

Beliefs, Values, Philosophy, Understandings For My Pastoral Ministry and Calling

By David Parker

Central Mission/Purpose: The church's central mission and purpose is to make, nurture, mature and release into ministry, Christian Disciples who will, in turn, use their life and gifts to do the same with others. (2 Tim 2:2)

Pastor's Primary Purpose: "Prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) and to lead, cast vision and plan with other Lay Leaders of the church, helping to work with staff and leaders in coordinating, supervising, training and evaluating ministry.

Spiritual Formation: Spiritual growth, maturity and connection to people can best happen through these core experiences:

- Personal devotional life of scriptural study and prayer.
- Home based, church based or community based "cell groups" that are focused on spiritual formation and maturing in Christ by engaging ourselves with study of the scriptures, prayer, support and mission.
- Regular worship attendance and participation in the programmatic, missional and giving life of the church.
- Deployed ministry service inside and outside the church.

Worship: Today, the church must expand its portfolio to include new forms of music, instrumentation and style as mediums of communication which are all an important part of helping the modern world make a life-changing connection with Jesus Christ. The use of innovative technologies and worship styles can help us fulfill our mission of reaching the unreached for Jesus Christ. The use of the arts in worship, drama, visual aids, power-point and video imaging can help us communicate the gospel to the people living in our tech-savvy culture. A staff member gifted in this area would be of great value to a church seeking to use this paradigm effectively. However, we must retain the rich and vibrant heritage of connecting with God through traditional and classic forms for the many among us who speak the "language" and "music" of tradition. In either case, worship should be lively, vibrant, moving, inspirational and Christ-centered.

Program/Ministry: The very best kind of ministry happens when people are intrinsically connected to their passions and callings. From the promptings of the Holy Spirit comes our response to join God where he is already "at work." Any church will be at its best to focus on "gifts" and "callings" instead of "offices"

as we seek to empower God's people to serve in a capacity that gives them energy and fulfillment. We recognize that sometimes God calls us to do things that do not correspond to our gifts or passions, and that these too are opportunities for us to grow in life and ministry. However, we should not try to "convince" anybody of a certain task or "peg" any one person to "fill a position." The very best ministers are willing and eager servants!

Staffing: Every church should staff for growth. All staffing should in some way relate to fulfilling the church mission and vision. I see a great potential and benefit in becoming more racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse in staffing. All future staffing should reflect the emerging ethnic realities of any community and of the larger world-wide body of Christ. Staffing should be more specialized and less "generalist" in nature. Local, in-house, leads are a better bet for long-term stability.

Plant/building: Church buildings and property should be seen as tools for ministry. Sometimes tools do a good job for a long time. Sometimes tools need sharpening, fixing or even modifying. Sometimes better tools come along and make older tools less effective and even obsolete. From time to time, the "tools" of the church should be evaluated in light of what the Spirit is calling us to do and be in ministry. Do they serve the vision adequately? Facilities should not limit ministry, but ministry callings and church vision should guide and direct facility needs and changes. Church property is not sacred or indispensable. God, and the people God meets with, are!

Organizational Systems: I dream and envision trying church governance by a responsible, highly committed and well trained few who handle all the financial, policy, administrative, staffing and property "decisions" related to the church and its ministry. I envision such a board being spiritual elders who seek wisdom and input from the congregation they serve, while stream-lining and simplifying the redundant processes for action on items.

Church Identity: I envision a community church that is "regional" in its nature, make-up and ministry; a church that draws people from a 20 mile radius, a church that becomes a regional center for spiritual life and growth for people inside and outside its immediate neighborhood. I envision a church that is faithful to its connectional relationship within United Methodism both in doctrine and in polity, but a church that, at the same time, is more concerned about making disciples than promoting "institutional denominationalism."

Doctrine and Theology: I am deeply committed to a robust but gracious evangelical articulation of the faith that has once and for all been delivered to the saints and church universal. Our churches must be orthodox in their preaching, teaching and ministry. Our strong Wesleyan theology is the source of our true biblical formation, historical witness and spiritual faithfulness. We must safeguard, promote and spread scriptural holiness everywhere because the world is still our parish.

