



GOVERNANCE **REPORT**

**FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING
IN OUR CHURCH**

SPRING 2025

Fostering Understanding in our Church

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North Shore Community Baptist Church
April 2025
More at: nscbc.org/governance

Dear Church,

Thank you for how you have stepped into this process of collective discernment with us already. We are incredibly encouraged by the more than 250 thoughtful responses to the survey full of wisdom and openness. Reading through your responses has given us a window into who we are as a church community and we are truly blessed as a church family to have each other.

What follows is a report back to you on what was shared in the survey and all-church lunch. We hope you'll be encouraged and see signs that we are a vibrant, intergenerational community that wants to honor God, seek guidance through his word, and grow in love for one another.

A key part of growing in love like this involves listening to one another. This report gives us a chance to do that by helping us to grow in understanding of one another. With that shared understanding, we hope to engage in increasingly loving and generous conversations throughout this process.

Overall, survey responses reflect signs of a healthy, gospel-centered church. It is a joy to serve a community where people are experiencing belonging, learning to follow Jesus more closely, growing in their knowledge and application of Scripture, and discovering ways to participate in a gospel movement. As you'll see, many—though not all—of us are approaching these conversations with established views on one or both of the topics we are considering. We are deeply encouraged that so many of you expressed hope about this process: hope that we can grow in love for one another, even as we explore areas of disagreement, and openness to reading Scripture and discerning together.

This report is the result of a collaborative effort that involved people across our church—from those who thoughtfully contributed responses, to volunteers with expertise in data analysis and editorial review, to the elders, process team, and pastoral staff who have been learning from these responses and praying for our church as a result. We hope this collaboration can be a gift to all of us.

Inside, you'll find a combination of data and descriptions of people's views and experiences. Of course, no single report can fully capture the diversity within our church. The *Widen the Lens* sections seek to highlight experiences that stood out to us as offering valuable insights for better understanding one another.

Thank you again for your participation in this process and your loving investment in our church family.

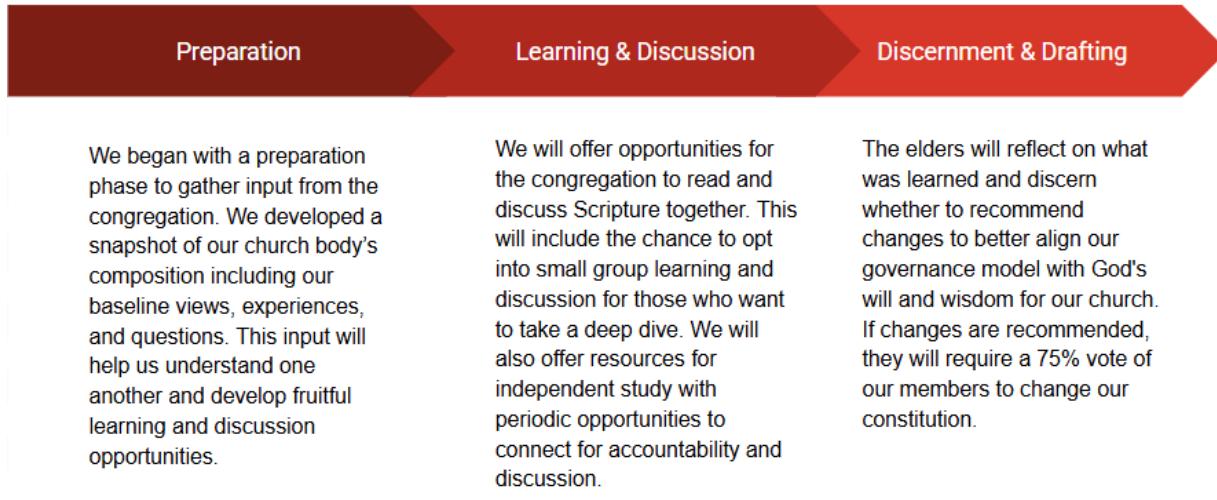
In Christ,

Richard Wallace, Associate Pastor, (*writing on behalf of*)
Bobby Warrenburg, Senior Pastor
NSCBC Elders and expanded process team

Process Update

What's happening: The elders are leading the church in a season of discernment regarding two aspects of North Shore Community Baptist Church's governance model.

The process is expected to unfold over three phases:



This report marks the conclusion of the first phase. It includes input gathered from the congregation through a survey of 224 active attenders¹ and a conversation with 125 participants at an all-church lunch in March of 2025. These were offered to everyone who calls NSCBC their church home and our elders sincerely thank you for participating in a spirit of honesty, humility, and openness.

