

URBAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

A possible development template for a **‘Discipling’ community**

(a synoptic perspective for discussion and development)



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The Journey

SECTION ONE: *PHILOSOPHY*

SECTION TWO: *PLATFORM*

SECTION THREE: *PRACTICE*

Strategy:

- ***Purpose:*** (What – Vision)
- ***Priority:*** (Why – Mission)
- ***Path:*** (How – Tactics/enabling objectives)
- ***Provisions:*** (Resources/tools)

PHILOSOPHY

“The Kingdom of God is not so much about performance and productivity – it’s about posture, priority, proximity and potential.”

S.W. Varcoe

“He who knows how will always have a job – He who knows WHY will always be his boss.”

Carl Ward

Scripture, Messianic teaching/modelling and New Testament Pattern in mind, make it abundantly clear that the Church is to function as a body and in fact cannot accomplish divine potential outside such a functioning mode. Ephesians 4:6-11 is probably the most profound illustration of such. It goes to the extent of declaring that it, the Body, is only held together by what each joint supplies. The inference being that if at any point one joint refuses or is unable to ‘supply’ (give what is necessary for not only cohesion, but function) then the body cannot operate properly.

Because God only creates perfect things and indeed Eden was the intent of God for us, then everything since Adam’s fall has been to bring us ‘back to’ that place of relationship, fellowship and wholeness. Redemption is about ‘getting back – restoring ownership’ and this Grace driven process has many remarkable consequences that include, but are not restricted too; restoring the lost to a found state, the broken to a whole state and the disconnected to intimacy. It is a process at its essence of identifying, addressing and removing the impediments to that ‘getting back’ to the Divine priority – the Kingdom.

So, for instance to facilitate ‘ownership’ of a Divine principle, process or purpose which is clearly God’s intent, it is really about dealing with the impediment that blocks or slows that. The search can obviously be difficult and may be years to find every issue. (Certainly, a continual focus on looking for ‘bad’ will do serious damage to the soul.) However, I’d like to suggest that it’s not so much about individual issues which for this papers’ sake I call ‘symptoms’, but more about, ‘understandings’ which I’ll call ‘causes’. This will not make resolution necessarily easier, but will simplify our focus.

From my experience, everyone has an angle on ‘ownership’. For the *choleric* personalities amongst us it’s almost a right; the *phlegmatic*, often an abdication; the *sanguine* would like to, if it makes them popular. The *Melancholic* if it’s done right. The ‘Leader’ by gift or nature feels obligated, even driven – particularly the Type A gang. The unskilled feel unqualified. There seems to be a myriad of reasons why some will own and some struggle with ownership.

I think God is clever (I know, grotesque understatement) He knows how we tick, so Jesus in, His model and teaching, showed us a lot about setting ourselves up to *own* the ministry of the collective-the group, and I believe these can, for the most part, be found in Discipleship and Disciple-making. Borrowing a word picture from Steven Covey, let’s remove significant obstacles in the ‘jungle’ and give people the tools, equipping, understanding and relational support to make their own niche in the jungle. More importantly, assisting them to do it the most efficient way, yet still allowing them a clear understanding that they are making the way *with* others, not just for or behind others.

We must grow disciples to maturity...mustn’t we?

By way of introduction – The following is not a fully formed and thoroughly researched work; it is a spiritual musing, excerpts from my prayer journals over many years. What I like to do is present such musings to those serious about maturity and intimacy in their relationship with the Lord, and to encourage them to see where it leads them in contemplation, rumination and prayer. The exercise is not to tell you how to think, rather challenge you to think, but more importantly pray.

Where will this take you? Thrash it out ‘in the closet’ (that quiet reflective place of supplicating and intercessory prayer) and then discuss it with those you consider wise in the Kingdom of heaven and with whom you wish to create and/or develop a church – a disciple-making community . Enjoy!

Head Space – Please read the following Eph 4:7-11 and Col 1:27-29. Now read them in the context of the entire chapter.

Integrity

Integrity is often seen as a goal in and of itself, while that is certainly possible and even worthy, there is a greater end to which integrity is party and yes, central to, and that end is maturity.

From my perspective, Integrity is a potent and inseparable combination of...

Authenticity + Transparency + Accountability = Integrity

It is my contention that without all three active and engaged it is difficult indeed to experience the ‘wholeness’ and maturity that this integrity will bring.

Integrity has a number of meanings: whole, complete, mature, and without flaw, so how do these four aspects work to this end?

Authenticity for me is a state of being both ‘real’ and wise, but also involves humility. I believe Disciples of Christ must be sincere (without wax*) and genuine in word, attitude and deed. Of course we understand that a person being as such, in an emerging maturity, will have many faults and vulnerabilities. This is where wisdom is necessary, not to hide the faults, but to manage them. Yet manage them in a way that does not impugn the second quality of integrity. This is why humility is such an imperative. We must be able to fully acknowledge and function in a place that does not allow pride the opportunity to manufacture, via ‘specious wisdom,’ a façade that makes us appear to be what we are not, or attempts to conceal such faults for the purpose of maintaining a ‘good reputation’. (One of the first casualties of this action is our character, which God so highly prizes) This, of course, is why the second criterion for integrity is **transparency**.

* (When statues in the ancient world were ‘chipped’ (particularly in facial areas) to avoid expensive repairs at the hands of stone masons, the owners would use wax to fix the damage. After a coat of white wash, **only close scrutiny** would reveal the ‘cover up’, but to the passing eye all appeared as it should be – Ah, the parallels in the modern ‘marketing’ arena are frightening!)

Transparency is quite simply being ‘see-through’, even if it means what is seen is less than flattering or even un-Godly. John the ‘Beloved’, writes so revealingly in his first epistle Chapter one verses 8-9. *“If we say we have no sin, then the Truth is not in us (liars in fact), but if we own up to what God already knows, (that God is right and we are wrong) then He is faithful and*

just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This means we are not attempting to conceal any error, but always seeking that we be clean and clear so that when people see through us, they see Jesus. However, for these qualities to not only develop, but more importantly realise the goal, there must be the ensuing quality of **accountability**.

Accountability it has been said by some in the arena of ‘motivational coaching’, is an inappropriate method for self-actualisation and focus should only be on responsibility. Yet this is one of the key differences between pursuing Jesus Christ and those pursuing the ‘being all you can be’ philosophy. We, as servants of Christ, are not on a journey of ‘self-actualisation’, rather, we are on a journey of submission to our Creator and Saviour’s ultimate will, which paradoxically brings us to the fruitful corollary that we thought we’d find in the pursuit of ‘self’. Accountability to the King of Glory is what will enable us to be responsible. In this place of submission, our entire beings are recalibrated to understand what responsibility is. It is, in its purest sense, ‘Focusing on God’s will; then people’s needs, always being sensitive to the consequences and outcomes, in regard to whom we represent and how we do that in our role of Kingdom Ambassadors.’ With God it is never about ‘performance’, rather it is about ‘priority’. When we are IN HIM, then our priorities are His priorities and we eventually bear the fruit we were so desperately and ineffectively attempting to bear in our ‘performance’.

It is all very impressive and even noble to purport to be *authentic* and even *transparent*, however, if no understanding or pursuit of *responsibility* (from a Kingdom perspective) is engaged then we just go on our merry way being ‘genuine’ in error and/or fruitlessness. At worst, we may simply declare that God’s grace will somehow cover our immaturity and error; at best, we may even declare that... “We are accountable to God!” However, it is again, John the beloved who said, *‘How can we say we love God who we can see and not love people who we can see.’* An inability to be accountable in this dimension is a clear indicator of an inability, or worse, refusal, to be accountable to God.

We all need consistently, and to varying degrees, Disciplers – (Role models, coaches, confidants and counselors), that can assist us in developing integrity and growing in maturity. As Disciples of Christ, we desperately need people to not only instruct us, but also reprove, challenge and admonish us, if we are to be serious about an integrity that will lead to maturity. None of these processes is about being ‘controlled’ by others, but in fact enabling us to more effectively yield to God’s benevolent Governance.