Church Values: Every church must function with values that will turn Beliefs into Behaviors and Actions! These must be central to the heart of the biblical narrative.

These “genetic code,” deeply held conviction become the bedrock of community and the basis for Decisions and Directions as we seek to fulfill the vision that God has placed on our hearts!

COMMITTED CHRIST-FOLLOWERS

- We are walking with Jesus, following his example, and putting Him first in our lives.
- We are hearing Jesus’ words and obeying His voice.
- It is clear from our behavior and attitudes that we follow Jesus.
- We practice spiritual disciplines that help us embody the character of Christ.

Ephesians 4:15 - God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

ENTHUSIASTIC SERVANTS

- The Holy Spirit empowers us to worship, love and serve.
- Worship and service spill out of us in response to God’s greatness and love.
- We are at our best when we are serving others.
- We count it a joy to sacrifice in the service of Christ.
- Our hope in God’s victory helps us persevere in ministry.

Romans 12:11-13 - Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

NURTURING AND LOVING

- We believe investing in God’s Kingdom means investing in relationships
- We are genuinely concerned for the well-being and growth of everyone around us.
- We love each other by springing into action when a family member needs help.
- We come to know each other beyond a surface level by sharing our lives and having fun together.

1 John 3:18 - My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality.

TRUSTING AND TRUSTWORTHY

- You can count on us to do what we say we will do.
- We encourage sincere and courageous feedback with each other.
- We hold sensitive information in confidence, protecting each other in love.
- We commit to resolve conflict and reconcile relationships without gossip and in a spirit of respect and gentleness.

James 3:17-18 - Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.

REAL COMMUNITY

- We strive to maintain unity.
- We move and work together in a common mission.
- We are interdependent, helping each other to be faithful.
- We are real with each other, not putting on masks but being honest about our victories and struggles.

Ephesians 4:1-3 - In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. . . I want you to get out there and walk. . . on the road God called you to travel. . . And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

AXIS OF GRACE AND TRUTH

- We point each other to Jesus (the Truth) with our advice and conduct.
- We help each other grow through mistakes; we don't disqualify each other because of them.
- We choose to forgive because we have been forgiven much.
- We believe the Bible is true and powerful to transform people.

John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

LIFE CHANGERS

- We prioritize learning from Jesus so we gain his wisdom to influence others.
- We boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, believing it brings hope and healing to the world.
- We embrace innovative methods to enhance God's kingdom.
- We invest ourselves in helping others meet, trust and follow Jesus.
- We reach out with compassion to lift the lowly and bless the broken with God's love and grace.
- Like Jesus, we invade the world with God's presence and power, promoting justice and peace.

Matthew 28:18-20 - Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Church Doctrines: Held in the spirit of Wesleyan engagement...

***"In essentials, unity;
in non-essentials, liberty;
in all things, charity."
John Wesley***

***"Do not move the boundary stones"
Proverbs 23:10***

- **The Triune God** - Who is a living, loving and just God proclaimed in the Old and New Testaments, eternally existing in THREE persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who together, created all things. (John 10:30)
- **Jesus Christ** - We affirm His deity, His humanity, His LORDSHIP, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and his personal future return in power and glory. (Galatians 4:4-5, Romans 5:8-11, 1 Peter 1:3, John 14:1-3)
- **The Holy Spirit** – Sent from God as His continuing PRESENCE and POWER in the world, to convict the world of "sin and righteousness," to help Christians grow into spiritual maturity (sanctification) that we might live holy lives, to gift and empower the church for its work, life and worship. (Acts 1:8, John 16:5-16, 1 Peter 1:2)
- **The Bible** – As God's INSPIRED and authoritative word for faith and practice, leading to our salvation through both testaments, united in witness

and word. It represents Heaven's personal love letter, an invitation into life and joy, a prophetic calling to holiness and repentance and the only validating reminder of who we really are and what life is truly all about.

