

JOSH HALL

IN HIS OWN WORDS

In his recent ordination process, Josh submitted these essays and biographical information describing his ministry resume, life story, ministry philosophy, and Christian beliefs.

LIFE STORY

I grew up in Christian home, going to a great little community Bible church. The church I grew up in did not invest in the Next Generation: Kids and Youth. At age 4-5 I begged my parents to let me sit in "big church" with them. I loved attending adult worship services: teaching, worship, praying for each other from a very young age.

After asking my dad about Jesus, I gave my life to Christ at age 5 kneeling down by my parent's bed and I was baptized not long after. I didn't really understand the Bible or what it meant to follow Jesus until high school when my Biology teacher (of all people) invited me to a high school boys Bible Study in his home with 50 high school boys part of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. At this point my faith came alive. I began to understand scripture and what it meant to follow Jesus. I was giving teaching and leadership opportunities in this group doing ministry with my peers. By my senior year, I was named president of our fellowship and really set on a course to continue to grow in ministry and leadership and my calling to be a pastor.

Once I moved away to college I got disconnected from my Christian community in high school and after about a year of wandering from God, a year of not praying or reading scripture, or going to church, the Lord spoke to me clearly out of the blue, and told me that it was time for me to stop wandering and start following again. I recommitted my life to Jesus and found a local church. After some time I was invited to volunteer to serve in the High School Ministry where I was then asked to come on staff as an intern and eventually became a Student Ministry Pastor working with High School, College/ Young Adults.

By this point, in the early 2000's, feeling called and gifted to be a pastor and having a passion for college students my next journey post-college led me to Seminary in San Diego and a college ministry pastor internship process for a few years at a 110 year old Baptist church a few blocks away from San Diego State. While serving in this College

Pastor role and attending seminary I got involved with leading in the young adult ministry of our church which had become a worship service called Flood. Over the next couple of years Flood would grow from a ministry of a few hundred college students to a church of over 2,500 20-somethings (average age was 21!) with 3 worship services on Sunday nights at 5, 7, & 9pm! This was a phenomenal move of God that I was privileged to be part of. We felt led at that point to plant other Flood Churches so a few of us prayerfully moved with our families to plant a Flood Church in Northern California in Sacramento. At that point I was over 2/3 completed with my M.Div. program at Bethel, but felt led to put that on hold to move and plant a church so we did.

Planting a church was a phenomenal, exhilarating, stretching, and extremely difficult experience. If anything it was extremely formative for me spiritually and as a leader. After a year of working 2 Full Time jobs to support my family, launching a church, and opening a coffee shop as part of our ministry to downtown Sacramento, I decided to go back to Seminary. Initially I planned to finish up my M.Div. but I took a few pastoral care/counseling courses because that was an area we were really struggling with our new church, and all the new (or not yet) Christians we were encountering in our church. Over time, I found these courses to be extremely beneficial and continued to take more of them until a couple years later I unintentionally finished a Master's Degree in Seminary in Counseling!

By then in my mid 20's after several pastoral positions, planting a church and several years of seminary in 2 different programs I was completely burnt out on people, and ministry, and the church. I took a sabbatical and for the first few weeks went down to Southern California and sat alone on a beach all day in silence listening to God. After 3 days of doing this God spoke to me and said simply "you have been sitting here for several days. You have done nothing, accomplished nothing, and yet my universe is still in order. My world



MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Teaching & Family Pastor

2016-Present
Fair Oaks Presbyterian
Fair Oaks, CA

San Jose Campus Pastor

2014-2016
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church
Menlo Park, CA

Campus & Executive Pastor

2011-2014
Cornerstone Fellowship Church
Livermore, CA

Life Groups Pastor

2009-2011
Cornerstone Fellowship
Livermore, CA

Associate Pastor/Church Planter

2004-2008
Flood Church
Sacramento, CA

College Graduate Pastoral Intern

2002-2004
College Ave Baptist Church
San Diego, CA

High School & College Pastor

1999-2002
Crosswinds Church
Dublin, CA

continues to turn, the sun rises and sets each day, the waves crash, with or without you or your help. When you do absolutely nothing, my world goes on just fine, just as it did before you, during your life, and will after you are gone. Remember my child, that I am God, and you are not." This experience actually led me to eventually feel called to leave the church I had planted, move back to the Bay Area with my wife and take a year off of ministry to rest, heal from burnout, reinvest in my marriage and start a family. That sabbatical year was extremely healing for my soul, my marriage, and my ministry. I have since become very aware of the dynamics of overwork, self reliance, and burnout in life and ministry and have worked to help people around me hopefully avoid that kind of outcome and way of life and ministry.