On Doctrine:

In all this we must develop *sound doctrine* to assist us in maintaining clarity, intent and discipline, particularly when relational and empirical aspects of our ‘Faith walk/experience’ are damaged, dry or perceivably deficient. This is no mean feat in a ‘Protest-ant’ religious arena. I would like to suggest, for ease of categorisation and retention, we develop a three-pronged approach.

- a) **Cerebral** – Truth understood via Doctrine, structure, principle as well as various theological, legal and historical proofs
- b) **Empirical** – Truth understood via experience, encounter, equipping and/or epiphany.
- c) **Relational** – Truth understood via collective interaction, accountability, and community affirmation.

For this exercise I define *good Doctrine* not as mere polemic elitism, derived purely from a one pronged cerebral approach (as if God can only be perceived and understood by human intellect

alone). Doctrine in this setting is derived from academia and philosophy alone, considering more the opinions of man through natural perceptions and all-be-it inadvertently, relegating the Counsel of the Creator and His supernatural instructions and impartations.

Good doctrine, from **my perspective**, is evidenced via...

- a) Well defined and defensible Biblical understandings and assumptions, geared to sound exegetical rules of evidence and supported by legal historical proofs, and scholarly accuracy.
- b) Behavioural 'norm' – in other words, that which is believed and defended is lived out in the individual's life. The evidence of the doctrine is in its implementation not merely its verbalisation.
- c) Ultimately and of greatest importance, for the above to truly become the manifestation of good doctrine, they should be – must be, first and foremost, predicated on the life and teaching of Jesus the Christ. (The 'Rosetta Stone' of God's entire Counsel)

To move away from a mere *maintenance* to a *maturity* mindset, in all this we must teach the disciples of Christ to understand and view Christian practices in the best way to promote the 'fullness' of Christ.

'Church Attendance' (Fellowship) and the [maturing disciple](#).

Whilst there is cerebral, relational and even empirical benefits of 'gathering with the saints' (having church) it is the foundational assumption, motive and intent behind this act that will determine the outcome, fruit and impact of that 'attendance'.

If our faith, our relationship with our Heavenly Father, is viewed primarily from a 'maintenance' perspective, then we will approach church meeting attendance as a maintenance exercise – However, if we see our daily journey with Christ as a relational experience unto maturity and therefore the ultimate manifestation of Christ, then we will view the experience of church attendance far differently.

If the former, then we will most likely attend church for the purposes of 'DRINKING' (come to get refreshed, maintain my basic Christian function and prevent decay or death) – mere survival, make the best of this life until Jesus returns or death takes me. However, if it is the latter, the pursuit of intimate relationship and maturity, then our going to church will be to 'DIG'. I come to 'dig' because I realize that my vital daily communion with my Lord and Saviour is maturing and enlarging me to contain, manifest and ultimately dispense more of the HIM.

John 4:14 and John 7:38 reveal to us what we have as people 'Born of the Spirit; John 4:14 (NIV) "...but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." And in Chapter 7, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." The 'River' is of the Holy Ghost and always there, but it can be buried/filled in by the debris of sin, encumbrances' and other impediments. When this eventuates we need to dig out the debris and allow that 'spring' to bubble again. I believe it is the maturing disciple who uses the collective fellowship occasions to DIG, so that they can again dispense that 'Living water' to others. However, I posit that it is the maintenance disciple that comes to church to merely DRINK and parch their dryness.

An interesting side here; it is the church who markets itself as the refreshing church and 'quenches' the thirst of the consuming Christian that will ensure return patronage. People have

a good 'drink' and it's enough to last them until next week, and back they come. Of course, if the 'thirst' isn't quenched, the consumer is unhappy and looks elsewhere for a 'drink'. It is poor theological leadership to maintain the 'drink dispensing' model, but it is good for crowd collection.

This leads to what I believe is the 'benchmark' of Christian faith – Whilst the following are imperative they are not the Bench-mark.

The Benchmark is time set aside for communion and intimacy with the Master – NOT time for life, work or even serving and ministry – Nor is the benchmark your confidence, fleeting achievements, passions, status or even station in life/ministry – it is your commitment to intimacy.

“Only as I truly know Him, can I make Him truly known.” R.T. Brooks

It is my opinion that the intensity, (proximity, recency and frequency, or lack thereof) of our relational allegiance to Jesus Christ The 'First Love') determines the influence of your associations and affiliations, either us on them or them on us.

“Keep the altar of private prayer burning. This is the very life of all piety. The sanctuary and family altars borrow their fires here, therefore let this burn well. Secret devotion is the very essence, evidence, and barometer, of vital and experimental religion.”

C.H. Spurgeon

This '**benchmark**' – this key is more vital than we often realise, for it is 'intimacy' ahead of structure, doctrine and even practice that 'metamorphoses' our faith from mere religious regulation, into restorative, redemptive relationship. It is this priority that will see structure, doctrine and practice realise their Heaven determined potential.

Now this is where it gets a little interesting! Sociologists have observed that deviance from norms is exponentially less when a meaningful interpersonal attachment is made with a group. Subordination to the ethos and practice of the group will be either strong or weak, depending on the extent of the attachment. If the 'connection' is geared primarily or solely to the 'ecology' of the group ('ecology' being factors that contribute to the positive environment of a group, i.e. activities, social connections, supports etc) then changes in the group or absence from it will significantly and detrimentally impact the individual. In this place deviation from the 'religious norm' will be, if not inevitable, highly likely – However, and this is where true Christianity comes into its own, if the relationship – the meaningful social/emotional integration, is not merely geared to the ecology of the 'religious factor' (i.e. structure, environment, activity etc), but rather the '**Origin**', source and Divine person of that 'Religion' then a strong and maturing attachment would minimise, if not eliminate the possibility of serious deviation.

Christianity, like no other religion, is predicated on the potential of a meaningful and interactive relationship with the Creator, not just a meaningful interaction and adherence to the 'ecology' of the faith (i.e. religious practices, Iconology, rules and behavioural guidelines).

The priority of any Christian Ministry should be to introduce people to, and help them grow in, this personal relationship and to see it mature so **that the disciple is one of the Christ and not the religious component of Christianity alone.** (Pause and read 1 Corinthians 3 :1-9) When this happens deviation is near impossible, as the attachment is personal, vital and

developing. The LAW – like a Tutor (Pause and read: Gal 3:19-25) is, I believe, the key element of this ‘ecology’, by which we can find a reference point and stability as we mature in our personal relationship. As with a child and/or infant – it can be ‘related’ by birth to the parent, but its ability to relate meaningfully with, interact maturely to, must be taught and learned. This is done in part, by using the ‘ecology’ of the Christian Faith to assist in bringing relationship with God to fruition, rather than simply relying on the ‘ecology’ to sustain the practice of religion.

The integration that takes place must be on both horizontal and vertical plains. By that I mean there is meaningful relational connections in the Christian church and with the Person of Jesus Christ – To be effective and sustainable relationship must be both with God and with each other. As mentioned earlier, it is imperative that the ‘vertical communion’ (with our Heavenly Father) is paramount, yet tantamount to that is our relationship with each other. Both have the capacity to maintain and sustain the other, yet if over emphasis is placed on the horizontal relationship alone, then the ‘ecology’ of the religion/faith will have greatest influence on our ‘walk’ and faith. If intimacy with God alone (in isolation from others) is pursued, then our ability to spiritually and beneficially integrate with other Christians will be impeded. This only adds to the potential for deviation, as the Enemy of our souls, revels in the freedom to attack an individual in the isolation ‘non-fellowship’ can give him.

Churches must give strong and consistent attention to both relationships and therefore the ecology (environment) and Intimacy (integration/relationship), yet the intimacy with Heaven must be the HIGHER CALL if balance and clarity are to be maintained and development, growth and impact are to be experienced. Ultimately the Disciples of Christ become ‘dispensers’, not merely ‘drinkers’ of God and His will – Conduits rather than mere consumers.

“Let your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Jesus Christ.

