



Report of the Task Force on Growing a Disciple-Making Church

(September 28, 2021)

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This report of the Task Force on Growing Disciple-Making Church is divided into three sections. First, the **Introduction** sets forth the purpose and the *modus operandi* of a massive research and deliberative efforts in seeking to enhance the effectiveness and growth of Fox River Congregational Church as a disciple-making church. Second, the **Summary Discussion of Main Areas of Consideration** sets the stage for the third section which focuses on **Church Implementation of Vision for Disciple-Making**.

INTRODUCTION

Christ invites us to follow him. To become and grow as his disciple is not a simple jaunt through the woods. However, one does not have to do it alone. Fox River Congregational Church (FRCC) is here to help and seeks to effectively do so which requires understanding the nature of and commitment to this responsibility.

After the founding of FRCC church in 2001, well into 2003 our congregation spent several months considering a document entitled *Vision: Building for the Future of Our Church* which provided focus and contributed to how we are organized today. After several years of activity, effort and growth, we revisited the then current status of our church as to where we were with respect to being a discipleship-making church, and what might be done to improve our efforts to encourage, equip and support our church members (and others) to progress toward becoming more Fully Devoted Followers of Christ. A resource book, entitled *Fox River Congregational Church: Becoming an Effective Disciple-Making Church* (2009), was prepared to provide an informational base for strategic thinking about how best to create and implement a fertile environment to become more effective in our disciple-making efforts. The past ten plus years have witnessed significant progress in our growing church. However, as is true with respect to any organization, a church which lessens its forward visioning efforts will ultimately plateau and then decline. Through the leadership of and discussions with our Senior Pastor Lonnie Richardson, it was clear that here at FRCC we should again undertake an in depth look as to how we can better grow as an effective disciple-making church. This led to the recently completed new resource book, entitled *Growing as a Disciple-Making Church* (2021), incorporating much of and building upon the previous efforts, providing an informational base to aid in enhancing the effectiveness of our disciple-making efforts.

As was true in our earlier efforts, *it should be emphasized that this effort sets forth a vision from both an individual's perspective on growing as a disciple (follower) of Christ and from the church's perspective as to its responsibility to grow disciples of Christ*. Thus, prayerfully, the resource book will serve as a useful reference for both individuals in their personal Walk with Christ as well as for the church as a whole in helping people in their Walk.

A Task Force on Growing a Disciple-Making Church, consisting of Reverend Lonnie Richardson, Reverend Ardie Johnson, Jon Hanson, Randy Johnson, Mary Beth Miranda and Barbara Zaiser, undertook a several month comprehensive review of the resource book leading to incorporating some changes both as to content of the book in general and recommendations to the

congregation in particular. The Task Force achieved unanimous concurrence as to both the book content and the recommendations.

However, it is important to note that the recommendations are not being presented to the congregation as a *fait accompli*, but rather the book, recommendations and this Task Force Report are offered as bases for consideration by and opportunity for input from our Congregation. The Task Force wants the Congregation to have the full opportunity to be involved before final recommendations are presented to the Congregation for action.

The resource book will be made available to every member of our church for at least four reasons. (1) The book serves as an informational base for our members when considering whether to adopt the recommendations ultimately proposed to enhance our disciple-making efforts. (2) The book offers an opportunity to heighten one's own individual awareness as to the nature of becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ and sets forth ways of doing so. (3) The book may spark interest for people to become more deeply involved in the implementation of their own personal disciple-making process and to provide a resource book helping them to do so. And, (4) if we as a church are to embark on a fundamental effort, prayerfully rooted in a sound vision, it is essential (i) that we understand what we are doing and why, (ii) that we are committed both intellectually and emotionally to doing it, and (iii) that we are on the same wavelength.

It is our hope and prayer that the process of considering this material will (1) stimulate broad participation throughout the church in discerning God's vision for the future of our church, (2) will create the space, time, and opportunity for meaningful and honest dialogue among members of the church in a caring and supportive setting, and (3) will enable members of the church to give substantive input to the expression of a faithful, hopeful, and compelling vision to guide the FRCC into the future. It is also our hope and fervent prayer that this effort will not only contribute to FRCC becoming a more effective disciple-making church, but also that it will contribute to encouraging and assisting individuals in progressing in their own personal Walk with Christ.

The resource book is offered to provide a broad and in-depth resource for our church to consider how we can grow as a more effective disciple-making church. Consequently, the resource is rather extensive being 700 plus pages long. It is not anticipated that everyone will read the book in its entirety. Nevertheless, its availability offers a resource for a person, a team or a ministry to draw upon those portions for use in deepening his or own personal Walk with Christ and/or his or her involvement in the work of some team, ministry or other activity. of the church.

What follows in this Task Force Report is a summary of the resource book upon which recommendations are founded and of the recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Congregation. For a more detailed discussion reference to the resource book is suggested.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF MAIN AREAS **FOR CONSIDERATION**

It is the hope and prayer of the Task Force that the following summary and the resource book as a whole will meaningfully contribute to our church's efforts to grow more as an effective disciple-making church. The comments below highlight some of the main areas considered.

- Disciple-Making: Core Mission of the Church
- Essential Elements of a Disciple-Making Church
- Clarity of Mission
- Content of Disciple-Making Experiences
- Process of Disciple-Making Experiences: Stages of Disciple-Making
- Stages of Disciple-Making: Program Content

I. DISCIPLE-MAKING: CORE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Christ's command in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) serves as marching orders for the church. We are to go out proclaiming the good news, lead people to Christ, and invite and lead people into the embrace of fellowship within our Christian family. And, this command goes even further. It calls upon us to make disciples. We are called upon not only to be disciples ourselves but also to "make disciples." The Great Commission charges us to lead the lost to Christ, bring them into the body of Christ and then equip and support them to become more Christ-like. The responsibility for carrying out this function, both becoming disciples ourselves and helping others do the same, falls upon all of our church members, not just upon church leaders. Churches make a fundamental mistake when they categorize discipleship as simply one of the ministries of the church. But rather, *making disciples should be viewed as the CORE of our church's ministry and integral in all that we do.*

Christ's command to make disciples involves two types of growth – width and depth. We are to reach people beyond the body of believers. Grow the number of believers. That is width. And, we are to make true disciples of them, as well as of ourselves, teaching them to obey all that he has commanded. That is depth. To be an effective disciple-making church, here at FRCC we must vigorously pursue both width and depth.

Regardless of whatever else it does, the only question that really matters is whether a church encourages and offers real opportunities for people to experience the transforming love of Christ in ways that touch their greatest needs and highest hopes and do so in ways which lead them to be people that God wants and created them to be? *The key to leading people to becoming what God created them to be lies in the recovery of churches' identity as disciple forming community. Disciple-making is at the core of effective church ministry.*

II. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH

The crucial question is how can we most effectively structure what we do as a church to make disciples? Spiritual growth is the process of believers becoming transformed into the image of Christ. All that a church does *must mesh together to engender life transformation*. To be effective, we need to foster and create disciple-making experiences in three key areas:

- defining and communicating understanding of our disciple-making *mission* with clarity
- knowing and effectively offering the *content* of disciple-making experiences
- understanding the nature of the *process*, i.e., where people need to go (the *stages of disciple-making*) to experience the content of disciple-making

III. CLARITY OF MISSION

The foundation of creating effective disciple-making experiences is a crystal-clear mission as to what we are about. Clarity requires answering two fundamental questions. First, what does God want us to become? Second, what do we need to do to grow toward a Christ-like life? As expressed in the *recommended* Mission Statement for Fox River Congregational Church (Appendix A), God wants us to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, by growing toward a Christ-like life in our thoughts, feelings and actions. This involves connecting in four crucial relationships:

- connecting intimately with God,
- connecting with other believers through sharing life together,
- connecting with both believers and others through serving their needs, and
- connecting with people outside the faith.

It is in the pursuit of these relationships that we open ourselves up to God and place ourselves in situations where God is most likely to transform us into the image of Christ thereby becoming people that God intends us to be. This is a clear mission as to what disciple-making is about.

IV. CONTENT OF DISCIPLE-MAKING EXPERIENCES

Growing as a follower of Christ (i.e., disciples) requires spiritual growth toward living a more Christ-like life through *understanding, learning and incorporating various spiritual practices into one's everyday living*. To be an effective disciple-making church, a church needs to encourage, equip and support people through learning and practicing spiritual disciplines. This requires addressing what should be the *content* of such experiences and what is the best *process*

through which the content is learned, understood and practiced. The content of disciple-making experiences can be grouped according to “getting connected” in the four crucial relationships.

