



State of the Church



2023

Follow JESUS. Make DISCIPLES.

Where there is no purpose, there is no direction. This year we identified our church's purpose. It was crucial that God's purpose for FBC Tecumseh be discovered and implemented. We are unique in our context. We are not like, nor do we want to be like, "every other church." Just as God created each person marvelously complex and has a plan for them, so too has he created FBC Tecumseh marvelously complex and has a specific plan for us.

Over 130 years ago, God saw to it to call 13 charter members to plant First Baptist Church Tecumseh. He did so knowing that He wanted to use this ekklesia (called out one) for a special purpose.

This purpose comes straight from God's Word...**Follow Jesus. Make Disciples.**

Follow Jesus. Just as Jesus made the call to his first disciples to "follow me" that's the call upon every believer and every church. Wherever Jesus leads, we must go. We go where Jesus goes because we know there is no safer place, there is no place closer to God, and there is no one and nothing else that will sustain us like Jesus.

It's a tough task at times to **follow Jesus**. He often walks contrary to culture and requires of us to take a stand against the things this world throws at us. Nevertheless, there is no more successful and safer place to be than in the footsteps and the will of God Himself. It's a daily decision to **Follow Jesus** rather than our own sinful nature, but as we make that daily decision it's amazing to turn around and see how far Jesus has taken us!

Make Disciples. God desires that everyone would follow Him. He could do that easily by loudly speaking to everyone on earth and showing them undeniable signs of His existence. However God decided to share the good news of salvation through Jesus a different way. He invited His children to be a part of the plan. It's called **Discipleship**.

Jesus modeled what this looked like when he took a group of young followers, replicated himself in them, and trained them up to do the same thing. In Matthew 28:19-20, He gave them this one imperative command: **Make Disciples**. All of the "Great Commission" revolves around this one imperative.

We are called on a personal & church level to **make disciples**. As Jesus Followers each of us have been given the command to **make disciples** who **make disciples** who **make disciples**. On a church level, we are expected to be a church who makes a church who makes a church. That is not to say we are to only make ONE disciples, but to multiply ourselves as far and wide as God would allow us.

Connect, Grow, Serve WITH US.

It's great to have purpose, but we also need an intentional process to accomplish that purpose. Our process, just like our purpose, is taken directly from Matthew 28:19-20. Every part of this is the Holy Spirit working through the obedience of His people to accomplish far greater than we can even think or imagine.

CONNECT. With Jesus and His Church.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19 to “baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Baptism in the New Testament is an ordinance of identification. There are so many things we do that with this goal in mind.

Fruits of 2023:

- We celebrated 14 baptisms and 40 new members.
- Sunday School attendance rose by 11% over 2022 and has further increased by 22% since April.
- Sunday Family Worship attendance rose from an average of 115 to 140, 18% growth.
- Adjusted Wednesday night schedule by opening up the family meal to all community members and beginning the service at 6:00 PM with Family Worship before discipleship classes begin.
- In order to move toward a better communication process, the website was redesigned for greater “front door” presence. Statistically in America today, the website is the first impression of the Church and what is communicated there will bring someone to the door or turn them away.
- Created an easy-to-use app that currently has 370 users and 190 individuals subscribed to push notifications.
- Another way to that we helped people **connect** was a new Welcome Team. This team is an extension of the already welcoming nature of our church and has 15 members that rotate weekly

Vision for 2024:

Focusing our efforts to **connect** people with Jesus and His church through an intentional schedule and program. We want to remove any hinderances to someone's encounters with Jesus. We cannot bring about life change, but we can provide an opportunity for someone to have an encounter with Jesus.

A popular saying from an unknown source: “**Jesus created the church the way He wanted it and now He wants it the way He created it.**” We have to be careful that we are not simply doing things because “it's the way we've always

done it.” At some point in time, someone started doing it that way...it was revolutionary at some point.

Sunday School began in Britain in the 1780's to teach working children literacy. Vacation Bible School began in 1898 when a doctor's wife wanted to take the Gospel to the children of New York City. Sunday Evening services were rooted in the Puritans of the 1600's and Mid Week services began as prayer meetings by evangelists like D.L. Moody in the 1800s.

