

Heritage Covenant Church

Church Planting Through Discipleship Strategy

A Covenantal, Church-Centered Approach to Formation and Multiplication

Our strategy for church planting is rooted in the conviction that Christ builds His church through the ordinary means of grace—Word, Sacraments, and prayer—and that lasting churches are formed not through rapid launch models, but through the patient cultivation of mature disciples within the life of the covenant community.

For this reason, we are committed to a discipleship-driven model of church planting in which formation precedes expansion, and where future leaders and potential church plants emerge organically from tested faithfulness rather than being externally constructed or programmatically engineered.

Phase 1: Gathering the Interested

We begin by identifying and gathering individuals and families who express interest in the vision, doctrine, and life of the church. This phase is relational and

invitational, focusing on conversations, hospitality, and informal connections.

The goal is not immediate commitment, but clarity—helping individuals understand the theological convictions, philosophy of ministry, and long-term vision of the church.

Phase 2: Forming the Core Team

From this group, a core team is formed consisting of those who demonstrate alignment in doctrine, commitment to the life of the church, and a desire to grow in discipleship.

This core team serves as the foundational community of the church plant. During this phase, we focus on:

- Clarifying vision, doctrine, and values
- Establishing relational unity and trust
- Introducing the structure and purpose of the Heritage Way Discipleship Program
- Identifying initial areas of service and responsibility

The emphasis is not on immediate deployment, but on shared understanding, covenantal commitment, and spiritual formation.

Phase 3: Summer Launch – Heritage Way with Core Team

During the summer, we begin the Heritage Way Discipleship Program with the core team and committed families.

This phase is intentionally focused and foundational:

- Establishing shared theological depth
- Building relational cohesion and trust
- Forming habits of Word, prayer, and life together
- Creating a unified culture of discipleship

Participation during this phase is expected to be more committed, as this group will serve as the spiritual and relational foundation of the future church.

This is not yet a public-facing launch, but a season of laying foundations—doctrinally, relationally, and spiritually.

Phase 4: Establishing The Gathering (Weekly Rhythm)

As the core group is formed, we establish a consistent weekly gathering: The Gathering.

This gathering serves as the primary rhythm of church life in the early stages and will continue as a central discipleship environment even after the church is more fully established. It is the place where we intentionally gather and grow together as a church.

The Gathering is designed to be:

- Intergenerational and relational
- Rooted in shared meals, prayer, and singing
- Accessible to new individuals and families
- Formative, but not program-driven

Each week includes:

- A shared meal to cultivate fellowship and hospitality
- Singing and prayer as a gathered body

- Intentional engagement for youth and children
- A structured Heritage Way discipleship segment for adults

During the first four years, The Gathering serves as the primary context in which the Heritage Way is lived out together as a unified body.

Phase 5: Building Toward Lord's Day Worship

As the core team is strengthened and the group grows in both number and maturity, we move intentionally toward establishing a regular Sunday Lord's Day worship service.

This transition is not driven by timeline alone, but by readiness:

- Sufficient core group stability
- Demonstrated commitment to the means of grace
- Emerging leadership and service capacity
- Unity in doctrine and life

When established, the Lord's Day gathering becomes the central and primary gathering of the church, where:

- The Word is preached
- The sacraments are administered
- The congregation gathers for corporate worship

The Gathering does not replace the Lord's Day—it prepares for it and supports it.

Phase 6: Ongoing Discipleship – Maintaining The Gathering

Even after the establishment of Sunday worship, The Gathering continues as a weekly rhythm, typically midweek.

Its role is distinct but complementary:

- Lord's Day → primary means of grace, worship, and preaching
- The Gathering → discipleship, relationships, and formation

During the initial four-year cycle, The Gathering continues to function as the primary environment for shared discipleship through the Heritage Way.

Phase 7: Transition to Distributed Discipleship (Post-Four-Year Pathway)

Upon the completion of the initial four-year Heritage Way pathway, the goal is not to conclude the program, but to transition it from a centralized teaching environment into a distributed culture of disciple-making.

At this stage, Heritage Way moves from being primarily taught in a large-group setting to being actively carried forward through the life of the congregation.

This transition includes:

Entrusting Disciple-Makers

Those who have demonstrated maturity, humility, and tested faithfulness are, in due time, entrusted—under elder oversight—to begin discipling others using the same patterns of doctrine, devotion, and obedience they have received.

Multiplying Contexts of Discipleship

The Heritage Way is now lived out through:

- Small groups and table groups
- Households and family discipleship

- One-on-one or one-on-two relationships
- Informal, relational discipleship environments

Maintaining Doctrinal Unity and Oversight

While the context becomes distributed, the content and accountability remain church-centered:

- The same theological framework and materials are used
- Elders provide oversight and guard doctrinal integrity
- Leaders remain connected to the life and authority of the church

Continuing Leadership Development

Emerging leaders continue to be equipped and supported through:

- Ongoing coaching and shepherding
- Regular leadership gatherings or check-ins
- Opportunities to grow in responsibility over time

In this way, Heritage Way does not end—it multiplies. What began as a shared pathway becomes a shared culture of disciple-making, carried forward through the members of the church.

Phase 8: Reproducible Formation and Emerging Works

Following the completion of the initial four-year Heritage Way pathway, participants are not only encouraged to continue discipling others within the existing congregation, but, as the Lord provides opportunity and under the discernment and oversight of the church, to begin gathering others in new contexts.

These gatherings may take shape as small, covenantal communities centered on the same rhythms that formed them:

- Shared meals and hospitality
- Prayer and singing
- The study and application of Scripture
- The use of the Heritage Way pathway for intentional formation

In many cases, these groups will begin informally—through relationships, neighborhoods, or shared networks—and will function as environments of discipleship, fellowship, and gospel witness.

Over time, where there is demonstrated faithfulness, growing stability, and clear alignment in doctrine and life, such groups may be recognized, supported, and further developed as emerging works of ministry, with the potential to become future church plants.

This approach ensures that reproduction is not driven by strategy alone, but by:

- Proven character
- Established relationships
- Doctrinal unity
- Shared patterns of life and worship

In this way, the Heritage Way becomes not only a pathway of formation within a single congregation, but a reproducible framework through which new covenant communities may be formed—extending the life and witness of the church into surrounding areas through ordinary, faithful disciple-making.

Summary Statement

We plant churches by making disciples.

We gather people, form them through the ordinary means of grace, and walk together through a shared pathway of covenantal discipleship. As disciples are shaped in doctrine, devotion, and obedience, they are, in due time, entrusted to invest in others.

As the church is established, Lord's Day worship becomes central, while The Gathering continues as a vital rhythm where we gather and grow together in discipleship and community life.

Over time, what begins as a centralized pathway becomes a distributed culture of disciple-making, and, as the Lord provides, extends outward into new gatherings, emerging works, and future church plants.

In this way, the church is not built through programs or events, but through the steady, faithful formation of people—resulting in a multiplying community of disciples, leaders, and future churches, all for the glory of Christ and the good of His church