- *Connecting with God* – While not exhaustive, the content of the disciple-making experiences fostering the pursuit of intimacy with God include the spiritual disciplines of prayer, spending time with God’s Word, worship, silence and solitude, meditation, discernment of and obedience to God’s will, and using different forms of spirituality (i.e., the different ways we connect with God to hear God’s voice).
- *Connecting with Other Believers* – Initially, this involves fellowship in the community of the church as a whole. However, more importantly is connecting with other believers in small groups. God does not intend that we live alone or in isolation from others or only in casual relationships. We have been created for relationships. Thus, it is essential that a disciple-making church foster the spiritual discipline of participation in well-structured relational small groups through which life can be intimately shared in the context of mutual love, encouragement, care, support and accountability.
- *Connecting with Others Through Serving* – To foster people’s efforts to connect with ministry through serving others, both those inside or outside a local church’s family, a disciple-making church needs to instill the understanding that the spiritual discipline of serving others reflects loving help, caring, and sharing the love of God in the world. Serving consists of offering resources, such as time, talent, expertise, influence and treasure, for the care, protection and nurture of other people. One’s spiritual gifts and God’s call need to be discerned and his or her knowledge and skills need to be developed.
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- *Connecting with the People Outside the Faith* – In his ultimate sacrifice on the cross, Christ demonstrated a loving obsession for all people. He calls upon each of us to share this love and introduce people to God. Christ’s ministry modeled evangelism. In the Great Commission he commanded us to “go” out to others. Doing so is important not only to God, but also to the persons reached and not reached, to us in our personal growing toward a more Christ-like life, and to local churches. Thus, connecting with the those outside the faith (through reaching out to, sharing Christ with and bringing people in) is a fundamental aspect of being a follower of Christ; i.e., growing toward a more Christ-like life.

Growing as a follower of Christ is more than simply accepting a set of beliefs. It is also how we conduct our lives. The essence of a disciple is to be a follower of Christ by seeking to grow more Christ-like in one’s thoughts, feelings and actions. Thus, *the responsibility of the individual Christian is to follow Christ by embarking upon and continuing those practices modeled by Christ (commonly referred to as spiritual disciplines)*, which offer experiences in which we are more likely to connect with God and be subject to God’s transforming power. The four general categories of spiritual disciplines, which mark a person growing and transforming into a disciple of Christ, are the habits of focusing on connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with others through serving, and connecting with the people outside the faith. These categories encompass the substantive content areas for disciple-making experiences.

For a person to embark upon and grow as a disciple, one needs to understand God's call upon him or her, be able to express it and be committed in his or her efforts in striving to meet the call in his or her daily living. Doing so is founded first on the clarity of the call which is expressed in the recommended Mission Statement for Fox Fiver. Next is awareness of the spiritual disciplines offering the opportunities of connecting with God. And finally, there needs to be personal commitment to on-going engagement in those spiritual disciplines which best work for each individual. Practicing spiritual disciplines are to be done for the purpose of spiritual growth, rather than merely engaging in a church ritual or to impress others. Principles applicable to meaningful practice of spiritual disciplines include purpose, commitment, assumption of personal responsibility, understanding why, learning how, training and perseverance.

V. PROCESS OF DISCIPLE-MAKING EXPERIENCES: STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

The first of the three principal elements undergirding an effective disciple-making church is defining the mission with clarity and members of the church embracing the disciple-making mission of the church. The second principal element undergirding an effective disciple-making church is communicating understanding of following Christ and fostering participation in the content of disciple-making experiences, i.e., spiritual disciplines, which lead to the accomplishment of the Mission. The third principal element undergirding an effective disciple-making church is understanding the nature of the process, i.e., where people need to go. This consists of the stages of disciple-making which progressively move people along the path toward a more Christ-like life.

As a disciple-making church, our responsibility is not only to communicate understanding of and the hows of spiritual disciplines, but also support our members (and others) to progress in their spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines. This requires designing and implementing a process or path encompassing the various stages of disciple-making. The content of disciple-making experiences consists of meaningful practice of various spiritual disciplines reflecting the pursuit of connecting in the four connecting relationships. Guiding where people need to go involves establishing a spiritual growth path, i.e., stages of disciple-making, which promise to effectively deliver the content of disciple-making experiences. To continually grow toward a more Christ-like life, one needs to pursue the four critical connecting relationships by progressing (not necessarily in a sequential order) to, within and through the stages of discipleship.

The recommended process or stages of disciple-making (see graphic in Appendix B) consist of the following.:

- *Conversion Process* – One initiates becoming a follower of Christ by accepting him as Lord and Savior. The process leading up to and including conversion is the initial step in connecting with God. The conversion stage of disciple-making consists of the thoughts, feelings, experiences and/or relationships leading to the decision for and commitment to Christ.

- *Vital Transforming Worship* – A maturing follower of Christ continually pursues an intimate relationship with God. Foundational in doing so is the spiritual discipline of participation in vital transforming worship. Christ promised to be with us when we gather in his name. Through reverence, awe, submission, praise and thanksgiving, worship services offer a time and place where we respond to and encounter our living God leading to a personal and intimate relationship with him. Failure to move from one's initial experience with Christ to regular and deeply personal involvement in worship presents a serious roadblock in one connecting in an intimate relationship with God.
- *Basics of Faith* – For those who are newcomers to the faith, movement along the spiritual path requires understanding the basics of the faith beyond the rudimentary understandings underlying the conversion decision to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. Gaining greater understanding of the basics of faith may occur in the context of any one of several stages of disciple-making. This may happen as early as the conversion stage, result from teachings during worship services, participation in the exploring church membership process, or participating in a small group. However, whatever the context, proceeding to, within and beyond the basics of faith disciple-making stage is a foundational element for one to grow in his or her spiritual formation. This stage of disciple-making can also serve as a valuable refresher experience for on-going members of the church.
- *Spiritual Disciplines Nurturing Faith* – Spiritual disciplines are the content of disciple-making experiences. Engaging in personal spiritual disciplines introduces a sense of intimacy and accountability in our faith walks which places us in situations where God is more likely to cause transformation toward a more Christ-like life. One learns and practices spiritual disciplines in the pursuit of connecting with God, connecting with other believers, connecting with others by serving their needs and connecting with those outside the faith. To grow in one's Walk with Christ a person needs to progressively engage in various spiritual disciplines. The disciple-making stage of practicing a personal spiritual discipline(s) (including, e.g., prayer, spending time with God's Word and worship) to connect with God in a loving intimate relationship with him is not a one time or one place exercise. It is an on-going stage of discipleship which interrelates with the other stages such as participation in small groups, growing in serving and growing in sharing Christ. Spiritual growth is a process that takes time. Practicing and growing in spiritual disciplines continues through one's lifelong Walk with Christ.
- *Church Membership in a Covenant Community: Getting to Know Our Church* – Scripture paints the church as an essential organism in which Jesus dwells. The church is the body of Christ in which he continues his incarnation by dwelling in his people. The church is nothing less than Christ's replacement on earth. The church is not an optional afterthought for those who accept Christ as Lord. Instead, a person's involvement in a local church is central in God's plan. A believer's role involves doing his or her assigned part in building Christ's church through the spiritual gifts he or she has been given. Thus, a major disciple-making stage, as one progresses as a follower

of Christ, is becoming a part of Christ's family through membership in and assimilation into a local church.

As a condition of membership, one needs to learn, understand and commit to the mission purpose of the church both from the perspective of what the church collectively seeks to do and, most importantly, the responsibility of and expectation for one's own growth toward a Christ-like life in his or her thoughts, feelings and actions. This involves getting to know and committing to what church membership is about including its mission, covenant (see recommended covenant in Appendix C), expectations, organizational structure and, in the context of FRCC, doing church in the Congregational Way.

- *Assimilation into the Life of the Church* – The disciple-making growth process is just beginning when one becomes a member of a church. Membership is more than simply belonging. Rather, membership connotes deep connectedness with and a responsibility towards others. Assimilation moves uninvolved persons to where he or she becomes an indispensable part of the church family in advancing Jesus' mission. And, importantly, assimilation into the life of the church enhances the likelihood of progressing on the individual's own disciple-making path toward a more Christ-like life. Assimilation is a crucial and an on-going stage of disciple-making.

The key to assimilation is persons experiencing opportunities giving rise to new friendships and meaningful ministry involvement. In turn, these foster growth in their growing a more Christ-like life. Furthermore, although assimilation is normally thought of in the context of those persons growing toward becoming a member of a church and/or persons who have newly become members, the concept of assimilation also applies to already on-going members who have yet to become active participants in the life of the church.

- *Small Groups*

- *Relational Small Groups* – God created us to be in relationships with others. Christians are called to belong, not just to believe. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught, but rather needs to be lived. The most effective place for life transformation occurs within the context of relationships. The best place for intentional relationships is participation in a relational small group.

Too often, relationships in a typical church are neither deep, close nor frequent. Casual relationships do little to contribute to life transformation. Thus, developing meaningful relationships in relational small groups (in which where every person senses love, caring, belonging, trust, encouragement, support and accountability) is crucial to spiritual formation and central to the Christian experience. Most nurturing of a spiritual life occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. The relational element in Jesus' model is at the heart of becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ. It is central to the Christian experience. Failure to connect in a relational small group leads to stagnation of

spiritual growth. Participation in relational small groups constitutes a virtually indispensable element for those seeking transformation toward a more Christ-like life and a growing relationship with God.

