

COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE
WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

8.3 Partnering in the Mission of Jesus

DC Dream Center

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Jill:

Hey, NCC'ers. This is Jill and I serve on the board of the DC Dream Center. And I'm here today with Ernest Clover, the Executive Director of the DC Dream Center to talk about the mission of Jesus and what it looks like to be on mission every day. So, first question. Ernest, can you go ahead and introduce yourself and how long you've been involved with the DC Dream Center?

Ernest Clover:

Hi, Jill. Thank you so much again. Ernest Clover, and I have the honor and privilege of serving as Executive Director of the DC Dream Center. And I have been there now for 13 years, total. First starting as a mentor and now 10 years as Executive Director.

Jill:

Great. Can you give us a little history lesson? How did the ministry start? What's the connection between Southeast White House and DC Dream Center?

Ernest Clover:

It is a true God story. The Southeast White House started February 6, 1996 and National Community Church started January 1996. And the two gentlemen who were there at the helm of leadership at the Southeast White House, Sammy Morrison, former Deputy Chief of Police in Washington, DC, Scott Dimick, former area Young Life leader for Northern Virginia were the two

guys who were there, said, let's have a house on the hill for the presence of Jesus. And that's where it started. And because of the friendship and connection between Southeast White House and National Community Church, it was in 2010 that conversations began about a partnership. And from those conversations, birthed the DC Dream Center.

Jill:

Such an amazing rich history, which leads us into partnering in the mission of Jesus. And so we've developed core beliefs as part of our discipleship pathways and we've outlined five practices that embody the missional church, and living on mission every day. And I'd love to hear how you apply those to your work at the DC Dream Center. The first one being, operates contextually. Essentially, what does the good news look like in your community, your unique cultural context? How do you operate contextually?

Ernest Clover:

This is a great question, Jill. So operating contextually. First, I would encourage everyone to become a servant to all. Paul admonishes us to do this in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. So in serving people, that allows me to listen and to learn and to be in a posture to actually add value to whatever situation might come, for the sake of the Gospel.

Jill:

So good. As we look at the next practice, it's pursuing Shalom. So when we talk about peacemaking, we are partnering with God in the ongoing restoration of the world, bringing wholeness to our relationships with God, self, others and creation. Can you share what that looks like for you?

Ernest Clover:

Yeah, a mainstay for us at the Dream Center is our reconciliation luncheon. And that is a real space for us to say, if we set a table and invite people to come around it, can we have them put down the weapons of war that they might have to have in the world? To say, hey, let's suspend that for a moment and let's realize that we have more in common than you might imagine because we'll facilitate a one-hour lunch where we break bread and engage. So pursuing shalom is really trying to help people see what they have in common instead of pointing out their differences.

Jill:

I love that. Putting down our weapons of war, so good. The third practice is dreaming God-sized dreams. So we believe the church is called to prophesy kingdom solutions in our world. How do you dream freely and how do you inspire others to as well?

Ernest Clover:

This is a great question, Jill. And I would first encourage believers to, there's a recognition that needs to happen in realizing that we are ambassadors for Jesus and therefore we represent the King and we represent His kingdom. And from that point, I would encourage you to join a small group, to be with other believers. And as you start bumping up against people and start asking them about their needs, ask them about their history, I believe that as you step into that space, the Lord will reveal to you, hey, this is what I want you to do. This is the opportunity that you have with this group of believers, to make impact for the kingdom.

Jill:

Great. The fourth is, the mission of Jesus exists on the redemptive edge. We talk about this as the place that light confronts darkness. Specifically at NCC we've named ACT, which is advocate for the poor and oppressed, care for the sick and sorrowful and transform through reconciliation. How does that play out in your context, Ernest?

Ernest Clover:

So being around the table quite often is the best way for us to really have that play out. So whether that's our cooking class in ward eight at Langston Lane, where we're taking youth and putting them in a position where they can learn not only how to cook for themselves, but also serve individuals who are experiencing homelessness, or whether it's our reconciliation luncheon or our mentoring or our summer camp. It is being present with individuals, hearing their story, but also being with believers to say, hey, we're going to pray with each other and sharpen each other as we meet these needs for the sake of the kingdom.

Jill:

I love that. What I keep hearing over and over again is relationship. All of this is in relationship. And you mentioned too hearing other people's story, which leads us into our next practice, practice five, which is the story of God, the story of NCC and the story of you as part of inviting others in. How is the story of Jesus shared at the DC Dream Center? What does invitation look like?

Ernest Clover:

So invitation again, and thank you, Jill, is all based on relationship. So it really is meeting people where they are, knowing that, hey, my goal is to have relationship with people. A perfect example is being able to have our cooking class and our chef celebrated her birthday. And I was like, guys, you know what? As followers of Jesus, we get to throw the best parties in the world. So before she gets here, I want you to get excited, I want you to do this. And I want you to know that you don't need to be jealous about this, because you too will have your time.

And so it's taking concepts that are Scriptural, that are Biblical, and really trying to break them down, but in healthy relationship. So that is just one little sliver of what it looks like to invite

people. And I would tell people, it's to hang out, to do life with people. So some of my volunteers, I'm like, hey, I want you to be with me and these are the spaces that I'm at. So come with me to NCC or come with me over to the Dream Center. Be with me, come and hang out.

Jill:

So good, doing life with each other, inviting each other into all the things we're doing and partnering in the relationship with Jesus and partnering in relationship with each other. And so I just want to thank you for taking the time to share all of this with us and all the work that's happening at the Dream Center. Love it if you have any final words of encouragement for NCC'ers and how NCC'ers can get involved in the DC Dream Center?

Ernest Clover:

Thank you, Jill. And my final words of encouragement is that please know that while, yes, you might see something on social media and you might see someone from stage every now and again, there is nothing special about me or anyone there, is that we are making ourselves available. So I want to encourage you. What does it look like for you in your context to make yourself available with the gifts and talents that the Lord has given you? Easiest way to get engaged with the Dream Center, please go to www.dcdreamcenter.com and there's a volunteer tab right there, fill out your interest form. And if you would like to be a mentor, I'd also encourage you to the same thing on our website.

Jill:

Great. Thank you so much.