Addendum: Pause and read 2 Chronicles Chapters 3-6 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-23

In our western culture, obsessed with image, veneer, marketing and profile, how much time is then spent on the ‘surface’ and how much spent on the ‘substance’?

Solomon’s temple was without compromise, incredible and unparalleled. Its fame and splendour resonated throughout history. The people who were privileged to see it were in absolute awe! Yet as impressed as they were with its grandeur and all that it attempted to represent; ‘the Glory of God’, it all paled when God Himself showed up! Every extension, representation and imagery became ‘as if of wood, hay and stubble’ when next to God himself.

Paul writes that we are now ‘The Temple’. What does that mean? What Paul was intimating was that Solomon’s temple is really a poor representation of us, as His temple. Do we get preoccupied with trying to impress with the ‘representation’ that, not only others, but we too miss the presence of God? Are we merely ‘donning’ the religious or cultural garb to make us look impressive or do they see the Glory of God inside us? So powerful was God’s presence in Solomon’s temple that all its majesty was relegated.

The icons within the religious ecology can help us remember or bring focus, but on what? If it is to remember only event or even purpose, then we miss the ultimate intent. If, however, they draw us forward to intimacy, not merely ‘back’ to ecology, then we will not continue to miss God’s best. Are we loved or valued any less – NO! However, the risk is that if ‘intimacy’ is relegated and ‘form’ promoted, it will be a sure fire way to see ‘religion’ increase and ‘relationship’ diminish.

Headspace: Read: Eph 3:14-19

How can He fill us? Whatever is empty is open to be filled. How can we make room? By DIGGING the well – How do we do that?

- a) Recognising and moving away from the ‘drinking’ mentality only.
- b) Consecrating - Set yourself apart to God first, then His will - seek, wait and watch and listen.
- c) Believing – Trust, yield and expect.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

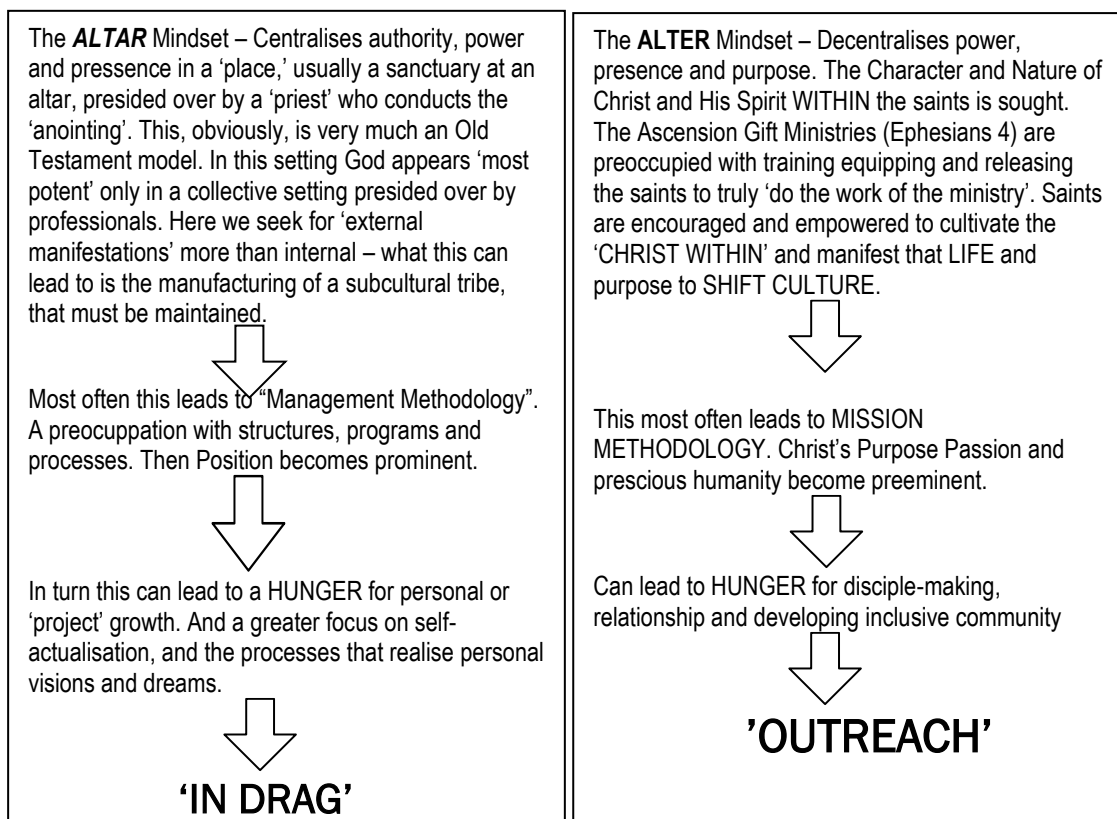
There is so much commentary and debate raging about the idea of ‘church’. Cliches, clamour and colorful critiques abound. The new buzz word for the new era is the ‘emergent’ church. Is it a ‘phoenix rising from the ashes’ of modern/postmodern conflagration. Is it merely ecclesiological masturbation disguised by slick postmodern theological marketers, endeavouring to carve out a new niche in which to (in an ironically modernity mindset) ‘market’ their theology? (as cynical as that sounds) Yet, there remains a restlessness, an almost unspoken hope of something real, intimate and life changing. The church again in community not corporation, in mission not marketing; So, comes the question, what does that look like? Again, the ‘architects of western christianity’ go into action endeavouring to define it, pin it down, package and market it. It would appear that the key ingredients that make such Christian Community emerge are absent in the western church. Physical/environmental need, hardship and of course, persecution.

How do we create a hunger in souls, collectively know as ‘the church’? Whilst an important question, I wonder if this is the right question to ask? If the spiritual belly hungers then it will crave for something to fill it. Once full (not necessarily satisfied) then hunger is abated and pursuit of that which will fill abates. The question I think we should be asking is ‘what are we eating that is filling our spiritual hunger INAPPROPRIATELY?’

With this question in mind I want to, by way of introduction, submit some synoptic thoughts before tabling some imperatives.

Altar Mindset or Alter Mindset

In our attempt to inspire, meet needs, generate momentum and market our faith, have we stirred the wrong appetites and neglected the right ones? Bear with me as I attempt to juxtapose some thoughts to give an brief example.



In the above for me, what is absolutely vital is the ‘how and why’ of a persons salvation. This is key to seeing what sort of hunger exists and why. Are we as a ‘church’ simply feeding ‘felt needs of hunger’ or are we helping the spiritually starving and thirsting find true ‘meat and drink’ to make them, not only whole, but set on the ‘right diet’, identifying the right hunger.

Let’s go back to **origins!** Like many philosophies, ideologies and religions that the ‘self oriented man seek, it’s usually about *Outcomes* – what’s in it for me, and does it feel good. Sometimes even the *Operations* may be considered if of course they are not too demanding – what’s involved, how much or how little must I do, and does it feel good. When it comes to Christianity – or better put **‘giving your life to Christ and following Him’**, it is first and foremost about **‘origins’**, - Where did it start? Why is it that way? Who? What does it mean for me? In appropriate sequence this is followed by operations, then outcomes. Unlike other ‘philosophies’ it is not so much about performance, but proximity. It is not about requirements, so much as relationship. So, let us go back to the origins... I want to submit here that Christianity has tiers, tiers of experience, expectation and expression, leading us foward, but we can be deceived to believing we are ‘Christians’ because of our proximity to the ‘Kingdom and it’s extension’, but these alone are not what determine our salvation, they are merely out-workings and supports to it. From where I’m standing, at least in the ‘west’, we tend to look for or live in the lower tiers.

