

THE PROXIMITY FELLOWSHIP: A GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

Companion Guidance to the Charter and Quick Starter

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proximityfellowship.org

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A Word Before You Begin

Christians have long differed in good conscience about many questions of practice. Proximity Fellowship does not ask those differences to disappear before Christians may gather. This Guide exists to help local fellowships approach several recurring practices with clarity, charity, and responsible attention to Scripture.

The Proximity Fellowship Charter governs the Framework. This Guide is companion guidance to the Charter and *The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter*. The Quick Starter helps a fellowship begin. This Guide goes further where particular practices need more explanation. It may explain a Constitutional Requirement, recommend a practice, or offer examples where the Charter leaves room. It does not amend the Charter, create new Constitutional Requirements, or turn recommendations into hidden requirements.

Proximity Fellowship is anchored in the historic Protestant Christian tradition, including the Protestant canon of Scripture received by the Framework. At the same time, Christians from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other traditions may participate in good faith where they can affirm the common Christian foundation and respect the Charter's constitutional boundaries. The Guide therefore does not pretend that Christian differences are insignificant. It seeks enough clarity for Christians to gather honestly without demanding manufactured uniformity.

Where the Charter leaves a matter open, local Christians remain responsible to seek Scripture, pray, listen well, exercise conscience, and discern together with humility and love. A recommendation in this Guide should remain a recommendation. Where the Charter establishes a boundary, the Guide should explain that boundary faithfully rather than soften it, enlarge it, or create another one beside it.

Gathering faithfully across real differences can itself become a school of Christian maturity and unity, teaching us to depend more directly and deeply upon Christ Himself as our Head and to grow together in Christlikeness. In this, grace and faith are not merely confessed, but lived.

This Guide is offered in that spirit. It is meant to help Christians practice fellowship with seriousness and freedom while remembering that no guide can carry the ordinary responsibilities of Christian life for them. Christ remains the Head, Scripture remains the norm, and Christians must still learn to follow Him together.

Scripture and Bible Versions

Scripture in the Proximity Framework

The Charter receives Holy Scripture as the authoritative written norm for Christian faith and life. It also establishes the biblical canon used by the Framework: the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament commonly received within historic Protestant Christianity. This Guide does not reopen that constitutional question. Its purpose here is practical, to help local fellowships choose and use Bible editions responsibly.

Choosing a Bible Translation

Proximity Fellowship does not prescribe one mandatory Bible translation. For common reading and teaching, a fellowship should ordinarily use a reputable translation responsibly translated from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek biblical texts and suitable for the people gathered. Different responsible translation approaches may be used. Accuracy, intelligibility, and faithfulness to the biblical text matter more than loyalty to one publisher, tradition, or preferred English style.

Reading and Comparing Translations

Participants may freely bring and consult different Bible translations. Comparing responsible translations can sometimes help a fellowship notice wording, context, or interpretive questions that deserve closer attention. Differences between translations should not become tests of spiritual maturity or occasions for unnecessary rivalry. Where a question matters, Participants may examine the passage carefully and seek appropriate help rather than assuming that one familiar wording settles every interpretive issue.

Paraphrases, Study Notes, and Editorial Material

Paraphrases may sometimes help with illustration, devotional reflection, or initial understanding, but they should not ordinarily serve as the primary text for establishing doctrine or normative teaching within a Proximity Fellowship. Study notes, section headings, introductions, maps, cross-references, commentary, and other editorial material may be useful, but they should be clearly distinguished from the biblical text itself.

Participants From Other Christian Traditions

Participants from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, or other Christian traditions may personally use Bible editions received within their own traditions. No Participant is required to renounce such an edition in order to gather through Proximity. For Scripture presented publicly in the name of Proximity Fellowship, however, the Protestant canon established by the Charter governs. The Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal books should not be presented as part of Holy Scripture for establishing doctrine, Constitutional Requirements, or normative Christian teaching within the Framework.

