

CHAD ELLIS



MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

SENIOR PASTOR – GILLIONVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH (ALBANY, GA)
2015–PRESENT

BCM CAMPUS MINISTER – GEORGIA BAPTIST MISSION BOARD
CLAYTON STATE UNIVERSITY AND GEORGIA PERIMETER COLLEGE
2009–2015

MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION – FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FOREST PARK (GA)
2001–2009

BCM CAMPUS MINISTER (PART-TIME) – BAPTIST GENERAL CONVENTION OF TEXAS
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS–SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER
1998–2001

YOUTH MINISTRY INTERN – FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAKESIDE (FT. WORTH, TX)
1998 & 1999

MINISTER OF YOUTH (PART-TIME) – ROCKFORD BAPTIST CHURCH (AL)
1997-1998

EDUCATION

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – KANSAS CITY, MO
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY, *IN PROGRESS*
Concentration: Leadership; Dissertation: TBD

SOUTHWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – FORT WORTH, TX
MASTER OF DIVINITY, 2002
NAMB Nehemiah Church Planting Project Certification

AUBURN UNIVERSITY – AUBURN, AL
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, 1997
Major: Communication Disorders; Concentration: Family & Child Development

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Born November 16, 1975 (Florence, AL)
- Married to Sheri Fowler, September 13, 1997
- Children: Madeline Rebekah (born June 14, 2001) & Timothy Noel (born December 21, 2004).
- Licensed to Ministry by Rockford Baptist Church (AL), April 21, 1998
- Ordination by First Baptist Church, Forest Park (GA), September 30, 2007

ADDITIONAL TRAINING & EXPERIENCE

- Church Planting Internship Program, Northwood Church for the Communities, Keller, TX – 2001
- Basic Teacher Training, English as a Second Language, North American Mission Board – 2003
- Consultant Training, Assisting Churches in Transitional Communities, South Metro Baptist Association (GA) – 2004
- Church Ministry Task Force (Captain), South Metro Baptist Association (GA) – 2005
- Chaplain of the Day, Georgia State Senate – February 25, 2005
- Adjunct Teaching Faculty, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, North Georgia Campus (Atlanta South Center): Biblical Teaching Certificate Program–BIUSS 1153: Introduction to the New Testament (The Early Church) – 2005
- Volunteer BCM Campus Minister, Georgia Baptist Convention – 2005-2006
- Baptist Collegiate Network, Collegiate Church Planting Committee (Chair) – 2010-2013
- Coaching 101 Training, Georgia Baptist Convention – 2012
- Church Planter Coaching Training, Georgia Baptist Convention – 2015
- Church Strengthening/Revitalization Team, Southside Baptist Network (GA) – 2014-2015
- Founding Contributor, www.collegiatecollective.com – 2014
- Southside Summit (Conference) Planning Team, Southside Baptist Network (GA) – 2015
- Committee on the Order of Business, Georgia Baptist Convention – 2017
- Vice-Moderator, Mallary Baptist Association (GA) – 2018, 2019
- Moderator, Mallary Baptist Association (GA) – 2020, 2021
- Board of Directors, Sowega Council on Aging (Albany, GA) – 2024–2026

MISSIONS LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Mexico Medical Mission Trip Leader, with UT Southwestern Christian Fellowship – 1999, 2000, 2001
- Ohio Church Planting Trip Leader (included assisting the Billy Graham Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Crusade), with First Baptist Church Forest Park – 2002
- Puerto Rico Construction Trip Leader, with First Baptist Church Forest Park – 2004
- Send Me Now Collegiate Summer Missions, Georgia Baptist Convention, East Asia Team Leader – 2010
- Send Me Now Collegiate Summer Missions, Georgia Baptist Convention, Haiti Team Leader – 2011
- Send Me Now Collegiate Summer Missions, Georgia Baptist Convention, Church Planting Road Trip (Upper Midwest) Leader – 2012, 2013
- BCM Spring Break Mission Trips (Various locations and projects within the state of Georgia), with Clayton State University BCM – 2010-2014
- Jeremiah 29:11 Mission (Honduras), with Gillionville Baptist Church–2016, 2017, 2024
- International Mission Board Partnership, Buenos Aires, Argentina – 2023
- International Mission Board Partnership, Buenos Aires, Argentina – 2025

