MERIDIAN CHURCH

March 2026 Meridian Life Letter [updated]

by Josh King

Meridian Church,

I am eager for you to read this letter and to meet with you at our next member's meeting to consider what our Lord is doing in His church here at Meridian. I trust you will prayerfully read this letter and respond with thanksgiving, adoration, and supplication.

Apprenticeship-Membership

Emake has been a kind friend by regularly providing a break for our volunteers for over a year. He has served us well and I know our hearts have grown to love him and his family even more. Many of your prayers for a shepherd in song have been specifically directed towards Emake. Those prayers have been answered.

When we first discussed his serving as an elder here, while Emake prayerfully considered it, he was not convinced he should pursue eldership. While logistics and other matters were considered, this was the primary obstacle. Though he has consistently served in churches, taken seminary courses, and been through elder training, he has never served as an elder. We believe God has used this season to prepare his heart to answer God's call to serve His church. Recently, after conversations with Lydia, his pastors, and us, he was ready to pursue this calling. You'll find the Ugiomoh's testimonies attached.

> *The elders recommend that Emake and Lydia Ugiomoh be welcomed into full covenant membership by letter from Christ's Fellowship Church and that Emake begin an elder apprenticeship wherein he will lead us to worship in song with compensation per our budget.*

When Frank Kresse joined Meridian he let me know that he did have a desire to pursue eldership, but felt that was something in unknown future. It has been a joy to see him grow in serving the body as a life group leader and teacher. So recently, when he let me know that his desire and willingness were at the ready if ever we might see fit, I asked, "Why not now?" Things moved faster than Frank expected, but he received our guidance with humility and candor.

The elders recommend that Frank Kresse begin an elder apprenticeship.

You'll find both of their questionnaire's attached to the electronic version of this letter. You'll notice that Emake's has more questions. The apprenticeship questionnaire has always had less questions. When we would send out the Shepherd in Song packet, it went with a fuller elder questionnaire and some additional questions focused on music. Although we knew the person could very likely go through the apprenticeship, because they would begin serving immediately in leading in song, we wanted to use the more extensive questionnaire.

With your approval, both would begin their apprenticeship immediately. We bring elder apprentices before you with completed questionnaires because they will be privy to all our elders meeting where we will discuss and pray for your souls. While we do not ask that you submit to them as those who keep watch over your souls (Hebrews 13:17) we do want you to have a peace about them serving alongside us as we do. Please let us know if you have any questions or thoughts about these two men.

I will also remind you that while the apprenticeship has a couple of recommended paths, they are all custom built. Both the length and the matter of study are tailored for each apprentice. Also, I believe it is always good to remind everyone that apprenticeship does not ensure eldership. For a variety of reasons, a man may withdraw from the apprenticeship, for example, serving alongside elders is a great way for a young men to really learn what ministry involves and decide that he does not aspire to the office of an elder (1 Timothy 3:1). While we would not anticipate such withdrawals with any recommendation, especially Emake or Frank, we understand that we are all sinners kept only by grace. So pray for your elders and pray for these apprentices and pray for Meridian that we would all remain faithful and true and grow in the grace of our Lord for the glory of His name.

Financial

While 2025 closed with a budget deficit of just over $1000 for the month of December, the year closed with near a $50,000 accrual. We began the year with roughly $67,000 in our general fund and closed it with just over $114,000. Praise be to God!

January nearly always sees a notable deficit, but this year we were blessed to see a small surplus of $60 having received over $23,500 in offerings!

The elders will continue monitoring the budget and hope to bring recommendations about building up our emergency fund and transferring it to higher interest bearing account soon. Let us thank our God for His generosity and continue to seek His grace that we might grow in faithful stewardship.

Core Courses

Roy Rochell will begin the course "Old Testament Introduction" on March 1st. This first time through he will be using Miles Van Pelt's lectures with plans to teach it again developing his own material in the future. Recommended texts to read with this study are *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* edited by Miles Van Pelt and *Dominion and Dynasty* by Stephen Dempster.

On June 7th Ryan Penner will begin teaching a Ligonier course on Sinclair Ferguson's *The Whole Christ*. This course is a mixture of both church history and theology, looking at the Marrow Controversy and the clarity it brings to the matters of legalism, antinomianism, justification and sanctification. Ryan is reading broadly on the Marrow Controversy and also plans to return to this course with his own lectures in the future. The recommend texts are Ferguson's *The Whole Christ* and Edward Fischer's *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Both of these courses will meet on Sunday mornings at 9:15 AM.

Summer School will begin on May 31st and meet at 6 PM. This year I will teach a course on C.S. Lewis' life and writings.

The Faith for Faith Conference

The Faith for Faith Conference is just around the corner. This year Dr. Stephen Yuille will return to speak on the theme "Biblical Anthropology: The Fourfold State." Anthropology is the study of man. As our society drifts from its knowledge of God, it is clear that we have therefore drifted far from our understanding of man. If we do not acknowledge the Creator, we will not understand His creation. So please, if you have not already registered, prayerfully consider setting aside some time to join us for this needed study.

I'll be delivering my annual Hebrews 13:7 lecture on Thomas Boston, a key figure in the Marrow Controversy and author of the classic *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*. If you plan to take Ryan's core course, I hope this will provide a worthwhile appetizer.

A big thanks to all who have already volunteered. The volunteers really do make this conference and they consistently make it phenomenal. We are in need of a couple of volunteers to oversee the meals. Roy and Sandy will still take care of most of the cooking (breakfast bing the major exception), but we will need someone to make sure it is here and warm and ready to serve. If you would be willing to serve in this way, please let us know.

