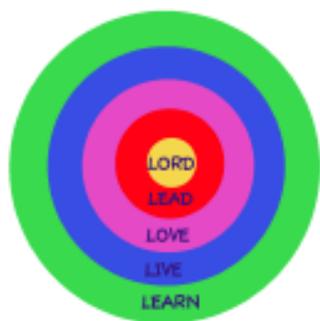


Don't Miss the Mark: Aim High

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Although most United Methodists understand our mission is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” it seems like we too often settle for spiritual mediocrity and casual religion. We may measure our “success” by attendance or money or service projects. However, discipleship is none of those things in and of themselves. Discipleship is not accidental or coincidental—discipleship is intentional.

At its heart, discipleship is a series of relationships. Unfortunately, sometimes we get that wrong. It would be easier if discipleship was just information. Then we could find the right book, the right curriculum, the right program and we would have a church full of disciples. But discipleship is never just information, but transformation—transformation from living for self to living for God, from being a slave to sin and death to being free to love and serve God and others. And that transformation does not come about unless we are in relationship with God and with each other. Each relationship begins the same way: with an invitation and a response.



Over the last year or so, Savoy UMC has worked on a model of intentional discipleship, called AIM HIGH. The visual image is that of a bulls-eye, with rings for Learn, Live, Love, and Lead, with the Lord in the center. “To sin” in Greek literally means to miss the mark. And many archers know that to account for gravity’s effect on the arrow, they have to aim high so they don’t miss the mark. So it is with us. We must AIM HIGH in our discipleship—not just today, but tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after.

Although we have classes for each ring, the real promise of AIM HIGH is the building of relationships. *The invited become learners.* Disciples mature through basic training—a time for learning the essentials. Jesus is an available and transparent leader. Before disciples can know who they are, they need to know who He is. Only then are they equipped to understand His mission and expectations. All who follow Jesus as a disciple need to learn the basics. Only by knowing who Jesus is can we accept his power and his authority. Once we know and accept who Jesus is, we can grow in our ability to trust and follow him. By attending a class in LEARN, our members start building relationships with the teacher and also with each other.

The learners become followers. Jesus did not call his disciples to come and merely observe, nor did he abandon them once a relationship was begun. He called them to walk and stay with him. He taught them how to live. As our members move forward in

LIVE classes, relationships deepen as individuals become more accountable to each other and to God.

Followers become ministers. The power of Jesus for healing, renewing and changing lives is available to every disciple today. It is to be used for the same purpose to reach others with the Gospel: to heal lives, to change circumstances and to overcome evil. Jesus brings the Spirit into the life of every disciple as we LOVE God and our neighbor. At this stage, many of our activities are intensive, such as DISCIPLE bible study, Jesus in the Gospels, or Christian Believer.

Ministers become living examples. The disciples become living examples and role models (leaders) as they grow in their relationship with Jesus. For leadership activities, we have implemented workshops and we have encouraged members to attend Lay Speaking activities.

But all of this is just another program unless we remember to keep LORD as our center.

I would like to say that we have everyone participating in discipleship formation and that we have members lining up to be teachers and facilitators. I can't say that yet, but we have seen our leadership commit to taking the classes, we have seen growth in both numbers participating and classes offered, and we are seeing lives transformed. And it is all to the glory of God.