

## Administrative Board Minutes from May 18, 2025

Submitted by Rebecca L. Griffeth for consideration and correction.

Handouts are in PDF attachments:

### Discipleship Assessment Plan, Strategic Plan Update

- I. Welcome by Pam Auble at 11:59am
- II. Opening Prayer (Jeff Sheehan)
- III. Minutes from February 2, 2025 (Rebecca Griffeth)
  - a. Pam Auble asks for any corrections or changes
    - a. Eric Patton moved to accept the minutes.
    - b. Second from Lynne Collier
    - c. Call for any discussion
    - d. Motion to approve the minutes carries - unanimously
- IV. Strategic Plan progress (Gretchen Napier)
  - a. Everything is in progress.
    - a. First: Continue existing work (Ministry Council Committees, managing church property and needed upkeep with the Strategic Stewardship campaign)
    - b. Second: evaluating our current commitments
      1. Golden Triangle will continue with separate service, succession plan in progress, support worship services for monthly communion and music, partner with youth and children's ministries
      2. Weekday School looking at changes to reduce administrative burden on staff, align the mission and values with Belmont UMC, whether it would benefit from having its own 501(c)3 status, could income be generated to fund missional objectives (e.g., provide care for low income students).
    - c. Third: Planning for future realities
      1. Grow stewardships and giving. All strategies are still underway
      2. Create clear paths of communication, governance
      3. Restructure staff agenda, roles of staff, organizational structure, governance.
    - d. Fourth: Develop a process of welcoming the community into Belmont
      1. Banners promoting events – especially children's ministries
      2. Recording baseline visitors
    - e. Fifth: Path of faith development.

1. Engagement committee
2. Beta Discipleship system for all ages had glitch, exploring a four week worship and discipleship system in the fall.
- f. Sixth: Transformative worship has made progress at engaging children.

b. Summary

- a. We are wanting to make sure we are reaching towards our goals and making progress. The work is being done and we are making good progress on our strategic plan.

V. Discussion of church discipleship needs and progress (Steve Bryant and Laura Dickinson) Faith Development plan

a. Articulating a path for faith development (4 steps in Luke 5)

b. Committees are split into those 4 areas of discipleship.

1. The core 4 (Welcome, Connect, Grow, Partner)
2. There was a Faith Development void and where we plan to focus.

Three challenges:

- a. Articulate the path
- b. Develop Discipleship self-assessment tool. It will get our congregation to think about how they are growing as part of the church.
- c. Does our church offer the opportunities to engage and grow?

i. What does it mean to grow in faith?

1. Proposal is to involve these three things: mind, heart, hands
2. Building understanding of what it means to grow in faith of Christ.
3. We are good at building community, and we can work on building understanding.

ii. How are we deepening Spiritual Practice?

iii. Strengthening Action

1. How are we engaged in life or in groups where we can share how we are faithful to our practice.
2. Covenant Groups: offering more opportunities to help people live fulling into the practices and covenant of growth in Christ.

iv. Essentially asking what more do we need to do to make this happen, forming of groups, various offerings, etc.

3. What does this mean for us

- a. Adult Church School: The School of Intentional Christian Discipleship. We will begin to look at how we can do this better within the existing ministry council teams/committees.

VI. Staff Parish updates on search for Director of Weekday School (Carrie Sherrill)

- a. At the end of April our WDS director left. Elizabeth went on to another position.
- b. A search committee has been formed
- c. An offer is being extended next week after 30 applications and 3 candidates coming to campus to interview.
- d. We hope to have information to share and a timeline for that person to begin.
- e. With many transitions recently at the Weekday School, a group of leaders met with both staff and parents to listen, reassure, and assess needs/wants.  
Four areas to focus on:
  - 1. Health and Safety
  - 2. Accountability
  - 3. Consistency of classroom and education
  - 4. Communication with all involved.
- f. Crystal, assistant to WDS started right before Elizabeth announced her leave. She has stepped up and helping manage the big emotions of transition
- g. Brittany Jordan has also stepped up to help as well as part of Admin Team.
- h. Carrie shares appreciation for both of them and all who have helped assess and move forward with the process of naming a new WDS Director.

