

**EPOCH CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY**

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## **Epoch Church Planting Strategy**

### **Foundational Statements**

#### **Mission Statement:**

Our mission is to meet contemporary needs with a vintage faith through a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### **Basic Core Values of Epoch Church:**

We Value **Relationships**:

##### **Jesus Christ:**

Epoch Church's sole purpose is to bring glory to Jesus Christ. Jesus is God the Son, and the Son of God. Through His perfect life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection, He seeks to re-establish a deep relationship with those who seek after Him.

##### **Christ-followers:**

Epoch Church is focused on building relationships with other Christ-followers for training, encouragement, accountability, and growth in a deeper relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. We believe this is best done in a multi-generational context.

##### **Community:**

Epoch Church's heartbeat is to build relationships with those around us. Through these relationships we hope to meet and provide for other's needs, but ultimately the greatest need is for a Loving Savior.

We Value **Creativity**:

In order to connect with an ever-changing culture we will continue to seek new ways to engage others in the teaching of the Word of God and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. In a church culture of “copy and paste” methodology, we strive to be unique and original in the way we conduct church. We do this for two reasons, to give unbelievers and the de-churched and opportunity to change their views of church, as well as finding new ways to engage in worship innovatively representing the image of God in us.

We Value **Truth**:

While the methodology of delivering the Gospel Message may change, we continue to hold that the truth of the Word of God does not change. Epoch Church desires to preach and teach the same truth from God’s Word as did the First Century Church. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no man can come to the Father but through Him (John 14:6). The Word of God is our source of truth for knowing Christ more, growing disciples, and reproducing new believers.

We Value **Excellence**

If Epoch Church claims to have the truth and offers something different than what the rest of the world offers, it has to be backed up with excellence. Colossians 3:17 notes “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

We Value **Cooperation**

Epoch Church continues to receive invaluable assistance from Dr. Art Taylor of the Jacksonville Baptist Association and the denomination. He has guided us from the beginning and directed us down the path we needed to take that furthers the cause of Christ.

We also value our relationship to the North American Mission Board and continue to seek their wisdom, guidance, oversight, resources. NAMB has provided a Basic Training Seminar in Ft. Meyers, which helped establish our various mileposts as a church plant.

Epoch Church also values the opportunity to partner with other ministries and organizations for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

### **Vision Statement**

Epoch Church is called to be a New Testament, Acts 2 model church in which Jesus Christ is lifted up and all men are drawn near. Epoch Church is called to go into the world reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Epoch Church is called to disciple new generations of believers and reproduce the Good News in others. Epoch Church will be a multi-generational, multi-ethnic body of believers. Epoch Church will be comprised of 50% new believers, and will have 60-70% of currently growing believers serving in some ministry capacity. God's redemptive plan will continue to be shared in the building of relationships through creative means. Through God's creative work, we will see how the marketplace and neighboring community will rely on and find support through the existence of Epoch Church.

### **Ninety Day Plan**

Epoch Church was launched January 11<sup>th</sup> of 2009 with a core group of 18 from the sponsoring church, South Jacksonville Baptist Church.

**Intentional Prayer:**

All of our efforts must begin with prayer. We established a Prayer Team of 10 individuals from both the sponsoring church and Epoch Church to intentionally engage in prayer. This is done daily on an independent basis, and weekly in a corporate basis. We recognized that unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).

**Adequate Resourcing:**

Our sponsoring church, South Jacksonville Baptist Church, will provide most of the resources in this planting project including finances, warm bodies, materials, and leadership. Our goal is for Epoch Church to be financially self-sufficient in three years. We also acknowledge the financial assistance of \$2,000 towards our start-up funds NAMB has provided. We recognize that financial assistance is essential for any church plant.

**Coaching Mentor:**

Every planter has weaknesses and lacks experience. The lead church planter, myself, will receive guidance and accountability from Dr. Charles A. Williams. We meet on a weekly basis. This continues to evidence the core value of relationships from the staff and leadership to the layperson. This continual discipleship will be multiplied in all circles of leadership within the church. Everyone will have a mentor and be mentored. I also conduct weekly meetings of training and accountability with our younger leadership: two interns and our worship leader.

Dr. Williams insists, and rightly so, that a New Testament Church should function in six areas. Two functions are upward (worship, prayer); two function are inward (fellowship, discipleship); and two functions are outward (evangelism, ministry). He evaluates everything we consider in reference to these six functions. Dr. Williams also subscribes to the leadership model that says that a pastor is a leader, not manager (though he must manage). According to this paradigm, a leader must function in five areas: planning, organizing, staffing, influencing, and controlling. By wedding the leadership functions to the church functions, as mentioned by Dr. Williams, we believe we have planted Epoch Church on solid ground.