In the past 7 years, I reengaged in local church ministry and have served at a 6,000 person, multisite church and served as the Small Groups Pastor, as

an Executive Pastor overseeing adult community and eventually a Campus Pastor of a 5,000+ person campus. I also had the opportunity to join a large multisite 5,000+ person Presbyterian church in the Bay Area and launch a brand new multisite campus and build a community from scratch in San Jose, lead and oversee a church merger, and launch another campus through a merger with another Presbyterian Church in Saratoga, CA.

Just a year ago, my family and I felt called to join the staff of Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church as a teaching and family pastor. It has been an amazing journey and we love our Fair Oaks Family! Today, I have love being a Pastor and shepherding others in their journey to become more like Jesus. I am passionate about weekend worship, preaching and teaching, building community, investing in the next generation of kids and students, and seeing the church grow and thrive!

I love hanging out with my wife, Kelly, and playing with our three kids, Aidan, 8, Zoey, 5, and Shiloh, 4. Other hobbies of mine are reading, writing, hiking, and working out. I love playing or watching baseball, basketball, soccer and golf (and taking the rare nap).

EDUCATION

BA, Psychology, 2002

University of California Berkeley
Berkeley, CA

M.Div. 2002-2004 (degree in process)
Bethel Seminary, San Diego, CA

MAMFT Counseling, 2008

Western Seminary, Sacramento, CA

D.Min. in Preaching, Present

Western Seminary, Portland, OR

MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY

The two distinctions of the Reformed faith that appeal the most to me are the high view of the Sovereignty of God and his purposes, and the high view of Scripture and it's role in the life of the believer and the church. I have the conviction that salvation is the work of God. It is God's sovereign grace that enables faith in Jesus Christ, which leads to salvation. A person must choose Christ but that choice is always a response to God first sovereignly choosing you to be in Christ from before the foundations of the world. God's grace comes to you and finds you, and someone preaches the Gospel to you, and God arranges the circumstances in your life to hear it and enabled you to respond in faith to Jesus Christ. That is why I am saved, and how it is that everyone is saved. It is the work of the sovereignty of God. In that sense, the concept of Election and Predestination appeals to me in realizing the miracle and wonder that anyone who is in Christ, has been chosen! Finally, the high view of Scripture and the emphasis of the Reformed faith in the supremacy of Scripture as the authoritative word for all of life and for the church as the very word of God by which we live strongly resonates with me.

The Presbyterian form of government

is typically expressed in leadership by elders/session who are elected by the local congregation, and groups of

churches that form a larger presbytery. The strengths of this model are the balance of power that occurs between the Session, Congregation, and Pastors/Staff, and the health that comes from shared leadership and decision-making, as well as partnership with other churches in the Presbytery and Denomination. In the Presbyterian model, the staff, or congregation don't directly hold all the power, or decision-making ability. The congregation elects elders to serve and lead the church, in the roles of ruling elders and teaching elders in determining the mind of Christ when it comes to decisions and leadership of the church. This provides a robust process and well-balanced power and decision-making structure. This model also encourages more collaborative leadership that in my experience and view is more Biblical than many modern "CEO Pastor" churches or Congregationalist churches. The collaboration, theological grounding among other reformed evangelical pastors, and the support that comes from being a part of a larger presbytery/denomination is healthier and more supportive than independent churches experience. The weaknesses of this model is that it can be inefficient at times and take a long time to reach a decision, in some cases elders may not be as connected to the ministry or the congregation being served, and there is often little accountability for

churches to participate in Presbytery (either financially or in meeting together) which can allow churches to remain largely independent. Of the different forms of church government I have experienced, in my opinion, the Presbyterian form is overall the best I have seen, and provides for the healthiest model for decision-making, and leadership of the church.

My philosophy of ministry is to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples.

My ministry is to proclaim the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, baptize people into the triune reality of God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commands, and to live this reality myself. I strive to always teach the teachings of Christ, and to live them. I view my role as a leader, pastor, preacher and follower of Jesus as an equipper of the church where I serve. My goal is to like Paul writes: "equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-13). I also believe that ministry is a community, and team endeavor and not the work of an individual. As such I believe in practicing ministry that is a shared endeavor between Senior Leadership/Staff/Session and the Congrega-

tion and that is also well balanced in terms of gifting, leadership, responsibility, and reflecting the diversity of God's Kingdom including racial and ethnic, age, and gender diversity in church leadership.