June 30, 2026

Dear Members of Calvary Baptist Church,

It is both a privilege and an honor to have been invited to preach in view of a call as your next Senior Pastor on Sunday, July 19. Sheri and I are sincerely grateful for the confidence your Pastoral Search Committee has shown in us throughout this process.

We are looking forward to worshipping with you, meeting your church family, and learning more about the people God has brought together at Calvary Baptist Church. As we prepare for that weekend, we have been praying that the Lord will give all of us wisdom, unity, and clear direction as we seek His will together.

I know many of you will have questions about our family and ministry. If you would like to become a little more familiar with my preaching before we meet, sermon archives are available on YouTube at **[youtube.com/gillionvillechurch](https://www.youtube.com/gillionvillechurch)**.

We would appreciate your prayers in the days ahead. Please pray for Sheri and me as we share this news with our current church family, and as we navigate the many practical details involved in relocating from Georgia to Tennessee. Most of all, pray that Christ will be glorified and that His will be accomplished through both Calvary Baptist Church and our family.

We are grateful for this opportunity and look forward to meeting each of you very soon.

Blessings,

Chad Ellis

Personal Testimony & Initial Call to Ministry

It is my passion for reaching the university community that has encouraged me to send this packet to you. Calvary Baptist Church is uniquely positioned, both geographically and by the decisions of successive generations of church leadership, to have a real, eternal impact on the university community in Knoxville.

My story of coming to faith in Jesus is a short one. I walked an aisle at a church in rural Alabama at the age of 13, prayed a simple prayer of repentance, and was baptized by immersion the following week. That was three and a half decades ago. The story of how my faith journey ties to my love for the work of *collegiate ministry* is a slightly longer story that connects my conversion, discipleship, and call to vocational ministry:

My initial discipleship equated the Christian walk with being a moral person who regularly attends church. The idea of needing to abide in scripture daily, to learn from it apart from listening to religious professionals, was sadly lacking from my experience. One of God's graces in my early Christian life was overnight trips to my grandparents' house. Whenever I stayed with them, I would always wake in the morning to find my paternal grandfather sitting at the kitchen table, a cup of coffee in hand, reading glasses on the end of his nose, hunched over in his bathrobe, reading his Bible. Every morning I was in their home, he started his day in the Word. And he was always smiling as he read it. That image took root in my imagination and led to a realization: there was more to Christianity than I was experiencing.

I left home for college (Auburn University) in the Fall of 1994. In the first few weeks of school I visited the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM). What I discovered there changed my life: A group of my peers who took the Bible seriously as a guide for daily life, not just "church life." Under the discipleship of my campus minister and upperclassmen, I began a meaningful, daily walk with Jesus. As my personal walk with Jesus grew, BCM allowed me those first opportunities to lead, teach, and disciple others. It was through BCM that God let me learn the "something more" my grandfather had modeled for me all those years ago!

God used local churches committed to ministry aimed at college students in the most transformative ways in my life: Not only my discipleship, but my calling into vocational ministry and the initial exploration of that call. It was at the end of my third and final year of college that I begin to wrestle with a call to vocational ministry. My BCM campus minister arranged for me to serve a small church as their youth minister to further explore that calling. During that year my call to ministry was confirmed, Sheri and I married, and we made the decision to move to Fort Worth, TX to enroll at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS).

I look forward to having an opportunity to share details about my time at SWBTS, the following years of service in local churches, and my experience as a BCM campus minister. I want to close my testimony by saying the impact of Baptist churches committed to ministry among college students has been a blessing to my entire family. Both our daughter (at the University of Tennessee) and son (now at Mississippi State University) have grown in their discipleship thanks to their BCM's and local collegiate-reaching churches.

