

Neighborhood Church

Who We Are

Name: Neighborhood Church

Location: Fresno, CA

Neighborhood: The Jackson Neighborhood

Our Vision

Neighborhood Church seeks the well being of the neighborhood and city in which we are located.¹ The Jackson Neighborhood is located just east of downtown Fresno. It is 8 blocks by 12 blocks and 923 homes representing 3,300 residents. It is one square mile from First Street to Cedar Avenue and Tulare Street to Ventura Street.

We see our neighborhood as a geographical area of spiritual responsibility: whether the issues are spiritual, economic, educational, environmental, political, or relational we pursue the well-being of the Jackson Neighborhood and its residents.² We are compelled by a vision for what it would look like if God got His way in our neighborhood.

As of 2021, 71% of our neighbors don't have a high school diploma, and the average income is \$26,000 a year. Metric after metric shows that our socio-economically diverse neighborhood is vulnerable and under-resourced. But that's not the final story. We believe that in the next 15 years, we have an opportunity to steward a new future, a God-sized vision for the way things ought to be for, between and in the residents of the Jackson Neighborhood. This includes greater neighborhood safety, higher educational attainment at Jackson Elementary and Roosevelt High School, more people working, more people owning their homes, a greater number of neighborhood associations, more people deciding to follow Jesus and joining a church family, and more teenagers involved in extracurricular activities.

Studies have shown that when these metrics change, it can change the fabric of an entire neighborhood — this is what it looks like when God gets His way in an actual

¹ Jeremiah 29:4-7

² As a church we have done a lot of work studying the biblical theology of Shalom and this shapes much of our thinking with regard to the nature of Jesus' Kingdom (Matthew 3:2) and the reality that the gospel must be rooted in "place" (John 1:14 & Acts 2:42-47).

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Our Values

Jesus + People + Place

Preach Jesus – Neighborhood Church emphasizes Jesus through weekly gatherings for worship (to align one's heart, soul, mind and strength to the will of God)³, evangelism (witnessing to Jesus' power)⁴, fellowship (followers of Jesus using their spiritual gifts to love one-another)⁵, discipleship (teaching how to obey Jesus' instructions),⁶ and service (doing the things that Jesus did).⁷

Serve People – We exist to meet the practical needs of our neighbors (spiritual, relational, physical, economic, etc.)⁸ and the practical needs of the Jackson Neighborhood.⁹

Build Place – We desire to see Jesus' kingdom come as we create a neighborhood that reflects heaven.¹⁰ We seek to make Jackson a better place for everybody to live.¹¹

Our Theology:

We affirm the historically orthodox beliefs contained in the following creeds, which are from the Scriptures, the authoritative Word of God.

The Apostle's Creed

The Nicene Creed

The Lausanne Covenant

U.S. Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith

³ Psalm 96:6-8

⁴ Luke 10:1-21 & 2 Corinthians 5:18

⁵ Ephesians 2:11-22 & 1 Corinthians 12 & Romans 12:4-16

⁶ Matthew 28:20 & John 14:15 & 2 Timothy 2:2

⁷ John 13:14-15

⁸ Acts 2:42-47

⁹ Luke 10:25-37

¹⁰ We aim to be a church plant that plants other gatherings because, as C. Peter Wagner has written, "Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven." It is also a biblical mandate: Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Acts 16:9, 12; Titus 1:5ff; Romans 15:19, 23.

¹¹ Mark 12:31; Matthew 6:10 & James 2:14-17

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
 the Creator of heaven and earth,
 and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
 Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried.
 The third day He arose again from the dead.
 He ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
 whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and life everlasting.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of the Father before all worlds;
 God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;
 begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
 by whom all things were made.
 Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven,
 and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man;
 and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
 He suffered and was buried;
 and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
 and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;
 and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead;
 whose kingdom shall have no end.
 And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life;
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
 who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
 who spoke by the prophets.
 And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for
 the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the
 world to come. Amen.

