

Southaven Community Church*

A Church Planting Prospectus



STEVE SAGE
Church Planting & Development (MS702)
Professor Steven Childers
Reformed Theological Seminary
Orlando, FL
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* I have selected Southaven, MS as the target community for a hypothetical church plant. Southaven is a rapidly growing suburb within the Memphis, TN metropolitan statistical area.

OUR PURPOSE

Southaven Community Church exists to joyfully bring God glory by transforming individuals, the Greater Memphis area, and other parts of the world with the power of the gospel.

OUR VISION

- To be a healthy church that balances worship, learning, fellowship, outreach, and mercy, while emphasizing our strengths in learning and fellowship.
- To see all members repenting of heart idolatry¹, growing in love for God, and seeking to glorify Him in their personal lives, vocations, and neighborhoods.
- To see all members identify their spiritual gifts and mobilized to use them in specific ministries to the church or community.
- To see members committed to corporate “Body life” through cell group involvement, meeting the needs of one another, learning from one another, praying for one another, and demonstrating to their neighborhoods the love of Christ through unity (John 17:21).
- To see leaders developed through church-based training in Bible, theology, character, ministry skills, and family life.
- To so impact the Memphis area with the transforming power of the gospel lived out in word and deed that even unbelievers would consider SCC a valuable asset to the city.
- To see all members trained to effectively share their faith in their neighborhoods, leading to substantial church growth through conversions of formerly unchurched people based on relational evangelism.
- To see the people of SCC become “World Christians” who pray Kingdom prayers and live out a passion to be part of a larger movement of God to plant churches throughout the city, country, and world.
- To effectively reach out to students at the two branch colleges in Southaven – the University of Memphis and Northwest Mississippi Community College – equipping them to live out the gospel on their campuses, and to see key students trained at SCC for vocational ministry.

OUR CORE VALUES

1. Making the Gospel Central²

The gospel changes everything. It is not merely the door through which we enter the Christian life, but is also the pathway on which we walk throughout the Christian life (Gal. 3:1-3; Col. 1:6). We are renewed by the gospel as our hearts are removed from our “idols” that we previously looked to for satisfaction, comfort, and meaning, and are placed on Christ instead. The gospel is the basis for personal, community, cultural, and societal transformation. The centrality of the gospel will be evident in the way we relate with God and one another, in our preaching, in our approach to discipleship, as well as in the way we reach out to our community.

2. Living with a Kingdom Mindset

Christ is building His Church; the Kingdom of God is present and is growing. SCC is part of this larger work of Christ. Our goal is to see the gospel spread throughout our community, the greater metropolitan area, and ultimately the world. Within SCC, we will emphasize equipping our people for member-initiated and led ministries and to make Christ supreme in all of life. Outside SCC, we will focus on extending God’s Kingdom through a church planting movement to see gospel-centered

¹ See “Our Core Values,” §1.

² Influenced heavily by Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Vision and Model: Gospel-Driven Church*, June 1997.

churches established throughout the city and particularly among unreached people groups around the world.

3. *Mobilizing Disciples*

A primary role of church leadership is to equip the saints for the work of service (Eph. 4:11-12). Leaders will model the Christian life to those in their care and seek to mobilize disciples according to their spiritual gifts to bring the gospel to bear in all areas of their lives and in all their spheres of influence. The ministers of the church are the congregation.

4. *Multiplying Leaders*

Church leaders (elders, deacons, ministry team leaders), future church planting team leaders, and other interested laity will be trained in a local church-based ministry context. Leaders will be developed holistically on three levels: intellectual (biblical/theological), character (personal piety, holiness, affections), and skills (practical ministry training in areas of giftedness). This is nothing more than Paul's strategy with Timothy and others to entrust what we have learned to faithful men who will be able to teach others also by involving them with us in the ministry (2 Tim. 2:2).

5. *Influencing Our Culture*³

Our culture is increasingly moving away from a Christian foundation. Cities are the seedbed for ideas, values, and culture. As a city goes, so goes the society. Therefore, the most strategic way to impact our culture is by changing our cities through the gospel. Memphis is the one of the larger metropolitan areas in the US, and a leading city in the south. SCC will seek to demonstrate its relevance to the Greater Memphis area and work toward cultural renewal by serving the city through positive attitudes toward the city, involvement in the community, ministry to the poor, and church planting.

OUR CORE BELIEFS

Southaven Community Church is affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). The term *Evangelical* refers to our commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures. The term *Free* refers to our form of church government as being congregational. Evangelical Free Churches depend upon the active participation of lay people in decisions and directions. SCC affirms the doctrinal statement and distinctives of the EFCA.

Doctrinal Statement of the EFCA

1. We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of his will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.
2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our high Priest and Advocate.

³ Also heavily influenced by Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service.
5. We believe that man was created in the image of God, but fell into sin and is therefore lost. Only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.
6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and thus become children of God.
7. We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as a means of salvation.
8. We believe that the local church is the visible expression of the body of Christ in a local assembly of believers.
9. We believe that only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church.
10. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs.
11. We believe in the personal, pre-millennial, and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, glory, and judgment, and that this "blessed hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
12. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead: the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord, the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.