On behalf of the elders,

Grace and peace,

Josh

Emake Ugiomoh's Testimony

I remember around the age of 11 or 12 I was at a youth camp and accepted a call from a preacher to give my life to Christ. The details are vague, the sermon, I do not remember, but I do remember when I turned 18 years. I looked back and realized that the entire time, I had not been following Christ. That moment of realization hit me so hard as I sat on the side of the road, in some corner, at a major bus station in Lagos Nigeria and started to weep.

I got up from that corner, wiped my tears, and said, "I will follow you, LORD" . Looking back and reflecting, the LORD has always had His hand upon me. I remember a lot of Christian influence around me. My mother prayed everyday as I observed. My father did not attend Church but was open to the idea of my mum taking us to Church with our neighbors. It was a Catholic Church. Though my mum was not catholic, she had faith that it was better than staying home on Sunday. These were rough times in our family. There was no cohesion and our family experienced a lot of spiritual chaos.

During the week, one of my uncles assisted the technical team at a Pentecostal church. My mum found an opportunity to take us to mid-week services sporadically. Another uncle of mine would visit us and he would have a collection of Christian music tapes (cassette, yes!). I love music, so I would sing along and learn God-glorifying songs. I did not realize that within all this chaos, seeds of God's grace were being sown in my life.

Eventually, my parents separated when I was 6 years old and my Spiritual influence was gone. However, by divine intervention, my soon to be step-mum was a very devout Christian. She got us to attend a protestant Church where I got involved with Children's church. It was in this season I accepted that call at the age of 11 (12). I was joyful, but somehow, I began to take matters into my own hands. Somewhere, the love and devotion to Christ seemed to fade. All of this was leading me to a major failure in my life that devastated me and left me crying on that corner of the very busy road and realizing that I had been living for myself. I realized my perceived devotion was misguided.

I saw no other way forward than to yield to God's mighty hand and follow Christ. I now realize that Christ set His love on me in my youth and when He came for me on that corner on the road, I had nowhere else to go. I had been taught reverence and the fear of the LORD in the most unlikely places and circumstances. Christ was planting His word in my heart and I'm certain His power and Holy Spirit gave me the grace to surrender to Him. No way I could have reached the conclusion of "I will follow you, LORD" on my own. I am a living testimony that our God saves. He saved me from sin and a life of selfishness and rebellion. I knew the truth but was suppressing it and I am glad that He shined His light and renewed my heart. I am His and He is mine. God be praised!

Lydia Ugiomoh's Testimony

I was very blessed to grow up in Christian home where both my mom and dad lived together. I, my three brothers, and my parents all went to church together basically every time the doors were open.

I was in Sunday School and children's church my whole childhood. I went to Falls Creek numerous times, but there was one week, I believe it was the summer of 2002, at children's camp that was different. I remember even before that night at camp feeling God pulling and calling me. Being silly and childish I was scared to ever stand up in front of the church and go speak to the pastor about becoming a Christian. That night at camp, though, I almost could not stay in my seat during the evening devotion. Thankfully my dad was there so I immediately went and talked with him after. I truly believe that I gave my life to Christ that night.

The years ahead, however, were filled with shame and regret because I was not living for Christ. I was pretending to be one person at church and with my family while trying to fit in and find some kind of love and acceptance at school with my peers. I had no close friends in which I could confide and I felt very lonely. I got into a bad relationship in high school and the first couple years of college and it took me distancing myself from the relationship to see just how toxic and controlling it was in my life.

Another big life event occurred when I lost my grandmother after my first year of college. This was the first grandparent I lost and even though she had had a stroke the previous year it was still a shock for me. My grandmother was one of the most impressive women I knew and to hear people talk about her generosity and thoughtfulness and see the legacy she left behind really caused me to look at my life and ask myself what I was going to do with my life? What would my legacy look like?

Before my last year of college I lost my second grandmother and this loss affected me differently. By this point in my life I had begun making some changes in how I spent my time and who I spent it with and I was more focused on my walk with Christ. I had peace after seeing my grandmother suffer from cancer and hearing her talk about her faith in the final weeks I spent with her. This peace both astounded and reassured me; I knew that I was in God's hands and he was with me both as I grieved and in the days ahead. I knew that his way was best and I finally gave him complete control, letting go of my worries about my future.

About a year later I ran into Emake at Falls Creek (we had met each other in class and at different BCM events prior to this) but this week was different. I knew very shortly after that he was part of God's plan for me and I am so glad that I did not miss out on this wonderful man. He leads me with grace and love in our marriage and growing together these 12 years has been fun, humbling, and uplifting.

God has continued to do amazing things in my life. He is currently teaching me to trust him more and worry less. He has helped me grow in my humility and in my prayer life. He has also taught me contentment and joy in his current blessings. He reminds me of my selfishness and my imperfectness but also of his steadfast grace, love, and forgiveness. I have also been convicted of not spending time in the Word of God as I should and I am working on that. He is a good and wise God and I am absolutely grateful that he chose to save me.

Emake Ugiomoh Worship Elder Questionnaire

This questionnaire will serve the church to evaluate you in four crucial areas: creed, character, calling, and competency. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

Creed:

1. What is your position on the inerrancy, inspiration, and sufficiency of Scripture?

My position on the inspiration of Scripture is grounded in 2 Tim. 3:16. Paul specifically writes that all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Furthermore, 1 Peter 1:20–21 tells us that, "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of
Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." These two portions of scripture among others have helped shaped my belief that God inspired men of His choosing to faithfully pass on His word.

