



DISCIPLESCHURCH

Membership Class

Class Session 1

Who We Are, Our Mission,
& Membership Priorities

Glorifying God Through Lives Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

SERIES OVERVIEW

What is the local church?

The local church is a group of professing believers who have covenanted to unify together to worship and glorify God by fulfilling the commands and mission God has given to the body of Christ.

Why Covenant Membership?

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. -Philippians 2:2

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. -1 Corinthians 1:10

1. **UNITY:** Covenant Membership provides all members with a clear understanding of the mission, vision, and core teachings of the church body around which they can unify and commit to carry out.
2. **COMMITMENT:** Covenant Membership allows all members to make a commitment to each other that they will fulfill the priorities and expectations according to an agreed upon, written covenant.
3. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Covenant Membership gives all members a formal avenue by which they commit to the church body and leadership to be held accountable to what God has ordained for His children as they walk daily in Christ.
4. **DEPENDABILITY:** Covenant Membership solidifies who within the local church body can be counted on as dependable members who will use their time, giftedness, and finances to help the church body fulfill its God-given mission, vision, and beliefs.

Class Objectives:

To help you understand:

- OUR STORY: The history and heritage of Disciples Church and who our pastors are
- OUR MISSION: What drives us, our purpose, our vision, and our power
- OUR TEACHING: Why theology matters, what we believe in, and what we teach
- WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER: What you can expect from Disciples' leadership, and what is expected from you—the individual members of Disciples Church

Brief Outline:

- *Class Session 1: Who We Are, Our Mission, & Membership Priorities*
 - *Home Session 1: What We Believe (part 1)* - DisciplesChurch.com/WhatWeBelieveAudio
- *Class Session 2: Members' Priorities (part 2)*
 - *Home Session 2: What We Believe (part 2)* - DisciplesChurch.com/WhatWeBelieveAudio
- *Class Session 3: Elders' Priorities & The Covenant*
 - *Home Session 3: What We Believe (part 3)* - DisciplesChurch.com/WhatWeBelieveAudio

Glorifying God Through Lives Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

CLASS SESSION 1

I. *The Rich and Diverse Heritage of Disciples Church*

A. Our Story

*Please see pages 8-10 to read about our 132-year history as a church.

B. Our Affiliations

Disciples Church is a self-governing church body that is led by our elders under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and God's holy Scriptures. We are not governed or controlled by any other organization, denomination, or institution.

Disciples Church has been blessed by the historic and longstanding orthodox teachings of those throughout church history. We identify as a Baptist church in that we stand with the Baptists who framed the historic Baptist Confession of 1689.

C. Our Leadership

We believe Jesus is the head of Disciples Church. **Ephesians 5:23** says, "... Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." In essence, our leaders' primary role is to seek God, His holy word, and the moving of His Holy Spirit to faithfully and obediently shepherd His flock.

Scripture calls for local churches to have elders (also called pastors/overseers) who lead the church under Christ and the authority of His word. 1 Peter 5:1-2 says to "the elders among you ... be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care." Scripture gives us clear instruction as to the qualifications the elders are to meet and what they are to do. God's word calls for the shepherds of the local flock to protect, feed, lead/ manage, and care for the members of the church. Therefore, Disciples Church follows God's commands in Scripture to have qualified elders lead the church under Christ.

Disciples Church also has faithful staff and volunteers who do their vital part of the work of the ministry.

Elders

Joshua Kirstine
Rob Barber
Steve Obert

Executive Staff

Joshua Kirstine – Preaching Pastor
Marilyn Stone – Administrator

Staff

Kristen Howard – Administrative Assistant
Justin Ader – Youth Director (Volunteer)
Jennifer Kirstine – Children's Coordinator

