

GEORGETOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

ENVISION



OUR MISSION IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND MAKE
DISCIPLES BY GUIDING DISTRACTED PEOPLE TO
CONFIDENTLY PURSUE THEIR NEXT STEPS WITH
JESUS.

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GEORGETOWN

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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- We send out two weekly emails (Mon & Fri) with important announcements
- Our weekly printed "Members Cue"
- Contact the office/minister for more info

Prayer Request?

- On our website (under the "Im New" tab)
- On the GTCOC app
- Contact the office and let us know

How Do I Get Prayer Concerns?

- We have a special email list called "Prayers Go Up" where you will receive updated prayer concerns
- Contact Amy Scott to sign up

Member Directory?

- On our website (under the "About" tab)
- On the GTCOC app
- Contact the office for a printed copy

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F R O M P A U L ' S D E S K

Hello Church,

In the January edition of Envision, I want to share with you some of the lessons I learned in this topsy-turvy year of 2022. This year we have witnessed the repercussions of a global pandemic, a war in Ukraine, an upended supply chain, the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and the slap heard round the world when Will Smith hit Chris Rock at the Academy Awards.

In the Georgetown Church of Christ the year has been just as topsy-turvy. We have seen the starting of Academy 4 in Bertram, the growth of Community groups, the emergence of a special needs ministry called Mission 4031, and great short-term mission trips to Temple, Mexico, and Greece. On the other hand we saw the departure of two ministers (Brian and Tyler), a slight drop in attendance, and the passing of some dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Through this difficult year I have learned some valuable lessons that I hope to take with me into 2023.

#1- 167 hours is great than 1.

I learned this last year that the majority of our tension, conflict, and disagreements as a church family come from what we do or do not do during that 1 hour every week on Sunday morning.

Some were raised with the “5 Acts of Worship” as the template for each worship gathering. These 5 acts always came with proof-texts that were plucked out of Scripture, and many times, out of context to make their argument. You had preaching/teaching (1 Cor. 4:17), singing (Eph. 5:19), prayer (Acts 12:5), taking a collection- Sunday only (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and the Lord’s Supper- Sunday only (Acts 20:7).

Now, is preaching/teaching, singing, prayer, taking a collection or the Lord’s Supper bad? No, of course not. But I feel that sometimes we hang our faith on these pre-selected activities instead of seeing the bigger picture of Scripture. For instance, why were speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12-14), prophecy (1 Cor. 12-14), fasting (Acts 13), the holy kiss (Rom. 16), laying on of hands (Jas. 5:14), not mentioned or counted as “acts of worship?”

What I have learned and what I have tried to preach and focus on this year is that we should not be converted to a hermeneutic (a way of interpreting the Bible) but a person, namely Jesus.

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Honestly, we do not have a pattern for how we should do worship in the New Testament. So, if the way we do things doesn't come from the New Testament, where does it come from? It comes from different movements in church history. Now, just because something is not Biblical doesn't make it un-Biblical. Some of our practices came as a reaction to what other groups were doing/not doing or over emphasizing or under emphasizing. Because of that, you and I are going to have a hard time proving, from the New Testament, why we have a church building, order of worship, sermon, full-time paid minister, dressing up on Sundays, tithing, Christian education, and the like. For example, did you know that the invitation after the sermon was started by a guy named Charles Finney in the 19th century and popularized by Billy Graham in the 20th century? Yet I have been to places that have called me heretical for not giving, what they call, "a proper invitation" after the sermon. Now, is it wrong to have an invitation? No, of course not. But in the same respect, it is ok not to have one as well.

The key word I believe that we need to consider is the word "contextualization." Contextualization means, to quote Timothy Keller, "...translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself. The great missionary task is to express the gospel message to a new culture that avoids making the message unnecessarily alien to that culture, yet without removing or obscuring the scandal and offense of biblical truth. It is giving people the Bible's answers, which they may not at all want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, in language and forms they can comprehend, and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them."

Contextualization is in no way compromising the message of the Gospel, but rather being committed to doing anything short of sin to reach people for Christ. The obstacle to our current way of "doing church" is that non-Christians simply don't understand what we are doing or why we are doing it. Our whole Sunday morning ritual has become either foreign to them or completely irrelevant. This leads us to a fork in the road and makes us ask the question, "Is our church service for the Christian or the unbeliever?"

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This leads me to the second lesson I learned which is...

#2- We need to focus on the people we are trying to reach not the ones we are trying to keep.

The Church is the vehicle by which God accomplishes his redemptive purposes in the world. To quote William Temple, "The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members." It is challenging to think of our church as a missionary society instead of a club or a group of like-minded friends that meet every week.

