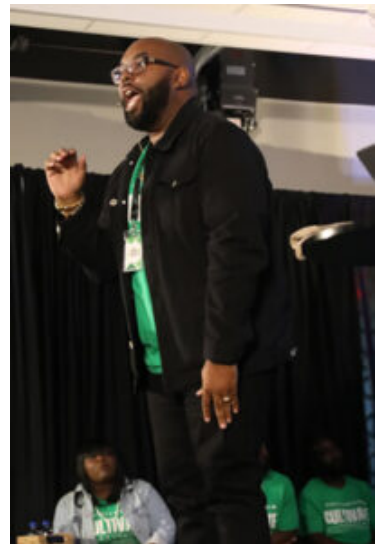


New church plant cultivates vision for missional community

January 3, 2025

THE COLONY—Since launching a new Texas Baptist church plant in September and holding worship services inside a state-of-the-art office and meeting space area, Jamael Graves, lead pastor of Cultivate Church in The Colony, realizes the mission field surrounding his congregation.



Since feeling called to establish Cultivate Church in The Colony, Pastor Jamael Graves notes how God’s hand was guiding and providing in preparation for the new church plant. (Courtesy Photo)

“When I realized that 40,000 people come to Grandscape and walk through

this destination each day, I realized that it's a mission field and thought about Matthew 9:38, 'Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field,'" Graves said. "We are believing God for the laborers."

The church plant is strategically placed inside Grandscape—a distinctive outdoor entertainment, dining and shopping destination that includes world-class restaurants, family-friendly experiences and technology-driven entertainment and events.

"We didn't choose Grandscape for our location. Grandscape chose us," Graves said. "We thought we'd be in the Galleria square and called to find out how we could host an interest meeting. That's when their leadership asked us if we'd be interested in using the Grandscape facility.

"We never thought we'd be able to afford it, but they took a drastic decrease off the rent to negotiate with us. That's a God-thing right there."

Since feeling called to establish Cultivate Church, Graves notes how God's hand was guiding and providing in preparation for the new church plant.

Word to the wise: 'Don't give up'

However, he acknowledges the journey of planting a church certainly hasn't been easy. Graves said if he could offer church planters a piece of advice, it would be: "Don't give up."

Throughout the church-planting process, Graves noted he often felt inadequate for the task at hand, and some situations seemed impossible. But that is when Graves said God showed up the most.

Graves said church planting has been on his heart for some time, but the timing hadn't been right—until now.

“Nine years ago, my mom died from HIV because of drug abuse. And the week that she died, I met my father and discovered the reason she never wanted him to be around me was because of his drug addiction,” Graves said.

“I was a school principal, and my dad that I had just met suffered a relapse and was back on drugs. Even though I was sensing that the Lord was calling me to start a church back then, I remember being filled with so many questions, doubts and uncertainties surrounding my life.

“I remember asking the Lord: ‘How am I supposed to lead? Why do you want me to do this?’ I’m coming from a dysfunctional family, and I felt disqualified to plant a church. I felt like I was going through a midlife crisis. So, I needed some time away from the idea of planting a church.”

God gave a new vision

Over the past year, Graves sensed God was stirring in his heart and giving him a new vision.

“I was at a conference and texted my wife that I felt called to plant a church,” Graves recalled. “I didn’t hear anything back from her. So, I assumed she thought I was crazy.”

Later, he discovered the Lord had already been working on his wife’s heart and preparing her for this moment.

“My wife said: ‘God already told me that he called you to this, but I knew you were too hard-headed. So, I didn’t say anything to you. I was just waiting for you to realize when the time was right.’”



Cultivate Church in The Colony meets inside Grandscape—a distinctive outdoor entertainment, dining and shopping destination that includes world-class restaurants, family-friendly experiences and technology-driven entertainment and events. (Courtesy Photo)

Last February, Graves took a giant leap of faith as he quit his job and started putting the plans into motion to launch the church.

By sharing his testimony and life experiences, Graves hopes it will help connect with people from all walks of life and remind those who are hurting about God’s redemption story.

“I’ve learned to trust God and trust the process,” Graves said. “This is God’s plan, not ours. You know it’s from God when it seems impossible. That’s when it shows his power and his plans that are not our own.”

The church takes the inspiration for its name from 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, where the Apostle Paul wrote: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be

rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."

"We want to see hearts turn back to God," Graves said. "Through the storms and pain of life, God has been faithful every step of the way. There have been so many hard times, but without a doubt, I know this is what God has called me to do."

"We are believing God for the laborers."