

NGU Partners with Local Church to Train Next Generation of Christian Leaders



North Greenville University (NGU) is taking its mission of graduating transformational leaders for church and society into the local churches through strategic partnerships. NGU has partnered with Rocky Creek Church in Greenville to offer graduate ministry courses through the church's Entrust Institute, a new leadership development program. The partnership began in January.

NGU President Dr. Gene C. Fant, Jr., says that North Greenville University was birthed by local churches and maintains a close relationship with local churches.

"Foundational to our mission is the equipping of transformational leaders for the church and this program is an outgrowth of that vision," said Dr. Fant. "Just as Dr. Agnew is a transformational leader at his church and as a former chair of the NGU board, this program prepares promising leaders by offering practical experiences in day-to-day ministry."

Dr. Travis Agnew, a 2003 NGU graduate, former Board chairman, and Rocky Creek Church pastor, is teaching the first two courses.

"I personally longed for a seminary experience that was tethered to a local church so that my educational experience would be aligned with practical training," said Agnew. "It is a joy to partner with North Greenville so that this opportunity can become a reality for the next generation of pastors, ministers, missionaries, and counselors."

The purpose of the partnership is to allow students to pursue their theological education while learning faithful ministry in the context of a healthy local church. Students who enroll in NGU through the Entrust Institute will take coursework toward the Master of Divinity and will have the opportunity to take classes from both the Rocky Creek pastors' staff and the College of Christian Studies faculty at the Tim Brashier Campus or online.

"We are excited to start this partnership in training men and women for ministry in the context of

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the local church. Our charter as a university of the South Carolina Baptist Convention is to serve and bless and strengthen Christ's Church and serve as catalysts for others to come to know Jesus," said Associate Dean of the School of Ministry Dr. Matthew Wireman. "We pray that this will be the first of many such partnerships to provide vital training in the ministry, while the local church provides the practical elements of applying that learning to serving the needs of the church."

The first two courses offered are Systematic Theology I and Discipleship. Systematic Theology I is an introduction to and a survey of approximately half of the major topics of classical Christian theology. The Discipleship class is an introduction to the practice of following Christ and leading others to do the same. Topics include personal discipleship, disciple-making, developing a philosophy of ministry that emphasizes discipleship, and implementing strategies for creating disciple-making movements.

NGU hopes this partnership is the first of what will be several strategic local church partnerships with the College of Christian Studies.

"One of the most promising trends in theological education is strategic partnerships between traditional schools and healthy local churches. I couldn't be more excited for our College of Christian Studies to partner with Rocky Creek Baptist Church, which is one of the healthiest churches in our region," said NGU Provost and Dean of the University Faculty Dr. Nathan A. Finn. "I look forward to seeing students who enroll through The Entrust Institute flourish as they learn how to connect their studies with practical ministry opportunities."

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