ENGAGED IN THE ESSENTIALS?

Ask the Essential Questions

- Am I a Christian?
- Am I a church member?
- Am I participating in worship with the church?
- Am I committed to a BFG?
- Am I joyfully serving the body?

(See Church Membership Information and the Connect Card)

How do the Essential questions help you think about who you are as a witness? (Individually and Corporately)

Why is it important to think most about the context (where) for a healthy witness rather than *only* the activity (what) of a healthy witness?

Why is it important for us to think about the *direction* of a healthy witness (progress / sanctification) rather than the *destination* (arrival / glorification) of a healthy witness?

While the Essentials provide us with a context and accountability to cultivate our witness in the context of a local church, they also give us specific ways to flesh out our witness. As you answer the next question, consider what ministries you are equipped to serve at Ashland.

Are you serving in at least one of these areas?

- Children's Ministry
- AWANA
- Student Ministry
- College Ministry
- T2W Women's Ministry
- BAM Men's Ministry
- Pro-Life Ministry
- Frontline
- Hospitality (coffee)
- International Ministry
- Missions
- Music / Tech / Media

How can you better use the gifts the Lord has given you to serve our church?

GLOBAL WITNESS

While we must engage in the Essentials within the accountability of our local church, this local witness of the Kingdom is meant to extend to the ends of the earth.

GLOBAL IMPACT, LOCALLY

In our context, a variety of opportunities for a global witness have been given to us right here in Richmond. We call these Global Impact Opportunities. These ministries have an immediate impact that extends to the ends of the earth. They provide both cross-cultural encounters, as well as trans-generational investments that extend well beyond Richmond and each of our lifetimes.

INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY

The nations have come to us in Richmond. People from all over the world are represented in our city as immigrants, refugees, and international students. We must be good stewards of this providence by inviting the nations into our culture and homes to share our lives and the gospel with them. There are many internationals who have come to Richmond to study at ECU. This witness has an immediate world impact as many of these students can hear, believe, and return home with the gospel.

COLLEGE MOBILIZATION

Bill Bright, founder of CRU, is known for saying, "If we can win the campus today, we will win the world tomorrow." College students in Richmond are presently making major decisions about how and where they will spend the rest of their lives. At Ashland Church, we want to help them make these strategic decisions as witnesses for both

immediate and long term world impact. We seek to equip students to serve as a large percentage of our mission force while in college and long after they leave college.

You could summarize our approach to serving college students in the following way: we want college student to be witnesses (1) in the church, (2) on campus, (3) to the world, (4) for life.

IN THE CHURCH

The best way for students to be mobilized as a global witness is for them to connect and serve like any other member at Ashland Church. We encourage them to engage in all of the Essentials at Ashland Church. As individuals, they are a strategic part of our collective witness in the community.

ON CAMPUS

Students at ECU have a unique opportunity to be a witness for Jesus living in a campus environment. They have the opportunity to speak and live the gospel with immediate impact on the world around them, often in consistent, close proximity with many of the same students for four (or more) years. A primary resource for seeing this happen is by connecting to a Campus Ministry (BCM, CRU, FCA, Campus Outreach). These ministries provide a 24/7 presence and constant resources on campus for students to effectively live and speak the gospel. Because of the strategic opportunity these ministries provide students and families, we encourage members at Ashland Church to serve and support them.

TO THE WORLD

Over the summer, students have the opportunity to serve in one of our church planting cities for 6-8 weeks. There are also additional opportunities to serve on other short-term trips with our church body.

(See "Ends of the Earth Interns" below)

FOR LIFE

As students make decisions about what they'll do with their lives and where they will do it, we encourage them to think cross-culturally and beyond the bounds of our city and state. We are delighted when students decide to be rooted in

Richmond, Kentucky for their post-college life, but we also want them to consider using their occupations, skills, and gifts to serve in one of our church planting cities, as well as other parts of the world. Graduating seniors can apply to serve for up to two (2) years as one of our Ends of the Earth Interns in one of our church planting cities.

END OF THE EARTH INTERNS

The local church bears the primary responsibility to train future pastors and missionaries, sending them out into the world. This means that at Ashland Church we must see ourselves as the mission sending agency.