I view evangelism as proclamation and relational. As a pastor, whenever I have the opportunity to share Jesus, and proclaim his good news, whether that is from the pulpit in preaching, up front, in small groups, or in a one-on-one conversation I strive to do that. Most people need to hear Jesus and his message preached, in a variety of mediums, and I work to never assume that someone has had the opportunity to hear about Jesus or his Gospel. In fact I assume that everyone needs to hear the Gospel preached, and invitation to follow Jesus presented regularly, because in every group there is always someone who still needs to hear it, maybe for the first time. I am learning, that we all need to hear about Jesus and be reminded to respond to him regularly. So, proclaiming the word, and the gospel, and the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus is something I value and want to do every chance I get.

Growing up, I always had a sense that I was called to be a pastor even from a young age. When I was 15, I was in a "career workshop" at my public high school. We went around the circle and said, "What we want to be when we grow up." My answer was "I think I am going to be a pastor." That was strange because up until that point in my life, I had no significant relationships with a pastor. The church I grew up in had a terrible kids ministry, so at age 5 I attended "big church" with my parents. That church had no youth ministry either and aside from church services my only exposure to ministry was through Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Bible Studies with teachers and students from my public high school. In college, I volunteered to serve with the High School Ministry, and I fell in love with doing ministry. The youth pastor of that church saw potential in me and asked me to come on staff doing youth ministry. After some time, along with our church leadership, he really affirmed my calling to be a pastor and in full time ministry. I have been a pastor ever since in a variety of contexts: a youth pastor, college pastor, teaching pastor, church planter, family pastor, executive pastor, and campus pastor. I have grown through all these experiences and my own understanding of my gifting, affirmed by the leaders and churches I have served with, to discern a calling by God to pastoral ministry, including

a ministry of preaching/teaching and church leadership.

Personal accountability is absolutely essential in my life and in the lives of those I serve. I believe that I have tremendous potential for self-deception and sin, and believe that to be true of those that I serve alongside and those to whom I minister. I am personally accountable to God for my thoughts, feelings, and actions. I also make it a point to surround myself with men and women who can hold me accountable in a community for the ways that I live, lead, serve, and do ministry. I strive to be very open to feedback and seek out feedback from others for my personal and spiritual life. I also remain in close contact with a number of spiritual mentors and fellow pastors that serve to hold me accountable and allow me to hold them accountable. This accountability is not only to my benefit, but it enables me to better serve and minister to the church that God has called me to serve and lead because I believe the extent to which I am connected to God and following Jesus closely enables me to lead others to where God is inviting them to go in their lives as well.

My Leadership Style

In decision making, I am a collaborative leader. I like to discuss strategy, decisions, direction and issues that matter to all of us in ministry with staff, volunteer leaders and elders. In my experience I do not believe the "CEO Pastor" approach seen in many churches, where the senior leader(s) decide and implement everything is healthy, effective or biblical. Administratively I believe in clear communication around vision, goals, direction and desired outcomes and allow teams and individuals to lead and find the best strategies and approaches to achieve the vision, goal, etc. I also believe in high accountability, regular feedback, and using objective measurement of progress and outcomes. When it comes to conflict, I have learned to make it a point in leadership/staff/elder meetings I lead in, to mine for conflict and encourage positive, healthy, well represented debate over ideas (as opposed to personal conflict). I have found this approach results in better communication, more people being heard, better ideas and strategies and greater buy-in, greater connection and better outcomes. Typically conflict arises because people care about the people and issues involved and if as leaders we can encourage healthy conflict of ideas it tends to result in better outcomes and less personal conflict in leadership teams.

My Worship Emphasis

I preach for transformation. My preaching style is firmly anchored in scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. I believe and practice that the faithful preaching of God's Word, revealing Jesus Christ, proclaiming his life, death and resurrection, and teaching and encouraging people to obey and follow Jesus in his teaching and way of life is of central importance in preaching. I strive to allow scripture to be the basis and the primary structure of every message. Additionally, I have found that stories are an effective means of illustration and consistent with the manner that Jesus taught, so I will tend to also tell stories that help to illustrate scripture or demonstrate how God is at work in the hopes that God will use the message to effect real transformation in people's lives.

My Call to Ministry

I believe I am called to pastoral ministry. In particular, I feel called to lead, preach and teach in the local church. Effectiveness would look like consistent, excellent preaching/teaching in weekend worship services that are practically helpful to people in hearing and obeying God and becoming like Jesus, and a church and ministry model that is effectively reaching unchurched people, inviting them into community, and effectively and consistently making disciples of Jesus who makes disciples.

My Views on Spiritual Giftedness

I believe that every believer who comes to faith in Jesus Christ is empowered with specific gifts by the Holy Spirit. I am a continuationist. I believe scripture teaches, and have experienced, that the Holy Spirit still does manifest himself in the forms of spiritual gifts, and in the means described in the New Testament I believe there is an appropriate way of understanding gifts of the spirit as the Apostle Paul lays out in passages such Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Ephesians 4:11-13.

