



SHILOH
COVENANT CHURCH

Proposal to Plant Shiloh Covenant Church

Butler County, Ohio

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A man blessed with much.

He was a man blessed with much. A large family, an abundance of flocks and herds, and plenty of servants to manage his estate. The ruler of the land, jealous of Isaac's wealth and power, asked him to leave, for fear that Isaac may overpower him. Isaac left in peace and settled into a new location for his family, servants and herds. This location was not new for the people of God; Abraham, Isaac's father, had settled there before. To provide for his family and herds, Abraham dug wells, naming each one. The Philistines, one of the great enemies of God, were determined to hurt Abraham by cutting off Abraham's water source by filling in the wells with dirt.

Years later, Isaac returned to the land of his father. To provide water for his family, herd and servants, Isaac focused on what was proven. He dug up the wells of Abraham, the ones the Philistines filled. Isaac used the same names for the wells that Abraham used. Isaac did not resort to "making a name for himself" by searching for new wells. In a time when others depended on him, Isaac looked to his father who walked before him and simply traced his steps.

In today's world, creativity is highly valued. The pursuit to become original and unique is treasured, even in churches and church planting. Church planters want to dig new wells and name them new names.

But what if the simplicity of church planting is to return to the ancient wells of our spiritual fathers and mothers? Instead of digging new wells and naming them new names perhaps the most efficient and sure thing is to drink from the same wells as our spiritual ancestors.

Christians have been planting churches for 2,000 years in every imaginable situation. Churches have been planted amongst the rich and affluent, among the poor and needy, domestically in the United States, and across the four corners of the world.

Below the reader will find a proposal to plant Shiloh Covenant Church in Butler County, Ohio. This church will be new in one sense, but extremely old in another. It will be new because the congregation in and of itself has no history. However, it will be old because the church belongs to a historic faith that has grown and thrived for thousands of years.

Why Church Planting?

The need for church planting is not a need that begins in Matthew 28 with the Great Commission. The need began in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve rebel against God's righteous law and proceed to hide from God. The sin of Adam and Eve creates a separation from God. Genesis 3 crescendos in verse 24 as God "drove out the man." Adam and Eve are banished from Eden and unable, on their own merit and ability, to ever return. The plot thickens when we consider the progeny of Adam and Eve, every human being, will be born to the east of Eden, born separated from God.

Incredibly, our God is a missionary God.¹ He desires to be with his children. Prior to Adam's eviction from Eden, God has a word with the crafty serpent. As Babe Ruth pointed to the outfield in Game 3 of the 1932 World Series and subsequently hit a home run during that at-bat, God called his shot, and told the serpent exactly what he was going to do. Genesis 3:15 records God's missionary promise: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Our missionary God promised a rescue for his children. A son will be born who will fight the serpent, and it will be a fight to the death. No mercy. The serpent will strike the promised son and cause him great pain, a pain so deep the son will cry out in anguish as he bleeds from his hands, his feet, his back and his brow. And when it seems like the serpent has won the day and achieved victory over the son, the son will rise up and crush the serpent's head, the fatal blow that ends the serpent. The children of God will be rescued through the promised son.

As the Old Testament continues, the identity of the Genesis 3:15 son is progressively revealed and culminates in the very first verse of the very first chapter of the very first book of the New Testament: Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

God is a missionary God because he sent his son from Heaven to earth to free his elect who are held in bondage to sin and Satan. Our rescue is only possible because it's the heart of God himself to rescue.

Now, what does this have to do with church planting?
Well, everything. The same son who has defeated the serpent established the method for how the children of God will be saved.

¹Andy Johnson, *Missions*, pg 79

After the bruising of his heel on the cross, and the crushing of the serpent's head in his resurrection, Jesus revealed the Great Commission. Jesus said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The mandate to make disciples is to be done primarily within the context of the local church. The reasons for this are twofold. Number one, the disciples interpreted the command as a mandate to plant churches. The book of Acts is a historical narrative of how the Apostles planted churches. Further, the epistles of the Apostles were all written to local churches, or written to individuals regarding issues in local churches. The disciples of Christ received the mandate to make disciples, and they began fulfilling that mandate by planting local churches.

Reason number two resides in the command to teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. The local church is the only institution on the planet that can teach all the commands of God. Parachurch ministries, as wonderful as many of them are, are niche ministries that focus on a particular area. Local churches teach the whole counsel of God and care for all God's people, and thus is the only institution that can properly teach all that Christ commanded.

God is a missionary God who rescues his children through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. The local church is the primary vehicle God uses to proclaim this Gospel to Adam's fallen descendants.

Why Church Planting in Butler County, Ohio?

