



A Rationale for Merced, California

LifeSpring Church came into being in September 2005/06 as a “parachute drop” church plant initiated by Bruce and Beverly Logue. Merced, the location of LifeSpring, was deliberately chosen after a 6-city tour of California: Seaside (Monterey area), San Luis Obispo, Eureka, Redding, Chico, and Merced. Merced was chosen because of four factors.

1. Active population growth due to the creation of a new University of California campus in Merced. We currently stand at 85,000 people in the City.
2. An academic emphasis in city’s growth: Merced College, Fresno Pacific University , and UC-Merced.
3. Affordable housing, as opposed to the exorbitant housing costs in other areas of the state. In 2008 Merced was declared “ground zero” of the national economic collapse of housing costs. This was due to the overly optimistic building that went on at the time in light of the new UC campus. (We have recovered from that now.)
4. Job opportunities for Bev who is a speech-language pathologist. She moved immediately into a position with Merced County Office of Education.

The reasons we chose Merced continue to be true. In addition to the just-mentioned four factors, we have found Merced to be welcoming, inviting, and progressive socially and economically. Merced has, on average, one of the youngest populations in the entire U.S., providing many opportunities for spreading Good News to curious but untaught people. UC-Merced also provides opportunities because of its annual student growth, constant hiring of new instructors, and impactful economic contributions to our economy (more about this later).

These are, we believe, compelling reasons to choose Merced as a place to locate one’s ministry. In this document we lay out what we believe to be the reasons that Merced continues to be a desirable church planting location.

Early, Setup Tasks Completed

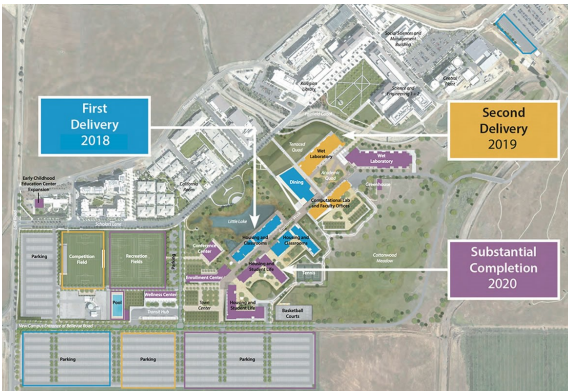
Church plants typically begin with certain tasks, important to the well-being of the church, that are also time consuming and labor-intensive. These tasks include finding a meeting place, completing non-profit paperwork, creating and establishing relationships with people, and purchasing whatever equipment is needed to facilitate church activities.

At LifeSpring (LCS) these early tasks are completed. The usual church plant paperwork is completed, and we have non-profit status. We have a bookkeeper, a bank account, an annual budget, and a place which we have called home for 11 years. The result of all this is that we do not have to invest further energy in these tasks.

The completion of this groundwork, I believe, is a huge benefit to our future church planters.

Lots of Room for Ministry Growth and Expansion

Being a parachute drop, means that LSC did not have a full team/staff in her beginning. Therefore LSC was unable to start with a broad strategy since only Bruce and Bev Logue were her beginning “team.” The implication of this is that the broadest opportunity for growth at LifeSpring remains untapped.



10,000 Students and counting On the northeast corner of Merced is a burgeoning population of people that represent a large, potential audience for the Good News. Because of the obvious limits of resources and personnel, LifeSpring has not ventured into this ripe field, although, Bruce has had many occasions to rub elbows with faculty, staff, and students.

The University is currently in the middle of the “2020 Project,” a novel public-private partnership to increase the capacity of the campus. By 2020 there will be 10,000 students on the campus. Eventually, UCM will have 25,000 students, depending on future revenue streams to fund that growth. There is a Christian presence on campus, Campus Crusade, but it has only partially tapped the UC’s potential.

Merced is also a beneficiary of this \$1.3 billion project. The expansion will result in hiring additional staff and faculty. Much of the cost of the project will be spent in Merced County for labor and supplies, and additional businesses will be created to supply the needs of these faculty/staff. UCM is nearing completion of an office building downtown which will house 300 of the UCM administrators. Merced already sees the stimulus this is providing to our downtown core. For the church planter, this means more people moving to town who need the opportunity to hear the Good News that LifeSpring represents.



