

DAMASCUS ROAD COMMUNITY CHURCH ORIENTATION

Vision & Mission

Our goal is to be a genuine Christian fellowship where people from any or no religious background come together to worship the living God and find high-application teaching which is culturally relevant and biblically rooted. The Damascus Road community is much more than a weekend service and reaches far beyond our walls. As you go through this orientation you'll get a taste of the adventure, depth, and joy we share together by our commitment to be:

A Community of Light by the Power of the Lord Jesus Christ

We accomplish this vision by living out our mission, found in Colossians 1:28:

“He [Jesus] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”

History

In the autumn of 1997, Damascus Road Community Church formed as a nondenominational church influenced by the ministries of Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church. Our original identity and mission were shaped by five orienting goals:

1. Lift up the Cross of Christ (as the true central focus of our faith)
2. Open up the Church of Christ (to the religiously burned, bored, or bypassed all around us)
3. Celebrate our Salvation in Christ (believing the bedrock of our hope is not any goodness [self-righteousness] we offer to God, but in the righteousness that comes from God as His gift to us in Jesus Christ)
4. Respect each Individual's Spiritual Gifts in Christ (being neither intimidated or irritated, but excited, by the wide variety of talents, strengths and leadership capacities of the people God sends into our midst).
5. Recognize every Member as a Minister of Christ (where we have a few teaching/equipping pastors, but every believer is called and gifted by God, and respected by us, as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ).

Our first services were held at the Damascus High School. God blessed us with a purchase/donation of approximately 225 acres in Laytonsville, Maryland, which we anticipated would be our permanent home. After meeting in the school for three years, we decided to lease space in the Damascus Shopping Center. In 2005, we sold the Laytonsville property because of the geographic shift of our congregation to the north and west of Damascus. We believe that God led us to our present home in Mt. Airy where we purchased land in May 2006. When our lease expired in the shopping center that same year, we moved our worship service back to Damascus High School. In 2009, our service moved to Oakdale High School and we began building our permanent home base. We opened the doors to this facility in April 2012.

Governance

Leadership of the church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and flows to us through the Holy Spirit. On a human level, three groups of people direct the ministries: the Elders, the Trustees, and the Staff.

The Elders

The Elders are composed of our pastors and prayerfully selected, biblically mature members of our congregation who provide spiritual oversight for the church. They assure that the church remains on a true course biblically and that the body is being fed through sound biblical teaching. They encourage and support ministries, as they guard against heresy and destructive division. They carry out Biblical and redemptive correction and discipline.

The Trustees

The Board of Trustees are members of the church who oversee the legal and financial aspects of the church and matters pertaining to facilities and staff employment. They have marketplace expertise which they use collectively to serve the congregation. They serve for 2 years and are elected by the congregation.

The Staff

The Staff directs the day-to-day affairs of the church. All ministries and volunteers are coordinated by the staff. They are paid so that they can devote the best hours of their day to building ministries and ensuring that hundreds of volunteers are led well.

Working Together

The way the three groups work together can best be stated as follows: The Staff directs the ministries of the church; these ministries are supported by the policies and financial allocation determined by the Board of Trustees; and all the activities of the church are carried out under the watch, care, and supervision of the Elders.

What makes Damascus Road work smoothly is the humble, servant-like spirit of these three groups of people. Leaders at all levels do not see it as their role to “lord it over” those in their charge, but desire to serve the body with their gifts and to build the Kingdom rather than an “empire.” This spirit of cooperation and appreciation is one of the remarkable features of the ministry of Damascus Road and is one of God’s greatest blessings to our body. It is a fragile gift, however, and any person desiring to become a participating member should value and protect it.

Core Values

Whether overt or implied, conscious or unconscious, hidden or clear, every organization has core values. These values guide and impact all decisions and naturally “bleed out” in the actions, attitudes and perspectives of all leaders. They are a genuine expression of what makes that place tick.

The following 5 statements are our Core Values. We believe they arise from Scripture, and therefore define not only how we function, but why Damascus Road Community Church even exists. Our elders believe for our church to remain a healthy prevailing church, the following core values must continue to define who we are as Christ’s followers and what we are about.

