



Oxford Church of Christ Congregation Profile

A LITTLE ABOUT US

OUR COMMUNITY

A historic, picturesque town in north central Mississippi, Oxford is rich with history and culture. Featuring a historic town square, acclaimed restaurants, and quaint boutiques, Oxford is a great example of a southern town. The town is home to the University of Mississippi, affectionately known to locals and alums as Ole Miss. Oxford served as Nobel Prize winning author William Faulkner’s inspiration for his fictionalized town of Jefferson, the locale for many of his novels. His home and the surrounding woods remain a popular, global literary attraction. Many writers, musicians, and artists and filmmakers have made Oxford their home, helping our town become a cultural centerpiece of the South.

Established in 1848, Ole Miss has 15 academic divisions, a major medical school, nationally recognized schools of accountancy, law and pharmacy, and the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College. While Oxford has worked hard to establish a remarkable local atmosphere for the retirement community, the close relationship between Oxford and Ole Miss produces a young, vibrant energy.

Located 80 miles south of Memphis, Oxford hosts an approximate city population of 25,000 and a student population of 23,000. In addition to the university, the Oxford School District is ranked first among public school districts in Mississippi, according to the 2015-2016 accountability scores released by the Mississippi Department of Education. For children residing in Lafayette County but outside of the Oxford School District, the Lafayette County Schools serve children who are in pre-K through grade 12. Oxford is also the home of two private primary schools. Regents, a Classical Christian school, currently offers K-12th grade. Oxford University School offers classes from 3rd-8th grade.

AROUND TOWN



CHURCH HISTORY

The Oxford Church of Christ was founded in 1929 after first meeting in schools, rented rooms, and homes. In the late 1930s, the congregation purchased a house on Jackson Avenue and converted it into a meeting place and apartment for the minister. Fundraising during the years 1944-1952 led to a new building in 1951. The Oxford church also helped establish the Rivers Hill church in 1957. In 1960, a board of directors to oversee a new Christian Student Center was established. In 2006, the board voted to disband and deeded the University Christian Student Center property to



the Oxford Church of Christ, and the UCSC was renamed to Alpha Omega Christian Student Center. Today, the AOCSC continues the original mission of being the center of operations for outreach to students and is one of the primary missions of the Oxford Church of Christ.

The biggest change over time has been the demographic of the congregation. The early members were farmers, clerks, and shopkeepers. As the university grew, it attracted an affluent and educated membership, most notably Gerald Turner, who arrived in 1984 to serve as the chancellor of the University of Mississippi. Average Sunday morning attendance peaked at 326 for the year 1992, and has never returned to that level. In 2000, a Sunday school class for international students and visitors was initiated which continues today. In 2001, the congregation chose as its primary mission to plant a congregation in Buenos Aires. In 2005, we started the Power of Choice class and began hosting AA and Al-Anon meetings which have continued to meet. In 2006 to 2007, the church faced difficult times due to a disagreement on the sale of the church property. About 60 members left the congregation in 2007, but the church has experienced slow and steady healing, with many former members returning to the Oxford fellowship. Currently, our average attendance is Sunday morning worship 285, Sunday Bible Study 191, and Wednesday evening 92.

Today the primary focus of the Oxford Church is campus missions and spiritually strengthening people for ministry in Oxford and elsewhere. We continue to enjoy the fellowship of international students, with a large contingent of Chinese members. We are also involved in Kairos (outreach to the state penitentiary), and in local benevolence. A small group continues to teach World Bible School correspondence courses.

WHO ARE WE SPIRITUALLY?

In Fall 2017, the congregation was polled, and the responses are summarized below. The majority of the Oxford Church of Christ believes that the Bible was written by people who were guided by the Holy Spirit to produce the Word of God. We believe that the Bible is a narrative of God redeeming His creation through Jesus Christ, that we might live in Him. We also believe that the Bible records the life and teachings of Jesus, who expresses His authority over His followers, as well as the whole world.