Even so, in order to be as effective as we can in our mission work we partner with like-minded missions organizations and with organizations within the Southern Baptist Convention such as the International Mission Board (IMB) and the North American Mission Board (NAMB). We also encourage seminary training at one of our Southern Baptist seminaries when available as a supplement to the training received through our local church.

Students and singles who apply for an Ends of the Earth internship can be sent to one of our church planting cities for six (6) weeks, and up to two (2) years when possible. Men considering pastoral ministry can apply to be a Pastoral Intern. Families considering the mission field will be assisted and equipped as they pursue God's call on their lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you believe is the biggest hindrance for people to locally serve internationals?

What has been your biggest hindrance to locally serving internationals?

List the ways a church benefits from being aggressively committed to college ministry.

The local church is to be the primary sending agent of missionaries, pastors, and church planters around the world. What obstacles do you believe keep churches from bearing this responsibility? How can Ashland overcome these obstacles? How can you help us do so?

How have you seen these three areas (Internationals / College / Church Planters & Missionaries) impact the world? (Share specific stories of specific people)

How has our church's commitment to these areas of ministry (Internationals / College / Church Planters & Missionaries) impacted your life?

MULTIPLYING OUR WITNESS: CHURCH PLANTING

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

– Matthew 28:19-20

The command found in the Great Commission to "make disciples" is ultimately fulfilled through planting churches. The church has been given the command to make disciples who are baptized and taught how to obey all that Jesus commanded.

Therefore, our ultimate mission as a church is to plant churches who plant churches who continue to plant more churches. In doing so, we are multiplying our local witness to the ends of the earth. Each local church stands as an outpost of God's authority declaring the truth that in Jesus, God's Kingdom has come and is coming into the world.

At this time we are directly engaged in church planting work in two cities. At Ashland Church we want every member to be connected to our work in both of these cities in some way.

NEW ORLEANS

Our long term goal in New Orleans is to continue to partner with Lakeshore Church in New Orleans to assist NAMB (North American Mission Board) church planters to plant more churches throughout the city. We take short term trips to New Orleans and send financial resources when available. We've also sent families from our church to New Orleans to join and serve Lakeshore Church.

ICA, PERU

In the city of Ica we are working alongside a newly planted church called Family Bible Center Church that is led by Pastor Wilfredo Pardo. We host conferences in the city to help train church members and pastors in Ica. We send summer teams for 6-8 week stints who stay at the seminary and assist Pastor Wilfredo and the local church. Our church also sends bibles and theological resources to the seminary to help train Christians in the city.

Ica is a strategic city at the base of the Andes Mountains that enables us to continue to invest in church planting in rural mountain villages like Cordova.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is the Great Commission best fulfilled through church planting?

- *Consider the ordinance of Baptism - "baptizing them..."*
- *Consider the responsibility to teach all that Jesus commanded*

What is the difference between just telling people about Jesus and making disciples of Jesus? How does this affect the way you build relationships for the sake of the gospel? How does this shape the relationships you have with unbelievers as well as Christians?

How does disciple-making and church planting affect the way a church thinks about: Missions? Short-term mission trips? What kind of mission activity we should be engaged in?

We want every member connected to our work in our church planting cities in some way. Members of Ashland Church should ask the questions:

- Can I go live and work in one of these cities?
- Can I take short-term trips to one of these cities?
- Will I give so others will go to these cities?
- What kind of resources will I send to missionaries on the ground in these cities?

- Will I pray specifically each week for the missionaries, church planters, churches, Christians, and the lost in these cities?

YOUR WITNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE DISCIPLES

Cultivating your identity as a witness locally by being engaged in our Essentials will lead to a global impact by praying, giving, going, and sending to a church planting city.

We must, however, intentionally seek to make disciples who make disciples. As you reflect and pray through this material as an individual witness, we want to encourage you to call others to do the same. Prayerfully consider the following questions:

- Who are you helping to cultivate the characteristics of a healthy witness in the life of others? How are you helping them develop a healthy witness?
- Who are you leading to take their next step in our Essentials? How are you leading them?
- Who are you recruiting to serve alongside you as you impact the globe, locally? In what ways are you doing this?
- Who are you recruiting to serve alongside you as you pray, send, give, and go to one of our church planting cities?

For more information about any of these steps you can simply complete a Connect Card indicating your commitments and questions. Your card will be given to the appropriate leadership team that will assist you.

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