On inerrancy, I believe that the word of God is perfect for matters of life, faith in Christ, and training in godliness. As a Christian I can be confident in the faithful transmission and communication of God's word through the ages. Psalm 19:7–10 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" There are matters of textual variants which is usually the crux of the objections to inerrancy. What has become known is that the textual variants provide more authenticity to the fact that God's word was kept in the custodianship of humans who at various times and in various places adapted, translated, and interpreted the texts to the best of their ability. Any meaningful differences have not changed the core tenets of belief in Christianity.

On sufficiency, I believe that scripture is sufficient to teach, to correct, to train myself and every other Christian in matters of godliness. I believe that the scriptures show us Christ and thereby helps us in matters of sanctification as we pursue conformity to Christ Jesus, our God. 2 Peter 1:3-4 tells us that "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." In all matters of faith and knowledge of Christ Jesus, we are blessed with God's inerrant and inspired word to grant us life in Christ Jesus our LORD.

2. What is the gospel?

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is the power of God bringing salvation for sinners through the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus according to the Scriptures. In the beginning, Adam sinned and thereby death was introduced into the world and all men sinned. But God promised to crush the head of the serpent through the seed of the woman (Gen. 3). In due time, God's own Son came to earth, born as a man, lived a perfect life and died as the ultimate sacrifice to drink God's wrath. God did not abandon humanity but kept His promise to save the world through His Son who

became flesh to save us from sin. Whoever believes in Christ is saved and is granted eternal life.

3. What is justification?

Justification is God imputing the righteousness of Christ upon a sinner when he or she is saved. Christ Jesus died for our sins while He remained righteous and without sin. It is this righteous state that God that is counted in the sinner's stead at the new birth. 2 Cor. 5:21 tells us that "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This is God's work.

4. What is sanctification?

Sanctification is God working in us through His Spirit to do His good works that we may be proven, refined, and prepared for our life with Him in eternity. As a result of justification, God grants us His spirit to set us apart to do His will for His glory. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians in telling them, " ...we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thess. 2:13)." This tells us that sanctification is an ongoing work of God's salvation to set us apart to be holy and blameless as we await Christ's return and our glorification. This is asserted in 2 Thess. 2:14 where Paul writes, "To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. What does the Bible mean in speaking of predestination and election?

Predestination and election from a Biblical perspective is God exercising His foreknowledge and sovereignty to grant salvation (not just by saying a prayer, but to full conformity to the image of Jesus Christ) to who He chooses to. Romans 8 provides a clear basis for God's predestination being in harmony with His foreknowledge. Verse 28 says "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." The matter of calling is attributed to God who does the calling. Verse 29 continues this line of thinking by telling us "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers"

Verse 30 gives us the basis for God's predestination where it tells us, "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." According to scripture, predestination is God's work to grant salvation to believers, conform them to the image of Christ and glorify them. It is complete work from start to finish.

For election, the Bible is clear that God purposes election for His glory. He specifically calls out individuals to fulfill His purpose according to His will. Romans 9 thoroughly expounds upon election, but one major revelation is that election is only dependent on God. God chooses whom He will save and whom he will punish, as seen in the case of Pharaoh and even the patriarchs like Abraham whom He chose among all the peoples of the nations.

In Rom. 9:10–12, Paul writes, "For this is what the promise said: 'About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.' And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was

told, 'The older will serve the younger.'" No injustice, no human will, condition or status plays any role in God's divine election. The example of Esau and Jacob are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the Bible tells us about election; however, God's mercy is dependent on Him and His judgement is dependent on Him as well.

Verses 30-31 shows the conundrum this generates in the fallen human mind where it states, "What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works." This grounds election in the will of God alone to save whoever and however He chooses to.

6. What does the Bible teach about the perseverance and preservation of believers?

The Bible teaches that saints should persevere in the faith based on the salvation worked by Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to do God's work. Perseverance can only be successful in and through the LORD. Ephesians 6:10 says "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." The power to press on as a believer in this life is granted by the Lord and sustained in Him. The Bible teaches that the "...thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10)." But we can be rest assured that Christ Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly.

The Bible tells us that preservation is God keeping us until the last day. Jude 24 and 25 unveils this doctrine as the apostle prays "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." This passage shows us that Christ is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before God. Preservation of the saints is an outworking of Christ's sanctification upon the life of the believer that God keeps and conforms him to the image of Christ and raise him up on the last day.

7. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin? What is the significance of your belief?

Yes. I believe Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. This is significant because Jesus' birth is supernatural and not just supernatural, but unique in its timing and possibility. Adam sinned, and so the sons of Adam are born in sin. The psalmist paints this image of our sinfulness where he says, "surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me (Ps. 51)." On the contrary, the virgin Mary conceived Jesus by the power of God, and we are told that the Child to be born will be called holy— the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

Jesus Christ was born a man, but He not like any other man. He is the holy God and the holy Man, set apart to fulfill God's grand plan. He is the obedient servant unto death on the cross for those He came to save. The significance of the virgin birth of Christ is that our salvation as Christians hinges on it. If Christ was not born of the power of the Spirit of God in Righteousness, how could He save us?

8. What is your interpretation of the biblical teaching on Hell?

Revelation 20:15 summarizes the Biblical teaching on Hell where it reads, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of

fire." It is a serious predicament of eternal punishment separate from God. Jesus warned about its dangers especially because of sin. Mark 9 presents a few critical points of the Bible's teaching on Hell. Verse 43 says, "And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire."