Lots of Kids: LifeSpring has been blessed with an abundance of kids. However, we have been unable to give them the attention which we would like to give, due to lack of “staff.” (Bev Logue has taught our children’s class for virtually our entire time here.) Our desire has never been to separate our children from the life of the whole church family as is often the case in large-church formal youth programs. As a result, all of our LSC social activities

include the children which we think is a good thing.

Nevertheless, we would love to offer more child-focused and appropriate activities to help them grow spiritually. This is a huge growth opportunity. It is certainly true that children are a huge door into the hearts of their parents.

Young Adults: Bruce’s age, 70, is a hurdle for becoming integrated into young adult programs and organizations in Merced. While, LSC has great relationships with young adults, 25-40, we believe it would be a great advantage to have someone on “staff” who would be closer in age to the aforementioned group. Statistics also show that young adults are dropping out of church at a large rate. LSC would like to continue our outreach to that group.

Teaching Opportunity: LifeSpring’s target audience has been young adults, the disenfranchised, and folks who have given up on church. In our 12 years of experience in Merced, we have found a profound lack of understanding about the Bible along with central concepts pertaining to discipleship. This is just as true among those who have spent some time in evangelical churches, as with those who have no prior religious experience.

Teaching at LifeSpring has been systematic in order to address some of the lacks we see among our LifeSpringers. We are currently using N.T. Wright's small group study guides for New Testament books. This has been very rewarding, and our LifeSpringers seem to enjoy the discoveries they make.

Preaching includes an annual series of sermons from a selected gospel. This Church year (2017-2018) we are studying Mark, beginning with Christmas and continuing through Easter. This makes it possible for LifeSpringers to get a thorough immersion in the life and teachings of Jesus.

For a church planter, systematic teaching is an ongoing process that matures congregants in being a disciple of Jesus.

At LifeSpring a church planter finds many opportunities for teaching.

The Effect of Jesus Centered Discipleship

LifeSpring is a truly non-denominational church. People who attend LifeSpring do so because of their desire to follow Jesus. We are very intentional about this and believe that it creates stronger, more committed disciples. We love seeing LifeSpringers discover what it means to follow Jesus.

How do we teach LifeSpringers?

1. We make sure that sermons and small group studies have ample amounts of attention given to who Jesus was, how he lived, and what he taught. This is both simple and powerful.
2. Part of discipleship is feeling invested and responsible for the Christian way. So we include LifeSpringers in every respect of the life and decisions of the congregation. Direction is not top-down. We make sure that “what do you think” is asked at every opportunity. It builds maturity because it invites LifeSpringers to think critically about a variety of issues.
3. Instead of the usual “business meeting” model of governance, LifeSpring has four annual gatherings called Round Tables. Attendees at these gatherings participate and decide on matters important to LSC’s ministry and DNA. For example, LifeSpringers recently decided on a new annual project to substitute for our Christmas Child box participation in the past.
4. LifeSpringers believe in the congregational integrity of our church community. They do not believe that congregational life depends on professional staff. Expressions of this include a prayer thread they created on FB Messenger so that they could share prayer concerns with one another. It is a busy thread.

Working with a Seasoned Partner



The person that chooses to come to Merced will get the benefits of working with someone who is both vocationally mature as well as thoroughly acquainted with Merced County. The Logues have lived in Merced for over 12 years. In their time here Bruce has been chairman of the board for the local Chamber of Commerce, both a participant and director of Leadership Merced, a 10-month leadership program sponsored by the Chamber, served for 12 years on the board of Playhouse Merced (now the secretary for the board), membership in a business networking organization, chair of two committees for the City (updating the zoning regulations and restructuring building fees), 2016 graduation as a Senior Fellow from the Great Valley Chapter of the American Leadership Forum, and other community involvements.

We have used these experiences primarily as a way to connect to our community. The benefit to our church plant has been that we are widely known throughout our community. Bruce is friends with Merced’s mayor, Superior Court judges, members of the County Board of Supervisors, our last three city managers, our last two police chiefs, city councilpersons, leaders of non-profits, and many more. We have several

LifeSpring members who came to us because of these community connections.

