

Intentional Faith Development

Vibrant, fruitful, growing congregations practice Intentional Faith Development.

- Christ's gracious invitation through Radical Hospitality invites and welcomes us.
- God's transforming presence in Passionate Worship opens our hearts to Christ's pardon, love and grace, creating in us a desire to follow.
- Intentional Faith Development allows God's Spirit to work in us, perfecting us in the practice of love as we grow in the knowledge and love of God together.

Learning in community imitates the way Jesus deliberately taught his disciples.

Following the formation of the church by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the earliest communities of Christians thrived as **“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42**

What is important to hear is the dual reference to learning and community.

- They studied together and had fellowship together
- They ate together and they prayed together
- Learning and community go together!

The # 1 goal of our faith is to become more like Jesus Christ.

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own... straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal.” Philippians 3:12-14

Faith is always moving, growing, changing and maturing.

As we mature in Christ, God cultivates in us the fruit of the Spirit: **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23**

These inner spiritual qualities are all radically relational, and we only learn them in the presence of others through the practice of love.

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20

Jesus taught in community so that we would learn to discover his presence in and through others.

- Christian faith is not static, it is dynamic – but it requires cultivation.

Growth in faith does not come easily or automatically but requires placing ourselves in community to learn the faith with others.

By joining a Bible study or class, or small group, we place ourselves in the circumstances that are most advantageous for growth in faith.

- God uses faith-to-faith relationships to change us.

The fruit of the spirit that we see in Christ cannot be learned apart from a network of relationship.

In the intimacy of small groups, we learn not only from writers and thinkers and people of the past through Scripture and books, but also from mentors and models and fellow travelers in our congregation.

We give and receive the care of Christ by praying for one another, supporting one another through periods of grief and difficulty, and celebrating one another's joys and hopes.

- Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and other small groups are really little churches within the bigger church family.
- They are the most likely places for us to learn to **“rejoice with those who rejoice,” and “weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15**