Distinctives of the EFCA

1. *The EFCA is inclusive not exclusive.*
Membership requires commitment to sound doctrine as expressed in our Statement of Faith. However, a person is not excluded from membership because he or she does not agree on every fine point of doctrine. Within the EFCA, there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some areas of doctrine.
2. *The EFCA is evangelical but not separatistic.*
We have deep convictions based on the authority of God's Word, but we do not draw battle lines over minor points. Nor do we make minor issues of doctrine a test of fellowship in the local church. We are evangelical. We believe in separated living and personal holiness, but we are not separatistic.
3. *The Evangelical Free Church of America is ecumenical in spirit though not in structure.*
We believe in the spiritual unity of the Church though not necessarily in structural union. We join with other Christian and other denominations of like precious faith in common goals and ministries to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. But we believe that there is strength in diversity and that it is important to preserve our distinctives.
4. *The EFCA believes in liberty with responsibility and accountability.*
The EFCA desires to preserve our freedom in Christ. We encourage our people to be responsible, godly men, women and young people who desire to live under the control of the Holy Spirit, in obedience to the principles and precepts of God's Word and in harmony with God's will for life as revealed in the Scriptures.
5. *The EFCA believes in both the rational and relational dimensions of Christianity.*

We believe the Scriptures must be applied to our individual lives with warmth of heart, warmth of message, and warmth of concern. We believe it is essential to have solid biblical content in our doctrinal understanding of faith, but it is equally important to have a dynamic, vital relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, the Son, and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sound Christian doctrine must be coupled with dynamic Christian experience.

6. *The EFCA affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs.*

The Evangelical Free Church is committed to a congregational form of government, which means that each local church governs its own affairs. Within the local church, the highest human authority rests in the congregation.

OUR MISSION

SCC seeks to be a church that influences our culture and other cultures of the world through the power of the gospel. We will focus on people groups following the pattern laid out to the apostles in Acts 1:8 when the risen Christ told them that they would be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

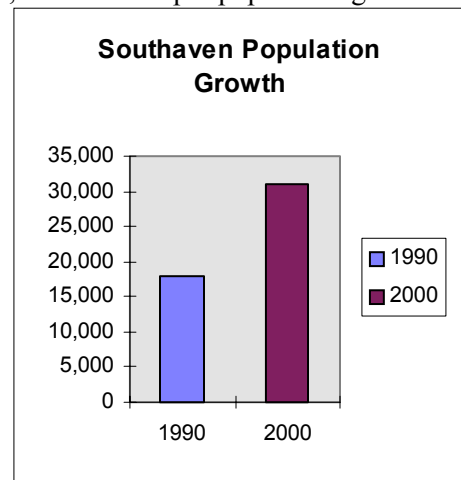
Southaven

Our “Jerusalem” is the city in which we are located, Southaven, MS. Although our focus will ultimately expand beyond our small community, during the church planting phase we recognize that we must focus primarily on this city and its people. Most of the people of Southaven are solidly middle class. A good mix of whites and blacks make up 98.5% of the population. The leadership will encourage a culture of acceptance from the very beginning by modeling love and concern for those who are culturally different from ourselves. Even if SCC is relatively homogenous in the beginning, our hope is that as our church grows, it will become more of a regional church and begin to take on the cultural characteristics of the larger Memphis area in general.

While Southaven is located in DeSoto County, Mississippi, it is part of the Greater Memphis, TN metropolitan area. Southaven is the newest and largest of four municipalities in DeSoto County, which was ranked seventh in growth potential among 841 metropolitan counties in the US by *Demographics Journal* in 1998. Similarly, the *Kiplinger Washington Letter* in 1997 mentioned the county as possessing one of the strongest economies in the Southeast. Southaven was incorporated in 1980. The city’s population nearly doubled during the 1990s. According to the 1990 Census, the population was 17,949, but current estimates place it around 31,000.⁴ This rapid population growth underscores the need for new churches.

The average household income for residents of Southaven is \$58,887. High school graduates comprise 71% of the population, and 9.45% have graduated from college. The median age is 33 years old, and the race distribution is 59.11% white, 39.47% black, nearly 1% Asian, and 0.5% other.

Southaven is home to Northwest Mississippi Community College and an extension campus for the University of Mississippi. These university students are at a very important transition time in their lives. Many are on



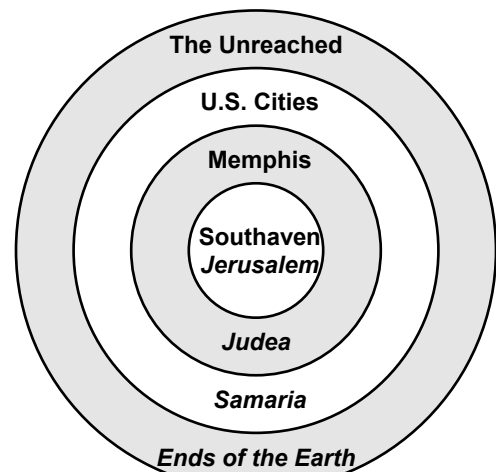
⁴ GoMemphis.com, “DeSoto County growing at rapid pace.” July 16, 2000, INTERNET: <http://www.gomemphis.com/newca/abouttown/where/x16desot.htm> (7/26/00).

their own for the first time and are thinking through who they are and what they will devote their lives to. Furthermore, university students represent the future leaders for our churches, economy, and culture in the next generation. SCC will focus on university students, seeking to win them to Christ and train them for leadership in His Church. We also recognize the strategic fact that the *world's* future leaders are coming to our doorsteps to study at our universities, many from countries where it is very difficult to take the gospel. The greatest need international students have is for understanding friends who can help them adapt to their new environment. SCC will intentionally reach out to international students at these schools through adopt-a-student programs where individuals and families specifically care for and sincerely befriend these students.