Worship, Hymns, and Songs

Worship in the Gathered Fellowship

Christian worship should direct attention toward God rather than toward the personality, skill, or prominence of those who lead. A Proximity Fellowship may worship through singing, prayer, Scripture, thanksgiving, silence, testimony, or other appropriate forms. The Framework does not require one musical style, instrument, order, level of formality, or historical period. A simple gathering may worship as genuinely as one with trained musicians or a carefully prepared liturgy.

Theological Care in Hymns and Songs

Proximity Fellowship recommends that hymns, songs, and other sung material used in a gathering be chosen with responsible attention to Scripture and be consistent with the historic Protestant Christian tradition in which the Framework is anchored. Because songs can teach as well as express worship, their words deserve thoughtful consideration. Popularity, familiarity, emotional power, or musical quality should not by themselves determine whether a song is suitable for common Christian worship.

Tradition, Authorship, and Christian Breadth

This recommendation concerns theological content rather than the denominational identity of a songwriter or the tradition from which a song comes. A fellowship may use ancient hymns, psalms, historic Protestant hymns, contemporary songs, or material received from other Christian traditions where the words can be sung in good faith within the Framework. A song need not have been written by a Protestant Christian in order to be suitable for a Proximity gathering.

Language, Culture, and Musical Form

Local fellowships remain free to use the languages, musical forms, instruments, and cultural expressions that serve the people gathered. No musical culture should be treated as inherently more spiritual merely because it is older, newer, quieter, more expressive, more formal, or more familiar to a particular tradition. Where Participants come from different backgrounds, thoughtful variety can help worship remain genuinely shared rather than belonging to only one group.

Participation and Conscience

No Participant should be pressured to sing words that they cannot affirm in good conscience. Where a song raises a serious theological concern, Participants may discuss it respectfully and choose another song where appropriate. The purpose of such care is not to create suspicion around every lyric. It is to help the fellowship worship truthfully, intelligibly, and together under Christ.

The Lord's Supper

A Practice Instituted and Commanded by Christ

The Lord's Supper was instituted and commanded by Christ and belongs to the shared inheritance of the Christian Church. In bread and cup, Christians remember Christ, give thanks for Him, proclaim His death, and receive the Supper according to the convictions of their Christian tradition. Proximity Fellowship encourages local fellowships to give the Lord's Supper a meaningful and recurring place in their shared life where circumstances and convictions allow.

A Serious Recommendation, Not One Universal Form

Proximity takes the Lord's Supper seriously without prescribing one complete sacramental or theological explanation for every Participant. Christians differ concerning what takes place in the Supper, how Christ is present, how often it should be received, what preparation is appropriate, and what liturgical form should accompany it. Where the Charter leaves these questions open, a local fellowship may follow its convictions with reverence, charity, and responsible attention to Scripture. A recommendation toward regular practice should not become a hidden requirement that every gathering must observe the Supper in the same way or at the same frequency.

Admission and Administration

Christians also differ concerning who should receive the Lord's Supper and who should preside, administer, or facilitate it. Some traditions require ordained or otherwise recognized ministers and maintain particular conditions for reception. Other Christians understand these matters more simply. The Proximity Framework does not impose one universal arrangement where the Charter has left the matter open. A fellowship should therefore make its practice known with enough clarity that Participants are not surprised or pressured at the table. Where a Participant cannot receive in good conscience, declining should be respected without embarrassment or spiritual suspicion.

Bread, Cup, and Practical Form

Questions concerning the kind of bread, the contents of the cup, distribution, posture, prayers, shared vessels, individual cups, and other practical details may ordinarily be decided locally. Such decisions should serve reverence, intelligibility, health, safety, and the people actually gathered. No practical form should be treated as spiritually superior merely because it is older, newer, simpler, or more elaborate.

Reverence, Peace, and Mutual Regard

Whatever form is used, the Lord's Supper should not become an arena for competition, pressure, or contempt. Participants should approach it with gratitude toward Christ and consideration for one another. A local fellowship may explain its practice, invite questions, and make reasonable accommodations where these do not violate conscience or the Charter. Differences at the table need not be concealed, but they should be handled with honesty and peace. The Guide offers direction for gathering faithfully across these differences. It does not turn one local practice into the universal practice of Proximity Fellowship.

