

Lives changed and community restored in Nederland

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NEDERLAND—A gospel-centered community group meeting in a house became a thriving and growing church reaching the lost and the broken in Nederland.

[Cornerstone Church](#) began when Ryan and Arin Thompson felt burdened for their friends, family and neighbors who were lost and in need of the gospel in their community.

“We set out with this vision given to us by the Lord to start a church and partner with other great local churches in our city to seek and to save the lost, to make disciple-making disciples and to see our community transformed by the power of the gospel,” said Thompson, pastor of Cornerstone Church.



Bryan and Dedra Curtice are pictured with their daughters Madison, Bryna and Sophie. (Photo / Kirsten McKimmey)

Dedra Curtice first visited Cornerstone at the invitation of her oldest

daughter, Madison. On the first Sunday she attended, Thompson preached from the New Testament book of Acts about the early church and described what the body of Christ should look like.

“I remember the Lord saying, ‘This is where you are supposed to be seated,’” Curtice said.

She was raised in the church but was never disciplined or taught the importance of living out her faith, she recalled, saying, “There was no relationship or community.”

“I started attending Cornerstone with my family and began learning and digging into God’s word. The more I would hear and read about discipleship and coming together, I realized it was a big piece of the puzzle that was missing in my life,” she said.

A few months after Curtice joined Cornerstone, the pastor asked if she would be willing to disciple a young woman in the church. Curtice was excited about the opportunity to meet with Sally. They met weekly for prayer, Bible study and time to share their lives with each other.

Transformational mission experience

Last Spring, Curtice was offered the opportunity to go on a mission trip through Cornerstone to serve the Amazon region of Brazil alongside two other church members. The church sponsors an indigenous Brazilian missionary through Texas Baptists’ Missionary Adoption Program, and the trip would give them the opportunity to meet the missionary.

She began to pray for God to provide the funds to go, and before she knew it, she had what she needed. The Amazon trip was life-changing for Curtice as she learned evangelism strategies and spent a week ministering to the Brazilian people away from the modern comforts of home.

“I prayed and prayed from the time I knew God was opening the door to go that he would change me—that he would change my heart,” she said.

God began to reveal her dependence on earthly conveniences. She felt convicted by the words of Jesus, “Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.”

Over the summer, God continued to bring to mind her shopping and spending habits. She decided to limit her spending and commit money each month to sponsor another Missionary Adoption Program missionary in Brazil. Rather than spending money on items she did not need, Curtice wanted to send money to a ministry partner to make a difference in the lives of others along the Amazon.

Reflecting on how God has moved in her life over the last year, she said, “My life has completely changed since I started being obedient to the Lord.”

She has seen growth from intentional discipleship and commitment to studying and living out God’s word, to obediently serving in Brazil and now sponsoring another missionary to continue that work.

‘The Spirit of God at work among us’

Curtice is one of many whose lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel at Cornerstone Church. Thompson has witnessed several friends from junior high and high school grow in their relationship with the Lord and celebrated immensely when his own father gave his life to Christ.

The church launched on Easter Sunday in 2017 with 20 covenant members and now has more than 100 people engaged in community groups.

“We have seen people far from God give their lives to Jesus, baptized and be discipled,” Thompson said. “It’s been humbling and encouraging to see

the Spirit of God at work among us and the fruits of gospel ministry.”



Worshippers gather on Sunday morning at Cornerstone Church.
(Photo / Kirsten McKimmey)

Thompson described the church as passionate to equip and train disciple-makers to live on mission in their spheres of influence. Whether in their neighborhoods, the workplace or at the gym, members of the church are helping each other to see all of life as an opportunity to demonstrate and declare the good news of Jesus.

Thompson’s home congregation, First Baptist Church in Nederland, served as the sending church for Cornerstone. It was a special privilege to be sent out by those who he had served alongside for the majority of his life, Thompson said.

After months of meeting in their home, Thompson went through Texas Baptists’ Church Planting Center training in Houston and began the process of laying the groundwork for Cornerstone Church. The center provided a coach to meet with him monthly to discuss challenges and successes of planting a church and provide updates and reports to First Baptist in Nederland on the new church’s progress.

“Cornerstone Church is a family of believers in Jesus Christ that love God, love His Word and love each other,” stated Thompson. “Our hope is to be

used by God to bring about the obedience of faith in Christ in more and more people for the sake of his name among all nations.”

The Baptist General Convention of Texas operates Church Planting Centers in El Paso, Belton and Tarrant County. Through gifts to the Cooperative Program, Texas Baptists provides funds for church planters to receive valuable training and resources. To learn more about the Church Planting Centers, email paul.atkinson@texasbaptists.org or call (214) 828-5217.