

EPIC
Community Church

Dear Friends,

Included in this packet are the Mission, Vision, Core Values, and the Fluid Strategy of EPIC Community Church for Clarksville, Tennessee. Its purpose is to give general information to any church, organization, or individual who may be interested in partnering with EPIC Church to reach the unchurched of Clarksville. As we take on this EPIC journey to share the freeing good news of Jesus Christ to a very lost culture we seek your prayers and support in any way that the Holy Spirit may place upon your heart.

In understanding the spiritual calling upon our lives, Jason Brinker and his wife Angela are setting sail to plant and pastor a new church designed to reach the unchurched, postmodern, emerging generations of Clarksville. We are totally committed to seeing the unchurched people of Clarksville experience Jesus Christ through CONVERSION, fin HEALING from the effects of sin, and be DEVELOPED into ministers of God's grace, truth, and compassion. We live for nothing else. This alone is our purpose, our vision, and our passion. We want to create healthy environments that will demonstrate the unconditional love of Jesus Christ to the unchurched and partner with the Holy Spirit to see God the Father breath life into their hearts.

EPIC Community Church will seek to establish a Biblical culture within the social culture of Clarksville. Because of this, we will seek to listen to the voice of the Spirit and seek to understand the current postmodern culture of Clarksville so that we can share the love of Christ in ways that are biblically accurate and culturally relevant.

Please review carefully our Mission, Vision, Core Values, and our Fluid Strategy to reach Clarksville for Jesus.

HISTORY & TRENDS

Located at the junction of the Cumberland and Red Rivers, Clarksville, Tennessee was founded in 1784. Bearing the name of General George Rogers Clark, a leader during the American Revolution, Clarksville was officially established as a town by the state of North Carolina in 1785. Over the years, Clarksville began to grow steadily due to the trade and commerce produced by Cumberland River. During the 1800's, roads, bridges, and railroads were built, along with churches and schools. Tobacco farming became the primary source of income for Clarksville residents, and Clarksville remained a farming community up to world war II. The second half of the twentieth century brought great economic expansion to the town. Growth in population and industry has caused this agricultural community to shift more to an economy based on transportation, retail sales, and professional business. Presently, Clarksville is the fifth largest and fastest growing city in the state of Tennessee.

Fort Campbell, the military base in Clarksville, was officially established in 1950. The existence of this post brought about many changes to the Clarksville community. Today over 23,000 servicemen and 40,000 family members in Clarksville have ties to Fort Campbell. Four thousand civilians are employed at the base, making it the largest employer in Tennessee and Kentucky combined. The base has brought people from all walks of life together in one community for a common purpose, and many of them are young families located away from their loved ones.

Clarksville claims the majority of the Montgomery County population with over 100,000 residents. The population, which is mainly of the Buster Generation, is projected to grow steadily over the next few years due to the influx of military families and growing business opportunities. The average household size is decreasing overall, even though many homes have children under the age of fourteen.

Age and source of income divide the city of Clarksville between the zip codes of 37042 and 37043. Those people who reside in 37042 make up the younger

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population with the median age of 27.6 years. These residents are primarily young mobile adults who are linked to the military base. A small number of this population is involved in the agricultural and industrial community; however, the majority is tied to Fort Campbell. The average household income for this zip code region is \$43,287 and is expected to increase over the next few years.

The residents of zip code 37043 are slightly older in age, with the median at 35.8 years. This population consists of the farming community, Baby Boomers, and senior adults. The majority of this area's population is white middle-class, with the average household income at \$59,946 and is also projected to increase with time.

Overall, Clarksville is a thriving community that is expected to grow even more as the years go by. The structure of the society and economy is changing rapidly as more people move in from different locations, and professional business and industry separate the city from its agricultural base. The young age and prosperity of this community reveals the necessity for churches that will meet their needs.

THE MISSION

What is EPIC?

In the American Heritage Dictionary of the English language epic is defined as:

1. N. An extended narrative poem or tale in an elevated language, celebrating the feats and journey of a legendary or traditional hero.
2. Adj. Surpassing the usual or ordinary, particularly in scope or scale. It is something larger than life.

Our definition: EPIC Community Church is an Ancient 1st century tale being relived through the lives of Jesus' 21st century disciples as they journeyed to know the greatest hero of all - Jesus Christ and make him known to the world around them.

An EPIC Church discovering more about and EPIC God
And making Him known to an EPIC World

The Mission

We exist to journey with the unchurched people of Clarksville, TN: As they experience Jesus Christ through CONVERSION, find HEALING from the effects of sin, and be DEVELOPED into ministers' of God's grace, truth, and compassion.