The Lausanne Covenant

Link: <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>

U.S. Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith

Link: <http://www.usmb.org/about-us>

Our “Why”:

In Revelation 21:5 Jesus says, “Behold I am making everything new.” He doesn’t say that he is making all new things. We want to see Fresno made new spiritually, economically, environmentally, socially, physically, and relationally. We believe a spiritually vibrant neighborhood church is his redemptive plan (Acts 1:6; Matthew 16:18). It appears that the church in North America is moving towards localized, geographically specific expressions of faith – churches that have contextualized theological visions. Could this be a move of the Spirit for North-American re-evangelization? The arc of the entire bible is moving towards God reconciling all things to Himself (Col 1:19-20). We believe that the Neighborhood Church vision is specific enough to participate in this redemptive act in Jackson but large enough to participate in the renewing of Fresno as a whole. To change the community you have to change the soil. We are the soil. We are the soil of Fresno and we believe Isaiah 61:11, “For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.” Our hope and prayer is that the soil of the Jackson neighborhood, and ultimately all neighborhoods in Fresno, would be transformed by the good news of the Gospel, bearing spiritual fruit for the flourishing of the neighborhood and the shalom of Fresno, for the glory of God.

In contrast to the many great churches that Fresno has, Neighborhood Church hopes to recapture the vision for parish which harkens back to a time when a church community was intimately connected to the life of the neighborhood in which it is located. We want to be a church that is deeply invested in its neighborhood even if our congregational members don’t live there. If the church vanished from the neighborhood overnight, we would want people to say, “We miss them. They were part of us.” Our notion of neighborhood is both geographic (oriented around a place) and social (oriented around a people). We want to live, work, and relate in Jackson and see it flourish. After all, Scripture teaches that God became flesh and “moved into the neighborhood” – that’s place (John 1:1, the Message translation). And Jesus commands his followers to “love

your neighbor” –that’s people (Mark 12:31). Does this not also imply your neighborhood? The neighborhood is the place we learn and live our identity as Christ-followers who love God and love our neighbors. Simply put: The Great Commandment assumes we know our neighbors. Love is not something that can be offered intermittently, from afar, or once a week. To live the Great Commandment in the neighborhood, amongst our neighbors, requires a new priority, proximity and permanence. We want to be a church that is intentionally localized, that listens to it’s neighborhood and it’s needs and hopes, learns to preach Jesus among our residents, address our practical needs, and build our community for our shalom.

How do we hope to fulfill our vision? The model Neighborhood Church imagines one church consisting of several weekly gatherings that networks together for the renewal of Jackson. Rather than attempting to grow one large church, our vision is for many small to medium sized neighborhood gatherings networked together. In addition to this, we created a non-profit to meet specialized needs with specific care and a small business which employs neighbors with barriers to employment. Neighborhood Church is therefore 3 things working together for the flourishing of Jackson: weekly gatherings for worship, community and mission, Jackson Community Development Corporation, and Neighborhood Jobs.

Why the neighboring/parish model?

1. Our model enables us to be specifically geared to the place and people of Jackson.
2. It forces collaboration in our neighborhood. If we are truly about seeing the kingdom come in a specific group of people in a specific place then we become open to collaboration with local government, other non-profits, neighborhood coalitions, and other churches for it’s common good.
3. We want to be appropriately sized. We want to be sized well-enough to be known and noticed (about 100 people per gathering) and also big enough to create sustainable momentum (we will grow to at least 3 gatherings).
4. It allows us to be diverse enough in our approach to ministry so that we can specialize in community development and workforce development while we disciple people through our gatherings.

Our “How”:

Weekly Gathering

The Church gathers together to worship Jesus, witness to Jesus’ power, fellowship and love one another, and practice following Jesus together. Those that gather constitute the church.

Those who call Neighborhood Church home agree with the statement of faith and mission and contribute to the body and life of the church. Neighborhood Church invites all of it's gathering to participate in discipleship including receiving the Holy Spirit, baptism, sharing, exercising giftedness.

