

Crestview, Florida, Church Plant Site Report

1. Introduction

Crestview, FL, is the county seat of Okaloosa County, located in the panhandle of FL. It is accessed by I-10 and US 90 (running east-west), by SR 85 (running north-south), by Bob Sikes AP, and by Okaloosa Regional AP located on Eglin AFB. A CSX railroad system main freight line also passes through Crestview. The Shoal River skirts the city on the east and south, and the Yellow River bounds it on the west. Other cities in the county are Ft. Walton Beach, Destin, Niceville, Valparaiso, Baker, and Laurel Hill. Recreational attractions include canoeing, hunting, fishing (fresh and salt water), white sandy beaches, and several state parks. Eglin AFB, Hurlburt Field, and Duke Field create a very strong military presence for both Crestview and the county. The four PCA churches in the county are members of the Gulf Coast Presbytery.

<http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&q=Crestview,+FL&jsv=107&ie=UTF8&ll=30.761604,-86.570892&spn=0.151344,0.319977&z=12&iwloc=addr>

2. Need

With recent military realignments and closures, Eglin, Hurlburt, and Duke Field will benefit from the changes and Crestview's population is projected to grow enormously with the influx of military and contractor personnel. Its character is changing from a southern rural lifestyle to a metropolitan with multicultural influences but still depends on the surrounding communities for a variety of shopping experiences and selections. The population has increased by 25% since 2000 and is expected to increase by 14% between 2008 and 2013. Race wise, projections show the Caucasians decreasing while the Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians increasing between 2008 and 2013. The prominent religious groups are Baptist (24%), Catholic (18%), Methodist (13%), and No Preference (14%). About 17% of the household are likely to contribute more than \$1000 a year. There is presently very little, if any, gospel-centered reformed witness to the community. The churches are broadly evangelical and largely oriented to the lifestyle of the older community. Crestview needs a strong gospel-centered and reformed presence that presents a Christian world view philosophy to the large unchurched population in the area. Some of our Crestview families have expressed a strong desire to see a church established in that city. We also have names of Crestview families that have visited our churches. Because of the nature of military communities, we would expect Crestview to become a combination of rather transient younger military families and more stable support personnel. Churches find themselves constantly discipling and sending "missionaries" throughout the world.

Current statistics for Crestview show household incomes averages \$57.5 K per year and the average age is 32.6 years old. Statistics for marital status is 63% married, 20% single, and 17% divorced/ widowed. About 76% of the homes are owned and 24% are rented. Education wise, 20% have not completed High School, 30% are High School graduates, 35% have some college training or an AA, 10% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 5% have a Graduate Degree. Okaloosa County has some of the highest rated High Schools in the state. There is a satellite campus of Okaloosa Walton College in Crestview. By occupational type, 53% hold white collar positions while 47% hold blue collar positions.

Living in Crestview, you can expect the summer to be hot and the winter mild. Allergies run high in the spring and fall. The northern part of the county gets more rain than the southern, and more thunderstorms/ tornadoes than hurricanes. Soil in the Crestview area is sand clay which supports gardening and provides for good drainage. Today, Crestview is a commuter town, has few main arteries, and it seems as if everyone owns a vehicle.

3. Project Description

The vision we have for a PCA church in Crestview is one that is gospel-centered and adheres to reformed standards, seeks to save local souls and grow them up in the knowledge and wisdom of God, supports national and world mission work, promotes a Christian worldview, fellowships with sister churches, and works to maintain peace and unity among the body of Christ. To this end, the congregations of Westminster Presbyterian (WPC), Ft. Walton Beach, and First Presbyterian (FPC), Niceville, seek to establish and support a PCA church plant in Crestview, FL. Our sister churches in Destin have also expressed an interest as well as our Gulf Coast Presbytery. Our churches are not large, but together we pledge to help support a church planter physically and monetarily for three, and possibly up to five, years in such an endeavor. The church planter would be expected to raise a significant portion of his salary and ministry needs from other sources.

The church planter and his wife must have completed the evaluation process of the PCA MNA Planting Assessment Center. We prefer a planter who has been recommended for church planting. The planter must embrace the vision of WPC and FPC and be willing to work to this end. Based on Crestview's economy, we project a salary of \$75,000 for a fully capable planter. In support, we proffer sustenance of \$25,000 per year and \$2,000 per year toward ministering allowances. Additional sustenance to cover housing, insurance, retirement, and transportation would have to be raised. The church plant would not be a daughter church as such, but we expect WPC and FPC to be guiding influences initially, and strong encouragers all along the way. We pledge ourselves to offer personal pastoral support to the planter, his wife, and family. Our churches will provide ministry oversight (Session, counsel, etc.) as needed or directed. In addition, we will cover moving and travel expenses to the Crestview area. We also pledge support in finding accommodations, assisting in networking, and acquiring ministering and worship aids and material.

We envision the church plant work in Crestview to begin by summer 2008 or as soon as possible thereafter. We would encourage that a family visit to our area, at our expense, be part of the interview process.

4. Conclusion

We believe the Holy Spirit is leading us (both churches and Presbytery) to plant a church in the Crestview area for the glory of God. We adhere to the Great Commission and see Crestview as part of our Judea. Crestview is the next land mass destined for growth in Okaloosa County because the southern part has reached its limits for rapid growth. Both industry and military have identified Crestview as appealing as well as several major corporations.

The opportunity to plant churches in other local areas, as they mushroomed, was missed. We don't want to forsake this opportunity. Hundreds of military personnel are expected to pass through Eglin AFB as it takes on the additional role of training. Demands for the Special Force skills of Hurlburt airmen continue to increase, meaning more manpower. The resort industry, alternate fuel production plants, and aircraft maintenance facilities have started buying land and planning for production. We believe the church planter could help WPC and FPC better learn how to understand and impact our communities while we offer the support needed in the planting of a new church. Also, we believe the church planter would develop a worship style that respects the churches past heritage while drawing from the wealth of contemporary God and Christ-centered material of today. People are coming and they need to know the presence of God in their lives.

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