The Vision

We exist to bring REAL HOPE to REAL PEOPLE facing life in the REAL WORLD.

About EPIC Community Church

An EPIC Church for EPIC times. EPIC is a desire born in the heart of a few to reach out to the 100,000 + unchurched people of Clarksville, TN. God has called His Church to invade the communities of the world with the power of His truth. We believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; however, our experiences of Christ depend greatly upon what culture we live in today. Therefore, EPIC desires to take the timelessness of Jesus' Person and Truth and impute it into the culture of Clarksville, TN. Jesus never called us to be the light of the church. We are called to be the light of the world, following the path of the true "light of life" Jesus. EPIC's vision is to bring REAL HOPE to REAL PEOPLE facing life in the REAL WORLD.

We affirm that the only REAL HOPE in the world today is Jesus Christ, not only the knowledge of Him or the approval of His ministry but the personal trust that we must place in Him as our Lord and Savior.

THE EPIC NEED

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Why does Clarksville, Tennessee need a new church? The answer is simple, LOST PEOPLE. The purpose of EPIC Church is to reach those people of Clarksville who are spiritually dead and separated from God because of sin. According to the latest demographics: Clarksville, TN has over 120,000 people living within the city limits. It is estimated that by the year of 2010 there will be 240,000 people living in Clarksville.

The problem that we have found, according to a demographic study done by the local Baptist Association, only 10% of the city's population can be found in an evangelical church on Christmas or Easter. This means that 90% of the population is unchurched. Upon further inspection we discovered that the average age of Clarksville is one of the nation's lowest averages with an age of 27. This is a community that is highly fluid due to the age, Austin Peay State University, and the nation's second largest military influence, Fort Campbell.

Although there are several large and successful ministries in Clarksville, very few are reaching unchurched post-moderns. At this time there is not one Southern Baptist Church in Clarksville that is reaching out to this unchurched emerging generation with success. There is one church in Clarksville that has been fruitful in reaching the unchurched and that has been the Clarksville Vineyard Christian Fellowship. With their emphasis of dynamic Spirit-driven worship and ministries of Mercy, this local church has seen tremendous growth. In seven years of ministry, Pastor Don Jarrell has planted and grown VCF to over 550 weekly worshippers.

EPIC'S CORE VALUES

Truth and Meaning

God is True and has revealed His Truth to us through the Person of Jesus Christ and His Holy Word. Truth is not found in any other person or form other than by the WORD (Jesus Christ and His revelation to us... the Bible). The number one question the world is asking today is "...what is the meaning of life?" The world offers a plurality of answers however these answers change with each person and season. God's answers to life's questions are different in that He calls them True.

Although the world changes, circumstances change, culture changes... His Word has revealed to us how life can be rich with meaning through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the Truth." When we come to know Him we find meaning in Him. EPIC's greatest desire is to discover what it means to live in truth (Jesus) and live out the life of meaning, purpose, and destiny that He alone holds for us.

God exists in perfect community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He also created man and woman to live in community with Him and others. However, community is deep and difficult to define, you only know it when you experience it. There is a deep sense in all of God's creation to belong, to be a part of something that is eternally good and true. EPIC desires to be a place that journeys with people to discover true community with God, to experience and worship Him as Father, to experience and commune with Him as Savior Lord, and to live and flow in Him as Spirit. EPIC desires to be a place of safety from the junk of life, a place of honesty and authenticity where you can express yourself as God's wonderful creation, a place of security where you can be yourself, a place of hope, direction, and family. It is our desire that God would create a special family where we together can learn to live life.

Worship and Beauty

God is Beautiful and all that God has created is called to reflect His beauty. There are things that speak to the human soul that never make a sound. The stars on a clear night, a painting, drifting clouds upon a blue sky, a picture, even silence. At other times sounds, voices, hands clapping, cheers of a crowd, music and images around us move the human soul to express deep love to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. Worship is more than singing. It's bigger than that; it's all encompassing. It is the beauty of a person's sacrifice to reflect God's beauty and worth because of the cross. It is the ear that hears, the eyes that see.

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It is our response to God in the average, daily things of life. We worship when we are who God created us to be - beautiful in Him. We worship when we create, admire, encourage, serve and share our lives. worship is something beautiful, and beauty that glorifies God as its author is worshipful. Our lives are created to be the very song and dance of worship; therefore worship is central to our life and to our lives together.

Evangelism

We believe that evangelism is the means by which we will reach out to lost people for Christ. We will intentionally make new relationships with unbelievers for the purpose of bringing them to Christ.