1. We Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

The cross of Christ defines our life in Christ. Therefore, Jesus and His finished work on the cross is at the heart of all we do. God welcomes us as we are, but His love and grace transforms us over time to become more like Jesus. We are all on a journey and each of us has a next right step.

2. We are a Mission-Driven Church

God has called us to be a light. We partner with other churches and organizations to bring hope and transformation in our region and our world where we have been called to engage.

3. We are a Community-Focused Church

We were designed to live in community. Weekly large gatherings of anointed teaching and worship and authentic, caring relationships in small groups create genuine community. We want to be a community people run to—not from—in their struggles.

4. We Focus on the Essentials

We prize unity by focusing on our mission and core biblical beliefs. We are known for what we are for, not what we are against. We refuse to allow non-essential issues to divide our church.

5. We are Equally Ministers of Jesus Christ

As Christ's followers, we are each called to serve others through our unique spiritual giftedness. We do ministry in a way that speaks to our culture without compromising the truth of God's Word.

Statement of Beliefs

We believe God allows for modifications in styles and methods of worship and outreach to meet different needs. Damascus Road Community Church is deeply committed to the eternal truth of the historic core beliefs of the Christian faith. Our seven basic beliefs are aligned with historic Protestant interpretations of key Christian doctrines. We are not dogmatic about matters on which honest Bible-based believers hold divergent views.

All our basic beliefs center in Jesus Christ. He is the Savior and Lord, the ultimate revelation of God. His message as found in and supported by clear and repeated passages of Scripture forms the heart of our message. More obscure doctrinal views or teachings, where the Biblical support is interpreted in various ways, are seen by DRCC as areas of fruitful study, but we do not require uniformity to one view nor take an official position in these areas.

1. The Bible

The Bible (Old and New Testament) is the divinely inspired Word of God. It is perfect for its purpose and its purpose is to reunite us to God as His children through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, we submit our reason and will to the authority of Scripture. All Scripture points to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25-27; 44-49; John 5:39-40), who reveals the heart and character of God (John 10:30; 14:6-10). The revelation of Jesus Christ and His church in the New Testament is the inspired fulfillment and final interpretation of all God revealed to Israel in the Old Testament. The truth of

Scripture is our basis for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness. It guides our relationship with God now and points us to the complete restoration of humanity and creation in eternity.

Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 3:2; Isaiah 55:8-11

2. God

There is one eternal, holy God, infinite, personal and knowable, who has revealed Himself in the Trinity (tri-unity) of three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—each of Whom possesses all the attributes of deity. Our God is worthy of our complete trust, worship and obedience.

Genesis 1:1-2, 26; John 1:1-4; Deuteronomy. 6:4-5; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians. 13:14; Ephesians 2:18, 22; Romans 8 portrays the interwoven work of the Trinity.

3. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fully human and fully divine, was born of a virgin and was sinless in nature and life. He died on the Cross bearing the penalty for our sins, then rose victorious over death from the grave. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, plus nothing, is the Gospel: the one, all-sufficient basis of human salvation. Eternal life is God's gift of grace for all who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Romans 6:23; 4:25-5:1; 3:20-26; Matthew 1:21-23; John 3:16-18, 36; 6:40; Isaiah 53:4-12; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; 15:1-4; Ephesians 2:4-8; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Hebrews 9:26-28; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 5:10-13; Revelation 1:5-6

4. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and our need for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He then unites the believer to the Body of Christ [His church], making real and effective all that Christ promised in the believer's life. The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to obey and share the Lord Jesus Christ; calling us to purity, faithfulness, and integrity in every area of our lives. The Holy Spirit also imparts gifts to every believer for works of ministry, but no one spiritual gift is the necessary evidence of salvation or of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-18; 16:7-15; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:18, 22; 4:30; Romans 8:5-16; Acts 1:4-8; 2:38-39; Luke 11:13; Zechariah 4:6; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

5. Discipleship

Full devotion to Jesus as Lord is our joyful response to God's gift of salvation. Genuine discipleship to Christ flows from our security in Christ. It is the Spirit-led fruit of receiving Christ's salvation—never the root of salvation. Scripture teaches that our fruit (character and actions) is judged only to reveal the true root of our life (self or the Savior). The highest evidence of a life rooted in Christ is self-sacrificing love.