One of the things we have enjoyed about this church plant is the freedom of creativity and discovery. Being close to City life has also enabled us to overhear what the people we want to reach are saying about church and faith. This has been instructive and useful to us.

Opportunities for Growth

As said earlier, there are many untapped opportunities for growth of LifeSpring in Merced. Here are some of the ways we would like to see her grow.

1. Increase in the number of children in our program along with more opportunities for children to develop friendships and learn what it means to love Jesus.
2. Development of a mature ministry on the two major campuses in Merced—Merced College and UC-Merced. 11,000 students are enrolled at MC, and by 2020 10,000 students will be enrolled at UCM.
3. Greater outreach into the lives of young families and, along with that, more small group studies and opportunities for social engagement among LifeSpringers.
4. A long range desire is to develop a network of LifeSprings within Merced, first, and then throughout the Central Valley. When the ACE Train, High-Speed Rail, and the Merced train station are a reality, there will be more and more people moving to this area of the state. It is a gold mine of people.

What Kind of Person?

We believe that a person well-gifted for this great work will have these specific characteristics.

1. Being well-read. Because teaching is a big part of the important work being done at LifeSpring, and the teacher must be constantly filling his/her bucket.
2. Being motivated and self-starting. The growth and maturation of LifeSpring depends on its pastor/s to be intentional and motivated. Our target audience at LifeSpring includes people who have no prior spiritual training and therefore depend on the intentionality of its leaders.
3. Being creative. LifeSpringers respond well to creative ideas and don't have to be convinced of their importance.
4. Being curious. One of the blessings of working in this context has been to be immersed in a culture of people who do not embrace faith. It's a great laboratory for discovery. As a friend of mine says, "spiritual anthropology."
5. Being out-going in regard to building relationships with everyone in his/her sphere. LifeSpring pastor/s have to "boldly go where no one has gone before" - to use a Star Trek phrase.
6. Being well-trained in shepherding people. In other words, knowing how to relate to people in ways that do not close doors.
7. Being willing to raise support money or to secure a job. LifeSpring is too small at this point to support anyone. But the cost of living in Merced is not exorbitant so living comfortably is not out of reach.

What Role Will Bruce Take in the Future?

Part of the reason for this search is to find someone/s who will come and love LifeSpring in the way the Logues have. We have 12 years in Merced including the 11 years of LifeSpring's life, and we do not want to see that hard work evaporate.

At age 70 it is time for me (Bruce) to recede. I am not abandoning this work, but I would like to see someone come who will love the wonderful opportunities LifeSpring and Merced provide. I would like to see the first year of an individual's ministry to be a year of getting acquainted, taking over by stages, and integrating into Merced.

I'm not a micromanager and only want to serve as mentor. After the first year, I will be quite happy to support and encourage as needed.



How to Contact Us:

We'd love for deeply interested person/s to come and visit us. LifeSpringers must vet the candidate/s for two reasons. The first is that they won't listen to someone they don't feel connected to. The second is that LifeSpringers must feel accountable for this process. It will give me an opportunity to teach them about spiritual qualification and how it impacts congregational life. This is exciting.

If you are interested in learning more about LifeSpring, there are several ways to contact or investigate us.

- [Our website can be found at this site.](http://www.lifespringchurch.net) www.lifespringchurch.net.
- Bruce Logue's email is bruce@lifespringchurch.net.
- LifeSpring's [Facebook page can be found at this site](https://www.facebook.com/groups/137329609654453/) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/137329609654453/>
- Bruce's church planting blog may be found at <http://www.plantingmerced.com>.
- Bruce's cell phone number is (209)327-0308.
- If you want to use snail mail, our address is LifeSpring Church; 731 E. Yosemite Avenue, Ste. B, #308; Merced, CA 95340.

Final Word:

LifeSpring is a treasure. Eighty percent of parachute drops (like LifeSpring) fail after five years. LifeSpring is now 11 years old, which is a tribute to the commitment and resoluteness of LifeSpringers. They do not give up, and we are looking for someone who will join us in this work. Will it be you?