Discipleship

We believe that discipleship is the process by which one will become a mature believer. We will strive to do so through the study of the word, the application of the word in our lives and the teaching of new believers.

A Missional Journey

Jesus said "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, I am here to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives and release the prisoners, to comfort all who mourn and to rebuild lives to display my Glory." As Jesus ascended to go back to the Father he turned to us and said, "Now it's your turn." We have been called into Him and that means into His life, plans, purposes, and destiny. We are sent to be the hands, feet, and voice of Christ to a broken world so that we might point them back to the Father in the new life of Jesus Christ the Son. It's not what we do as much as who we are. The missional journey is calling and destiny of every follower of Christ. To follow Him means that we are to take the journey that he took all the way until the day that we too ascend to the Father.

STRATEGY

Developing the Core

The core for Epic Community Church will be developed from a number of different sources, including area believers, college and seminary students, transplanted church members, and finally area new believers. The gathering of these individuals will come from a variety of strategies including door-to-door surveys, mailers, and cultivative Bible studies.

Upon first arriving in the area, the church planter will first make himself known throughout the community. Introducing himself to as many public and/or prominent people in the community can do this, individuals such as community group leaders, political figures (mayors, commissioners, aldermen, etc.), school officials, and church leaders should be included. This can begin a networking effect that will prayerfully lead the church planter to potential core members, as well as providing a foundation for the character and purpose of the church planter in the community. Two strategies can be implemented to reach a large number of individuals in a short time, mailers and door-to-door surveys. The strategy "The Phone's for You" will be used to determine which individuals will be mailed an informational letter. This is a strategy in which a large number of phone calls are made to pinpoint those individuals who show some interest in attending a new church. Phone calls will be made to every individual in the Clarksville area and those who show interest in attending Epic Community Church will be sent an informational letter about the church and its purpose in the Clarksville area. This letter will include not only information about the church, but will also give the interested party an opportunity to respond as to their level of interest. The individuals that respond back will be visited by the church planter to prayerfully bring this individual along side the purpose and vision of Epic Church.

Concurrently with the phone call strategy, the church planter will be doing door-to-door surveys in the community. This survey will be similar to the phone survey, asking such questions as their church attendance, the reason for the lack of church attendance generally, and their interest in receiving information about the church and/or a Bible study being started in their area.

The contacts made from the phone and door-to-door surveys will be placed in small group Bible studies. These small group studies will serve several purposes. First and foremost, these studies will aid in the development of the core groups relationship with Jesus. Secondly, this group will give the opportunity to discern

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the group's spiritual gifts to later place them in particular areas of ministry. Finally, this study will allow for the planter to promote the vision of the church and unify the core group to that vision, which will lead to the core group owning that vision.

Apart from the cold gathering of individuals from the community, individuals who are already apart of the vision will be transplanted to the area. The vision and purpose of the church will be presented to the sponsoring church (es) and a challenge will be made for families and individuals to move from the sponsoring church to be a part of reaching Clarksville for Christ. Also, the vision and purpose of the church will be promoted at area colleges and seminaries, such as Austin Peay in Clarksville, Vanderbilt in Nashville, and Southern Seminary in Louisville. Epic Church will partner with Christian groups on the college campuses as well as the Church Planting Center at Southern Seminary to recruit men and women to the ministry of Epic Community Church.

Meeting Felt Needs

The felt needs of the area will have to be met in order to effectively evangelize and disciple the people of Clarksville. These needs include a sense of community (both within and outside the church), parenting, childcare, stress relief, finances, real relationships, and marriage. The strategies for meeting these needs vary and include activities within the church and within the community of Clarksville. The need that seemed to arise time and time again was the sense of isolation from the rest of the community. This need can be met in a variety of ways. Some ways include community-wide events, such as health fairs, carnivals for the children, and informational classes. These classes would include strategies for effective parenting, child-rearing, and financial planning. These events can take place at Epic or a community center. Epic Church will also sponsor community-wide Parent's Night Out's. This will allow the parents to leave their children with qualified childcare workers in order for the parents to enjoy in evening alone. Another possibility for Epic in the future would be a pre-school promoted throughout the community providing care for church members children as well as unchurched children.

Within the church, Epic will seek to meet the needs of the community. One way to accomplish this will be through the small group system. This system will promote relationship building, unity, and church involvement. This will allow the new members of Epic to quickly build meaningful relationships, as well as gain spiritual accountability through biblical study and application. Another way to meet the felt needs of the community is to provide alternate worship times other than Sunday morning. Saturday evening worship will be a real possibility to reach the college students and post-modern culture who not use to and even unaware of the traditional Sunday morning service time.