Tier 3: 5-Community 6-Support 7-Resources

Tier 2: 4-Meaning 3-Purpose 2-Direction

Tier 1: a) Rescue b) Adoption

Many may start their journey toward Christ in **Tier 3**, which is fine from a ‘seeking’ perspective, but it is not ‘salvation’. Even experiencing community, teaching, finding meaning and purpose may help us understand ourselves and the Kingdom, but ‘understanding’ the Kingdom is not salvation, just another positive pre-translation step. Here’s the bite, no one absolutely no one, can come into God’s family, be in God’s kingdom without being **adopted**. Adoption enables us to become ‘joint heirs with Christ’, ‘Children of God’, part of His family. This, however is prefaced by the most important revelation, and that is the need to be **rescued**. Until we see, and understand why we need rescuing then we can never truly appreciate how incredible it is that the Creator, the Author of life adopts us as one of His own, even though were where not worthy of being family, we were tragic slaves of sin.

Without understanding sin and its impact, without understanding God’s Holy Law - His 10 Commandments and all that they represent, we will never see clearly how lost, how desperately in need of rescuing we were. Then we can understand that God takes us from ‘slaves to sin’ and redeems us (after rescue) to be HEIRS... This is not ‘good news’, it’s INCREDIBLE NEWS!

I would like to submit that there is, in my humble opinion, a couple of “must do’s” rather than ‘how to’s’ we can begin to foster that can be of benefit in seeking change. I believe it is imperative to set and continually promote four foundational premises. These will not simply undergird a ‘church’ and its program (which statement in itself sends the ‘cringometer’ buzzing); but will be indispensable in developing the personal walk of the individual saint and they with others and all toward Mission. This, I posit will only add to the kingdom of God and the extension of its community.

These premises which must be continually sought are:

1. VISION OF FIRST AND SECOND LOVE:

Revelation 2: 4-5a Jesus said, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen...”*

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

This paramount precept of Heaven is to ensure our gaze, attention and focus remain on the Creator, Author and Perfector of our Faith. This, in turn, will facilitate relationship; intimate, vital and progressive and the transformation of the individual to conform with the image of the Divine Son in character/ nature as well as in will and purpose. (Romans 8:28-29 and Ephesians 4:13) This priority in turn ensures that which is imparted to others is of Christ. We are called FIRST to God, then to minister His Love and Life to those we meet. This is not merely a process, but an all embracing lifestyle of devotion and consecration that will only develop as we draw ever near DAILY.

2. VISION OF COST AND WORTH:

We first must seek to grasp God’s perspective of what it cost Jesus to suffer and die for Humanity. (Isaiah 53:3-9, Phil 2:5-8, Luke 22:41-44, Matt 27:46).

It cost the Son everything; physical, emotional and most of all, spiritual anguish, even into momentary separation from His Heavenly Father, a thing never experienced in the history of time. If we grasp an understanding of that cost, then **John 3:16** takes on a whole new depth of significance and thus, hurls our hearts and minds into a new divine perception of the tremendous worth of the individual. Knowing this, we need to remember that we are not dealing with statistics or problems, but with peoples’ lives, both temporal and eternal. The ambassador/advocate needs a full or continual expanding vision of Cost and Worth to be able to most effectively relate that love in word and deed. **2 Peter 1:5-8, Luke 15. Parables of the lost sheep, coin and son.** This is again an incrementally achieved state. This will only come as we continue DAILY to seek Him and His transformation.

3. VISION OF AND FOR NEW TESTAMENT RELATIONSHIP:

1 Thess 2:7-12 Paul writes, *“We were gentle among you just as a nursing mother cherishes her children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you **not only the Gospel of God, but also our very lives** because you had become dear to us..... as you know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would have a **walk worthy of God** who calls you into his own kingdom and glory”.*

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY (not communally) is that New Testament Relationship. All that we can have, can be and ultimately impart, are in Him, through Him, by Him and because of Him. It is therefore, vital to yield those things to Him for His use and discretion. Men cannot legislate for this, but only exhort one another to know and practice that non-exclusive, ever expanding horizontal relationship that embraces our entire lifestyle. It is in this practice that the above two visions will find their ultimate expression. Many would interpret this in different ways. I believe New Testament relationship speaks of **First:** Community and then **Second:** Family.

'Community' first because, although to us 'family' can mean love, support, protection and safety, to many in our culture it can mean disconnection, dysfunction, rejection, indifference and even danger. Or it can represent 'exclusivity by expectation'. In other words, they may feel, whether it exists or not, that to keep the new Christian 'family' they have entered from being like their natural family, they must comply with the existing functioning relationships. That, to them, can be a threat because they feel they will be inadequate. In 'community', there is first a sense of 'belonging' without the perceived intense obligation to perform.. The 'community' offers protection, comfort, affirmation, and consolation, as well as a conscription, instruction and accountability. As the individual grows, the later responsibilities of community become more attainable and they can then see not only the need for, but benefit of, 'real family'. And in time, they too become 'fathers and mothers' in the Faith.

These 'communities' are the consequence of obedience to Matthew 6:33 "*You seek first the kingdom of God (His jurisdiction and dominion, first in your life, then in your community) and His righteousness (His standard for Character and living) and all these things (all that you need not only for living, but abundant life) will be yours.*" God wants people who will be responsible for 'The Kingdom' and the establishment of its 'inclusive community'. (We all like the benefits of community, but few will take responsibility for the creating of it). To help us 'put legs' to this idea of community, scripture presents us with, essentially, two models. In these, the New Christian must be both 'birthed' and developed. As I see it, these two models are: 1) Parenting and 2) Apprenticing.

PARENTING - Must come first. This generation needs fathers and mothers. As with new-born babes, spiritual babies, no matter how old, need special care. They will need not only spiritual, but emotional and, at times, psychological repair and development. (Who the child is and their basic character are formed by the parents. What they will be as a person is formed in this relationship).

APPRENTICING - When they have grown sufficiently, they follow the master's steps. Although a component, 'classroom' time is relatively small (Classroom discipleship is not outlined in scripture because it is ultimately inadequate). The method is simple:

- a) Master does, the apprentice observes.
- b) Master does, the apprentice assists.
- c) Apprentice does, the Master assists.
- d) Apprentice does.

What they do as a person is the result of apprenticing.

It is this discipleship of parenting and apprenticing that is the responsibility of the individual saint (You are the 'Ministers', the un-saved are the 'ministry').

Remember, the saints BIRTH, ESTABLISH & DEVELOP. The Ascention Gift Ministries TRAIN, EQUIP & RELEASE.

4. VISION OF PERPETUITY (Eternity):

I am convinced that is not sufficient, and if fact will ultimately be detrimental, to seek merely to 'Possess the Land'. We must, in all we do, no matter how large or small the scale, endeavour to ensure we leave a PRODUCTIVE INHERITANCE to those generations following. There are several things required in attaining that, but of paramount importance is the **REVELATION OF JESUS**, who He is, what HE has and is willing to do. I'm continually reminded of that which the Holy Spirit ministered to me some years ago. It would be more than beneficial for us to retain it. **THE WILL AND PURPOSE OF GOD (LET ALONE HIS CHARACTER AND NATURE) WILL**

NOT BE EFFECTIVELY DEVOLVED THROUGH PROGRAM STRUCTURE OR EVENTS, BUT ONLY THROUGH A PERSONAL REVELATION OF AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LIVING CHRIST. No great revelation, you may say. Perhaps to those moving in that relationship, it is in a non-negotiable fundamental. But to the majority who have not perhaps left, but at the very least, distanced themselves from the FIRST LOVE, this is an imperative insight NOT to be neglected.

The keys to perpetuity are, in brief, as follows:

Key 1- Chronicles 28:8-9 *“Be careful to search out all the commands of your God and do them, that you may possess the land and leave it as an inheritance to your descendants forever”*. If we are serious about leaving a spiritual inheritance to the next and subsequent generations, then there can be no half measure! We must endeavour, in God’s grace, to pursue all God requires of us, to see His Kingdom. Jesus reiterated this same requirement in what the Church calls the Great Commission... *‘Teaching them to observe all I have told you...’*

Key 2- Lamentations 1:9 *“She did not consider her destiny, therefore, her collapse was awesome”*. We must remember our destiny and reward are in eternity. Don’t let the demonically inspired temporal mind-set of the world, or the insisting dictates of egocentric philosophies rob you or generations following, of your and their God-given destiny (James 4:4, Col 3:1-6).

