



Fig Tree Christian

Pastor Melissa Fain

Fig Tree Christian is a new church start currently located digitally at www.figtreechristian.weebly.com. Within the next 6 months this digital church will mature to be locally centered in Hiram, Georgia, have its own web address, and be ready to meet physically in Paulding County, Georgia. Throughout this packet you will find helpful information about Fig Tree and how you can help this ministry.

Materials found in this packet include...

- What is Fig Tree Christian and what defines it?
- Current plan of action and objects already achieved.
- Who is Pastor Melissa Fain and why is she called to Planter ministry?
- What can your congregation do to help?

For about a decade, the region has seen a need to plant a church in the Paulding County area. From Hiram, Georgia, the closest Disciples church is a forty minute drive.

As a minister, look over the material and consider handing it to a committee or group within your congregation. Allow them time to prayerfully consider Fig Tree's request.



Fig Tree: Who are we?

Biblically the fig tree is a powerful symbol of purpose. Be fruitful or perish. It was 2,000 years ago and Jesus didn't mess around. God's people were not connecting with the needs of the world. This wasn't a time to say, "Ah, let's wait and see what happens." "Maybe," just wasn't good enough. Jesus' message with the fig tree was clear; we must act now.

When Jesus got up the next morning, he was hungry. He started out for the city, and along the way he saw a fig tree. But when he came to it, he found only leaves and no figs. So he told the tree, "You will never again grow any fruit!" Right then the fig tree dried up.

Matthew 21:18-19 Common English Bible

The Christian story only has a place as long as we are telling it; as long as we are producing fruit.

It has been a long Winter for Christianity. Eighty percent of mainline churches are in decline. Many of those churches are near death. If we are going to be a people set apart to share the everlasting love of God, we have to re-imagine what church means to an ever-growing secular generation.

Fig Tree Christian is a place where we can talk openly about Christianity. It is a place where we can learn together. It is a new adventure in being a community of God. Spring is here and a new summer is on the way. We are Fig Tree Christian because it is such a time as this when we need to be the example to invite in a new summer.

Learn a lesson from a fig tree. When its branches sprout and start putting out leaves, you know summer is near.

Mark 13:28 Common English Bible

Fig Tree will strive to be an educational oasis for those thirsty to learn biblical truth. Coming from a Disciples background, it is natural to be a congregation that seeks open communication in an effort to grow closer to one another and God. This will be accomplished by creating open atmospheres of learning through Bible studies, honest sermons, and transparency.

Fig Tree also hopes to be the plant that seeds new congregations. Our meeting space will be intentionally limited. When we get to a place where we can gather our own offering, a percentage will always be set aside for the next seeded congregation.

Finally, we hope to have a strong online component. As students begin to take more online classes, people purchase more items online, and businesses focus their attentions more and more on their website, the church needs to begin moving in a similar way. Today we live in a culture where people take jobs all over the nation, but still want to connect to their community. Having a strong online base allows these congregants to remain connected.

Our vision is to have a growing community of Christian believers gathering, worshiping, and learning in Hiram, Georgia. Bible studies will be available both online and in our place of worship. Sermons will be formatted in two ways to speak to the online and physical congregants. The ultimate goal is to grow and begin launching another congregation 5 years after our launch.

Fig Tree: Plan of Action

Celebrate! Pastor Melissa has already accomplished so many things:

- A Planter Minister should submit their application to the General Church to have their congregation considered a new church plant. Melissa did this in August 2012. Her application was accepted.
- Communicating with the Interim Regional Minister Bob Frank-Plumlee, Fig Tree and Pastor Melissa were accepted by the region to be a new church plant.
- Over the past six months Pastor Melissa has communicated and visited multiple new church starts, some of which are in Paulding County.
- Pastor Melissa has visited and continues to visit Paulding County churches to get an idea of what the area needs and already receives on a ministerial level.
- Fig Tree Christian has its own website, Twitter and Facebook accounts.
- Pastor Melissa posts weekly to Fig Tree's blog and the website receives 60+ visitors daily!

Over the next six months, here is where Fig Tree wants to go:

- Purchase the website name www.figtreechristian.org, and upgrade the support for the site.
- Order 5,000 two-sided postcards that lead the reader to the website.
- Reserve a gazebo at the local Hiram park for March 16th.
- Go door to door passing out the cards and introducing Pastor Melissa as a new minister in the area.
- Pastor Melissa will begin posting a monthly sermon online starting in January.
- Pastor Melissa will participate in the General Church's Planter training in February.
- Create and implement at least one online Bible study before the March 16th event.
- Scout for possible physical locations
- Always be praying to understand God's blueprint, realizing God's plans are bigger than our plans!

Statistics for figtreechristian.weebly.com

Pageviews Unique Visitors



Fig Tree's Road Map

Preparation:

- Participate in multiple services already active in Paulding County.
In Process! So far Pastor Melissa has been to many services from traditional to contemporary. She has visited UMC, Baptist, Independent, and Presbyterian churches. Up to the launch date she will continue this exploration.
- Go to the Planter Training held by Hope Fellowship in February.
- Read books and articles about planting congregations.
In Process! Much like visiting congregations, this is an ongoing process which will continue after the launch date. A helpful book suggested by a Planter Minister for Pastor Melissa was *Launch: Starting a New Church From Scratch* by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas. Pastor Melissa is hungry for any and all resources passed in her direction.
- Talk to Planter Ministers and get their perspective.
In Process! It seems every week Pastor Melissa has the opportunity to talk to people who have been in the field and made Planter Ministry work. It is a blessing.
- Look at census data and determine the demographic of the area
Accomplished!
- Talk to local business owners and hear their take of the area.
Accomplished!

