

# Dallas church brings new meaning to hybrid worship

October 14, 2024

As a bivocational pastor, Tedrick Woods demonstrates versatility in service. But his church's hybrid worship model takes that versatility to a different level.

Three out of four Sundays each month, Woods preaches to the church he pastors in Dallas, from 200 miles away in Austin. On the first Sunday of every month, Wood comes to Dallas, and the congregation meets together in person.



Woods with his family.  
(Courtesy Photo)

Woods serves as senior pastor to Living Word Fellowship Church in Dallas.

The church was founded in 2015, in Hurst, at the suggestion of Larry Sanders, senior pastor of Keller Springs Baptist Church in Carrollton, where Woods served on staff as an associate pastor.

Woods prayed and considered the suggestion. Then, he decided to pursue it by beginning the process of requesting church planting assistance through Dallas Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he said.

He received their approvals, with the Exciting Singing Hills Baptist Church in Dallas designated as the sponsoring church.

Woods noted the senior pastor of Singing Hills, Howard Anderson, was well known to him since childhood. He recalled growing up where Anderson “lived just two houses down from me in the community of Singing Hills, in Dallas.”

Within 18 months, the new church plant had grown from its five founding members to about 30 people. Things were going well, Woods said.

Then “church life happened.” The building where Living Word Fellowship was meeting, graciously provided by the late Pastor R.L. Rogers of Fort Worth, was listed for sale.

“The church thought it was not a wise purchase because we were still young. So, we moved to Dallas,” where the late Billy Bell of Dallas Baptist Association had offered the use of his church’s fellowship hall.

However, that meant the loss of several church members who lived too far away from Dallas for the move to make sense when other congregations were available nearer to their homes. After the relocation, the congregation numbered about 23 members, Woods explained.

Membership remained consistent from the 2018 move to the new Dallas location until 2020, when a new obstacle came along.

The bivocational minister had an opportunity to work for the state in Austin, and he took it, not knowing what was about to hit the country in March of that year.

## **Pandemic pivot**

When COVID struck, like most churches during that time, Living Word transitioned to online meetings. They met by Zoom exclusively from March through July of 2020.

“Then, by faith, we started meeting in person on the first Sunday of each month, keep in mind that my family are now residing in Central Texas,” Woods note. “The members of the church wanted to stay together.”

The congregation decided this hybrid model wasn’t just a workable model for church during a pandemic, but it was how they wanted to continue to relate as a body of believers in the unique position of having a pastor who lives 200 miles away, Woods explained.

Woods pointed out “hybrid” church is the new norm for many congregations post-COVID, with numerous congregations offering live-streaming of in-person services.

“However, for us, Living Word Fellowship Church, we are truly a hybrid church in a unique way,” he said. “We do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as Hebrews 10:25 states. ... We meet every first Sunday in person to worship.”

And when they meet in-person every first Sunday, they use social media to go live.



Tedrick Woods serves as pastor, CLC chair and as a state employee. (Courtesy Photo)

However, on the other Sundays, they hold worship services strictly by Zoom.

Woods explained they embrace this model “because of our location and the level of engagement and support from our members. This requires loyalty and faithfulness from members, and it’s not for the faint of heart.

“We don’t simply record services and play them back” Woods noted. “We are actually a full-fledged online ministry.”

Woods said in order for this model to work, members agree to be fully focused on the worship or Bible study for the times they are on Zoom. And to respect members’ time commitments, he keeps the sessions within the allotted time.

“This model allows us to share the worship experience within one hour with our members. We also have prayer and Bible study every Tuesday for 30 minutes,” he said, noting the Bible study is a six-week emphasis with two weeks off in between each module. And guests join the congregation, either

in-person or by Zoom, at least three times a month, Woods noted.

On remote worship Sundays, Woods usually delivers his Zoom message from the basement fellowship hall of the historic Sweet Home Baptist Church in Austin.

After Living Word Fellowship's service, from 10 to 11 a.m., Woods heads upstairs to assist Pastor Steve Manning with Sweet Home's service.

Typically, Manning asks Woods to preach at least once a month. "It's a sweet ministry partnership," Woods said and recommended everyone visit this traditional Black, yet multicultural, Baptist church located in the historic Clarksville neighborhood of Austin.

## **Hybrid model challenges**

Woods acknowledged the hybrid model can be challenging.

"Creating a genuinely hybrid service means prayer, preparation, and purposefully engaging with the members." Woods said to do this effectively, requires contemplating the members' lives to identify ways to serve their spiritual needs and creating a seamless church experience.

Engagement is not limited to Zoom, as members also connect by text message at least twice a week "with words of comfort, short prayers and announcements.

"For us, online works because we build in workable alerts, a schedule of teaching, and accessible resources." Church members prepare for the Bible study beforehand, so they are ready for the brief discussion time.

Additionally, Woods sometimes receives requests for speaking engagements, which his congregation supports, often by attending or offering their prayers. These preaching engagements offer another

opportunity for in-person worship for the church.

Living Word Fellowship describes itself as “mission-led” instead of “location-based,” which allows its leaders to think creatively and explore outlets for accomplishing the mission of bringing the lost to Christ.

The church seeks to demonstrate that “resurrection is a lifestyle, and whatever is dead in our lives, God can bring it back to life, if it needs to be,” Woods said.

Living Word’s hybrid model aims to overcome geographical limitations, accommodate diverse needs and preferences—including those with mobility issues or health concerns—and reach a wider audience.

However, hybrid services require careful planning and technological investment to ensure a seamless and engaging experience for both in-person and online participants.

“By leveraging technology and adapting to changing societal trends, our model aims to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for faith exploration and spiritual growth,” Woods concluded.

*Living Word Fellowship Church currently meets in Dallas on first Sundays at the New Creation Bible Church. The church mailing address is P.O. Box 530922, Grand Prairie, TX 75053. Woods can be reached by email at [tedrickwoods@yahoo.com](mailto:tedrickwoods@yahoo.com).*