Key 3- Proverbs 29:18 *“Without a vision (prophetic revelations) the people perish (cast off restraint)”*. Not searching out all the commands of God or failing to consider your divine destiny will facilitate a casting off of restraint. The holy restraint that keeps us from carnality, flesh and the world which brings indifference, passivity and aimlessness or merely self-seeking and self preservation; thus, ultimately, denying the instruction of our first key.

Key 4 – Proverbs 15:11 *“Hell and destruction are always before the Lord, so how much more the hearts of the sons of men.”* Destination in eternity is not just about location, but connection and consellation. God having to die for man in and of itself, speaks of incredible urgency and ultimate concerns. Every preventative measure has been initiated to keep people in relationship with Heaven and rescued from the destruction of hell. Jesus spent almost a third of his focus on this inescapable reality. (Valley of Hinnom – references)

This has been a brief, hopefully concise presentation of things that we may well know, but I wish to exhort you to further consider, ponder and pray concerning these matters, that we may be the ‘Vessels of Honour’ our mighty Lord wants us to be.

We must each purpose in our hearts, minds and wills to daily seek to know our God and His will in light of the aforementioned. Church, let us not just have seasons of exertion and fervour (though we undoubtedly will) but more vitally, let us, in His love, grace, power and timing, consistently and with unfailing perseverance, draw ever closer to His throne of grace, that we may commune with our awesome triune God. Allow Him to transform us and to minister to us His direction, plan and purpose, that we may implement it for His glory and pleasure.

Community or Commune: What will we have?

Community

Reach out & touch others

Inclusive

Preoccupied with Journey

Preoccupied with Rescue

Preoccupied with Service

Preoccupied with People

Preoccupied with Resource

Preoccupied with Responsibility

Preoccupied with 'Being'

Preoccupied with Why's

Protective

Preoccupied with JESUS

Commune

Reach in & touch us

Exclusive

Preoccupied with Destination

Preoccupied with Recreation

Preoccupied with Comfort

Preoccupied with Program

Preoccupied with Reward

Preoccupied with Relaxation

Preoccupied with Benefits

Preoccupied with Wants

Defensive

Preoccupied with SELF

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ANATOMY OF ACCOUNTABILITY

God's format for government is Theocratic and, being so, God has, in His wisdom, elected to govern His church through a system of mutual submission, interdependency and servant leadership. I believe this finds expression in three primary settings

FAMILY - Eph 3:15

The word family here, in the transliteration, means patriarchy. It denotes not only the role of headship (which relates more to 'source and supply' than to authoritative control), but also of offspring, as being precious, contributing, yet subordinate members, each knowing their station and function. For, in time, under the right 'headship' (source) they will learn to be such to their offspring. Their worth is not in their position in the patriarchy, but in the fact that they are heirs (and in our case, joint heirs: Rom 8:14-17). The value is in the relating, and in so doing, fulfilling the role, not the parading position.

BODY - Rom 12:4-5, Eph 4:11-16

(Could be termed 'Biblical Functionalism')

This is probably the more effective description of governmental relating. It is referred to numerous times in Scripture. It is Government, not merely by structure and function but, importantly, in co-operative participation. A head not only directs and commissions, but supplies and without a body to implement, is redundant. The Head (Christ) has, by design, deliberately submitted Himself to a co-operative role with the body. The relationship ensures that we work together (1 Cor 3:8-9).

Each part is connected to the head, yet it is only in the co-operative setting that this can prove beneficial. The eye may see to interpret danger, but without the legs to remove the body from the danger, difficulties are assured. As Paul notes in his letter to the Ephesians, it is imperative for each joint to supply. If each joint (or part) doesn't supply, then the body as a whole is impeded and will be dysfunctional; thus the true worth of the individual can only be fully recognised in the co-operative expression (the inextricable need for inter-dependency).

When it comes to order and government in this setting, it could be seen that the Ascension Gift ministries of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers (gifts Christ gave to the church to govern by servitude), could be likened to the central nervous system, taking the instruction from the head to the body parts. their effectiveness can only be measured by the efficiency of carrying the right information to the right part and the effectiveness of the anatomy in acting on the signals given.

God has created us all to be gregarious to some degree; we are designed to 'be' and live in a group context and thus ensure that it is virtually impossible for us to fully know and experience God and His purpose outside of accountable fellowship.

BUILDING - Eph 2:19-22

Another example of biblical functionalism. Leadership and governance are the foundation of the building- the Church; but the living stones which make up the church are the habitation. Again, interdependence and mutual dependence. Christ needs all of us to be built together in order and to a plan, so that He can fully manifest Himself through it. The Christ cannot inhabit a foundation alone, nor can He inhabit a building with no or poor foundations (Luke 6:46-49).

Some reasons why accountability is a Biblical and God directed imperative.

1) Mutual exhortation, challenging, confronting, admonition and affirmation; all unto edification (Heb 10:25).

2) It assists in preventing the hardening of the heart and the deceit of sin setting in (Heb 3:13).

3) It affords a great forum for example to be exercised and seen through parenting and apprenticing. Accountability to those who, by demonstration of faith, fruit and relationship, motivate us to step higher in God (1 Cor 11:1, 1 Thess 2:7-12, Phil 3:17, Phil 4:9).

4) It aids in the avoiding of egocentricity (selfishness). "Autarchy" is government of self, for self, by self and the foundational premise of much of the neo-paganistic philosophy that has infiltrated some Christian ideals; i.e. "I don't need other people in my compartmentalised, Theologically selective world. In fact, they prevent me realising the fulfilment of my potential."

We are not so much called to selflessness, but rather to the pro-activity of Divine Love (1 Cor 10:23). We must be accountable to those in authority and those weaker than ourselves, in as far as our accountability (or preferring of them) assists them. Our life in fellowship is not to simply achieve our own end, but to assist others, ensuring all have the opportunity to realise their Christ potential (Gal 6:1, Gal 4:19).

Take special note of Romans 15:1-6. The passage speaks uncompromisingly of commitment to others, not of commitment to self. The word 'ought' in verse one, is translated 'indebted to'. In simple terms, we owe the weaker and frail among us the help and support they need because the gifts, abilities and resources we have are for them, not us.

Suffice to say, it is impossible to minister in such a fashion if we have separated ourselves from fellowship. The following is the same passage as taken from "The Message" translation:

"Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand 'to those who falter and not just do what is most convenient for us.' Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, 'How can I help?' That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for Himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in and helped out. 'I took on the troubles of the troubled.' is the way the Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for us. God wants the combination of His steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterise us, keeping us alert for whatever He will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with all of us. Then we'll be a choir - not our voices only, our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus!"

5) To maintain an order and a vigil against Pride, ambition, vain imaginings, also spurious doctrine and ultimately, heresy (Eph 4:11-14, Gal 1:6-9, 1 Cor 4:18, Titus 3:6, Acts 20:28-30). Unity and order existed in the post Pentecost church due primarily to the Authority and Doctrine of the Apostles who set the structures for leadership and service in the church. A failing to adhere to protocols and doctrines saw the commencement of sectarianism even to the point of a new Gospel. All through the New Testament, Paul consistently addresses this dilemma, even commanding that those who failed to yield to the structure and doctrine be set outside for a season (1 Tim 1:19-20).

The formalising of doctrine and the constituting of the same insured ideology and order are maintained, especially when key people are removed. This minimises the risk of chaos, heresy and the following of a personality rather than a doctrine.

(However, it is vital to forcefully stipulate, it is the Teachings and Doctrines of the Apostles, who have enacted and demonstrated all that Christ had ministered to them that we are to submit to, not some 'authority' that intends to invoke such submission without demonstrating they have so submitted themselves. We are warned as much about false teachers, as we are about the absolute need to submit in humility.)

PEOPLE WHO SET THEMSELVES OUTSIDE OF THESE STRUCTURES AND DOCTRINES INVARIABLY BECOME TARGETS FOR THESE ERRORS!