VII. Strategic Stewardship updates, Centric report (James Bagwell)

- a. Properties specific
  - a. Centric Architecture team lead by Maggie Scott Bryant
  - b. They did a building assessment on Thomason Hall and the Sanctuary bldgs. They provided a great report about 150 pages with pictures.  
Came up with 6 areas.
    - a. Stained glass \$120 thousand
    - b. Sanctuary interior/exterior
    - c. Thomasson Hall
    - d. Sanctuary Choir
    - e. Drainage in Parker Hall
  - c. In April we met with the team and ranked the needed work in terms of:
    - a. Urgency

- b. Value
      - c. Cost
    - d. Drainage issues scored high in urgency, value, and cost. Work has been done to access those priority areas.
    - e. Sanctuary air handler replacement is being worked on.
  - b. We are really trying to investigate the Stewardship parts of these plans
    - a. Early plans are being formed for a 2026 capital campaign for these priorities.
    - b. Awaiting a June decision on the grant from Sacred Spaces for the stained-glass windows. This is our second time applying for that. Focused on sanctuary and Thomasson Hall.
- VIII. Ongoing Security updates (Carrie Sherrill)
- a. In January/February staff expressed safety concerns especially on Sunday mornings. We've grappled with balancing safety with being welcoming.
  - b. Actions Taken
    - a. Metro Nashville Police came through and offered suggestions. Limiting door access.
    - b. SFM: they also did a walkthrough and gave tips
    - c. Team solutions
      - 1. Doors are locked at certain times after Sunday church begins
      - 2. Sanctuary doors will only open for about 45 minutes and then those lock
      - 3. Chapel Doors and Iris room doors open a bit longer which still limits access, but funnels people into those central entrances.
      - 4. Dani has been hired on Sundays. She is unarmed and is here 7:45am to 11:45am during our services. Her biggest role is to watch and "see" people. She is a school resource officer. Dani will also serve as de-escalation if needed and assist our volunteer ushers/greeters.
      - 5. SFM: has given us rates for doing a security upgrade. Staff and team are following best practices with our resources at this time.
    - d. SFM team will be giving us a plan and some solutions in the coming months.
    - e. More signage has gone up to help people know where to go.
    - f. One suggestion is to do a fire drill to help improve awareness for our emergency plans.
      - 1. Eric Patton suggested a doing it on Pentecost

2. Steve Bryant informally endorsed this effort

IX. Advocacy/Outreach updates (Anna Cramer)

- a. Anna Cramer was asked to step in ahead of sabbatical of Heather Harriss and Allie Rutland
- b. Ebenezer UMC
  - a. Their ESL classes ended on May 6<sup>th</sup>.
    - 1. We had hoped to bring a large crowd to attend. They have asked for familiar faces be present rather than unfamiliar faces given recent events in Nashville (ICE raids).
    - 2. They still need childcare for these classes
  - b. Via “HOPE,” they have been able to organize a summer camp type offering.
  - c. There is a lot of fear based on the ICE raids in Nashville.
  - d. On March 9<sup>th</sup> a legal clinic was held in collaboration with BUMC about powers of attorney paperwork to have on hand should there be deportation.
  - e. There are ongoing conversations on how Belmont can support and keep persons safe for the families at Ebenezer.
  - f. They may be looking for temporary guardians should it become necessary for their members.
  - g. Lynne Collier added that at the end of June a group from Colorado will be staying at BUMC will be painting Ebenezer’s Pavilion.
  - h. Steve Bryant added that Belmonsters are volunteering to stand at the doors of Ebenezer. He mentioned other names of Belmonsters who are helping in many ways with the Ebenezer community.
- c. The Lenten offering raised \$24,000 for Justice for Our Neighbors.
- d. Give Ye Them to Eat mission trip
  - a. There are beginning plans for a mission trip in early 2026. They have two missionaries arriving and we are trying to make this a feasible trip for BUMC congregants. Kay Bowers is working on details and open for further discussion.
- e. Malawi
  - a. It is our single largest mission budget at BUMC.
  - b. Many are suffering from hunger given all the food increases throughout the world.
  - c. Anna wanted to make sure we continue to lift them up.