The Greater Memphis Area

Memphis is our “Judea,” the larger region in which we are located. The Greater Memphis area is headquarters to three of the nation’s largest Protestant denominations: the Church of God in Christ, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Memphis Theological Seminary is affiliated with Cumberland Presbyterian. This city is home to more than 25 Catholic churches, six Jewish synagogues, three Islamic mosques, and two Buddhist and one Hindu temple.⁵

As SCC develops into more of a regional church, we will expend more of our energy and resources to impact this larger region through ministries of word and deed. Particularly, SCC will engage in planting like-minded daughter churches throughout the city that can cooperate in ministry projects and attempts to extend the Kingdom of God throughout the city and the world.



Other Cities in the U.S.

Because of the importance of reaching the cities, SCC will participate in church planting efforts in other strategic cities in the United States. We believe this is **Figure 1: SCC's expanding ministry focus.** involved in changing the culture of our country for three main reasons. First, the hope for our country is based on the inward renewal of the gospel to transform lives, and church planting has historically been the most effective means to win the lost for Christ. Second, as mentioned above, cities are the seedbeds for ideas, values, and culture. As our cities go, so goes our society. Third, the need for new churches in our nation’s cities is great as our country becomes increasingly urban. It has been estimated that New York City *itself* needs 5,000 new churches *today* to reach its present population!⁶

Unreached People Groups⁷

Even though the need for the gospel in our cities is great, the need of many places throughout the world is greater. While we want to be involved in church planting throughout the United States, an

⁵ GoMemphis.com, “Memphis blessed with richness in religion.” July 16, 2000, INTERNET: <http://www.gomemphis.com/newca/abouttown/community/x16relig.htm> (7/26/00).

⁶ Tim Keller, *Redeemer: Changing New York*, July 1995.

⁷ A “People Group” is the largest group of people within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. These barriers are based on language, culture, caste, ethnicity, religion, or other sociologically significant factors. “Unreached People Groups” are those groups among which there are no churches with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this group without requiring outside (cross-cultural) assistance.

even higher priority is to plant churches among unreached people groups throughout the world. Thus a strong focus on missions will be established early on in the life of the church. SCC will pray for missions, give financially toward missions, participate in short-term missions trips, and proactively seek to train and raise up missionaries from our midst. A strong focus on local international students can help underscore the vision for the unreached peoples among our people.

OUR PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

We believe that the Scriptures describe a healthy church as one which is engaged in ministries of worship, learning, fellowship, evangelism, and acts of mercy. Because of this, our Ministry Strategy will include purposeful attention to each of these core areas of ministry. Acknowledging this, we also realize that not all churches are the same, and particular churches have strengths in one or more of these areas. SCC has unique ministry priorities for learning and fellowship. We strive to be a church that combines sound biblical preaching, teaching, and training with meaningful group life and pastoral care. As a training center that mobilizes disciples and multiplies leaders to impact our city for the Kingdom, our discipleship programs strive to renew minds and restore hearts so that members can be released to fulfill their God-given calls to ministry.

Worship

Mission Statement: To make God supreme in the affections of His people.

Worship is both adoration and action, and it involves our whole person – intellect, will, emotion, physical posture, action, and words. In worship, we express praise and honor to God by declaring who He is, what He has done, and what He promises to do in the future. Worship should be done out of a spirit of love, humility, thanksgiving, joy, and proper fear as a natural result of faith in Christ and in obedience to God’s Word.

Worship is to be understood in a “broad sense” and a “narrow sense.” Broadly, we are to offer our whole lives in service and obedience to God to the “praise of His glory” (Rom. 12:1; Deut. 6:4-9; Isa. 1:10-17; Mic. 6:6-8; Hosea 6:6). Narrowly, worship refers to the occasions of public worship services in which the saints of God are assembled together in God’s presence to corporately declare His praises and hear from His Word. Both are necessary and cannot be done without the mutual support of the other.

The following core values outline elements that should be true of our corporate worship of God. Unity on these issues is vital, as corporate worship is too often an area of contention and division among Christ’s Church because these values are subordinated to personal preference. Over time, our worship services should remind us and instruct us in these core values.

1. *The majesty of God.* God is high and exalted, absolutely holy, immense, transcendent. We want to cultivate an awe and holy fear of God and help each other to see Him more fully and to focus on Him as the audience or recipient of our worship. Worship is for God, and should be done in accordance to His Word.
2. *The presence of God.* Although God is high and exalted, He is also intimately present with His people. Worship should be particularly Christ-centered and engage our hearts as we express our deep love relationship with Christ.
3. *Community.* While God is clearly the primary audience of our worship, the assembly of believers is the secondary audience. As we participate in corporate worship, our hearts are stirred and we are encouraged to love and serve God and one another as we hear from God throughout the

service.⁸ This means individuals in the service should understand and actively participate in the worship activities. As much as possible, we should work together to develop a style of worship that is relevant to all members of our community.

4. *Outreach.* We should expect and encourage unbelievers to be present in the worship services (1 Cor. 14). They represent a third audience to worship, and we should ensure that all aspects of the service are culturally relevant and understandable to unbelievers, realizing that God often uses the worship service to draw people to Himself through the sermon, testimonies, song, or other means.
5. *Heritage.* While avoiding traditionalism and meaningless habits, we desire to respect and learn from our tradition and to incorporate aspects of our heritage into our worship of God. We want to develop a style of worship which appropriately expresses the old and the new, the historic and the contemporary. To this end, we strive to blend the best of traditional (responsive readings, hymns, creeds) and contemporary (testimonies, choruses, instrumentation) worship styles.⁹
6. *The end of the story.* We know the future! We desire to worship God in light of the end of the story by celebrating His ultimate victory which has already begun. This honors God, communicates our trust in Him, and builds our hope for the future to help us through present, often difficult, circumstances.