- *Short Term Small Groups* – Limited duration short term small group programs (e.g., 4 to 8 weeks in duration) have become a popular trend in churches today. Although much good can come from such groups, when standing alone, their prime failing is the lack of developing on-going deepening relationships with other believers after these short-term small group sessions conclude. Nevertheless, short term small groups can serve one or more of three important functions:
 - spark spiritual growth by addressing various topics such as basics of faith, Bible studies, exploring theological questions for faith formation, etc.
 - introduce people to small group experiences thereby providing a bridge to relational small groups which are essential for deeper and broader spiritual growth experiences
 - train people in various aspects of disciple-making such as small group leadership, serving others, and/or evangelism.

It cannot be overemphasized that progressing to and becoming active in small groups, both short term and ultimately relational small groups, constitutes major advancement in growing through the stages of disciples-making resulting in growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions. Small relational groups nurture not only continuing pursuit of intimacy with God (both within the context of a small group and also in personal private devotions), but also they nurture moving on to Christ's mission of serving others and reaching out to and bringing people to Christ.

- *Growing into Serving Others & Growing into Sharing Christ* – The disciple-making stages of the conversion process, vital transforming worship, learning the basics of faith, practicing personal spiritual disciplines nurturing faith, getting to know the church and church membership, assimilation into the life of the church, and committed involvement in a relational small (and possibly some short term small) group all nurture us in growing toward a more Christ-like life. These stages of disciple-making primarily and vitally contribute to our growing intimacy with God and connecting with other believers in loving, caring and supportive relationships through the practice of the various spiritual disciplines.

But there is more. Christ calls us to mission. We are to serve others and to reach out to those outside the faith. Growing in serving and reaching out to and sharing Christ with others not only respond to God's call for mission but also, in doing so, further enables us to connect with God in a more intimate relationship and connect in

relationships with others as well as those with whom we work with in doing so. Growing into serving others and sharing Christ with others (evangelism) constitute the last two stages of disciple-making. However, progress through the various stages does not necessarily occur sequentially.

VI. STAGES OF DISCIPLE-MAKING: PROGRAM CONTENT

Following the procedural path consisting of the various stages of disciple-making leads a person to disciple-making experiences essential to growing toward a more Christ-like life. It is the role of a disciple-making church to offer such experiences in meaningful ways to foster the practice of various spiritual disciplines leading to enhancing connections with God, with other believers, with others through serving their needs, and with people outside the faith. Thus, the question for the church becomes what should be the content of disciple-making experiences and how should they be delivered. PART FIVE of the resource book suggests some content possibilities for consideration with respect to each stage of disciple-making. This is done in some detail which will not be reiterated here. These suggestions are offered to indicate the type of activity and subject matter appropriate for the various stages of disciple-making and to provide a starting point for exploring and reviewing possible programs, events, activities and materials for use.

CHURCH IMPLEMENTATION OF VISION FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

To implement a vision for effective disciple-making, several key elements need to be addressed and implemented by a church seeking to be an effective disciple church. These include the following.

1. *Foundation for Implementation of an Effective Disciple-Making Church*

There are five foundational structural components which undergird an effective disciple-making church: (i) mission, (ii) process (stages of disciple-making), (iii) model, (iv) programming, and (v) alignment

- Our *Mission* is predicated on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The recommended Mission for Fox River Congregational calls for us to be to be a disciple-making church by encouraging, equipping and supporting persons in growing toward a more Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions by connecting in four relationships, i.e., with God, with fellow Christians, with persons through serving their needs, and with the people outside the faith. (For The recommended Mission Statement, see Appendix A.) Mission must be the nonnegotiable imperative for a disciple-making church All that the church does must be based upon and reflect its mission. To be an effective disciple-making church, we must to be passionate about our mission and structure our church in a manner to accomplish it

- The *Process* by which one grows as a follower of Christ, i.e., the *Stages of Disciple-making*, needs to be clear, communicated, fostered and implemented to move people toward developing and enhancing connecting in the four critical relationships.
- A church *Model* is the framework a church creates to advance its mission. The model serves as the organizational principle under which programming operates. The small group model, designed to funnel all people into small groups, has proven to be highly successful. Not only are relationships and Christian fellowship best developed in small groups, other aspects of spiritual formation in growing toward a more Christ-like life are also fostered.
- *Programming content* (whether worship services, program studies, events or other activities and whether on-going or new) should be considered with the questions does this and, if so, is this the best way to foster advancing the mission our church. Furthermore, the model of programs should foster and facilitate utilization of the small group model which plays a fundamental role leading people to grow in following Christ. This is the critical concept to keep front and center in developing a strategy for continuation of, change in, or adding to what we are doing as Christ's church.
- Without *alignment* among the various components of a congregation (pastors, church leaders, church staff, volunteers, and all other members of the church), a church is out of sync with different components pulling in different directions. When all are pulling in the same direction, the likelihood of effective results is greatly enhanced. Foundational to alignment is a congregation understanding the mission of its church. It is impossible to create alignment in a congregation if there are multiple understandings of the congregation's purpose. Clarity of mission is essential. Start by asking whether the program contributes to achieving the primary purpose, i.e., mission. In an aligned congregation all that is done relates to and foster achievement of its mission. Without clarity of mission there will be no alignment. Without alignment, it is very difficult to grow a congregation and engage in a consistently faithful and effective disciple-making ministry.

2. *Excellence in Implementing and Growing a Disciple-Making Church: Quality Improvement*

As a local church we are God's franchise in the community. Excellence honors God. Therefore, in all that we do as a church, we need to be committed to the standard of excellence by every person exercising their God-given spiritual gifts to the best of his or her ability. If in presenting ourselves as a reflection of God's love and character we do so in a mediocre manner, we fail to honor God who deserves the best we can offer. Thus, as we seek to grow in effectiveness as a disciple-making church, we need to embrace the goal of on-going quality improvement. This is not simply becoming more efficient in what we do, but rather be efficient in a manner which enhances our effectiveness in advancing our mission. That is, in all that we do in encouraging,

equipping and supporting people in their growth toward a more Christ-like life in their thoughts, feelings and actions, we should do so in a manner of pursuing excellence. This does not say that we will always achieve excellence. We are imperfect human beings. But, strive we must.

Growing disciples is on-going process requiring on-going rather than periodic efforts. Hence a church needs to develop an on-going process for excellence in such areas as assuring quality in the physical and welcoming environments of our church, assuring quality in the content of disciple-making experiences, and assuring quality results in our spiritual growth efforts. When a church undertakes an excellence process analysis and follows up with needed changes, the natural result is increased effectiveness in its disciple-making efforts.

3. *Implementing Leadership in a Disciple-Making Church*

Quality leadership is foundational for an effective disciple-making church. In order to create and sustain quality leadership, a church needs to consider and institute several elements including the following.

- Possession of *positive personal leadership characteristics* is the *sine qua non* of effective leadership. Effective leadership depends upon how he or she goes about exercising one's leadership role, especially connecting with and investing in his or her people and giving them work in a manner meaningful to them. Be aware of these needed characteristics when looking for and using persons in leadership capacities.
- *Leadership development* for those having some ministry responsibility can be critical for effectiveness. Simply vesting responsibility in someone and leaving them to figure out what they are to do is an invitation to failure. To assure an on-going and expanding supply of leaders in various capacities and responsibilities, it is important for a church to institute a leadership development program for both those currently occupying leadership positions and those coming on board as leaders in a variety of situations. Furthermore, waiting until the church needs a leader is the worst time trying to find one. Instead, institute a process for identifying potential leaders before they are needed. The key is to be people focused rather than need focused. This requires intentional and on-going leader development effort.
- *Equip leaders for ministry success* – Plan and prepare for success by inviting the right person to the right ministry, determine the desired results for each ministry, identify the skills and core competencies needed to achieve the desired results, and invest in the necessary training materials and tools. Equipping is an ongoing process. Ministry and culture change. Equipping is not an event. It is a life style. Equipping needs to be an integral part in the life of a disciple-making church.
- *Develop team leaders and team members* – *Structure* a church around teams. The team approach enhances communication, creates broader ownership, is more rewarding to participants, better models the Christian community, and contributes to growing team members in their own individual Walks with Christ. This not only

fosters a basic purpose of the church (fellowship), it enhances productivity and quality. This is particularly true in the context of more recent generations who want to participate, make a difference, and see their ideas acted upon. Leadership selection and development are the crux of establishing and conducting quality improvement ministry teams. And importantly, since effective relational small groups are the heart of the growth of people toward a Christ-like life in thoughts, feelings and actions, as groups form and expand in number, increasingly small group leaders will need to be found and trained.

4. *Implementing Effective the Stages of Disciple-Making Path*

Growing as a disciple is the process of becoming transformed into the image of Christ. To effectively grow spiritually one needs to move through Stages of Disciple-Making which offer experiences of spiritual disciplines that better place oneself in situations where God is more likely to transform him or her. Needed is a pathway leading people step-by-step from the point of initial contact with the church to spiritual maturity through growing toward a more Christ-like life. Thus, it is incumbent for a disciple-making church to not only clearly express its disciple-making mission purpose and the characteristics of discipleship by which this purpose is to be achieved, but also it is the responsibility of the church to set forth Stages of Disciple-Making to, within and through which one progresses to grow toward a more Christ-like life by connecting with God, other believers, others through serving, and the persons outside the faith. A church which recognizes disciple-making as its core mission, is confronted with the responsibility of implementing a process (i.e., Stages of Disciple-Making) to encourage and support people in their efforts to grow in their Walk with Christ. It is the development of a clear spiritual path and the means to traverse such path to foster movement which demand our church's on-going focused attention. Conditions underlying successful implementation of a process which effectively moves people through the Stages of Disciple-Making include the following.