As I said previously, much of our stress in our church comes from the tension between looking inward and looking outward. But the problem with turning inward and only focusing on making ourselves comfortable is that in doing so we forfeit our role in this world as a church. Samuel Escobar, in his seminal book *The New Global Mission* says, "The Church exists for mission, and...a church that is only inward looking is not truly the church."

What I have been guilty of this past year is playing waiter instead of missionary. I have run around and tried to make everyone happy, and in the process lost focus on the mission God has called this church to. Now, when I say "we need to focus on the people we are trying to reach not the ones we are trying to keep," some people hear that and say, "We are trying to kick you out or you want us gone." Not at all! We love each and every one of you dearly. I wish you could hear our prayers for you and know how much we care for your physically, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. But what I want for us is to understand that the church doesn't exist for itself, but to serve the world. Of course I want you to stay. Of course I want to worship alongside you and have you work alongside me. Of course I love you and want to live life with you. But what I don't want is for the leadership team to be fought on every little change we make as we strive to contextualize the Gospel for non-Christians. What I don't want is for you to filter every choice we make by how it makes you feel or what you like or don't like. What I don't want is for people to think that any change to the way we do things is heresy and we are apostate if we don't continue to do everything that was lined out in the "Why I am a member of the Church of Christ" handbook. Again, to repeat what I said a few weeks ago, "I am not interested in being the "CHURCH of christ," but rather the "church of CHRIST." This means that we are people who are constantly changing and adapting, because that is what it means to love our neighbor well. After all, it's not the number of activities that a church is involved in that defines its success, but whether those activities result in accomplishing God's mission for his church.

MISSIONAL MAP MAKING JOURNAL ENTRY: 2009

To show you how passionate I am about this, the following are some journal entries I had back in July of 2009 when I was here in Georgetown as the youth minister.

“A church which pitches its tents without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, is being untrue to its calling... [We must] play down our longing for certainty, accept what is risky, and live by improvisation and experiment.”

Hans Kung, *The Church as the People of God*

In my GPS system did you know that Wolf Ranch does not exist? It's true, when I turn into the parking lot at Wolf Ranch shopping center; it says I am out of range. Imagine trying to find your way around a city with outdated maps; the results would be frustrating at best and disastrous at worst.

The problem with maps, in general, is that they are never reality. They are simply one's interpretation of reality. A map is a flat description of a complex and complicated world. There is no way that something two-dimensional can do justice to something three-dimensional.

Where maps fail, one on one correspondence prevails. I was in Anahuac, TX the other day and I was trying to find the Dairy Queen. (hmmm Snickers Blizzard)...sorry. Anyway, I looked at my GPS and it said that it didn't exist and I looked at a regular map but couldn't figure out which way I was supposed to go. So, I asked the church secretary and she said, “Go one street over and take a left, go like you're going out of town and make a left at the bank, then go to the elementary school and take a right and it will be on your left hand side.” Guess what? I found it with no problems. She had lived in Anahuac most of her life and didn't even know the name of the streets but knew how to get around town.

People with years and years of college training could tell you everything about the science of making the map that they made for Anahuac, but they couldn't get me to Dairy Queen. Isn't that what we have turned Christianity into? I know several people who could tell me detail after detail of the Word of God, but what I really want to know is how to have a deep, rich, meaningful relationship with God and how to live like my Savior, Jesus Christ. Maps can't show me that, only people who live there can. I don't need a Biblical map expert to teach me, in an hour long class, everything I need to know about reading the map; I need someone who has been where I want to go to show me the way.

When I was in middle school I got to go to the Dallas Science Museum and watch Bob Ballard uncover and explore the sunken Titanic. It was a live simulcast where we could ask questions and see footage as it was happening. There is something about exploration that gets a 7th grade boy's imagination going. In one of Bob's later speeches he started out by telling the audience, "We're all explorers," and ended the speech with, "Work today involves traveling in uncharted territory, navigating the unfamiliar terrain of a new economy for which no maps exist."

Ballard hit the nail on the head in describing what the church faces as well. To quote the famous Bob Dylan song, "Times, they are a changin'." The world is changing at such a phenomenal rate that I can't imagine what the world is going to be like for my children and especially my grandchildren. I read a poem the other day that illustrates the point and it goes,

I bought the latest computer;
It came fully loaded.
It was guaranteed for ninety days,
But in thirty was outmoded. (Bill Ihlenfeldt)

Another issue with maps is that they are not impartial; they all have a bias. Every map sees things from a different point of view. I noticed something the other day that proves this point. I bought a map and wondered why North America was at the center of the map. So I got on Google and found that if a map was made in New Zealand then guess which country was in the middle? You've guessed it, New Zealand. We all have this tendency to try and make all reality what we want to make it. We all turn things to suit our biases, thoughts, or convictions.

With all of these thoughts, the bottom line is that drawing better maps will never get us there. We can't reduce God's Word into a bunch of principles, creeds, or doctrines. It is a living breathing document that moves along with the changing times.