Butler County is 25 minutes north of Cincinnati with a population 399,554² and is steadily increasing. Interstates 275 and 75 provide easy access to Cincinnati and movement within the county. Ten Fortune 500 companies are headquartered within the Cincinnati metro area, resulting in Butler

County being ranked as the 6th best metro area for businesses and relocations.³ Butler County also hosts the largest township in the state of Ohio. With a plethora of parks, restaurants, revitalization, and employment opportunities, Butler County is a preferred residential destination for young families.

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/butlercountyohio/PST045223>

³ <http://www.butlercounty.org/resources/Business-Directory.html#:~:text=Ten%20Fortune%20500%20companies%20and,for%20business%20expansion%20and%20relocations.>

Inside Butler County are several good churches. However, when one considers reformed churches within the county, the options drop considerably. Currently, there are five reformed(ish) churches within the county. One church is confessionally reformed and adheres to the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. Another church is reformed, holding to the 5 Solas. A conservative PCA church is in the county. Finally, there are two churches that lean reformed. These five churches host approximately, in total, 700 people each Lord's Day. Pastor Michael Foster notes that there are less churches now, per capita, than there were in 1776.⁴ Meaning, church planting has not kept pace with population growth. With a population of nearly 400,000 people, the county has room for a reformed church plant.

My intention, with the grace of God, the support of my wife, the approval of my elders and joyful commissioning of my church, is to plant Shiloh Covenant Church in Butler County.

What Kind of Church?

John Calvin plainly taught what constitutes a church. He said, "Wherever we see the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."⁵ Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church is the "pillar and buttress of the truth." Timothy ministered in the Roman city of Ephesus, a city that worshiped the goddess Artemis to the extent that the temple built

for her was so large that it is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple contained massive pillars and buttresses, but they held up a temple dedicated to a false goddess. The church is meant to be a pillar and buttress that lifts up the truth of God for all the world to see.⁶ Tim Keller uses a three part model to explain the identity of churches. The three parts are "Doctrinal Foundations," "Theological Vision," and "Ministry Expressions."⁷

⁴ Michael Foster, "Church Planting SFC'23" YouTube Lecture

⁵ Nathan McKnight, *Pastor by Planting*, pg. 46

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*

⁷ Tim Keller, *Center Church*, pg 20

Theological Vision

The Theological Vision of the church describes the mission and values of the church. Our mission is to make disciples and plant churches. This has always been the focus of the church, and the church plant will drink from the ancient wells. Making disciples is mandated in Deuteronomy 6 and Matthew 28. The people of God have successfully handed down the doctrine and commands of God to the next generation for thousands of years. Evangelism has been a high priority in Scripture as God has used local churches to preach the Gospel and reconcile sinners to God.

We value peace that comes from God and is experienced in many ways. For the Christian, we have peace with God knowing that Christ has died for our sins and absorbed the wrath of God that we rightly deserve. We are no longer enemies of God, but have become his children, co-heirs of His kingdom, saints, and friends. The peace of God is also felt in daily life. God gives his peace to us during difficult times, during moments of anxiety, and times when we have fear. Simplicity is a value that will govern our attitude towards the church. We do not need a church service with high production, nor do we need an elaborate plan to make disciples or evangelize the city. What is simple is repeatable, and what is simple is teachable. We will seek to keep things simple. Hospitality will be one of the primary modes of disciple-making and evangelism, more on that below. Finally, we will emphasize unity in the church. Unity in doctrine, unity in discipleship, unity in evangelism, and unity in having fun and enjoying one another.

Ministry Expression

Lastly, the Ministry Expression shows how the church will execute. The church plant will be elder led, deacon served, and congregationally ruled. We will gather on the Lord's Day with a liturgy consisting of singing hymns or new Gospel songs, confession of sin, assurance of pardon, pastoral prayer over the congregation, sermon, administering communion, singing the Doxology, and blessing the church through a Benediction.

Preaching will consist primarily of verse by verse expositional sermons where we walk slowly through a book of the Bible and expound the text to the church. Preaching will primarily be done through the elders of Shiloh Covenant, and other qualified men approved by the elders. Women are not permitted to preach.

In order to make disciples and maintain our value of simplicity, the elders will ask church members to give two time periods to the church. The first, and foremost, is Sunday morning. Members will be asked to arrive at 9:00 for an hour of Sunday School. Sunday School will be an opportunity for the elders to teach on very specific subjects or doctrines. Sunday School is a place where members can practice sharing the Gospel with one another so they are more equipped for evangelism. This practice and discussion of evangelism will build a culture of evangelism in the church.⁸ After Sunday School is the Lord's Day service featuring the liturgy mentioned above.

