



JAN. 24 OWNERS MEETING FAQ

CHURCH PLANT

Q: Why do we need to start new church bodies?

- **It is an act of obedience. It is the expectation and call of the New Testament.**

The “Great Commission” as Jesus taught it and Paul applied it was essentially a church planting commission. In Jesus’ “Great Commission”, we are called to spread the Gospel by making disciples and baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As the book of Acts shows, the act of baptism was the work of integration into the gathered assembly that Christ promised to build. This was Paul’s strategy throughout the book of Acts and is the Biblical Mandate.

- **There is a real need.**

It’s easy to look around our area, see many church buildings, and think our city doesn’t need more churches; but not all of those buildings are home to a thriving, growing church family that is making an impact in the area they reside. Statistically, there are more churches shrinking and closing each year than there are churches being planted. Post-COVID, many churches have closed their doors or have been declining and simply getting by. There is a real need that exists that we can’t always easily see. Here’s some data:

- According to some recent statistics from the Unstuck Group and Exponential Conference
 - 80% of churches in America are either Declining (the church is decreasing and losing people) or Plateaued (stable but neither declining or growing; stagnant).
 - 16% of churches are Growing (attracting and retaining new people regularly).
 - Only 4% of churches are Reproducing (adding locations or planting churches).
 - More churches are closing each year than are being started.

- **It is the best and most effective way to evangelize our city.**

The birth of a new church revitalizes areas of town with passion and excitement for sharing the Gospel and it attracts people who might never try going to church. Studies have shown that new church plants are the best at reaching the unchurched and have shown that the average new church reaches unchurched/dechurched individuals 6-8 times more than established churches that are 15+ years old. There is a great opportunity for reaching people with the Gospel that an established church’s programs and events can’t do.

- **It brings purpose.**

Not only does planting churches have a great impact on those far from Christ, but it also has an

incredible impact on those who already follow Christ. Sometimes we find that following Jesus feels like going through the motions. Planting churches awakens believers to contribute and take risk in ways they might never have before - in being sent out and by stepping up. We see believers being sent out to a new church to provide the help and support it needs to thrive. We also see believers stepping up to fill spots that will be left open at the sending church to serve and lead in ways they didn't do before. This is a beautiful cycle and part of following Jesus that brings purpose and meaning to the lives of believers within the church.

- **From a Tim Keller conversation on the why of church planting:**

"Studies have shown that — and I can attest to this, because we started Redeemer 24 years ago — studies have shown that churches that are less than 10 years old assimilate non-church people at six to 10 times the rate of older churches. There are a lot of reasons for that, and that's exactly what happened at our church.

In other words, for the first 10 years, pound for pound far more people from outside — people who didn't like church or weren't part of any church at all or weren't believers in Christianity at all — were a large portion of people who were there on a Sunday. And that slowly changes for a lot of reasons.

So unless you have new churches, you are not winning new people, you are not winning new generations, you are not winning the actual community as it is. And so if you have 100 churches in a town, and, say, 20 of them or 25 are under 10 years old, the overall Christian body will be growing in numbers, but if you only have one or two new churches, the overall body will be shrinking in numbers. If there's like 10, it will be about the same.

So whether Christianity in a particular town grows or shrinks completely depends on church planting. Otherwise, some churches get a cooler pastor, better music, and then pull people from other churches, and you have a recirculation of existing church members, but you don't actually grow the overall footprint."

Q: What will this new church body look like?

Before TLC even launched, we believed in planting churches and have carried a vision to do so. Our first church plant will be **a new expression of the gospel in our city that has close family ties to The Local Church GR**. We hope to share similar DNA such as our mission, vision, values and teaching.

This is a new member of our Local Church Family, much like a "younger sibling." This church will have its own lead pastor and the freedom to be itself with its own heartbeat and style; yet we will partner together with an interdependent and collaborative approach under the protection, care and governance of TLC.

Q: Who will lead this new expression?

TLC's current Pastor of Local and Spiritual Engagement, Austin Presnell, will become the Lead Pastor of this new church! God brought Austin on staff here almost six years ago and has been preparing him to go out and lead.