(2 Timothy 3:15, 16, Psalm 119:11, 105)

- **Original Sin** – As a clear and apparent reminder of our CORRUPT AND FALLEN NATURE shared throughout humanity. Through one man (Adam) all have sinned and have become separated, estranged and inclined toward evil. (Romans 5:12, Galatians 3:5-6, Isaiah 53:6)

- **Grace** - As God's incredible gift of love and undeserved FAVOR that leads our hearts towards faith (Prevenient Grace), restores us back to a right relationship (Justifying Grace) and renews our lives back into alignment with the heart and character of God (Sanctifying Grace). All of this is accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:9-11, Ephesians 2:8)

- **Faith** – Which is confirmed through a public confession of Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior, through a COMMITMENT to discipleship and intentional growth, and through a lifestyle of obedience. (Romans 1:5, 10:9-10, Matthew 10:32)

- **Salvation** – As God's plan for saving a FALLEN humanity. While we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us, signing the pardon for all that believe on Him. The Holy Spirit moves us into sincere repentance and wholehearted acceptance of Christ's gift to us. This free gift leads to our justification before God (the healing of our estranged relationship with Him). (Romans 5:8, John 1:12; 3:16, Ephesians 2:8)

- **Eternal Life** – As the larger and more complete DESTINATION and DISPOSITION for all human beings, resulting in a "forever existence" that is either to the life of Heaven and paradise or to the death and suffering of Hell and separation from God. (Rev. 22:1-5; Matt. 25:31-46)

- **The Sacraments** – Instituted and blessed by Jesus Christ:
 - (1) **Baptism** – which is an OUTWARD sign of God's grace at work in our lives to incorporate us into His family, with all forms (sprinkling, pouring, immersion) being equally valid. (Matthew 28:19, Colossians 2:12)
 - (2) **The Lord's Supper** (Communion) as both the symbolic and real use of bread and juice in remembrance and CELEBRATION of Christ's life on earth, and His ultimate sacrifice for our sin by His death on the cross. (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

- **Prayer** – As a way to be corporately and individually in COMMUNION with God, cultivating relational intimacy with Him as well as love, trust and familiarity with His voice. (John 10:4, Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 18:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

- **Love** – As the “most excellent way” for Christians to live and RELATE to one another and to all the people of this world. (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1, Romans 12:9-10, 1 John 3:11)
- **The Church** – As the living body of God’s CHILDREN, committed to faith in Jesus Christ and life in a collaborative community of people who belong together and build each other up in love until we all attain to unity and maturity in Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 4:1-16)
- **Generous Giving** – As a way of life and one of the spiritual DISCIPLINES from God for the surrender of our lives and the support and spread of His mission. We are called to be generous with our TIME (giving service), TALENTS (giving skill & knowledge), TREASURES (giving money), TESTIMONIES (giving a witness). The method ordained by God in financial giving is called “firstfruits” or tithes (10% of our gross income to the church) and free-will offerings (given over and above the tithe.) (Malachi 3:10, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Luke 16:13, Matthew 6:21)
- **Ministry** – That each person in the church is both GIFTED and CALLED to join in using their spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit in building up the body, modeling healthy community and bearing witness to the world. In this way, even the Holy Spirit is “Empowering believers to impact their world for Christ!” (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4:8-11)
- **Mission** – As the great enterprise of the people of God to DEMONSTRATE and DECLARE their faith to an unbelieving world and INVITE them to share in Heaven’s new life of JOY! Christ has commissioned us to make more disciples from every nation and people group and to live our lives as his ambassadors. (Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:20)

All of the above confessions, and many others, can be found in our historic Wesleyan faith in the doctrinal standards of the United Methodist Church, as outlined in the 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline “Doctrinal Standards and our Theological Task,” ¶ 101-104. These beliefs are rooted in the orthodox, evangelical, ecumenical tradition of the early church’s four founding creeds which have formed a consensual basis for the Christian faith.

