



encounter

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GROWTH TRACK

**“I HAVE COME THAT
THEY MAY HAVE LIFE,
AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL.”**

JOHN 10:10

THE ENCOUNTER STORY

Pastors James & Deidre Turner, and their three girls, Emily, Mikayla, & Mariah, dreamed of planting a church with a simple goal: *“to take the Life-Giving Message of Jesus Christ to the people of Central Arkansas, so that they might become fully devoted followers of Christ.”*

With the help of the original Launch Team – 46 people committed to seeing this dream become a reality – Encounter Church began on February 16, 2014. That first Sunday, over 120 people attended at the Hot Springs Convention Center in Downtown Hot Springs, AR.

From the beginning, Encounter Church focused on reaching out to the unchurched and “de-churched” community, creating an irresistible environment on the weekends and building healthy relationships through small groups that meet throughout the city. The life-giving message of the Gospel, the passion and joy of Sunday Services, and the simple style of Encounter Church brought immediate growth.

Since its first year, Encounter Church has grown to hundreds in weekly attendance. An additional 800-1000 people watch via our Live Stream - Internet Campus, and so far over 550 have people committed their lives to Christ. At the same time, the church has given over thousands to missions, and has water baptized over 250 people.

God is at work at Encounter Church. We invite you to see for yourself how exciting church can be when the focus is simple and people are free to go after God with passion!

Our Prayer for You:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people." - EPHESIANS 1:17-18

"I ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing Him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is He is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life He has for His followers." - EPHESIANS 1:17-19 MSG

Our Spiritual Journey Consists of Four Steps:

1. _____ (To Know Him)

"[I pray]... that you may know Him better [personally]." - EPHESIANS 1:17-18

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you.'" - MATTHEW 7:21-23

2. _____ (Find Freedom)

"[I pray]... that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened [focused and clear]." - EPHESIANS 1:17-18

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." - JAMES 5:16

3. _____ (Discover Your Purpose)

"[I pray]... that you may know the hope to which He has called you." - EPHESIANS 1:17-18

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us." - ROMANS 12:6

"All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." - 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 NLT

4. _____ (Make a Difference)

"[I pray]... that you may grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life He has for His followers [in his holy people]." - EPHESIANS 1:17-18

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." - JOHN 15:8, 11

"God has given gifts to each of you from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." - 1 PETER 4:10 NLT

1. Encounter With God.

SUNDAY SERVICES

We consider reaching people who do not know God personally to be one of our greatest responsibilities. Our Sunday services are for people at all stages in their spiritual journey but are primarily designed for those who do not yet have a genuine relationship with God.

Our Sunday services focus on four values:

1. _____
We believe church should be enjoyable.
"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"
- PSALM 122:1 NKJV
2. _____
We believe church should be a place where people experience God's presence.
"But...when some unbelievers or ordinary people come in, they will be convinced of their sin by what they hear. They will be judged by all they hear, their secret thoughts will be brought into the open, and they will bow down and worship God, confessing, 'Truly God is here among you!'"
- 1 CORINTHIANS 14:24–25 GNT
3. _____
We believe church should be a place where people learn how the Bible applies to their daily lives.
"So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."
- EPHESIANS 4:11–12
4. _____
We believe church should be a place where people can accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
"'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?"
- ROMANS 10:13–14 NLT

How we share Christ with others:

"Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full."
- LUKE 14:23 TLB

As we continue to reach people far from God, every one of us can do our part by following these four principles: **(Invest & Invite)**

1. Accept the personal _____.
2. Build a personal _____.
3. Share your personal _____.
4. Give a personal _____.

In our city, our nation, and our world

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- ACTS 1:8

In addition to our efforts during Sunday services, we are focused on reaching people in three key places designated by Jesus:

1. "In Jerusalem" – _____

"Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight." - JAMES 1:27 MSG

The primary way we reach our cities is through our Sunday services, Dream Factory (Downtown Missions & Food Pantry), Love Days, and Outreach Small Groups.

2. "In Judea and Samaria" – _____

"As they traveled from town to town, they presented the simple guidelines the Jerusalem apostles and leaders had come up with. That turned out to be most helpful. Day after day the congregations became stronger in faith and larger in size."
- ACTS 16:4–5 MSG

The primary way we reach our nation is by starting new churches and strengthening existing churches through the Association of Related Churches (ARC).

ARC is a church-planting organization that started with two church plants, one of which was Encounter Church. We support ARC today as it trains, coaches, and resources hundreds of new church plants across America and abroad every year.