The vast majority of our church believe that there is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ. We believe His resurrection from the dead was an actual historic event. As a whole we do not believe

WHO ARE WE SPIRITUALLY? CONTINUED...

that the path to ultimate truth can be found in all religions, but the Bible answers all the basic questions of life.

We collectively agree that those who do not attend church with us know we are Christians and that we take following Jesus seriously. Most of us spend time in prayer and meditation on a daily basis and study the Bible a few times each week. Many give testimony about their faith a few times a month or more. Most of us also regularly spend time in private worship, either daily or a few times a week, and as a whole we regularly meet with a small group for prayer, study, and encouragement, apart from normal, scheduled worship times. Nearly all of our church attend worship service four times a month or more. Members of our church admit to struggling with impatience, anger, guilt or shame, and pride as well as other issues.

MINISTRIES

CAMPUS MINISTRY

The Oxford Church of Christ has a rich history of ministering to the students of Ole Miss. Since 2006, the campus ministry has been the primary mission of the local church. We support a student center on the edge of the campus that houses up to twelve students. The ministry has adopted the name "Rebels for Christ," and the center hosts daily and weekly events to strengthen and encourage students from Ole Miss and Northwest Community College, located in Oxford.

Casey Coston has served as campus Minister since 2004. He is married to Tracey Coston, and they have three children: Miles, Moses, and Maggie. As part of our mission to strengthen people spiritually and send them out, we welcome undergraduate interns and graduate student apprentices who are interested in becoming campus ministers. The campus ministry and the Oxford congregation have a partnership with the Christian Relief Fund (CRF) and sponsor a number of children in Haiti, where the campus ministry has traveled to annually since 2011. Our primary mission is to "seek, save, strengthen, and send," and we leverage the campus population to help build God's kingdom.

INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY

OCOC has a sizable contingent of international students and professors from the University. We have a Sunday international class that is designed to help seekers learn the truth and grow spiritually. The class averages 20 attendees weekly. We also participate in the FriendSpeak program, which uses the Bible to help international students strengthen their English skills using scripture as a foundation. The program has resulted in several participants being baptized into Christ, and two of our international members serve as deacons in the church. Several church members work with Oxford Chinese Christian Fellowship on campus, which ministers to Chinese students and visiting scholars.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Oxford Youth Ministry consists of 7th-12th graders from the surrounding schools. Our mission is to be Christ-like in everything we do and to show others what it means to be a Christian through our words and actions. We strive to make everyone in the youth group feel welcome, safe, and included by providing fellowship opportunities that are designed to build relationships. Each summer, we participate in a week at Sardis Lake alongside our brothers and sisters

there. We are also involved in several local service projects that help us focus on serving Christ by serving others. There are also many other trips, events, and activities, always focused on building relationships and growing God's Kingdom.

Since January 2015, Jimmy Devine has served as our youth minister. He is married to Michele, and they have two children: Jay and Madelyn.

FACETIME MINISTRY

In 2014 a group met with Everett Huffard of Harding Theological Seminary for help in defining the mission of the Oxford Church of Christ. As a result, the following mission statement was formulated: "The OCOC fellowship creates trusting relationships to serve God by blessing our community and our church family." The main method for implementing the mission was establishment of a small group ministry called Facetime. The main goals of the Facetime groups are to provide a means for strengthening people spiritually, for enabling deeper fellowship through sharing of Bible study and meals in people's homes, and for helping new members make connections with church members. Facetime groups meet twice a month on Sundays for Bible study, discussion, prayer, and a meal.

FACILITIES

CHURCH BUILDING

The Oxford Church of Christ building is located one block off the square on North Lamar in the heart of Oxford, approximately 1.5 miles from the University of Mississippi. The original building, built in 1951, is now the fellowship hall. The classroom hall was added in 1966, and the auditorium was added in 1983. The auditorium seats approximately 400 people and there are 12 classrooms. The courtyard is used for outdoor gatherings and as a playground for kids. The fellowship hall, equipped with kitchen and storage, is used for classes and other events.



