



BETHEL

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Pastoral Search Candidate Packet

Bethel Christian Church
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Greetings,

Thank you for your interest in Bethel Christian Church, in Chicago, Illinois, as we seek our next Pastor.

Bethel began over 25 years ago as a church plant. Over the years, Bethel has grown, and seen the Lord work in many ways. Having been particularized since 2006, Bethel has established itself as a healthy, stable, and faithful congregation for many years. Our people love to hear faithful, expositional preaching of God's Word. They love to study and learn more about theology, and how the truths of their faith inform the way they live their lives. We have a vibrant community, which loves fellowship, and literally spends hours together on Sunday mornings. Anyone who has had a chance to get to know Bethel will tell you, we are a faithful congregation, who loves Jesus and each other passionately.

Bethel seeks a Pastor who has strong skills in preaching, teaching, shepherding, and discipleship. We long for a faithful shepherd who can faithfully expound the scriptures to us weekly, love the people, and be a godly example to our people. We are a small church, but we love Jesus, each other, and our Pastor dearly. We are thankful for your consideration, and hope you will take the time to get to know us a bit, and to hear about the wonderful gathering of saints at Bethel Christian Church.

Sincerely,

The Session of Bethel Christian Church

A Letter from our current Pastor

I am TE Joe Cristman, and I currently serve as the Pastor of Bethel Christian Church in Chicago, Illinois. I have served as the church's Pastor for almost 5 years now, and I can honestly say, it has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. I can easily think of many reasons to be thankful for Bethel, but I will focus on the biggest reason to me, and that is, the people. Anyone who has come across our church will tell you the same thing, these people are truly something else.

Having grown up, and served in other PCA churches, I knew very well how sweet a reformed presbyterian church could be. That was blown away when I met the faithful saints at Bethel. For the vast majority of the church's 25+ year history, Sundays have been attended with great joy. Adult Sunday school class begins the day, followed by a rich and vibrant worship service together, followed by a time of fellowship. I must inform you, however, this is not your typical fellowship time. Rather than brief coffee talk in the foyer, our people go downstairs to our fellowship hall, and will stay there for anywhere between 1-3 hours. I typically do not plan to be home from worship on Sunday morning until 3pm, because that is how intent these people are on sharing life together. It is truly a beautiful sight to see, the people of God, loving the church and wanting to spend time with one another intentionally and deeply.

The people don't just love one another, however. They first and foremost are together, spending this rich time in fellowship, because of their genuine love for Jesus Christ. D.A. Carson once said that the church is filled with "naturally born enemies" who wouldn't be together if not for the unifying work of the Gospel. I have seen at Bethel, a rich diversity. We have. Ethnic diversity, economic diversity, social diversity, and political diversity. Amidst all the differences, however, there is a deep bond, love, and appreciation for one another, because of their shared love for Christ. They love God, and His Word, they devour the opportunity to be taught Scripture, and to apply it to their lives. In our ever polarizing culture, Bethel feels like a sweet oasis, where though we may disagree, we love one another, because we love God, and our greatest desire is to glorify and enjoy him forever.

These people love God, and they love one another, it is so incredibly clear. But one final aspect of these great saints, is that they love their Pastor so very well. After hearing countless stories of friends, who have taken difficult calls, and struggled in various ministry contexts, I give great thanks and glory to God for bringing me to this church. The people care about their Pastor. They receive his preaching and

teaching well, and desire his leadership. They pray for their Pastor, and regular give encouragement in his ministry. They provide for their Pastor and his family, making sure he is well cared for. Every guest preacher we have had longs to steal our members away to their own churches, and it is no surprise that our guest preachers are eager to return. These people love their Pastor, and respect him dearly. I am moved to tears when I consider their kindness.

I have accepted a call to plant a church in my home town. After almost 9 months of the Lord making clear that this call was where he was leading my family and I, we finally decided to submit, and to accept this call away from Bethel, and towards the church plant. I have said to everyone who will listen “We are excited for this next call that God is leading us into, but we are very sad to be leaving Bethel.” I am accepting this new call because I truly feel like I would be disobedient not to respond to the Lord’s work in this new development, but I am so very sad to be leaving my beloved congregation Bethel. There is no hidden issues, conflicts, or discontentment, but rather, a deep appreciation for Bethel. This church is unlike any other I have known, and I am so very thankful for my years here.

As we search for the next Pastor of Bethel Christian Church, my desire is to find a man who will be godly, preach the Word faithfully and boldly, disciple the people well, care for our families, and faithfully shepherd this incredible gathering of christians. As you consider this call, I want to leave you with this final encouragement: you will find no other collection of saints who are as committed to the Gospel and one another, as well as to their Pastor, as you will at Bethel Christian Church. This is a wonderful place to minister, and I am very excited for the next Pastor to come, and enjoy what I have enjoyed- it is a tremendous privilege.