- f. Lori Pearce lifted up the Youth mission trip coming up this summer. June 29-July 5<sup>th</sup>. More info to come on how to support this group.
- X. Clergy and Staff Reports
  - a. Emma: Youth and Young Adults
    - a. Seven Youth were celebrated on May 4<sup>th</sup> for Graduation. Followed by the end of the year program.
    - b. We had nine confirmands this year!
    - c. Summer Youth Plans
      - 1. Choir Tour: 35 people going to NYC
      - 2. 36 are going to ASP mission trip (high school only), three veteran youth are also joining
      - 3. Youth Mission Stay
        - a. Service projects around town and staying at church
        - b. Adult volunteers are needed
    - d. Young Adult Ministries
      - 1. Allie and Ethan have been great in keeping this going.
      - 2. 10 spots are open for a Young Adults event.
        - a. Working to get 6 spots sponsored
        - b. Looking at the MLK holiday to enable young persons to be able to take a PTO day.
  - b. Hunter Wade
    - a. (notes from Matt Webb)
      - 1. Music Ministries
        - a. Children did an amazing job with the musical this morning.
        - b. Youth are getting ready for choir tour June 5-9<sup>th</sup> to NYC
        - c. Worship continues to be a meaningful way to connect with word and worship.
    - b. Interim Associate Pastor
      - 1. Working with Steve Bryant on Ministry Council items
      - 2. Getting to visit many Belmonsters
      - 3. Being a part of WNAB
      - 4. Hunter is here to help in ways that Heather would normally help during Heather's sabbatical.
    - c. Belmont Wesley
      - 1. Had some students graduate from the group this year
      - 2. Leadership is changing over and it is exciting to work with new leaders

c. Paul Purdue

- a. Worship has been fantastic with amazing things happening all the time.
- b. Children's Ministry- "Amy is crushing it".
  - 1. Summer Sunday school adult volunteers are needed in the children's ministry. Lori Pearce put a challenge out for all of us to help and pick a spot.
- c. "Carrie is crushing it, or being crushed by it".
- d. Forming Discipleship Path
  - 1. We are unique in Nashville,
  - 2. We are not literalist and that is liberating. There is a different way to read the scripture
  - 3. We are inclusive, we are a warm congregation and our visitors feel welcome. We are being even more intentional about that.
  - 4. We care about justice.
  - 5. Matt thinks that we are one of the few churches that offers both traditional music/worship and a liberal interpretation.
  - 6. We have global connections
  - 7. We are thinking and reasoning people
  - 8. We have a great location, but not enough parking.
  - 9. Our neighbors need this, and they long for it. So, we need to be intentional in helping people experience that.
- e. Does ministry council need to add immigration to our strategic plan? How do we walk with hope and how to offer good news?
- f. We have a chance to offer hope to our community. We don't know how to navigate all of this but if we are faithful, we can bring about hope and faith for a better day.
- g. Ends by offering thanks to all for all the hard work.

XI. Benediction by Paul

Strategic Plan Update

Administrative Board

May 18, 2025

Continue Existing Work

I. **Continuing Ministry Council Committees with input from survey and listening sessions to improve their work**

- a. Ask the Outreach Committee to focus their portfolio so that it increases congregational engagement, decreases participant costs (local vs not), increases efficacy & equity, and includes GTF & ESL to ensure we are living into Welcoming Statement.

- b. Ask Advocacy Committee to focus on 1) Gun Control, 2) LGBTQIA+ Rights, and 3) Homelessness and Housing.