CHRISTIAN STUDENT CENTER

The Alpha Omega Christian Student Center, located approximately one mile from the church building, is used for reaching students on the Ole Miss and Northwest Community College campuses.



STAFF

Casey Coston serves as our Campus Minister; our Youth minister is Jimmy Devine; and Jimmy's wife, Michele, serves as the children's minister. Michelle Williams serves as our church secretary, and Rebecca Easley serves as bookkeeper. Our Student Center is managed by Katrina Dickerson. The church's counseling ministry is led by Eric Suddeath and Nina Ingram, licensed professional counselors.

ELDERS

Elders normally serve a five year term and are selected by the congregation. These terms are staggered to maintain continuity within the eldership. This allows new elders to be appointed and current elders whose terms are expiring to be reaffirmed if they wish to continue serving. The role of elder is one of servanthood, both individually and collectively. The eldership functions as a team, handling different areas of responsibility. The elders work alongside ministers, teachers, and other staff, and they help the church connect the truth of God's Word to the struggles that we all face. The current elders are Adam Andrews, Pete Brummett, Eric Dahl, Dale Davis, Durward Davis, and Bill Russell.

MINISTER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Under the direction of the elders of the Oxford Church of Christ, the minister's roles is to preach the Word and provide spiritual guidance and leadership for the church.

Responsibilities:

1. Bible scholar, well grounded in scripture, who spends time studying the Word to present deep, relevant, and interesting sermons.
2. Model a healthy spiritual life and facilitate the spiritual development of the congregation.
3. Work alongside office staff and other ministry leaders in facilitating worship assemblies that are sensitive to the needs of the congregation, including planning sermons well enough in advance to help with coordination and continuity.
4. Work with the elders, ministers, deacons, and ministry leaders to build and maintain a strong team, and to provide strategic congregational leadership that is servant-oriented, biblical, relational, and suited to our context.
5. Serve as team coordinator with other ministers, and collaborate with them and other church staff to serve the members.
6. Engage in evangelism and equip others to evangelize.
7. Develop and support the Bible school program for adults.
8. Equip members for involvement in ministry efforts.
9. Collaborate with small groups ministry team to strengthen the relational bonds of the congregation.
10. Partner with elders and other ministers in pastoral care and counseling at his discretion, and upon request and availability, officiate at weddings and funerals of members.
11. Develop appropriate personal relationships with members of the congregation, including the university students.
12. Develop consciousness of and involvement in ministries of social compassion and justice, in our community and other locations.
13. Promote unity in diversity in areas such as age, spiritual maturity, education level, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and convictions on church-related issues.

FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS

The minister's spouse and family should be visibly supportive of the minister's work. The members of the family will be expected to be actively involved in the life and work of the congregation. They will not be expected to be present every time the building doors are open, nor will they be expected to involve themselves in all the programs of the congregation. Like other members, they should be guided by their talents and interests to work in those ministries for which they are suited. We expect the minister and his family to have a healthy home life with private time and time for recreation and the other things that contribute to the spiritual, mental and physical health of the family.

PREFERRED TRAITS OF A PREACHING MINISTER FROM OCOC

During preparation of the Congregational Profile, a survey was administered by the transition team. As part of the survey, desirable characteristics for a preaching minister and his sermons were identified. The results of these questions are summarized below.

The majority of respondents (70%) see the primary role of the pulpit minister in preaching and teaching and in serving the congregation with a strong educational emphasis. The second most important role (62%) was as a compassionate friend who can relate to people's struggles. The third (61%) most important trait was a spiritual guide who emphasizes spiritual growth, followed by the fourth (60%) role, a visionary leader who understands the mission of the church and is effective in leading others in accomplishing the mission. The three least important traits of a pulpit minister were church administrator (65%), social activist (62%), and priest (57%) that places emphasis on ritual and ceremonial aspects of worship. By far, the most valued trait in a pulpit minister, based on this survey, is that he is an effective preacher/speaker (76%). This choice was followed by being a biblical scholar (42%), helping people develop their spiritual life (42%), and working effectively and cooperatively with elders and church leaders (39%).