Some survey respondents asked questions about our church model. Our [constitution](#) outlines our model, denominational affiliation, and how to amend our constitution. As true of Baptist churches, many people are involved. Members are eligible to vote on many important decisions and are eligible to serve as elders and deacons. It also outlines the roles of the senior pastor, deacons, elders, and committees. You are welcome to speak with an elder or staff member or explore your questions at a Connect lunch.

Readers' Note: Surveys represent an individual's self-report to posed questions. They are a helpful but imperfect tool for understanding others. This report presents a snapshot of what regular attenders said at the outset of our process. This document is not a doctrinal, theological, or official statement on any matter. The report production was coordinated by an expanded process team working in collaboration with skilled volunteers, our pastors and elders. Find their names and contact information at nscbc.org/governance.

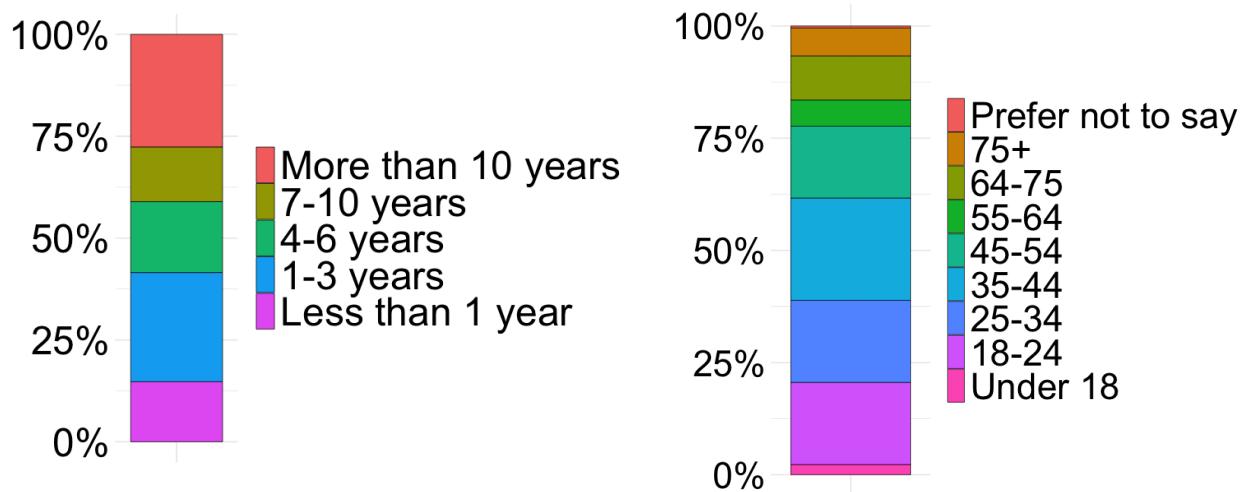
¹ An additional 30 people took the survey and specified they were visitors, occasional attenders, and former attenders, or submitted very incomplete responses. These responses were not included in quantitative reporting.

Who We Are

NSCBC is an intergenerational church. 42% of our congregation has joined within the past three years, while about 28% have been part of the church for over a decade, reflecting a mix of new energy and long-term commitment. Asked about our church backgrounds, the most common are Baptist and Non-Denominational, though people named 17 distinct denominational or church traditions and a small number said they are new to Christianity.

When asked what drew and what sustains their attendance, many highlighted the sense of family or community, the worship and preaching, children and youth programming, particular ministries, and the impact of specific people who invited, welcomed, and cared for them personally.

How long have you been attending NSCBC? What is your age range?