Jason Nott – Facility Supervisor
Jeremy Suniga – Music Director

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OUR ELDERS



JOSHUA KIRSTINE

Hometown: Irvine, CA

Vocation: Preaching Pastor at Disciples Church

Wife: Jennifer **Anniversary:** May 15, 1999

Children: Noah, Parker, Natalie, Piper, Savanna, and Roman

Contact: JK@DisciplesChurch.com



ROB BARBER

Hometown: Bakersfield, CA

Vocation: Owner/Operator of Barber's Quality Lift

Wife: Laurie **Anniversary:** August 22, 1992

Adult Children: Ashley & Sean, Hannah & Colin, and Caleb

Contact: RB@DisciplesChurch.com



STEVE OBERT

Hometown: Lake Isabella, CA

Vocation: Engineer with AT&T

Wife: Erin **Anniversary:** May 29, 2005

Children: Azaria, Arylah and Ezekieal

Contact: SO@DisciplesChurch.com

OUR STAFF



MARILYN STONE

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Title: Executive Administrator

Adult Child: Brock

Contact: MS@DisciplesChurch.com



KRISTEN HOWARD

Hometown: Phoenix, AZ

Title: Administrative Assistant

Husband: Paul

Child: Jason

Contact: KH@DisciplesChurch.com or



JASON NOTT

Hometown: Lompoc, CA

Title: Facility Supervisor

Wife: Kelly

Children: Tanner and Tyler

Contact: JN@DisciplesChurch.com

OUR STAFF (CONT.)



JENNIFER KIRSTINE

Hometown: Annandale, VA

Title: Children's Volunteer Coordinator

Husband: Joshua (*Preaching Pastor*)

Children: Noah, Parker, Natalie, Piper, Savanna, Roman, and numerous foster children

Contact: Children@DisciplesChurch.com



JUSTIN ADER

Hometown: Spokane, WA

Title: Youth Coordinator (Volunteer)

Wife: Krista

Children: Alexis, Ashley, Emma, John, and Layla

Contact: Youth@DisciplesChurch.com



JEREMY SUNIGA

Hometown: Bakersfield, CA

Title: Music Director

Wife: Jennifer

Adult Children: Annessa, Brandon, and Tristan

Contact: Music@DisciplesChurch.com

II. The Unity of Disciples Church – Our MISSION

A. What is a mission statement, and why is it important?

B. Our Mission Statement



*Please see page 7 for a one-page summary of our mission statement.

1) Purpose: “To glorify God”

For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.

-Romans 11:36

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

-1 Corinthians 10:31

B. Our Mission Statement (cont.)

2) Vision: “through lives transformed”

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

-John 15:5

a) **ENJOY God**

“I am the vine”

b) **GROW within Community**

“you are the branches”

c) **LOVE others**

“will bear much fruit”

... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

-Ephesians 4:15-16

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B. Our Mission Statement (cont.)

3) Power: “by the gospel of Jesus Christ”

The heart of the gospel—the good news—is the power of God’s glorious grace, which achieves salvation and reconciliation for undeserving and incapable sinners. It is the good news that Jesus Christ, who is God, put on flesh; lived a perfect life; died a sacrificial, substitutionary death; and rose bodily from the grave to secure eternal life for His people.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ...

-Romans 1:16

a) Understanding the power of the gospel

i) IRRELIGION: “I don’t really have to obey anyone but myself.”

ii) WORKS-BASED RELIGION: “I will perform before God to get my right standing.”

iii) THE GOSPEL: “I am redeemed by God—united to Christ eternally—on the basis of the gospel alone by grace through faith; therefore, I obey God.”

On the one hand, the gospel is the truth about God’s grace and the “power of God for the salvation of all who believe” (**Romans 1:16**). But on the other hand, this truth is a living power that continually expands its influence in our lives. The gospel is not the first “step” in a stairway of truths; rather, it is more like the “hub” in a “wheel” of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C’s; rather, it is the central hub of all of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary for salvation, but it is also the key to transformation once united to Christ.

The gospel is not just a truth that we affirm with our minds; it is also a reality we must experience in our hearts and souls. We are transformed when we live “in step with the truth of the gospel” (**Galatians 2:14**)—avoiding both legalism and license—and pursuing the joy found in complete and utter surrender of our unrighteous life in exchange for Jesus’ righteous life (**Galatians 2:20**). The gospel is what makes us right with God (justification), and it is also what frees us to delight in and obey God (sanctification).