My Views on Charismatic Expression in Worship

Just as I believe there are spiritual gifts, there are also appropriate ways of using those gifts and conducting charismatic expressions in worship (either from up front or among the worshiping congregation) as Paul outlines in passages such as 1 Corinthians 14. Paul sums this instruction up to that church with a timeless principle, "But everything (in worship) should be done in a fitting and orderly way." 1 Corinthians 14:40.

My View on Women In Ordained Office

I am an egalitarian and believe that

men and women should serve together as equals in the church on the basis of calling and giftedness and not on gender. I have served directly under, alongside, and served over both men and women several times in the church and have no issue with either arrangement for myself personally or the church as a whole as it pertains to women serving as leaders, pastors, teachers, or elders in the church. I can appreciate that the EPC views this particular issue as a "non-essential" and strives for unity in handling similar issues. I can effectively work alongside other churches within the presbytery, in the broader

denomination, or otherwise who hold to a complementarian view.

My View on the Presbyterian Connectional System

I greatly appreciate the Presbyterian connectional system of government. To me, this means that our individual churches are not truly independent but are actually part of a larger church body including other churches in our presbytery, and on a national level within the denomination. This provides a greater level of accountability to churches. It also provides for more will rounded leadership and decision

making. I also believe this approach to government, leadership and accountability is on only effective, I believe it is biblical. I have been a part of several independent, non-denominational churches and have seen firsthand the challenges of church leadership when a church operates independently of other churches and even elders, when leadership (particularly senior leadership) are the sole decision makers, it is unhealthy. I do not take any exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

THE BIBLE

Scripture is the very word and mind of God. In it is found everything needed for life as it is intended by God to be lived, and everything necessary for understanding and obedience to the Gospel. Scripture provides the full means of understanding and putting your confidence in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On a personal level, I have grown to love scripture, and have seen the power of scripture to be used by God to transform my life and the lives of countless other people. Scripture is and will be the standard by which I live, teach, preach, lead and manage my own life, family, relationships, and responsibilities of the church. I have a passion for reading, meditating, learning, memorizing, preaching, and teaching the word in my own life and in the life of the church. My hope is that my life and ministry will inspire understanding, submission, and obedience to God in others through Scripture.

GOD THE FATHER

God the Father is the first person of the Trinity. He himself is God, eternal in nature, and beget the son. He is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is the judge of all of humanity and has made his will and law plain to us in Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ and will judge the living and the dead on the Day of Judgment. He is an immeasurably holy, powerful, loving, and good father in an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit and lovingly adopts all believers in Jesus Christ into the family of God.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the second person of The rinity. He is God, eternal in nature, come in human flesh, and lived a real human life, died a brutal death on a Roman cross, and was raised to new life on the 3rd day. Trusting in the person of Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection and following his teaching, and way of life is the only means of salvation and the forgiveness of sins. He alone is the high priest and mediator between God and humanity. He is the image of the invisible God and holds everything together. (Colossians 1)

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is God and exists eternally as spirit and proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit indwells the life of every believer, testifies to the truth about Jesus Christ, provides gifts to the church for the purpose of ministry, guides humanity into all truth about God through his holy inspired scripture, and transforms human beings into the likeness of Jesus Christ, sanctifying, sealing and guaranteeing them until the day of judgment.

MANKIND

Mankind is created by God, male and female, in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Mankind was created for relationship and fellowship with God, as it was in the Garden in the original creation. All mankind since Adam and Eve (with the exception of Jesus Christ) has been born into sin, and is guilty of sin and has broken fellowship with God, each other, creation and even with our own selves.

Jesus Christ is the only hope for the salvation of mankind and the restoration of creation to God.

SIN

Sin is disobedience to God, rebellion against God, and rejection of God's law, his commands, and his will. "Sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4) whether conscious or not. Sin is any thought, word or action that is contrary to the will of God or his commandments. It is the assertion of our will over and against God's will that results in both natural consequences and breaking of fellowship with God. All humans sin and are guilty of sin (with the exception of Jesus Christ). As a result of the first human sin, all humanity is born into sin, under the curse of sin and the guilt of sin is imputed to them. Sin requires atonement to be absolved. Only by responding to and putting their confidence in the saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ can a person be forgiven, justified, and freed from sin and the sins they have committed.

SALVATION

Salvation is the gift of God in Jesus Christ. It is by Christ alone that man may be saved. "There is no other name but Jesus Christ by which man can be saved." (Acts 4:10-12) Jesus Christ's death on the cross fully paid the penalty of sin and death and forgiveness is offered to anyone who is elected by God and puts their faith in Jesus Christ.