Verse 45 says, "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell." Jesus' statement here juxtaposes Hell with life which gives a clear meaning that Hell is a place of ultimate death even warning that being lame is beneficial than the predicament of Hell.

Verse 47 says, "And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell." What could be so bad that warrants lose a vestige, a limb or even the eyes? In this passage, the Bible tells us that Hell is the place of eternal damnation. A place so bad, nothing is worth it instead. We are to choose life in Christ and pray that our name be written in the book of life.

9. What is your view concerning baptism?

Baptism is the proclamation that we have received the new birth in Christ. This ordinance does not save the believer, yet it is required of the believer. It is the work of Christ and belief in Him that brings salvation. The thief on the cross received salvation and glorification without getting baptized. As to the practice and requirement of baptism, I believe that it is reserved for the regenerate Christian. In Acts 8:26-40, Philip encounters an Ethiopian eunuch and preaches the gospel to him. The Eunuch's response was his desire to be baptized having believed in Christ as his Savior. In Acts 2:41 the scripture gives the account of those who heard Peter's message and believe. We are told that they were Baptized afterwards. This is in fulfillment of the command to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

10. What are your beliefs concerning spiritual gifts?

According to the Scriptures, God grants various Spiritual gifts to Christian in order that they may use these gifts to serve Him. These gifts are to be used in glorifying God rather than oneself (1 Cor. 12:4). The Bible points out some of these gifts and gives guidelines on how they can be used effectively to build up the body of believers and honor Christ. Most importantly, the Bible alludes to the fact that of all the gifts, Love is the primary spiritual gift that all believers should pursue (1 Cor. 14:1).

1 Cor. 14 also gives a structured approach to applying Spiritual gifts in the context of congregational worship. 1 Cor. 14:31-33 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace." I believe the Spiritual gifts are to be used as God has intended for the exhortation of His Church to the glory of His name not to make us proud or high minded, but to make us humble that we can partake of His work until He returns.

11. How would you describe a successful church? What is the mission of the church?

The one that will make it to heaven. Christ loves His Church and calls her His bride; however, she must remain faithful until the end. Revelation 2-3 gives a vivid picture of

Christ's admonition to the local bodies of believers in various locations. Of these references, two churches stand out which are the church in Philadelphia and the church in Smyrna. Christ admonishes these two churches to continue to remain in faithfulness. The other churches (Laodicea, Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis) receive various warnings to repent from their sin and error. Nonetheless, Christ exhorts them to remain faithful to God until the end. I believe that a successful church is one that seeks to meet the commendation of Christ by obeying His word faithfully, remaining steadfast in Him, preaching the Gospel, making disciples and waiting faithfully on the LORD until the end.

12. How do you believe the church should be governed?

By the congregation of believers in that local body. I never really considered this question until more recently. From a Biblical perspective, I do believe Congregationalism to be the prescribed Scriptural methodology for church governance. The body of believers can select elders who might make specific decisions on behalf of the congregation, however, the governance of the church under Christ is prudent when the congregation partakes of its governance collectively.

13. What are you beliefs in relation to the regulative principle?

My belief about the regulatory principle is based on Scripture's admonishment on how worship gatherings among believers may proceed. Paul writes extensively about the Spiritual Gifts and their application in a worship setting (1 Cor 12–14) and exhorts believers to apply them. Hence, what is pleasing to God is to be practiced in an orderly fashion within the context of the Church.

Character:

14. There are many who profess to know Christ who are mistaken. What evidences do you have that you have been given new life by God?

I am at peace with Christ. I know that He lives and that He called me and knows me. I've been a believer since I was a young boy, and more recently, the conviction to mortify sin has only grown stronger. I believe that Christ is sanctifying me as He exposes my sin to me frequently. The pride that lies in wait to sneak into my heart is a real and present danger, but Christ has been victorious in reminding and restoring me to consider Him and His work. I did not save myself; He saved me.

The trials of life, and the cares of this world have thrown distractions my way. Admittedly, I have at times latched on to some of these distractions or gotten lost in worry and concern, but somehow Christ draws me back to Him. Jude's doxology comes to mind as I reflect upon the testimony of Christ preserving me through trials. It says, "To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen (Jude 24-25)."

15. Closely examine each of the Bible's qualifications for pastors (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Which are your strongest qualities? With which requirements do you have the most trouble? Why do you believe these areas of difficulty do not presently disqualify you from ministering? (Note the phrase "must be" in 1 Tim. 3:2.)

When considering the "Must be" requirements in 1 Tim. 3:2 as well as the requirements highlighted in Titus 1:5-9, I find that by the grace of GOD:

- I am faithful to my wife of almost 13 years.
- I don't drink anymore for health reasons and when I did, I never sought to be drunk as Ephesians 5:18 sternly warned against this.
- I prefer peace in any situation (Romans 12:18), even when confrontation is necessary the command to pursue peace is paramount.
- I find I am not easily motivated by money. I prefer a profession that GOD has called me to. They joy one experiences when fulfilling God's calling is worth more than gold.
- We practice personal and Spiritual disciplines at home and expect our children to exercise discipline in their personal lives and affairs.

Regarding the requirements set out in 1 Peter 5:1–4, I wanted the LORD to prove my heart so that I would desire the call to be an elder and not feel obligated to do so. Thankfully, some wise men encouraged me to pray and be certain that God was calling me rather than feeling obliged to pursue the role.

The requirement I have had the most challenge with is understanding what it means for one to desire to be an elder. I have always desired to serve God's people in the context of the church; however, I think my lack of knowledge of the role of an elder and church governance kept me in the dark. While examining and trying to figure out why I have had mixed thoughts about pursuing service in this capacity, I never considered that a person can be sought out and encouraged to pursue service in the role of an elder.