Message series will also be centered on the felt needs of the community. Four to five week series will be utilized to attract the unchurched to Epic. These series will include such topics as Parenting in the 21st century, Handling Your Finances in a Coming Recession, There Goes the Neighborhood, a biblical perspective on living in unity in the community of Clarksville, and Living Life without Pulling Your Hair Out, a stress relief sermon.

The more general community-wide events will be use to move the people of Clarksville from the community to the crowd, getting them to the church in the first place. The small group system and sermon series will aid in moving the crowd to the committed, those individuals who are committed to the purpose of the church. Deeper, more in-depth study of Scripture on a day different than the worship time will aid in moving the committed to the core, those individuals who are committed not only to the purpose of the church but are actively involved in the vision of reaching Clarksville for Christ.

Target Group

It is the goal of Epic Community Church to reach the unchurched postmodern emerging generations within the ages of 18-36. We will have a multi-cultural congregation of Anglo's, African American's, and Hispanics. Epic's staff will also reflect this multi-cultural congregation as well.

Partnerships

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There have been several resources to help Epic Community Church get the start we need. They are as follows: The Nehemiah Project of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and First Baptist Church of Metropolis, IL will serve as our financial accountability partner. Some possible but probable sponsors as well are: New Work Fellowship of Hopkinsville, KY; Hillview Heights Church of Bowling Green, KY; Four Rivers Church of Paducah, KY; and Northstar Church of Kennesaw, GA.

Location

Epic Community Church will be located in the down town area of Clarksville, which is a 15 minute drive from any location within the Clarksville area. We are in the process of talking about renting the YMCA location, which is two blocks off the main highway.

Worship Service

The preaching style will be Topical Expository preaching. Practical preaching so visitors/members can apply biblical truths to their lives. Our worship music will be totally contemporary. Our music will be culturally relevant but will have a deep spiritual worshipful atmosphere and at the same time NOT hiding the gospel message. worship will be authentic, celebrative, and intimate within a 20th century culture.

Assimilation

1. We will cast the vision for small groups by referencing them in messages and closing almost every service with a small group challenge.
2. Starting new groups from within existing groups every 24-30 months. Once a group gives birth, it then re-grows to build leaders to re-birth again.
3. Strategically assimilating people into a Small Group by...(a) Require completion of New Member Class for membership, (b) Connecting people to a Small Group before they leave the New Member Class, (c) Requiring all leaders to be in a Small Group in order to Serve (includes music leaders).
4. Leadership Models the Small Group Strategy. All staff members model the value of Small Groups by personal participation in a Small Group, only enlisting ministry leaders who regularly attend a Small Group, and holding all lay leaders accountable for their attendance in Small Groups.
5. Groups are designed to Multiply every 24-30 months: Birth, Growth, Release, and Rebirth.
6. Age grading: Small groups will start with a felt need topic and continue from there.

EPIC INTERVIEW'S

Director of Missions: Dennis Pulley

1. How long have you been a DOM? 6.5 years.
2. What are your responsibilities as a DOM? Generally speaking, I work with churches and pastors to resource them in full filling the call of God in their local context. I am a mission strategist who identifies needs, and challenges a church or group of churches to meet those needs. I preach, teach, do missions, counsel, and encourage.
3. Describe the growth (population)/ change in the areas served by the churches in your association. Our county is one of the fastest growing sectors in Tennessee. Demographics show about a 17% growth rate in our county. Of course some areas will show a greater growth rate while others will fall below that figure.
4. How are the churches in these growing areas responding to the influx? Many

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of our churches are growing. In fact, some of our churches are challenged by the limitation of space. About eight of the churches are in building programs. As usual, we have some churches that ignore their context and do church as if it were in the 1950's. These churches are either stagnate or declining.