The gospel so changes everything about us that it restructures our motivations, our self-understanding, our identity, and our view of the world. The gospel changes our hearts, which then allows everything else about us to be authentically transformed. By thinking, hoping, and living out the “lines” or ramifications of the gospel, every dimension of our lives are renewed: spiritual, psychological, financial, physical, corporate, and social. The gospel is to be applied to every area of thinking, feeling, relating, working, and behaving.

We cannot and need not ever move “beyond” the gospel. This only produces a “different gospel” (**Galatians 1:6–7; 2 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Timothy 1:3**), which is not good news at all. Apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no forgiveness of sins, no hope, no reconciliation to God, and no transformation into Christ’s likeness.

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Membership Priorities

I. What is “Covenant Membership?”

WHAT COVENANT MEMBERSHIP ISN'T:

- A vow of “till death do us part” (There are biblical reasons to leave a church)
- A membership card to an institution or organization
- A business contract

WHAT COVENANT MEMBERSHIP IS:

- A promise made to one another for as long of a season as God has you here in this city while this church is operating in a biblical manner
- A commitment to playing your part in building up a community of people
- An understanding of what is expected from each member and what is expected from the leadership of Disciples Church
- A willing participation in the great mission God has given us

WHY WE PRACTICE COVENANT MEMBERSHIP:

We practice Covenant Membership because Jesus calls the saved to be one in unity, and the biblical expression of this geographically is in the local church. It can be seen clearly in Scripture that there is an expectation of being committed to and belonging to one another as a congregation of believers under the shepherding of qualified pastors/elders; in this, there can be biblical unity.

1 Corinthians 12:14–20 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

9Marks, a ministry devoted to equipping church leaders, says it well:

... church membership is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.

Membership recognizes and responds to the call of discipleship in the context of gospel-centered community. It is an affirmation and agreement to contribute to the good of the body rather than simply taking from it. It is what we see in Scripture, namely, local groups of professing believers living under the authority of God's word and the shepherding of qualified elders. It is an obligation to sacrificially seek the good of others in the body of Christ by taking the general call toward service and putting it to practice within a particular people. It is a blessing to each of us, because our ongoing sin is very real, and God gifts His people with the love and accountability of the local church to spur ongoing repentance and growth in personal Christ-likeness.

At Disciples Church, the current process for becoming a member involves classes and assignments, a meeting with the elders, and agreeing to the membership covenant. Far from mere formality, these expressions are important representations of the formal commitment.

II. The Five Priorities of Covenant Membership

THE FIVE PRIORITIES OF DISCIPLES CHURCH COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

Testimony | Worship | Service | Accountability | Discipleship

TESTIMONY

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

1. SHARE YOUR STORY

- The story of how you were saved
- Ongoing testimony of how God has worked and still is working in your life

2. BE BAPTIZED AS A BELIEVER

What is believer's baptism?

- A public testimony to God, the church, yourself, and the world of your faith in Christ
- A visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ through the gospel, and the power of the gospel to transform a person's life

Romans 6:1-5 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

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- Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus and in no way contributes to one's salvation. Baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. The new believer is symbolically buried in the waters of baptism as they are fully submersed and raised to new life as they come out of the water.
- Baptism is *not* a cleansing ritual that needs to be repeated, but a one-time demonstration that you have been forever cleansed of the stain of sin by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who should be baptized?

- All who have put their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for their salvation

Acts 2:41 (NASB) So then, those who had received his word were baptized ...

- Baptism is *not* for anyone who has yet to repent and place his or her faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for his/her salvation. A personal proclamation of saving faith in Christ Jesus alone is the requirement found in Scripture.

Why should someone be baptized?

Our highest aim in baptism is to glorify God and tell the world what He has done in our lives.

- In baptism, God is glorified by our public testimony of His saving grace and work in our life.
- In baptism, God is glorified because we are being obedient to Christ's instruction to do it.

Matthew 28:19-20 "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."

How does Disciples Church baptize people?