Statement of Faith

Alongside my personal devotion to and faith in Jesus, I affirm and minister within the theological framework of the Nicene and Athenasian Creeds, the Baptist Faith & Message (2000), and the Chicago Statement of Inerrancy (1978). My doctrinal beliefs rest within the boundaries of the Protestant, Baptist, and Evangelical movements. This means I hold to:

- Orthodox trinitarianism.
- A high view of and dependence upon Scripture for truth, faith, and practice.
- An exclusivist view of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. Or, as J.I. Packer said: “The cross saves.”
- A commitment to the doctrine of penal, substitutionary atonement, i.e., Jesus died for our sins and in our place.
- Believer’s baptism and a memorial view of the Lord’s Supper.
- An emphasis on personal evangelism and global missions.
- A congregationalist view of church governance.
- An emphasis on the autonomy of local churches.
- An emphasis on the “Five Solas” attributed to the Protestant Reformation: Faith alone. Grace alone. Christ alone. Scripture alone. Only for the glory of God.

This is far from an exhaustive list of theological convictions and positions, but serves as a good foundation and starting point for conversation. Authors and theologians from across the Evangelical spectrum have been important to my theological formation and thinking. Modern authors would include Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Leon Morris, J.I. Packer, John Piper, Jim Putman, Bob Roberts, Peter Scazzero, and John Stott (among other influences).

Philosophy of Ministry

1. I want to help the church prioritize its Gospel Mission.

- a. **2 Corinthians 5:18-20.** *“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*
- b. We have the privilege and responsibility of being God’s ambassadors visibly and verbally. I desire that each member of our church embrace this reality and have the tools to share their faith as God provides the opportunity. Let’s show the love of Jesus and share the message of Jesus as often as He allows!

2. I want to help church members embody Kingdom Ethics.

- a. **Matthew 5:13f** *“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”*
- b. Faith in Jesus should transform a person’s whole life. Jesus changes how we see and interact with the people in our lives. The Christian walk is just that—a daily *walk*. Christianity is a way of being, decision-making, and living under the kingship of Jesus.

3. I want to help church members become Spiritually Mature Disciples.

- a. **Colossians 1:28f** *“...we proclaim [Christ], warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”*
- b. Discipleship drives everything we do in the local church. It is how we judge success and the viability of programs. Are we investing our time, energy, and resources in things that help people to grow more in love with and more like Jesus?
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4. I want to exemplify contextually rich, theologically faithful, expository preaching.

- a. **Matthew 28:19f** *Go therefore and make disciples...teaching them to observe **all** that I have commanded you...* (emphasis mine)
- b. I unashamedly spend a lot of time on the *context* of Scripture. Why? My first task is to teach *you* how to better read, study, and enjoy the Bible *on your own*. I do not preach to entertain, but to give the congregation tools to understand scripture. My desire is for church members to have the training and tools to read and discern the clear meaning of Scripture for themselves, rather than needing seek out religious professionals for every question—and to have the capacity to teach others as they learn!

5. I want to help the church mobilize the Next Generation for ministry.

- a. **2 Timothy 2:2** *“...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”*
- b. Being a disciple requires two hands. With one hand we are always reaching up, learning from those further ahead of us on this journey of faith. With the other hand we are reaching behind, telling and training younger believers all that we have learned about

following Jesus. A disciple is called to always be busy with *both* of these tasks! A failure to invest in the next generation is not simply a failure in discipleship, it is a failure to *be* a disciple, yourself.

- c. In an increasingly mobile society, every church is a sending church. So every church needs to be an equipping church!