Baptism

A Practice Commanded by Christ

Baptism belongs to the shared inheritance of the Christian Church and is received as a practice commanded by Christ. Christians across the centuries have baptized in obedience to Him, while differing sincerely concerning the recipients, timing, mode, administration, and theological meaning of baptism. Proximity Fellowship does not require one complete baptismal theology as a condition of participation where the Charter leaves these questions open.

Different Christian Convictions

Some Christians baptize professing believers. Others also baptize infants or children within the life of the Church. Some ordinarily baptize by immersion, while others use pouring or sprinkling. Traditions also differ concerning preparation, the role of ordained or otherwise recognized ministers, the relation of baptism to church membership, and the recognition of a baptism previously received in another Christian community. These differences should be discussed honestly without pretending that they are insignificant or requiring every Participant to resolve them before fellowship can begin.

Local Practice and Administration

Where a local fellowship practices baptism, it should do so in a manner consistent with its Christian convictions, the Charter, and the responsibilities of those involved. The Proximity Framework does not impose one universal rule concerning who must administer baptism where the Charter has left that matter open. A fellowship that understands baptism to require an ordained or otherwise recognized minister remains free to follow that conviction. A fellowship with a simpler understanding of administration may likewise act according to its conviction with appropriate care and accountability.

Consent, Children, and Responsible Care

No person should be pressured into baptism or into repeating a baptism merely to demonstrate loyalty to Proximity Fellowship or to satisfy another Participant. Where an adult is being baptized, participation should be informed and voluntary. Where infant or child baptism is practiced, parents or legal guardians retain their proper responsibilities, and local practice should remain consistent with applicable law and appropriate pastoral care. Water, clothing, physical assistance, privacy, modesty, accessibility, and other practical matters should be handled with attention to safety, consent, and dignity.

Clarity Without Uniformity

A fellowship should explain its baptismal practice clearly enough that Participants understand what is being done and why. Those who hold a different conviction should not be mocked, treated as spiritually inferior, or pressured to participate against conscience. Where disagreement concerns whether a prior baptism should be recognized, the matter should be approached with Scripture, patience, and honest respect for the convictions involved. The purpose of this Guide is to help Christians practice baptism faithfully within the freedom the Charter preserves, not to turn one tradition's practice into the universal practice of Proximity Fellowship.

Spiritual Gifts, Tongues, Prophecy, and Personal Impressions

Different Christian Convictions

Christians differ sincerely concerning the continuation, nature, and expression of spiritual gifts. Some expect gifts such as tongues and prophecy to remain active in the Church. Others understand certain gifts differently or believe that some belonged particularly to the apostolic age. Proximity Fellowship does not require Participants to settle these questions before gathering together. Where such differences remain, the fellowship should seek peace, intelligibility, mutual edification, and responsible attention to Scripture.

Tongues and Interpretation

Where tongues are spoken aloud in a gathered fellowship, Proximity recommends following the apostolic concern that the gathering be built up through what can be understood. Public tongues should therefore ordinarily be accompanied by interpretation. Where no interpretation is available, the speaker should refrain from addressing the gathering in that form. This guidance is not a denial of the gift. It reflects the principle that shared worship should remain intelligible and edifying. No Participant should be pressured to speak in tongues or be treated as spiritually deficient for not doing so.

Prophecy and Personal Impressions

Where prophecy or a personal impression is offered, it should be expressed humbly, clearly, and without spiritual domination. Language such as "I sense" or "I believe this may be for us to weigh" is ordinarily wiser than using God's name to demand another person's obedience. Prophetic words and impressions should be weighed thoughtfully rather than accepted merely because they are spoken with confidence, emotion, or spiritual authority. Nothing offered in this way stands above Scripture or is exempt from testing.