Church Creeds: I also affirm and embrace Christian History’s great confessions:

- Apostle’s Creed - A summary of the historic Apostles’ Teachings
- Nicene Creed - Upholds the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Chalcedonian Creed - Upholds the two natures of Jesus Christ as God and Man
- Athanasian Creed - Upholds the doctrine of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit

Renewal Movements: A signed member of The Confessing Movement

The Confessing Movement is a witness by United Methodist lay men and women, clergy and congregations who pledge unequivocal and confident allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ according to “The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and seek to work for biblical renewal and doctrinal faithfulness in the life of our church.

You can also visit their website: www.confessingumc.org

What I believe about Life:

*Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves
have rolled over me.
Psalm 42:7*

Life is Journey - because no one arrives overnight.

Nothing that is good and lasting in life is quick or easy. Jesus said, the Queen of Sheba “traveled a long way to hear Solomon's wisdom” – and she marveled at the magnificence of his understanding and insight – once she arrived! Progress and growth happens in life when we are willing to commit to taking a long journey. Eugene Peterson put it this way: “There must be a long obedience in the same direction.” Truth is, anyone can start a race and anyone can stop. It’s that IN-BETWEEN time of rugged, raw and restless journey that determines the course your destiny. Jesus said – “I am the Way!” To believe in Jesus is to journey through life with him.

Life is Mystery - because sometimes there are no clear answers.

Pain, frustration, betrayals, catastrophes – Why does life have to hurt so much? Why do bad things happen to good people? – and why do good things happen to the bad? So many unanswered questions. In his wisdom, Solomon said, “People cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT). Turns out, the vantage point of human existence doesn’t allow for perfect 20/20 vision (the seeing and understanding all of life’s problems and complexities). To do life well, we have to embrace mystery. And the only way we can make peace with mystery is to live by faith and hope: Faith in a God who sees and understands what we don’t – Hope in a promise that (in the end) Eden is restored, anguish is banished and Life resurrected. Jesus said – “I am the resurrection and the life!”

Life is Painful - because disappointment and hurt travel with us.

None of us chose these traveling companions – they just rudely show up on our doorstep and shadow us on our journey through life. The Bible reminds us that people can and do hurt and disappoint us. The Apostle Paul once told his younger colleague Timothy, “Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm” (2 Timothy 2:14). It’s not

unusual to feel “HARMED” by others. It’s what you do with that nagging nemesis that determines the sustained impact on your life. Why not turn bitterness into blessing – heartache into hope? Joseph came to believe that what his brothers intended for evil, God purposed for good. That attitude not only raised his spirits, but also his stature into a national leader. God wants to transform our temporal pains into a life-giving gains.

Life is Sacred - because everything and everyone matters.

With over 7 billion people and countless details, options, causes and concerns on this tiny planet earth – it’s easy to get lost in a sea of over-stimulation. Too much of anything can rob us of a vision that life matters and holds profound importance. To say that life is sacred is to say it’s an incredible gift from God; a cherished opportunity; a magnificent mystery that affords us time and space to live and work, to relate and love. The Bible reminds us that God gave us our bodies (and our lives) as a “Sacred Temple,” a holy dwelling for His dignity and reverence. Truth is, the more we value things and people, the more devoted attention and care we’ll give to them, and the more blessings we’ll receive from them. So it really is true after all – what you SEE is what you GET!

Life is Spiritual - because God is Spirit and has given us spirit.

More and more, researchers are telling us that people are open to spirituality but less and less interested in institutional religion and Christianity. Affluence and secularization has opened the doors to self-serving, isolated consumer religion. The Bible tells us that God has “planted eternity in every human heart” (Ecclesiastes 3:11) so that we might seek after Him and find Him. God gave us this gift not to focus on ourselves and our own special entitlement spiritual interests, but to focus on Him. It’s why He sent His Son to earth. Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). The only question is, will we be an observer, a distant admirer – or a faithful, fully-devoted, life-long follower?

Life is Hope - because despair is death and defeat.