The “elements” of our worship must be guided by Scripture, which gives significant freedom for how they are expressed. Scripture seems to indicate that some elements are absolutely essential for a worship service, such as Scripture reading, the preached Word of God, and prayer (silent or spoken). Others may depend upon the occasion, such as the Lord’s Table and baptism. Still others are important, yet optional for any given service, such as confession of sin, anointing the sick, personal testimonies, offerings, drama, special music, missionary moments, and responsive readings (Scripture, creeds, etc.). We understand singing to be a means of expressing the various elements, such as hearing God’s Word and expressing our prayer; it is not a distinct element of worship.

Learning

Mission Statement: To teach the Word of God so that God’s people learn to think God’s thoughts on any given topic and live lives that passionately reflect His glory in all situations.

Our goal is not to provide a long list of educational, classroom setting programs. Rather, we want to teach members to think clearly about the Scriptures and how they apply to life, whose knowledge leads to greater love for Christ instead of spiritual pride, and whose lives are transformed by the truth of the gospel they increasingly come to understand.

The following core principles will guide the educational ministries of SCC:

1. *Community: create the context for formulating theology and spiritual growth.* Spiritual maturity can only fully develop in the context of Christian community. We learn from others’ insights into the Scriptures. Therefore, we will focus on growth in community rather than growth as isolated individuals. Adult education ministries will encourage mentor discipleship, small groups, Body life, and corporate worship. Structures will free up elders and other church leaders to spend less time with “board activities” in order to have more time to actively minister as pastors/shepherds and overseers to a sub-section of the church whom they represent. See “Fellowship” below for related priorities.

⁸ We hear from God by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of His Word in liturgy, song, and sermon; prayer; public testimonies; and other means.

⁹ This last statement is taken nearly word-for-word from Scott Wells, *Church Planting Prospectus*, Spring 1998.

2. *Knowledge: impart a biblical world and life-view.* “Christianity” affects all of life, not just the religious. We will avoid providing disconnected knowledge and legalistic behavioral standards; rather, we will seek to see people transformed by the gospel as they understand the relationship between worldview, beliefs, values, and behavior. Systematic instruction in the Scriptures and historic theology will help our people formulate a mature worldview. Instruction will be given for how to understand and engage our culture with a biblical world and life-view.
3. *Character: focus on personal holiness through the transforming power of the gospel.* Knowledge is not the end goal. While we value clear thinking, the impersonal transfer of knowledge is inadequate and even counter-productive. We recognize that true knowledge leads to deeper affections and stronger character. The gospel is the basis for personal and societal transformation, and spiritual maturity is based on understanding how the gospel affects all of life and having our lives actually transformed by its power. Our educational ministries will not stop short of this goal.
4. *Skills: develop needed skills to effectively minister to the community and the world.* Our culture can be most effectively impacted when practical ministry skills are developed by a person who has a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and godly character. We will focus on equipping believers to minister to the church and the world in word and deed, rather than simply passively soaking up information in classroom settings. Skill development will include areas such as training in applying spiritual gifts (teaching, mercy, hospitality, etc.), personal evangelism, family devotions, Bible study methods, group discussion dynamics, officer training, lay counseling, etc.

Fellowship¹⁰

Mission Statement: To be a church family who loves and nurtures one another in joy and trial.

The picture of the church in Scripture is that “in Christ, we who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom. 12:5). “Belonging” involves loving care and personal sacrifice as we consider each other’s needs above our own. “Belonging” is also our glorious privilege. This biblical reality stands against the hyper-individualism of the secular culture, as well as the spiritual isolation that has crept into the church. We desire to see our church become a thriving *family of families*, whose unity and love reflect the unity between Jesus and the Father of which Jesus spoke, “that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:11). SCC will follow the “meta” model of fellowship styles, having large gatherings for corporate worship and small group (cell) gatherings for nurture, fellowship, study, training, outreach, etc.

The following core principles will guide the fellowship ministries of SCC:

1. *We must regularly communicate God’s vision for us as a family sharing a common identity and purpose in this life.* The foundation of our unity, and the power to realize it, is found only in the Spirit’s working in us through the gospel.
2. *We encourage each individual Christian to recognize that he or she is a “believer-priest,” gifted by God to uniquely serve this people in this place at this particular time.* We must provide clear teaching and modeling concerning the stewardship of our resources: time, talents, and money. We desire to see each Christian come to the realization that he or she has a stewardship that is not

¹⁰ Most of this section is taken from Scott Wells, *Church Planting Prospectus*, 1998. Scott received this material from the Mission Statement of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, VA.

only a matter of obedience but also a source of great joy. “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another” (1 Peter 4:10).

3. *We must assimilate people carefully.* The word “assimilation” is a means of expressing our desire to adopt newcomers into our family, to the end that they would know and use their gifts to serve the church for God’s glory. While special ministries will focus on assimilation of newcomers, it is every member’s privilege to be part of this adoption process, lovingly welcoming and embracing newcomers into our Father’s household.
4. *We must deliberately plan opportunities for people to get to know and be known by one another.* In our small groups, Sunday school classes, and other ministries, we will purposefully and personally seek to pray for, encourage, and shepherd one another.
5. *Our shepherding leaders (elders, deacons, and small group leaders) must be in touch with the needs of the congregation.* We can bear one another’s burdens only as they are made known. Our leaders need to be in intimate contact with the people under their care to determine needs.

Evangelism

Mission Statement: To equip and send out each member as an ambassador of Christ and the good news of His gospel.