The most important trait of a sermon was that it should be biblically based and illustrated (63%). This was followed by being challenging and thought provoking (47%) and setting forth a clear faith position as a guide for making decisions and living a faithful life (42%). There was a clear preference for a pulpit minister who emphasizes practical matters over theory with provoking and challenging messages, and there was a preference for being receptive to new and creative thoughts and ideas. It was also clear that the pulpit minister should have some latitude to pursue the church's mission, even if it causes some discomfort.

The need for balance in a pulpit minister's work shows in the split responses on whether they should be decisive or collaborative. There was not a strong margin either way, with opinions likely reflecting the broad range of circumstances for which either of these approaches may be most appropriate. There was preference for a more relaxed manner, rather than strictly formal, that paralleled a preference for a minister who is outgoing and socially engaging. There was a slight preference shown for a minister to be able to, at times, limit access so that they could have time for family, friends, and professional development.

We realize no minister candidate will possess all of these characteristics in the exact proportions described, nor should candidates expect our congregation to fit this description exactly. We prayerfully anticipate God's leading us to the right person, realizing that the most productive relationship may vary from the profile in some dimensions. This description gives both the church and prospective candidates objective information on the current identity of our congregation, and provides a good starting place toward finding the right fit for the Oxford context.

WHO ARE WE?

BY THE OXFORD CHURCH OF CHRIST ELDERS

We are a congregation of the body of Christ. We have no head but Jesus, no creed but the Bible, and no hope except for God's grace. We are deeply committed to being a house of prayer for all nations.

According to the New Testament gospels, Jesus promised his apostles that after his death, they would be guided into all truth. In keeping with this promise, after Jesus's resurrection and ascension, the apostles began to preach the gospel of salvation through faith in him. The ones who accepted this good news, believing in the divinity of Jesus, repenting of their sins and being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, became God's chosen people under the New Covenant. They were called citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven, members of the household of God, and part of the body of Christ. These new believers had been asked to join nothing, but when they were saved from their past sins they became members of the church.

Following its miraculous beginning on the Day of Pentecost, the church grew rapidly; however, through the years, God's people departed from the inspired teaching of the apostles, just as God's people in the Old Testament fell into sin after the law was given from Mount Sinai.

In order to avoid these mistakes of false teaching, the Oxford Church of Christ seeks to return to the divinely guided church of the New Testament. We believe that if we hear the same gospel and respond in the same way we will be members of the same church. So if you ask us "Who are you?" we respond that we are a congregation of God's people, a church like the ones you read about in the New Testament, a church belonging to Christ.

In the New Testament, we find that no one was asked to join the church. They were encouraged to believe in Jesus as God's son, to repent of their sins, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. When they obeyed this teaching, they became members of the church. We are a fellowship of brothers and sisters who have responded in this way to the good news of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

OUR VISION

We seek to be the church that you read about in the New Testament—nothing more and nothing less. We realize that we often fall short of this ideal, but we believe that submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ compels us to avoid any direction that does not follow his steps. We hope to bless others as God has blessed us.

OUR MISSION

We seek to realize our vision by teaching a saving message, strengthening those who have committed themselves to a life of discipleship and then sending people out to share the good news with others to make more disciples. Using small groups and other ministries, we create trusting relationships to serve God by blessing our community and our church family. The Oxford-University community provides a wealth of opportunities to pass the gospel on to people who come here from our state, our nation, and the entire world.