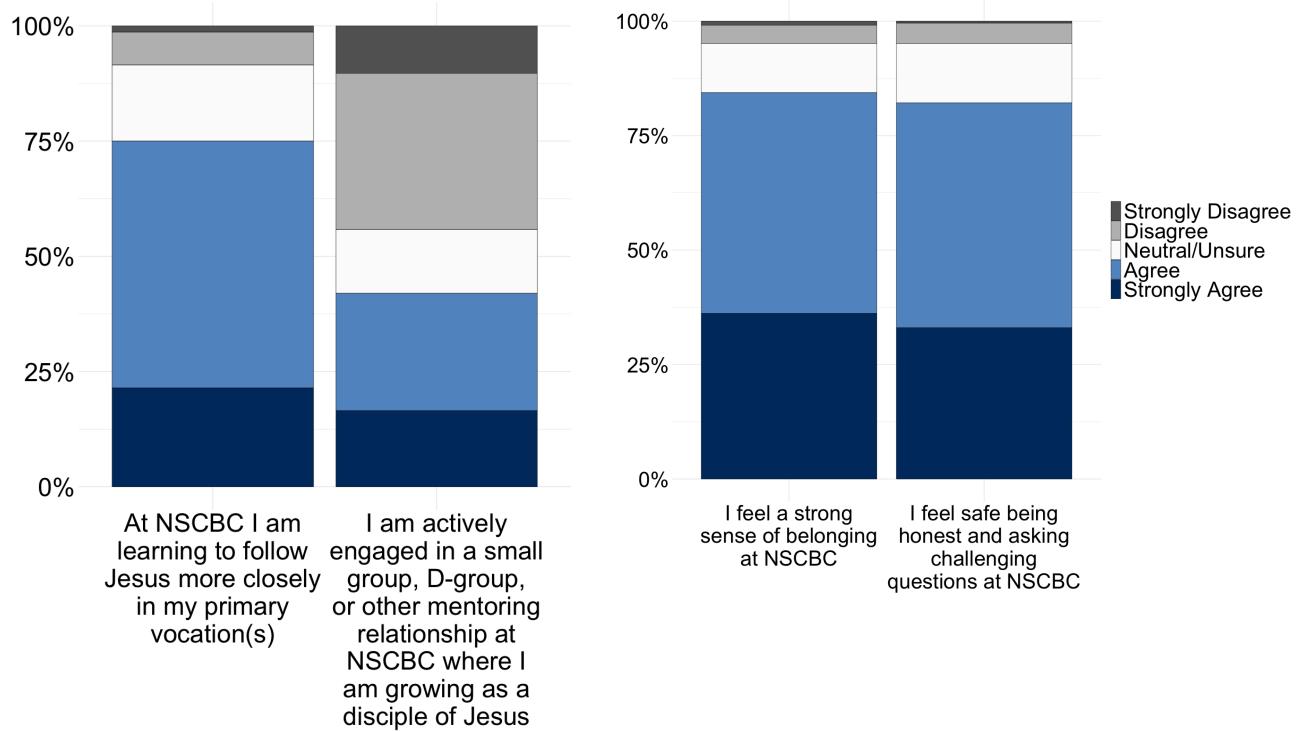
Signs of a healthy, gospel-centered church

75% of regular attenders say that NSCBC is a place where they are learning to follow Jesus more closely in their primary vocation. It is common to participate in small groups, d-groups, or other mentoring relationships; 41% said they do.

82% agree they are aware of how to make connections at NSCBC. And, 82% say NSCBC is a place where they feel safe being honest and asking challenging questions. This includes people who are still exploring faith. *While many are beginning this process with established views, 89% say they are open to studying Scripture and considering these matters.*

Survey data shows a small number (5%) who do not feel a strong sense of belonging at NSCBC. This is especially true among less represented demographic groups.

Many are experiencing belonging and are engaged disciples of Jesus



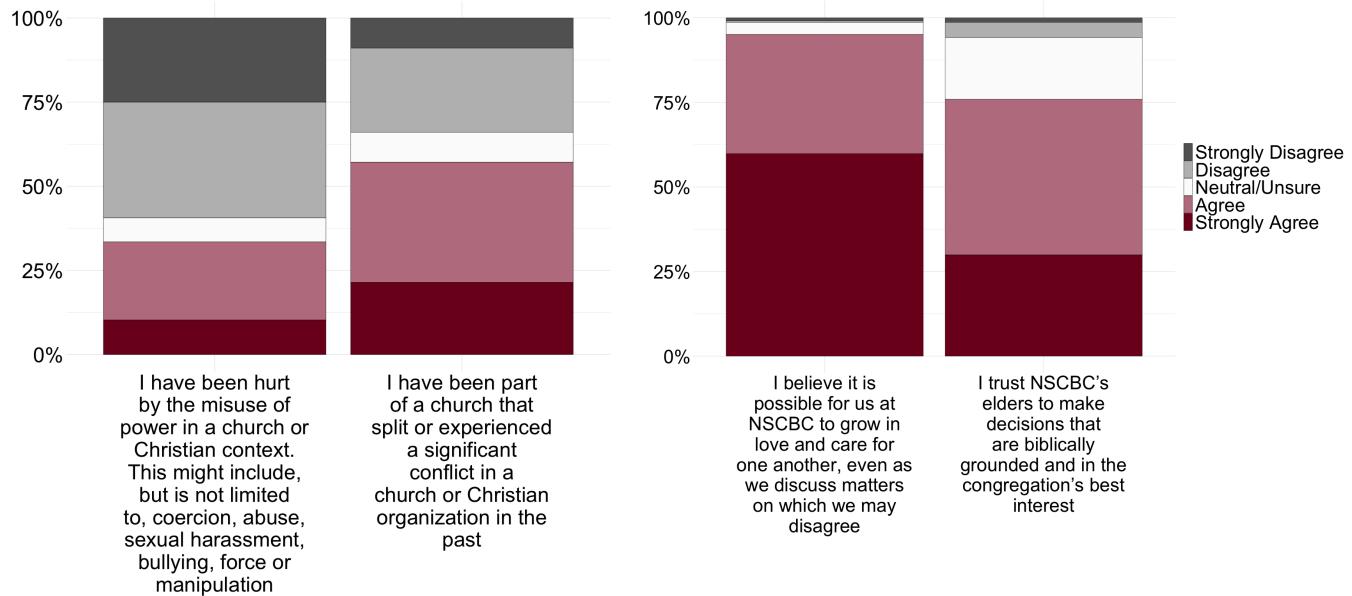
Many have had hurtful past experiences. Yet overall, we are hopeful.