SCC seeks a balanced emphasis on the natural, personal evangelistic efforts of our members, the witness of the church gathered, and strategic evangelistic events.¹¹ In light of this, and SCC’s foundational values for equipping and mobilizing believers, a major emphasis will be to train people who have been transformed by the gospel message to take that message into their communities. This strategy requires the following objectives:

1. *Offer help for overcoming common barriers.* The church needs to provide encouragement, resources, and training for each of its members to overcome the common barriers most face to sharing their faith. These barriers include lack of knowledge of the actual gospel message, weakness of character (such as fear of rejection, apathy and lack of compassion toward the lost, or distance in relationship with God), and lack of skills to effectively communicate the message. Training will move beyond the classroom and will be modeled in discipleship relationships. Approaches to training may include an evangelism course, evangelistic Bible studies, new believer follow-up, and Kingdom-oriented prayer meetings.
2. *Emphasize the four laws of evangelism.* To have the greatest spiritual influence possible, our members need to live out four basic principles for effective evangelism. (1) *Spiritual authenticity.* A vital and growing relationship with Christ is more important than any method or program; it is absolutely foundational for evangelism. (2) *Close proximity.* We will encourage our members to be “insiders” in the culture – God’s representatives, sovereignly placed in their particular network of relationships – rather than be isolated within their Christian relationships. (3) *Gospel clarity.* There is an obvious correlation between clear communication and maximum impact. Our training will equip our people to share the gospel clearly using a wide variety of methods that speak to different people of different generations and worldviews. (4) *Church community.* The goal of evangelism is incorporation into the local church. There are also numerous ways the community of faith can provide a corporate dynamic to the evangelism

¹¹ See “Our Ministry Strategy” below for a clear definition and application of each of these approaches.

process. We are interdependent with different gifts and abilities. The natural witness of the Body of Christ as it loves and cares for itself is a powerful testimony to the gospel toward unbelievers.

3. *Supplement our members evangelistic ministry with church-wide evangelistic efforts.* Although our primary evangelistic effort will be to train the members of our church to effectively represent Christ in their daily lives using their own particular gifts and styles, SCC will engage in various evangelistic activities to supplement this primary emphasis. Gospel-centered preaching, deaconal witnessing while engaged in mercy ministries, the Newcomer's Class, and various creative evangelistic events represent common church-sponsored evangelistic activities.
4. *Instill a greater vision for the world in our congregation.* Individual training and involvement in evangelism is a springboard for a vision and involvement on the world scene. We will encourage our members to learn about, pray for, financially support, and be personally involved in cross-cultural missions and other North American church planting projects.

Acts of Mercy

Mission Statement: To adorn the gospel with ministries of mercy that meet the needs of people in our community.

Mercy ministries are fundamentally important to the ministry of the church. We are servants of our community, not the other way around. Therefore, we seek to make a noticeable difference in the quality of life in the city by ministering to the poor, imprisoned, and the unborn. These ministries in deed complement and adorn our evangelistic ministries. As our culture changes and becomes less and less anchored in a pursuit of truth, the role of mercy ministries will become increasingly important for the effectiveness of the evangelism of the church.

OUR MINISTRY STRATEGY¹²

1. Basic Strategy

Win – Introducing unbelievers to Christ through:

A healthy, evangelistic church is involved in three major ways of winning the lost to Christ: natural relationships, body life, and ministries. While many in recent years have argued for the primacy of one approach over the others, the fact is that God uses all three approaches. Therefore, we affirm all three and believe that true synergy takes place when all three approaches are in proper balance with one another. These evangelistic approaches include:

- *Natural relationships.* Often called friendship or relational evangelism, this approach emphasizes redemptive and authentic relationships with unbelievers by individual Christians. SCC will provide many training opportunities to emphasize this every-member-ministry approach to evangelism through natural relationships through our neighborhoods, recreational activities, and places of employment.
- *The body life of the church gathered.* God uses the church gathered in powerful ways to draw non-Christians to Himself. Our worship services will stress the relevancy of the gospel to the life of the believer and the unbeliever. Evangelistic Dinner-Discussion Groups will be an important

¹² The outline and most of the strategy is taken from Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Vision and Model: Gospel-Driven Church*.

tool for outreach at SCC.¹³ Other non-threatening friendship events will also be used to put non-Christians in contact with Christ's family.

- *Strategic evangelistic ministries.* SCC will engage in occasional evangelistic outreach programs, such as seasonal outreaches (Easter, Christmas, back to school), and other creative events.

Build – Growing disciples to spiritual maturity

- *Discipleship and leadership development.* We help new Christians mature into servant-leaders through classes, small groups, and mentoring relationships. The Memphis Institute for Bible and Theology is a long-term ministry goal to facilitate leadership development on a higher level (see below).
- *Caring ministries.* We provide a context for spiritual growth through our network of small groups, classes, and seminars. Our diaconate will help people with specific physical and monetary needs. In light of a focus on the unchurched and the general state of our society today, we will take steps toward offering professional counseling services through a church-based counseling center.
- *Prayer ministries.* Without prayer and reliance of God, all of our strategies are hollow. We gather groups for prayer to seek God's face and praise Him for what He has already done.
- *Coordination ministries.* Through Corporate Worship, Education, Administration, and Finance ministries, we support the overall work of the church by matching resources (people, skills, finances) with the best place for service.

Send – Mobilizing disciples for meaningful ministry

A major goal of all of our ministry efforts is to equip and mobilize trained and maturing disciples for meaningful ministry within the church and to the community and the world.