- i. Email campaigns to encourage communicating with legislators such as SB676/HB754 targeting Trans people, HB793/SB836 targeting undocumented immigrant children, and more.

- ii. Supporting United Methodist Day on the Hill

- iii. Preparing for a booth at Pride

- c. Ask Outreach and Advocacy to work together to determine how to differentiate each committee or merge the two committees into one.

- i. Outreach and Advocacy Committee have begun attending each other's meetings to help with communication, and to ensure differentiation. See recent meeting notes below.





### Joint Outreach & Advocacy Meeting Notes

**Values:** To do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8, CEB)

**Vision:** Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. ([King Center website](#))

**Mission:** Building beloved community through compassionate action and courageous outreach.

#### Ways of thinking about advocacy and outreach

ADVOCACY	OUTREACH
Systems change	The “now” work
Public-facing	Behind-the-scenes
Direct action	Direct involvement

Questions to be answered and/or documented in Drive:

- BUMC comms procedure
- Reporting/documenting process for priority areas

## II. Managing and optimizing church property to ensure upkeep, conserve financial resources, and align with missions (Strategic Stewardship Committee, Trustees).

- Centric Architecture completed Building Condition Assessment of Sanctuary and Thomasson Hall; meeting April 29, 2025 to review priorities
- Re-Applied for National Fund for Sacred Places (NFSP) matching grant in 2025.
- Trustees obtained appraisal of property value of Vandy Imaging building and the half block of our complex on the 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue side.
- Committee continues listening sessions with Sunday School classes.

## Evaluate Present Commitments

### **Create a Golden Triangle Fellowship Strategic Planning Task Force to evaluate existing relationship and mutual engagement.**

- Interim Report below, final report due December 2025
- “Will they continue as a separate Karen language service?” Yes. Although attendance has declined as former members have newer affiliations and distance from their residence. They have long-term bonds in fellowship and in language.
- “Is there a succession plan?” Sort of, in progress. Two members have been studying materials to serve as a Lay Pastor for the fellowship, and Pastor Paul is aware of this, although he questions if one has sufficient English skills.
- “Identify and recommend best practices for improving/supporting worship services?” [Carolyn Jones has been playing the first hymn for them, but she would like a backup piano player.](#) They need a piano player (as their steel guitar doesn’t easily accompany hymns). They will likely need pastoral support for monthly Communion. They will continue to need financial support.
- “Partner with youth and children’s ministries to explore relationships that meet needs of both congregations ‘ youth and children.” As to children, Amy Cooper says that “... they have been a consistent presence in the children’s Sunday School classrooms. Many teachers have had the same children over a two-year period....I have only seen them be fully welcomed and known by name. Teachers say the children of the Golden Triangle Fellowship have a solid Bible knowledge. There is, of course, work to do, as all children get to know each other.” Nothing is known about Youth participation, but youth activities are often on Sunday evenings and transportation is a problem.

### **Create a Weekday School Strategic Planning Task Force to evaluate existing relationship and governance.**

- Progress report below, final report due December 2025

#### Charge:

- What changes need to be made to effectively reduce the administrative burden of the Weekday School on church staff?

- How can the association with Belmont UMC deepen the mission and values of the Weekday School? How can the Weekday School align with the vision, welcoming statement and values of Belmont UMC?
- Would Belmont UMC or the Weekday School benefit from the Weekday School having its own 501(c)3 status?
- Could changes be made to generate income above expenses to fund Belmont missions, or alternatively, to align the Weekday School mission with the missions of Belmont UMC (e.g., provide care for low income students or other missional objectives)?
- Could a progressive Christian curriculum be part of the Weekday School classrooms?