6. I want to help the church answer the question: “What can our church do better than 10,000 others?”

- a. *Ephesians 5:11f* “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”
- b. This language comes from the writing of Will Mancini. It is not the language of *competition*, but of *missiological focus*. All churches are called to make disciples. All churches give energy and effort to evangelism, worship, fellowship, missions, and ministry. But what if *each* local church could discover how God has uniquely wired it. Generic “mission/vision statements” would give way to meaningful, measurable goals an entire congregation can engage! Mancini encourages each local church to invest time exploring the skills, calling, and opportunities that are unique to *your* local church. If a church is able to identify a unique, God-given mission then it should mobilize its resources around that singular missiological focus! At Gillionville Church we say: “We exist to build families that will passionately follow Jesus for Generations.” This is not a slogan. It’s why we show up. It is why we give. It is why people volunteer their time in ministries. “Building families that follow Jesus” is the metric we use to evaluate our programs and ministries.

7. I want to help church members have a “Revelation 5:9 Vision” of the Church.

- a. *Revelation 5:9f* “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”
- b. Even when focusing on the unique calling and mission of the local church, I hope we have a vision of how our story ends! On any given Sunday morning we gather alongside churches in countries we will never visit, singing in languages we’ve never heard spoken, in cultures we cannot imagine. I pray that this picture of heaven is a goal we strive for here on earth!

8. I want to help the church be unashamedly baptistic in its doctrinal belief and missional partnerships.

- a. *Philippians 4:14-16* “Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.”
- b. We live in a generation where denominational affiliation seems to be on the decline or, at the very least, out of fashion. I hope that we can appreciate our doctrinal distinctives as

Baptists and, more importantly, find healthy partnerships with churches of like-faith for the purpose of missions, church planting, disaster relief, and theological education. I appreciate and have been blessed by our IMB, NAMB, and seminaries. These partnerships are the best part of being Baptist!

9. I want to exemplify authenticity in Pastoral Ministry.

- a. *Philippians 4:10-13* I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- b. I have always tried to be a disciple first, before being a pastor, in the eyes of my church. Transparency in my own discipleship journey does not come easily, but I believe it is a vital part of my ministry. It is why I attached a personal testimony to this packet! I want to encourage church members to share their struggles and help carry each other's burdens. This has to be modeled by leadership. I believe honesty and openness in our walk with Jesus are the greatest weapons the church has in its fight against the sin of hypocrisy.

10. I want to make *this* decade of ministry count: *Because we are all interim.*

- a. *Philippians 2:17* Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.
- b. When you think about it, all pastors are interim. We serve our churches for a little while and then someone else steps into the pulpit. That little while may be months or it may be decades, but it is not forever. I am grateful that my ministry tenures have been comparatively long ones. Nonetheless, I want the churches I serve to be stronger when I depart than when I began. I want the church to be healthier for my tenure of service, however long that may be. And not knowing how long God may grant me to live and to serve His church, I want each year to count! As I begin a new decade of ministry, I am prayerfully open to God opening doors for service for His glory and the good of His church. Sheri and I are excited about the opportunity to serve Calvary Baptist Church because of its proximity to and rich history of ministering to the university community in Knoxville.

The pastor search team sent questionnaires to candidates. Here is a sampling of Pastor Chad's responses:

What do you believe the pastor's role is in a church?

Scripture describes the pastoral role primarily through three complementary images: shepherd, overseer, and elder. We find all three of these terms used interchangeably in 1 Peter 5:1-5. In light of this language, what is the biblical role of a pastor? Your pastor carries the responsibility of overseeing the church as a shepherd might watch over their flock. As a shepherd, the pastor offers the church spiritual guidance, protection, and direction. The pastor is to lead as an elder, providing the congregation wisdom and instruction by word and example. Any leadership required from a pastor should be exercised with great gentleness, care, love, and humility under the guidance of "the Chief Shepherd," Jesus.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

For nearly three decades, God has allowed me to learn, serve, and lead. I hope this next chapter of ministry will focus on sharing what I have learned to "faithful people who will be able to teach others also." I am passionate about investing in the next generation—especially college students and young families—and equipping them to live on mission and lead in the church. I believe it is what God has called me to do. In five years, I hope to be serving in a local church where I can be fulfilling that calling.

Do you disagree with any portion of the 2000 edition of *The Baptist Faith and Message*? If yes, please explain.

