Central Baptist Church

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Name Jared Nelson

Please provide written answers to the following questions:

Why do you desire to be in ministry? Do you feel that you are "called"? Please explain briefly.
I do believe that I am called to ministry. I have known since I was 18 that I was called to be in ministry of some kind and have served in my churches in many different roles. In 2012, I felt called to go to seminary and spent the next four years earning my MTS degree. Since then, I have served in various leadership roles in ministry, starting as a volunteer lay leader, bi-vocationally, and eventually full-time vocationally. The story of that journey and how God has been growing and preparing my family and me for vocational ministry would require more than a brief explanation, but I hope that I will get the opportunity to share it with the team at Central during this process.

Have you been ordained? If yes, when and where?	Yes ☒	No ☐
I was ordained at Mission Valley Church on April 8, 2026.		

Please tell us about your immediate family.
My wife's name is Jennifer. We met in 1999 when we were in youth group, and we have now been married for 15 years and have two children. Jen currently serves as the Kids Ministry Director at our church. She started her career teaching Kindergarten for over 10 years, then as a new teacher mentor. Between teaching and ministry, she spent a few years at home when our kids were young. My daughter Kate is 11, and my son Henry is 8. Kate is outgoing, artistic, and very musical. Henry is an old soul, shy, and is a blue belt in karate.

Discuss your interest in our children's pastor position. What attracted you to this position? If you are currently serving in ministry, why would you be interested in such a change?
I have never seen a vision and job description for the leader of a children's ministry quite like the one Central has for this role. What seems unique is the desire for and understanding of the need for a pastor to shepherd and disciple both parents and children. Over the past few years, it has become more apparent to me that parents need equipping, discipleship, and encouragement, as they seek to raise kids who love Jesus. I am seeing more and more that the church has an important role to play in partnering with these families rather than simply teaching the children. It has been a great joy of mine to disciple men in my church towards leading their families well. My current role as an Associate Pastor has allowed me to focus on many areas of the church. As I have looked at the church as a whole, I have gained an appreciation for how vital a strong children's ministry is to the health of the whole church. In a children's ministry, there is tremendous opportunity to disciple not only the children, but also the parents and the teachers/leaders in the ministry.

Have you been baptized by immersion after accepting the Lord Jesus?	YES ☒	No ☐

How do you hold yourself accountable to God?
I have several important rhythms built into my life to ensure accountability to God. First, I spend time in God's Word and in prayer throughout the day. I spend time in His Word and reading books and other resources about His Word to study and apply it. I pray constantly throughout my day for people, the church, and specific things happening, such as meetings or needs I hear about. I attend church each week to maintain spiritual disciplines of worship and reflection.

In addition to spiritual disciplines, I also have relationships that create accountability. Each morning, Jen and I spend 45+ minutes having coffee and talking before we get ready for the day. This time is spent, for example, talking about our marriage, the kids, sometimes work, ministry and friends, what we are reading, what we are praying about, struggles, and other important things in our lives. Additionally, Jen and I meet with a counselor regularly to help us maintain health in our marriage. This practice started years ago in a season where we were struggling more. Eventually, when our counselor shared that she believed we were ready to exit her care, we asked to still meet with her some since we were entering a new season of ministry and still wanted counsel and outside perspective to ensure we were honoring God with our marriage and in vocational ministry practice. It has been a huge blessing for us to have someone speaking into our marriage and ministry.

Lastly, we believe that we are accountable to God to be good stewards of the resources that he has given us. To that end, we work hard to honor God with our finances by tithing 10% and spend/save the other 90% wisely. Lastly, we have been giving extra focus to our physical health lately. We have been examining and adjusting our eating habits and exercise to ensure that we are honoring God with our bodies and physical health. We start each day with physical exercise.

Please give us your definition of discipleship.

I would define discipleship as "the process of spiritually investing in others." I know that is a broad definition, but I adopted it several years ago after reading a book on the subject because no two people are the same, and the discipleship process is personal, relational, and must be based on the individual. I firmly believe that discipleship is a deeply relational process where we point people to Jesus as they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

"A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by the Holy Spirit to be more like Jesus, and is leading others to do the same." I have used this definition of a disciple for nearly 15 years. It is based on Matthew 4:19 and comes from the book Real Life Discipleship.

