

McElwain Baptist Church Adoption Frequently Asked Questions

Why adopt McElwain?

1. *Why McElwain and why now?*

In 2016 our Pastor, Dr. Danny Wood, put together a ***Beyond the Horizon Vision*** that gave Shades a broad direction for the next 10 years. He shared this vision with our church during his 2017 State of the Church message, and copies of the vision are given to every new member who attends Discover Shades.

An excerpt from that vision reads, *“We will actively pursue churches in need of revitalization. By providing pastoral and lay leadership along with the investment of financial resources we will lead an existing church to start a new chapter of vibrant ministry.”*

During the last 3 years we have been contacted by 2 other churches with the opportunity to pursue this path of church revitalization. After prayer, discussions, and further research it was determined that those opportunities would not work.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) reached out to us regarding the opportunity to adopt McElwain. This is a unique opportunity in which McElwain will surrender complete authority of everything to the leadership of Shades. There is great potential in this opportunity, and through prayer and through the due diligence process we feel God is ready for us to move forward with this plan in faith.

2. *How many people are currently attending McElwain on a regular basis/what is the current membership of McElwain?*

Currently, McElwain has 290 members and around 120 people attend each week.

3. *Why do we believe there is a potential for growing the church?*

54,000 people live within a 3 mile radius of the church property. Ethnicity in that area is very diverse with 55% white, 41% African-American, and 3% Hispanic. The age breakdown is also diverse and equally distributed among those in the 25 – 65 year-old range. McElwain’s current attenders are largely an older demographic and not reflective of the age or ethnic diversity of the surrounding area. The new church will be perfectly positioned to be a strong multi-generational, multi-ethnic congregation. We believe a revitalized church in that location can have an incredible impact on the community.

4. *Do we have a plan for reaching a multi-generational, multi-ethnic group of people?*

Yes. We will be seeking leadership with a heart for reaching all people and with experience in serving multi-ethnic groups.

What will happen during the adoption process?

5. *When do we plan to officially begin our involvement at McElwain?*

We're planning toward November 1.

6. *Do we plan to change the name of the church?*

Yes. This is an exciting time for fresh vision, new leadership, and great opportunities. The new church will have a new name, and we'll plan for lots of advertising in the community as we prepare to launch this new work.

7. *Does this adoption include any property?*

Yes, the main McElwain campus sits on about 6 acres and includes 5 buildings totaling around 80,000 square feet. McElwain also owns property across the street (currently under contract to be sold) which includes the former McElwain church building.

8. *Who will be the pastor at McElwain?*

We will place a pastor at the new church to provide hands-on, day-to-day leadership and preaching in-person on Sundays.

9. *Who will be the point person at Shades?*

Tim Wheat, Shades Pastor of Missional Living, will be the point person and serve as the liaison between Shades and the new church. We believe Tim is a part of our Shades staff team for such a time as this. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in the arena of church development and revitalization. He has experience as both a staff member in a church with multiple campuses and working at NAMB with church planting and revitalizations responsibilities. His leadership is uniquely suited for this.

10. *Do we plan to keep McElwain's current staff?*

We will spend some time with all existing staff and make evaluations about moving forward.

11. *Do we plan to utilize current Shades staff members at McElwain?*

We have many Shades staff members with the skills and experience to provide great leadership for the remaining McElwain staff and for future hires. Our staff count it a joy and privilege to serve alongside and encourage this new work.

12. *What will be the membership status of current members of McElwain?*

Once the adoption is finalized, members of McElwain will be members of the new church.

13. *Will there be a place for volunteers from Shades to be involved?*

Absolutely! Anyone interested in serving should contact Tim Wheat. Many who are interested in serving are already involved in our Training Institute this fall.

14. *What will happen long term if this fails?*

While we are not entering this endeavor planning to fail, we do realize that sometimes church plants don't make it. If that were to happen, Shades will own the property. The new church would be dissolved and the property would be sold.

How much will this cost?

15. *How much will this cost now?*

As a part of the due diligence process, we have discovered that McElwain facilities have about \$1 million worth of deferred maintenance that will need attention immediately. Those items include: new roofing, electrical updating, boilers, parking lot work, lighting, staffing needs, and more. These costs will be covered through projected 2020 underage in spending at Shades plus the revenue from the sale of a piece of property owned by McElwain across the street from their church location.

16. *How long do we plan to provide financial support and at what level?*

We need to plan on supporting the new church's operating budget for several years while they are becoming established as a church. For 2021 we anticipate that amount to be \$650,000. We anticipate the amount to decrease each year until they are self-sustaining.

17. *How do we plan to cover the costs?*

We will treat McElwain as a church plant and it will be a part of our Make Jesus Known budget. We project that we will have about \$250,000 to go toward these costs: 2020 underage spending (since we have had to curtail many mission trips, etc.); remaining 2019 giving overages that have not been spent in 2020; and projected overage in giving to MJK. Our recommendation is to increase the MJK budget in 2021 from \$1,250,000 to \$1,400,000 with the additional \$150,000 budgeted going towards the new church. That leaves the balance of need at about \$250,000. In any God-sized venture that a church pursues there has to be an element of faith and risk...and this will be our step of faith! God has been faithful in the past as we have looked to where God was moving and took bold steps to join Him. God has already cleared so many hurdles in this venture that we as leadership feel confident we can trust Him to once again provide "the only way to explain it is that God did it" moments!

