



**2016 "State of the Church" Address
Pastor Kevin Subra – January 24, 2016**

I thought I would make an attempt at giving you a report of where we are at in many areas at Northridge. I used to work this in during annual business meetings several years ago when we had our meetings on Sunday evenings. Since we have our annual meetings on Sunday mornings now, our available time is very limited.

This is an unusual practice for me, as I am not accustomed to reading items of any length from the pulpit. Please permit me to do so now, so that I can effectively and efficiently present this information with the greatest amount of thoroughness and the least amount of temptation to wander off topic.

I will seek to cover an overview of a broad number of topics in as brief a time as possible. My goal is to inform you at a level that helps you understand what makes up Northridge today, and what we are working toward or working on.

Our Pastoral Staff:

I would like to begin with our pastoral staff. I certainly know that our entire church family serves a critical role in ministering to one another. This is not to slight them. I simply know that shepherds set the direction and the pace of any church. Therefore let me review our pastors and their responsibilities.

Pastor Kevin Subra

I'll start with myself. Jane and I and our family have been at Northridge for a combined total of nearly 19 years. I first was called as the solo pastor in April of 1996, and began in May of 1996. I served for nine years. In 2005 I turned over the leadership to other men serving as pastors at the time (Sean Kelly and Randy Smith), as I went to serve both in a church rescue capacity and a church plant for a short time. I returned to Northridge in August of 2006, and I've served here ever since. Most of our children know of no other church as a home church, and most grew up or are growing up here. I have always served here in a bi-vocational capacity, having always worked a full-time while serving here as pastor.

I am the Lead Pastor, and my primary areas of focus are Leadership and Discipleship. My key duties include instruction, leadership, administration, and outreach. In the realm of instruction, I serve as the primary teacher of our assembly. I preach most of the sermons, teach many of the lessons, and oversee or prepare the Sunday school curriculum for our church family. In the realm of leadership, I seek to lead our assembly to follow God's Word in the world and circumstances in which God has placed us. I also work to identify and mentor leaders at any level as God has appointed pastors to do (2 Tim 2:2), and I will continue to do so as God provides men to train up. In the realm of administration, I serve as the primary administrator, overseeing the church family, staff, ministries, facilities and business. In the realm of outreach, my efforts go towards maintaining and improving the church's social media outreach through various means on the internet, including our church web sites.

Pastor Jim Douglass

Pastor Jim and his wife Dori came to us in February of 2011. It was during a tough time, as we had seen our congregation shrink to a low number for many reasons, and so I was thankful for the help and encouragement these two brought to me and to our church family.

Pastor Jim is an Associate Pastor, and his primary focuses are Pastoral Care and Visitation. As far as pastoral care goes, Pastor Jim's focus is on pastoral care of our church family, visiting those in the hospital, those that may be no longer able to attend, and the elderly. His pastoral care ministry includes ministering at two local assisted living and nursing home facilities (Union Park and The Rose), and providing transportation for several from those locations. Pastor Jim also has outreach responsibilities. He coordinates and leads our basic neighborhood visitation ministry, and is working to enhance that effort. He will continue to assist in other neighborhood outreach efforts. Pastor Jim also assists me in facility management, serving as a liaison to inspectors and contractors as necessary.

Pastor Ethan Long

Pastor Ethan officially began his position just last year (January, 2015) as Assistant Pastor. He and his wife Jordyn have a slightly different story than most, as both of them grew up here at Northridge to some degree or another. Their serving in their own church family is right in keeping with our philosophy of ministry, as we seek to raise up leaders from within our own assembly.

Pastor Ethan's primary focuses are Outreach and Discipleship. For outreach, Ethan will continue to help our church family create and develop neighborhood evangelistic outreach endeavors. He and Jordyn have been key planners and leaders of VBS, Cornival, and Trunk or Treat. Ethan has also participated in local door-to-door visitation. In the area of discipleship, Ethan will continue to develop youth and young adult programs. He teaches Sunday school, and often leads our Wednesday children's ministry (FWAP). He also shares some of the preaching responsibilities.

Goals and Vision for Our Pastoral Staff:

I have identified several goals that we will seek to accomplish this year.

More Effective Communication

One goal regarding our staff this year is to work at becoming closer as a team in our thinking and efforts. This involves meeting more often to discuss and clarify our focus and efforts. It also involves growing our levels and avenues of communication so we are more informed about one another's efforts. We may try to work on some system of collaboration, such as an internet-based shared calendar or workspace.

Defined and Refined Ministry Efforts

A second goal is to define and refine our ministry efforts, so that we are focusing on what we want and/or should be focused upon, and are less distracted by needs that do not fall within the scope of our responsibility. We are called to shepherd this flock, and that is what our focus will be honed to do.

Leadership Training

A third goal, as time and opportunity permits, is to do some leadership training which may include those beyond our pastoral staff. Training may include assigned reading with written reports and discussion, and/or sessions that include instruction.