- One big move that I've prayed over, researched, and prayed some more over is a Sunday morning schedule change. Moving our Sunday Family Worship to 9:45 AM and **Grow** Group (purposefully renamed from Sunday School) to 11:15 AM. These **Grow** Groups would be facilitated discussions around the sermon from our Family Worship Time.
 - In Acts, we see the early church doing this same thing. They were gather at the temple for worship and reading of the word, followed by meeting in homes to devote themselves to the apostles teaching, sharing a meal, fellowship, and prayer. ...AND DAILY THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBERS.
- Streamlining communications in 2024 will begin by focusing our communications efforts into our digital platforms. Our social media, website, and app are so easily accessible with a far reach for a fraction the cost. We will not abandon printed bulletins or calendars, however that media cannot hold all the information that we can easily communicate through digital means.
- Continuing to **grow** our Welcome Team will be a great boost to removing obstacles that may hinder visitors. Arriving at a new church for the first time is intimidating for many. Having a friendly face in the parking lot and at any door they walk through puts people at ease. Going hand in hand with our Welcome Team are things like welcome banners and indoor/outdoor signage to help people know where to be and when.
- Improving our livestream through upgraded streaming software and hardware. We have many people that are only able to watch online because they are physically unable to attend or have a job that doesn't allow consistency. We still want to give them the opportunity to worship with their church family. In addition, people looking for a new church home often decide whether they will attend based on watching a previous service. We need people to know that we are doing our best to represent God well, even in our quality of livestream.

GROW. In Knowledge and Obedience.

“Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.” (Matthew 28:20) It's not enough to just **connect** people to Jesus and his Church, we have been

tasked to raise them up to know the Word of God and how to be obedient to that Word.

Fruits of 2023:

- The creation of MinistryU for anyone in our church that has answered or is exploring God's call to vocational ministry or missions. We had eight in our first semester.
- All sermon series this year from Easter to Christmas laid the foundation of who Jesus is, who His church is, and how we are to respond to that.
- Multiplication of Home Groups and Sunday School classes began. Two new Home Groups launched this year and we were able to multiply one of our children's classes.
- Relaunch of our Men's Ministry began through a Men's Retreat to Chickasaw with 17 men.
- Created a ministerial staff position, Connections Minister, tasked specifically to work with the Senior Pastor to lead our church in the area of growing in knowledge and obedience to Jesus.

Vision for 2024:

Growing in knowledge and obedience happens best in small groups. Groups of 12 or less allow for discussion and more focused teaching. Intentional disciple-making relationships work even better than small groups for life change.

It's why Jesus had his 12 disciples, but also deeply invested in only three (Peter, James, John). The One who created us, knows how we learn best and he leveraged that to teach them how to be multipliers when his work was done.

Moving forward we need to look to Jesus' model for multiplying himself into his disciples.

- Restructure our current Sunday School classes into thriving **Grow** Groups that are for the purpose of learning to **follow Jesus** and **making disciples**.
 - **Grow** Groups would always begin with the intention that in 12-18 months they would multiply themselves into a new **Grow** Group.
 - **Grow** Group leaders identify and train future leaders, multiplying themselves.
 - **Grow** Groups, whether on campus or off campus, would be focused on intentional prayer, facilitated discussion about the sermon, spending time in fellowship together, and sharing meals.

- The greatest method for growth is life-on-life discipleship. **Grow** Groups are great arenas for that, but where it really happens best is in disciple-making relationships when one disciple is multiplying themselves into one or two new disciples.
 - This is more than bible study, it's daily accountability, teaching, and growing.
 - These would **grow** out of natural relationships developed within **Grow** Groups and fellowship within the church.

SERVE. In Ministry and Missions.

“Go” (Matthew 28:19) This verb to begin the “Great Commission” in Greek literally means “as you go” or “while you are going.” Jesus was telling His disciples that they need to do this wherever you are. We express that in two different ways, the ministry that happens within our church and the missions that happens in our community, state, nation, and world. We are to **serve** personally wherever our feet are and as a church through the opportunities that the Lord affords to us.

The Ministries of our church are meant to be programs by which we **connect, grow,** and **serve.** The Missions of our church are meant to make Jesus known to the **here, near,** and **far.**

Fruits of 2023:

- Food Pantry continued to thrive serving an average of 50 families a month. In the aftermath of the April tornado in Shawnee, the Food Pantry did even more, providing food for those effected in the Shawnee area.
- We had countless volunteers from our church assisting with tornado cleanup all around the Bethel/Shawnee area. Many of our church members helped provide cleanup, food, water, power, and even a shower trailer for the residents of Legacy Park Apartments who had no where to go.
- We put feet to the “mission-minded” statement that we have by intentionally partnering with North America Mission Board church planters (Steve and Toni Chambers) and International Mission Board missionaries (Jes and Cindi Smith; Daniel and Moriah Turner).
- Salt & Light was repurposed into a weekly mission focus. Keeping the ministries and missions of the church in the forefront every Wednesday and Sunday.
- Financially we have given nearly \$1500 to our state's Edna McMillan offering, over \$4400 to NAMB's Annie Armstrong offering that goes straight to church planting and missions efforts in North America, and we are on track for \$15,000

to IMB's Lottie Moon Christmas offering that supports over 3800 foreign missionaries.