How do you see discipleship integrating with children's ministries?

I believe that parents are the primary disciple-makers for their children. Of course, there is significant opportunity to teach and disciple children in the church through weekly programming, but it is nothing compared to the levels of time, access, and influence parents hold. So much ministry is happening in living rooms that we, the church leaders, are not there for! If we are going to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ," we must disciple and equip parents well.

In regard to directly discipling children well, I believe that the children's ministry must teach God's word, build biblical literacy, and teach spiritual disciplines at an age-appropriate level. I believe that consistency in leadership is also important so that teachers can get to know and connect with the kids so they can build a discipleship relationship. This requires the leaders of the ministry and church to care for the leaders well and equip them well.

What do you feel are the most important factors in the spiritual growth and physical growth of a church?

Church growth is a fascinating subject for me. We find ourselves with clear biblical direction and encouragement that we have a part to play in the process, but ultimately it is Jesus who builds his church. It is very similar to the process of sanctification.

I believe that there is a strong relationship between spiritual growth and physical (I assume meaning attendance) growth in a church. Some of the factors that I believe are instrumental in church growth are strong leadership, clear vision, effective systems, and operational excellence. We serve a God of order, not chaos or confusion.

Paired with these more leadership/operational factors, Ephesians 4:11-16, especially v11-12, gives a great picture of how Jesus gives the church the right people with the right gifts to help build each other up spiritually. When done effectively, people can mature and live as those who are sent, and "when each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16b). As believers in the church grow spiritually, they should have a growing desire for the lost and share the gospel with them. Doing this well requires clear teaching, intentional discipleship, community, and strong shepherding.

Comment on your ability in the following areas:

Preaching
My first experience preaching was about 12 years ago when I was in seminary, and my former church licensed me to preach and let me preach a few times in a young adult church service on Sunday nights. I did not preach again until 2025 and have preached 10 times since. I really enjoy preaching and have received very positive feedback.
Teaching
Teaching is one of my favorite things to do in my role. I am capable of creating curriculum for classes and enjoy teaching in an engaging collaborative style. This year, I have prepared class content on systematic theology, evangelism, and giving.
Evangelism
I have no issue articulating and sharing the gospel. I have used several different methods over the years and find that the conversation with a person will often dictate how I share it. I most often share the gospel with people who come to the church who aren't believers or with friends who don't believe yet. I also end up resharing the gospel with church members a lot when we meet about issues: Not because they have forgotten Jesus saved them theologically, but more as a reminder of the sin in the world and that Jesus can redeem anything and anyone.
Shepherding
As an elder at my church, I have a list of people who I am responsible for shepherding, and I check in with them regularly. I am also a community group leader, so I practice shepherding there. In both capacities, I get to know about their spiritual struggles, families, and other parts of life. I am also the one to disciple them, meet with them on issues, care for them, and guide them. This is one of the best parts of doing ministry.
Administration
I have strong administrative skills. I served for several years as the Executive Director at my church bi-vocationally. During my bi-vocational ministry years, I was a consultant and Director of Operations, which required significant administrative skills. Also, I was part of the leadership team for Mission Valley's church merger in 2022, and my focus was on the feasibility of the merger with regard to finances, budget, church bylaws, and working with church legal counsel.

Please give a brief description of your theological views on the following topics

Baptism
Baptism is for the professed believers, not infants. It is symbolic and is a public outward symbol of the change that has happened in a believer. Baptism does not save. Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:38, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12
Speaking in tongues
Here is what God's word says about speaking in tongues: 1 Corinthians 12:10 lists it as a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. *If* practiced, it must be practiced in an orderly way, in the gathered church, and interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:26-33, 1 Corinthians 14:39-40). All that said, I believe that this gift has most likely ceased, as 1 Corinthians 13:8 states will happen. However, since scripture does not give us more details about when or how that will happen, I hold that conclusion with some humility and acknowledge that I can be mistaken. In this, and all other matters, I believe scripture is the final authority rather than trusting in my own understanding.

