

Discipleship at the Gathering United Methodist Church

Why the church exists:

The Gathering exists to create Christian community that is compelling for new generations of people in St. Louis.

What we do:

Our primary task is to invite new people to become deeply committed followers of Christ

We need to keep in mind the three areas of growth we're trying to accomplish...

- 1) Intellectual / Knowledge-based
- 2) Spiritual
- 3) Social / Relational
- 4) The overlap between these elements

So overall, the vision for our discipleship process is to help people...

- 1) Connect w/ Community
- 2) Commit to the vision (understand it, get on board)
- 3) Continue in growth:
 - a. Intellectual/Knowledge: Bible, God, Jesus, Church (Christianity & Methodism)
 - b. Relationship with and love for God (Worship, prayer, giving, etc)
 - c. Relationship with and love for others (Fellowship, service, etc)

So that's the vision, but instead of starting at the beginning, we want to look at our dream for somebody who has been at the Gathering for ____ years. This person will hopefully...

- 1) Have an understanding of the basics of the faith (Bible, God, Jesus, Church)
- 2) Participate in personal spiritual practices
- 3) Have meaningful connections and relationships with others
- 4) Have the ability to articulate what they believe and why it matters
- 5) Have some understanding of their unique gifts and actively use those gifts to serve others

→ It's the *wrestling* with the faith that really matters. Without it, you're just a puppet. #1 gives you the skills to wrestle with the faith, #2 gives you the tools to practice that faith, and #3 gives you the people to wrestle with. #4 is then the personal result of the wrestling and #5 is the outward result of the wrestling. We want people to live differently as a result of what they come to believe. So we need #1,2,3 to get to # 4&5....

Guiding Principles

- 1) Simple (Invitational, transparent, accessible)
- 2) Potential Depth (Go where the group needs to go, push people to go deeper)
- 3) High Quality (Planning, execution, leaders/training, relationships, fully commit, intentionality, do a few things really well not a lot of things that are mediocre)

Our Proces Currently looks like...

- 1) Coffee with Matt (Monthly)
 - Initial connection to the church for most people
 - Opportunity to learn about the history and vision of the church
 - Opportunity to meet Matt personally and ask questions
- 2) Connections Dinners (Monthly)
 - Get new and quasi-new people connected to the community
 - May be based on affinity groups or not
- 3) One-Time Events (Monthly)
 - a. Visiting professor – God in OT or something like that
 - b. Advent/Lent Prayer Practice
- 4) Skeptics
- 5) Membership Class (One night per month) – Give a little bit of the history/vision of the church, mixed with some basic beliefs of the church and a good deal about what it means to be a member at the Gathering, what practices are expected, etc. Membership is not the end of some process, it's the first step in the journey.
- 6) Foundations
 - Four weeks: Bible, God, Jesus, Church, generally followed up with an Ask the Pastor night with Deb
 - Not mandatory encouraged for all and definitely required for small group leaders and class teachers
- 7) All Church Book Studies (twice per year)
 - All Church small group push, much like the Ecclesiastes series
- 8) “Electives” (at least one in each foundational category per year):
 - a. Pray Like a Grown Up
 - b. Living Your Strengths
 - c. Jesus I Never Knew
 - d. Who is God?
 - e. Intro to Bible
 - f. Three Simple Rules
 - g. Simply Christian
 - h. Family friendly group (after Corinthians)
- 9) Disciple Bible Study – OT in Fall, NT in Spring plus books
 - 8-9 week group of more intense Bible study and relationship building
- 10) Community/Life Groups – Small group study plus occasional fellowship & service
 - a. short term and “ongoing”
 - b. Students, neighborhoods, men, women, parents, etc. affinity and non-affinity