Vision of 2024:

This is part of our process I'm most excited to see advancement in 2024. Serving in ministry and missions is where Following Jesus and Making Disciples leads us to.

The next step in multiplying is to multiply our church. The more I've prayed and sought God's will over our future, the more He's convinced me that we're not meant to be a megachurch, seeing how many we can bring in.

Just like the servants Jesus speaks about in Matthew 25:14-30, we've been given resources that we must do well with. We would do well to take what he has given us, invest it in Kingdom works, and yield a return to be given back to him. Let's do Kingdom math by multiplying ourselves to the ends of the earth.

FBC Tecumseh should be a training ground for ministers, missionaries, and church planters; raising them up from within and bringing them in from the community around us. Training them, sending them, and supporting them as they plant their own churches, begin a parachurch ministries, or go to the foreign mission field.

- We need to be focusing the ministries of our church on our Purpose and Process. This will pose some challenges because tough questions will have to be answered. Questions like *"Does this ministry advance or hinder us?"* *"Can this ministry operate more efficiently by changing the way it functions?"*
- Expanding and building upon MinistryU will be the beginning of this pipeline. Spring and Fall semesters will help those wrestling with a call from God to understand that call and see how God has designed the minister and the church to function.
- This year we must move from "cooperating with" to "supporting" church planters. That means moving from simply praying for church planters in general and giving to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program to supporting a specific church plant. That support comes in the form of prayer, participation, and provision.
- Creating a steady stream of short term mission trips to our mission partners will enhance our dedication to being a "mission-minded" church.

From the P A S T O R

Since arriving here in April, this has been a whirlwind eight months. It has been the most challenging, scariest, and exciting eight months of my life. From the very first zoom interview I had with your elected search committee, I knew God had something special for this church. The people were too sweet, too prayerful, too passionate for this 130 year church to fail.

What Jenna & I found here was the most loving, most welcoming family of Jesus followers we've ever experienced. It was known that there was hurt and disunity in the church's recent past, but through the leadership of Mike Craig, the deacons, and the remnant, you were ready to press forward, unified and ready for a move of the Holy Spirit.

I am grateful for each of you that were faithful to be where God called you to be. I'm especially grateful for our staff who faithfully week in, week out came and gave Jesus their all to minister to you in those difficult days. This staff is the best around.

Rita Pine, Janette Dewitt, Kandi Fowler, Susan Hookum, Millie Freeman, Kyle Fowler, Cameron Clark, Ariel Kim and Joy Bickers are passionate about Jesus and they love each of you so much. I am humbled and blessed that God has allowed me to **serve** alongside them. Please make sure that each of them knows how you appreciate and love them every chance you get. Ministry is hard. People are difficult at times. They need your encouragement.

As I look back on what God has done here over these last few months, I know it is because this is a church that is seeking His will. This is a praying church, a Bible believing church, a serving church, a loving church. You have allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work without obstacle. It's because of that that I know the future is bright.

The vision God has given us is a big one, but He's a big God! He's calling us to a vision that only He can accomplish. It's going to stretch us and challenge us.

We are a family, each member with a responsibility. If any of us does not want to accept that responsibility or we take it lightly, we are like an 12 cylinder race car running on 11 cylinders. Sure it runs, it can probably be in the race...but it's not running smooth and it certainly won't win the race. This is a whole-family effort.

My prayer for you is that God would show you how you fit in this family, what your responsible for, and give you a passion to do that. I promise you, you fit somewhere!

My continued prayer for this church is unity and love...Jesus says that it's by those things the world will know us.

Inevitably with change comes questions, possibly murmuring, rumors, and opportunities for Satan to get a foot in the door by creating division. Let's not give him that opportunity!

Know this about me: I'm desperately seeking God's will be done. I have no desire to be known. I do not want a church that I have designed, that would be a major flop! Every decision has been meticulously prayed over, confirmed by Scripture, and discussed with men and women wiser than me both inside this church and outside.

I ask this one thing of you brother or sister: if there is ever any questions, concerns, worries, frustrations, or sticking points...please come to me. My office is always open, I'm always available for you. I will listen with humility and patience. I'm human and willing to admit fault if I've wronged you or failed to see your perspective.

I love each of you so much! I'm here, like you to **serve** Jesus first and foremost. Secondly, I **serve** and pastor my family. Thirdly, I'm here to shepherd and **serve** alongside each of you. Next year is going to be an amazing year...you can be a part of what God is going to do or you sit back and watch...it's your choice.

IN SERVICE & LOVE,
Clint Bryant