- Disciples Church desires to baptize those giving a credible profession of faith as often as possible. Practically, this normally happens four times a year at our all church celebrations; however, we'll have baptisms whenever a fruitful opportunity exists.
- Personal discussions about saving faith and baptism happen between anyone wanting to be baptized and pastors or other leaders. At times, orientation classes are provided to have these conversations and answer any questions about baptism.¹

¹ Baptism is something that should be understood and cherished. At Disciples Church, we treat the baptism of children with special care and want to help parents walk with their children through the baptism process. If you have a minor who is expressing interest in baptism, a special setting is provided to affirm the understanding and readiness of your child. This special session with one of our leaders is for the baptism candidate and parent(s). During this session, we will talk about saving faith, the meaning of baptism, as well as the right and wrong motivations for being baptized. This is an opportunity for the child to share his/her story and for an elder or a member of the staff to talk with the parents and the child in order to discern the child's readiness for baptism. The elders and/or staff members will either recommend the child for baptism or encourage him/her to wait for a later season. *Parents will be asked to honor the recommendation of the church leadership.*

3. PARTICIPATE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is the Lord's Supper?

- The Lord's Supper is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby professing and accountable believers gather together regularly to remember, celebrate, and testify of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ by consuming the elements which represent His body and blood.
This is a regular practice and testimony for those who are saved by God.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Who should celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- Only those who have placed their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for their salvation

Why should someone participate in the Lord's Supper?

- It is a unifying reminder of the centrality and supremacy of Jesus in our faith.
- The Bible commands the Church to celebrate the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns (see 1 Corinthians 11:26 above).
- It is a regularly practiced, symbolic statement of your faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.

How does Disciples Church celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- Disciples Church observes this ordinance generally twice a month on Sunday mornings during our worship services and at various other corporate gatherings.

D ISCIPLES CHURCH



“To glorify God”

God has orchestrated human history to display His glory; therefore, the purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ has always been the same. The Church exists to glorify God. Though methods and strategies are always changing to adapt to the shifting culture, the ultimate purpose of the Church has never changed. Because of this truth, our purpose as a local church is first and foremost God-centered: we exist to glorify God. Everything we are and do as a church is designed with the ultimate goal of exalting and glorifying Him above all.

“through lives transformed”

We believe the Bible teaches us that God is most glorified by people who are finding their ultimate joy and satisfaction in Him; however, the default mode of the human heart is to glorify ourselves rather than to glorify God. We believe God is glorified in His saved children when He does the work in us: transforming our lives from that of finding our joy in our own selfishness to that of finding our joy in Him. Said another way, we believe the life that is transformed for God’s glory has three essential pillars:

ENJOY God

We believe God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. As we are reoriented to the gospel, our hearts are transformed and begin to genuinely find their ultimate satisfaction and joy in God. The result is authentic worship of Him.

GROW within Community

We believe life transformation happens best in the context of people doing life and discipleship together, where we can use our gifts to constantly reorient one another back to the beauty and truth of the gospel. The aim is that we are growing in our enjoyment of God and conforming to Christ.

LOVE others

We believe as the gospel transforms our lives, it produces sacrificial and loving people on mission, who live to glorify God by growing in Christ and moving beyond themselves to love others with the light and power of the gospel in Bakersfield and the whole world.

“by the gospel of Jesus Christ”

We believe the only way for our lives to be transformed is by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel isn’t a program, but rather it’s the good news about a person, Christ Jesus, that through His death and resurrection, we can be reconciled to God. In other words, we are not accepted by God based on what we do, but instead, we who trust in Christ are accepted by God based on what Jesus did for us. Only the truth of this message has the power to radically transform our lives. As the gospel is understood more deeply, we see the beauty of God more clearly, and our hearts’ affections are then drawn to Him more completely. So as a church, Disciples Church is “gospel centered,” in that everything we do as a church is driven by the gospel and is designed to help us deepen in our understanding and faith in the gospel.

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OUR HISTORY

OUR HISTORY

Disciples Church was formed in 1889 as the first Baptist church of Bakersfield. The following is a brief insight into our rich history of gospel ministry in the central California valley.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Following the discovery of gold in the southcentral California valley, the first pioneers began to settle in the valley in the mid 1800's. In 1873, the city of Bakersfield was officially incorporated. By the 1880's the town began to see growth, as the population went from the hundreds to the thousands.

It was in this time that the first Baptist worship services were organized in April of 1889 at George Wear's Opera House, located at the southeast corner of Eye and Wall Streets, under the shepherding of Pastor J. Campbell Jordan of Fresno.