We also can't take maps that other churches have created and go by their directions. One person's plan is another person's poison. There is only one Willow Creek, there is no way to take what they do, apply it wholesale and expect the same results. That is trying to reduce three dimensional living into a two dimensional process; it will not and cannot work.

I think the issue is that, for too long we have relied on the "that's the way it's always been done" map of church, and that type of mentality needs to change. Rylan and I were going to Wal-Mart the other day and he got it in himself that he was going to direct me where to go. He told me to go right but we needed to go left. I went left and he complained and whined about me not going the direction he wanted. Now, what if had gone the way he wanted me to go just so that he wouldn't complain? Two things would have happened, one I would have taught him that to get his way all he has to do is complain, and two, we would never have arrived at our destination.

In order for the Georgetown Church of Christ to head in the direction that God wants us to go I believe the first thing we need to do is listen to the Word of God, rely on prayer, depend on trusted people who know the lay of the land that we are about to embark into, and not give in to the whiners, complainers and critics. I had to remember that Rylan was 4 years old and that is why he was whining and complaining. I used that opportunity to help him mature by teaching him that it is not about his personal preference, but for what is good for him and good for the whole. When it comes to the Church, those who are the constant complainers and gripe about everything that is going on, need to be called to maturity and given perspective to see the larger picture of what God is doing in this place and in this Church.

LIQUID MODERNITY JOURNAL ENTRY: 2009

“A great deal more failure is the result of an excess of caution than of bold experimentation with new ideas. The frontiers of the kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution.” J. Oswald Sanders

We have moved, are moving, and continue to move from modernity to post-modernity or as some cultural critics are saying, solid modernity to liquid modernity. I believe we are going to need to do more than just rework or tweak the way we do things in the church. What we need is an entire overhaul. Many churches have tried to rework things by becoming seeker-sensitive or seeker-friendly but that is not doing the trick. That is like trying to improve your computer every year by just updating the software while ignoring the hardware as well as the operating system. Eventually something other than cosmetic changes or program changes needs to be done.

In order to do a job right you need to have the right tools. Without the right tools the job's that much harder. I believe we in the Western church are lacking the right set of tools to get the job done. We are in desperate need of a new set of tools, a new paradigm, a new vision of reality, a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values not just our methodology.

It's not that reaching into our past is not part of the solution. It is. The issue is simply that we generally don't go back far enough; or rather, we don't delve deep enough for our answers. Every now and again we do get glimpses of an answer, but because of the radical and disturbing nature of the remedy we retreat to the safety of the familiar and the controllable.

In AD 100 there were as few as 25,000 Christians. By AD 310, just before Constantine, there were around 20,000,000 Christians. That is a 40 to 50% growth rate per decade. You have to ask yourself, what in the world caused this?

I mean think about it; during this period it was illegal to be a Christian. They didn't have church buildings as we know them today. They didn't have the Scripture bound and portable. They didn't have an institution or the professional form of leadership we have today. They didn't have seeker-sensitive services, youth groups, worship teams, seminaries, or commentaries. They even actually made it hard to join the church. By the late second century, aspiring converts had to undergo a significant initiation period to prove themselves worthy. So, what caused this type of growth?

I think one of the things that caused that type of growth is that the followers of Jesus were true to the Gospel. And I believe today if we Christians are true to the Gospel then it will awaken in us a dormant potential to catalyze a renewed movement. This movement would resurrect passionate love of God and others, persistent and fervent prayer, and incarnational practices that would lead us to recover radical discipleship, appropriate modes of leadership, and relevant forms of organization and structures.

It is sort of like at the end of the Wizard of Oz when they realized that they didn't need the Wizard after all; what they needed was a situation that forced them to discover or to activate that which was already in them. They had what they were all looking for, only they didn't realize it.

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7

We have the entire God-head at our disposal to accomplish the mission at hand, if we would only use the power he has given us and allow the mission to take place in and through every aspect of our lives.

What we need to recover is a genuine movement ethos that can revitalize the Jesus movement of old. We must instill within our people the urgency that our restoration movement was once characterized by. I echo what David Garrison said in his book Church Planting Movements, when he said what we need is "a rapid mobilization of indigenous churches planting churches that sweep through a people group or population."

No more "one size fits all" churches. The larger you get as a congregation the more vulnerable you are to institutionalism, and when you get to that point, the grassroots people movement that Jesus started dies, or at the very least is neutered of all its power.

So what you are left with is a very watered-down version of the Christian message or a message so abstracted from real life that it loses all effectiveness in a world searching for meaning and significance.

In the face of changing times the beautiful thing about the gospel is it is never threatened by the changing circumstances of life. On the other hand, what may be compromised is the church's faithfulness to the gospel.