### **Team Ministry:**

Since the conception of Epoch Church, we have prepared a launch team to co-labor with me and the sponsoring church. This includes myself, our worship team, two interns, and four core families (including my own), and college age volunteer leaders. Many of these core members have taken volunteer leadership roles in our various ministry areas including children's ministry, hospitality, and administrative ministries.

### **People Group Focus:**

Our target people group is those who fall into the 20-30 year age range. These include college age student, young career starters, and young families. Being a larger college town, many of the students continue to live and work in Jacksonville after graduation. This helps to insure a continuing relationship that can nurture spiritual growth for years to come. There are several apartment complexes, condominiums, and college campuses in within our 5 mile radius. We also know that the parents (The Boomers) of this generation (Gen-Xers and Millenials) are more likely to attend church with their children than with their own parents (The Busters). We do have

a secondary people group in mind, namely Senior Citizens. We will begin to put more effort into this area once we develop a more multigenerational appearance.

**Right Location:**

Starting in January 11<sup>th</sup>, and continuing unto September 30<sup>th</sup> we held services in the Hampton Inn Hotel in our target area. We chose this area based on the high concentration of our target people group (20-30 years), it's easy access to a major artery in our city (State Road 9A), and its continual community growth. It is relatively adjacent to the largest college in Jacksonville, as well as two smaller community college campuses.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, we became tenants of a long-term lease agreement in a storefront property, within two blocks of the hotel in which we were meeting. This move was beneficial because of its close proximity to the hotel, as well as having a more sufficient capacity to hold our growing numbers.

**Right Situation:**

Early on in our planning we inquired of Dr. Art Taylor about the necessity of incorporating Epoch Church at that time. Dr. Taylor informed us that it was not essential. We proceeded with the idea that South Jacksonville Baptist Church will D.B.A. (do business as) Epoch Church. This procedure saved time, money, and legal assistance necessary for incorporation. It also left open the possibility of simply changing the corporate name in the event that we decided to merge the two congregations in the future.

**One Year Strategy**

Now that we are in a leased facility we begin a new phase of our church plant in January. Our goal is to keep things simplified for flexibility purposes. We are currently test driving ways to do various ministries including Children's Ministry and Small Groups. It is our goal to have all renovations completed as well as all of the basic equipment we will need for our services and ministries in the month of December.

### **Worshipping Together:**

We have looked at the New Testament model of church and have simplified the bare essentials of Christian fellowship into three major categories: Corporate Worship, Small Groups, and Events. Every Sunday we will continue to have at least one morning service and one evening service for corporate worship together.

Small groups are encouraged to meet out in the community for midweek encouragement, accountability, and discipleship. These can be conducted in homes or public places, including restaurants and coffee shops (but not limited to). Each small group will ideally have a leader, an apprentice, and a host or hospitality person. The apprentice is being groomed to take a portion of the small group and start another as it grows. Our children's small group opportunity will be during the morning service. Youth, 11-18 years of age, will have a chance for Small Group interaction on Wednesday evenings. This will provide a chance for youth to hear a message from the Worship/Youth Leader and then break up into small groups (Middle and High School ages). Children's Ministry and Student Ministry will officially launch in the third week of January. Outside of Children's Ministry, we currently have 6 functioning Small Groups.

Events include occasional fellowship opportunities that would encourage community participation as well. These will have a particular focus on Women's Ministry, Student Ministry,

Drama Ministry or a more specialized event including our Artistic Christmas and Easter Services.

Twice a year we will host “The Art of Worship” night service. This is a worship service geared towards a more artistic culture found in our surrounding college campuses. We explain to the participants that if the Lord has inspired them in some way to create a piece of art, they can dedicate it back to Him. They would then display their art on that night. We tell them a month in advance, and provide a two week window to produce something and share with the church leaders. This way scheduling and filtering can be conducted efficiently. All participants are given two rules: 1) The art must be completely original (a painting, song, poetry, etc.) and 2) It must be scripturally based and doctrinally sound. While we continue to grow, we hope to incorporate more creative ideas in our worship services during both the music and the message.

### **Leadership Development:**

I, the church planter, will continue to meet with my mentor and pastor, on a weekly basis for continuing guidance, accountability, and training. All staff continue meet together on a weekly basis to continue discussion on administrative and ministry needs. I conduct a weekly meeting with the core leadership at Epoch Church to provide discipleship, accountability, and leadership training. They in turn will recruit and disciple others as volunteer leaders in new upcoming ministry opportunities.

### **Prayer Ministry:**

Every Wednesday evening, we hold a prayer meeting service with a pastoral Bible study. Our prayer team and congregation are encouraged to attend. There is a weekly prayer list that is

updated and distributed. This prayer list is focused on three areas: Requests, Answered Prayer, and the Lost by name.