Continued All-Church Focus

We will continue, as a pastoral team, to serve the entire assembly. We do not believe in an age-segmented pastoral role ("youth pastor," "children's pastor," etc.). Each pastor serves the whole assembly within their identified roles and responsibilities. We try to rotate some teaching or leading responsibilities so that pastors are engaged with different age groups at different times of the year.

Discipleship:

I would like to turn my attention now to discipleship. First, I would like to share some of our philosophy and vision regarding discipleship.

Discipleship Vision

Biblical, Broad, and Balanced Teaching. We purpose to preach directly from the Word of God in a way that presents the whole counsel of God. We select and design our studies to provide exposure to the entire Word of God in some depth, as well as presenting a balance of instruction from both Bible testaments and from many key Bible subjects.

Active Ministry Training and Meaningful Ministry Opportunities. We also purpose to provide active, meaningful ministry opportunities. We do not want to simply be listeners, as we know we are being trained for service work. We seek to orchestrate ways we can learn to serve or continue to serve.

Our Sunday Morning Gathering

We are working our way through the Gospel of Luke in our series entitled, "Learning to Love the Lord through Luke." It covers the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. We will study through it at an unknown pace, but it will certainly take us beyond 2016. Our study has already been a great blessing to learn from this Gospel.

Our Sunday School Gathering

We will continue our "Timeline of Truth" chronological study through the Bible. We are studying this way for several reasons. First, this approach covers Scripture in a more thorough way than normal Sunday school curriculum does. Second, this approach builds a foundation of understanding of all Scripture. This is especially important since all Scripture is inspired and is intended by God to be studied. Third, this approach allows the entire church family to study and learn the same truths at the same time.

We usually take a break from our normal Sunday school schedule part or all of December and January to give teachers a break, to allow special services or schedule changes for holiday times, and to make room for different needs such as our annual business meeting. We will be starting our Sunday school up again next week, January 31.

I am happy to report that Sean Kelly will be teaching the Adult class, leading us through our study of the Numbers (a critical book for understanding many New Testament passages). The adult class will continue to be one week ahead of the younger classes. The teachers of the younger classes will listen to the adult audio recording and then modify those lessons to fit their class age groups. We are so thankful for dedicated teachers who work so faithfully to train our younger ones!

Wednesday Midweek Gathering

We began a new topical series a few weeks ago entitled "How to Know God's Will." The purpose is to teach us how to make Biblical decisions. We will study this series at least through the end of March.

We also plan to use the second portion of our Wednesday evening to provide meaningful ministry opportunities. Our children's ministry will work on learning good wholesome songs that they will sing for our church family. Our Junior High and Senior High (and possibly Young Adults) will be working on a puppet and drama ministry. Our adults will also have one or more ministry opportunities on Wednesday evenings.

Outreach:

I'd like to turn now to our outreach efforts. I divide them into three categories: Local, Worldwide, and Digital.

Local Outreach

Our local outreach is anything affecting our immediate neighborhood or which is directly carried out in our community by our church family. This would include our seasonal door-to-door visitation informing people of our church, our summer week-long Vacation Bible School, our one-day Carnival evangelism effort, and or Trunk-or-Treat evangelism event. Ministry at care centers can also include evangelism opportunities. We will continue to evaluate each local outreach effort, and enhance or eliminate them as we consider their profitability or find other more effective efforts.

Worldwide Outreach

Worldwide outreach would usually be supporting evangelism that is beyond our neighborhood or community. It is often done by those that are financially and prayerfully supported by us. To help encourage us in this area in which we have had little emphasis for the past several years, we will work on at least three options. First, we plan to reestablish our Faith Promise offering, which encourages our church family to give over and above our normal giving in order to give to missions. Second, we will work to develop a process to review evangelizers which we may evaluate and potentially support. Lastly, and maybe as a more long-term goal, we may investigate possibly ministry trips for our own church family, whether helping other churches with VBS or other outreach efforts, or even possible foreign ministry trips.

Digital Outreach

Digital outreach can be defined as anything that can be done through the internet. We presently have two main categories.

Our Web Sites

The first category is our web sites. We have our "old" web site – northridgebaptist.COM – and our "new" web site – northridgebaptist.ORG. These sites allow us to reach beyond our walls and our community, and serve several functions:

- *They Serve to Invite:* Our web sites can serve as a "first touch" by those outside our church who may be looking for a church or investigating our church including our beliefs, ministries and philosophy of ministry.

- *They Serve to Inform:* In addition to providing information to those outside our assembly, our web sites provide information for those within our assembly. A key piece of information provided by both sites is our calendar information.
- *They Serve to Instruct:* Both web sites presently have sermon audio files (MP3) and notes (PDF). Our "old" site has these resources all the way back to 2006. Our new web site provides sermons from 2015 onward. This allows our church family as well as potentially people from all over the world to listen to Sunday school lessons and sermons. Because of this technology, I certainly encourage to never miss a lesson, and to listen to lessons again to help you learn our studies more thoroughly.
- *They Serve to Influence:* We have the ability to publish blog posts on our new site, which may serve to further our influence by addressing current events, particular topics, or written teaching. We have not aggressively pursued this because of time constraints, but we hope to more this year.