We couldn't be more proud of how Austin and his wife Olivia intentionally and prayerfully processed where God is leading them. We affirm his readiness for leadership of this church and will function under the care, protection and governance of TLC.

Toran will serve as the Lead Pastor of our Local Church Family and will continue to lead TLC directly. Jordan will shift to be the Executive Pastor of our Local Church Family to help with high level leadership, strategy, and support to the churches. This also means we will shift and hire certain roles here at TLC to sustain and grow our ministry as we send out this new church.

Q: How will this new expression operate?

- **Within the Waters Edge Network**

This new church will be part of the Local Church Family and operate as part of the Water's Edge Network, just like TLC does. We desire to be generous with others similarly to how Central Wesleyan Church in Holland was for us: **helping to plant and support churches in a way that allows them to do ministry most effectively.** We will still operate within and as part of the Water's Edge Network which allows us to best supply the processes, systems and support needed to help churches thrive as they begin ministry.

- **Leadership & Governance**

Toran will provide overall leadership and Austin will provide local leadership, teaching and pastoral care to that location. Our Local Elders will oversee both churches from a governance perspective. Eventually, we will add Local Elders at this location and will prayerfully determine how and when to do that as the church grows. Overall, TLC and this new expression are legally governed by Central Wesleyan's Shepherding Elders.

- **Mission, Vision, Values**

This new expression will share the same mission, vision and values as TLC (at least to begin with). We share the same heartbeat and passion for multiplication, reaching the next generation and helping people fall in love with Jesus. This new expression will create some of their own local mission partners, but both churches may share some together as well.

- **Financials**

- We will share one budget but the campus will operate on a designated line item(s) that pertain to their specific ministries.
- They will be accountable to act and spend according to their budget. We will guard and guide them through this and stay in conversation.

- The money we have raised and set aside for this will be used specifically for that campus only and will be their startup funds that will function on a three year scale, with the goal of becoming self-sufficient by year three.
- Funds will then be shared but separated and designated but operate under one overall budget. This helps us determine need and balance funds as necessary. It will operate that way for at least the first three years and then we will evaluate the need at that time.

Q: How could I be involved?

- **Pray**

While there is much to be done and many people needed to do it we need God to graciously and tenaciously do what only He can. We need the people of TLC to pray for God to guide and provide all that we need to partner with him in this ongoing mission. Pray for ongoing guidance to our elders and leadership as things move into place for the launch of this new ministry.

- **Give**

This is a significant sacrifice for our church but one that we believe is well worth it. In your prayers, ask God what He wants you to [give](#). Allow any gift to be a supernatural sacrifice born out of your time with God. Be confident that He will provide for you. God will not twist your arm...He's looking for willing hearts. Our sacrificial generosity not only pleases God but will continue to allow for the ongoing mission and ministry that He has entrusted to us.

- **Be part of the Launch Team**

We will build a "launch team" in the fall of 2024, made up of people who will make a two year commitment to help launch this church by serving with their time and tithing their income to see the church begin to flourish and reach the next generation.

- **Serve faithfully at TLC**

To pursue our mission of helping the next generation fall in love with Jesus, we also need people to continue faithfully serving here at TLC! Each of our volunteer [serve teams](#) plays a key role in building up the TLC community and helping to make disciples who make disciples, who make disciples! Maintaining strong involvement to help TLC stay on mission here will help us as we become the "hub" for future church plants as well!

THE FUTURE OF TLC

Q: What's coming up for our current church body?

God has great things in store for TLC and we couldn't be more excited for what's to come. We've seen real growth in people's lives with Jesus and experienced growth in the size of our congregation. We've seen almost 200 people give their life to Christ in the last 6 years and grown as a church by almost 200 people in just this past year! This wonderful, God-given growth has both humbled us (that God has

chosen to work so mightily in our presence) and necessitated the move to three services to continue to make space that more people might be transformed by Jesus.