The security of the believer
I believe that those who have placed their faith in Jesus are eternally secure and cannot lose their salvation. Salvation is a work of God and not based on our merit or works. John 10:27-29, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6
Sufficiency of Scripture
I believe that God's Word is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. It is the final authority on belief and practice for the believer. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Ordination of Women
I believe that 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 make it clear that the role of elder/pastor/overseer is reserved for men.
Homosexuality
I believe that scripture is clear in several places that practicing homosexuality is sinful. Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10

Please provide brief answers to the following questions

What books, blogs or preachers or teachers have most impacted your life and why.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and work have made a tremendous impact on me. Specifically, his books *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer's work has given me unending insight into the church, shepherding well, and following Jesus even at great cost. *Real Life Discipleship* by Jim Putman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman, and *The Foundation of a Disciplemaking Culture* by Justin Gravitt have been very impactful in how I have viewed and approached discipleship. Each of these books approaches discipleship from a different perspective and, when put together, has given me a clear picture of how to make disciples. *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life* by Donald Whitney and *A Tale of Three Kings* by Gene Edwards have also been impactful, and I return to them on occasion. Dr. Whitney's book was very helpful in understanding the impact and reason for spiritual disciplines. *A Tale of Three Kings* has been instrumental in my learning to lead in a way that honors God.
In your experience, what has been the most effective way to motivate and equip lay leaders in the church?
In my experience, the most effective way to motivate and equip lay leaders in the church is to view their development as discipleship. I believe you have to know the person to know how to motivate, equip, and encourage them for long-term success. Once you know their gifts, interests, experience, and where they can be encouraged to grow, then you can help them find a place to serve well and be successful. There is also an element of vision casting in this. People need to understand how their service connects to the mission of the church and what God is doing in the lives they are impacting. I am not a big fan of simply filling ministry roles blindly or just to fill a need. The primary goal should always be the spiritual growth of the individual through serving the church.
Consider your most recent (or current) ministry position. What was (are) the nature of your responsibilities? What was the most effective part of your ministry and what was the least effective?
In my current role as Associate Pastor, I am the only pastor on-campus for a church of 350 people, so there is a wide range of areas that I work in. My primary focus is discipleship through our community groups and through meeting with individuals throughout the week. I also work with the other staff members of the church on their various initiatives and programming. I spend a significant amount of time working with our Kids Ministry Director on projects and programming, connections, and other various items the Senior Pastor needs, as he is co-vocational and off-site. The most effective part of my ministry has been in one-on-one discipleship. There are eight men in the church that I have been discipling over the past year. Nearly all of them are fathers. It has been amazing to see them growing spiritually, leading their families more intentionally, and some of them are starting to disciple others! Multiplication is beginning to happen!

The least effective part of my ministry has been launching a men's ministry in our church. Changing priorities, budget changes, and a lack of sustained ownership have made it difficult to take prepared plans and make them a reality. This experience has been very eye-opening and taught me the importance of a clear mission in a church and empowering those around you to lead when in leadership.

I was saved at an early age, seven, I think, at a Vacation Bible School. I don't remember much of my life before then as a young child, but I remember admitting my sin and my need for Jesus to save me. I grew up going to church, but there wasn't much application of God's Word or fruit from faith in my home growing up. My story is more about how Jesus brought me to take my faith more seriously, changed me, and called me into ministry.

I don't have many distinct memories of what my faith looked like growing up, but I have two clear times I remember experiencing God in a way that changed my faith. When I was 14, my family moved from Phoenix, Arizona, to a small town in Vermont. The closest church my parents would attend was about 40 minutes away, which meant our attendance was sporadic. After two difficult years, my family had an opportunity to move back to Phoenix. I remember being told that we would not move back unless everyone in the family wanted to go. As a 16-year-old who didn't want to uproot himself and give up his new friends, I was uncertain what to do. I remember very clearly being convicted that my faith was important and that it could not grow in the environment I was in. It was the first time something like this had ever happened to me.

Two years later, when I was 18, I was back in Phoenix and wondering whether I was supposed to go into vocational ministry or a secular career. During a Sunday morning sermon titled "10 Ways to Test a Godly Impression," the message seemed to confirm what I had been wondering. I left that morning with a significant sense of peace about pursuing ministry, even though I had already enrolled in college for another degree path and I was not naturally inclined toward adventure or uncertainty back then. That conviction, along with confirmation from others, led me to change my college plans and pursue what I believed God was calling me to do.

