



July 16, 2024

Church Plant Vision Q&A

7/25/2024, 6–7 p.m., Multipurpose Room

Dear Christ Church,

My desire is for Christ Church to follow the Lord's calling to *cultivate gospel transformation* starting in the hearts of our church members and regular attenders, extending to the Bloomington/Normal area and ultimately to the ends of the earth. Christ Church has always had an aim to be a church planting church. I have been a pastor at Christ Church for over 10 years and I remember the elders communicating this aim in our session meetings when I first arrived. The general consensus among our leadership was that once our campus was maximized, we would set out a vision for planting a new church.

It has become clear since the completion of our physical campus that we are at the point of maximizing our capacity. At a session meeting on April 14, 2024 the elders voted to move toward establishing a second site of Christ Church in Bloomington, rather than adding a second service time at our current location on Sunday morning. On May 19, 2024 I sat with the diaconate to talk through future plans and shared this vision to plant a new church. Since those meetings, I have had numerous conversations with people who might be interested in being a part of this satellite campus, pursued various potential sites, initiated conversations with some of our church staff about potential impact to their job load, begun meeting with staff to begin initial logistical planning on key elements of a service (worship, childcare, administration, etc.), and been in prayer.

We are quickly approaching the time when we will feel that the need to expand is upon us and we are praying for our people to join us in this exciting new chapter of Christ Church.

Below are the main big-picture questions I have been working through and answering for people as I have had initial conversations. My hope is that by sharing these initial questions and answers, it will help you better prepare for the vision night on Thursday, July 25. Please join us! Childcare will be provided during this time.

Q. What is the long-term vision of Christ Church?

- A. My (Pastor Brad's) hope is that over the years to come Christ Church's main campus would remain at about 400 people and we would continue to plant churches around town and in the surrounding communities as the Lord blesses our growth. The end goal is not growth in numbers, but gospel transformation. I believe the best environment for cultivating gospel transformation is in churches that are small enough to truly do life together. That is not a moral statement about the ethics of church size. It is simply a fact that when churches grow to large numbers, the dynamics of ministry change dramatically. I believe the DNA of Christ Church is best suited for more intimate discipleship and soul care. If the Lord continues to grow the numbers of our church, I pray that more and more daughter churches would be planted out of our mother church campus.

Q. I've heard various terms used like church plant, site plant, satellite campus, multi-site, etc. Can you explain what these mean and what we are doing?

- A. This new campus would not actually be a “church plant” in the truest sense of the phrase. A more accurate way of describing it would be a second campus in a multi-site model, which means we will have the same elders, same deacons, same ministries, etc. I will call it our Bloomington Campus for now. Sometimes the term “satellite campus” is used, but this usually carries a connotation of the sermon being streamed in from the main campus via a video feed. We do not desire to stream sermons in this way.

There may come a day when it would make sense for the Bloomington Campus to particularize with her own set of elders, deacons, staff, and ministry plans, etc. It's also possible that the Bloomington Campus would remain as a multi-site model indefinitely. That decision will not be made on the front end, rather we will wait until we have established the campus and its leadership.

Q. Are we only starting the Bloomington Campus because we are growing?

- A. Sort of but not really. The reason we are starting the Bloomington Campus is because we feel God is calling us to it. This has always been the aim of our leadership. But the reason for the *timing* of starting the new campus this fall is because we will most likely be beyond capacity when summer ends, the students come back to ISU and IWU, and families have completed their summer traveling. If trends from past years hold true this fall, we will likely see Sunday morning attendance of over 500 people. I point this out not to stir up pride in numbers, but simply to show that God is blessing us with more people and we need to address capacity concerns.

Q. Why not go to two services at Christ Church, like we had here for years?

- A. In a sense, we are moving toward two services, but those two services will be at different locations, rather than different times at the same location. The session has decided that the multi-site model would fit our needs better. We believe it will spur growth and provide more opportunities for gospel transformation in parts of town in which we currently have no presence. In the past, the two service model has felt like two separate congregations. Since coming together in one service (in the gym) again in August 2023, we have experienced a greater sense of unity, both relationally and in ministry. We have received much feedback about the benefits of being together in one worship service. We believe that the risk of starting a new campus is worth the reward, and that the hard work and volunteer manpower will be a blessing to our people who have an evangelistic heart and desire to impact the community.

Q. Who is going to pastor the Bloomington Campus?

- A. At the beginning of the life of the new campus, we would have rotating preachers. We are blessed to have multiple pastors, licensed preachers, pastoral interns, and other capable men who are all willing to serve by preaching the word of God. The session has had preliminary discussions about potential pastoral candidates to eventually come serve as the site pastor of this campus and plan to eventually hire a pastor to join our staff within the first year of the plant.

Q. What about Foundations Hour and childcare?

- A. At the beginning stages of the Bloomington Campus, our desire is to have everyone continue to meet at our main campus for Foundations Hour and Sunday School from 9:00–9:50 a.m. Then those who are attending the Bloomington Campus will head to their location and start their service at 10:30 a.m.

Our hope is that this minimizes the pressure on volunteers to start a new children’s ministry and plan new Foundations Hour classes. When the Bloomington Campus is more established, we would ease into a new plan for beginning these ministries on location with leaders who are established at the new campus. The details for nursery and Children’s Church during the worship service will still need to be worked out. Our new Children’s Ministry Director, Morgan Stong, is helping think through this and will be an excellent resource.

Q. Do you have a location in mind?

- A. I have pursued a few different options and continue to pray and trust God to provide the best location. One potential spot is a good possibility but has not been secured. I hope to be able to share more details by our July 25 meeting.

Q. Why are we starting this so quickly? What’s the rush?

- A. The answer to this has a few important aspects.
- a. We are going to feel the pressure of a maxed out sanctuary very soon. We desire to have the Bloomington Campus ready to go to alleviate that pressure as much as we are able.
 - b. It feels quick because I waited too long to announce it to you and I apologize for that. There have been many informal conversations happening.
 - c. I hope you would join me in trusting God for the vision of what this could become and help work out some of these details as we go for it together!

Q. What are the financial implications of starting this new Bloomington Campus?

- A. For the first year, the financial implications should be minimal. The largest budget items in the long term will be a rental facility and staff salaries. In the first year, we don't plan to add a new salaried pastor or employee, and we are looking for a space to use *only* on Sunday mornings for the duration of the worship service, which should keep costs low. Beyond the first year, we will explore the budget implications and plan accordingly. We are trusting God that as the church continues to grow and experience God's blessing, the finances will fall into place.

Q. Are we encouraging certain groups of people to go?

- A. We're trusting God that the right number of people will end up attending the Bloomington Campus. We have had conversations with a core group of people, asking them to commit to being a part of this and would love to hear from anyone who has this desire. Our hope is that about 100 people will attend.

I hope you found these initial Q&As helpful. Please partner with us in prayer about the planning for this new endeavor. We look forward to seeing you at the vision night on 7/25 at 6 p.m. We are excited about what lies ahead.

Love,
Pastor Brad