Matthew 7:16-24; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 13:34-35; Romans 8:3-4; Galatians 5:16-25; Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-8; Jude 3-4, 17-19; Revelation 22:12-17.

6. Body of Christ

We are a part of the universal Body of Christ—all those who trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. Every congregation gathered around the risen Lord and empowered by His Spirit for mutual growth, encouragement, evangelism, service and worship is a local expression of Christ’s universal church. In obedience to Christ, we express our faith in Him through the signs of the New Covenant: Baptism by immersion in water and celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Matthew 16:16-19; Ephesians 3:10-12; 4:4-6, 15-16; Colossians 1:18-24; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 2-3; Matthew 26: 26-29; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-11.

7. Second Coming

The Kingdom of God, ushered in by Christ at His first Advent, will be fully realized (visibly and physically) at His Second Coming. Christ will appear in glory to end human suffering, to resurrect the dead, to receive all those who are His and to destroy those who refuse His salvation.

Hebrews 9:26-28; Matthew 13:39-43; 24:27-31; 25:31-34; John 5:24-29; 6:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 2 Peter 2:6.

Baptism

We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is a new believer’s first public profession of faith in Christ. Jesus established it in the last words he spoke to us before he ascended to heaven. It is a call to “step out of the shadows” and demonstrate what we say we believe. It also illustrates and points us to the central tenet of Christianity: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Colossians 2:12, Romans 6:3-4, Acts 2:17-36, 8:29-38, 16:14-15, 22:15-16.

Immersion or Sprinkling

There has been much confusion and controversy amongst Christians over the centuries about the correct way to baptize. Should believers be sprinkled with water or fully immersed? We don’t feel the need to get caught up in that controversy. We practice baptism by immersion because we think it most closely represents the symbolism of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. However, if you’ve been baptized as a believer by any method other than immersion, that’s fine. We recognize that and celebrate with you.

Believer Baptism or Infant Baptism

The question of believer baptism versus infant baptism has been a controversial issue among sincere Christians for centuries. We respect Christian leaders who hold differing opinions on this issue, and we are always interested in dialoging and learning from other believers. However, it appears clear to us that Jesus intended baptism to be for those old enough to understand the meaning of accepting Him as Lord and Savior.

This means that if you were baptized as an infant, it was a meaningful event for your parents. We would encourage you, however, to study the key scriptures on this topic and offer yourself to Christ for baptism as an adult believer. It will be a very meaningful mark in your spiritual journey and God will use it as a witnessing tool for others who are watching. Nearly every time we have a baptismal service, someone watching will approach one of the pastors and say, “When can I be baptized?” Wouldn’t it be awesome to be used by God to nudge someone else toward an eternity with Him?

Child Dedication

A child’s relationship with Jesus is very important to us. This is why we place such emphasis on Children and Youth ministries and support parents in raising their children in the Christian faith. One of the public ways we celebrate this is our Child Dedication ceremonies. At these services, parents who desire to dedicate themselves to being Christ-centered role models for their children are introduced with their children to the congregation by the pastor who then concludes the ceremony with a dedication prayer.

Membership

Commitment

The Bible speaks of two commitments: Committing yourself to Christ for salvation and then committing yourself to other Christians through membership in a local church family. (2 Cor 8:5, Acts 2:42, Heb 10:24-25.) If you have not yet made the first commitment of receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior, we invite you to explore His life, His teachings, the power of His death and resurrection, and His gift to you of eternal life. For guidance on these matters, speak to one of our Prayer Ministers or a Pastor after a service, fill out a connect card, or call the church office 301-829-3722. Once you have made that commitment, it is time for you to commit yourself to membership in a local church family.