I was mistaken to think that I wouldn't depend on Christ to help me as sin can sometimes get in the way of one thinking that Christ's work is independent of Him. I was guilty of this. My thinking needs to be that I depend on Christ in all things. I have never experienced the responsibility of the role of an elder even though I have been mentored by great pastors, and assisted in some of the responsibilities, such as leading the congregation in worship, prayerfully selecting the songs, preaching and teaching in the church when called upon.

In the one year serving at Meridian, I have been praying and seeking the LORD, and so far, He has granted me more clarity about what the Biblically mandated qualifications are and the responsibilities are. I'm thankful to God for the wise people He has surrounded me with over the years who have encouraged me to pursue the role of an elder.

16. What are your specific and regular practices regarding the spiritual disciplines (e.g., personal prayer, Bible study, meditation, stewardship, learning, etc.)?

The specific spiritual disciplines I practice regularly are prayer, meditation, worship, stewardship, learning, fasting, and Scripture memorization. This year in my learning, I took a Spiritual disciplines course that exposed my deficiency in Bible study. My misconception was that reading the scripture was the same as Bible study. There's a distinction. So far, I have been convicted by the Holy Spirit to return to setting out time to study the word. Thankfully, the discipline of learning is retraining me to prioritize Bible study distinct from scripture reading and scripture memorization. By God's grace, I pray daily when I wake up and twice in the evenings, once when we gather the children for evening prayers and after the kids are asleep. Lydia, and I set out a specific time to pray every evening. I'm seeking to implement a sustainable Bible study time into my schedule. As for fasting, I quite enjoy it. I fast almost daily and pray to the LORD for guidance in all matters of life.

A few times a month, I get an opportunity to hide away in solitude to pray and meditate on the scriptures. I usually meditate on Psalms or other passages of Scripture I have memorized. Journaling is also a part of the personal spiritual disciplines I practice. Sometimes when meditating I find it helpful to journal prayer points and testimonies of answered prayers. I seek to journal much more than I do now. I still seek growth in these areas, I know I can be a lot more disciplined in ensuring I pray frequently during my fasts and most importantly, that all the disciplines I practice be Biblically focused and aim to please CHRIST and not to glorify myself.

17. How do you disciple your family?

I disciple my family through daily Prayers, weekly worship and evangelism. Our children and I pray daily before bed. We incorporate worship, singing Scripture-derived verses. Once a week, we have a worship night at home where we sing the songs which have been picked out for Sunday service.

As for their learning, the kids have a Bible writing section for their schoolwork where they write out the scriptures daily. Since Lydia and I have recently started evangelizing and sharing the gospel with the kids, they are encouraged to write less verses and read them. We seek to implement follow up in their evangelism for our older kids who have expressed interest to follow Christ and become believers.

18. Are there any sins you have or are currently practicing that you feel would exclude you from serving the church in this capacity?

No.

Calling:

19. Why do you believe God is calling you to serve as an elder of Meridian Church?

Over the past year, I have been praying that the LORD would bring an elder in worship to Meridian and knowing the congregation's need, I believe God has ordered my steps back here to serve as an elder in song of Meridian Church. Having served in a limited capacity so far, I believe the LORD has provided more clarity for me on exactly how to serve the congregation here.

20. Why do you want to serve in this capacity?

I believe that God has given me a genuine love for His people in the Church. I want to serve HIM and his people in whatever way He calls me to serve and in whatever capacity He equips me to serve in. I just want to do what God wants me to do.

21. How does your wife feel about your commitment?

Lydia is 100% on board. When we first considered this opportunity, Lydia and I wrestled with the logistics due to the distance, getting the family prepared and how we would embrace the new changes to our routine. Over the last year, we've been praying and have a shared sense of clarity that God would allow us serve at Meridian Church, and I have her full support.

22. In what ways do you think God has gifted you to serve the Church?

I believe God has gifted me in the areas of teaching, leading in song and working with members to foster a music ministry. I'm also adept with technology as churches today depend on technology significantly. God providentially placed me in a position to teach young people in my church before I took on the profession of teaching. This allowed me to learn to lean on Christ and grow in His word to be effective in teaching and exhorting the brethren (2 Tim. 2:15). As for organizing, I enjoy taking care of and executing events and seeing them through to completion. Church events benefit from being appropriate to the context (conference, Bible study, community groups etc.) and I do enjoy working to see that these events have what is needed to make them successful.

23. Would you view coming to Meridian Church as coming to a launching pad or a landing pad? Are you looking for a church to grow in, with a desire to ultimately serve somewhere else, or, are you looking for a church to settle into and serve long term?

I don't know what the future holds. However, I see Meridian as a calling to serve the LORD and His people, fellow believers, brothers and sisters in Christ. Do I see Meridian Church as a launching pad? No. I only desire to be faithful to Christ in my service and grow wherever He has me. I would love to settle in Meridian long term should the LORD permit. I have been a member of my current Church for about a decade and were it not for God's call and providence to serve in Meridian, I would still be there.

Competency:

24. In what ways do you think God has gifted you to serve as an elder?

I'm still not certain about all the gifts to serve as an elder, however, as I have served in the Church, there are certain competencies Christ has granted me, and I have been fortunate to receive training in. They include:

- Teaching—I believe God has granted me the grace to teach various demographics in my profession and in the Church.
- Leading in Song–I have been fortunate to serve with elders who value a biblically based and Christ-centered approach to leading the congregation in song. Ephesians 5:18–20 has been beneficial in gaining a biblically centered approach towards this area.
- Preaching–This one is still a work in progress, but at Christ's Fellowship Church, I've had the opportunity to go through training in preaching and got the opportunity to preach once.