- *Marketplace ministry.* We seek to work with excellence and Christian distinctiveness in our vocations and to exercise cultural leadership for Christ.
- *Mercy ministry.* We will engage in community development and social service in an attempt to re-weave the physical and social fabric of our community.
- *Church expansion ministries.* We will engage in evangelism, discipleship/education, church renewal, and church planting ministries throughout the Memphis area and worldwide.

2. Team/Cell-based

Our basic organizational building block is the cell group (ministry teams are a form of cell group). Virtually all ministry in the New Testament is done in teams/cells; individual ministry is by far the rare exception. Teams/cells bring together a diversity of gifts to accomplish ministry, provide a setting for mutual care and discipleship, witness of our love for one another, and are the best place to develop leaders. Although classroom and one-to-one approaches are used, the primary setting for ministry and growth at SCC will be in service through a cell or team.

¹³ These groups are 11-week evangelistic Bible studies. They include a leadership couple and two apprentice couples, along with 6-8 unchurched people. Those that come to Christ through this series will have already experienced a small group setting for spiritual growth. One of the two apprentice leaders of the group will continue the group as a growth ("normal") cell group, while the leader and other apprentice leader will start two new evangelistic groups, multiplying our reach through this method.

3. *Leadership Development*

Investing in People

Leadership development is an investment in people through relationships. Classes and reading assignments are part of the process, but leadership is primarily developed by observing, participating, and debriefing in the context of ministry under the guidance of a ministry mentor. Modeling is fundamentally important to this process and is built into our ministry team structure through the leader-apprentice relationship.

Multiple Levels of Leaders

Biblical leadership is always relational. A leader can only develop 3-12 others at any one time. Therefore, we will organize so that there is a limited span of care. Staff directors will oversee up to 12 coordinators, who oversee 3-5 leaders, who oversee up to 10 cell/team members. Each leader is responsible for developing apprentice leaders.

Leadership Roles

1. *Elder Council – Vision/Strategy.* Elders have several areas of responsibility. They are shepherd-leaders providing pastoral oversight to some segment of the congregation, provide ultimate oversight over the various ministries ensuring doctrinal purity and sound biblical teaching, and they exercise church discipline when necessary. Elders are also responsible for clarifying and keeping the vision of the leadership teams aligned with the vision of the church as a whole. They delegate strategy and tactics so that the ministry has as broad a base as possible and is not confined to a small number of leaders.
2. *Leadership Teams – Strategy/Management.* Each of the major ministries of the church is overseen by a leadership team. These teams are responsible for developing strategies consistent with the vision approved by the elder council. The leadership teams make progress reports to the elder council on a regular basis.
3. *Cell Groups/Ministry Teams – Tactics/Ministry.* The heart of ministry within SCC is carried out through cell groups and ministry teams which carry out the tactics of ministry consistent with the vision and strategy for their ministry area. Cells and teams are made up of a leader, one or more apprentices, and several team members.

Ministry Community

Ministry Community training meetings are held monthly for all leadership teams, ministry team leaders, and apprentice leaders. These “DVD” meetings provide *devotion* (prayer and worship), joint *vision*, and *leadership development*. The entire group is together for the devotion and vision segments, but breaks into smaller groups under each leadership team during the development section for accountability, skills development, encouragement, prayer, and quality control reminders.

The Memphis Institute for Bible and Theology¹⁴

The Memphis Institute is a formal church-based training program for Bible, theology, character development, ministry skills, and family life. It is planned for launch during the Development Stage of the church plant (see Projected Timeline, below). The Institute will express our commitment to be a training center to mobilize lay people and multiply leaders for maximum Kingdom impact. Leaders will be developed holistically on three levels: intellectual (biblical/theological), character (personal

¹⁴ A few of these ideas are taken from The Bethlehem Institute sponsored by Bethlehem Baptist Church and the Biblical Institute for Leadership Development (BILD), but most are the result of personal reflection over the last decade. An entire prospectus could be presented to unpack the full concept.