3. "To the ends of the earth" – _____

"Jesus said to His followers, 'Go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone.'"
- MARK 16:15 NCV

The primary way we reach our world is through strategic missions. At Encounter, we intentionally invest a portion of our resources in missions work all around the world with a focus on unreached people groups, children, and church planting.

How you can participate:

1. _____ - Pray that we might reach people in each of these areas with the Good News of Jesus.

"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'"
- MATTHEW 9:37–38

2. _____ - Give your time and resources to reach people for Christ.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be."
- MATTHEW 6:19–21

3. _____ - Go to our cities, nation, and world to serve others and show people the love of God.

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go and tell this people...'"
- ISAIAH 6:8–9

2. Encounter Freedom

SMALL GROUPS

We believe life change happens in the context of relationships. Small Groups have one simple purpose: to bring people together. God created us to live in community with others, and it is only then that we can experience the full life He intends for us.

Small Groups provide three things:

1. A place to _____ with others.

"Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him." - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 TLB

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community, and Small Groups provide a place for you to connect with others, share life, and grow in faith together.

2. A place to _____ each other.

"We know what real love is because Jesus gave up His life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters." - 1 JOHN 3:16 NLT

When we do life together, our problems become smaller as God uses others to bring support and encouragement to our lives. Small Groups become a place where others don't just know your name but care about what is happening in your life and want to support you in your spiritual journey.

3. A place to _____ together.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." - PROVERBS 27:17

We believe every person is created with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. Small Groups are a place you can grow with others to become more like Jesus and reach the potential God has put inside you.

Encounter Church Small Groups Model

We base our Small Groups model on the early church as described in the Bible in the book of Acts. in Acts, you can read about how small group meetings in homes helped lay the foundation for tremendous growth in the first church in Jerusalem.

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah." - ACTS 5:42

"You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." - ACTS 20:20

*Encounter Church is a church **of** Small Groups, not a church with Small Groups.*

Four things to know about Encounter Small Groups:

1. Our groups are "free market."

We want people to gather together based on things they enjoy and are important to them. Essentially, the things you are already doing in your life are the things that can make up your Small Group! From sports groups to lunch groups, parenting groups to student groups, Bible study groups to creative arts groups, our groups are as varied as we are. All groups fall within eight hubs:

***Men • Women • Marriage and Family
Students Freedom • Prayer • Outreach • Financial***

2. There are three semesters every year.

Life flows in seasons, and we want to make it easy for you to be in the right Small Group for you in each season. This is why we have new groups that start and stop three times a year in what we refer to as "semesters."

Winter/Spring – 13 Weeks
January - May

Summer – 6 Weeks
June - August

Fall – 13 Weeks
September - December

3. Everyone can join a group.

Our hope is for every person at Encounter to be connected in meaningful community through a Small Group. With so many groups to choose from, we are confident there is a group that is a great fit for you. You can search groups by topic, location, day, and time in our online Small Groups directory at churchoftheEncounter.com/groups. Once you find a few groups that interest you, contact the leaders to learn more and make plans to check them out in person.

4. Most can host a group.

We believe hosting a group is simple because we all have something to offer others. Whether it's something you are passionate about, an experience you've had that can help others, or an area in which you are looking to grow, hosting a group is a great way to bring people together in meaningful community.

To learn more about becoming a Small Group leader, attend Small Group Leadership Training at Step Four of the Growth Track. Even if you're not sure if you're ready to host a group, we invite you to come to a training event.

3. DISCOVER PURPOSE

GROWTH TRACK

The Encounter Church Growth Track exists to help you discover and develop your purpose and live the full life God created for you. The Growth Track is made up of four steps, which guide you through next steps in your journey to know God, find freedom, discover purpose, and make a difference.

"Let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity."
- HEBREWS 6:1

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." - JOHN 10:10

4. MAKE A DIFFERENCE

DREAM TEAM

All of us were created by God to make a difference in the world around us. God has a place for you where your unique abilities and passions can impact the lives of others. We believe your life will never make sense until you find, develop, and fulfill your purpose.

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
- EPHESIANS 2:10

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me."
- ACTS 20:24

"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities...and there are different kinds of service to God [ministry]...All of you together are the one Body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it."
- 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-5, 27 TLB

At Encounter Church...

...we believe there is no great divide between the “ministers” and the “congregation.” Everyone has something they can do to impact the lives of others in the Kingdom of God. From our perspective, every member of Encounter is a minister, every person is gifted in some area, and every task is important. Discover what you do well, and take steps to use your gifts to make a difference.