57% of people said they have been part of a church that experienced significant conflict. 33% have been hurt by the misuse of power in a church or Christian context. Without a doubt, those are painful experiences. We are grateful to know this, especially in a season of discussion around our church model. We want to be a church where hurt is acknowledged and we make an honest effort to heal and reconcile, where possible.

It is hopeful that 95% agree it is possible for our church to grow in love for one another, even as we discuss matters on which we disagree.

We are further encouraged that 76% of regular attenders say they trust our pastor and elders to make decisions that are biblically grounded and in the congregation's best interest. 74% say they feel comfortable approaching our pastors and elders with questions. That trust is higher among members. Some who experienced hurt in the past said that they are healing at NSCBC. Others highlighted concerns that still need healing.

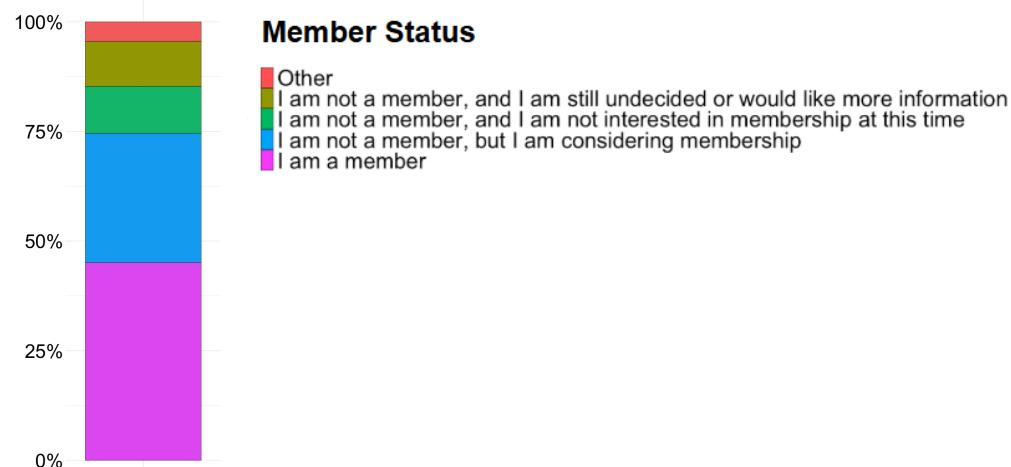
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Membership & Survey Results

When asked how important membership is, it was most common to say that church membership is mostly or very important. **45% of regular attenders taking the survey were members.** 66 people said they are considering membership and 20 said they were undecided or would like more information.