We knew this would be a sacrifice but also a necessary stop gap measure and that the day would come when we would outgrow our current space. Our building has been an incredible gift from God and we still pinch ourselves that this has been our home for more than 6 years now. While we are humbled and grateful for this building, we knew from the beginning that this space was not designed to allow us to care for the next generation in ways that we think are valuable and needed.

We expected that the size of our current space would one day become a barrier to the mission and vision that God has given to us, we just didn't expect it so soon. Our wonderful building has now become a limiting factor in our ability to do what we believe God has asked of us.

Q: Yes, we've all felt the squeeze, but if we plant a church won't that alleviate our space issues?

The answer is yes, probably, maybe... but only for a short time. We hope to send 100-200 people out with the church plant but even if we send that many we will still be at the limit of what two services can accommodate and we anticipate backfilling most, if not more, within the year.

Even if that didn't happen, we've still not solved the issues we currently have with our building such as the windowless storage closet we use for our youth room, the lack of office space needed for our staff, or the lack of space for our ever expanding kids ministry (did you know that we've had close to 100 babies born at TC in just the last two years?!). This isn't even factoring in the fact that we don't have any medium sized spaces for ministry, the jam packed lobby and bottleneck we experience between services for kids ministry or the reality that the small amount of storage space we do have is already full.

Our move to three services this year has helped with some of these issues but it also causes others. The cost to our culture due to the time constraints that three services bring has been felt by many of us as well as the drain it brings to staff and volunteers. We have all served with joy and gratitude and are grateful for what God has provided but we also want to pay attention to the long term costs to our Body associated with three services.

Our Elders have discerned that we need to start considering new space options now and our staff has felt the same, knowing it can take up to three years to plan, raise funds, and find a location to remodel or build.

Q: Couldn't we just stay here and expand?

The board is doing our very best to listen to Him and obey what He says without getting ahead of Him or dragging our feet. We have been discussing this and praying about it for over two years now. We have also stayed in close communication with the leadership at Central Wesleyan (our sending church) for wisdom and insight. In 2022 we contracted with Progressive Architecture and Engineering to do a

couple of studies to look at our current space and offer suggestions and recommendations and over months discerned that this current building may not be the best long term place to try to expand. There was a season that as we continued to pray and seek God for direction we sensed Him telling us to “wait” and so we waited.

This past Fall at our annual Elder Retreat we spent hours working through a group discernment process that included times of silence, truth telling, scripture, prayer, listening and discussion. God slowly began to make it clear to the team (and confirmed through a similar discernment process that the staff participated in as well) that we are to begin the process of looking for a new space. This was not and has not been taken lightly, but God often calls us out into faith that is both exciting and terrifying at the same time. We continue to pray and listen and discern as an Elder Board and staff and God can redirect us anytime He wants.

Q: Do we really need to be bigger, I mean we’re planting a church like we said we would?

On the one hand, of course not, God can accomplish whatever He wants with us and through us regardless of our size. With that truth in hand, there are things we believe God still wants us to do that we believe will require a more functional building. Our goal was never to simply plant one church, but to do for others what Central has done for us. We hope to offer the churches that we plant many of the same central office resources that we have been given (systems, accounting, payroll, design, HR, among others). Although it is neither our aim nor our goal to be a “mega church” and we definitely do not want to be on a “mega site” we know that our current facility, as amazing as it has been, is becoming a barrier to the vision and mission that God has given to TLC.

As the Waters Edge Family of churches continues to expand, Central will not be able to support them all and has always hoped that some of the churches in our Family would eventually become a “hub” like they are. A church with enough resources to be able to care for and support both relationally, spiritually and organizationally new churches. This has been the vision we believe God has called us to. We want to help plant and care for a number of churches around GR and the nation. To do this in a way that not only allows us to continue to reach the next generation and the un/dechurched we’ve been called to reach but also help plant and support churches in our Local Family we simply need more space.

We know this is a lot to consider in the midst of planting our first church; we want to be wise with what God has given us and what we are doing. We invite you to please pray along with us for God’s wisdom, guidance and blessing as we step out in faith.