Dreams, Visions, and Claimed Revelation

Participants may differ concerning dreams, visions, inner impressions, and other experiences understood as divine guidance. Such experiences may be shared with humility where appropriate, but they should not be used to establish doctrine, create a new Constitutional Requirement, override Scripture, or control another person's conscience, relationships, decisions, or spiritual standing. A claim that "God told me" does not remove the need for discernment, wisdom, accountability, and the freedom of others to test what is said.

Peace, Discernment, and Mutual Edification

Spiritual gifts should serve the building up of the fellowship rather than become measures of rank, maturity, or closeness to God. Participants should make room for appropriate expression without allowing one gift, personality, or spiritual style to dominate the gathering. Leaders and Participants may ask for clarification, weigh what is offered, set reasonable boundaries, or decline a proposed practice where necessary for peace, safety, conscience, or faithfulness to the Charter. The aim is neither suppression nor spectacle, but Christian fellowship in which gifts are exercised with humility, order, love, and Scripture as the norm.

Elders, Deacons, and Leadership

Leadership as Service

Proximity Fellowship understands Christian leadership fundamentally as service. A Host, elder, deacon, teacher, facilitator, or other person entrusted with responsibility serves for the good of the fellowship. Responsibility does not create ownership, spiritual superiority, or a right to control another Participant. A title may describe a responsibility, but the title itself does not make a person spiritually qualified.

Hosts and Shared Responsibility

A Host ordinarily helps make gathering possible and supports an orderly, welcoming, and safe environment. Hosting does not make that person the permanent leader, exclusive teacher, or owner of the fellowship. Where reasonably possible, practical knowledge and responsibility should be shared rather than unnecessarily concentrated in one person. Participants may contribute according to gifts, maturity, circumstances, and conscience.

Elders and Deacons

A local fellowship may recognize elders, deacons, or comparable forms of service where this is consistent with its understanding of Scripture and its Christian convictions. Proximity Fellowship does not itself ordain, install, or universally recognize a person as an elder or deacon merely because a local fellowship uses that title. Where elders are recognized, their responsibility should be pastoral and spiritual service. Where deacons or comparable servants are recognized, their work may include practical care, hospitality, administration, stewardship, and other service that strengthens the fellowship.

Teachers and Other Forms of Service

Teaching carries real responsibility because words offered as Christian teaching can shape faith and practice. Teachers should therefore handle Scripture carefully, distinguish biblical teaching from personal opinion, and remain open to appropriate questions and correction. Other forms of service may be just as important even when they are less visible. Hospitality, care, administration, music, practical help, encouragement, and quiet faithfulness should not be treated as lesser contributions merely because they carry no formal title.

Character, Maturity, and Accountability

When significant responsibility is entrusted to a person, Christian character should matter more than charisma, confidence, popularity, education, wealth, or public influence. Integrity, humility, reliability, self-control, care for others, and willingness to be accountable deserve serious attention. Leaders remain Participants among Participants and remain subject to correction. Leadership should increase accountability, not reduce it. Spiritual language, Scripture, personal influence, or a position of trust should never be used to manipulate, intimidate, isolate, exploit, or dominate another person.

No Universal Polity and No Indispensable Leader

Christians bring different convictions concerning pastors, elders, bishops, deacons, ministers, and other forms of church government. The Proximity Framework does not impose one universal leadership structure where the Charter leaves such matters open. A fellowship may use formal offices, shared leadership, simple hosting arrangements, or no formal titles where titles are unnecessary. Whatever form is used should remain capable of healthy review and transfer. A fellowship should be able to continue when a particular leader becomes unavailable. Christ is the Head. No local leader should become indispensable.

Marriage and Marriage Blessing

A Constitutional Boundary

Marriage is treated differently in this Guide from many practices on which the Charter leaves substantial local freedom. Within the Proximity Framework, the historic Christian understanding of marriage is received as the covenantal union of one man and one woman. This is not presented here merely as a recommendation. It is a Constitutional Requirement governing what a fellowship may perform, bless, or publicly present as Christian marriage in the name of Proximity Fellowship.