Worship services soon moved to the Kern County Courthouse and remained there until 1890, when the church constructed a permanent building on the northwest corner of 22nd and Eye Streets. In March of 1890, legal requirements were met to incorporate and officially become the "First Baptist Church of Bakersfield."



GROWING IN DOWNTOWN BAKERSFIELD

In the years to come, the booming Kern River oil fields were attracting workers to Bakersfield. The first few decades of the new century brought with it a great deal of spiritual growth and many challenges. In December of 1924, Frank O. Belden, D.D. of San Diego, California was called to be the next pastor of First Baptist Church. His emphasis on youth activities during this season of ministry brought increasingly larger Sunday school enrollments and growth to the church.



The late 1920's brought with it the Great Depression, which made for difficulties in shepherding the flock and for building a new church on a property located in the heart of downtown on Truxtun Avenue. However, God provided, and by November 1932, the new church was dedicated and with it, a new season of ministry began. This downtown building still stands today, is distinguished as one of the Bakersfield's historic landmarks, and was the only religious structure of its era to survive the 1952 Kern County earthquake that destroyed much of downtown Bakersfield.

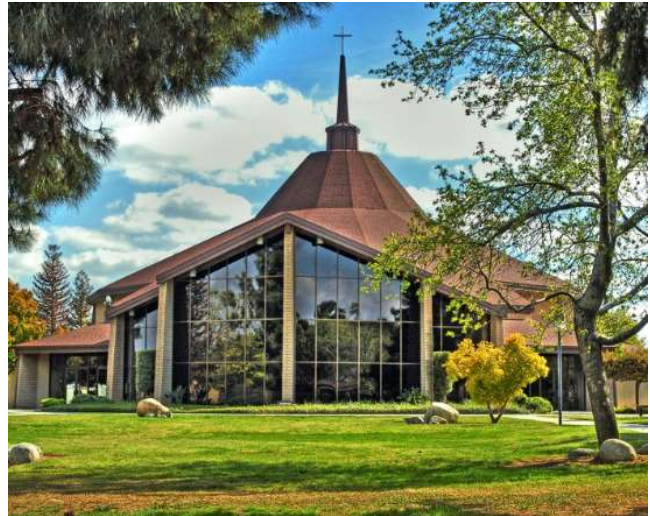
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Over the next two decades as the church grew, so did the desire to plant churches in other areas of the city. The first group sent was the Edison-Fairfax Baptist Mission in 1948, followed by Chester Avenue Baptist Church in 1949, and then University Baptist Church in 1957.

In September of 1961, the church had about 1700 members and was blessed to see such a far and wide influence of the gospel in the southcentral California valley. It was in this season that John A. Lavender, D.D. of Chicago, Illinois became the next lead pastor of the First Baptist Church.

EXPANDING TO OLIVE DRIVE

The congregation had been outgrowing the church facilities on Truxtun Avenue throughout the 1970's, so a 32-acre property on the northern outskirts of the city on Olive Drive was acquired. A ground-breaking ceremony for what would be known as the Bakersfield Christian Life Center, home of the First Baptist Church, took place in October of 1977. The campus was designed to house a school and had the privilege of seeing many years of Christian education in addition to church ministry on the large campus, including being home to Bakersfield Christian High School for the years just prior to their building their current campus on Stockdale Hwy. One of the highlights of the large campus was its 1100-seat worship center that would come



to be known as Celebration Hall. It housed a famous 8,800-piece pipe organ, which was made up of pipes from the downtown Truxtun church and the Memorial Church at Harvard University. This season of ministry was marked by large music productions and a thriving youth ministry that ministered the gospel of Jesus to 400 students throughout Kern County.

The 80's, 90's, and the new century brought many changes in leadership and philosophy of ministry, which equaled significant decline in attendance, especially by those who were longing for more traditional Baptist practice. In 1989, First Baptist Church celebrated its

centennial anniversary. In the years to follow, many efforts were made to keep the large campus running.

In 2001, the church changed its name to Olive Drive Church. In 2008, in an effort to bring new life to the aging congregation, a new community within Olive Drive Church was launched with the goal of bringing the gospel to an emerging group of young adults and young families in Bakersfield.