25. How are you currently serving your local church? How have you served church in the past?How have you served churches in leading worship in song?

I have been serving my local Church in the Worship Ministry since I became a member in 2015. I helped lead worship in song and have since played alongside our elder in Song, Philip Tallman. While at Cameron Baptist Church, I served in the youth ministry as the intern as well as a musician working with the worship ministry with the

youth and also the main church. I also helped with the video capture and technology needs within these ministries.

I have been blessed to serve in the music ministry at Redeemer Church and then subsequently, Christ's Fellowship. I also have served in leading worship in song at other churches as well (Meridian, FBC Snyder, Letitia, and Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Elgin).

26. What musical styles do you prefer?

In the context of worship: Hymns and contemporary Christian songs which are appropriate to teach theology and have a melody that can be sung by the congregation are my preference. I prefer instruments to be played at a minimal cadence as there is a lot of value in the congregation singing. My preference in musical styles in personal context is quite diverse, but it depends on each individual song. School of Worship has an album that could be considered a "rock" album; however, the songs therein are some of my favorites. I like some jazz productions as well as funk, rap music etc. It all depends on the song, the rhythm, musicality and perhaps other factors I can't pinpoint until I listen to the music.

27. As worship leader, what would you consider your role to be?

- Shepherd the congregation in learning theologically rich songs of praise and worship.
- Assist the elders in structuring the worship service.
- Teaching God's word in the Church within different contexts.
- Serve in whichever way the church requires me to.

28. In this role, who besides God would you understand yourself as being accountable to?

I will be accountable to the body of believers at Meridian and the elders. Regardless of the role, church membership from a Baptist understanding requires that every church member submit their lives to the church in matters of faith and lifestyle. 2 Cor. 13:5 asks us to, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" On top of this, Paul distinctly handles how the church ought to carry out discipline in passages such as 1 Cor. 5 in order for the church to maintain a blameless standing before the LORD.

29. Who should direct the worship of the church? Why? Which methods of leading corporate worship are appropriate? Which are inappropriate?

The Elders should direct the worship of the church. The worship in the church is not relegated to "Sunday's songs", rather it is the culmination of the congregation's gathering before the LORD to meet with God, pray corporately, sing praises, Psalms and spiritual songs and hear the word preached and read. This requires the elders and members of the church working together to glorify Christ in the gathering of believers.

30. As worship leader, what would you consider your role to be?

I would consider my role to be serving the LORD in shepherding His people. This will be primarily in song and in the Scriptures during the worship gatherings. It will take the

form of teaching members of the church and informing our theology in the Scriptures and in song. I do believe that it would be amazing to teach and preaching the word when necessary. Serving the body and the members in spiritual matters such as prayer, doctrine and discipleship. Encouraging fellowship within the church for the growth of believers.

31. Who are some of your favorite artists (please include all musical tastes)?

- Matt Boswell – Contemporary Christian
- Matt Papa – Contemporary Christian
- Ron Kenoly – Contemporary Christian
- Paul Wilbur – Messianic Music
- Sovereign Grace – Hymns, Contemporary Music

32. What are some of your favorite worship songs/hymns?

This is far from an exhaustive list.

1. What Child Is This
2. None are Righteous
3. And Can It Be
4. Blessed Assurance
5. Christus Victor
6. Behold Our God
7. He Will Hold Me fast
8. Christ The True and Better
9. All Things

Meridian Church

Frank Kresse Apprentice Questionnaire

This questionnaire will serve the church to evaluate you in four crucial areas: creed, character, calling, and competency. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

Creed:

33. What is your position on the inerrancy, inspiration, and sufficiency of Scripture?

The Scriptures, as we received them in their original manuscripts, are without error because they are the words directly given by God through the apostles and prophets whom He inspired and then expired His words through. They have been preserved faithfully and any perceived errors are either transmission errors (which are very few and far between) or, more likely, issues with the reader. The Scriptures are the sole rule of faith; per 2 Tim. 3:17, they are the only fully sufficient thing to make a person godly.

34. What is the gospel?

God saves people despite themselves. Colossians says that Jesus accomplished all of the work required to make His people, who were hostile towards Him, above reproach by His standard, and the only thing He demands of them is the faith which He provides.

35. What is justification?

The end of Isaiah 53:11 says that God's “righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” and, I believe rightly, the ESV translates “justify” as “make many to be accounted righteous.” Romans 5:19 says that through Jesus’ “obedience the many will be made righteous.”

36. What is sanctification?

Sanctification is the necessary step following faith-filled belief and repentance; it is a lifelong process where the believer is increasingly conformed to the image of His Son until the believer is glorified in God’s presence. There is the possibility of someone being a Christian without bearing fruit for a time, but the Bible would have believers refer to them as illegitimate children for a time, or give them over to Satan, until they learn to repent of their sins.

37. What does the Bible mean in speaking of predestination and election?

Ephesians 1 is about as clear as it gets and Romans 8 doesn’t leave much wiggle room either. God determined before creation to reveal His grace and mercy by saving a particular people for His own purposes. If we’re tempted to think it’s just a Pauline doctrine, Jesus also prayed specifically for the people whom God gave Him.

38. What does the Bible teach about the perseverance and preservation of believers?

He who begin a good work in you is faithful and will bring it to completion. God, the author of our faith, is also its perfecter. Believers are also commanded to participate with God and Paul said at the end of his life that he had persevered.

39. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin? What is the significance of your belief?

He had to be born of God (the Spirit hovered over the womb creating life) and not of man because He couldn't inherit Adam's condemnation… but it didn't have to be a virgin for that to happen. God could've chosen to birth Him immaculately from a woman who had previously birthed children. Women aren't inherently sinless until they sexually come into contact with a man. But this is good news because the same God who could've creatively hovered over a womb which was previously occupied by a sinful person to create Jesus' untainted body, yet didn't, can and does now create new life where sin previously inhabited. Jesus had to be born of a young maiden (rightly interpreted as virgin) per the Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 7) and the types/shadows of the faithful yet barren women of old (Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah). The chief reason is that if Jesus wasn't born of a virgin, then the Scriptures are errant. Matthew interpreted the Old Testament prophecy that the maiden is a virgin and Luke did the same. Paul and John both use the same word to describe virgins, and Jesus said Scripture cannot be broken.

This is also a great thing to discuss with Roman Catholics: in Mk. 3:33–35, Jesus bases His entire argument for the familial bond He shares with believers on how it is more important than His relationship with His blood family including his blood brothers. I hold to the doctrine e*xtra ecclesiam nihil aeque falsum* (outside the church there is no salvation).

40. What is your interpretation of the biblical teaching on Hell?

The eternal, conscience torment inflicted on the unrighteous in Hell is a terrible doctrine. The most awful thing about it is how well founded in Scripture it is. Jesus seems to have thought that the eternality of death in Hell is the same as the eternality that believers share with Him. Matthew 25:46 is the most clear. Some think the fire is eternal, but the death is temporary. I reject that because the offense is against God, and the sin deserves eternal punishment just like the obedience Jesus displayed was worthy of everlasting life with the Father. Some argue that it's not conscious torment, but gnashing of teeth implies that they're conscious.

41. What is your view concerning baptism?

Baptism is one of the three ORDINANCES Jesus gave to the church (alongside communion and church discipline). The outward sign is symbolic of the internal washing that the Lord has already done. It is not necessary for salvation, although the saved, in faith, are commanded to be baptized. It is sin for them to disobey that command. Salvation is also not withheld from a believer until they perform the act.

42. What are your beliefs concerning spiritual gifts?

I believe the sign gifts have ceased for 2 reasons:

1. They are supposed to be obviously from God and I'm not familiar of any recent ones. Ironically, the ones performing the modern day "signs" accuse others of blaspheming the Holy Spirit when their own actions seem to be evidence of blaspheming Him.

2. Signs are given when covenant words are given and that closed with the close of the canon and death of the Apostles.

There are other gifts that believers have, each having been embodied by the Holy Spirit, which, like the sign gifts were, are "the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

3. How would you describe a successful church? What is the mission of the church?

A successful church is faithful to follow Jesus' command to make disciples. It sings psalms, psalms, and spiritual psalms while it dedicates itself to the apostle's teaching as well as loving the other brothers guided by the texts in the Bible telling them how to (one another). It is also not marked by the besetting sins that mark the churches in Revelation.

Character:

4. There are many who profess to know Christ who are mistaken. What evidences do you have that you have been given new life by God?

When I sin, God is faithful to convict my conscience and lead me to repent.

5. Closely examine each of the Bible's qualifications for pastors and deacons (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Which are you strongest qualities? With which requirements do you have the most trouble? Why do you believe these areas of difficulty do not presently disqualify you from ministering? (Note the phrase "must be" in 1 Tim. 3:2.)

Strongest qualities:

- able to teach
- hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught
- not a drunkard
- not a recent convert
- not quick-tempered
- not violent but gentle
- not quarrelsome
- sober-minded
- a lover of good
- disciplined
- hospitable
- not under compulsion
- willingly
- not for shameful gain
- not greedy for gain
- eagerly

Most trouble and why are they not disqualifying?

- above reproach
- respectable
- well thought of by outsiders
- upright

- holy
- disciplined
- of good repute
- examples to the flock
- not be arrogant
- full of the Spirit
- full of wisdom

I desperately hope that Daniel is not the standard for the character of Christian pastor. If so, I happily withdraw my candidacy. These traits are increasing, but I would never claim to have attained them (nor do I claim the ones in the "strongest" category). I'm not sure where to draw that line, so I'll defer completely to the local body's collective wisdom.

- husband of one wife
- self-controlled

From 6th grade (when I believe I made a false profession of faith) until my last semester of college (when God revealed Jesus to me in His Word), I was enslaved to lustful passions. Not only did it play itself out in near daily use of pornography, but it was the entire way I viewed people. Pornography discipled me and it marred my concept of what gave people worth. I'd love to say that since becoming a believer God miraculously took that sin and the consequences from me, but He did not. Instead it has been an incredible fight which I believe He has delivered me from participating in that heinous sin. I hope and trust that God will preserve me, but I also know like Voddie Baucham said, "the wisest man in the Bible fell into sexual sin, the strongest man in the Bible fell into sexual sin, and the godliest man in the Bible fell into sexual sin. For me to think I'm above falling into this sin is to think that I'm wiser than Solomon, stronger than Samson, and godlier than King David." I covet your prayers, especially on this topic.

- manage his own household well
- with all dignity keeping his children submissive
- children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination

I desperately hope the cleanliness of the Kings and Presgroves houses are not the standard for a well managed house of Christian pastor. If so, I happily withdraw my candidacy. The thrust of the text is, to use Old Testament reference, how is the man with his wife and children when he is in the gate?"