One Another

Jesus said that our love for each other was to be the mark of discipleship (John 13:33-34). He wants us to experience connection, unity and strong relationships. We are commanded throughout Scripture to love each other, pray for each other, encourage, admonish, greet, serve, teach, accept, and honor one another; to bear each other’s burdens, forgive, sing to, submit to and be devoted to each other. None of these can be done by a Christian alone or isolated from a body of believers.

Christ’s Call

These “one another” commands are what membership in a local body of believers is all about and are the responsibilities of membership. Being part of a local church community where you can live these out is a crucial part of God’s plan for your spiritual growth. Luke 10:27 summarizes Christ’s call to the church this way: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.” That means Enjoy God and Build His Kingdom!

Benefits

To hold certain positions of leadership such as Trustees and Elders, you must be a member. And though we seek to serve all who reach out to Damascus Road for help, we have limited time and resources. But members receive first priority in resources and support from our staff and Pastors. To vote at business meetings you must be a member. Seven items that members are invited to vote on are:

1. The annual budget
2. The selection of trustees
3. Calling or removing the senior pastor
4. The acquisition of real property and related indebtedness
5. Amendments to the church bylaws or Articles of Incorporation
6. Merger or dissolution of the corporation
7. Disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the corporation in the event that DRCC ceases operations.

Steps to Membership

The difference between an attendee and a member can be summed up in one word: *commitment*. Before signing a membership covenant at Damascus Road, we expect that you will have done the following:

- Accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior
- Been baptized as a believer
- Read this orientation
- Attended FirstStep 03 – GO (Membership Class)

Members Take Action: They “Live the Five”

All of us are busy - many of us on overload. Yet we want our life to make sense. We want to prioritize and simplify, focusing on what's really important, to be fully devoted followers of Christ. We desire healthier lives with more joy, purpose, and impact for God. Below are five action steps from His Word that, if founded on God's grace in Jesus, build such a life.

Membership Covenant

Membership at Damascus Road Community Church is a commitment (covenant with God) to grow and mature in five areas, according to our Statement of Beliefs.

I accept Damascus Road Community Church's Statement of Beliefs. I have been baptized into Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior. Knowing, as a disciple, I will grow and mature along the Discipleship Pathway (beginning, growing, overflowing) as I follow Jesus, I commit to “Living the Five” (biblical purposes of the Church as described in Acts 2:42-47):

Reading the Bible & Praying

This involves intentionally reading the Bible daily, which is Christ's living word to you (see Hebrews 4:12), creating space for a personal dialogue with “Our Father in heaven...” through responding to Him in prayer as you reflect on His word (see Matthew 6:5-13).

Serving & Giving

Serve others in the name of Jesus on a ministry team. Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others...” (Mark 10:45). Be a generous steward of all God's resources in your life (time, treasure, and talent). In Christ, your life “will be enriched in every way so you can always be generous” (see 2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

Doing Life Together

Join a life group. Only in community can you become the person God intends you to be. Jesus said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Our unity in Christ as a diverse, imperfect community of small communities is our greatest testimony.

Sharing Jesus

Share your life in Christ. People seeking God aren't looking for perfect people, but for honest, vulnerable friends who have meaning in life. Listen, share, and invite others to “come and see.” Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, “...go and make disciples of all the nations...”

Removing Barriers

Allow Jesus to remove barriers in your life as you seek to grow and follow Him. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teachings...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Our Invitation

Regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey, we invite you to:

1. Attend church regularly for biblical teaching, worship and community
2. Join or host a Life Group, where you can give and receive support and grow in Christ together
3. Volunteer in a ministry and learn about how God created you uniquely to serve others

FirstStep Part 03 – ‘GO’ (Membership Class) provides an opportunity to consider becoming a member at DRCC and to dialogue with our Senior Leadership. Some of the information in this orientation will be explored in more detail and there will be a question-and-answer session at the end. Visit damascus.com/firststep to learn more or register. FirstStep takes place during a DRCC service, so childcare is available through DRKids’ Sunday program.