To date the Task Force has been Jennifer Bagwell and Lucian Giese. We have spent the last two months interviewing the key stakeholders at WDS and Belmont:

- Seth Neumann (part time HR director at BUMC)
- Elizabeth Ayton (immediate past WDS director)
- Lynne Collier (WDS Advisory Board)
- Carrie Sherrill (Executive Director for Church Management)
- Amy Cooper (Director of Children's Ministries at BUMC)

Next steps for Task Force:

1. Expand Task Force members in order to study areas listed in charge.
2. Welcome comments and suggestions from the congregation, WDS parents, and WDS staff.
3. Further conversations with SPRC and leadership, especially when the new WDS director has been on board for a little while.

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Plan for Future Realities

**I. Engage in Strategic Financial Planning to grow giving, support mission, and increase engagement.**

- a. COMMUNICATION: Create regular, intentional communication relaying the impacts of our gifts (Who, what, how does it impact?) using numbers and stories. *Communication plan due 5/25, review number of giving units quarterly.*
  - i. As part of the larger communication plan, we are finding ways to use current communications to educate about giving impact, and sharing updates. Communications has started to do this, but a more developed plan will be shared by June.
- b. EDUCATION: Educating the congregation on different ways to give. Creating a program/presentation that can be adapted to different demographics and media. Topics may include, how to create a will, giving RMDs, auto-draft, gifting stock, estate plannings, etc.). *Due 5/25*
  - i. Pledge cards and the website have been updated with the number of ways to give to Belmont.
  - ii. With the above communication plan, we will address the program and presentation that is easily adaptable.
- c. NEW REVENUE: Find new funding streams by leveraging the property/buildings as assets. Investigate how we can use Community Center for weddings (with alcohol). *Due 5/25*
  - i. Conversations around the strategic stewardship and Centric conversations have included some of this wondering, but there has been no formal assessment of how best to look at the building use for revenue. A team has put together a general building use assessment which can then be used to determine space and function availability.

**II. Create clear pathways of governance, communication and accountability among staff, lay leaders and the congregation.**

- a. Create a targeted communication strategy by asking groups what communication channels work for them. *Create plan by 3/25, see results by end of 2025.*

- i. Jan - Mar 2025 - Communications listening sessions conducted to assess members' preferences, needs, and challenges with our communications
  - ii. March 2025 - Analyzed listening session data; 80% of respondents were most interested in Outreach and Advocacy and wanted to receive more information about those two areas – in response, Angie is now attending these committee meetings to improve the connection between event planning and event promotion. Internal Communication Plan attached.
  - iii. April - May 2025 – Currently drafting an annual communications plan that includes overall Belmont communications as well as individual ministry communications, will implement platform updates based on listening session data
  - iv. August - October 2025 - Branding and Style Guide
- b. Restructure staff agenda to include sections for 1) discussing the week's activities, 2) discussing decisions needed and issues needing resolution, and 3) discussing prayer needs. Goal – 80% of Staff see positive change. *Due 2/25*
  - i. Agenda revised 10/2024. Throughout the first three months of the updated agenda, staff feedback was received at the end of each meeting. All staff continued to agree with the updated agenda, and small tweaks have been made throughout the feedback process.
  - ii. Now almost eight months into the new format, we will resurvey staff to see what updates need to be made.
- c. Develop and share clear contact list for who to ask for various group needs, like reserving space, recruiting volunteers, funding. *Due 12/24*
  - i. Staff meetings and planning sessions have been used to clarify roles for staff. In the coming months, we will be using current job descriptions and work functions to create a clear responsibility list for support work in the church.
- d. Develop and share an org structure of both staff and various church committees/groups so that congregants know how the church functions. *Due 5/25.*

- i. A draft of this has been created and shared with Paul, updates are still being made to show the full scope of the staff.
- e. Create governance process for decisions about starting or ending programs that impact multiple areas/other programs. (consult Book of Discipline). *Due 8/25.*
  - i. A draft of a governance map has been created and needs to be updated with committee function and stating their impact on the decision making process.

