

Missional Community Connection

A Guide To Joining Biblical Family Life At HCC

Purpose

The purpose of this time together is threefold: learn, consider, and engage. First we want you to learn about Hope Community Church: what we believe about the Bible, God's mission, and how we engage in that mission. We also desire to help you honestly consider these values and how you might align with them. If you so choose, we want to then step you through the process of how you might engage in God's mission with us.

Topics

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 - Structure
 - Doctrine
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 - Make Disciples
 - Go
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 - Teach
3. How To Get Involved
 - Potential Missional Communities To Join
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Hope Community Church

Structure

AUTHORITY

We believe in the supremacy and authority of Jesus in all things, namely the local church. To us, this means that our purpose as a local church is to embrace His mission in His way. We see this expressed primarily in two ways:

1. We seek to follow the model of Jesus in how He lived and what He lived for.
2. We desire to model an authentic faith in the revealed Word of God as the authority for all that we think and do.

DIRECTION

We believe that the church is to be led by the Holy Spirit. It is our biblical conviction that the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of God in and among us. From the Bible, we conclude that His presence in and among us is to empower and direct us into the life that God desires for us as His church. Therefore, we do not desire to set our course, but faithfully pursue his course for us.

LEADERSHIP

We believe that the Bible speaks of only two official positions of influence in the local church, those being the positions of elder and deacon. It is our conviction that these two positions are not equal, but, rather, complementary in that the elders are responsible to God for leading the church into His mission while the deacons are responsible to assist the elders in the promotion of this mission. We have also maintained another practical leadership role for those qualified to lead one of our missional communities (MC), which we call “the missional community leader.”

Consider

How does our structure compare with what you have experienced in the past?

FORM

We have chosen to structure our church as minimally as possible. We desire to avoid a program driven culture and, in its place, create an organic family culture of mutual growth and pursuit of the mission of God. We believe that this is best accomplished in smaller groups of people that are led by those who can both model and coach others into the missional lifestyle that God desires. We call these small groups “missional communities (MC’s).”

Doctrine

BIBLE

We believe that the Bible is the inspired revelation of God to us; and, for this reason, it is our authority. We can be redeemed to a right relationship with God and be restored to our purpose in pursuing His mission only through the power of His life in us. This is both revealed to us and demonstrated through us by knowing and applying the truth of the Bible.

GOD

We believe in the one true Triune God, expressed through three distinct persons who demonstrate perfect community through unified purpose and diverse functions. The will of the Father is seen through the person of Jesus the Son and empowered through the Holy Spirit. We believe that God is three persons yet one; but we humbly admit that His composition, nature, wisdom, power, and glory are beyond our capacity to fully understand.

PEOPLE

We believe that people are made in God's image, after his very being. We are not equal with God, yet we are similar to Him in that we carry the fundamental characteristics of his person. In mind, will, emotion, and spirit, we are like God and can experience deep personal relationship with Him and other people. Because of Adam's choice to rebel against God, people are born into a state of sin¹ that naturally positions them as enemies of God. Yet, each person is eternally condemned for their personal choice to sin against God.

¹ This state of sin induces a heightened awareness of sin, a propensity toward sin, and an enticement to sin.

SALVATION

We believe that all people are lost in their sin, separated from God, and, unless they are spiritually restored to God, they are bound for an eternity of separation from Him in Hell. We also believe that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in the form of a man, lived a perfect life, and died as the substitutionary sacrifice for every person. This sacrifice is applied to every person that believes in the person of Jesus as God Himself and His substitutionary death and resurrection for them. Upon believing in Jesus in this way, the person is declared righteous by God by virtue of Jesus' work for them, and they are restored to God's family as His child forever. A few other key distinctives:

- We do not hold to the Calvinistic belief that God sovereignly chooses some to salvation. We believe that faith is our own, consistent with being image bearers of God, and we must exercise it of our own accord.
- We also do not hold to the Lordship Salvation theological conviction that good works must follow a salvation experience in order to validate the authenticity of the person's faith. Salvation must be free of any works, either to earn salvation or to validate it afterwards.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

As children of God, this new relationship brings the presence of the Holy Spirit within every believer. He resides within every believer to guide them into an understanding of, and experience in, the truth of the Bible. God's basic design for His people is that they would be increasingly transformed into the image and model of Jesus in a functional way as they pursue personal spiritual growth in a community of believers while serving His mission.