My college years were difficult. Looking back, I realize that I did not properly understand the importance of relying on Jesus in my everyday life, especially in ministry. I dropped out of college and floundered in my faith. A few years later, when I began dating my now-wife, I realized that I wanted to marry her, and I was again confronted with the need to take my faith seriously. I returned to college, pursued a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies with a focus on public speaking, graduated, and began a career in public education administration. At the same time, the call to seminary became increasingly difficult to ignore. Eventually, someone reminded me that God does not remove the callings He places on our lives simply because we run from them. I told my wife that I needed to go back to seminary and her response was, "Duh. You're the only one who hasn't known that."

I needed seminary. I needed to examine my faith and ask questions like, "Do I really believe these things?" and "Why do I believe these things?" One of the things I learned in seminary is that "seminary doesn't make pastors, the church does." I came to realize that my church had been very good at sharing information but not very good at teaching people how to apply what they knew. At graduation, I walked across that stage as a different man than the one who walked in on day one. One of the most important things I learned was that what we believe about God should result in worship and, from there, affect how we live.

I went into seminary telling my wife, “I don’t know what God is going to do on the other side of graduation. I only know that I am supposed to go.” As we approached graduation four years later, we found ourselves realizing that our church was not where we believed God was leading us to raise our family. In 2016, after twenty years at the same church, we made the difficult decision to leave and joined Valley Life Church in North Phoenix. They quickly gave me opportunities to serve and lead as a volunteer, while I was also beginning a career as a consultant.

In late 2020, we were called to join Valley Life’s newest church plant, Valley Life North Mountain, where I served as Executive Director. One year later, Valley Life decided that it would no longer operate additional campuses, and we had six weeks to become an independent church or shut down. Our team worked hard, and we successfully launched Mission Valley Church as an independent church in January 2022. The experience was painful, and I eventually took a break from serving on staff. During that season, my good friend Ben Wood helped me learn what has probably been the single biggest lesson I have learned about God: the sovereignty of God really is complete and perfect. I thought I had learned this in seminary, but I had not understood the depth of what it meant for my life. My faith and my outlook on life and ministry began to change.

A few months later, Mission Valley was given an opportunity to merge with another local church: The same church where Jen and I had grown up. Because I knew both churches and had experience in leadership and business administration, I was asked to work with both churches’ elders to explore the financial and organizational feasibility of the merger. In only three months, we went from the first discussions of a merger to a vote where both churches affirmed the merger. Looking back, I could see another example of the lesson God had been teaching me: His sovereignty is perfect, His plans are better, and we are called to be faithful even when we do not understand.

I continued serving Mission Valley in various ways as the merger began to take hold. I was also still working as a consultant, traveling roughly 25 weeks a year. During that season, my marriage started to struggle. One Sunday, during a sermon, the pastor said, “If anything in your life is out of order, fix it with urgency for the sake of the mission.” I came home that afternoon and asked Jen whether she believed my job was interfering with our marriage, my relationship with our kids, and my ability to serve Jesus. She said that she believed it was. I resigned from my consulting job the next morning. I had no plans to resign the day before, but I knew my marriage and family were more important than a job, no matter how much I enjoyed it.

Afterward, Jen and I worked to strengthen our marriage and family, and I took a job with the local school district. I was home for dinner every night and able to devote more attention to Mission Valley. In early 2025, our church leadership realized that we had grown beyond the capacity of our co-vocational volunteer Senior Pastor. I was asked to explore what an Associate Pastor role might look like and to prepare a prospectus for the elders. I immediately expressed interest, and after several months of prayer and preparation, the position was approved, and I began serving full-time at Mission Valley.

My first year in full-time ministry has been an incredible blessing and joy. It has also been difficult at times. Through all of these seasons, I have increasingly realized that being in ministry truly is my calling. God has used my faith journey, my marriage and family, my failures, my education, and the various seasons of ministry to teach me that strong leadership, intentional discipleship, and pastoral care are essential to the long-term health of a church. Most importantly, He has continued to teach me that His sovereignty is perfect and that my responsibility is to remain faithful to the calling He has placed on my life.