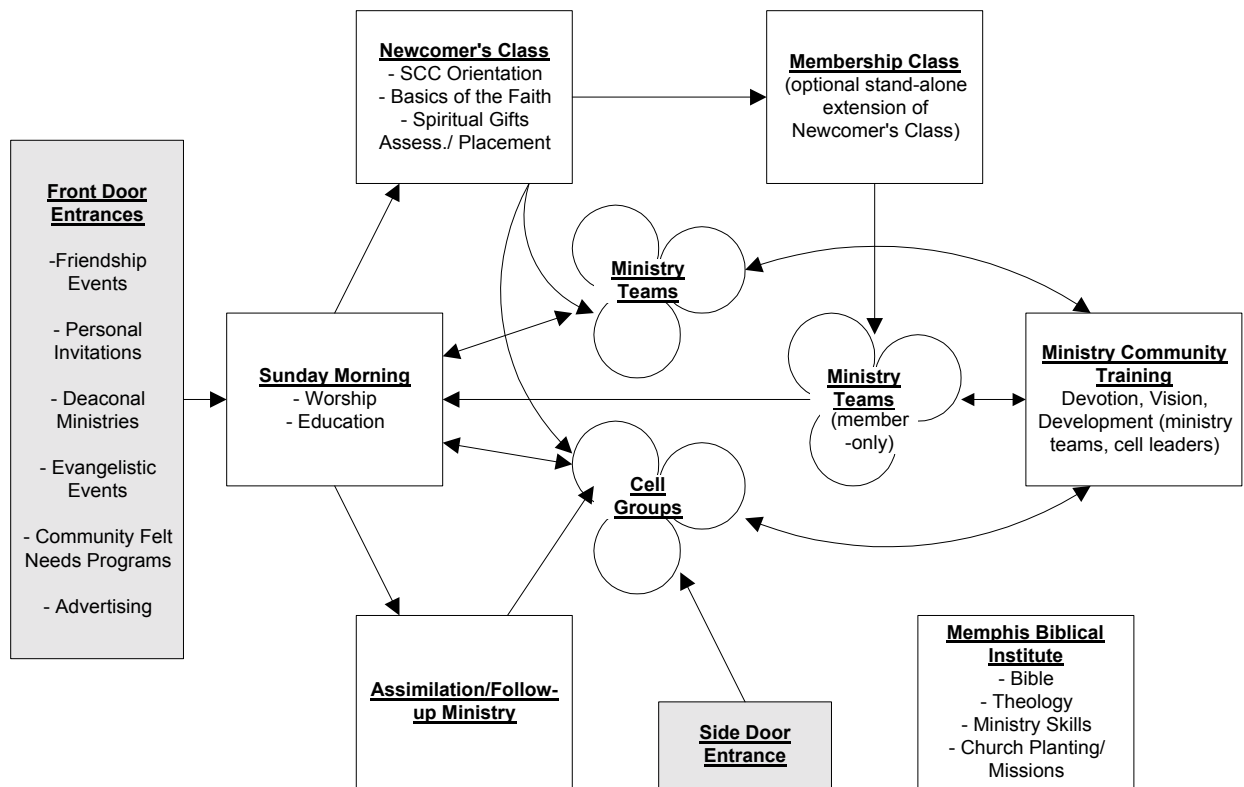
piety, holiness, affections), and skills (practical ministry training in areas of giftedness). Once daughter churches are planted in the area, the Institute will become a regional resource servicing our affiliated churches in the area and staffed by pastors and key lay leaders from these churches, as well as by occasional visiting professors from theological seminaries and parachurch agencies.

A process of development is planned to lead ultimately into four different tracks (some seminars and courses will overlap between tracks):

- **Track One: The Discipleship Program** is designed for any believer who wants to learn more about Bible study methods, family devotions, advanced spiritual gifts assessment and training, basic doctrine, church history, apologetics, and other related topics.
- **Track Two: The Development Program for Church Leaders** is designed for officer and leadership team training, as well as for missionary and ministry candidates who do not need to study at the M.A. or M.Div. level.
- **Track Three: The Apprenticeship Program for Vocational Ministry** is designed for those preparing for vocational ministry as pastors, church planters, missionaries, or other full-time vocational ministers at the elder level. Some graduate level credit may be possible once fully established.
- **Track Four: The B.A. and M.A. Program in World Christian Foundations** is designed for missionary candidates, senders, missionaries on furlough, and missions committee leaders. It imparts an understanding of the biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic outworking of God's global purpose. The basis for the track is the World Christian Foundations (WCF) program developed by William Carey International University, a mentor-based distance education program that SCC will sponsor. It can serve as a 48-semester unit degree completion program or a 32-semester unit M.A. program.

4. Ministry Flowchart

The two primary “entrances” into our church are through the Sunday morning worship service and cell groups. Our goal is to equip each believer to be an effective ambassador of Christ who uses his or her spiritual gifts for Christ's Kingdom. The Newcomer's Class and involvement in a ministry team or cell group is important for assimilation into our church, as well as for spiritual growth and equipping. Cell group leaders, apprentice leaders, and ministry teams will all participate in our Ministry Community, an opportunity to worship together, cast vision for the ministry, and train these leaders in smaller groups that specialize in their particular ministry setting. The Memphis Institute will offer various tracks of classes and seminars that are available to people along the entire spectrum of involvement at SCC: general inquirers, parents, lay leaders, officers, and future missionaries or church planters.



5. *Initial Ministry Teams*¹⁵

- **Worship** – the worship leader and music team for Sunday morning services
- **Nursery** – a coordinator who recruits and trains a team of nursery workers
- **Children’s Ministries** – the team that recruits and trains teachers for Sunday morning educational ministries for children up through 6th grade
- **Adult Christian Education** – the team that coordinates, recruits, and trains teachers for Sunday morning classes and leaders and apprentice leaders for small groups
- **Youth** – the junior high and high school youth ministry teams
- **Missions** – the team that facilitates SCC’s involvement in missions through education, prayer, training, making financial support decisions, organizing short-term mission trips, caring for missionaries, etc.
- **Facility** – the team that handles setup, tear down, and equipment storage for our rented facilities
- **Benevolence** – the team that gathers resources and distributes them to those in need
- **Helps** – the team that coordinates painting, moving, and other projects
- **Hospitality** – the team that facilitates the fellowship of the congregation and coordinates church-wide gatherings

*OUR PROJECTED TIMELINE*¹⁶

Stage 1 – Preparing: Pre-field

(September 2001 - December 2001)

Goal: A unified church planting team with a clear vision.

¹⁵ Adapted from Scott Wells, *Church Planting Prospectus*.

¹⁶ Nearly all of this information is taken from either Scott Wells or the U.S. Center for Church Planting.

- Establish a prayer base of 25 daily intercessors per staff person.
- Finalize and study the specific target group and area.
- Adjust the Philosophy of Ministry as needed.
- Develop the action plan.
- Raise financial support.
- Create the church's presence.
- Outline sermons for the first 6 to 12 months.
- Complete administrative tasks (incorporation, phone line, office, bank account, personal insurance, etc.).