If you’ve ever been cast low by DESPAIR, then you know what it’s like to live in the basement of life. Struggling with depression, on the verge of giving up, tired of just coping and surviving. Everything about despair tells us to stay parked in perpetual pain. Despair’s evil voice says, “Don’t even dare to think that anything will change or get better.” And then leans in close to us and whispers in our ear – “Get used to it!” The Apostle Paul once said, we were “so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Feeling despair is not wrong, but moving in and permanently settling down with despair is. King David once said, “I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). Hope, turns out, is a far better housemate!

Life is Jesus - because "In him was life..." (John 1:4).

It's amazing to see how many different ways people choose to chase after the elusive goal of LIFE. Relationships, power, possessions, position and prestige are just a few of the paths people travel to find their fulfillment. For many people, LIFE is defined by SATISFACTION, and culture tells them to "obey their thirst." Wisdom personified in the Bible, on the other hand, suggests a different strategy: "Whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD" (Proverbs 8:35). Turns out, Life-giving wisdom doesn't come from a higher-ed degree or accumulated experience, but as the generous gift of God who wants to graduate all of us someday into His eternal Kingdom. Are you still "looking for life"? Jesus, the Jewish Rabbi, came as our teacher – and long after His resurrection- class is still in session. Why not enroll today?

What I Believe About People

"The light of my face was precious to them" ~ Job 29:24

People matter! All people matter – no exceptions! All people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26); their days on earth are ordained from heaven (Psalm 139:16) and all people are the apple of God's eye (Psalm 17:8). No exceptions! That makes each person special to God.

From Heaven's perspective...

We believe that all people are wanted, valued and loved.
We believe that all people are chosen, cherished and desired.
We believe that all people are gifts, vessels and treasures.

No exceptions!

We also believe that every human being is broken, imperfect and beautiful!
We believe that God believes in people while insisting on kingdom behavior!
We believe this is possible through forgiveness, grace and the Holy Spirit!

We believe that God wants us to "love the sinner but hate the sin"
We believe that our culture no longer believes and embraces this truth.
We believe kingdom life (biblical values) can be seen as judgmental.

So with deep humility, I bravely, gracefully and resolutely affirm my commitment to ALL PEOPLE even when I do not affirm all life choices or actions. For instance:

I am FOR Addicts but against all addictions
I am FOR prisoners but against all crime
I am FOR tax evaders but against tax evasion
I am FOR homosexuals but against homosexuality
I am FOR liars and cheaters but against lying and cheating
I am FOR the divorced but against breaking covenant
I am FOR the marginally religious but against marginal religion

I am FOR religious hypocrites but against hypocrisy

You get the idea!

In my mind and spirit, “FOR” means recognizing God’s prior and greater plan for any person’s life outside of, and above, their current contrary behaviors. I am also capable of “contrary behavior” myself, and in some cases, even worse. And so I humbly join the Tax Collector who understood his rightful position before God, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

What I Believe about Church

I believe that every church is to be...

A broken, imperfect and beautiful family that is healing together. We are all loved by God and we are all in need of forgiveness, repair, restoration and transformation. None of us have arrived and no one will be graduating from discipleship anytime soon. Church is PEOPLE – first and foremost – a people growing into Christ-likeness. Church is community and how we live together matters. Community begins with mutual respect and unravels with distrust. We must be a gracious, patient, unconditionally loving and valuing body of believers.

I believe that every church is to be...

Chasing after God’s incredible dream of a family formed for joy and liberty. Joy is the ecstasy of relating to our Lord and Savior in ongoing love. Liberty is the life-giving freedom (physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically) that comes from our deliverance from sin, bondage, fracture and every form of darkness that once oppressed us and controlled us. Only in God’s family (the Church) are we full alive in this way.

I believe that every church is to be...

Engaged and activated! Worship Services, Discipleship Programming, Mission Projects, Church Leadership planning and initiatives, campus facilities, community partnerships – they are all offered for our full participation, not for CRITICIZING and COMPLAINING. By PARTICIPATING and PARTNERING, by IMPROVING and ENHANCING, we are the church – together – building our family and community up in love. !

I believe that every church is to be...