Our goal is to improve these on a continuous basis. We want to enhance our sites to make them more functional, more informative and more attractive. We may eventually reduce to one site, but because of our long repository of sermons, that may not be feasible. Still, our .ORG site is being used as our main site going forward, as it has the best design.

Our Social Media Accounts

Social media accounts are types of web sites which allow us additional ways to post information about our church beliefs, preaching, or events. We have accounts with the following social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Google+, and iTunes (podcast).

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NorthridgeBaptistChurch/>
- Twitter: @NorthridgeDSM
- Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/northridgebaptist/>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NorthridgeBaptist>
- Google+: <https://plus.google.com/+Northridgebaptist/>
- iTunes Podcasts: www.northridgebaptist.org/feeds/sermons

We put the most information on Facebook. When we publish sermons, events, and posts, we can automatically publish to Facebook and Twitter. Sermons also post automatically to iTunes podcasts as an extra means to promote them, and where people can subscribe to them. We have not aggressively posted to Flickr or YouTube in the past year, though we do so occasionally. We have not tried to use Google+ actively as of yet.

Key Document and Policy Updates:

One huge area of concern that I have and which is also a big need that exists is in the area of our key documents and policies. They are long overdue for review and updating. Part of this is due to changes within our church as we have grown; another cause is the cultural and governmental changes that we face at an increasingly rapid rate. There are at least four areas which need our attention as soon as we can do so.

Our Doctrinal Statement

Our doctrinal statement is a summary of what we believe here at Northridge. It does not include every detail, but it includes foundational beliefs which define what we understand the Bible to say. We have a fairly good doctrinal statement. We do need to refresh sections, refine other sections, and add additional sections that have become necessary to clarify and define because of cultural shifts. Who would have thought we would come to the point where it is necessary to define and clarify gender? Yet that is where we find ourselves in today's culture.

Our By-Laws

Probably the biggest changes that need to take place are in our by-laws. By-laws are how we decide to conduct our various business (how we vote, how we select pastors, church membership guidelines, etc.). We need to update our by-laws to reflect what we practice, and also to reflect changes that our by-laws simply do not address at all, such as how our "umbrella" ministries are governed, what are the procedures for new umbrella ministries, how do we handle leadership changes in these ministries, etc.

Our Church Policies

Church policies are another area which need created or updated. Policies help decide ahead of time how things are handled. For example, what guidelines apply to the use of our church facility or property within the church building? Who will we allow to marry in our church building? is another question that needs addressed. These are often separate from the by-laws to make them easier to update, when needed.

Our Financial Processes

One other area that I believe needs attention, though it may not be as critical as the other three right now. That area relates to our financial process. I think we have done very well to track our finances, and I also think that we have good processes in place to protect the church and protect the men that count and handle the finances.

I think we need a process put in place whereby we review the tax laws each year to see what has changed that may affect us as a church, how we handle our finances, issue tax receipts, or pay our staff. Also, I would like to see an external audit conducted at least every other year. We have simply not had the means or ability to do that, and it has become more complicated to do so with online banking. My biggest concern is the yearly changes in the tax laws, so we'll try to address that more quickly.

We will keep you informed of our progress as we update or create documents and policies. We will approve the changes in announced meetings periodically as we have changes to present.

Our Scheduled Fellowship Times:

I do not have a great deal to say about fellowship events right now. We will likely continue to have our weekly fellowships in the Chapel after our morning services. I think we all enjoy that time each week, and we have scheduled this weekly time for the very purpose of encouraging us to encourage one another.

We also will continue to plan special meals held here in our church building. Our next such event is scheduled is our Married Couples Banquet next month. We try to have some type of carry-in meal for our entire church family multiple times a year.

We also anticipate other meals outside of our church property. Though we do not have them scheduled yet, I would anticipate another "adult out-to-eat" night at a local restaurant, and we will likely have a good number of backyard fellowships this year as we have had for the past few years. We will also likely have several work days this year. Work days always provide some great fellowship.

Our Facility Updates:

During our annual meeting we shared a list of our potential projects for this year. I will not repeat all of these for this report. The two projects most likely to get attention first will be the new cupboards and sink in the CE Room, and some type of new fence on the north side of our parking lots.

Our Future:

I wish I was wise enough and squared away enough with ample time to share some grandiose plans that I might create that reach far into the future. I do not have such plans to share today. I would say that we plan to continue to serve the Lord faithfully, week by week, as God supplies the ability and the strength and the personnel to do so.

I do look forward to more difficulties to face as our country continues to rebel against God. However, we know that God remains our sovereign Ruler, and He will continue to help us, day by day, as we faithfully serve Him with obedient hearts.

I am thankful for each of you, and the way you serve one another in so many different ways. The faithful attendance, service, giving, encouragement, and spirit of joy of so many of you makes Northridge a wonderful church family to serve in, among, and with.

Thank you for serving the Lord and His people that make up this assembly known as Northridge. May God bless each of you, your families, and our church family as we seek to honor and serve Him.