Consider

How does our doctrine compare with what you have learned in the past or what you personally believe?

MISSION

We believe that the mission of God directly informs the overarching and unifying doctrine of the Bible. His intent in creation was to fill the earth with His glory, love, and goodness through a dynamic personal relationship with His children. This mission has never changed, but it has been adapted over time and through various circumstances. Sin and the lostness of people have brought the need for salvation and redemption; yet, the ultimate aim of God must still be served. We desire to align ourselves with this mission and pursue, not only the redemption of people back to God, but also the restoration of people to His purposes on earth.

ETERNITY

We believe in the promise of an eternal state, living in the presence of God forever. Prior to this final eternal state, there will be a series of events in which God will judge and purify the earth for its sin and rebellion against Him. Jesus Himself will reign for a literal one thousand years on the earth, culminating in His final defeat of Satan and sin. We also believe in a believer judgment where all believers in Jesus will stand before Him as He judges us, not for our sin, but for the work that we did for Him as His children. This

judgment will determine our role of service in the eternal kingdom of God and is a motivator for us in the choices that we make in our present-day lives.

Notes | Doctrine

Vision

It is our conviction that we have been redeemed (bought back into a right relationship) by God with a promised eternity with Him. We also believe that this is only a part of what God desires for us. We see that, from the creation of mankind, God has been pursuing His mission of redeeming and restoring all people to His original design for them. We believe that He will pursue this mission until the end of time as we know it. It is our expressed purpose and aim in life to join God in pursuing this mission into which He has graciously invited us.

Question

How does this vision compare with what you have learned in the past or what you personally believe?

We believe the context for pursuing this mission is authentic biblical community; this is the environment where we develop a deeper relationship with our God, deeper relationships with others in Christ, and deeper friendships with those who have yet to be reconciled to God. We are guided in this context by the authority and direction of the Spirit of God in us as He builds the truth of the Bible into our minds and lives.

Missional Community

We believe that the best context for pursuing the mission of God is in smaller groups of people, of various places in life, who are unified in their desire to live for God. Following the model of Jesus with his disciples, we desire to build a church that is comprised of these organic gatherings of people who collectively embrace the struggle of pursuing God in the direction of His mission. We call these small groups “Missional Communities.” To best understand the vision and function of these missional communities, we go to the last words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20; notice four simple words/phrases that help us understand this mission more clearly: make disciples, go, baptize, teach.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“Make Disciples”

A disciple is a follower or a student in the school of a Master. Culturally speaking, to the time of Jesus, it communicated the idea of giving one’s life to follow, learn from, and ultimately adopt the lifestyle of one’s teacher. This is our mission, specifically, in relationship to Jesus Himself. We must embrace this basic mission both for ourselves and for others.

- “Be” disciples. One aim of missional living is the fundamental posture of understanding one’s own need for becoming like Christ. MC life is about needy people needing to pursue a changed life.

- “Make” disciples. The other aim of missional living is embracing the mission of making disciples out of those who are not. Missional living is not only about personal change. It also includes pursuing making disciples who can ultimately make more disciples.

Notes | Make Disciples

“Go”

When Jesus sent us out to pursue his mission, he made sure to explain it to us in simple ways. One area of importance is the posture necessary in effectively making disciples: We must pursue a posture of “going.” Simply stated, the mission is not to invite people to church; it is to go build relationships with them, where they live, and share the gospel with them.

We will not naturally embrace the go posture, and that is why Jesus sends us out with this charge. In missional community, we must challenge each other to personally embrace the posture of going, feeling the personal responsibility of reaching those we interact with regularly. We must also commit to praying for each other as we go individually, and we need to create ways to go with each other on mission.