Missional through deference! Personal preferences and opinions almost always interfere with (and can undermine deep growth in) discipleship and sacrificial attitudes of deference. More importantly, personal PREFERENCES tend to unseat the rule of

PURPOSE in community decisions and directions. The PURPOSE of the Kingdom must always trump the PREFERENCE of individuals.

I believe that every church is to be...

Ordered to serve. Structures, committees and oversight governance systems are to serve the mission and people; people were not created to serve structures and become worn down by endless meetings. Support structures are the PLATFORM but not the POINT!

I believe that every church is to be...

A culture of respect and honor. Pastors and Church Leaders (while not perfect or without fault) are to be honored, respected and followed as ones who have been given both divinely appointed and given temporal and spiritual charge over the larger body to promote Christ's mission, protect the flock, feed their growth and correct their error (Heb. 13:17).

I believe that every church is to be...

All assimilated and integrated. Church and body life matters deeply and no one should remain as an anonymous "side-line" attendee among the rank-and-file. None should hide, hang out or hibernate from responsible participation. Growing disciples do not only want to "sit and soak." Come instead, as Christ calls each member of His family, to engage and graft your life to Christ's life (Romans 11:11-24). Making ourselves known to each other and moving into deep relationships of nurture, trust and growth is essential. In the end, this is how God's people are called to live well.

I believe that every church is to be...

Safe for all! Boundaries Make Us Beautiful. The Bible says, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

Every person is a sacred gift from God to be loved, valued, cherished, protected and dignified into life! Within the larger framework of the Central Church family, we have adopted an all-church commitment to creating and sustaining ministries and environments that are conducive to trust, safety, dignity and healing.

This commitment is to be seen and taken as a sacred trust for each of us as we attend to our own weaknesses, vulnerabilities and brokenness. Purity of love and holiness of conduct become the hallmark attributes of a safe community that is determined to offer its very best for one another in respect of healthy spiritual formation and healing. While a "Safe-church Policy" focuses more specifically on children, youth and vulnerable adults, the spirit and intent is for all participants of every ministry program.

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every participant at Church must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Each participant is responsible to join together in creating a family environment and experience for all that is filled with hospitality, graciousness, deference, respect, mutual partnership, appropriate relational conduct and communication that is best for the benefit and edification of all people! "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19)

I believe that every church is to be...

Continually improving! We have not always done a good job at living these ideals out. Each church must want to do better and learn how to THRIVE as we follow our Lord. Each person's presence and participation on this journey of transformation is an important gift towards mutual edification. Effective spiritual growth happens in community!

"Give me one hundred men who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergyman or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven upon the earth."

-John Wesley

What I Believe about Disciples

If I could ask for three qualities in the Christ followers which would posture them most for deep and expanding growth and transformation, it would be these three:

Humble: People who understand that life is "not all about them" are aware of a larger story. They have come to learn (maybe the hard way) that maybe they are not exactly the best thing since sliced bread. They now know how to assume their rightful place before God and among others (Romans 12:3; Ecclesiastes 5:2). These are the people who are more likely to be teachable, grateful, relatable and deployable in the causes of Christ's kingdom.

Hungry: People who are truly desperate for God and for a fresh start on life are focused on grace, growth and godly outcomes. Chasing after what matters most (Matthew 6:33) means leaving life's shallow nonsense at the door and desiring truth and hope more than comfort, coddling and personal preferences. They are willing to exchange the pretense of a "together life" in order to lay hold of an "in-recovery" identity that actually is rewarding, meaningful and life-giving.

Honoring: People who get what "life together" should look like are ready to settle in with a diverse crowd of people who are still under construction. They reserve judgment

and ramp up engagement. They build bridges, ask questions and learn to celebrate folks they used to not understand or get along with. They hone the skill of honoring the image of God in everyone by embracing the mind of Christ for themselves.

What I Believe about “Life Success”

It is Being comfortable and content in my own skin!

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist” John 13:3,4 ESV

It is Being evidently and conspicuously in love with God!

“One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved dearly, was reclining against him, his head on his shoulder” John 13:23 The Message

It is Helping people take hold of the life that is truly life!

“...so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”
1 Timothy 6:19b TNIV