In our quest to make the gospel relevant we have fallen short and sought after acceptance instead. Instead of asking the world, "Are you getting the message?" we are asking the world, "Do you like the message?" It is not my concern whether they like the message or not, the message is the truth. My concern is whether or not we are communicating the message in such a way as to give them a chance to respond to the Gospel call.

I believe that we are in danger of compromising the gospel by mistakenly relying on strategies that are not effective in our changing culture.

D O B Y D O I N G
J O U R N A L E N T R Y : 2 0 0 9

“If you want to build a ship, don’t summon people to buy wood, prepare tools, distribute jobs, and organize the work, rather teach people the yearning for the wide, boundless ocean.” Antoine de Saint-Exupery

I don’t know if many of you know this about me, but I was going to be a pro bowler. I know, pretty cheesy, but that is what I was going to be. Actually my choices out of high school were to go on the pro bowling tour or go into the AIM program. I decided on being a missionary and I am so glad I did. Before I stopped bowling I had a 213 average. You have to have a 210 average to enter in pro tournaments so I was in.

Did you know I never read a book on how to bowl? I never studied game film...boring. And I never went to any workshops or conferences on bowling technique. I simply bowled. I started when I was 4 years old and practiced all the time. I learned how to bowl on the fly. And isn’t that really the only way to learn something?

How did my 4 year old learn to swim? By swimming. How did my 2 year old learn to go potty? By going potty. How is our congregation going to learn radical discipleship? By being disciplined. How is our congregation going to learn community? By living as a community.

The one component that is needed to accomplish all of these things is desire. You have to have the “want to” or you are never going to accomplish the goals that you set out for. The problem with leading a group of people is that we can give people the tools, teach them the techniques, even provide opportunities for them to grow, but only they can provide the “want to.”

The only thing I have ever seen that sparks the “want to” spirit in someone is passionate leadership. We are what our churches become. This principle was never so evident to me than it was when I was a youth minister in San Diego. I was so frustrated with my youth group wondering why they were spiritually shallow and only wanted to have fun all the time. It seemed that the group was a lot of fun to hang out with but none of them wanted to be serious about anything.

Then one day, I figured it out. The group was exactly what I was in everyday life. I loved to joke around all the time but when it came to God, Jesus, or the Bible I wanted to stay surface level. I noticed that as I changed, the group changed with me.

We must be the change we wish to see in others. We are not going to teach ourselves into change, we are going to model ourselves into change by being the change we wish to see.

The challenges with doing this task abound, but the reward is great. A major shift has taken place in recent years from people identifying with a large traditional grouping. Instead people are moving to a myriad of smaller, emerging subcultural groups defined around anything from cultural interest to sexual preferences. The tribalization of our world is taking place right before our eyes.

We have moved from a pluralistic society, where your beliefs matched up with the denomination you claim to be associated with, to a more fragmented society where the group that you are with or choose to spend the majority of your time with doesn't necessarily line up with your personal beliefs or convictions.

Ethan Watters, in his eye-opening book called, *Urban Tribes*, gives voice to this type of fragmentation happening in our world today. He says, referring to this postmodern generation, "We stitched together our life philosophies from song lyrics, sacred texts, our college social psychology classes, our parents, our bosses and co-workers, *The Simpsons*, snippets of wisdom forwarded to us in e-mails, and things we overheard on the bus. For us, the answer to the question How do you live a good life? was not something handed down from on high. We were making up answers—riffing them—as we went along." He goes on to say later in the book, "No one seemed up to the job of telling us how we should live. We were facing the challenges of lives navigated without signposts and, not surprisingly, we had headed in many different directions."

In order to reach this generation for Christ we must not just look at statistics that come from George Barna or demographic studies, but we must try to integrate them with the convoluted stories of people's actual lives.

Instead of fighting against "truths" that we fought against in the past (i.e. Methodist, Baptists, Buddhist, etc.), we are dealing with 6 billion different forms and ideas of what truth really is and means. This is going to force us as a Church to move beyond institutional forms of spreading the Gospel and into more of a personal and organic style of ministry.

For this reason, we must have a leadership in place that is willing to experiment with new ideas and explore the uncharted territories of our world. As we all know from personal experience, failures can be the greatest teachers, and we must be ready to do whatever it takes to meet people where they are and take them to where Jesus wants them to be.

WELL DISCIPLINED CONSUMER JOURNAL ENTRY: 2009

“We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us.” Winston Churchill

If we are going to reach the majority of the population we cannot continue to do the same things over and over again and expect different results. (Isn't that the definition of insanity?)

We also can't just simply pump up our programs, improve our music and audio/visual effects, or become slicker, smoother, and more professional. That is not going to solve our missional crisis.

It is said that 65% of Americans reject what we call the “traditional church.” So how can we reach people with the message if people are reporting that they feel alienated from the form of church we have created? How do they access the gospel, if they reject our form of church? We need to start asking ourselves, what would church look like in their specific context?

