



Liberti Church Main Line Profile

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Introduction

Liberti Church is a church for Philadelphia's Main Line neighborhoods. Liberti wholeheartedly embraces the gospel, or good news, of historic Christian faith: that, in the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, God has acted to redeem and renew the cosmos he has created. This shapes who we are and everything we do. As such, Liberti's mission is to live, speak, and serve as the very presence of Christ for our neighborhoods.


History

In exploring how God was at work across the Philadelphia region, a small group of praying families from the Main Line connected with leaders from the young church plant in Center City that was part of the Liberti Network of churches, and who encouraged partnership with them. Liberti Church Center City had begun worship services in March of 2009, and after several years of growth, began seeing a number of people come to the Center City worship service from the neighborhoods along the Main Line. So, in January of 2012, the church launched a campus on the Main Line to create a presence that was accessible to friends and neighbors interested in exploring Christian faith, and to continue Liberti's commitment to connecting people to each other in neighborhood-based community. In March of 2012, Liberti's Main Line campus began worship services at Rosemont College.

For seven years, until Sept 2019, Liberti Church Center City & Main Line worked together as a multi-campus church to reach the communities of Center City and the Main Line. In God's graciousness, in September 2014, Liberti was able to purchase and renovate the beautiful First Baptist Church building located in the heart of Center City at 17th and Sansom Streets, through the partnership of its congregants in both Center City and the Main Line.

God was generously gracious to both Liberti campuses in the first years of life, and there has been much development, growth, and change along the way. As part of that development and growth, Liberti's leadership decided in September 2019 to work toward organizing both a Liberti Church Center City and a Liberti Church Main Line as separate sister churches. The goal of moving from a multi-campus church to two partnering sister churches was to further and more effectively pursue in each community the vision of being a Church that loves and serves its people and its community.

Like many churches, Liberti has had its own share of growing pains. However, the community of Liberti Main Line has remained strong through the midst of multiple transitions - separation from the Center City campus, the resignation of its founding pastor, and the resignation of the founding pastor's successor, who left the ministry altogether. Liberti Main Line was Blessed to be able to recruit Matt Harmon as lead pastor in the Fall, 2021.



Additionally, Rosemont College asked us to worship elsewhere when they placed their campus in lockdown, in response to the COVID pandemic. During the pandemic, Liberti Main Line conducted worship in the backyards of member's homes and local parks until it reached an agreement with St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Wayne, PA to share its space. Liberti Main Line is actively pursuing a sacred place of its own and is in the financial position to do so when the right opportunity arises.

Church Vision

Liberti's founding vision was drawn from multiple sources, including Redeemer NYC (PCA), and the two churches most directly involved in its planting, Liberti River Wards (PCA) and City Church San Francisco (RCA).

Current Liberti Vision Statement:

Liberti Church exists to live, speak and serve as the very presence of Christ on the Philadelphia Main Line.


Core Values

Liberti's mission and values are manifest through three core ministry areas: (For more details, see Liberti Institutes and In Covenant Membership material.)

- Worship
- Community
- Mercy

Worship: We believe that worship is the chief task of the church. Worship is not only seeing the worth of God and giving God what He is worth, but setting all or our affections on God and God alone. We want each service to form the story of the Gospel in the congregation. Thus, our services have an intentional shape, containing the fourfold order of movements within a service practiced from the earliest days of the Christian church, and practiced across the whole Christian family: Gathering before God, The Word of God, The Sacraments, The sending. With this structure, and recognizing that people come to worship from different places (personally, spiritually, etc.) we strive to worship in a way that is both traditional and dynamic, God-centered and comprehensible, hospitable, and speaks to both the heart and mind.

Community: The Church of Jesus Christ is not only an event, but a people. In addition to our corporate gatherings on Sunday mornings, we express community primarily in small gatherings called "home groups," as people who are in covenant with God and each other. Liberti's home groups are intended to provide pastoral care for the entire congregation, which enables personal and communal spiritual growth. Each group develops into a primary



Christian community where the presence and power of Jesus Christ are experienced. In these communities, Christ transforms the lives of individuals as they do real life together. At the same time, the community group itself is transformed into a more life-giving community, which impacts the larger communities (Church, neighborhood, and world) of which the group is a part.


Mercy: Scripture reveals that God's grace comes to us, so that it can be expressed through us. We are liberated by the gospel to be a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom for others. We express the mercy of God in compassion and multiplication. We show compassion through gospel-driven service to those around us who are wounded, in need, and forgotten, which flows from experiencing his grace. As we become recipients of God's grace, we then are transformed into conduits of His grace, as well. Scripture tells us that mercy and justice are the natural overflow of a transformed heart. The good news (Gospel) of God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ is not for one group of people. The Scriptures tell us that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is good news for the whole world. Therefore, we want to multiply disciples of Jesus, communities that follow Jesus, and churches that follow, proclaim, and demonstrate the love of Jesus. Liberti Church is concerned not only with demonstrating Jesus' compassion and care locally - we believe that God loves the whole world, and so should we. We connect with partner churches and organizations globally in order to serve the needs of the world and the Church throughout the world.