### **III. Develop a process for engaging the community.**

- a. Create and post banners quarterly welcoming the community to children's events. Completed Q1 2025.
- b. Increase # of newly recorded visitors – baseline documented
  - i. Q1 2024
    - 1. First Time Visitors - 19
    - 2. Second Time Visitors - 8
    - 3. Third Time Visitors - 3
    - 4. Fourth Time Visitors - 5
  - ii. Q2 2024
    - 1. First Time Visitors - 8
    - 2. Second Time Visitors - 1
    - 3. Third Time Visitors - 0
    - 4. Fourth Time Visitors - 3
  - iii. Q3 2024
    - 1. First Time Visitors - 19
    - 2. Second Time Visitors - 12
    - 3. Third Time Visitors - 3
    - 4. Fourth Time Visitors - 3

iv. Q4 2024

1. First Time Visitors - 14
  2. Second Time Visitors - 10
  3. Third Time Visitors - 2
  4. Fourth Time Visitors - 0
- c. Create unassisted handicap accessible bathroom from Sanctuary. *Due before Easter 2025*
- d. Create resources to communicate effectively to visitors about availability and location of restrooms & comfort resources such as children's packets, etc. Completed Q1 2025.

**IV. Articulate a path for faith development.**

- a. Form an Engagement Committee that will receive hand off from Welcoming Committee and alleviate staff burden for follow-up
- i. Melissa Eckert and Lori Pearce co-chair the new Connections Team. Mary Beth Franklyn and Jerry Parks are the other team members. Additionally, Steve Bryant from Ministry Council, and Paula Gaddis from Welcoming also join us at our monthly meetings. Heather is our pastoral representative, so Hunter will be joining us while Heather is away. The four Connection Team members are assigned a Sunday each week to follow up with all visitors on the list Anne sends weekly.
  - ii. We are primarily emailing our visitors and attaching our Sunday School list and Connections opportunities (attached). We strive to develop relationships with our “assigned” visitors and help them find connection with a small group or ministry. I’m keeping a list of the visitors and team member assigned.
  - iii. Steve has developed our “Come and See” sessions to be offered to visitors and new Belmont members. We plan to offer these 4 sessions quarterly, with the first one starting this Sunday April 27th in the Iris

Room. We emailed all of our visitors the invitation to our Come and See sessions.

iv. This is a work in progress and we are learning along the way.

b. Develop two consistent Engagement Actions for every new visitor.

- i. Fellowship in the Foyer – Weekly gathering following worship--a goal is more volunteers to help with clean up (and/or to see if this is something we can ask James to do) Carolyn orders the cookies, picks them up and sets up each week
- ii. Coffee and Conversation - The 2nd Sunday of the month, Anne invites visitors of the last 6 months, in the Iris Room, we talk for a bit, answer questions and then tour the building.

c. Develop beta Discipleship System for All Ages. *Due 1/25.*

Think Orange curriculum experienced internal organizational problems. Search ongoing for new options. Over the past several years the staff has considered a variety of models to help develop a path for faith development, i.e. the discipleship system for all ages. Indeed, during Lent the church used a Lenten resource from A Sanctified Art entitled “Everything (in) Between” that coordinated worship themes and sermons, adult discipleship opportunities, and supplied the excellent curriculum used by all our Children's Sunday school classes during lent. We distributed over 200 weekly home devotional guides, but had limited success in creating new small groups.

In the fall we are exploring a similar 4 week worship and discipleship curriculum around stewardship from A Sanctified Art that may be followed by their Advent series as well. We need to be very intentional about creating small groups around these studies.