Pastors and Staff

Qualifications and Function -

- Pastors are gifted for pastoral work by the Holy Spirit, and are recognized and affirmed by the Leader Team. Pastors preach and teach, provide spiritual direction and care. They marry, bury, and provide sacramental functions.
- Staff are hired by the church to facilitate administration or programmatic duties.
- Lead Pastor(s) live in the Jackson Neighborhood.

Accountability -

- The Lead Pastor(s) is accountable to the Leadership Team. Staff and other Pastoral staff are accountable to the Lead Pastor.
- Pastors and staff affirm the statement of faith and are accountable to the staff handbook and the policies therein.

Leadership Team (Eldership)

- Paragraph on Eldership.

- The gathering (church) in the New Testament operated under the care of elders who served as shepherds for the community (Acts 14:23). Their responsibilities were about taking care of the church (1 Peter 5:1-3, Acts 20:28). The expectation for elders included godliness because they were held accountable by God for the church (Hebrews 13:17). Because of this, there are clear biblical qualifications for eldership (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Elders at Neighborhood Church constitute the Leadership Team. For more on Eldership see <http://www.neighborhoodchurchfresno.com/positions>

- Women in Leadership

- Neighborhood Church affirms women serving in congregational leadership and preaching. For Neighborhood Church's biblical view of women in leadership, including serving on the Leadership Team, see <http://www.neighborhoodchurchfresno.com/positions>

- How many serve at a time?

- 4-8 men and/or women serve at a time on the Leadership Team. The full team is composed of members of Neighborhood Church alongside the lead pastor and/or at least one other pastor on staff. It is intended that 50% or more of the Leader Team members are residents of the Jackson Neighborhood.
- A simple majority shall constitute a quorum for a Leadership Team meeting.

- How are they nominated and affirmed?

- The Leader Team nominates and approves subsequent members. Lead Team members are disciples of Jesus and adhere to the qualifications in scripture.

- Who they are and what they do (spiritual/biblical roles)

- Those that serve on the Leadership Team (i.e. Elders) shepherd the community taking care of the church. Functionally the Leadership Team prays, discerns, decides, and oversees.
- The Leadership Team approves staff level policies.
- **How long is someone serving in this role?**
 - Leadership Team members serve for 2-3 years with at least 1 year off before a subsequent term.
 - Leadership Team members can be removed for cause by consensus.
- **Leadership Team Roles in regards to governmental status**
 - Chair - facilitates the monthly meeting and prepares the agenda with staff.
 - Vice Chair - facilitates the meeting in the absence of the Chair.
 - Secretary - Takes notes and provides the minutes.
 - Treasurer - Connects staff level financial reports and processes with the LT.
 - Beyond governing functions and overseeing the Lead Pastor, the Leadership Team prayerfully sets direction for the church and shepherds the congregation.

Family Meeting

- Each year there is a gathering of the Leader Team, Pastors, Staff and congregants to celebrate ministry, cast vision, affirm changes in leadership, and stir one another on in mission.

How We Make Decisions

- **Staff Decisions**
 - The Leadership Team sets the overarching vision which the Lead Pastor enacts through the direction of the staff team.
- **LT Decisions**
 - Lead Team decisions are made by consensus.
- **Handling Disputes**
 - Workplace Disputes are governed by the policies of the Staff Handbook. General disputes are resolved using the model of Matthew 5. Ultimately the Leadership Team can be involved in resolving disputes.
- **Handling Discipline and Restoration**
 - Ministerial Sexual Misconduct will be handled in accordance with the Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure of the Mennonite Church USA.
- **Wrapping Up the Church (dissolution)**
 - Should Neighborhood Church Fresno be dissolved, its capital assets shall become the property of the Pacific District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Financial Stewardship

- The Leadership Team approves the annual budget of the church.
- Neighborhood Church staff will operate within the budget as approved.
- Lead Pastor assigns director control of program areas.

- A staff member will be empowered to ensure that the church is up to date on all obligations.
- Extraordinary expenditures, especially exceeding \$5,000 must have Leadership Team approval.
- The staff of Neighborhood Church are not able to open new accounts or take on lines of credit without Leadership Team approval.
- An approved firm will review the financial standing of Neighborhood Church every year.