Stage 2 – Starting: Arrival to 1st public service

(January 2002 - June 2002)

Goal: All ministry systems designed and in place.

- Team moves to the field.
- Begin networking with contacts, local churches, organizations, and businesses.
- Each staff establishes accountability relationships with a local mentor and other church planters.
- Locate meeting facilities.
- Confirm the start date.
- Secure site equipment.
- Implement outreach strategies.
- Implement advertising campaign.
- Establish multiplication ministries through small groups.
- Recruit and train the site setup crew.
- Recruit and train the worship team.
- Plan the first worship service.
- Secure equipment for the nursery and children's ministry.
- Complete administrative tasks (liability insurance, bulk mail permit, etc.).

Stage 3 – Developing: Ministry & leadership development

(July 2002 - December 2003)

Goal: Basic ministries and leadership developed.

- Recruit and train leadership for basic ministries (prayer, worship, learning, fellowship, evangelism, mercy ministries).
- Implement leadership training and initial Memphis Institute classes.
- Establish assimilation and follow-up ministries.
- Continue and further develop the multiplication/discipleship ministries.
- Determine the newsletter publication schedule.
- Hold the first Newcomer's Class and confirm new members.
- Conduct the first "fishing pool" events.

Stage 4 – Organizing: Formal organization of the church

(January 2004 - June 2004)

Goal: Leaders committed to plant more churches.

- Set the organization date.
- Conduct potential officer training.
- Further develop the Memphis Institute.
- Elect the pastoral nominating committee.
- Submit a request for organization to the denomination.
- Examine prospective lay leaders.
- Elect lay officers.

- Approve the call of a pastor.
- Submit the call to the denomination.
- Plan and conduct the organizational service.
- Begin elder and diaconate meetings.

Stage 5 – Growing: On-going church growth & development

(July 2004 - December 2004)

Goal: A healthy, growing church.

- Determine growth goals.
- Train and ordain additional leaders.
- Continue, refine, and adjust multiplication and discipleship training.
- Initiate plans for daughter church.
- Recruit a church planting intern.

Stage 6 – Reproducing: Starting a daughter church

(January 2005 - December 2005)

Goal: A reproducing church.

- Continue to impart vision for church planting.
- Identify church plant target group and area.
- Establish specific goals and objectives.
- Raise the necessary financial support.
- Provide training, supervision, and support.
- Plant the first local daughter church.
- Impart a vision for reproduction in the daughter church.
- Be a resource to the new church.
- Recruit a new church planting intern.
- Raise funds to purchase land.

Stage 7 – Locating: Establishing a permanent presence

(January 2006 - June 2007)

Goal: Permanent facilities established for church ministries.

- Raise funds for the building.
- Find a location for the permanent facility.
- Determine the building plan and needs.
- Oversee the building project.

OUR NEEDS

Outside Support

Prayer Partners – Each member of our church planting team is not only required to be committed to personal prayer and to developing prayer ministries within the church, they are also required to form their own personal prayer team from individuals outside of the church. This prayer team consists of at least 25 people who will commit to pray daily for the team member for a specific period of time. Team members will communicate regularly with and pray for their prayer partners.

Financial Partners – Until the church becomes financially self-sufficient, each of the church planting pastors will share responsibility for raising the necessary support to finance the church plant. Individual staff members will raise their own support and a percentage of the additional resources necessary to cover church expenses. Any finances provided by the denomination or other entities in support of the project will be first applied toward church expenses and then

divided amongst the staff members. The budget indicates a sliding scale of outside support needs that is projected to end by the close of the third year.

Staffing and Ministry Partners

SCC will be a multi-staff church plant from the beginning, comprised of three or five full-time and/or part-time people (an initial odd number is important). This approach to church planting distributes the intense workload, allows for more rapid ministry development, capitalizes on the strengths of multiple people, addresses the issue of isolation and loneliness often experienced by the lone church planter and his wife, and (interestingly!) often is the lowest cost approach to new church development in the long run.¹⁷ Additionally, lay ministry partners are needed who are called by God (just as is the pastoral staff) to volunteer for very important initial ministries within the church.

In addition to the senior pastor who is particularly responsible for preaching, leadership development, team building, and initial vision, the following roles are needed.

Worship Leader – A full-time or part-time staff member or a committed lay person is needed to coordinate Sunday morning worship. This person needs to have pastoral gifts, musical skills, the ability to lead a worship team, and a good presence in front of a large group of people that includes many previously unchurched.

Evangelist – Even though all church staff and core group members will be engaged in evangelism, any church plant needs a gifted evangelist. This will ideally be an associate pastor who can dedicate a large percentage of his time to evangelism, discipleship, and evangelism mobilization among the core team.

Pastor of Pastoral Counseling – In order to effectively minister to the unchurched community and given the erosion of family and societal moorings, we anticipate the need for professional pastoral counseling. A part-time church staff person who can operate his practice out of the church office is desired. Eventually this person *could* become full-time church staff.

Mercy Minister – This core function of a healthy church is the most likely to be overlooked given the gift mix of the senior pastor and the history of evangelicalism. Yet SCC desires to be a church which makes a positive, tangible impact in the city. A lay volunteer who has a passion for benevolence is desired to develop this ministry within the guidelines of the overarching church vision.

Director of Children's Ministries – A committed lay person is needed to coordinate the education program for all children and youth up through high school.

Director of Adult Discipleship – A full-time or part-time staff member or a committed lay person is needed to coordinate the education program for adults, including Sunday morning classes and small groups. Eventually the staff-run Memphis Institute will supplement this ministry.

¹⁷ Lyle Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991, p. 111.