We would love to find some strong weekly Christian formation/ education/ discipleship curriculum that engages all age levels and reflects our progressive approach to Scripture, but as of yet we have not found this. The staff is considering self-publishing a weekly midweek one page devotional guide rooted in Sunday worship, that would utilize scripture,



prayers from Sunday worship and questions to discuss in home-based small-group devotional reflection times,

- d. Develop Discipleship Self-Assessment. Draft Attached. Plan for implementation is in-process. *Due 12/24.*

**V. Develop and communicate a process for continuing to evolve the congregation's experience of worship into a transformative one.**

- a. Create a theological framework for musical selection and a communication strategy for informing the congregation. *Due 3/25.*
- b. Determine how to most meaningfully engage children in worship by assessing children's church and/or sermon. CMT considering metrics for success. *Due 6 months after new Director hired.*

(Following details provided by Amy Cooper, Director of Children's Ministry and Music)

- i. Children's Sabbath in November involved children in almost every aspect of the service, except for preaching.
- ii. Chapel Choir represented the children's choirs in Feast of Lights
- iii. When the scripture is appropriate and a child can read successfully, we have been asking children to read scripture (two times come to mind, once on Christmas Eve, and just recently Wiley Rhodes read beautifully on Palm Sunday)
- iv. Paul, Emma and Heather have lead children in a Children's Moment during worship (four times overall)
- v. Currently, four children along with their accompanist and choir director have written a children's musical, "The Noah Musical," and it will be presented at Blakemore Senior Living (May 14) and BUMC (May 18)
- vi. The worship bags seem to be used during worship, ranging from ages 2 -4th grade. Brittany may be able to give us an approximate number of used bags being returned each week.
- vii. Recently, Carolyn Primm with Welcoming reached out to ask if children could be included once a month as offering collectors. This has occurred once already, and we have two more times scheduled

for the summer. This has been a good learning experience for children and their parents.

- viii. We tried to engage children in the Maundy Thursday service by participating in the spiritual practices of foot washing, communion, and a reflection station where coloring could take place. We hoped this type of prayer and action would appeal to families with children. To my knowledge I don't know of many children that attended. We can poll families to see if it's too late at night (7:00 pm) or if they thought it would be too serious of a service, or other thoughts... I did ask one family with an older child if they were willing to help strip the altar at the end of the service. I think they would have but they were going out of town.
- ix. On Palm Sunday, we had many, many children and families. I think we had an increase in young babies/toddlers with parents, which makes my heart happy! Also, our pen pals from Ebenezer UMC attended and participated (around 7 children).
- x. Of course, our children's choirs and children's chimes continue to sing and ring on a regular basis.
- xi. Amy has been emailing newcomers with children when given the information that they have been in worship. Recently, we heard from a parent wondering if her child with a disability would be welcome in Sunday school and worship. Amy assured her that she definitely would be welcomed and asked for more information about needs, modifications, etc.

Our Children's Ministry is thriving!

- On our best Sunday, we had 48 children in Sunday school classes (toddlers-6th graders)
- There are 33 children in children's choirs, and 8 in children's chimes.
- At the most, I believe we've had 8 toddlers in the new Sunday school class.
- We have 7 pen pals from Ebenezer UMC.

- I didn't get a count of the Palm Sunday Parade, but enough children and parents that we almost ran out of music.
- We've had 4 children's sermons, given by Paul, Heather and Emma.
- Children have read scripture two to three times in worship.
- We've had two Sundays where children assist with collecting the offering (8-10 children each time)
- The last Parent and Child music, we had over 30 participants (infants, toddlers , care givers, parents, grandparents)
- I've recruited three new children's Sunday school teachers since January.
- Approximately 10-12 worship bags are used and returned in worship.
- Three offers were made to take dinner to families with new babies (two accepted), and family faith books were given.
- I would love to look at how many new children we've welcomed to Sunday school and choir this year. I think I could look at our registration forms and know. I wasn't in this position last year, but I feel like we've seen an increase in visitors
- Six rising 7th graders previewed Open Door Singers youth choir, and UMYF this past Sunday.

c. Create a Theology of Worship communication strategy (what, how, when) that explains why we do the things we do (in worship prior to engaging in an activity, WNAB, newsletter articles, etc.). *Due 4/25.*

## **Belmont UMC**

### Discipleship System

#### **Discipleship System Overview (based on four movements in Luke 5:1-11)**

##### **1. Welcome** (Water/Baptism)

- **Purpose:** Create spaces for seekers and newcomers to encounter Christ and feel welcomed in the church community.
- **Key Practices:**
  - Offering hospitality to all.
  - Reaching out and receiving people as they are
  - Providing low-barrier opportunities to experience worship and church activities.