- *Clear Path* – The Stages of Disciple-Making must be clear, communicated and understood. The recommended Stages of Disciple-Making, considered above, offers a process in which various programs, ministries and other are intentional tools to move people along in their Walk with Christ rather than simply being isolated or non-integrated experiences. When specific programs, events, ministries and other experiences are draped on this pathway structure, a simple clear path of disciple-making process is offered for a person to follow.
- *Intentionality of Movement* – Grow people through a process that has a purpose (a mission). To respond to the challenge of moving people through the Stages of Disciple-Making, both the church and the individual need to be intentional about movement. They must commit and remain committed throughout the Walk with Christ.
- *Encouragement of Movement at Each Stage* – Movement to, within or through the Stages of Disciple-Making needs to be encouraged at each and every stage. The church needs to determine and foster various ways to encourage movement to, within and through each stage. There must be a system of intentional effort to move

people along in their Walk with Christ. At each stage the spiritual growth experiences offered need to be perceived as attractive both with respect to being interesting, exciting and worthwhile, as well as offering convenient scheduling with respect to persons' availability, so as to induce people to move to, within and, in some cases, beyond a particular stage. As a church, we need to evaluate the content offered to assure that it offers meaningful spiritual formation experiences attractive to potential participants. Furthermore, programmatic and small group efforts do little good if the discipleship process is not repeatedly well communicated as an integral part of the fabric of the church.

Both the church and individuals need to recognize that disciple-making is one step at a time and that people progress at different paces. Furthermore, one's path may not be sequential. Different people may enter the process at different point and proceed in different ways. However, the goal is ultimately to move to and experience each of the stages of disciple-making as we pursue intimacy with God, intimacy in a community of believers, serving others and connecting with the people outside the faith. The church is responsible for effectively fostering peoples' movement through the Stages of Discipleship.

5. *Fostering Disciple-Making Success*

In addition to engendering movement to, within and through the stages of disciple-making, there are several additional means to foster successful disciple-making applicable across the range of the stages of disciple-making.

- *Implementation of Means to Discern and Match Persons' Gifts to Ministry* – In addition to understanding the spiritual discipline of serving, we need to discern those God given gifts which we each possess and how they can be best used in response to God's call for us to serve the needs of our members, those outside our church, and the functioning of the church itself. When a person struggles to do something for which God did not create him to do, the results are likely to be frustration, burn out, or giving up on the church altogether. In contrast, discovering and using one's God given gifts clarifies God's call for one's life, glorifies God, and brings joy and growth in one's Walk with Christ. From both the perspective of a church whose mission includes both serving others and disciple-making its members and from the perspective of individuals seeking to grow into a more Christ-like life, the crucial question becomes what are the God given gifts that we each possess and how can they be best be used in response to God's call to ministry? The importance for the members of our church to discover and utilize their God given gifts cannot be overemphasized. One's growth toward a more Christ-like is seriously deterred by one's failure to do so.

Consequently, if we as a church are serious about being an effective disciple-making church. it is our responsibility to develop and implement a way or combination of ways, on a church wide basis, for our members to discern and apply their God given gifts. These include short term and/or relational small groups using gift discovery programs and materials as well as discerning the gifts of others in

one's group. Other gift discerning approaches are available as well including periodic church-wide gift surveys. A spiritually vital church recognizes the essential role that God given gifts plays in the life and ministry of the church and organizes itself so that those gifts can be discerned and exercised. This is an essential ingredient in fostering disciple-making success.

- *Implementation of Personality Style Evangelism* – While persons acting individually can utilize their own personality style to influence unbelievers, a greater impact is much more likely to result when members of a congregation work together as a whole with each person discovering and employing his or her own evangelism personality styles. Thus, a church desiring to enhance the overall effectiveness of its evangelism efforts should consider instituting personality style evangelism on a church-wide basis. An overall process for church-wide personality style team evangelism embraces several elements including (i) both individual and collective church *prayer* on what to do and for the opportunity to encounter prospects, (ii) *individual personality evangelism style assessment* for all members of congregation better enabling reaching out to others in a style natural to him or her, (iii) *assessment of church's personality style and gifts* to better focus energy, resources and training for effective evangelism, (iv) incorporating the basic elements of evangelism commonly applicable across the range of different evangelism styles, and (v) *vision casting* the church's evangelism mission
- *Foster Personal Commitment* – Being a follower of Christ (a disciple) involves embarking on and continuing a process of growing in the image of Christ. This is achieved through the understanding, learning and practicing spiritual disciplines by moving through the Stages of Disciple-Making. The process is neither easy nor does it lack challenges. But, if one's habits remain the same, he or she will experience little of the “abundant” life Christ offers. Growing toward a more Christ-like life is a choice. It is the result of the commitments we make and spiritual practices we do. A critical responsibility of a disciple-making church is to communicate understanding, create expectations and motivate persons' commitment to progress in their Walk with Christ. Communicating the stark comparative differences in the costs and benefits of following Christ versus the costs and benefits of non-discipleship provide powerful motivation for people to positively respond and commit to God's call to follow Christ. A church needs to confidently ask people for commitment. Whatever the specific approach, to be effective the church's call for commitment needs to be a clear, aggressive and positive.
- *Implement Self-Assessment and Spiritual Development Plans* – In his letter to the Corinthians Paul calls upon us, as well as the Corinthians, to examine and test ourselves to see if we really are in the faith. He urges that we give ourselves spiritual checkups and look for a growing awareness of Christ's presence and power in our lives. Presumably, most of us are not very conscious of the specific nature of our shortcomings in trying to become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ. Although we generally accept that we fall short, at best, only a few translate this recognition into self-assessment as to how to do better. Typically, we view ourselves as being pretty

good persons. A key to motivating ourselves and our church members to commit to more intentional discipleship is developing a system of self-assessment which not only fosters commitment to spiritual growth, but also helps guide a person in discerning a development plan to better enable him or her to progress in growing toward a more Christ-like life. Furthermore, one is more likely to commit if they have some idea as to the specifics to which he or she is committing.

Several highly successful churches have discovered the need for self-assessment mechanisms and/or development of customized spiritual development plans for individuals to personally assess where they are and guide themselves on their spiritual journey. This gives rise to the goal that every member of the church (as well as others involved in albeit not members of the church) have his or her their own personal spiritual growth plan and be able to answer at any time the question where he or she is currently and what is the next step in his or her spiritual growth development. In turn, the church will then be able to better help persons in customizing individual “personal spiritual growth plans” for them to pursue. Alternative approaches to a self-assessment are available (some considered in the resource book) including an approach used by our church based a self-assessment survey conducted several years ago. Whatever the alternative approach selected, an on-going self-assessment plan and the development of individual personal spiritual growth plans are of prime importance for greater church effectiveness in disciple-making efforts.

- *Assessment of Church’s Disciple-Making Efforts* – Scripture calls for assessment: “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds....” (Proverbs 27:23). This calls for the development and implementation of a means to assess the effectiveness of our church’s disciple-making efforts. To progress as an effective disciple-making church, we must regularly ask whether we are advancing the mission to which Jesus calls us, i.e., make disciples by leading people to accept Christ as Lord and Savior and grow them to be more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings and actions. What does a church look like when people are growing in their Walk with Christ? The discipleship model anticipates transformation of lives. This, in turn, raises the question, what are the marks in a person’s life which evidence that spiritual transformation is occurring and the church is advancing its mission. The recommended Mission Statement for FRCC sets forth the foundational marks of discipleship; (i) connecting with God in a loving and intimate, relationship, (ii) connecting with other Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together, (iii) connecting with people through loving serving, and (iv) connecting with the people outside the faith by witnessing the good news, bringing them to Christ and into Christian fellowship in the church.

To assess the effectiveness of FRCC as a disciple-making church, we need to develop a means to assess, on an on-going basis, to what extent people are in fact progressing in their efforts to make these connections, i.e., to what extent do they reflect theses marks of discipleship. Two approaches, which complement one another, offer means of doing so. (1) *Keep track of persons’ progress within and*

through the Stages of Disciple-Making. Although such numbers don't provide in depth knowledge as to persons growing in faith, nevertheless they evidence whether the church is fostering peoples' participation in experiences which may lead toward a more Christ-like life. (2) Drawing upon individuals' *personal spiritual self-assessments*, such as that considered earlier, can be the most revealing. Subjective, self-assessments inform as to where people think they are at, where they need to go and, when done on a periodic basis, whether there has been progress, stagnation or retrogression. This not only informs the church as to how it is doing, it points to areas where improvements need to be made.

Developing an effective assessment of our church's disciple-making efforts needs to be implemented on a regular on-going basis consisting of the following elements. With our mission purposes, core values and vision as the foundational standards, we need to develop quantitative and qualitative standards providing practical means to answer are we advancing our mission, what are we doing that is an obstacle to advancing our mission, and what aren't we doing that needs to be done to advance our mission. Determine the information needed to evaluate church performance. Then, develop feedback mechanisms to generate the information needed to evaluate.