The Word of God

I believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God. Written by various human authors, the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit in both their words and meaning. Because scripture is God's Word and is true, it carries God's authority and is to be obeyed. I believe scripture is sufficient for all that we need to know regarding salvation and righteous living.

2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Hebrews 4:12-13, Jude 1:3, and Psalm 19:7-14

The Trinity

I believe in one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully God and worthy of worship. Good is good, holy, righteous, unchanging, eternal, completely trustworthy, and worthy of our worship.

Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 46:9, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Matthew 28:19, 1 Peter 1:2

God the Father

I believe God is self-existent, eternal, infinite, omnipresent, and dependent on nothing outside of Himself. He is unchanging in His essence and attributes and is both transcendent above creation and actively involved in it. I believe God has determined His purposes from eternity past and faithfully brings His plans to fulfillment.

Psalm 90:2, Acts 17:25, 1 Timothy 1:17. Exodus 3:14, Jeremiah 23:23-24, James 1:17, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 5:45, 6:25-30, 10:29-30, Ephesians 1:11

Jesus

I believe Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, fully God and fully man. He is eternal, the creator and sustainer of all things, and worthy of worship. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. As fully human, He became the mediator between God and humanity and offered Himself as our substitutionary sacrifice. Through His death and resurrection, He defeated evil, provided atonement for sin, paid our penalty, reconciled us to God, redeemed us, and justified those who believe. He now reigns at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for His people, and will return as judge and eternal king.

John 1:4, 5:22-23, Hebrews 1:8, 2:16-17, 7:25, 9:22, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Timothy 2:5, Galatians 4:4, Luke 1:26-38, John 1:29, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 1:19-22

The Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit is a divine person, not an impersonal force, and is the third person in the Trinity. He is fully God and possesses the attributes of God. The Holy Spirit was active in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and is active in the life of every believer. He illuminates God's Word, seals believers for the day of redemption, convicts of sin, teaches truth, glorifies Christ, and helps and intercedes for believers in their weakness.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16, 3:16, Acts 5:3-4, 7:51, 10:38, Hebrews 9:14, Luke 1:35, 4:1, John 14:26, 16:14, Matthew 10:20, Romans 8:11, 8:26-27, Ephesians 4:30

Salvation

I believe sin separates humanity from God and that all people inherit both the guilt of Adam and a sinful nature. Sin affects every part of who we are, including our mind, desires, and will, leaving us completely unable to save ourselves or come to faith in Jesus apart from God's work in us. Salvation is therefore a gift of God, received only by His grace. God justly pardons the sin of those who trust in Jesus and imputes His righteousness to them.

I believe those who have genuinely trusted in Jesus for salvation are eternally secure in Him. Because salvation is entirely the gracious work of God, those whom He saves are kept by His power, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and cannot ultimately lose their salvation.

Romans 1:24, 1:32, 3:23, 5:12, 8:1, 8:33, 1 Corinthians 15:22, Ephesians 2:3, 2:8-9, John 14:6, 15:5, 6:65, Matthew 19:26

The Church

I believe the church is the body of Christ, both universally and locally. A true church teaches the whole counsel of God's Word, observes the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, follows the commands of Christ, and worships God. I believe the church's mission toward God is to worship, expressed through preaching and hearing God's Word, praise, prayer, and celebration of who He is. The church's mission towards others is to make disciples of all nations. This includes helping believers grow toward spiritual maturity and equipping them to faithfully follow and serve Christ.

Ephesians 1:12, 1:22-23, 4:12-13, Acts 2:38, 2:42, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Colossians 3:16, John 4:23, Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 10:24

The Ordinances

Baptism is an outward proclamation of an inward change and is intended for believers, representing their identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is likewise for believers and serves as a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice and our union with Him through faith. The Lord's Supper is to be observed when the church gathers.

Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Marriage and Family

I believe God created marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman and designed the family as the primary context for raising and discipling children. Parents bear a God-given responsibility to teach their children to know and follow Christ, while the church partners with families to encourage, disciple, and equip them in this calling. I believe that a husband's first mission field is his wife and a parent's first mission field is their children.

Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 19:4-6, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:25-33, 6:4, 1 Peter 3:7