Accountability in its truest form can only be understood when we are compelled to be accountable. Compulsion though is not the product of coercion, rather the submission to love not law. This is the test of humility. Accountability is the consequence of both the understanding of New Testament relationship (Discipleship) and the fruits of the Spirit.

THE CULTURE OF SUBMISSION

R.T. Brooks said: ***"Only as I truly know Him can I make Him truly known."*** Only as an individual experiences, relates to and, subsequently, manifests the connectedness to Christ can an assessment begin as to the authority of that individual. The following are some aspects that authority may issue from:

- ◆ **The Authority of Knowledge** (2 Tim 3:16-17, 1 Cor 8:1) It does not *puff up*, it equips for good works. The implementation of the whole counsel.
- ◆ **The Authority of Relationship** (2 Tim 1:12, 1 John 1-4) A progressive intimacy with the Holy Trinity can only usher in the principle of *"I must decrease and He must increase"* (John 3:30). In so doing, ensuring a life that 'oozes' Jesus' nature and character.
- ◆ **The Authority of a Consecrated Life** (Gal 2:20, 1 Cor 4:7-11, 1 Pet 4:1-3, Gal 5:16-26) An imperative to the authority associated with relationship, is the need for the setting apart, not only from the world, but to the Christ, that will, again, ensure His Life is manifest, not the egoism of our carnal nature.
- ◆ **The Authority of Calling** (2 Cor 10:7-11) This is not the defence of self-generated status. It is the defence of a life of service that clearly evidences the specific mantle one was given.
- ◆ **The Authority of Example** (1 Cor 11:1, Phil 3:17, 4:9, 2 Tim 1:13; 3:10-12, 2 Thess 3:7-9, 1 Pet 5:2-4) "A picture paints a thousand words", "Your actions speak so loudly, I can't hear what you are saying". Showing people how to live is more powerful than telling them how to live. Our theology is to point people to Christ. God's theology is to show people the Christ.
- ◆ **The Authority of Leadership/Government** (Heb 13:7, Act 20:28-30, Eph 4:11-17) True leadership comes from a heart to see the people of God nurtured and matured. Instruction, direction and discipline are as an integral part of real love as are tenderness, patience and grace. Yet these must all be manifest from the posture of servanthood.

Our secular culture has difficulty in liking those it respects. We, as Christians, are called to respect (prefer, hold in high esteem) those we love. Who is it we are to love? Our neighbour! Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan makes it abundantly clear who our neighbour is. Beyond the areas of our interaction with the secular environment in the manner previously mentioned, we are given a greater mandate in our relating in the church. This is the area which brings us into greater illumination of Christ's nature and purpose for us, but more through us. The

purpose of this relating is to a) Manifest the example of living and relating Christ to His disciples and b) Demonstrate to the world the outworking of that relationship (John 13:34-35).

It all insists on **humility** that is biblical submission:

⇒ **Submission of Respect/Humility** (Phil 2:5-8, Matt 20:25-28, Luke 22:24-27)

⇒ **Submission of Obedience** (Matt 26:36-46)

⇒ **Submission of Honour** (Rom 12:10, John 8:49 “Even though He was equal”)

⇒ **Submission of Order** (1 Tim 5:17-21, Titus 1:5-16) While it is true of our culture that some of the Church may have become ‘corporatised and institutionalised’, this sad distorting of form and order should not produce in us a knee jerk reaction to order, structure and authority. These things were instituted by the Christ and all in a matrix of humility, servanthood and love. All done with the intent that each saint would realise the fullness of the character of Christ and the intimacy the Creator purposed from the beginning. Thus, a perversion of these things has seen error; but Jesus never preached rebellion, instead the counter cultural ‘militancy’ of a changed life, that adheres to scriptural truth. He never directly taught that one should submit to corrupt regimes/cultures, and also never advocated the attack of these corrupt systems except by, again, a ‘militant’ demonstrating of compassion, holiness and integrity in the declaration of Truth (Matt 7:15-20, Matt 12:33-37).

⇒ **Submission of Love** (John 13:34-35) This is the ultimate and all encompassing motivation for submission, or at least should be. The New Commandment far exceeded the old one of loving your neighbour as yourself. Now, it was to love as humbly, mercifully, compassionately and completely as Jesus loved us!

This synopsis, I hope, will cause you to read all the passages of Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to convict and encourage you to be completely fulfilled in your part in God’s great Kingdom.

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Some Pragmatics in the Philosophy

Some thoughts on how that may happen.

First, we have to determine what needs to be ‘centralised’ for standardisation sake and for clarity on the ‘what’ and ‘why’, as well as what must be ‘decentralized’ to release Heaven’s purpose.

CENTRALIZE:

- a) **Priority** – As disciples-makers we need to determine what Scripture (in its objective context) is telling us is important to all saints, not just what individuals promote as ‘special’. After a complete submission to the Lordship of Christ and understanding of that relationship and all that entails - it is Mission – The incarnation of heaven among men that must be our highest priority.
- b) **Path** – it is consistent and although flexible, a relatively set one. How we get to our destination needs to be a clearly defined route - No short cuts or quick fixes or jumping queues. Character and relationship are of higher value than skill, but please understand that skill remains highly valued.

- c) **Purpose** – Clearly defined and clearly articulated vision and mission component. It is clear to all what is the intent and purpose of the group/church.

DECENTRALIZE:

- a) **Position** – How people are ‘titled and hold position’ is non-negotiable, we are servants. However we can be totally creative as long as it doesn’t divert from the priority and purpose – People can own their roles and be creative in the fulfilling of them. We don’t have volunteers, we have paid and/or unpaid team members.
- b) **Power** – From my perspective there is no such thing as responsibility without authority. If this is the ‘coal face’ then resource and authority are needed to accomplish vision and mission. If utilized in the framework talked about here, it will empower others not control them. Whilst simultaneously it will let them ‘flex’ in who they are without egos and pride undermining the individual’s or the collectives’ prime focus and objectives.
- c) **Productivity** – It’s not about ‘polished’, performance alone, it is much more about priority and potential. The majority of this is about encouraging and enabling people to be fruitful. We are designed for that. It is simply assisting people to discard those things that impede fruitfulness, whilst enhancing those things that bring fruitfulness. If we don’t understand that properly it is difficult for us to be servants.

It is my opinion that our relationships, roles and functions have an order. We are...

- First: **Children of God** - (Roman 8:17, John 1:12. You can’t know God without being adopted)
- Second: **Servants** – (Phil 2:1-7, Luke 17:7-10. This is the *posture* for everything Christ did)
- Thirdly: **Disciple-makers** – (Matthew 28:17-20, John 20:21. This is the ‘GREAT Commission)
- Fourthly: **Ministers** of our unique call and gift. (Rom 11:32. This is simply the full extension of that which went before.)

To my way of thinking, it must be in this order. If these roles are ‘promoted’ in this order then much like army boot camp, all get the basics down very well and understand the bigger picture before they can specialize. When this occurs, their ‘speciality’ will have greater context and impact.

- Humility (Phi 2:1-8)
- Love (John 13:34-35)
- Understanding (John 8:31)
- Obedience (Luke 22:42 – At His cruellest moment, a time Jesus verbalized a need to NOT do.)
- Servant heart (Luke 17:7-10, Luke 14:24)
- Preferring one another (Rom 12:10)
- Sacrifice (Luke 14:25)
- MAKE DISCIPLES AFTER YOUR KIND! When the above are developing and functioning in your life the disciples being made will be world changers, much like the first Twelve.

So what does leadership look like in the aforementioned framework?

Three ‘P’s will help us...

Proximity– A growing intimacy with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our LORD. Fostering a deliberate and disciplined seeking to know, not simply the ‘what’, but more ‘who’

and 'why' of God. This is foundational to 'conforming with the image of HIS Son.' (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 3:7-11)

Priority - Understanding and perpetually seeking to calibrate life, activity and purposes to Heaven's priorities. Jesus Himself gave us the command that must be foundational in all our agendas. In Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the KINGDOM of God and HIS Righteousness...". Our LORD tells us to seek FIRST the 'jurisdiction – sphere of influence of HIS Domain, first in our life, then in our environment. Then we are to SEEK HIS standards for living and being. When this is part of our key platform and practice it is easier to determine what is important and what isn't.