One Man and One Woman

For marriage and marriage blessing within the Framework, man and woman are understood in relation to biological sex. A Proximity Fellowship therefore does not perform, present, or recognize as a Christian marriage blessing a union between two persons of the same sex. The same boundary applies where one or both persons identify as transgender. A local fellowship may not adopt a different practice and present it publicly as though it were the position of the Proximity Framework.

Personal Conviction and Framework Practice

A Participant may personally hold a different conviction concerning marriage without that disagreement by itself determining the person's Christian identity or automatically excluding the person from ordinary fellowship. Freedom of conscience, however, does not require Proximity Fellowship to perform, endorse, or represent that differing conviction as Framework practice. Participants should be able to discuss disagreement honestly without coercion, contempt, or pressure to conceal what the Charter actually establishes.

Dignity, Welcome, and Pastoral Care

This constitutional boundary concerns Christian marriage and marriage blessing within the Framework. It is not a declaration that a person's human dignity, civil status, need for friendship, participation in ordinary fellowship, access to prayer and Scripture, or need for pastoral care disappears because of sexuality, gender identity, or disagreement with the Framework. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and other persons should be treated with dignity and without mockery, humiliation, contempt, exploitation, or coercion. Truthfulness and welcome should remain capable of existing together.

Freedom From Coercion and Civil Marriage

No Host, leader, or Participant should be pressured to perform, facilitate, or publicly endorse a marriage blessing contrary to this constitutional boundary. At the same time, disagreement should not be used as permission for harassment or public shaming. Civil marriage, legal recognition, and Christian marriage blessing are distinct questions. Where legal or official ecclesiastical recognition is required, Participants should use the appropriate lawful or ecclesiastical means. Proximity Fellowship does not prescribe one universal wedding liturgy. Within the constitutional boundary stated here, practical forms of prayer, blessing, preparation, and celebration may be shaped according to local Christian conviction and circumstance.

A Closing Word

A Guide That Serves Beneath the Charter

This Guide exists to help Christians practice the Proximity Framework with greater clarity, care, and confidence. It does not stand beside the Charter as a second constitution. The Charter governs the Framework. Where this Guide explains a Constitutional Requirement, it does so because the Charter has already established that boundary. Where this Guide recommends a practice, the recommendation remains guidance rather than a hidden requirement.

Freedom With Responsibility

Not every Christian difference needs to be resolved before fellowship can begin, and not every local difficulty needs a new rule. Where the Charter leaves room, Participants remain responsible for prayer, Scripture, conscience, wisdom, mutual accommodation, and mature Christian judgment. Local freedom should neither be used to disregard the Charter nor surrendered merely because uniformity feels easier. The aim is faithful fellowship under Christ, with enough clarity to guide and enough freedom for Christians to learn how to live together responsibly.

A Guide That May Be Refined

This Guide may be reviewed and refined as real fellowships encounter real questions. Such revision may improve explanation, examples, recommendations, and practical guidance. It may not quietly amend the Charter, redefine the Foundational Christian Confession, alter a Constitutional Requirement, or create a new requirement by accumulation. Any change that properly belongs to the Charter must be addressed through the Charter's own amendment process.

The Final Measure

No guide can anticipate every circumstance or carry the responsibilities of Christian life on behalf of those who gather. When these pages are helpful, they should be used with gratitude. When a question reaches beyond them, Participants should return to Scripture, seek wise Christian counsel where needed, and exercise mature judgment together under Christ. The purpose of the Guide is fulfilled when it helps Christians gather more faithfully without becoming something upon which they must permanently depend.

Christ is the Head.

Scripture is the norm.

No human being is indispensable.

This is v1.0 of *The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices*, dated August 31, 2026.

Suggestions, concerns, and thoughtful disagreement may be sent to info@proximityfellowship.org.

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Digital Resources

Publication links - not part of this publication's text.

Read Online

- [Proximity Fellowship Website](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Charter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience](#)

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1. **The Proximity Fellowship Charter**
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