

SEVEN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH  
CALERA, ALABAMA

In Partnership with the Shelby Baptist Association and Concord Baptist Church

*To engender a community of faith and loving service  
for the glory of God and the spread of the gospel to all peoples  
(Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Prov. 11:30)*

After much prayer and study, we believe that God is calling us to begin a new work in and around the Shelby Springs and Waterford communities near Calera. Given that a biblical church is defined as a congregation, not a location, we have not made a final decision as to a physical site for the work. We believe that God is already working and calling those whom he desires to be a part of this work, and as the congregation grows we will at some point settle upon an actual location for our meetings.

Calera is the fourth largest city of Shelby County and is currently experiencing phenomenal growth along with the rest of the county. Currently more than 9,027 people live within five miles of our target area. With only three Southern Baptist congregations in the area that means there is one SBC congregation for 3,009 people. Including the seven other congregations in the area, there is one church for every 902 people. If every church in the area were filled to capacity there would not be enough room for the people who already live in the community.

According to *The Birmingham News* 5,600 people per year have moved into Shelby County since 2000.<sup>1</sup> Based on development plans listed on the City of Calera website as of January 6, 2005 over 4,933 new homes were planned with 37% already sold or under construction. With 63% still planned and additional development plans since January of 2005 the potential for further growth demands new works to reach the unchurched in southern Shelby County.

We desire to plant a church with high expectations and deep accountability for the purpose of equipping the saints of God for works of service. To reach the new generation of unchurched people we must train believers to evangelize and minister to their family, friends, and co-workers through the power of the Spirit. To accomplish such a task will require a high level of commitment among the leadership and the congregation.

In order to fulfill this mission we commit ourselves to the following principles and practices of the local church laid down in the New Testament:

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<sup>1</sup>Jeff Hansen and Joseph Bryant, "Shelby County outpaces Tuscaloosa in Census Bureau population report," *The Birmingham News* (May 3, 2005) accessed online February 20, 2006 at <http://www.sceida.org/05032005.htm>.

- **God-centered worship:** Worship by its very definition must be God-centered. The power of worship affects us when we move our attention from ourselves and our circumstances to God and His glory (Exod. 33:12-34:9). Our suffering and burdens are the sacrifices we bring to God in worship looking unto Him to redeem them for His own glory.
- **Expository preaching:** God's Word is His chosen means of communication with His people. Our God is a talking God who has spoken to us through His divine Word. Preaching is the primary means God has chosen to spread the gospel throughout the world (Rom. 10:9-10). Preaching can only be effective when it is saturated with the Word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We believe that that preaching which explains the clear meaning of the text of Scripture best nurtures and equips believers for works of service and more effectually brings sinners to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (Neh. 8:1-8; note v. 7).
- **Biblical discipleship:** The primary mission of the church is to make passionate disciples of Jesus Christ. To accomplish this mission we must exercise every available means to bring God's people into contact with God's Word. Our focus will always be on leading Christians into a deeper walk with God through the ministry of the Word of God. The Apostles valued the ministry of the Word and prayer so highly that they delegated other important tasks to qualified men so that they could focus on their calling (Acts 6:1-7).
- **Spirit-led evangelism:** All true evangelism is Spirit-led. We do not make converts by our power or prowess; we share the gospel under the anointed leadership of the Spirit. Salvation, from beginning to end, is the work of God (Jn. 6:44). Paul followed the leadership of the Holy Spirit in his mission work (Rom. 1:9-15; Acts 16:6-10). Whenever we share the gospel and a sinner responds we can be assured that the Spirit of God was there ahead of us. To say that we seek to engage in Spirit-led evangelism should not be taken, however, to mean that we have a laissez-faire attitude toward evangelism. We embrace the principle of intentionality in evangelism and will actively seek those Spirit-given opportunities to share the gospel with others.
- **Support of global missions:** The task of missions was given to the local church. Although we cooperate with other churches so that we may more effectively support our missionaries, we cannot escape the reality that we are called to support the mission effort personally. Our Lord did not hand the task of evangelization and discipleship to a mission organization but to the church (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:6-8).
- **Scriptural Church discipline:** Church discipline takes two forms: formative and corrective. Formative discipline includes the task of making disciples. Corrective

discipline includes the work of accountability. We believe that church discipline lies at the very heart of the nature and definition of the church. However, we find in our day that it is often neglected or ignored. God's people must be encouraged and held accountable to their common confession. We are not a perfect people; we stumble and we sin. Therefore, the Scriptures call us to correct and to restore those who fall in a spirit of love and humility. We are neither to condemn nor to forget those who fall, but we are to labor to restore them to their walk with God realizing that we, too, may need someone to lift us up in the future (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 6:1-5).

Leadership within the church will be shared among qualified, gifted, and called men who are committed to the common vision and purpose of the church. The elders function within the church to equip God's people for works of service, so we believe that the most effective model of church ministry incorporates the whole congregation and empowers all members to use their gifts and abilities in service to the Lord (Eph. 4:11-16).

Our mission and core values shall dictate the direction of the entire ministry. Through thoughtful and deliberate practices we hope to engender a spirit of excitement and high expectation for every member. In today's society the level of biblical illiteracy is high, even among professing believers. Reaching persons who have no church affiliation requires bringing them into meaningful contact with the gospel message through a variety of venues: personal witnessing, preaching, and small, open, group Bible studies. Once persons have demonstrated a faith commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord they should be brought into a more in-depth study of the Christian life through closed discipleship groups in which mentoring takes place as well as Bible study. At the same time these persons should remain active in open group studies and be encouraged to bring their unchurched friends and relations with them.

Along with Bible study, group worship is an essential component of the Christian faith. Group worship includes singing praises to God, testimonials, prayers, thanksgivings, the exposition of Scripture, and the celebration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We value the recent contributions of gifted and anointed worship leaders as well as the rich heritage of worship music passed down throughout the years, therefore we desire to incorporate these various contributions within the worship service.

At present, two men and their families are committed to the task of leadership in the church plant process. Leonard Smith has already undergone the Church Planter Assessment with Bob Brown, the Church Planting Strategist for the Shelby Baptist Association, and is seeking salary assistance through the Association and the State Board of Missions. A. J. Smith has recently moved his family to the area for the purpose of joining the work as a fellow laborer. We are praying and seeking others whom God might call to join in the harvest.