His children will bear witness to how the man is in the gate of his house by the way the children behave in public. While my children aren't the best behaved (I walked in last year to Frankie attempting to triangle choke Jackson in the nursery), they are increasingly becoming controlled and respectable individuals (for anyone wondering, Frankie didn't understand that jiu jitsu is for the mats and he and Jackson rolled together that week. Ryan and I each disciplined them for their lack of wisdom and helped with their form). The each need the Spirit to grant them Godly self control, but, from my perspective, they each have evidence of being restrained and they are growing in obedience. I hope that one day God will grant them peace with Himself and therefore be pleased with their faith-filled obedience.

The word translated "believers" is often translated as "trustworthy" (in the Gospels talking about the servants). It's often used to refer to God, where believer doesn't quite make sense and trustworthy emphatically does.

Eph. 1:1, 6:21, Col. 1:7, 4:7, 9 - "beloved brother and faithful"

It could include Christian or not. It seems to parallel Christian with faithful service, so maybe those mentioned are both exemplary and Christian.

1Tim. 4:3 - God has made every good thing for those who are trustworthy or His children?

Answer: why not both? He's likely using the double stating of “truthful” to draw from the reader “who are the true ones?” Then they logically deduce believers from that logic, but not necessarily from the word itself. Paul is doing an art with words.

1Tim. 6:2 is probably the best text to argue that Paul does mean children ought to be Christians since he says “believing [or trustworthy] masters… are brothers” with their believing slaves.

2Tim. 2:2 is another fun proof text. Why would God simply demand that the men be trustworthy but not be believers?

Answer: the men cannot be faithful preacher's without being believers as well. Trustworthy men has "believing" built in because there are no men who can be trusted with God's word who are not.

2 Cor. 6:15 also contrasts believing and unbelieving spouses as unequally yoked.

Gal. 3:9 Abraham is the man of faith. Believer makes more sense here over trustworthy given the context. Similar to the possible interpretation of 2 Ti. 2:2, it’s possible that the text is saying only believers are capable of being trustworthy. That doesn’t seem to be the best interpretation.

For clarity, I’m not arguing that a man will manage his household so well that his children come to the faith. The Wind blows where it wills. We don’t want converts who are becoming believers based on how well the elders can manage them, we need the Holy Spirit to miraculously make them new creations. Besides that it’s the churches collective job to make disciples and pastors aren’t to convert the sheep, they’re to disciple them. There is an evangelical duty of the pastor, but it’s not dependent on his skill.

Some make the argument that this is the only criteria that has some external sign rather than being related to the internal character of the man. The Christian wife would be a similar external sign, but so are all the character requirements. All of those qualities are God bearing testimony externally that this man is qualified to shepherd the flock.

I’ve heard it argued that if an elder’s child recants the faith or they have a child, he would then have to stop being an elder. Just because it seems impractical, doesn't mean that's not the correct interpretation.

I’m resting on one of my key hermeneutical principles: if there’s room for differences in interpretation, I’m going to defer to men and women of God whom I trust including the corporate testimony of the church throughout the ages. This applies to 1Ti 6:2, 2Co 6:15, and Gal 3:9.

6. What are your specific and regular practices regarding the spiritual disciplines (e.g., personal prayer, Bible study, meditation, stewardship, learning, etc.)?

Bible intake through daily reading with accountability, Charis and I pray together nightly, weekly corporate worship, evangelism mostly with my family, and learning (books for Theobros or church courses), participating in the best small group.

7. How do you disciple your family?

Psalms, psalms and spiritual psalms on the TV, regular corporate worship, we pray together, we're very slowly reading through Chronicles, Charis and I are going through the Bible together, and we're homeschooling the kids. I'll confess, that last one is mostly Charis' effort. We've focused on memorizing in the past, but that has fallen off recently.

When disciplining them, I clarify why their sin is an issue. The person they've sinned against is made in God's image and so are they. Of the kids, we have them so the "5 things:" repent before God, make sure they're okay, say you're sorry, see if there's acting you can do to make it right, and ask them to forgive you.

8. Are there any sins you have or are currently practicing that you feel would exclude you from serving the church in this capacity?

By God's grace, none. I covet your prayers that it persists.

Calling:

9. Do you believe God is calling you to be an elder? Why?

I believe God is calling every man to the godliness that is required to be an elder and I will believe that He had called me to be an elder if the church sees fit to appoint me as one.

10. Why do you want to serve in this capacity?

I love serving the body by teaching, I believe God is equipping me with the qualifications that permit a man to serve the Lord in that way, I think any capable man ought to serve in this capacity, I'd love to help plant a church one day, and, obviously, I'd love the fat check that comes with being an elder.

11. How does your wife feel about your desire to serve as an elder?

She's been considering the qualifications along side me. She's expressed hesitations when we've talked about it in the past, but most of her hesitations were regarding who the church is. There have been things in the past which would've disqualified me at the time, but those are no longer present.

Competency:

12. In what ways do you think God has gifted you to serve as an elder?

Others have said they've been blessed by my teaching from the Scriptures, my boldness when giving council, and I have a desire to serve the body in this manner.

13. In what ways have you served churches in the past? In what ways are you serving now?

Leading a small group, director of Double Honor Productions, taught a couple of courses. I was a deacon in charge of ORDINANCES at Gatlin, taught some, and served on the AV team. Also taught youth and a small group at FBC as well as posted a list of five grievances I believe the Lord has against the church. I was also on a research committee at FBC where we helped plan the sermons. Jared and I also taught in an underground seminary in China.