OUR COMMON BELIEFS

In Romans 15:5 (NIV), Paul wrote: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the spirit of unity as you follow Jesus Christ." The Oxford church is a diverse group of people made up of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, socio-economic levels, political beliefs and theological beliefs. Even amid all of this diversity, we are able to maintain unity and peace through the following core beliefs:

- Jesus** We believe that Jesus is at the core of our faith. He is the Christ, the Son of God. He is King and Lord and Savior. We believe that his life, his death on a cross and his resurrection from the dead are the good news we are called to share. We are empowered to do His will in this world by the Holy Spirit that he promised.
- Bible** We believe the Bible is God's authoritative, trustworthy and inspired Word. It instructs us completely in every good work, and no collection of man's words can replace it.
- Faith** Our faith is anchored in the God who created the earth, the universe and all living things. He sacrificed his Son so that we might have complete forgiveness of sins.
- Grace** God's grace is his forgiving power that saves us through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal savior. Grace assures us that we will live eternally in heaven.
- Baptism** Immersion in water is a response of faith. Through baptism, a person is reborn in Christ and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it is an essential step in following Jesus and becoming a Christian.
- Communion** We observe communion with one another and with our Lord on the first day of each week to celebrate our redemption. In this act, we are reminded of Christ's supreme sacrifice, the power of his resurrection and his future return.
- Worship** We experience worship daily by the way we live and weekly by gathering to praise God through prayer, communion, scripture reading, a cappella singing and a biblical message.

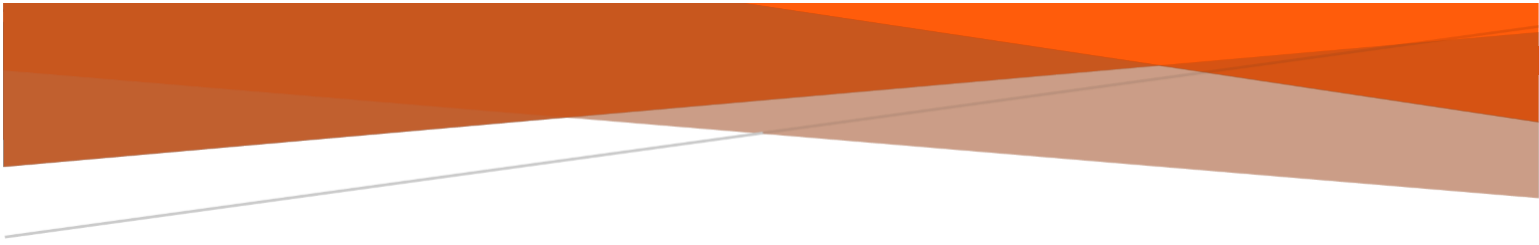
WHAT DO WE VALUE?

- Mission** To create trusting relationships to serve God by blessing our community and our church family.
- Outreach** Consciously influencing people to have a saving relationship with Jesus. We believe that God has blessed us so that we will be a blessing to others.
- Discipleship** Teaching people how to live as fully devoted followers of Christ.
- Worship** Celebrating God's grace and praising Him daily for his presence in our lives.
- Service** Using our gifts to serve Jesus by compassionately serving others.
- Fellowship** Working together to build healthy relationships through our love in Christ and build trusting relationships within the church and community

WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

Given our beliefs and values, we desire to be a Christ-centered, Spirit-powered, grace-motivated family of believers whose purpose as a church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ is to be actively involved in:

- Seeking** Luke 19.1-9 2 Corinthians 5
- Saving** John 3 Acts 2 Romans 1 and 6
- Strengthening** 2 Peter 1:8, 3:18 Philippians 1:6
- Sending** Matthew 28 2 Timothy 2.2



Dear applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the preaching minister position at the Oxford Church of Christ. We will carefully and prayerfully consider all applicants for the position. We seek to find a minister who will mesh with our congregation so that we can serve God together. In order for us to make the most informed decision possible, we need information on your qualifications, professional history, and your ideas about preaching.

We are accepting applications through the spring of 2018.

Each applicant should submit the following information by email to jobs@ococ.org or by mail to P.O. Box 1500 Oxford, MS 38655:

Resume

5 references

Philosophy of preaching (2 pages or less)

Please provide two sermons (audio or video) from the following dates:

February 12, 2017

April 21, 2017

August 13, 2017

November 26, 2017

In God's love,

Oxford Church of Christ Transition Team