6. *Implementing the Creation and Structuring Small Groups for Disciple-Making*

Earlier discussion highlights the fundamental roles which both short term and relational small groups must play if we are to be an effective disciple-making church. Here the focus is on factors which need to be considered in creating, structuring and implementing small groups for effective-disciple-making. Every church member and attendee should be emphatically encouraged to become involved in either a short term and/or immediately or ultimately a relational small group.

- *Form and Implement Short Term Small Groups* – There is no rigid format or protocol for forming short term small groups as to the interest for participation, the manner of conduct, nor as to who may sponsor the group (e.g., a team, an individual or group of individuals). However, despite the high degree of flexibility, three standards should be adhered to; (i) group conduct should be done with excellence (avoid poor group experience which is likely to dissuade persons from moving on to other group experiences), (ii) prior to the conclusion of the group experience participants should be encouraged and supported in progressing to a relational small group, and (iii) the content of short term group programming should embrace some fundamental aspect of fostering spiritual growth to, within and/or through the Stages of Disciple-Making. The key element in the success of a short-term small group is the leader. Therefore, the church should afford some means of training current and potential leaders.

➤ *Building Transformational Fellowship around Relational Small Groups*

- *Crucial Role of Relational Small Groups* – Since God is love, his very nature is relational. When he creates persons in his own image, we are inherently relational and purposed to love one another. However, love cannot be learned in isolation, but rather love involves relationships. In the Christian sense "fellowship" means more than just socializing, fun and food. Real fellowship is experiencing life together. Life is meant to be shared. The spiritual discipline of connecting with others in Christian fellowship is characterized by mutual acceptance, caring, sense of belonging, accountability, integrity, trust love. Following Christ requires that we walk alongside others to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward the image of Christ. Most nurturing of a spiritual life and ministry occurs in committed on-going relational small groups. Following Christ is not something that is simply taught. Following Christ needs to be lived. Relational small groups serve as a prime, perhaps indispensable, vehicle for doing so. At our church the absence of church-wide participation in meaningful small relational group experiences reveals a major gap in our disciple-making efforts. Failure of a church to foster a relational small group environment significantly undermines the effectiveness of its disciple-making efforts.

As a disciple-making church, we need to concentrate priority efforts on offering spiritual formation experiences through relational small groups. A fundamental goal of our church should not simply be a church with just a few relational small groups. But rather, a fundamental strategy for our church needs to become *a church of relational small groups* with all church members participating in a relational small group of some sort.

- *Encourage Churchwide Participation in Relational Small Groups* – It is essential that relational small groups should not be considered simply as an appendage or an alternative to other operational aspects of the church. But rather, relational small groups need to be an integral and central part of the church strategy and structure. They constitute a foundational and indispensable stage of effective disciple-making. Participation in an effective relational small group is the ultimate goal of assimilation efforts. Thus, all members of the congregation, through the various means of public communication and personal invitations, should be encouraged to participate in some small group. The motivation might be to test drive a small group experience or to form a small group around a topic of particular interest to him or her. All teams need to explore and wrap either a small short term or longer relational small group component into their team activities, programs and events. Teams themselves should function as a small group rather than simply being a committee performing some tasks.

- *Conditions for Transformation through Relational Small Groups* – Experience demonstrates that simply meeting in a relational small group format does not automatically result in spiritual growth. Several ingredients are necessary for a healthy environment to encourage people out of their shells into active and meaningful disciple-making relationships. When present, these characteristics of relational small groups create a disciple-making environment leading toward spiritual formation. They need to be increasingly reflected by group members as the group evolves into deeper relationships in sharing life together.

Such qualities include working toward creating an environment of relational transparency and mutual trust through developing characteristics such as honesty, listening, respecting and affirming others as to their uniqueness and value to the God, humility, confidentiality, reliability, caring and love. Grow trusting mutual relationships fostering confessions thereby opening oneself to God's transforming power. Strive toward creating an environment of mutual accountability in which group members challenge one another as to their efforts in the practice of spiritual disciplines appropriate for that person. In short, a relational small group should reflect and vigorously pursue the creation of a transformational disciple-making climate which better enables its members to discern and pursue God's specific call for them both individually and as a group.

- *Forming and Structuring Covenant Based Relational Small Groups: Relational Small Group Covenant* – Community serves two basic human needs; the need for relationships with others and the need for involvement in purposes greater than oneself. Relational small groups are covenantal in nature. A relational small group covenant not only fosters an environment for higher quality relationships, but also unites group members in a shared purpose to which God calls us. Through the making and committing to a covenant, relational small groups articulate their common purposes, vision and the norms which connect the group to one another and to God.

It is the responsibility of an effective disciple-making church to create a model covenant for relational small groups which establishes understanding of and commitment to (i) the foundational purposes of mutual spiritual nurture leading to growth and transformation toward a more Christ-like life and contributing to others in doing the same, (ii) the expectations as to core values contributing to spiritual growth (e.g., striving for intimacy with other members of the group, growing in serving others, sharing Christ with people outside the faith, and going out and reproduce disciples by finding and teaching others), and (iii) procedural expectations as to the manner of group conduct supporting meaningful functioning of the group in building and maintaining relationships (e.g., participation in frequent and regular gatherings, manner of interacting with one another such as mutual trust, honesty, confidentiality, openness, accountability,

respectful discussion, etc.). In order to both foster and place greater emphasis and effort in effectuating *meaningful* relational small groups, our church needs to establish a covenantal base for such groups. In doing so, it is recommended here that the church adopt and institute the relational small group covenant set forth in the resource book.

Although effective disciple-making is covenantal in nature, small groups need not be the same identical in structure and mode of operation. Groups take on their own particular attributes and focus based on the nature of the participants and the interests which draw them together. Differing small groups are necessary to meet the needs and interests of the different members of our congregation. The learning and practice of spiritual disciplines through relational small groups can be practiced in many ways with each group taking on those attributes reflecting its particular common interests and needs. It is ultimately up to the members to shape their own group.

However, the foundational purpose of spiritual growth needs to be included in the experience of every group. It should be covenant based. In general, in addition to sharing life together, spending time in the Word and prayer, serving and/or outreach need to be a part of the experience of each relational small group in order for significant spiritual growth to occur. In building, fostering and implementing a church-wide relational small group effort, the church should accept the varying natures of groups, but do so in the context of covenantal groups embracing the elements of growing toward more Christ-like lives.

7. *Building a Contagious Christian Church*

Earlier discussion in the resource book on evangelism centered upon the role and development of individual believers engaging in personal relationship evangelism and the church's responsibility in creating evangelism disciple-making experiences to encourage, equip and support such efforts. Here, focus shifts from the individual's perspective to the church's perspective in building a contagious Christian church. In addition to church evangelistic efforts considered elsewhere, additional facets of church efforts need to be considered.

- *Synergy: Integration of Personal Relationship Evangelism and Church Outreach Efforts* – The Great Commission leaves little ambiguity that evangelism is central to what our church is to be about. This includes every member of our congregation. Each individual's personal relational evangelism efforts play an important role in bringing people to Christ. To be an effective disciple-making church, it is the responsibility of the church to motivate, equip and support ordinary believers to communicate their faith naturally and effectively.

However, there are limits to the degree of success which individuals can achieve when carrying out unsupported Lone Ranger evangelism. When individual

personal relationships develop with persons outside the faith, at some point there needs to be a place and situation to bring them for a relevant, interesting, attractive experience (e.g., an engaging worship service, exploring small group to discuss questions, participation in a friendly small group, etc.). Developing a synergistic approach for individual and church efforts affords a powerful evangelistic approach and is essential for effective outreach efforts.

- *Characteristics of Churches that Reach People* – Churches which have been successful in bringing people to Christ reflect five fundamental characteristics; (i) all proclamations, assertions and efforts must be grounded in absolute *truth*, (ii) offer opportunities helping people to *experience God* or at least get a glimpse of God, (iii) *servicing others needs* reflecting God’s love in practical terms, (iv) *share the good news by word* at an appropriate time, and (v) remain cognizant of *dependence on God through prayer* by all church members (praying persistently for the lost, for opportunities to approach people outside the faith, and for boldness to open the door for spiritual conversations). When implementing a synergistic approach to its evangelism (and other efforts), these crucial elements of truth, offering opportunities to experience God, serving, sharing the good news, and cognizance of dependence on God through prayer need to remain in the forefront of our church’s efforts.
- *Evangelistic) Values* – Evangelistic values serve as the foundation of outreach efforts. These values, which are rooted in scripture, provide the essential principles which need to be owned, modeled and instilled in the culture of the church in order to build a contagious Christian church. They include

people matter to God
 people are spiritually lost
 people need Christ
 people need answers
 people need community
 people need cultural relevance
 people need time.

Having discerned these evangelistic values, the question becomes how to put them into effect so as to reach the doubters, atheists and others. What is the evangelic process?

- *Evangelistic Process* – Evangelism is a core mission embraced by FRCC’s current and recommended Mission Statements. To be an effective disciple-making church, we need to develop and implement a strategy to build a contagious Christian church. The discernment of the evangelistic values affords a foundation for doing so.