⁸J. Mack Stiles, *Evangelism*, pg 42

The secondary time period will be one weekday night each week. A mixture of things will happen during the weekday meeting. Members will assemble into small groups in the homes of members. Small groups are an opportunity to study Scripture in a much smaller environment, as well as a place to share our joys, sins, and lives with one another. Small groups will meet every other week from September through May. Church unity, Lord willing, will grow through these small groups. During the off weeks when small groups are not meeting, we ask that members practice hospitality with other members and with non-Christians. Hospitality is an ancient well that the church has used for discipleship and evangelism. Members having one another over for a meal is a biblical way to create unity in the church. Hospitality is also an effective tool for evangelism. Our church will view evangelism as a spiritual discipline and we will encourage members to use one weekday night of the month to have a non-Christian over for dinner. “The best way to discipline ourselves for evangelism is to plan for it, for Christians to actually put it in their schedule.”⁹ Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 that he was delighted to share both the Gospel of God and his own life with others. “Paul’s ministry involved both-sharing his life and sharing the word of God.”¹⁰ Hospitality is effective in accomplishing the method of Paul.

In both of these time periods, Sunday mornings and one weekday evening, our intent is to prioritize making disciples through relationship building.¹¹ Jesus knew his people, and his people knew him. Our goal is to disciple by teaching all of the commands of God, and, thereby, grow Oak trees and not dandelions. The temptation to go fast is something that plagues church plants. However, going fast can easily result in dandelions, as they are more prone to spring up quickly, but die even quicker. A dandelion’s growth in the first two weeks will easily outpace an oak seed. If we zoom out 20 years into the future, the dandelion is most likely dead, and the oak tree, with its roots dug deep into the ground, towers over the other trees, providing shade during the heat of the day and branches for the birds to nest. The combination of Sunday morning devotion to Sunday School discipleship and Lord’s Day celebration and one weeknight catering towards small groups and evangelism through hospitality will, Lord willing, turn church members into oak trees.

Finally, our church will have meaningful membership. Mark Dever writes, “Biblical discipline should first appear in the way we take in new members.”¹² A healthy membership is on board with the Doctrinal Foundations, Theological Vision, and Ministry Expressions of the church. Member candidates will be required to attend classes, have an interview with an elder, and presented to the membership for a vote. Church unity is attainable when the members understand the mission and vision of the church, and desire to see the church honor God and thrive.

⁹ Ibid. pg 95

¹⁰ Tim Chester, *Total Church*, pg. 57

¹¹ McKnight, *Planting by Pastoring*, pg. 21

¹² Mark Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, pg. 184

Determining Success

Deep down pastors have metrics of success they use that may not be biblical. Is the church meeting its budget? How many people were baptized last year? Is church attendance increasing or decreasing?¹³ Instead of defining success based on budget, baptisms and attendance, what if biblical faithfulness

was considered a success? Nathan Knight asserts that church planters should “plant a church to make Christ’s identity more clear to more people so that he might receive glory, not you.”¹⁴ Our church plant will define success by faithfully preaching the Bible and administering the sacraments.

Timeline

SEPTEMBER 2025

1. At the Grace Covenant Church Member Meeting, where I am an elder, the elders will announce to the church my intention to plant a church, and ask Grace Covenant to pray for wisdom and discernment regarding the church plant.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

1. Meet with individuals who are interested in joining the church plant
2. Hold monthly prayer meetings with people interested in planting the church.
3. Ian will finish the first phase of his training to become a certified biblical counselor with ACBC.

BEGINNING JANUARY 2026 AND ON-GOING

1. Grace Covenant has a small group ministry. During this time, my small group will consist of individuals who are planting Shiloh. This is so we can worship God, study the Bible, and unite as a group before the public launch of Shiloh Covenant Church.
2. Continue with monthly prayer meetings
3. Ian Lubbers will continue his training with the North American Mission Board to prepare for planting a church.
4. Begin to build out the launch team and assign leadership roles
5. Fundraise with like minded churches
6. Search for a building to host our church
7. Host a Member Class and conduct member interviews
 - a. Have membership transferred from sending church to Shiloh Covenant

FALL 2026

1. Have a “practice” service to get a sense of the logistics of setting up for a Sunday morning.
2. Commissioning service hosted by Grace Covenant Church.

3. Launch Shiloh Covenant Church

¹³ Clint Clifton, Church Planting Thresholds, pg. 24

¹⁴ McKnight, Planting by Pastoring, pg. 69

Conclusion

Jesus said that he will build his church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against the church.

For 2,000 years, this promise of Christ has held true. Local churches have been planted all over the world. Hell has not been able to stop the church. If it be pleasing to the Lord, a Reformed Baptist church will be planted in Butler County with the purpose of making disciples, reconciling sinners to God, and planting more churches. May the Lord bless our efforts as we drink from the ancient wells of our ancestors.

