

CANTON ADVENTIST CHURCH

Canton Adventist Church is a diverse, spiritual community that is *learning to love well*. We share a love for Jesus and a commitment to demonstrating and spreading the good news of His transforming love to our neighborhoods, the city of Canton, and the world. Rooted in the teachings of Scripture and the rich practices and theology of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we seek to be creative, relevant, honest, and adventurous in our life together.

We warmly welcome all, and invite you to join us in our journey of worshiping, serving, learning and growing. If you're a long-time, baptized, active Seventh-day Adventist, you're welcome. If you're not a Seventh-day Adventist but feel blessed by fellowshiping with us, you're welcome. If you lead out in a major ministry of the church, you're welcome. If you just warm the pew, attend only occasionally and never officially join, you're welcome.

Our goal is to minister at whatever level and to whatever degree you feel a need. However, we offer a standing invitation for everyone to become deeply involved in the life and ministry of the congregation.

The **reason we exist** is to **Create authentic community, show genuine compassion, and share the transforming love of Jesus**. This is our mandate, our **mission**.

We are **motivated** by four **core values** that determine the things we do as a church. They are:

- **Love, Acceptance and Grace,**
- **Community**
- **Family**
- **Service**

A place of **Love, Acceptance, and Grace**

Canton Adventist Church is a family that welcomes all, regardless of race, religion, or lifestyle. We seek to be a safe place where people are free to explore questions about God and faith, and the life the Jesus calls us to live. A place where past errors are laid to rest, where hope is born and where new life begins, where less-than-perfect people can be confident of love, acceptance and forgiveness in a spiritual family. A place where people can

know they are not alone!

We passionately believe that the absolute best way for us to live the life Jesus called us to live is to simply and authentically love each other. This is what we mean by learning to love well. We seek to build each other up in all things. In our words and actions we aim to communicate to our community and our world that they are loved well.

We build authentic **Community** together

We believe that the spiritual journey is designed by God to be experienced alongside others, so we encourage authentic, personal friendships whenever possible.

We try to build time each Saturday morning for informal and meaningful conversation. We believe that the purpose of the church is to ensure that no one is left alone. And we are called to community with each other. It is for this reason, that every activity the church runs is viewed as outreach and an opportunity to build community. Our members are encouraged to invite family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances to every aspect of our church program- worship services, social events, children's programs, youth activities, Vacation Bible School. As individuals and as a church family, we seek to make each attender feel a part of our spiritual community.

We build up the **Family**

We seek to encourage and support strong families, regardless of size or form. From the beginning, God intended for families to provide the foundation for a strong society. We seek to provide ministry to the whole family, from children through adults. Our Saturday morning bible studies for children, our summer VBS program, family camp outs, outdoor church, regular church social activities, and spontaneous family get togethers, all seek to provide a stable environment where our relationship can be nourished and flourish.

We **Serve** our community and our family

We believe a greater blessing is found in giving than in just receiving, and we believe that God gave us spiritual gifts to be used for the benefit of others. This is why we encourage our members to actively serve in some capacity. Because we're dependent on volunteers for all our ministries, when the percentage of passive participants becomes too high, we can no longer provide all the ministries we wish to offer. So helpers are definitely needed all the time. We don't want you to dread coming to church because you feel you're not playing a large-enough role. We want you to participate in a manner appropriate to where your life is presently.

We appreciate the kind of pressures that many people face. We know the demands of family and work. We understand how crises arise that threaten to overwhelm. So if you can do nothing more than summon enough spiritual energy to drag yourself to church occasionally, be assured, you're welcome.

We also actively seek to engage the need of our community. We are very active with two organizations that directly impact the community directly adjacent to our church. Path to Shine is a tutoring program that provides academic support to elementary age childrens, and Forever Fed provides food and clothing to those who have material needs. We also step forward when disaster strikes, and provide financial and human resources to help those affected.

We **Worship** the ONE in community

We believe that we were created to worship the One...Jesus Christ. He is the reason we come together in community each week. He is the reason we make the gathering of our family a priority in our lives. We believe that when we gather together on Saturday mornings, we are allowing our community to be shaped and formed by our common desire to know Jesus better.