18. *Why do we have "extra" funds currently, and shouldn't those extra funds be applied to NEXT?*

We have extra budget funds because when COVID-19 hit in the spring Tom and Chad prepared for possible financial uncertainty by reducing our \$8.9 million operating budget to a \$7.9 million spending plan. Through generous giving by our church family and careful stewardship by our staff, we will meet and exceed our \$8.9 million budget, with \$750,000 of underage spending that we can put toward this adoption.

Our agreement with NEXT was that every dollar given OVER our operating budget (less the 10% that would go to the Cooperative Program) goes to NEXT to pay down the debt. We did this in 2019 and will do the same in 2020 and each year until the debt is paid off. At this time, we are just past the half way point on NEXT and we are over \$200,000 ahead of giving projections. The interest that we pay is minimal because the cash on deposit is being swept against the line of credit and interest accrues only on the net balance. The Kingdom potential of the adoption of McElwain by far exceeds the value of minimal interest expense savings.

19. *Does McElwain have any debt that will be passed on to Shades?*

McElwain does not have any debt that will be passed on to Shades. McElwain did accept COVID related PPP (Payroll Protection Program) funds that will likely be forgiven.

20. *What is McElwain's current budget and what will the budget be for the new church going forward?*
McElwain's current budget has been \$770,000 but giving has been short of the budget. Current giving is around \$500,000 per year, and we anticipate that amount to continue. The budget for the new church will be around \$1.1 million.

21. *Does the proposed 2021 McElwain budget include the cost of new staff members?*
Yes.

22. *Could the surrounding community support an ongoing budget of \$1 million or more?*
Absolutely. The estimated median household income in a three-mile radius based on census data is \$99,214 per year.

Does McElwain have a daycare or school?

23. *What type of weekday educational programs does McElwain offer?*
McElwain currently has a Child Development Center for children 6 weeks – 4 years old. It is a year-round, full-time (Monday – Friday, 7am – 6 pm) child care center licensed by DHR.

Additionally, they operate a school, McElwain Christian Academy (MCA or the Academy), for Kindergarten – 6th grade.

24. *Will the CDC continue to operate?*
Yes. The CDC has a strong educational curriculum, a great facility, and a long waiting list. We do plan to provide leadership for the CDC so that it becomes more of a ministry arm of the church, much like our Early Learning Center.

25. *Is the CDC self-funded?*
The CDC is currently self-funded, meaning that tuition payments cover the cost of operation.

26. *Will the Academy continue to operate?*
The Academy will close at the end of the current school year. While the school leadership has a great heart for education with a Christian worldview, the academy has been declining in enrollment for several years. It is not self-funded and has a current enrollment of 25 students. We want to focus efforts on revitalizing the church and serving the community.

How will this affect ministry at Shades?

27. *Are we changing our plans for ministry and/or planning to be a multi-campus church?*
We have no intention of becoming a multi-campus church or changing any of our home base ministry plans at this time. Revitalizing a church is a part of Shades' long-range vision. This new church has a large facility and an incredible potential to reach an underserved part of Birmingham. We'll be forming a new church entity, controlled by Shades, into which McElwain will contribute all existing assets (no liabilities). While we will be heavily involved in the beginning, we plan for this new church to become an independent, self-sustaining entity in the future.

28. *Are we asking Shades members to pledge more money for this?*

No, we are not.

29. *Will pursuing this opportunity take away from other ministry opportunities that might be a better use of our resources?*

No, this will not take away from any strategic initiatives in our immediate area. We are not aware of any other ministry opportunities that could have more of a potential impact. The potential impact is why we have been excited to pursue this as a great opportunity to send transformed people to influence their world for Christ.

30. *Are we increasing Shades' operating budget for 2021?*

Shades' operating budget will not increase for 2021.

31. *Will this arrangement hinder us from paying off NEXT?*

No (see #17). We are ahead of projections.

2017 Incident at McElwain

32. *Is there pending litigation from a 2017 incident?*

It is public knowledge that an alleged sexual abuse incident took place at McElwain in 2017 involving a deacon and two minors. The incident happened during unauthorized use of the church facility while the campus was closed. The deacon was asked to leave the church and the criminal case is still pending in Jefferson County Court. McElwain appears to have handled the situation well with all parties involved, and there is currently no civil litigation pending against the church, although that could change. There have been several delays in the criminal case, but it appears that the case may be tried in the spring of 2021.

33. *How are we protecting ourselves from potential liability?*

We have confirmed that McElwain had sufficient liability insurance coverage at the time of the incident. We have spoken with attorneys and with the insurance company and have been advised that we would not be liable for this unresolved case.

What is the next step?

34. *What if I have more questions about the adoption of McElwain?*

Sunday evening, September 20 at 6 pm in the Worship Center, we will have a church-wide business meeting to discuss and vote on the unanimous recommendation by our deacons and finance committee to move forward with the McElwain adoption process.

35. *What if I can't attend the business meeting on Sunday?*

The meeting will be livestreamed (www.Shades.org/live). You will be able to submit questions and vote online.

36. *What is the process for submitting questions and voting online?*

Information will be provided on screen Sunday evening during the livestream about how to submit questions and how to vote electronically.