Regarding their views on the two governance matters we are considering, members and non-members were fairly similar. For this reason, the data in this report includes all regular attenders. Regarding the membership exception, our members had a slightly less favorable view. Regarding men and women serving as elders, members and non-members did not differ much in their views. **If constitutional amendments are offered, only members will be eligible to vote on them.**



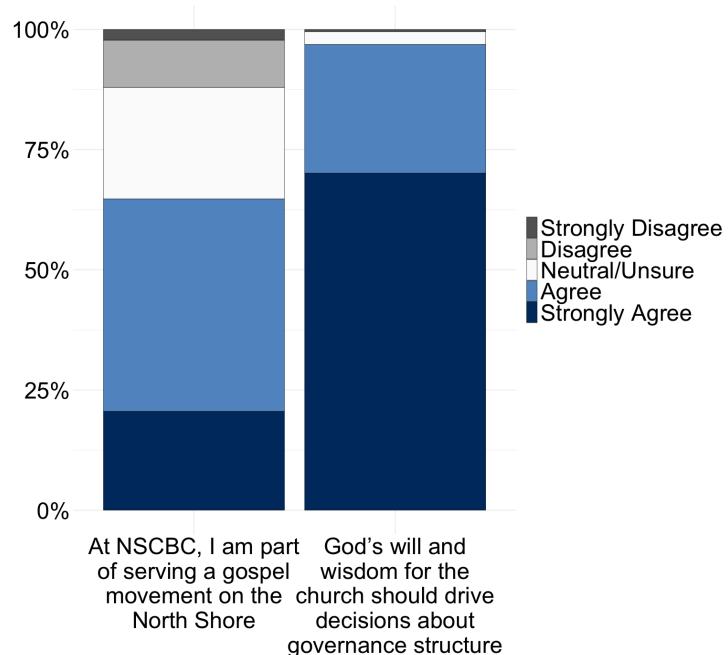
Governance & Membership

The Purpose of Church Governance

Our governance model exists to support our vision and our life together. This is why the elders grounded their introduction to this process in our vision and invited us to first consider what membership means to us, before diving into discussion of possible changes.

Over the past ten years, we have consistently said that we exist to serve a movement of the good news of Jesus Christ, which reconciles people to God, to one another, and even transforms communities. The survey found that ***65% agree that NSCBC is a place where they are serving a gospel movement.*** Some are uncertain exactly what it means and how their church involvement contributes.

We almost unanimously agree (97%) that God's will and wisdom for the church should drive decisions about how we organize our church. This is good! And, we see in narrative responses that while we share a belief in the authority of Scripture, we have some different approaches to interpreting Scripture. That is to be expected! There is a lot we can learn from one another. And, it means we may not always agree on how to discern God's will and wisdom. In this process, we are not aiming for uniformity. We aim for more shared vision as we belong to Christ and to one another. More depth and unity in our diversity.



What Membership Means to Us

When sharing about their membership experiences at NSCBC, the vast majority described a genuine and welcoming community. They cited: a strong foundation in Scripture, biblically based teaching delivered with humility, experiencing spiritual growth, the church's commitment to local and global missions, approachable and caring staff, a vibrant children's and family ministry, beautiful worship services, and more. Some indicated that NSCBC has been a place of safety and healing after past church hurts.

There are people who feel disconnected from the community and wish they had deeper relationships, particularly in less represented demographic groups and among people who have sustained loss. A few members said they no longer strongly agree with the church's approach but remain due to close relationships or loyalty. A few people said they want more opportunities to contribute their voice.

We asked our congregation why people become members at NSCBC. We also asked for the reasons Christians choose not to become church members. These overlapped significantly.

Reason	...not to become a member	...to become a member
Commitment & responsibility	Responsibility seen as a burden and commitment as a lack of freedom; concerns that the church will ask too much	A sense of ownership and responsibility to the community seen as an opportunity be part of a body to which all contribute and belong through the good and the bad
Community	Experiences community as hurtful, exclusive, rigid, polarized, or hypocritical	Experiences community as family, a way of being known, a shared purpose built on Christ, a place where healing and restoration are possible
View of Self	Fearful of not being good enough	An opportunity for spiritual growth

Those who become members do not always agree with all aspects of the church's approach. They recognize that any group of human beings is imperfect. They spoke, rather, of becoming a member as a lasting, non-transactional commitment to a local body of believers as part of their identity with Christ. Some described it as solidarity with those following Jesus in every part of the world.

Those who do not become members give a wide range of reasons. Some people said they have not joined because they are still exploring faith or are not ready for a public declaration of affiliation. Others say that at NSCBC they already feel a strong sense of belonging, commitment, and service despite not being a member and are unsure what they would gain by becoming a member. Still others are simply not comfortable joining organizations. Some are uncertain if they will live on the North Shore long enough to join a church. Others expressed past or present hurt; disagreement with church theology or practices; or simply a lack of understanding about the process of membership.

The elders wish to thank our long-term attenders, and especially our members, for fostering a church environment where people can explore faith, belong, and grow as disciples of Christ, even if they cannot join or are not ready for membership. You make it possible for those who are temporarily on the North Shore and those who are still exploring their beliefs to experience the body of Christ.