Our worship is relaxed and informal and driven by our value of acceptance. You will see a variety of dress styles, from the extremely casual to the well dressed. You are also quite likely to see jewelry and other forms of outward adornment. Our aim is to worship our creator together, and we refuse to allow external appearances to hinder us from that goal. It is our belief that corporate worship is an opportunity for all of our members and attenders to come together at the same worship "table," creating a beautifully engaging and meaningful celebration.

We aim to offer biblically faithful, culturally relevant, and Christ-consumed worship opportunities that incorporate everything from ancient to modern elements in this weekly conversation between God and His people.

We seek to let the Spirit guide

The members of Canton Adventist Church believe in letting the Spirit guide the individual conscience on issues concerning which the Bible lays down broad guidelines but doesn't provide specific directives.

Our philosophy, in general, is that it's the job of the church to promote the principles outlined in scripture. But it isn't the job of the church to prescribe every practical application of those principles. That's the work of the individual conscience, guided by God's Spirit. And our value of love, acceptance and grace leads us to embrace all with open arms.

Our aim is to specifically reach out to the the prodigals, the spiritually hurting, the angry, the cynical, the doubters, the heretics, the free-thinkers, the free spirits, the uncommitted, those who've been burned by Adventism or by Christianity in general, those who've all but given up on organized religion, and those who've never been exposed to religion in the first place. They recognize a spiritual void exists in their life and they may come seeking a place where the void may be filled. They don't want to be chastised and condemned; they want spiritual encouragement. They want hope. They want love, acceptance and forgiveness in a spiritual family. Rather, we open our arms, welcome them and encourage them to become actively involved in some form of ministry.

We embrace our Adventist heritage

As member of the worldwide body of believers known as the Seventh-day Adventist church, we embrace our rich heritage that grew from our founders over 150 years ago. They were true pioneers in their desire to follow God and their willingness to go against the grain of tradition and dogma. They embody the pioneer spirit in their bold desire to be a unique light to a dark world.

Canton Adventist aims to be the same unique light perched on a hill, and those who attend often sense that uniqueness. Some don't like what they find, but many do. Quite innocently, however, newcomers can fall into the trap of trying to change our approach. "Why do you tolerate such far-out opinions?" they ask. "Why don't you make the young people dress more appropriately?" "Why don't you follow the denomination's traditions more closely?" "Why don't you take control more?"

We believe that our approach is critical to creating an atmosphere that fosters family and community. Undeniably, the Canton Adventist congregation colors outside the lines at times. However the departures from tradition are rarely by chance and are never a sign of anarchy. They're part of a carefully thought-through and comprehensive philosophy.

In the Atlanta area, we have the luxury of a veritable smorgasbord of Adventist churches- large and small, traditional and progressive, urban and suburban. In all probability, a church already exists that has a corporate

personality that quite nearly matches whatever a person is looking for. Thus, it isn't necessary to overhaul any congregation; it's simply a matter of finding a congregation that provides the right match.

In keeping with the candor that characterizes Canton Adventist Church, we want every potential member to know why we think and function as we do. That's the reason for this brochure. We readily acknowledge that in some respects we're different from many Seventh-day Adventist congregations. But we're excited about the niche we've carved for ourselves. Our unique approach has positively impacted many who would never be reached otherwise.

We feel privileged to be part of such a ministry and we open our doors to all who would like to share the Canton Adventist experience with us.'

Invitation

- *If you like the emphasis of our Mission, Values, Strategy and Metrics ...*
- *If you like the explanations provided in this brochure ...*
- *If you like our Bible-centered, Christ-centered, hope-centered, service-centered worship ...*
- *If you like the congregation's willingness to let people make their own spiritual decisions ...*
- *If you like open and free discussion . . .*
- *If you like a congregation that targets much of its ministry toward the spiritually down and out . .*
- *If you feel comfortable in a congregation that candidly admits its own spiritual inadequacies ...*
- *If you feel at home when fellowshipping with us . . .*

Consider making Canton Adventist your church family.