Missionaries don't go over to other countries and create an American style church right in the middle of Japan, Africa, or Russia. Well, to be honest, many of them do and it causes more problems than it helps to spread the gospel.

We need to begin asking ourselves what missionaries around the world ask themselves on a daily basis...questions like, “What is good news to this people group?” and “What would church look and feel like in this people group?” In order to get to the right answers we must start asking the right questions.

Like many churches we have built our model around a consumeristic model and now we are paying the price. I remember reading church growth books that actually encourage churches to mimic the shopping mall and apply those principles to your church. No wonder we are so off base.

We have bought in to faulty principles that are leading us down the wrong road. The church growth books I have read talk about making church comfortable and convenient for people which is the basic definition of consumerism. We have also talked about making church a safe and secure place which is the definition of the middle-class.

So, who becomes our audience? The consumeristic middle class, and we wonder why we are having problems. It is because the members we are getting are applying those same principles that they live in life to what they want from a church.

And to top it off, we develop very co-dependant relationships between the ministers and the members. Let me explain. As leaders we foster this “come and get fed” mentality, because by nature, most preachers and ministers are people who love to teach and care for people, and the congregation, in turn, loves to outsource learning and be cared for. Thus a co-dependant cycle is created that is very hard to stop because it is so comfortable for everyone involved.

So, church has become a service provider and a vendor of religious goods and services, which is so far from who Jesus is and what he came to do. It seems what we have created in the religious world is a bidding war between churches. Since this consumerist mindset is already prevalent in our churches, it seems the church with the best programs and the “sexy-ist” appeal tends to get more customers.

And since we have ministers to pay, buildings to pay off, and bills to keep up with, we find ourselves continuing in this rat race because we can’t afford not to compete. It is a vicious cycle that will keep going until someone has the courage, tenacity, and foresight to yell “Stop!”

There have been a few in the past with such boldness, but that is when the institution quickly silences their voice because they are going against the establishment and trying to bring down status quo.

Bottom line: we can’t seem to make disciples based on a consumerist approach to the faith. We plainly cannot consume our way into discipleship. Consumption is detrimental to discipleship.

The problem we have to face is that people who are used to being fed generally loath moving from passivity to activity. This is where we must lead by example. It is not particularly useful to stand on dry land while trying to give swimming lessons. We must be guided not just by a philosophy of ministry but we must be characterized by a set of practices by which we wish the church to be embodied.

CHURCH AS EXPERIMENT

JOURNAL ENTRY: 2009

“Strictly speaking one ought to say that the Church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it... And if the atmosphere of crisislessness still lingers on in many parts of the West, this is simply the result of a dangerous delusion. Let us also know that to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of truly being the Church.” David Bosch

To quote Bono (U2) it seems that we are “stuck in a moment and now we can’t get out of it.” I have a youth minister friend who told me a story of one of his youth classes. An elder of the church walked in and wanted to talk to the kids. The elder said, “I just wanted to let you know that we are not going to sing any of these new contemporary songs in service.” The youth group of course responded, “Why not?” The elder went on to say that the old songs were better and said that we don’t need to add anything new to our service. A very observant kid spoke up and said “Sir. Did you sing “Our God He Is Alive... (728b for the true church of Christers). The elder said, “Yes, we did. That is one of the classics I am talking about.” The kid continued, “Well, it says here the song was written in 1956. Weren’t you a teenager when this song came out?” The youth minister told me that the elder, said thank you and quietly walked out.

But doesn’t it seem like many people in our church feel that the “old way” is better. People keep on talking about us striving to be the 1st century church but I fear that we went back to the 1950’s and got stuck. It is no wonder that our pre-commitments to the Christendom mode of church and thinking restrict us to past successes and give us no real solutions for the future. We always seem to default to its preconceived answers. Genuine learning and development is at best a risky process, but without journey and risk there can be no progress.

Unless the paradigm at the heart of a culture is changed, there can be no lasting change. Ivan Illich was once asked what he thought was the most radical way to change society; was it through violent revolution or gradual reform? He gave a careful answer. Neither. Rather, he suggested that if one wanted to change society, then one must tell an alternative story.

Hearing that reminded me of what Bill Easum, a church consultant, once said. He said, that “following Jesus into the mission field is either impossible or very difficult for the vast majority of congregations in the Western world because of one thing: They have a systems story that will not allow them to take the first step out of the institution into the mission field, even though the mission field is just outside the door of the congregation.”

It's futile trying to revitalize the church, or a denomination, without first changing the system. C.S. Lewis said, "there exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. So we must strive very hard, by the grace of God to keep the church focused on the mission that Christ originally gave to it."