You can start by joining the Dream Team at Step Four of the Growth Track!

ENCOUNTER CHURCH GOVERNMENT

As you consider investing your heart, time, family, and finances into the life of a church, it is important for you to feel confident in church leadership. Our goal in sharing the details of Encounter’s government is that you will understand that our church is structured to support the values of integrity, accountability, and spiritual authority.

Our church government is made up of three groups of elders:

1. Guided by _____
The Pastoral Staff team is led by Pastors James & Deidre. This team oversees the day-to-day ministry and operations of the church. These staff pastors serve the congregation and are responsible for the development of the spiritual life of the church.
2. Protected by _____
Our Trustees are 3-5 members of the congregation appointed by the Senior Pastor, and approved by the current members, to oversee the finances and direct the provision of the facilities needed by the church. They provide counsel to the Senior Pastor regarding the major financial commitments of the church. The Trustees serve as Non-Staff Elders.
3. Strengthened by _____
The Overseers are five pastors of respected congregations and ministries who love Encounter Church and are willing to provide spiritual protection to the church. They may be called upon to help in accountability matters relating to the Senior Pastor if requested to do so by the Pastors or Trustees. The Overseers serve as Apostolic Elders.

CHURCH FINANCES

“Every Sunday each of you make an offering and put it in safekeeping. Be as generous as you can. When I get there you’ll have it ready, and I won’t have to make a special appeal.”

- 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1–4 MSG

At Encounter Church, we practice tithing for the support of Christ’s body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of our income is the Biblical standard for giving.

“Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.”

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." - MALACHI 3:10

Giving is one of the central themes in the Bible. Jesus talked more about this subject than Heaven, Hell, or prayer. To understand what it means to be a Christ-follower, we must also understand what it means to be a giver.

1. **Tithe** - The tithe, or "first fruits" of our labor/income belong to God. We find this principle all through God's Word. Tithing, giving God the first 10% of our income to the local church, is the primary, practical way we acknowledge that God is first (Proverbs 3:9-10).
2. **Offerings** - An offering is giving over and above the tithe. The Bible says that by giving generously, we are able to "take hold of the life that is truly life." You aren't really living unless you are freely giving (1 Timothy 6:18-19).
3. **The Gift of Giving** - The gift of giving is a spiritual gift that God gives to some people (Romans 12:8). It is a Spirit-given capacity and desire to serve God by giving of your material resources, far beyond the tithe, to further the work of God.

Many people love to give to God and as they do, they want to feel confident in the organization through which they give. At Encounter, we want people to understand they are giving to God through the church, not to the church. As we openly share the honesty, integrity, and spiritual values that guide the financial practices of Encounter, we believe people can focus on what God is calling them to give and trust that He is leading our church to steward it well.

The giving of tithes and offerings is worship to Jesus and an expression of the relationship between the individual giver and the Lord. That is why we don't have people fill out pledge cards or make faith promises. Funds are not "income only," they are worship and are not considered to be a business transaction but an expression of gratitude toward God.

BECOMING A MEMBER

Encounter Church Membership Covenant

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and being in agreement with the values and ideas presented in Step One of the Growth Track, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Encounter Church family. In doing so, I make the following commitment to God and my fellow church members:

1. I will protect the unity of my church by:

Acting in love toward other members.
Refusing to gossip.
Following the leaders.

"So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together."
- ROMANS 14:19 PH

"Live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ toward each other."
- ROMANS 15:5 TLB

"Have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart."
- 1 PETER 1:22 GNT

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."
- EPHESIANS 4:29

"Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you."
- HEBREWS 13:17

2. I will share the responsibility of my church by:

Praying for its growth and health.
Inviting the unchurched to attend.
Warmly welcoming those who visit.

"To the church...we always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers."
- 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1–2

"Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that the house will be full."
- LUKE 14:23 TLB

"So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified."
- ROMANS 15:7 TLB

3. I will serve the ministry of my church by:

Discovering my gifts and talents.
Using my God-given gifts to make a difference in the lives of others.
Developing a servant's heart.

“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you.”

- 1 PETER 4:10 PH

“So Christ Himself gave...pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

- EPHESIANS 4:11–12

“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus... taking the form of a bondservant.”

- PHILIPPIANS 2:4–5, 7 NKJV

4. I will support the testimony of my church by:

Attending church and Small Groups faithfully.

Living a Godly life.

Giving regularly.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

- ACTS 2:42

“Let us not neglect our meeting together...but encourage one another.”

- HEBREWS 10:25 NLT

“But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”

- PHILIPPIANS 1:27 PH