Posture - This is now HOW we lead and implement. We all know our 'POSITION' in Christ. We are 'the head and not the tail'. We are 'over-comers!' We are 'Joint Heirs with Christ!' We are 'KINGS KIDS' - but this is a given. We don't have to strive for these in our role as 'aliens' in this world. Our KINGDOM is HIS KINGDOM and therefore 'it is not of this world.' Our 'status' if you like is set 'in the Heavenlies', so it is not about 'showing off', however, it is our **posture** we must be concerned with. Just like our LORD, by HIS Grace we can 'be like Christ'. To do so, and to fulfil all that God has planned, we need to 'put down' our **position** and take up the **posture**. We, like Christ, are to leave the 'given's' and humble ourselves, even as servants, and serve HIS purposes HIS way. It is when we serve in humility and love that the fullness of God's life and power can be revealed. (Philippians 2:1-11)

Development and devolution of care and growth:

Micro Net-weaving Community = Cell Groups.

a) **THE NET:** Community is collective discipleship in a social and functional sense – The Net for inclusion and connection includes: - hospitality, meaningful and authentic social interaction and social responsibility/justice. These must not be a 'sales pitch'. If integrity is to be maintained this must see the individual as a whole person not a task or project to be processed. We also envision them becoming who they are in Christ and helping them replicate that in others. (See overview – Relating into community)

MODELLING + RELATIONSHIP + GIVING

b) **GROWTH:** Discipleship/disciple-making is the 'intentionalised' nurture and development of people as heirs and ministers (**Not simply bringing and including, but rather committing to and caring for**. This is done not merely for comfort, but rather wholeness and replication sake)

MODELLING + EDUCATION + SERVICE

c) **DEVELOPMENT/MULTIPLICATION:** This is the on-going leadership and multiplication of the above.

MODELLING + TRAINING + SERVICE + LEADERSHIP

If your perspective fails to consider, and keep in your strategic thinking, all three of these elements, despite their unique emphasis, then the journey will become fragmented. You may gain success in an area, however from a holistic perspective you will merely compartmentalise and miss the entire mandate of the great commission and ultimately be ineffective from an eternal perspective.

PLATFORM

Headspace: Brainstorm in Holy Spirit's Presence

The Idea - Church inception and plant.

NAME: *'Your Town' Community Church*

Possible Slogan:

Possible Motto:

Possible Vision Statement: *"An inclusive community of Christ's disciples that seeks a greater intimacy with our Heavenly Father through the Lordship of His Son, Jesus Christ. A community that is committed to assisting those in and outside His kingdom discover and develop that same intimacy, through relevant yet Biblical discipleship."*

What is our passion (Vision) and intent (Mission)?

OUR PRIORITY

"Committed to seeing precious people become authentic Disciples of Christ using Kingdom principles for 'sustainable impact. 'The kingdom of God is within us' (Luke 17:21). We as disciples are carriers of that Kingdom and in turn imparters of the same.

It is vital to comprehend and carry the kingdom, but it is imperative we 'pass it on' in such a way that the next generation can catch it and uncompromisingly live it out and in turn pass it on. Our priorities revolve around the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Our activities, processes and involvements will be geared to our priorities."

WHAT WE VALUE! (Our presuppositions – OUR BELIEFS!)

Paramount: We deeply value the Lordship of, and intimacy with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Tantamount:

1) We value people – Particularly their person and potential, not necessarily performance. Our love for people is to help them meet Jesus Christ and find who they are in Him and to walk with them as their Saviour teaches them how they are to be in Him.

In this we value biblical, love-based relational Discipleship, which embraces the fruit of the Spirit along with admonition (warning and instruction), edification (building you up with exhortation and encouragement), and relevant teaching - All in the spirit of Grace. This will assist in bringing people to a place of replicating themselves through discipling others.

2) We deeply value prayer – ‘It is the language of relationship.’ It is communion with God. We deeply value and seek to develop devotional and corporate prayer. Discovering, knowing and fulfilling divine mandates are the result of progressive intimacy and the trust and obedience which that induces.

3) We deeply value the Word of God – The Bible is the final authority on things Divine and the Human condition and redemption. The Word of God is Divinely Inspired, authoritative, infallible and all sufficient. As such it is the ultimate truth that needs to be learned, understood, demonstrated, taught and imparted – we value the need for thorough and accurate study and stimulating and challenging exegesis of His Word, as well as relevant and accurately applied Hermeneutic.

Synopsis of the Chicago statement of inerrancy (All Authoritative, sufficient and Infallible)

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

4) We value the ‘Priesthood of all believers’ – that is we as disciples of Christ are all called to be Ambassadors of His kingdom and carry the delegated authority which that brings. We are the ministers; those not yet with Christ are the ‘ministry’.

5) We value the gifts of the Holy Spirit - and their function through the church, not merely in meetings. We understand these ‘gifts’ are at ‘God’s discretion’ and along with the Motivational gifts of Romans 15 and the Governmental gifts of Ephesians 4 are for the benefit of the body, its development, equipping and releasing to do the work of the ministry – Every disciple a MINISTER.

6) We value the Character of Christ – above the gifts – the fruit of the Spirit and the maturity in the Saviour as the “higher call” (Eph 4: 11-16)

7) We value being a ‘counter-culture’ – yet being active in bridge building into the culture and environments we find ourselves on a daily basis, discerning, and educating on the ‘spirit of the age’ and its pervasive and pernicious nature. Teach people good Polemic and good Apologetic, so they can STAND against the stream of any destructive consensus.

8) We value a) Social Responsibility – The need for incarnation, relationship and encouragement with and for the marginalised, disenfranchised and disadvantaged. However, and particularly in our culture, education must be the new welfare, if we are to see real change and growth in those we seek to serve and help. We therefore also value **b) Social Justice** – The need for advocacy, philanthropy, but above all EDUCATION, so that they can be given the best opportunity to exit the disadvantaged state.

PERSONALITY OF OUR COMMUNITY - ‘Our Culture’

Every group/sub ‘cultural tribe’ has its idiosyncrasies - I’ve never found a church that actually clearly and definitively states their point of view on certain issues. Well this process seeks to do that, at least in part. For example, this church is a ‘fruit cake free zone’ in other words, we don’t cater for overt and self-indulgent eccentricities that seek to ‘hijack’ not only meetings but worship culture.

Having said that, a churches personality will be as unique as the individuals who choose to invest in it; we invest through relationship with God and each other and all in the matrix of the pursuit of the nature and character of Christ; being authentic, real and honest with each other, yet in the safety and respect that Christ’s life engenders.

Some things we understand...

- I. We understand the world system doesn’t ascribe value to a person, rather to productivity and performance – we want to change that.
- II. We understand lawlessness will abound in the last days (Matt 24:12) and that we need to pursue, yield to and walk in God’s love and grace if we are to confront lawlessness effectively, without ‘growing cold’.
- III. We understand the ‘system’ works against meaningful, interpersonal relationships. The ‘system’ demands and steals time and energy from people. We understand that we, the church, need to help people find balance in all this for their and their families sake and too, for the sake of the Kingdom and the lost.
- IV. We understand the ‘system’ values ‘form’ over ‘substance’ – Image in this culture, is more important than depth and substance, and we labour to promote the latter and to boldly challenge the veneer with sensitivity, relevance and grace.
- V. We understand that every human being has a core need for i) TRUE INTIMACY ii) TRUE IDENTITY and iii) TRUE SPIRITUALITY. We set ourselves to help people discover these and promote them to all they encounter.
- VI. We understand that we live in a pluralistic society, however we seek to fulfil the Great Commission of Christ, by understanding and identifying with people, yet uncompromisingly presenting the Gospel in deed, declaration and demonstration.
- VII. We understand that the reductionist approach to the Gospel and counsel of God is a result of trying to ‘win the culture’. In so doing we have lost a great deal of truth, life and power and in many ways the ‘world’ has won us. This has resulted in a response to Christ’s claims more on the basis of convenience and consumerism, rather than commitment and call. Much of Christianity has become the pursuit of self-actualisation. We are at great risk of exploiting the Kingdom for our own gain, rather than investing in the Kingdom for His glory. We seek to reverse this so the later is fulfilled.
- VIII. We are concerned about, and want to challenge both ‘Modern’ and ‘Post Modern’ ‘reactionism’ to the TRINITY’s claims. Redefining culture using Biblical prescriptions and Messianic relational models – Love, humility and servanthood,

yet firm in His Absolutes; rather than having Christ's claims and Biblical mandates redefined by the rapidly declining pluralistic culture. We have gone from 'Sounding' like the world, to 'Looking' like the world, to 'Smelling' like the world and now on the verge of 'Tasting' like the world. If so, have we then lost our ability to be SALT AND LIGHT? We seek, as a community, to have Heaven 'recalibrate' us so that we may be what the Lord would have us be.

