

Dan Knight

Minister of Adult Discipleship

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What do I do?

I do my best to serve God by serving others. My mission in life is to accept people wherever they are in life and lead them to accept what God wants them to be. My current responsibilities are focused principally on the latter part of the statement: Leading others to accept what God wants them to do.

My official title at the Overland Park Church is Minister of Adult Discipleship, and my three major roles include organizing adult education, organizing small groups and, a relatively new role, helping people in spiritual formation. Adult education involves lining up teachers for Sunday morning adult Bible classes and coordinating the teachers with the various LINKS.¹ We change teachers in each class every two months, so this is an ongoing task of organization. I am always on the lookout for new teachers! Most of our teachers rotate through the different classes presenting the same material to each group. This helps avoid the pressure that's on a teacher to come up with new material every quarter or two months. Every other year, we host a special educator to enhance our work as teachers.

"Organizing" small groups is my task in lieu of "controlling" small groups. Most of our small groups exist autonomously. I naturally serve as a resource for the leaders whenever there is a need. In 2017, we had a guest teacher about small groups and I hope by the Fall to see many more groups coalescing and our people developing more and deeper relationships. We are currently forming a typology of small groups that will be more inclusive. In other words, we will recognize the importance of Bible study groups (that is, LIFE Groups) as well as groups that are oriented toward relationship building, groups that are task-oriented, and groups that are evangelistic. All groups will have some element of Loving God, Loving One Another, Loving Our Neighbors and Loving the One Seeking to Know Christ. These four components are the DNA of groups, but some groups emphasize one element more than others.

I encourage our ministers to take advantage of small groups in two ways. First, in creating teams to assist them in their ministry, either in specific tasks or in deciding the direction of the ministry. For example, Taylor may decide to train and activate a group for her ministry opportunities. Second, for their own need for nurturing, it's great for ministers to have a group to surround them with love and acceptance.

¹ LINKS are an affinity-based approach to organizing communities of people within our church according to their life circumstances. The LINKS are centered on, but are not limited in their scope to, the Sunday morning adult Bible classes. LINK is an acronym for Leading, Involving, and Networking the Kingdom.

Spiritual formation is a phrase that is rather new in church circles, but the concept is as old as the New Testament. The Apostle Paul's rather dramatic statement to the Galatians sums up the importance of spiritual formation: "My children, I am again suffering labor pains for you until Christ is formed in you." (4:19) This process begins (thanks to our great Children's Ministry!) when a child is born into this congregation, and continues until we say our final goodbyes with a celebratory memorial service. If I may use a sports analogy, spiritual formation, especially through the spiritual disciplines, is the process of preparing ourselves spiritually for the game day. On the "playing field" we live out the four loves mentioned in a previous paragraph.

In order to enhance my ability to lead in the area of spiritual formation, I have spent the last two years working toward a doctoral degree in the area of missional theology and spiritual formation. Lord willing, I will finish my dissertation project early in 2018.

My fourth area of responsibility, over and above the three major roles I've mentioned, corresponds directly with my Grace Gifts of shepherding and teaching. Shepherding for me includes performing weddings and officiating at funerals, talking with people in need of spiritual direction, preparing people for marriage, and assisting other ministers and administrators on staff with various projects. Teaching involves teaching Bible classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday nights (I have taught almost every week that I have been here since 1993), and teaching individuals in various aspects of Bible knowledge. My office is open and readily available for such sessions.

I try to serve, also, as a resource for other ministers in assessing a person's giftedness and helping them get involved based on that. Here's a very possible scenario: Taylor meets people working in the inner city. She helps them encounter the love of Christ and they come to Zach to see about involvement at OP Church. They become connected to the spiritual formation process, discover how God has gifted them, and eventually emerge to help Taylor's work as Community Liaison.

If you are interested in being part of our teaching team or small group leadership team, please, contact me. If you have any questions about adult discipleship, please get in touch with me, also.