What are those things that have distracted us from living out the mission Jesus gave us? One look at our newly formed ministry book can give you insight into that question. Our church is so busy doing everything; we, in essence, are doing nothing. It feels as if we have one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake. Eventually something is going to burn out, and the majority of the time it's the leadership, then it trickles down to the membership, and that is why so many churches across America are closing their doors. We can't keep up the fast pace of going nowhere.

To reach beyond the cultural barriers we face, we must adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture. This will mean adopting a sending approach rather than an attractational one. I am not a huge fan of Purpose Driven Church but one of the quotes that I love in Rich Warren's book is when he said, "The success of a church is measured in its sending capacity not its seating capacity."

It is time for the missional church to arise and for the sleeping giant to wake up. One of our only obstacles is that change will be resisted by those with the most significant vested interests in the current system.

It is time for the church to go underground again and renew the grassroots movement mentality of old. This is only accomplished through church planting, in my opinion. Gerard Kelley, author of RetroFuture says, "Experimental groups seeking to engage the Christian faith in a postmodern context will often lack the resources, profile or success record of the Boomer congregations. By definition, they are new, untried, relatively disorganized and fearful of self-promotion. They reject the corporate model of their Boomer forbearers, and thus do not appear, according to existing paradigms, to be significant. But don't be fooled. Somewhere in the genesis and genius of these diverse groups is hidden the future of Western Christianity. To dismiss them is to throw away the seeds of our survival."

Why, as a whole, is the Church not reaching the 18 to 40 demographic? Is it because people are not interested in spirituality? Far from the truth. Is it because they don't care about community? Not the case. It is because they have rejected the corporate model of church and the Jesus that the institutional church has created along with it.

Take the young people that still remain, inspire them, train them, send them, get out of their way, and watch them reach the masses for Christ. I believe the answer is right under our noses, but we can't seem to see it because we are looking for the wrong things.

M U S T A R D S E E D C H U R C H

J O U R N A L E N T R Y : 2 0 0 9

“The spontaneous expansion of the Church reduced to its elements is a very simple thing. It asks for no elaborate organization, no large finances, no great number of paid missionaries. In its beginning it may be the work of one man, and that a man neither learned in the things of this world, nor rich in the wealth of this world...What is necessary is faith. What is needed is the kind of faith which uniting a man to Christ, sets him on fire.” Roland Allen

I am not a very smart guy. I don't claim to know about the scientific world. I heard that in the biological system that each cell carries the full coding of the whole organism. If that is true, then the whole organism can be reproduced from a single cell. Wasn't that what happened in the first century? The structure and message of what they knew as "church" was so simple to reproduce that when the great persecution came, when Christians were spread from Jerusalem to the four corners of the world, they were able to reproduce the Christian faith wherever they went. Truly brilliant!

And what was this message that spread like a disease throughout all of the known world? Jesus is Lord. If you diagrammed the church of the 1st century you will see that it spread like a viral epidemic. The message of Jesus was easily transferred from one person to another. In essence it was "sneezable."

Easily transferable ideas can create powerful movements that can change societies. Have we made our message too complicated? Have we added too many requires and addendums to our Gospel? I can't say, but it sure seems like it.

Jesus is Lord is such a revolutionary statement. It is God's redemptive claim over our lives. It is the proclamation that Jesus has claim over every aspect of our lives, both individually and communally. It says that Jesus rules every aspect of our lives. It yells in the face of the political leadership of the day and says, Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

This message flies in the face of the results of the Enlightenment period that secularized society and marginalized the church and its message into a certain realm of personal preference. There is no place over which Jesus doesn't have dominion. There is no place, whether in government, school, workplace or society over which Jesus hasn't claimed Lordship.

If you have read the Pentateuch lately you have noticed how it seems to jump from one subject to another, from issues of sublime theology in one verse to seemingly trivial issues in the very next verse. The reason is that the Torah was seen as a logic to train the man to relate all aspects of life to God.

Therefore, everything—one's work, one's domestic life, one's health, one's worship—has significance to God. He is concerned with every aspect of the believer's life, not just the so-called spiritual dimensions.

Michael Frost said, "While in the Western spiritual tradition we have tended to see the 'religious' as one category of life among many (we even call nuns and monks the 'religious'), the Hebrew mind has no such distinction about a purely 'religious' existence but is concerned with all of life...All of life is sacred when it is placed in relationship with a living God."

To sum it all up, there is no such thing as sacred and secular in biblical worldview. It can conceive of no part of the world that does not come under the claim of Yahweh's lordship. All of life belongs to God, and true holiness means bringing all the spheres of our life under God.

In order for us to be the missional church God is calling us to be, there can be no non-God area in our lives and in our culture. Our task is to make all aspects and dimensions of life sacred—family, work, play, conflict, etc.—and not limit the presence of God to certain 'religious zones.'