PRACTICE

We have looked at Philosophy and Platform and the essentials therein. We now need to lay down some of the essentials of the way 'we', as a community, 'WALK THIS TALK'.

Some timely reminders we do well to carry with us into this 'practice' phase...

"Do you ever get that wistful feeling that there are other things more effective, even more desirable than prayer? This explains why far too many of us are busy in attempting great things for God, rather than expecting great things from God in a humble attitude of prayer." Robert Foster

"God does nothing on the earth save in answer to believing prayer."

John Wesley

"You can do no more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than prayer, until you have prayed...prayer is striking the winning blow...service is gathering up the results."

S.D. Gordon *What it will take to change the world*

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Presbytery/Servant Leader

When I look at the Church in much of the West, I see that a 'choleric', driven, vision CEO model is what appears to work. Well at least for gathering a crowd or growing a crèche... But that is not the model I see Jesus implement. It's what's beneath the surface, what the closer inspection reveals that must concern us. Are people truly becoming more like Christ and reproducing after His kind? Or is that easily dismissed in the midst of grand endeavours and moving the masses around?

Now having been around quite some time (credentialed in two Pentecostal denominations, worked with Baptist, Methodist and Salvation Army – small country and large urban churches; as well as Para-church groups like Youth For Christ.) I have no illusions that ideals are hard to peddle, but endeavour we must to break out into churches that truly mobilize servants to fulfil the Great Commission in the market place, rather than simply gathering crowds into auditoriums where only the few have any experience of the 'power and anointing' of God.

So with that in mind and prayerful idealism; this is the concept for church leadership

A 'Covenant Team' of at least 10-12 people having co-leadership sharing leadership/serving; always keeping the Model, Method and Mandate of Christ as the focus and the tenants/ethos of our mission and culture as priority.

In turn, each Micro-Team assumes – for the period of one or two assignments – the following...

- Coordinating and resourcing cell communities. Assisting leaders to fulfil their primary pastoral discipling/equipping role.
- Be administration and first public contact for any wider community profile issues that may arise. E.g. who we are, what we do, activities, resources etc.

The 'go to' people, as it were. They coordinate referral and delegate tasks of follow up and quasi counselling needs.

- Ensure Sunday/Saturday Services are implemented and resourced according to program. They would enlist the assistance of the cell community they are coaching in all aspects of running the Worship program – Host, set up, hospitality, worship leading, preaching and communion.
- **DEBRIEF** – The covenant team/presbytery at the end of the assignment do a collective hand over. Examining what was done/achieved and how things went. Be open to receive and give constructive feedback as to what is to be improved/acted upon for change and development. This process also ensures a continual focus on Vision, Mission and Mandate – as well as practice and methodology.

PUBLIC MEETING/GATHERINGS:

The endeavour is to focus on knowing and honouring the Lord and then helping others do likewise. Remember, *“Only as I truly know Him, can I make Him truly known.”*

- *Teaching/worship* with prayer ministry – twice a month (followed by lunch twice a month). This will often start with the Word, then worship, then ministry in that order. Challenging the idea that 'worship' is a 'warm up' for the Word. In fact if you look at Biblical models (Old and New Testament) Worship was a response to the declaration of God's counsel/promise or admonition.
- *Café' evening* – This can have studio acts, but will often have provocative 'life scenario' skits followed by facilitated discussion over coffee at tables. (supplement once a month)
- *H2B* – 'How to' school gathering. Dealing with topics like, parenting, money management, mediation skills, habit management etc. (supplement once a month)
- Once a quarter we have a SUNDAY NITE LIVE – band café' deal, full on gig with ministry from the group. (alternative)

Any of these options can be used to engage the lost. However the later two are more conducive to such.

HOWEVER – THE REAL MINISTRY AND FOCUS MUST BE IN WHAT IS NEXT – THE ABOVE IS MERELY A SUPPLEMENT TO IT...

The legs to the above concept are found in the Discipleship focusing on Relationship, Growth (Individually and numerically) and Service.

Some structure/program requirements for Cell Groups.

- Leadership is of 'Servant' kind... leader must coach at least 2-3 others and share servant leadership responsibility, for purposes of growth and partition.
- Three Saturdays a year we have a celebration/development day where we have fun (i.e. go bowling) and do some training/teaching workshop
- Once a year we have an EGOCENTRICS ANONYMOUS weekend to prevent 'power broking, hijacking' attitudes which are part of all us fallen critters.
- Meet at least once a week.

- Must during course of a year, strategize and implement at least one serious outreach i.e. DPYK, Alpha, Christianity explained... followed by E.N.C.OR.E. (follow-up journey for new converts)
- Must have social outing at least once every 5 weeks... particularly invite unsaved friends... i.e. bowling, meal, movies, in-door rock climbing/volley ball etc.
- Must focus on one series of 'Character of God' in a year.
- Must have a neighbourhood/community service endeavour at least once a year...ie get involved in Neighbourhood house/watch. Do gardens of the elderly etc. More importantly participate and partner with quasi – ACP set up having house that all church partners participate in.
- The core 'presbytery' team each has a Cell group, must be minimum of 8 and cannot get larger than 20. Once a group has reached 20 in size, then trained leaders from the group are commissioned and the group partitioned.
- As each Core member/couple take their turn to facilitate the church for the one or two month period they will enlist their cell group as a team. This is a great vehicle for training and sharing load/responsibility.

Now having tabled what may seemingly be a plethora of activities, they are not demands, rather responses to the Divine prompt and Earthly need. However for much of the cell community life the following are imperative in our communion with the Father and with each other. These imperatives will help us gain perspective and maintain focus.

***Study** – Faith comes by hearing – hearing by the Word of God. (Rom 10:17)

***Serve** – The Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve and give... (Mat 20:28)

***Share** – One another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal 6:2)

***Stillness** – They that seek Me with all their heart will find Me. (Jer 29:13)

Study

The Word – diligently! Allow God's Word to 'Discern you' – Be accountable to it and one another. This is our Map and Reference point. The Counsellor can do just that when we are in the Word and Christ's Lordship has context.

Serve

Develop a serving culture in family, cell and community. Look for and plan ways in which to serve each other, but more importantly the unredeemed around you. **Prize generosity, over reciprocity. This will include social responsibility and/or justice mandate as above.**

Share

Share your burdens, joys, resources and lives, each to the level of their understanding, growth and maturity. We must be authentic and integrous in this, and accountable to one another.

Stillness

This imperative, is giving priority time and absolute attention to our Lord and King Jesus Christ. He is our reason and our destiny... when Christ walked the earth as man, He only ever said and did, what He heard the Father say and do. This was only attained by making time to be still waiting, watching, worshipping and listening – IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, His priority.

Other functions/settings

X Group – The 5 to 12 YO Journey – Cutting edge activities with rotating leadership of all people, but predominantly Parents with children

Y Group – The 13 to 20 YO Journey – Again community preoccupied with the next generation and not merely entertaining the current one.

These are musings, perspectives and possible visions, but serious nonetheless. Time in prayer and development and God's clear leading are what will take it to the next step.

Selah! Shane Wesley Varcoe