Membership & Baptism

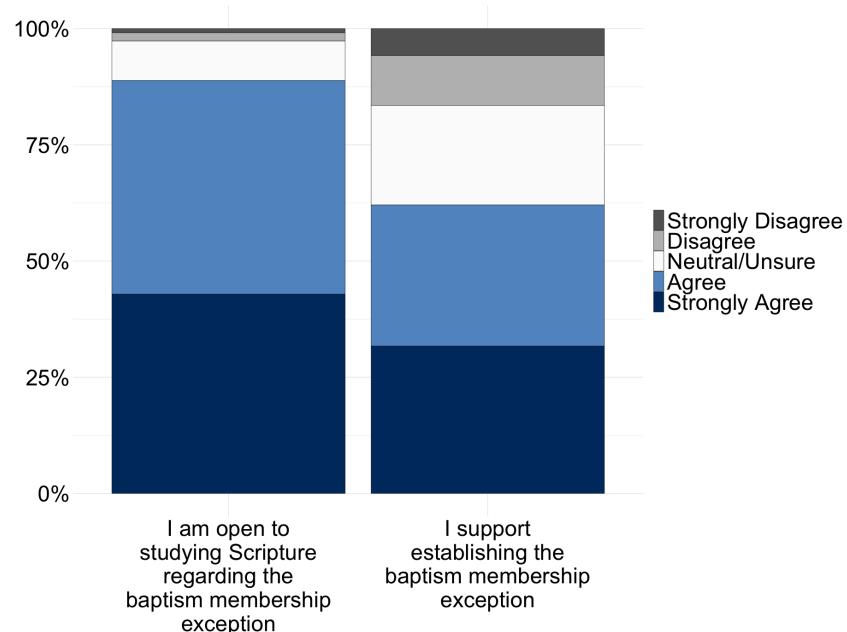
NSCBC is a historic Baptist church affiliated with Converge, a Baptist church network. The elders have invited us to consider an exception to the believer's baptism requirement which would allow people who were baptized as infants and who later profess faith publicly to become members if they believe their original baptism was meaningful and sufficient. This would not change our practice of believer's baptism or other aspects of our membership process.

Baseline Perspectives

Many said they value our practice of believers' baptism by immersion, especially the public profession of faith involved in the practice.

Those disagreeing or expressing reservations about the proposed membership exception said they are concerned that it would lead NSCBC away from its Baptist roots, denominational identity, or affiliation with Converge. Some expressed concerns with the theological integrity and unity of the congregation if we welcome members with different theological perspectives. A few expressed the belief that the Bible commands adult baptism.

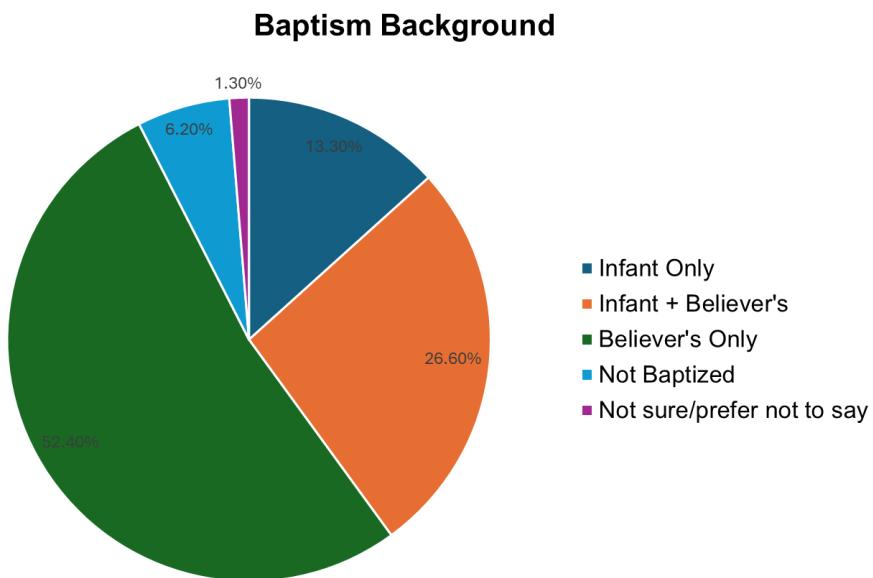
Those agreeing said that baptism is not a "first-order" or "central" matter and, as such, should not present a barrier for those described above becoming members and serving fully in the life of the church. Some said becoming more clear and unified around the central tenants of our faith is a preferred way of fostering unity.