Based upon these values, Willow Creek Community Church has predicated its evangelism efforts on a six stage evangelistic process consisting of the

following: (i) church leaders own and model evangelism values, (ii) leaders instill evangelism values into the culture of the church to excite people to become involved in personal relationship evangelism, (iii) empower an evangelism point person, (iv) liberate people from fears of doing evangelism and equip every believer for personal relationship evangelism, (v) mobilize evangelism specialists in a diverse evangelism group ministry, and (vi) innovate high impact outreach events. Willow Creek's evangelistic process provides a highly successful model for building a contagious church. This and other approaches should be explored for additions, alterations and/or deletions which may be integrated into or in lieu of this basic framework.

Several conditions underlay successful implementation of an evangelistic process including fully committed church leadership, broad congregation support, alignment with the evangelism mission and other church ministries, and strategic coordination of all outreach activities with one building upon another.

- *Width and Depth* – Although evangelism is a foundational element in our mission, it not the sole calling of our church. To be an effective disciple-making church we must not only go wide through outreach efforts to bring in the lost, but also once people come to Christ (current as well as new members), we must go deep in helping them grow in their faith leading to more Christ- like lives in their thoughts, feelings and action. One should not be sacrificed for the other. We are called to go both wide and deep.
- *Attracting the Unchurched*
 - *An Inviting/Connecting Church* – The preponderant reason that growing churches attract the unchurched to attend a church worship service, program, other event or activity is an invitation by a family member, a friend or one who is in the process of establishing a relationship. This occurs on a widespread basis when a church has created a culture of invitation in its members. Furthermore, failure to engage newcomer visitors/guests in relationships lessens the likelihood of a return. The 30 second meet and greet either before or after a worship service, or other event, does little to connect visitors with the church. More is required.

In contrast, small group opportunities offering themes of interest to visitors need to be available coupled with intentionality of church members to connect newcomers with such a group. A small group environment provides opportunity to bring a visitor into authentic community and a connection with church. Informal small groups, gathered in comfortable non-threatening environments, affording opportunity for discussion and questions, arouse interest and attract participation, especially when invited by a friend. Furthermore, such groups provide opportunity to connect and develop in relationships which enhances the appeal to keep coming back. It is essential that our church be both an inviting and a connecting church.

- *Serving* – Caringly and lovingly serving peoples physical, emotional and/or spiritual needs opens the door to communicating at least a sense that there is something positive about the Christian faith. When church members do so on a widespread basis, the potential for bringing people in and ultimately leading them to embarking on a faith journey may prove to exceedingly successful.
- *Marketing* – Churches have an immensely important message to offer, but it is of little avail if no one is there to listen. Whatever mass marketing is used, it is important to develop the church's most effective story about who we are, what our ministry is about and how that vision can impact peoples' lives. Find ways to use various on-line and other medias to spread the word about the church and welcoming them into our faith community. To the extent marketing is utilized, avoid that which has proven to become increasingly ineffective.

Furthermore, whatever form our mass marketing takes, first market our own members. Get them excited about the church. This, in turn, is likely to be conveyed to those outside the church in personal relationship invitational situations. However, the critical lesson is that, although marketing and media efforts may help somewhat, they cannot replace personal relationships and invitations as the prime means for both bringing people in and encouraging and supporting them in commencing a continuing a spiritual journey.

- *Outreach Events* – The sixth stage of the evangelistic process is to innovate and implement high impact outreach events There are several questions and principles to consider to get on the right track in developing and implementing an outreach event including (i) who are we trying to reach, (ii) what are we trying to achieve, (iii) how does the event fit into a larger evangelistic process (always give a prospect the next step), (iv) integration of outreach events with other opportunities, and (v) promotion.

There are a wide variety of church events and activities which can contribute to the evangelism process. These can be grouped under three general categories (worship services, short term small groups designed specifically to attract skeptics and unbelievers, and other non-worship events).

- *Intentionality as to Our Targets* – In fostering the achievement of our mission purpose of reaching out to and bringing people to Christ and into the local church community, it is important not to approach this fundamental task with a casual attitude. The universe of unchurched people embraces a wide range of attitudes, mindsets and personal circumstances. When we have a clear idea as to whom we are targeting, we can more effectively select and implement those outreach efforts most likely to attract these people. We need to be intentional about our primary targets.

In doing so, we need to be mindful of the different mindsets of the substantial majority of non or lapsed Christians today reflecting a Modernism or Post-Modernism perspective (younger people especially reflecting the latter). We need to go where the people are and adapt our approaches to ways which make sense to them. A review of such factors as (1) susceptibility to outreach, (2), the relative impact of successfully reaching different potential target groups, and (3) and the nature of our church in relation to the characteristics of the different groups lead to the conclusion that the primary focus of our church's outreach efforts should be those persons possessing a Post-Modern mindset (including Millennials and younger). Post-Modern people, who increasingly seek a more meaningful life, exhibit a greater acceptance of and curiosity about spiritual matters and long for connectedness (fellowship) with others. If we create a safe and comfortable place and manner to engage them, there is a tremendous opportunity for successful outreach. Geography and demographic data suggest a sufficient presence of this group in our geographic area. Although the attributes of this mindset are most commonly reflected among the younger generation, such attributes can also be found in older age groups as well. So, our primary focus should be on those persons possessing the Post-Modern mindset, not necessarily only on a specific age groups..

- *Creating Irresistible Environments* – On any given day persons may walk onto our church campus. His or her first impression may ultimately determine whether he or she becomes a lifelong member of the congregation or never steps foot in the building again. Environments matter. To attract those from outside the church and enhance the likeliness of their return, create irresistible environments. To do so, define what is meant by irresistible environment for each specific ministry and all other areas of the church (e.g., parking lots, ministry areas for children, small groups, worship services, etc.). Establish and implement standards of excellence for all ministry environments. Newcomers who come, do evaluate. Several essential ingredients, considered in the resource book, underlay the creation of great environments for attracting and retaining the unchurched. Each ministry in the church should be periodically evaluated and necessary corrections and improvements made. Utilization of secret shoppers, in addition to other forms of internal evaluation, further enhances the ability to create and maintain an irresistible church environment.
- *Strategy for Reaching Secular People* – Unless the evangelistic values and good intentions are translated into a step-by step strategy, significant advancement in our church's efforts to build a contagious Christian church advancing our evangelism mission is unlikely to occur. The foundation of an effective strategy consists of three basic steps.
 - *Step 1: Build Relationships.* The church needs to instill and engender in believers the habit of asking God to lead them to an unbeliever or skeptic with whom one can establish a relationship as well as asking God for aid in doing so. Thus, Step 1 in the church's evangelistic strategy is for all church

members to commit to building relationships with people who need to be reached. When the relationship is, or becomes, one of friendship, discern and utilize the opportunity for spiritual conversations.

- *Step 2: Share a Verbal Witness.* After building a trusting relationship, offer verbal witness. Each believer needs to be willing to assume risks and initiate spiritual conversations. It is imperative that the church develop and implement means to prepare all of its members to build relationships, witness the impact of Christ in their lives, and articulate the truths of the gospel (i.e., personal relationship evangelism).
- *Step 3: Invite Friends to Outreach Events.* For unbelievers to come to Christ, someone needs to lead them to a basic understanding of the Christian faith and to experiencing the joy of relationships in following Christ. However, rarely does an individual church member not lead a person to Christ all by him or herself. The work of the Holy Spirit is at work in all evangelistic pursuits. Step 3 of the strategy to reach unbelievers is for the church to offer both attractive and interesting worship and non-worship outreach events, as well as short term and relational small group opportunities, to which members invite unbeliever to attend in an attractive irresistible church environment. Effective evangelism is a church-wide team evangelism effort. By combining individual efforts with well executed worship and non-worship events, the message of the Word can be communicated and loving relationships can grow initiating a person's embarkation on a path leading to accepting and to growing in Christ.

It is the responsibility of a disciple-making church to structure and will itself to carry out this three-stage strategy of (i) relationship building, (ii) sharing Christ and (iii) invitation. We should strive to become a contagious Christian church by motivating, training, equipping and supporting all of our members to actively engage in personal relationship evangelism and by providing attractive opportunities to which they can invite people whom they are reaching out to. A strategy that integrates an individual's personal relationship evangelism outreach efforts with well executed worship and non-worship outreach events and which provides an irresistible environment is a strategy that has proven to be quite effective in building a contagious Christian church.

8. *Team Organizational Structure*

The effectiveness of a church as a disciple-making church, in significant part, depends upon its organizational framework being based upon and implemented for the accomplishment of its mission. The passage of time since the last organizational review here at FRCC and the discussion in the resource book gives rise to recommended modifications. But, most importantly, the adoption of the recommended Mission statement and an awareness of the Stages

of Disciple-Making, which are incumbent upon a person seeking to grow toward a more Christ-like life, call for reconsideration of several aspects our current organizational structure.

- *Recommended Organizational Structure* – As established in the By-Laws of our church, the current organizational structure is founded upon Christ as the head of the church. Under Christ, the congregation is the policy making body. Serving under the Congregation are currently seven teams whose responsibilities are set forth in the By-Laws. In the context being a Congregational church, although the senior pastor as well as other staff under him do not occupy command and control role authority, our senior pastor is highly respected and influential as the leader of the church.