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A NEW ERA OF REFORMATION AND NEW BEGINNINGS

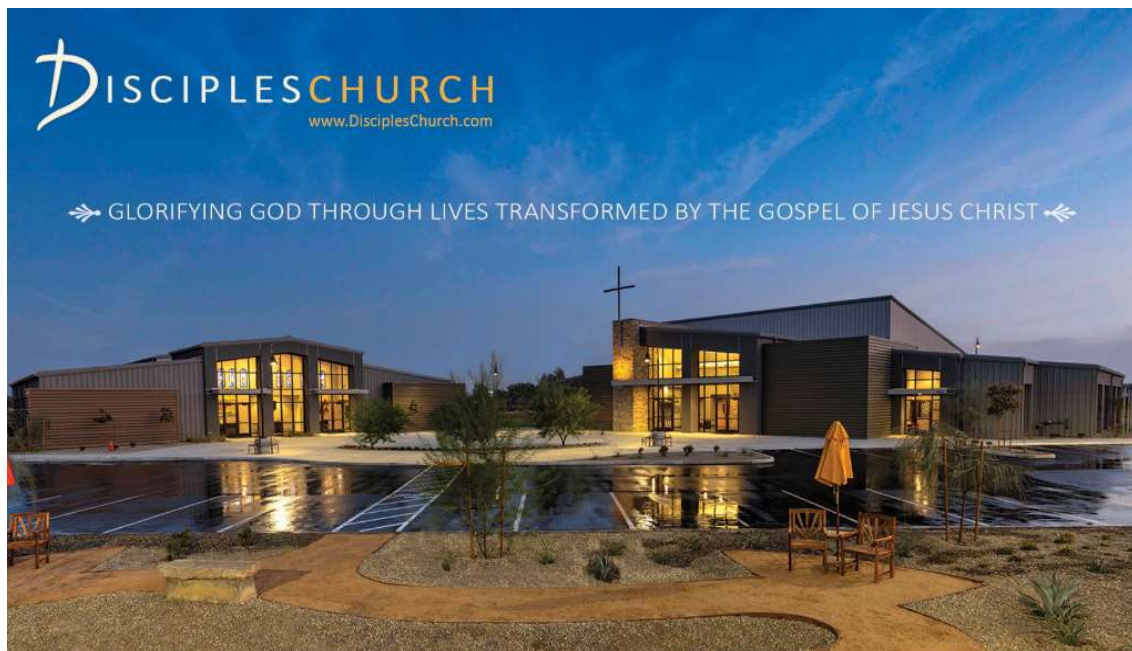
In 2008, God began a critical work of refinement and rebirth in our church that would become a 10-year dedication to a much-needed biblical reformation of our historic church. It was in this important season that our congregation affirmed that God prepared, qualified, and ordained Joshua Kirstine of Irvine, California to become the next Preaching Pastor. Our conviction to fully submit to and boldly preach God's word became a driving catalyst to make disciples who make disciples, both locally and worldwide, as we aimed to glorify God through lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 2014, the church leadership concluded a year-long assessment of the deferred maintenance and demands of the large Olive Drive Campus, and a united conclusion was made that it was time to right-size the church facility by selling the large campus to Valley Baptist Church, allowing us to begin prayerfully looking for where the sixth permanent church facility would be built for the future ministry that God has in store for us.

In this exciting season of transition and transformation, the Lord brought our church family together in a huge way. One of the most critical things God did was to solidify a true plurality of pastoral elders who, together, would faithfully lead our local church forward in the truth of God and for the glory of God.

In 2016, a new property was found and purchased at the corner of Allen Road and Hageman Road in northwest Bakersfield. We broke ground on May 17, 2017, and after just one year of construction, held our dedication ceremony and celebration and first worship services the weekend of June 3, 2018.

The newly named Disciples Church is thankful for God's mighty work in and through our church for over 133 years. Disciples is now enjoying an exciting season, whereby multiple generations of people from all kinds of backgrounds are connecting in authentic relationships, growing in the truth of God's holy word, and maturing in their faith.



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