Consider

What has been some of your experiences in reaching unbelievers? What are some of your biggest fears in reaching unbelievers?

When we think about this go posture, we have no better example than God Himself. In fact, this go posture that we are to embrace actually demonstrates the character of God to those we are reaching. Consider how God pursued Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and, most powerfully, how Jesus pursued all people when he came to earth to die for our sins!

Notes | Go

“Baptize”

Jesus spoke in culturally relevant ways when he called his disciples to “baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The word baptize simply means “immersion,” so we understand that he was commanding them/us to immerse people in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We comprehend this best when we consider how Jesus Himself lived when he was here on earth.

Consider

What does ‘immersion’ mean to you, and what are you personally immersed in?
How did you get immersed in those things?

Jesus was in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead him. He regularly repositioned his thinking around the will of the Father. He demonstrated that he needed the power, guidance, and love that the fellowship of the Trinity alone provides. He did all of this in the context of community with the disciples. Now we, too, have been spiritually positioned into Christ so that we might also live like he did.

This lifestyle of immersion with others in the Trinity will not happen on its own. We must pursue it over all other things. We must be open to consider how our lives have been lived in a way that is inconsistent with this fundamental lifestyle that Jesus lived. We will grow in living this way as our understanding of and relationship with Jesus increases and as we step into the lifestyle of Jesus for ourselves.

“Teach”

Jesus also spoke clearly to the need for teaching in discipleship. Learning is essential for people to become followers of Jesus. The idea of being the people of God on mission for him is a concept that is derived from the Bible. It is not a human strategy at all. Because of this, we adopt a conviction that learning from the Bible and living accordingly is the way that we are equipped to live on mission for God. The Bible itself claims that only an accurate interpretation and application of what it says can equip us to pursue this mission.

Consider

What has been your experience in studying the Bible? What are the biggest challenges for you personally?

Missional Community life will constantly press into your personal life as you are challenged to humble yourself under the authority of biblical truth alone. Most of us have viewed bible study/application from an individual/private standpoint, but this is dramatically out of alignment with the picture we see in the Bible. God has ordained that the Body of Christ be instructed about this life on mission through the Bible in community with others. He also outlines two primary means for instruction in the Bible:

- Being Taught. We are to be taught the Bible as a means for growth. One context where this takes place is at our Central Teachings where we provide consistent, contextual instruction of the meaning and application of the Bible.
- Being Equipped. Not only are we to be taught the Bible, but God desires that we be equipped to study and apply the Bible for ourselves in the context of community. This equipping takes place in missional community as your leaders help guide you in learning how to study and apply the Bible with others.

How to Get Involved

Potential Missional Communities To Join

Although we have six potential missional communities that meet at various times and locations, there are a number of factors to consider in narrowing down the options. The factors below are not prioritized in any kind of order.

1. Which missional communities are currently open for new members? (For various reasons, missional communities can be at stages of growth or multiplication that might prohibit them from adding new members. This will be investigated on your behalf, by your guide, prior to making any decisions.)
2. Which missional communities meet close to your home? (Proximity to MC members and MC gathering locations can be a helpful consideration as you consider your other life commitments.)
3. Which missional communities have members who live close to you?
4. Which missional communities have regular gatherings at times that you can commit to?
5. Which missional communities might be most beneficial for your growth into the mission of God?

Process For Connecting Into A Missional Community

Once we have established one or two missional communities that might be best for you to join, we want to go through a simple process before you start attending the group.

1. Your guide will help arrange meetings with an MC Leader from each of the potential missional communities. Both you and your guide will meet together with these leaders.
2. Next, you will meet with your guide to process and pray through your options.
3. You will then interact with the MC Leader(s) for any follow-up questions.
4. Once you decide which missional community to join, your guide will inform the MC Leadership team. Someone from the team will then communicate with you directly regarding a plan to begin participating in the MC.