Governance

Liberti is part of the City Classis of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), an historic denomination in the Reformed family of the Christian Church.

Reformed Church of America

The RCA, founded in 1628 in New Amsterdam (today's New York City), is the oldest Protestant denomination in the United States. It is characterized by both deep roots in historic, Reformed Christian faith, and an ongoing commitment to the mission of Christ in the world. We trace our theological roots to the Reformation, a movement for church renewal and reform that took place within the churches of Western Christendom in the 16th century. Reformed churches emphasize the importance of preaching in worship, the sovereignty of God in creation and redemption, the priesthood of all believers, and the centrality of the gospel in the life of the church. As a Reformed Church, we believe that the sacraments of baptism and communion not only represent God's grace, but also seal and apply that grace to our lives. As Reformed Christians, we are committed to living out the implications of God's radical grace in every area of our lives, and believe that ALL of life, at home, at work, at play, is to be lived to the glory of God.



Reformed Churches have a distinct way of talking about God's grace in salvation. Five distinctives can be made: the human condition; the initiative of God, the Father; the work of Christ, the Son; the ministry of the Holy Spirit; and the Promise of the Gospel.

More information on Reformed beliefs can be found by reading the historic Reformed confessions:

- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Belgic Confession
- The Canons of Dort

City Classis

A classis gathers minister and elder representatives from a group of RCA congregations, usually according to their geographical proximity. Each classis supervises the congregations and ministers within its bounds. The City Classis was formed outside of traditional geographic regions to support churches in the practices of missional ecclesiology with urban contexts.

Liberti Church Leadership

Each RCA congregation is governed by a body called a consistory. The consistory is made up of elders and deacons, elected by the congregation, and the congregation's installed minister(s).

Elders

The elders, together with the deacons, are responsible for overseeing the entire life and mission of the congregation. Elders and ministers are particularly responsible for spiritual oversight—to “look diligently whether every member of the church lives in the way of Christ”—as the 1968 edition of our liturgy expresses it. Reflecting our egalitarian perspective, our current elders are:

- Nanette Ballbach
- Joe Bruni
- Ian Clausen

Deacons

Deacons are called by God for the ministry of mercy, service, and outreach. They shall serve those in distress and need and shall minister to the sick, poor, hurt, and helpless. The Book of Church Order directs deacons to aid the victims of the world's abuse and to express the social concerns of the church. The focus of their service is both in the church and in the world. Our current deacons are:

- Ben Ruegsegger
- Bianca DiCamillo
- Lauren Clausen
- Jonna McDougall



Ministers

Liberti Main Line's current pastor is Rev. Matthew Paul Harmon, Th.M, who joined us in 2021 after serving many years at a church in Grove City, PA.

Jordan Armentrout was hired in 2022 as a Part-Time Administrative Assistant. The Church is currently conducting a search for a Worship Director and Director - Next Gen. Ministry as we re-launch Liberti Main Line, following a period of disruption caused primarily by the global COVID pandemic.

Affiliations

Liberti Network

The Liberti Network is a multi-denominational community of churches that seek to live, speak, and serve as the very presence of Jesus in Philadelphia and our surrounding regions. Liberti churches can be identified by essential [core values](#) that are expressed and lived out within the Liberti Network of churches.

Our partnership with the Liberti Network allows us to participate in citywide initiatives like Small Things, Easter Outreach, and support of church-planting efforts around Philadelphia.


Redeemer City to City Network

We are also participants in an international organization that seeks to start gospel-centered churches in the world's major metro regions called the [Redeemer City to City Network](#). Redeemer City to City prayerfully recruits, trains, coaches, and resources leaders to start and strengthen churches and networks in their cities.

Local Community

Philadelphia

The Main Line is a suburb of Philadelphia. Philadelphia, the sixth-most populous city in the United States is known as the birthplace of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Today, the city maintains a focus on history and culture, but it is also a study in contrasts with both thriving and faltering neighborhoods. More than 25 percent of Philadelphians live below the poverty level, contributing to the homeless population and those who are resource insecure. According to a 2018 one-night count of people living on the streets and in shelters, Philadelphia had 5,788 homeless people. One in 5 residents go to bed hungry each night. That's more than 325,000 people who aren't sure where their next meal will come from. One in 3 families reported a lack of sufficient heat or electricity to ensure a safe



home. And more than 1 in 3 families experienced some form of housing insecurity – either living in a crowded home or moving several times in one year.

Main Line

Understanding the culture and challenges of the city helps highlight the stark contrast of the Main Line suburb. The Philadelphia Main Line, known simply as the Main Line, is an informally delineated historical and social region of suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lying along the former Pennsylvania Railroad’s once prestigious Main Line, it runs northwest from downtown Philadelphia parallel to Lancaster Avenue (US Route 30).

