

# CHURCH BASH



## **The History and Legacy** *of Western Hills Church*

I am the 8<sup>th</sup> of the 8 Pastors that have served in our churches 88-year history. I have served here for 35 years. Tomorrow is the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my first Sunday at Western Hills.

Over the 88-year history of our church, the mission has not changed.

[Matthew 28:18-20](#)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

NKJV

The mission has not changed, but the strategy for reaching people and discipleship has radically changed!



Our church was founded by 12 members in 1931. It was called Southside Baptist Church and was a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. The first Pastor was W.E. Cresswell. The church grew under his leadership and this was the first building they built. It was located on SW 39<sup>th</sup> and Hudson, just five blocks to our north. It was called Southside Baptist because at that time SW 36<sup>th</sup> was the southern boundary of OKC. For the developers of OKC, SW 36<sup>th</sup> or grand boulevard was like the Kilpatrick Turnpike is currently to OKC.



By 1938, the church had grown from those first 12 members to over 300 members. It was end of the depression. Not every member even owned a car. The members lived within walking distance of the church campus.

**The neighborhood church campus and its buildings were the center for all discipleship and church community life!**

- They met for services three times a week to hear three sermons a week from their Pastor.
- They had Sunday School for children and adults.
- They had training union for missions training.
- They gathered at the church campus for weekly potluck meals and other recreational activities.
- They had revival services at the church campus 3 to 4 times a year.

Because the neighborhood church campus and its buildings were the center for all discipleship and church community life, from the early 1900's until the late 1940's, new churches were started in new neighborhoods as Oklahoma City expanded to the south.

When I became the Pastor here in 1984, I counted 17 southern Baptist church campuses within a mile and one-half radius of our campus.



By the late 1940's and early 1950's transportation had greatly improved in OKC. Those southside churches that were growing needed bigger buildings on main streets and our church was one of them. Under the leadership of Pastor Loren Belt, our church dedicated this building at our current location on June 10, 1951.



In the mid 1950's I35 and I40 were completed. Those southside churches that were growing needed even bigger buildings and under the leadership of Pastor Warren Terry our church was one of them. Our church built this new auditorium and it was dedicated in May of 1959. By the time he left in 1968, Pastor Terry also led the church to build a new nursery, a new educational building for youth, and a new cabin at Falls Creek.

This was all happening because the church campus and its buildings were the center for all discipleship and church community life for its members.

Then in the mid 1960's, I44 and I240 were completed. With these improvements in transportation, people would travel all over the OKC to attend church. Those churches that were growing became the first mega churches. By 1970, our church was not one of them. By 1970, our church was \$400k in debt and in decline. There was no need to find a new location and build any more buildings.

When I was called here to be the Pastor in August of 1984, I was 29 years old. There were about 60 people still attending our services.



As a 29-year-old Pastor, I was an idealist. I was also a student of church history and especially church history in the New Testament. I knew that in the New Testament history in the book of Acts that there were not church campuses with church buildings. I knew that the first church campuses with church buildings were not built until after 300AD. In that first 300 years after Jesus died on the cross, the church of Jesus Christ exploded across the Roman Empire and into other parts of the world. Christianity was finally declared to be a legal religion in 312AD and by that time, Christianity had millions of adherents.

I knew that before 312AD the church campus and its buildings were not the center of discipleship and church community life for the church because there were no church campuses and church buildings!

The church just met in homes. That bothered me when I was 29 years old and it bothers me now.

I have always felt that the church in our nation was missing something very significant that caused us to need church campuses and buildings for discipleship and church community life in order to be successful.

It bothered me because what I had personally experienced in discipleship did not match what I saw occurring in local churches.

It bothered me that when church members talked about the church they were talking about buildings or worship services rather than the members of the church.

It bothered me that as a Pastor I felt this incredible burden to disciple every member of the church and personally take care of every member spiritually and physically no matter how much our church grew.

It bothered me that people were choosing what church they would attend by what church had the coolest pastor, the best praise band, or the best children's ministry.

It bothered me that with the church buildings being the center of discipleship and community life that I was always seeing the least and the lowest left out and neglected rather than highly valued.

It bothered me that people could be a church member and no one in the church really knew them.

It bothered me that I could be the Pastor of the church and no one in the church really knew me.

It bothered me that I could read in scriptures that my job as a Pastor was to equip the saints for the work of discipleship, but I just did not know how to get that done.

This burden has weighed on me heavily since I became the Pastor here 35 years ago.

I have made all kinds of changes over the years to try and lead the church away from our buildings being the center for discipleship and our church community life. I did away with three services a week. I did away with Sunday School and training union. I did away most revival services. I tried various strategies for discipleship and community life to replace those things that could be done outside the walls of this building.

But I was never sure that I was leading our church the right way, I was never satisfied with my strategy, and I did not see the results that I envisioned.

Then in November of 2012, I attended a Pastor's conference on discipleship by the BGCO at FBC Moore. It was there that I heard a guest Pastor named Jim Putnam that was bothered by all the same things that bothered me about the local church. He shared his story of how Jesus had led him to start a church called Real Life Ministries in Post Falls Idaho in 1998. I was amazed at what I heard. By the year 2008, the church had equipped over 800 of its members to disciple over 8000 people outside the walls of their buildings. They had baptized over 4000 people. They had moved discipleship and church life outside the walls of their buildings they were seeing incredible results.

Jim shared how they did it starting with just him, his wife, and two other couples. It was so simple. Here is a summary of what he shared.

In 1998, we did not discover a new strategy for discipleship and church community life, but we rediscovered an old one. We just followed Jesus.

- [Jesus called and chose 12 men to be with Him to be His disciples. He told them follow me and I will make you a fisher of men. \(Matthew 4:19\)](#)  
The definition of a disciple was in His invitation.
  1. [A disciple is someone who follows Jesus.](#)
  2. [A disciple is changed by Jesus.](#)
  3. [A disciple is on mission for Jesus to make disciples.](#)
- [To make disciples....](#)
  1. [Jesus was an intentional leader of the 12.](#)
  2. [Jesus nurtured a relational environment with the 12.](#)

3. Jesus gave the 12 a reproducible process to make disciples that could make disciples.

- Jesus sent everyone of His disciples out to make disciples using the strategy He used to disciple them. There were no exceptions!
- The church of Jesus has divorced the strategy that Jesus used to make disciples from the commands of Jesus and has expected to get the same results.

I repented and embraced the strategy of Jesus.

Since 2013, Sandra and I have been using our free time to make disciples of Jesus that make disciples of Jesus the way Jesus made disciples.



(Show two videos of the church being the church after Brandon introduces them-testimonies by Kathy Boyle and then Stephen and Anna Dellinger.)



Does anyone know why there are steps leading up to this backyard?



These are what remains of the steps to Southside Baptist Church in 1931.



These steps mean a lot to me. I drive by these steps every day on my way home from our church campus.

- Seeing these steps reminds me of our incredible legacy.
- Seeing these steps reminds me of God's faithfulness. We are still here after 88 years just as these steps are still here.
- Seeing these steps reminds me that God has a here for a reason. God still has a purpose for us being here, to make disciples of Jesus that make disciples of Jesus the way Jesus made disciples.



When I see these steps, I see our past, our present, and our future.

Won't you join our back to church bash?

Won't you repent and embrace the strategy of Jesus for His church?

Will you take the next step with us?

Will you let us equip you to make disciples the way Jesus made disciples?

We will teach you how to disciple others like Jesus made disciples....

- We will teach you how to become an intentional leader
- We will teach you how to develop a relational environment
- We will teach you how to use a reproducible process

Won't you join us? Brandon will share with you how to get connected.