5. what do you project the growth to be in your area in the next five years? Demographics project a 15-20% growth rate. Areas near exit 1,8, & 11 on I-24 will experience the greatest growth. The area south of Dover Road west of Clarksville will also experience significant growth. The extreme southern part of Montgomery County will not grow as rapidly until projected road construction is completed.
6. Do you think the churches in these areas will be able to respond to this influx? Churches who have a vision and capable pastoral leadership will respond to the growth. Some of our churches are making plans for anticipated growth. Others will only exist while surrounded by opportunity and people.
7. what areas/groups not being reached have the greatest need for ministry in your area? The only area that needs immediate attention is the area south of highway 79 along Dotsonville road. This is an area we are targeting for new work. Also, we need a strong Hispanic work. The foundation for this work is in place. We also need to develop a strategy for reaching people in Multihousing units.
8. How well served are the new communities in these areas by the established churches? First Baptist Church of Clarksville is committed to a Hispanic work. They have just called Bill Graham, who recently retired from NAMB to oversee this work and other ministry and mission endeavors. This association's On Mission Teams will be taking the lead in a new church start in the Dotsonville area. I will be working with the OMT to develop a multihousing strategy for reaching these groups of people.
9. Are there any church plants/potential church plants in your area presently? We currently have four church plants in process. We anticipate four or five more in the next few years.
10. what (if any) areas are in need of a new church? The Dotsonville area and Exit 8 off I-24.
11. If you could start one ministry to reach lost people in your association, what would you do? The role of the association is to partner with churches and resource them in their calling. Our task is to equip and train people to do the work of evangelism. We also help plateau churches catch a vision of those who are on the threshold of eternity without Christ. In the association we are encouraging churches to start new works as the New Testament model for Kingdom growth.
12. what are some of the felt needs in this area? Because of Fort Campbell this community is a very diverse community. Marriages are deteriorating, people are lonely, looking for love and meaning in their lives. They have the need of affirmation, encouragement hope, and some assurance and certainty about the future. Their needs are not much different than the community where you live.

State Church Extension Coordinator: Fred Davis

1. what Church planting efforts are currently underway in the area in question? There are 3 Anglo church plants going on right now in the Clarksville, TN area.
2. who is the local supervisor of church planting efforts in the area? Jim Powers.
3. How would you assess the need for new work in this area? There is a great need for new work. Clarksville, TN is growing very fast, has a population over 100,000, has a military base with over 20,000, has a massive subdivision development going on right now, and it is laid out perfectly. The Hazelwood area is projected

to build 500 new homes within the next five years.

4. what is the likelihood that the state convention would assist in such an endeavor? Very likely!

Established Church Pastor:

1. what ministries is your church currently involved in to reach the unchurched? Judgment house, drama, recreational ministries (basketball, baseball, etc.), and medical clinics.

2. what are the strengths and weaknesses of your congregation? weaknesses: needs to pray more and to be more spiritual.

3. what do you know about the outreach ministries and growth of other churches in the area? Only know a little about other churches. Not much.

4. what areas of town are growing the fastest and are most in need of ministry? All areas are growing and all are in the need of ministry.

5. what types of people reside in the area? Middle class

6. How receptive are the residents to someone from the church or whom they perceive to be a minister? They respect ministers.

7. How do you assess the need for new work in the area? Any new work should work through the Baptist Association. In other words, there is need, but only if you go through the association. If you don't, there is no need.

Church Planter: Daniel Carr

1. How receptive are the residents toward the church in general and toward new work in particular? Very receptive.

2. How fruitful were door-to-door work, mailers, and phone surveys? Very fruitful, we had 42 conversions in a year. We sent out 20,000 mailers twice in one year.

3. what felt needs have you addressed in your area? They lack a sense of community.

4. If you are familiar with the area, can you suggest some possible locations as a meeting place? High schools are your best spot and then secondary schools.

5. How receptive have established churches been to your work? The established churches have been very receptive. Have you done anything in particular to build bridges and gain their support? One established church is our sponsor church. They contacted me.

Survey Interviews:

On Saturday March 24, 2001 the Clarksville team traveled to the Clarksville, TN community to build relationships, survey the community, and find possible potential core members. After driving around and getting a feel for the Clarksville, TN area we went to a location, to ask survey questions, where we knew a lot of people would be...The Mall of Clarksville. The following is a list of responses we received:

. "Clarkesville is more prejudice than Louisiana." She rarely went to church but would be interested in attending a church like Epic, which will focus on reaching a diverse congregation.

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. "We don't need any more churches. We already have too many. All they do is spend money on buildings and not on people."

. "We attend a new Catholic church plant just outside of Clarksville. There is a great need for a ministry to reach out to the major young population."

. "I've visited several churches in the area, but they all seemed fake." She became very excited about the prospect of a church like Epic coming into the area.

. "A place where you could just come and be who you really are interests me, most churches are to judgmental and non-accepting."

. "It is none of your business why we aren't involved in a church."

. "I would be very interested in a church that had practical preaching that I could apply to my everyday life."

. "We attend Clarksville Family Bible Church, which meets in a movie theatre, has 200 + members. Would like it if they had permanent workers and better childcare."

. "Church is boring, I would be interested in a church that had an upbeat music style and things for kids besides coloring."

. "I belong to another denomination, but I like a church to have a family atmosphere, good things for kids, and a strong sense of community."

. "Can't attend church on Sunday because of my work schedule, but my kids attend church regularly."

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