On July 4th I was invited to a BBQ to celebrate the holiday. It was great. Kids playing in the pool, guys shooting the basketball around, people around the table talking about everything from the Bible to potty training. I began to think to myself, 'This is great. This is what church should be. Why does this feel so much like real life and our church gathering so abstracted from real life? Why is this considered secular time and the time spent inside a building on Sunday morning considered sacred? The time that I spent swimming and playing with my kids, seems a lot more sacred than what I do on Sunday morning.'

This dualistic spirituality has been called a number of things, but perhaps the idea of the Sunday-Monday disconnect brings the experience to the forefront. We experience a certain type of God on Sunday, but Monday is another matter. I hear things like, "This is the real world, things work differently here."

If God is the private sphere and the world is the public sphere then it sure seems like the church sits right in the middle blocking the world from God instead of being the bridge that it was designed to be, to bring people back into a right relationship with their Creator.

To quote John Lennon, "How can I go forward if I don't know which way I'm facing?" Jesus is Lord is the epicenter of our entire faith. Jesus as Lord of the Church and of the World hasn't changed, I believe the only thing that has changed is our focus. If we realign ourselves with that story, charge, and meta-narrative then I believe in it we will realign ourselves with the mission of God.

F R O M P A U L ' S D E S K

What I said in my journal entries back in 2009, I still hold to today...maybe even more so.

So, looking ahead to 2023, what does this mean for the new year. It means two key things.

#1- We are going on mission.

#2- We are going to do it together.

First, I want us to turn our attention away from what happens or doesn't happen in this building 1 hour a week to the 167 other hours of the week. We must change our perspective from consumer church to missional church. From church as "a dispenser of religious goods and services" to "a group of people sent on mission into our world." This is a switch from looking at the "church as place" to the "church as people," from "mission as program" to "mission as purpose," from "we exist to preserve the institution" to "we exist to die to self for the sake of the world." These are two contrasting postures, but for the sake of our church and the sake of the world, we must embrace the latter.

Second, we need to move from a multi-generational church to an inter-generational church. I have heard the desire from our members to see more young families and young people in our church. The problem is, up until this point, we haven't been willing to make the changes necessary to contextualize the Gospel to that younger generation.

Every minor change is met with such forceful resistance that it has been hard to gain any momentum in creating meaningful environments for our young families. It's like me standing by Bob Ross while he is painting one of his "The Joy of Painting" paintings, and after every stroke he makes I stop him and go, "Why are you doing that? I don't like that stroke? That's not a tree. See that didn't lead to what you wanted." After a couple times of me doing that I could see him get frustrated and say, "No, it's not a tree, but it will be if you give me some time and let me finish." Now, neither I nor the elders are the Bob Ross of church growth, but whenever leadership decision are constantly met with resistance, what it communicates is that there is a lack of trust or a lack of understanding in what we are trying to do. If there is a lack of trust, let's talk about that together and work on that.

If there is a lack of understanding, then let me be very clear about what we are trying to do. We are trying to disciple our older generation in Christ by encouraging them and equipping them to reach the next generation for Christ. This means our older generations are going to have to think like missionaries instead of church members. This means our older members will have to separate what is traditional and what is Biblical. This means our older members will need to see themselves as accelerators of change and not the brakes and continue to slow things down.

F R O M P A U L ' S D E S K

Now, with that said, this means that the younger generation will have to bring love, understanding and empathy to the other generation. This means that they can't translate everything the older generation likes as irrelevant and meaningless. This means that the younger generation needs to seek to understand why things are the way they are before simply coming in and trying to turn over the apple cart.

What I am suggesting is that we approach things as a family. We don't just run off and go to another church when something happens that we don't like. Would that be easier? Probably. But it wouldn't be nearly as beneficial in the long run; because here is the bottom line: we are better together.

I want to end by saying this: I love this church! And I love our community! All the leadership team and I are trying to do is to get this church to love the community and get the community to fall in love with Jesus. In doing so, we as well will grow in our love of Jesus.

Blessings,

Paul

THE BLESS PRACTICES



**BEGIN WITH
PRAYER**



LISTEN



EAT



SERVE



STORY

Begin with Prayer

**I WILL PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE GOD HAS
PLACED IN MY LIFE AND THE PLACES GOD
HAS PUT ME IN.**

“God, may Your kingdom come and will be done. Please provide me with an opportunity today to bless some- one or some place. Help me be aware of your presence and your leading today.”

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Ask God to help you build authentic loving relationships where you live, study, work and play.
- Ask God to give you eyes to see how He is at work in this place or person.
- Pray that God would give you opportunities to join him.
- Ask God to give you openness and wisdom as you enter into spiritual conversations.

PRAYING FOR PLACES

- Where does pain exist here? Pray for healing.
- Who makes the decisions here? Pray for integrity.
- Who gathers here? Pray for community.
- What resources are needed here? Pray for provision.