In Christ,

TE Joe Cristman
Pastor - Bethel Christian Church

Community

Bethel Christian Church resides in the Portage Park neighborhood of Chicago. Our neighborhood is historically a Polish neighborhood, with deep Catholic roots. Over the years, the neighborhood has changed quite a bit, but you can still feel the remnants of that previous era. Many of its residents are professing Catholics, though there is an increasing percentage of residents without a church community/active involvement in a religious institution. Portage Park represents an excellent mission field, and a place of great need for Gospel ministry.

Much gets written about Chicago from a national perspective, but don't be fooled, Chicago is second to none. We believe it is the greatest city, and its diverse neighborhoods make up for distinct pockets throughout the city with their unique makeup and culture. Portage Park is a safe neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest Side, which has a passionate culture surrounding good food, friendly community, and enjoying the many amenities that Portage Park has to offer. This is a great place to live, it's no surprise that many are flocking to Portage Park to get the best of city life, while also retaining a cozy neighborhood feel.

Congregation

Bethel Christian Church began as a church plant back in the mid 1990's. The church then settled in the Portage Park neighborhood around 2001, and moved into our current building. Since then, our church has grown to love our community, and neighbors. Our building resides right in the middle of residential Portage Park, and we are surrounded on all sides by homes. Over the years we have planted other churches, one on the south side of Chicago, and another in the northern suburbs of Chicagoland. While we may be a small congregation, our people are faithful, loyal, and determined. You will find that our people are willing to do what is needed to see the work of the church move forward.

One aspect of our congregation which gets mentioned by anyone who visits is our diversity. We are very ethnically diverse, comprised of roughly 40% Asian, 40% Hispanic and 20% White. We are very economically diverse, comprised of members both making over six figure salaries, and low income households. We are socially diverse, having members with different opinions, political leanings, personalities, etc. We are very diverse, but there is a strong cord of unity which binds us together and fosters deep fellowship, and that is, the Gospel.

Confessional

At Bethel, you will find a congregation which is committed to the Westminster Standards. We not only agree and submit to them, as a church within the PCA, but we desire to have them used practically, and taught regularly. Our people are committed to Reformed Theology, and enjoy having their Pastor explain the nuances and depth of Reformed teaching. You will find Bethel a great place to minister, as our people love to learn and grow more into the doctrines of their faith. If you love to teach, and to preach the truths of the Reformed faith, this is an excellent church to be at.

Ministries

Bethel Christian Church has several ministries which have proven to be fruitful over the years. Here is a list of just some we have found particularly effective:

Adult Sunday School Class

Class subjects ranging from Evangelism 101, Intro to Theology, How to Read the Bible, etc. Sunday mornings from 9-9:50am

Small Groups

Small groups which meet for fellowship, prayer, and to discuss the previous week's sermon with an application focus

Book Club

Book Club every April, August, and December, reading through a book selected by the Pastor to be discussed on Sunday after service. We have read books such as Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul, and other strong Reformed titles.

Women's Ministry

Our Women's Ministry has largely existed in the past as a monthly fellowship gathering to encourage the women of our church.

Church Health

Bethel Christian Church may be small, but she is healthy. Here is a small snapshot of our current health as a local church:

Spiritual Maturity

Our members take their faith very seriously, and it is shown by their desire for rich, expositional preaching, attendance in Adult Sunday school classes, as well as their participation in small groups, book club, and other various ministries. There will always be room to grow further, but this is a great group to come alongside and shepherd.

Financial Health

Bethel has been financially stable, and healthy for many years. Even after COVID-19, we continue to pull in tithes & offerings over \$120k. We have a reserve of cash savings over \$170k, and our building is fully paid off, with no other debt present.

Member Stability

Bethel's members are incredibly loyal. The average member at Bethel has been here for many years. While we are continuing to see new members join, the core of the church is made up of members who have been here for over 10+ years, and are committed to the church's worship and work.

Leadership

Our current leadership team is determined to lead Bethel Christian Church in a Christ honoring, Biblically submissive, and Pastor-led fashion. Here is a look at our current leadership/staff:

Elders:

Dave Fong (Clerk)

Dave Lin

Deacons:

Frankie Caldero

Francisco Miranda

George Marroquin

Staff:

Facilities Manager: Matha Calderon

What We're Looking For

To see a more technical breakdown of our preferences, please see our Church Profile Form uploaded with the PCA's Admin Committee. We are looking for a qualified, godly man who fulfills all of the character requirements of 1 Timothy 3, who wishes to humbly and faithfully shepherd God's people.

An ideal candidate will have had Pastoral experience, and particularly have several years of preaching/teaching experience. Any candidate should possess a Master of Divinity degree, or equivalent, from an accredited, and biblical Seminary. Any candidate should be ordained, or be able to be ordained, in the PCA. We would like for our Pastor to be involved in the life of the Presbytery, and connected to what is going on in our denomination.

Applying

All those who wish to apply should email our current Pastor, and Moderator of the Session, TE Joe Cristman, at joecristman@gmail.com. Please include a Resume with your email, and a Ministerial Data Form(MDF) if possible. Once submitted, we will contact you within a week regarding your application, and any potential next steps. Thank you for your consideration!