The recommended organizational changes involve amending the church By-Laws with respect to creating new and deleting old teams, team name changes, and team responsibilities. Several significant recommended changes in team organizational structure are noted here.

- To remedy our current lack of a systematic and coordinated efforts to assimilate prospective new and even on-going members into the life of the church, a *newly created Assimilation Team* is recommended to play a major role in remedying this defect.
- Creating and growing disciples is the role of the entire church, not simply that of one team. Worship, fellowship, serving and evangelism are all integral elements of discipleship. Thus, it is recommended that there *no longer be a Discipleship Team* whose current responsibilities will be reallocated to a new and/or other existing teams.
- The new *Adult Christian Education Team* emerges from the former Discipleship Team. Utilizing a variety of means, including short term small groups, its focus will be on adult Christian education, training short term small group leaders, and supporting other teams in related areas.
- The new *Sunday School and Youth Education Team* is created to assume responsibilities in this area formerly exercised by the Discipleship Team.
- The new *Relational Small Group Team's* responsibility is to foster relational small groups as a fundamental element in advancing our disciple-making mission. This calls for encouraging and moving each member of the congregation into an effective disciple-making relational small group. Creating, training and leading relational small groups needs to be a fundamental component in our church organizational structure.
- Create the *Ministry Support Team* which is a rename for the current Accountability Team whose current name is unsuitable for the Team's current and future functions covering a wide gamut of responsibilities.

In short, the recommended team structure consists of the ten teams:

- (i) Worship
- (ii) Fellowship
- (iii) Evangelism
- (iv) Assimilation
- (v) Adult Education
- (vi) Sunday School and Youth Education
- (vii) Serving
- (viii) Relational Small Group
- (ix) Ministry Support
- (x) Administrative

➤ *Team Responsibilities in General*

- *Enculturation of the Mission* – The essential foundation of an effective disciple-making church is its mission. This requires deeply embedding our Mission in the culture of our church. It is the responsibility of pastors, staff, all teams and ministries to be actively involved in the enculturation process. Thus, a general responsibility for every team in their team meetings, programs and other activities is to incorporate in a meaningful manner, reaffirmation of the recommended Covenant which includes the recommended Mission.
- *Disciple-Making Process* – In any organization consisting of teams or other similar bodies, there is a tendency for each unit to focus virtually all of its attention and efforts on its particular area of prime responsibility. In a church context, all too commonly, there is little tendency to be continually alert to supplementing the efforts of others teams in moving persons to, within and through the various stages of discipleship leading toward a more Christ-like life. Consequently, it must be communicated and emphasized that all teams, especially team leaders, need to be cognizant of and understand their responsibility for advancing the overall Mission of our church, not just focusing on their specific area of responsibility. All teams need to be alert as to when and, where it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in moving people through the stages of disciple-making. This general responsibility needs to be specifically included in the By-Laws for each team.
- *Fostering Fellowship* – Although there is a Fellowship Team, fostering fellowship is a natural and essential responsibility of all teams as well as each member of the church. The concept of encouraging and enabling fellowship as a church-wide phenomenon is well expressed in the FRCC Vision Statement which envisions a Christian fellowship gathered around and bound in love for Christ and one another. In all that a team does, it

should create and incorporate an environment of friendships, belonging, and caring personal relationships. The opportunity for fostering fellowship arises in all that the various teams do both in the context of the activity being pursued and among team members themselves. In short, it is the responsibility of all teams to be alert to and supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship and assimilation in moving people through the stages of disciple-making.

- *Fostering Team Member Spiritual Growth* – Team meetings should be more than simply the conduct of business. These meetings offer opportunity for team members to gather in a manner fostering their own personal spiritual growth. Among other possibilities, this not only involves building fellowship with one another, but also moments for prayer and spending time with scripture. Thus, a general responsibility for all teams is to foster team member personal spiritual growth through fellowship, prayer and scripture and perhaps in other ways as well as conducting team business.

➤ *Individual Team Responsibilities*



- – The detailed recommended responsibilities for each team are set forth in PART SIX, Section VIII, pp.620-637 in the resource book. The recommended responsibilities for each team are set forth under two categories; (i) general responsibilities common to all teams and (ii) specific responsibilities for each individual team. The recommended By-Laws (subject to potential changes following opportunities for discussion by members of the congregation) are set forth in Appendix D below.

These responsibilities reflect and are built upon the recommended Mission Statement, current FRCC By-Laws, our current adopted church vision and core value statements, current team descriptions, outlines of current strategies applicable to each team, and suggestions and recommendations offered in the resource book.



APPENDIX A

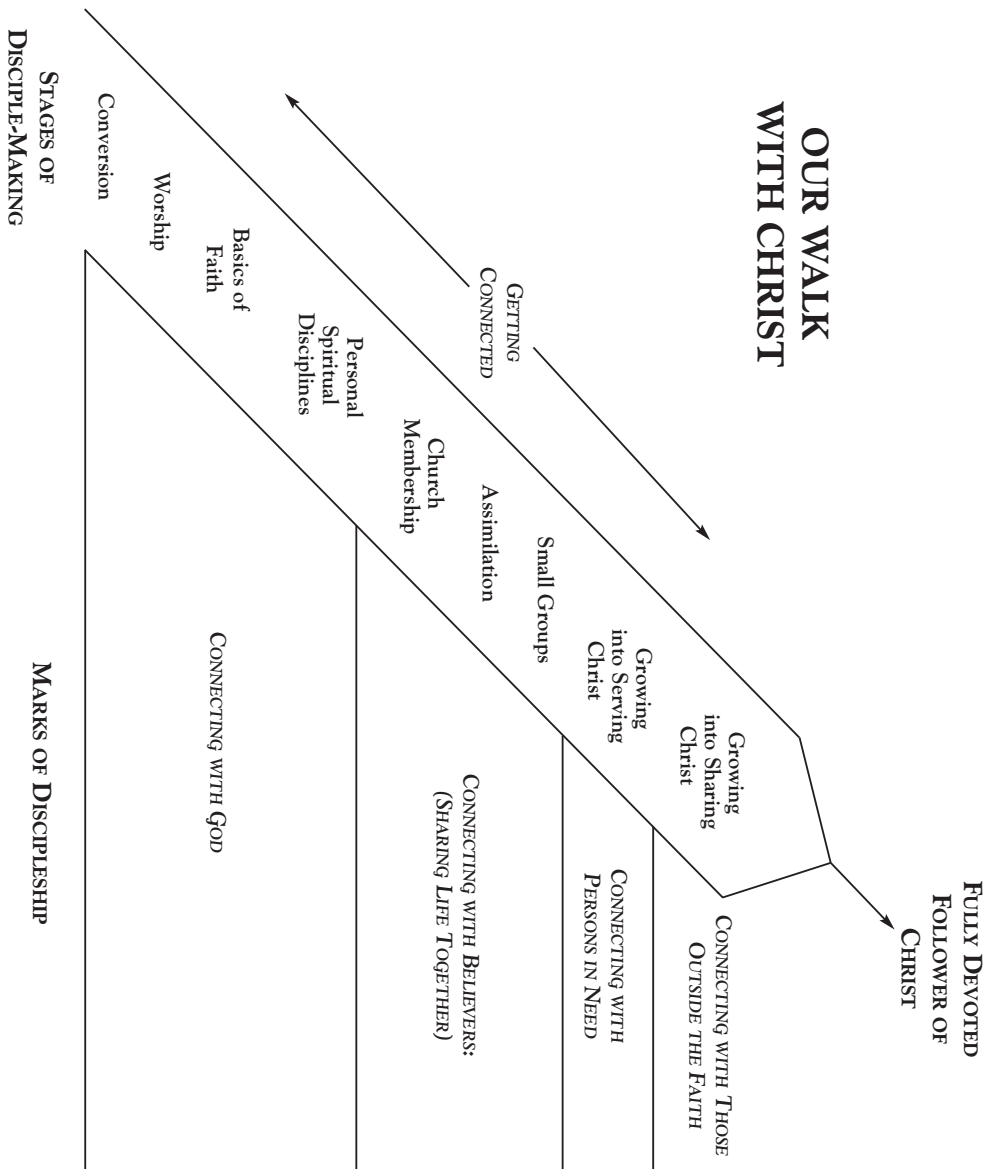
Recommended

MISSION OF FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Mission of Fox River Congregational Church is to fulfill Christ's Great Commandment and Great Commission to encourage, equip and support all people in growing toward more Christ-like lives in their thoughts, feelings and actions by

- connecting with God in a loving and intimate relationship as modeled by Christ,*
- connecting with Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together,*
- connecting with people through lovingly serving their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and*
- connecting with people outside the faith through lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ and the power of God's love for all people, leading them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life.*

APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C

Recommended

COVENANT OF MEMMBERSHIP OF FOX RIVER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

As a follower of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and my Lord and Savior, I covenant with God and other members of our church to personally commit to creating an environment for richer communion with God and to

OWN the Mission of our Church

GROW toward a more Christ-like life by seeking to

- connect with God in a loving and intimate relationship as modeled by Christ,
- connect with Christian believers through love, caring and sharing life together,
-
- connect with all people through lovingly serving their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and
-
- connect with people outside the faith through lovingly witnessing the good news of Christ and the power of God's love for all people, leading them to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and bringing them into congregational life.