I can in good faith affirm *the Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) and comfortably served within its framework while a state missionary in Georgia. I require pastors at Gillionville Church to affirm and teach/preach within its framework. There is not another confession that "better summarizes" my views, especially regarding baptist distinctives.

What do you believe is the most critical issue facing The Church today?

I believe that all of the problems within the church are ultimately discipleship problems. The answer to the church's real problems is a renewed focus on discipleship. Healthy discipleship equips people to think and respond biblically to whatever issues arise in their church, culture, or lives. We must do a better job of training and modeling how to walk with Jesus, especially for the next generation. One of my core convictions is that "we live for generations." Our entire purpose is, as Paul wrote to Timothy, to entrust all that we have learned from the Lord to faithful people who will be able to instruct others. The church must renew its passion for making disciples of the next generation.

What would you hope for in your church staff?

I want the best for each of my staff members. This requires individualized expectations and development plans, but generally, I want all of the men and women who serve on our church staff to faithfully love their families, serve this church, and grow as disciples and as professionals. Part of the staff's annual evaluation is making sure they have the time, resources, and action plan to do those things well.

While our church staff is divided by specific areas of responsibility (i.e., administration, pastoral care, worship, youth, children, preschool, women, finance, facilities), I actively push against operating within "ministry silos." Our staff, pastors and administrators alike, are all serving one church. We are one team and should be working toward the same mission and helping each other to achieve individual ministry goals. I would expect any staff I serve alongside to develop this mindset.

God has providentially placed Calvary on the doorstep of our state's flagship public university. The university community should naturally be at the heart of Calvary's mission. Each individual staff member, regardless of role, needs to be able to connect and communicate effectively with university students, faculty, and staff. As new associate pastors and staff are added to our team, it is important that they understand and have a heart for reaching that ministry field.

What role has your spouse/children played in the life of the church?

Sheri has been an incredible support through our years of service. A registered nurse, she works part-time at our local hospital as a mother-baby nurse. She volunteers her time in our preschool ministry, will make hospital visits with me when necessary, is active in our women's ministry, and serves in many other ways around Gillionville. She is not an extrovert leading from the front of the room, but is a great help and encouragement in ministry. I do not approach "pastor's wife" as a role in the church bearing any official capacity or responsibilities. In fact, I have tried to protect her (and our other ministry wives at Gillionville) from those extrabiblical expectations. Sheri faithfully serves as my wife, the mother of our children, and an active member of our church. She does a wonderful job at each!

Sheri and I are empty-nesters. Our daughter, Maddie, is married and lives in Maryville, TN. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Tennessee. Maddie is a data analyst and her husband is an engineer. They are expecting their first child. Our son, Timothy, is a rising senior at Mississippi State University where he studies mechanical engineering. They were both very active in church life at Gillionville and are active in their local churches now. We are proud of how our children continue to walk with Jesus and grow as disciples.

What has been your experience in missions: local, national, international?

I benefit from my years as a BCM campus minister, where I was allowed to lead a mission trip each summer semester and during spring break each year. I am also blessed to have served at two churches that support the work of missions outside our local community. This has allowed me to lead an international mission trip almost every year (outside of the COVID years).

Tell us about the last book you read (other than the Bible) that made an impact on you.

Most of my current reading is devoted to sermon preparation or my academic work through Midwestern Seminary. I have particularly enjoyed several titles in the past few months, including Trevor Laurence's *Cursing with God* (the definitive work on the imprecatory psalms, or psalms of cursing), Peter Scazzero's *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, and *Deep Work* by Cal Newport.

There are four books I consider essential for my church staff: Our language for discipleship is based on Jim Putman's *Real-Life Discipleship*. As I mentioned above, I am a fan of Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* and agree with his premise that "it's impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature." Don Whitney's books on spiritual disciplines are helpful, but his short book *Praying the Bible* is a must-read! I also have my pastors and team read Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* as a starting point for how to work as a staff.