Prelaunch:

- Set-up and launch a web-based congregation with weekly blogs and monthly sermons.
 - Purchase the web address www.figtreechristian.org and transfer the data from one site to the other while also upgrading the web hosting.
(This is a \$10 a month cost.)
 - Prepare a weekly blog focused on Christian education.
Accomplished!
 - Once the web hosting has been upgraded, the blog will expand to including videos and other information.
 - Starting in January, Pastor Melissa will post monthly lectionary-based sermons online. These sermons will be for a web-based audience and will be speaking directly to this group of people.
- Create and distribute cards inviting all Paulding County residents to participate.
 - Pastor Melissa, before she worked in ministry, worked in a photo lab restoring photos. She is experienced using Photoshop and has used the program to create bulletin covers and fliers for local area churches. Using this skill, she created a two sided postcard to distribute in the local area.
 - In October or November set up a distribution party where a fellowship of helpers go door to door handing out the postcards. We live in a world where we are overwhelmed by images but underwhelmed by human contact. The best means to reach people is face to face.
 - Keep the website current and begin offering local activities and studies.

- Gather a group of dedicated supporters to help with the Launch service.
 - Ask Soulfire, the praise band at FCC Marietta, to help with music.
Accomplished!
 - Ask individuals in the North West District for their physical support.
 - Rent the Gazebo on March 16th for a Launch Event.
 - Research and purchase a good take away item for the event.
(i.e. coffee cup, pens, magnet)

Launch:

- Create a worship experience where people can get a taste of what Fig Tree has to offer.
 - Advertise on Fig Tree's website and begin a Facebook campaign.
(Facebook ads cost \$20 a month)
 - Begin worship team meetings where volunteers from outside churches, and the core team gathered through the postcard drive begin putting together the worship experience.
 - Congregational music in Paulding County is either really gritty and electric or traditional. Fig Tree's music will be current, acoustic, and partly secular. As it is the tradition in churches throughout the generations, music develops by taking the secular and incorporating it into the spiritual. If done correctly, a congregant of Fig Tree should recall a God moment while listening to their favorite radio station.
 - Scripture for this event will be Mark 3:16-19. The calling of the disciples is a great statement of purpose for Fig Tree. The sermon will be tied to this sentiment: We are where we are today because those first disciples agreed to go. They did their part, now it is time to do our part.
The date for the event will tie into the scripture (3-16-12.)
- Leave space following the worship experience for a question and answer session.
- Have sign-up sheets where participants can become congregants.

Post-Launch:

- Find a physical location where Fig Tree can begin meeting on a weekly basis.
- Hire a second minister to begin growing in anticipation of a future split.
- Prepare a charter service for June.

Pastor Melissa Fain

Who am I? A mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a minister, a friend, a child of God... the list goes on. I cannot imagine my ministry apart from the other areas of my life. For me, it is all interconnected.

Formally, I have a MDiv from Candler School of Theology, part of Emory University. I was ordained into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) February 14, 2010 at First Christian Church of Atlanta with dual sponsorship from First Christian Church of Marietta. From the time I was 19, I worked in a Christian setting. I spent three summers at Christmount, two of which were as Camp Staff. I worked at multiple churches in the Georgia Region: Loganville, Brookhaven, and First Atlanta. After ordination, I was the Senior pastor at Bedford Christian Church in Bedford, Kentucky.

For most of that time, a still small voice kept echoing in my heart. I believe, from a time even before I discovered my call to ministry, God was preparing me to plant a congregation. I imagine my call as a congregational planter illustrated like a seed in the soil. At first it didn't seem plausible the seed could grow into anything at all. A seed is not substantial like a rock. A seed is not filling like a piece of fruit. By itself, a seed is a small little piece of nothing. But my call was nurtured and planted. With time, the gifts God blessed me in, began to blossom and grow.

Melissa served as my role model by inspiring me to become a camp counselor. Her dedication to Christian service is impossible to miss, and I can honestly say that I would not be who I am without her advice during my high school years.

-Henry Brewer-Calvert (Former camper at Camp Christian and Camp Staff 2011-12)

Melissa has served as my church pastor during a very difficult time in my own life. She gave me hope, encouragement, and 'refocused' my attention on the important things in life that God has in store for my family and me. Through her words of scripture, as well as her own experiences, I gained the support I needed to see life through during a very tough time!

-Kim Temple (Congregant at Bedford Christian Church)

Prayerfully Consider Helping

Fig Tree is counting on you to help bring God's plan to life. We need sponsors. Below are three different ways you can help. Please prayerfully consider helping us in one or more of these ways.

Prayer Warriors: Consider gathering a group who can pray for Fig Tree on a weekly or monthly basis. All we need is the faith of a mustard seed and we can move mountains. If that is all it takes to move mountains think what it will take to start a congregation.

Missionaries: As we work to get to our launch date there will be times we will need people to help hand out cards, set up tables, or simply be present.

Financial: From Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch, by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas- *"No matter how strong your calling or how good your intentions, a new church cannot succeed without funding."* If you believe this project is God inspired, consider a one-time offering, or a monthly gift.

Many of the church starts in Georgia have accomplished with the help of a parent congregation. Fig Tree hopes to create Sisters in Christ, where 3-5 congregations offer their support. With your help, not only does a new congregation gain its footing, but the Georgia Disciples can have ownership of the mission happening here in North West Georgia.

If you are interested please contact Pastor Melissa using the resources below:

- Phone: (502)905-3246
- Email: PastorMelissa@rocketmail.com
- Address: 232 Silver Ridge Dr, Dallas, GA 30157