The railroad first connected the Main Line towns in the 19th century. They became home to sprawling country estates belonging to Philadelphia’s wealthiest families, and over the decades became a bastion of “old money”. Today, the Main Line is comprised of a predominantly white, educated population and includes some of the wealthiest communities in the country, such as Lower Merion Township, Radnor Township, Gladwyne, and Villanova, as well as several nationally recognized public school systems.

Main Line by the numbers (highlighted from Radnor Township):


- Population 33,582
- Median household income \$139,076
- Median age 32
- Median home price \$664,500
- Bachelor’s degree or higher 75.6%
- Persons in poverty 6.2%
- Diversity
 - Black 5%
 - Hispanic 6%
 - Asian 9%
 - Foreign born 4%

Liberti Demographics

The congregation strives to be a welcoming environment for both the church and unchurched—including those familiar with Liturgical traditions as well as educated, non-Christian skeptics. Attendees and members are a mix of academics and professionals; most are families with young children, but there is also a good number of empty nesters and young single professionals.

Number of Giving Units - 48

- Families - 59%
- Empty-nesters - 17%

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- Singles - 16%
 - Married w/o children - 8%
 - Number of kids - (-50)

Strengths

Home Groups


Home groups are small gatherings that take place during the week, where people are able to do life together through the study of God's Word and fellowship. We believe that home groups are essential to the spiritual health and discipleship of Liberti's members, as we seek to build neighborhood-based, Gospel-centered communities. In home groups, relationships are deepened and members often seek additional times for fellowship outside of their small group gathering. Liberti does not require membership to the church prior to involvement; rather, we see home group as a conduit for engagement and eventual church membership. In the midst of the changes that the Liberti Main Line community has experienced over the last few years, home groups have been a continued source of support and connection among members and attendees.

Congregational Commitment

Liberti is sustained by a core group of committed congregants who have weathered the many changes faced by the church in recent years. These congregants include elder leaders, members, and regular attendees who have continued participating in home groups, planned and carried out church outreach events, volunteered with partner ministries, contributed financially, and supported weekly Sunday worship by teaching Sunday school, serving communion, and more. This core group of people are committed to seeing God work through the many changes at Liberti, and are truly invested in Liberti as their church home and mission field. A recent church-wide survey distributed by the Pastoral Search Team included a response from a congregant who described the church as a "very energized group of congregants willing to take on any number of tasks because of their love of the church."

Community/Hospitality

Liberti's passion for community building is evidenced by the annual men's and women's retreats, women's Bible studies and social events, and a men's prayer group. Liberti has a thriving meal ministry for those experiencing crisis and major life transitions such as births and those facing illness or loss. Liberti is blessed with a community that enjoys spending time together outside of "official" church events, including Christmas Eve caroling, an annual Easter picnic, and ad-hoc women's gatherings and children's play groups. The recent church-wide



survey revealed that many members and attendees find the community within Liberti Main Line to be one of its greatest strengths. Furthermore, Liberti has members with a heart for outreach within the greater Philadelphia community, demonstrated by its involvement with mercy ministries (Small Things, Easter Outreach, Emmanuel) and its member-led outreach events, such as an annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Sound Doctrine in a Gray World

Liberti Main Line values being a place where sound doctrine is presented in a way that is unwavering, yet approachable to those who are new to faith or still seeking. This includes sermon messages that are seeker friendly, an open-door policy for home groups, a weekly coffee hour on Sunday mornings to welcome newcomers, and a commitment to outreach events that are open to members of the community. Liberti also strives to provide a place for members and attendees to ask questions within a framework of belief. This is evidenced by periodic discussions with pastors and church leaders to focus on some of the bigger questions and issues facing modern culture, such as the intersection of faith and science; the role of the church in addressing poverty; and Biblical perspective on sexuality.

Mercy Ministries

Liberti has long standing relationships with several ministries that require volunteer participation from members and attendees. A church-wide survey revealed that mercy ministries are a top priority to many within the congregation; respondents cited their commitment to the church's existing relationships, and their desire to focus on mercy ministries as an area of further growth.

- **Easter Outreach** | This annual ministry raises funds for the purchase and distribution of food to people who have been affected by COVID-19. And, Easter Outreach has continued its partnership with an organization, Philabundance, to purchase and distribute food to neighbors who are elderly, children, food insecure, and medically vulnerable. The Liberti Main Line congregation has assisted in meal packaging and delivery, and has also provided substantial financial support.
- **Small Things and Emmanuel** | Led by Vito Baldini and his team at Small Things, volunteers pack food for those suffering from food insecurity. Also, in partnership with Liberti Center City (now known as Resurrection Church) we support the feeding of homeless persons in the Rittenhouse Square part of Center City.