Since Jesus' call to go make disciples is rooted in God's command to Abraham, we believe that blessing others is a critical part of making disciples.

QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

- Read Matthew 28. What joy can be found when we BLESS those we live, work, study, and play with?

- How has intentionally setting a time to pray for people and places made a difference in your life?

- Can you identify any barriers that may keep you from beginning with prayer on a daily basis?

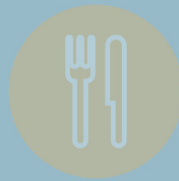
THE BLESS PRACTICES



BEGIN WITH
PRAYER



LISTEN



EAT



SERVE



STORY

Listen with Care

I WILL LISTEN TO AND DISCOVER THE NEEDS
OF OTHERS AND THE PLACES WHERE GOD IS
AT WORK.

TO GOD “God, how do YOU want me to BLESS my world today? Help me to listen to and discover the needs of others and where you are already at work.”

- In praying for people and places, listen to God intentionally through spending time in prayer and reading His Word.

TO OTHERS “What is your story?”

- To build authentic, loving relationships with others, listen to them first. In your interactions today, take the posture of a learner.

TO YOURSELF “Do I have assumptions that influence how I see others?”

QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

- **Have you ever assumed you know what someone needed, only to find out later that you were wrong? Listen to their story.**

- **What difference does it make to listen to others' needs before you begin serving?**

- **How can your assumptions influence how you hear another's story?**

- **What are some things that you could be listen for as you interact with people?**

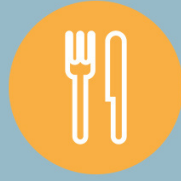
THE BLESS PRACTICES



BEGIN WITH
PRAYER



LISTEN



EAT



SERVE



STORY

Eat Together

I WILL SHARE MEALS AND SPEND TIME WITH
THE PEOPLE GOD PUTS IN MY LIFE.

- Jesus often ate with people and shared in their story. Eating is one of the fastest ways to move a relationship from acquaintance to friendship.
- Is there a “third” place that you regularly visit (coffee shop, gym, etc.)?
- Who could you eat with (or have coffee with)? A co-worker over lunch? A neighbor during the day?
- A friend or family member over the weekend?
- How intentional are you in living a life that attracts others to want to join in? Are you living an invitational life?

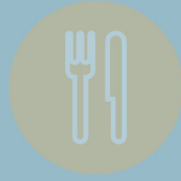
THE BLESS PRACTICES



BEGIN WITH
PRAYER



LISTEN



EAT



SERVE



STORY

Serve in Love

I WILL RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS
AND HELP THEM IN IMPACTFUL AND
PRACTICAL WAYS.

Before jumping into serving, have you taken the time to pray for, listen to, and/or eat with those you are wanting to help? Do they want you to serve? After all, praying for, listening to, and eating with others helps you discover the way that you really need to serve them.

- Who can you serve this week?
- Who do you know that has a practical need?
- Ask them how you can help them.

QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

- **When's the last time that someone truly served you or you served someone else? How did that affect you? What did it do to your relationship?**

- **What most often keeps you from serving people?**

- **How do you think God may be calling you to serve someone? Is there something that you can help them with?**

- **What is one step you can take toward obeying God and serving that person?**

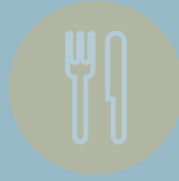
THE BLESS PRACTICES



BEGIN WITH
PRAYER



LISTEN



EAT



SERVE



STORY

Share the Story

I WILL SHARE THE STORY OF JESUS AND
WHAT HE IS DOING IN MY LIFE WITH
OTHERS.

You can't spell BLESS without the second "S". In other words, sharing the story of God with others is a vital part of participating in God's mission (Matthew 28:18-20)

Here are some tips on how to share the story of Jesus with others.

- Start by sharing how God has made a positive difference in your life.
- Share your story in such a way that demonstrates that God is also at work in their life.
- Don't feel like you have to tell your story all at once. Think "bite-sized" stories.
- Consider inviting them to the place the story is told (i.e., weekend services, your small group, One Days and Easter/Christmas, etc.)

Our mission at the Georgetown Church of Christ is to glorify God and make disciples by guiding distracted people to confidently pursue their next step with Jesus



GEORGETOWN
church of christ

Truth
with Grace

Giving
with Joy

Serving
with Love

Relating
with Depth

Mentoring
with Purpose

Going
with Courage

Pathfinder
that pursues the way

↳ **Partner**
that doesn't walk alone

↳ **Provider**
that shares gifts freely

↳ **Preparer**
that intentionally equips others

↳ **Pioneer**
that goes anywhere
and tells everyone





GEORGETOWN
CHURCH OF CHRIST