Widening the Lens: Experiences that Stood Out

When people are baptized at NSCBC, we celebrate joyfully! Many said this is a beautiful practice of identifying with Christ's death and resurrection and joining God's family. We have members who have been part of Baptist churches for decades - some their entire lives.

According to the survey results, 69 people at NSCBC were baptized as infants and again as adults and 31 were baptized only as infants. Of those, 17 said they were not members because they do not want to be baptized again. A few said they want to honor the commitment their parents made to them by baptizing them as infants. A few said they want to join the church as a family, but because one spouse does not wish to be baptized again, no member of the family has joined. A few people described meaningful experiences in churches with different practices, which influenced their desire to make it incrementally easier for those who were baptized as infants and later make a public profession of faith to join. A few people shared examples of Baptist churches who make the specific membership exception we are considering.



Men & Women Serving as Elders

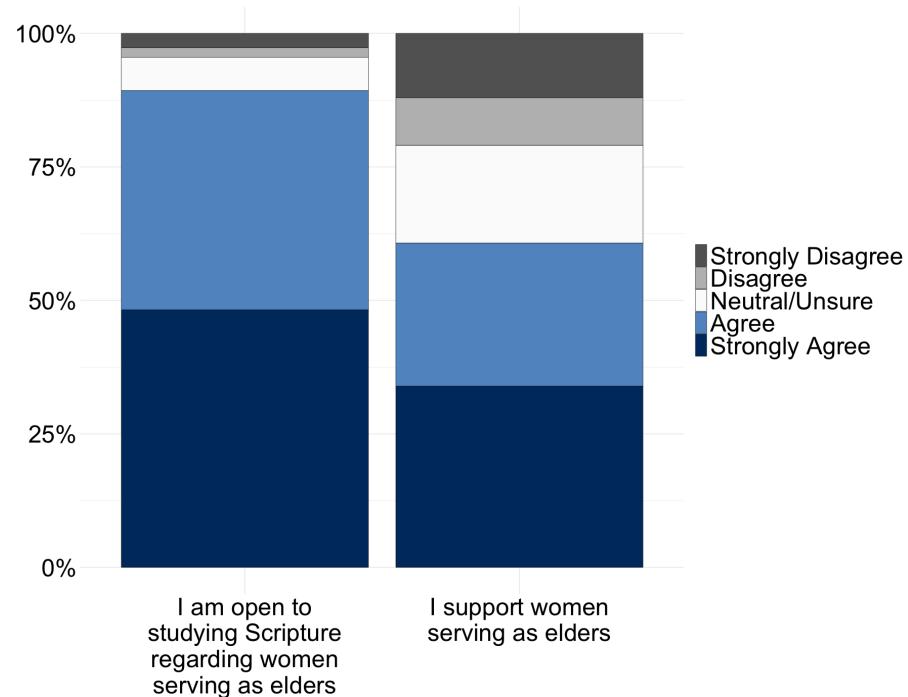
We are exploring the possibility of men and women serving together as elders. This would not change the process for becoming an elder or requirement that elders exhibit Christ-like character.

Baseline Perspectives

Comments demonstrated areas of widespread agreement. Many expressed their appreciation for our elders and a desire that we will always be served by elders who are humble and marked by Christ-like character. Many spoke to the equality and equal dignity of men and women. Many expressed appreciation for the differences between men and women, saying these are good and add value to our congregation.

Those disagreeing with the change emphasized specific biblical passages or generally described the view that these passages clearly mandate categorically distinct roles for men and women in ministry.

Those agreeing with the change emphasized specific biblical passages or generally described the view that the Bible emphasizes shared partnership with men and women serving in their areas of giftedness.



Across the spectrum—those who agree with the potential change, those who disagree, and those who are unsure—people submitted thoughtful reflections. Respondents cited biblical texts, referenced respected Christian authors, shared meaningful personal experiences, and pointed to examples from church history that shaped their views. It is clear that NSCBC includes thoughtful followers of Christ who have an authoritative view of Scripture, yet differ in their views on this matter. Their differences in view arise, in part, from taking different approaches to interpreting Scripture. Some individuals expressed either

discomfort or unfamiliarity with interpretations that are different from their own. In the next phase, we will all have the opportunity to grow by exploring other perspectives with humility, seeking greater understanding, and investing in honest, Christ-centered relationships.

