

02 | WALK ON: CHURCH AS A **PATHWAY** FOR FAITH

By Derek Sweatman

“Trust The Process”

Remember that phrase? It was/is an axiom used in sports and wellness spaces, career consulting, therapy, and anything that comes with necessary steps and disciplines. Does it work within the realm of faith development, though? What *is* the process for that? There are churches and traditions that come with very particular onboarding classes for new members, and those are typically sessions focusing on required beliefs and practices. You may call them checklists for faith and church life development. There are also churches who promote a rather unattainable goal of holding a version of faith that that *should* be moving forward at all times.

The “Come And See” Alternative

We read in John’s Gospel, “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you get to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’” (John 1:45-50, NRSV) The first thing to notice is the call to “come and see.” Here we see one of the ways discipleship works, which is through *invitation* and *discovery*. Jesus used these same words earlier in John 1, so the repetition helps us lock this model in. There’s an invitation to follow Jesus around, which for us is to learn of him and his works through the Gospels. As we read we are also following, we’re trailing him like so many of the people featured in the Gospel narratives who were also loosely or closely turning up wherever Jesus was. The second part of the calling is to discover, to see what we see as we follow Jesus. For our purposes this includes hearing Jesus’ teachings as we read through the stories.

Look Around

This is the way of discipleship we have embraced as a church, these two images of *invitation* and *discovery*. We seek to be a safe place to follow Jesus by “looking around” and discovering who Jesus is, knowing that this process is never always clean or linear or always moving forward. Faith takes a lifetime. But over time, as your faith in Christ develops, you will experience the movement along the pathway of your faith and will know more personally what Jesus meant when he said to Nathanael, “You will see greater things than these.” (John 1:50, NRSV)