DEDICATE time, talent, and treasure to the service of God

ABIDE in the Congregational Way as understood and embraced by our fellowship

APPENDIX D

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS OF FOX RIVER COMMUNITY' CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ARTICLE IV –. Section B.1 a. through f. shall be replaced by the following.

B. Team Structure and Team Responsibilities

Team Structure

There shall be ten (10) Teams: - Worship Team, Fellowship Team, Evangelism Team, Assimilation Team, Adult Education Team, Sunday School and Youth Education Team, Serving Team, Relational Small Group Team, Ministry Support Team and Administrative Team

Worship Team Responsibilities include

- assist Senior Pastor. (and/or his or her designated person) in the worship function by providing support, consultation and recommendations for implementing worship programs leading persons to experience God's presence' and spiritual transformation. Assist in offering genuine participatory rather than spectator oriented worship services, meaningful opportunities for confession and prayer and worship services attracting and engaging those outside the faith. Assist in providing music expressing love, praise, reverence and gratitude to God and the sacraments and liturgy.
- oversee special worship events
- arrange for and train ushers and greeters with emphasis on creating a welcoming and fostering fellowship environment for both existing members and visitors
- arrange for and/or offer teaching experiences on the purposes and the hows of worship

and, as common with all teams,

- be alert to where and when the Team it can be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

- foster personal spiritual growth of team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

Fellowship Team Responsibilities include

- create, promote and implement activities and programs creating environments fostering sense of belonging and friendships through the development of warm, knowing and caring personal relationships founded on respect, understanding, forgiveness, trust and love
- offer church-wide social fellowship opportunities enabling people to get to know one another including host refreshments after worship services and refreshment/meals at other church events in conjunction with other teams sponsoring such events
- foster home fellowship social gatherings

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when the Team can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Fellowship Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

Evangelism Team Responsibilities include

- directly and in conjunction with the Senior Pastor (and/or his designated person) repeatedly communicate, permeate and instill into the church culture Christ's call for evangelism, evangelism values, and evangelism lifestyle in all members of the church

- plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts leading people outside the faith in getting to know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and to actively participate in our Christian fellowship community
- encourage, train, equip, support, and foster commitment of all church members in developing knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in personal relationship and serving evangelism including fostering members' understanding of their natural personal traits and style for evangelism and using their God given gift(s) and personality characteristic in reaching out to others
- plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts and activities leading people outside the faith to know and accept Christ as Lord and Savior and to actively participate in our Christian fellowship community, including the following
 - offer meaningful experiences to people outside the faith through building personal relationships. small group gatherings, teaching basics of faith and responding to questions, objections and doubts leading toward acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior
 - either directly and/or in conjunction with the senior pastor (and/or persons he or she designates), foster clearly understood alternative ways and opportunities to accept Christ as Lord and Savior
 - foster evangelism through the formation of evangelism oriented short term and/or relational small groups either directly and/or in support of the Relational Small Group, Team and/or other teams
 - when appropriate, consult with and recommend to the Pastor and/or Worship Team as to the nature and effectiveness of worship services in attracting and engaging those outside the faith (worship evangelism)
 - gathering and developing evangelistic leaders to serve on other teams to uplift and implement evangelism values and activities in those teams
 - foster the maintenance of an attractive, welcoming and non-threatening environment in which those not yet committed to Christ feel safe and free to explore the Christian faith.

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when the Team can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Evangelism Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members

- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

Assimilation Team Responsibilities include

- plan, promote, organize and oversee efforts assimilating members and prospective members into and progressing through the stages of discipleship.
- develop and make available a current information data base on team, small group and other church offerings to participate in
- foster and facilitate participation in assimilation opportunities including discerning prospective participants, encouraging their exploration, and assisting in making connections
- offer relationship building assimilation opportunities including matching new and/or already believers with an existing small group of believers or create a new group
- foster becoming a church member
- recognize and celebrate new members

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when the Team it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

Adult Christian Education Team Responsibilities include

- offer Christian adult (including youth) educational experiences to foster understanding of, commitment to and involvement in growing toward being more Christ-like by progressing through the stages of stages of discipleship

- offer basic refresher and advanced educational experiences on the Bible, God's call for transformed living, elements of Christian living and other spiritual growth subjects
- offer educational experiences about the role and practices of spiritual disciplines
- in consultation with the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person), offer Exploring Church Membership Class opportunities for non-members to learn and understand the church's mission, covenant, stages of discipleship, core values, vision, the Congregational Way, benefits of being a member, how the church is organized, how to get involved in small groups and/or ministry, and membership requirements. Offer similar learning opportunities to current members.
- for confirmed and church youth, offer preparatory church membership program experiences including Exploring Church Membership Class, age suitable basic Christian education, and other spiritual growth programs and activities

as common with all teams,

- be alert to where and when the Team can be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Adult Christian Education Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team Responsibilities include

- offer age appropriate biblically based Christian education programs and experiences for children and youth of the church up to and including eighth grade and confirmation
- recruit and schedule teachers

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when it can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship

- foster personal spiritual growth of Sunday School and Youth Christian Education Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all team meetings. and, where appropriate, in team programs, ministries and events

Serving Team Responsibilities include

- foster a churchwide serving culture encouraging and equipping all church members to participate in a serving church ministry and/or serving in individual personal life circumstance
- foster identifying and serving felt need groups both within and outside the church community whether or not they are believers or in our church community
- teach and foster understanding the biblical mission and spiritual discipline bases for serving
- foster and assist persons discerning and developing their personal gifts for serving and help matching persons' gifts with serving needs and opportunities both inside and outside the church
- foster and assist persons serving physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others
- in consultation with and support for Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person), provide pastoral care for both those inside and outside church including visiting shut-ins in nursing homes, hospitals, private homes, etc.

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when the Team can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Serving Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

Relational Small Group Team Responsibilities include

- foster creation and, implementation of relational small groups which lead people toward spiritual growth (a more Christ-like life) through learning, understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines (including worship, prayer, spending time with God's Word), and basics of Christian living including fellowship, serving and evangelism
- equip relational small group participants for effective relational small group experiences by
 - fostering understanding the attributes underlying effective relational small groups including honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, caring, reliability, support in difficult times, reflective listening, affirming one another, mutual trust, mutual accountability and confession
 - developing and implementing means to help relational small group members to discern their gifts and match them to ministry
 - finding, training and developing relational small group leaders either directly and/or in conjunction with other church leadership training programs
- foster church-wide the multiplication of and participation in relational small groups either directly and/or supporting other teams doing so
- foster relational small groups undertaking serving and/or evangelism efforts, projects or activities

as common all with teams

- be alert to where and when the Team can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Serving Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

Ministry Support Team Responsibilities include

- foster teams functioning together in advancing the mission of the church including facilitating coordination of church policies, planning, programs and activities
- directly and/or in conjunction with the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person) and/or other teams, foster understanding of and commitment by all members of the church to following Christ by progressing through the Stages of Disciple-Making
- foster excellence in all that the church does; assuring quality in the physical and welcoming environment of the church, quality in the content of disciple-making experiences offered by the church, and quality of spiritual results in growing, disciples.
- institute a church-wide program for all church members to discover their gifts, talents and interests, guide them in matching their characteristics to existing or new ministries and/or team roles, encourage their commitment to serve, and foster appropriate teams to train and assist them in their growth¹
- develop, implement and foster periodic individual spiritual growth self- assessment of all members of the church and foster development of individual personalized spiritual growth plans
- foster people volunteering for teams and other church ministries
- either directly and/or in conjunction with other teams and/or the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person), institute periodic assessment of the church's disciple-making efforts evaluating whether they significantly contribute to the achievement of mission purposes of the church and, when appropriate, recommend to teams and/or the Congregation areas for continuation, improvement or removal
- directly and/or in conjunction with Senior Pastor (and/or his or her designated person), foster leadership recruitment and development process, and prepare for emerging leadership needs
- make available and distribute church public information
- in consultation with the Senior Pastor (or his or her designated person,) implement annual financial stewardship campaign raising funds to maintain the annual operating budget, including organizing and soliciting annual pledge support.

¹ However, in doing so, the Ministry Support Team will neither directly nor indirectly endorse a person for a Team or Officer position.

- Encourage the development of bequests, trust funds, and memorials.

as common with all teams

- be alert to where and when the Team can, be supportive of other teams and ministries in fostering fellowship, assimilation and moving people through the stages of discipleship
- foster personal spiritual growth of Ministry Support Team members by incorporating regular personal relationship fellowship building, prayer and scripture opportunities among Team members
- promote general and systematic giving of time, talent and possessions
- incorporate reaffirmation of Covenant in all Team meetings and, where appropriate, in Team programs, ministries and events

ARTICLE IV – Section B.1 g. shall be amended by

deleting the subheading *g. Administrative Team*

and replacing it with *Administrative Team Responsibilities include*