### **Worship Style:**

It is our desire to maintain a biblically sound, yet culturally relevant approach to worship. We have a simple, yet modern method of worship through music led by our worship team. We considered how we would conduct “worship in a coffee shop”. We have incorporated vintage, traditional hymns along with engaging modern songs into our already contemporary methodology. Whatever is sung, it must be doctrinally sound and Christ-exulting. Often, there will be elements of creative worship involved, through dramatization, PowerPoint, or videos.

### **Evangelism:**

Marketplace evangelism was a priority for us in this fast pace culture. Given our new location in a storefront property, we have an opportunity to develop relationships with local businesses, schools, and apartment communities. We believe this is part of the “Go and Tell” portion of the Great Commission, creating a presence in the community around us. We have partnered with a nearby coffee shop by conducting small group Bible studies in their location; in return we receive the right to produce our own coupons in our bulletins for free coffee. They will also be providing coffee services for our Sunday services starting in January.

In correlation to marketplace evangelism, we couple it with the Servant Evangelism model. We will be conducting opportunities to surprise and serve without expecting anything in return. This is something we can do for not only the local businesses, but the schools and colleges around us as well.

Our most successful evangelism efforts have been through the college campuses. Our Jacksonville Baptist Association and Baptist Collegiate Ministries has provided opportunities for us to meet with college students on all major campuses and to begin building relationship with them. Director Lance Beauchamp has walked along with us in promoting Epoch Church and getting college students connected with the core group, and eventually the church itself. Mr. Beauchamp has provided several opportunities for us to provide luncheons for college students, and game nights, as well as speaking engagements on the college campuses and in our new location. The majority of the conversions we have seen have been through these opportunities on the college campuses.

#### **Follow-up and Prospects:**

We have established a Welcome and Hospitality ministry that is twofold. First we had greeters at the entrance of the hotel that would pass out bulletins to visitors, members, and residents of the hotel as well. Secondly, we incorporated one of the core married couples to be in charge of follow up phone calls after we receive contact information on our connection cards. As pastor, I sent a personalized follow up letter. This letter would provide an invitation to a Meet and Greet event we hold once a month. The event is called Java-Java Coffee Nite, held at the local coffee shop, Manhattan Coffee. There, new members and curious guests could meet me and other core group members, asking questions about the church and receive free coffee on us.

#### **Cultivation:**

We have developed several ways of connecting with the community and letting them know Epoch Church exists. One of the primary tools we used is the internet. We have constructed an engaging and artistic website that reflects the core values of the church. It can be

found at [www.epochchurchjax.com](http://www.epochchurchjax.com) . Secondly, we began a Facebook account for the church, which has proven to be very effective for communication. This is often the first step in creating curiosity and beginning conversations about Epoch Church. We created several opportunities to connect with various businesses in the area as well, having an opportunity to hang flyers and pass out Epoch Church business cards.

By January, we hope to have in place storefront signage and banners throughout the community. Along with signage we will seek assistance from LifeWay to provide mailouts within a three mile radius.

### **Ministry to Community and Beyond:**

There are several ministry opportunities currently organized. We began a relationship with Community Connections that caters to women and children with various needs. Our first ministry to them was a food drive for Thanksgiving and providing some our core group members to spend time with them. This will be something we will continue to do in the future. We also began a relationship with Heartland Nursing Home in which we will provide a monthly ministry in caring for the retired Seniors. This Christmas we will have a small performance for them of music and drama.

We will also begin a monthly service project called Date Night, where young parents can leave their children with our child care workers and rekindle their marriages. We will provide an opportunity for them to receive a “kit” to help them rekindle their marriage and to hear a speaker for the evening.

In conjunction with the already established ministry opportunities, we are currently putting together a community survey to distribute to the local apartment complexes and neighborhoods to see what kind of activities would generate interest.

**Direct Missions:**

We continue to plan for the future in regards to being a missional church. We have plans to engage in a foreign mission trip on an every-other year basis. On the off-years, we will make plans for inland missions either in state or in the country. Our current pursuits are to organize a team to send to China (Nest of Hope) in the late part of August.

**Affiliation:**

Our relationship to the Southern Baptist Convention and our Local Baptist Association has been common knowledge from the beginning of Epoch Church. On our website we have included our doctrinal stance, as well as a link to the Baptist Faith and Message. It is commonly talked about in our services and business meetings. Our cooperation with the Baptist Collegiate Ministries is regularly publicized as well.

The Cooperative Program is regularly discussed in our services, particularly during the seasons of Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings. We continue to encourage the church body about the purpose of the Cooperative Program and its partnership in local and foreign missions.