Widen the Lens: Experiences that Stood Out

People described a range of experiences. Some said they chose NSCBC because of the opportunity to learn from and be led in worship by biblically grounded men and women. Others for our male-only elder model. Our current model, where men and women serve together in all areas of church life except as elders, was shaped by previous periods of study where our leaders sought to discern God's will and wisdom for our church. There are people—both those who support the potential change and those who do not—who said that our current practices create barriers to fully joining or feeling a sense of belonging. Others saw it differently, saying our current model demonstrates that people with different views can worship together.

Some shared about the roles men and women play in their homes or workplaces and noted that they believed there was beauty and freedom to be found in the approach they are taking. While those experiences influence their expectations of church leadership, the governance process will be focused on pursuing God's will and wisdom for our church structure.

Reflecting on their experience as elders, a few men shared that they encountered situations in which they wished female elders had been present on the board. They recognized the gifts of women in the congregation and expressed a desire for fuller collaboration. Similarly, a few attenders pointed to specific past situations they believed would have been better addressed through the partnership of male and female elders. A few men noted that they declined serving on a male-only elder board for this reason. A handful of respondents agreed that they believed women would make great elders but simply felt the Bible prohibited it.

What Comes Next: Phase Two

Elders' Goals for Collective Discernment

Our elders are unified in inviting the congregation into this process. Their goals for this process are outlined below. These grow out of our church's existing vision and values, which guide our life together. Read about our vision and values [here](#) and read our member covenant which outlines our commitment to one another [here](#).

Center the Process on Christ and Discipleship	Our goal is to highlight the centrality of Christ as the cornerstone, unifying the church in diversity (Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 1:17-18). We are invited to embrace discipleship as a goal, especially where the process presents opportunities for personal and communal discipleship toward greater humility, grace, and spiritual maturity. We want to avoid consumerist tendencies (Romans 12:2) and cultivate habits of Christian life.
Deepen Understanding of Scripture and Theology	Our goal is to study the bible together, including both broad themes and key passages. We hope to foster theological literacy and a deeper understanding of the Bible, while growing in the Christ-like love for each other that should mark us as Christ's body.
Align with God's Mission and Kingdom	Our goal is to ensure any changes to our model enhance the church's ability to fulfill its mission and vision and reflect God's desire for the fullness of His kingdom to touch every aspect of creation through the full participation of His people.
Clarify the Core and Pursue Unity	Our goal is to distinguish between the unchanging core of the gospel and aspects of church governance that may be adapted. We are invited to honor our history as we discern what is most effective for our local context. We hope to promote a spirit of curiosity, empathy, open-handedness, and graciousness, disagreeing without disconnecting (Philippians 4:2-5) and striving for an outcome that brings greater understanding, unity, and contentment, even amid differing convictions.
Grow in Humility and Grace in the Process	We will seek the most faithful path forward rather than trying to achieve universal agreement. We aim to approach discernment with an attitude of humility, seeking God's will through prayer, Scripture, and wise counsel. We will work to build trust and foster unity.

Get Involved in Learning and Discussion Opportunities

We will offer learning and discussion in two primary ways based on the congregation's input provided in surveys.

Independent Study with Periodic Gatherings

We will publish a recommended resource list with books, sermons, podcasts, and articles exploring the topics. Many of these are resources recommended by members of the congregation to one another. Those who opt for independent study will be offered optional discussion opportunities for gathering with others for reflection and to ask questions. These groups will meet a few times over the coming months. We also plan to offer optional, fun opportunities for setting independent study goals to support engaging with resources from differing perspectives. [Register on Church Center](#) to indicate that you plan to take the independent study track and ensure you receive invitations for discussion opportunities.

Exploring Scripture Together Cohorts

We will offer two short-term cohort groups this spring and summer. These will explore the biblical foundations for the two topics we are considering. These cohorts respond to our congregation's desire for deeper scriptural engagement in community. Next to sermons, small groups and discussion are the modes of learning people told us they prefer. Each group will reflect on key biblical texts, theological perspectives, and practical questions, with an emphasis on generous listening, spiritual growth, and unity in the body of Christ.

- Women and Eldership: Weeks starting Sunday April 27, May 4, May 11, May 18
- Baptism and Membership: Weeks starting Sunday June 1, June 8, June 15

Groups will include about 12 people each and are led by facilitators who guide respectful, Scripture-centered discussions. Additional options may be added based on interest. To participate, [register on Church Center](#) and indicate your availability.

We invite everyone to pray for these groups as we seek God's direction together.