##### **2. Connect** (Loaf and Cup/Holy Communion)

- **Purpose:** Build authentic relationships and foster a sense of belonging within the church community.
- **Key Practices:**
  - Joining small groups, classes, or fellowship opportunities.
  - Developing friendships within the church.
  - Exploring Belmont UMC and its ministries and the path it offers for growing in love of God and neighbor.

##### **3. Grow** (Bible/The Word)

- **Purpose:** Encourage biblical and theological reflection, and spiritual formation. Deeply engage with God by learning to live in the way that leads to life.
- **Key Practices:**

- Regular participation in spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, and worship.
- Practicing stewardship through giving time, talents, and resources.
- Engaging in personal reflection and discipleship groups.

#### **4. Partner** (Towel and Basin/Servanthood)

- **Purpose:** Equip and empower individuals to lead, mentor, and actively contribute to the mission of the church.
- **Key Practices:**
  - Mentoring others in their faith journey.
  - Taking on leadership roles in church ministries.
  - Advocating for justice and serving the community.

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**Discipleship Self-Assessment: Where is God calling me to shore up or go deeper with my Christian discipleship?** This assessment is designed to help you evaluate how you are progressing in these four dimensions of Christian discipleship. Reflect prayerfully; answer honestly; identify strengths and areas for growth.

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**Stage 1: Welcome—Jesus actively welcomed these unholy fisherfolk into his life and ministry with grace and directness, accepting and involving them just as they were. Having received us likewise in ways unique to our circumstances, God calls us to reach out and welcome others with the same grace, acceptance, and appreciation.**

1. How well do I reflect Christ's welcoming love and hospitality in my everyday interactions?
  - (Poorly) 1 2 3 4 5 (Exceptionally)
2. Do I reach out and relate to people who are different than me?
  - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Frequently)
3. Do I intentionally welcome new people into our church community?
  - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Always)
4. How often do I invite others to join me in worship, class, or service projects?
  - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Frequently)
5. Do I share my faith story or commitment to the way of Christ when appropriate?
  - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Always)

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**Stage 2: Connect—Jesus made a lifelong connection with these fisherfolk. From that day forward, Jesus remained central to their transformations of heart, life, and relationships with one another. For us as well, staying connected with Christ in community with one another is central to our discipleship and flourishing in God's fullness (Eph. 3:19).**

1. Do I participate in worship with the church and feel spiritually nourished by it?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Always)
  2. Do I have personal and family practices of prayer, spiritual reading and reflection?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Frequently)
  3. Do I feel a sense of belonging within my faith community?
    - (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Completely)
  4. Do I regularly participate in one or more small groups where I am known and know others?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Frequently)
  5. Am I comfortable sharing my faith journey with others in a group setting?
    - (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very comfortable)
  6. Do I help others who are searching for their place in the faith community?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Regularly)
- 

**Stage 3: Grow—Growing in the life, truth, and way of Christ is a journey that happens for us as it did for the first disciples—by call and response, Spirit and spiritual discipline. In response to Christ’s daily invitations to listen, learn, and follow his lead (“row out a little way from shore,” “row out farther into the deep water,” “let down your nets”), our hearts change and lives expand in unexpected yet Christ-like ways.**

1. How consistent is my practice of inward spiritual disciplines (e.g. spending time being with God, listening, searching scripture, journaling, or spiritual conversation)?
  - (Inconsistent) 1 2 3 4 5 (Consistent)
2. How intentional am I about studying Scripture and applying it to my life?
  - (Not intentional) 1 2 3 4 5 (Highly intentional)
3. Am I taking advantage of the studies, resources, retreats, and ministries the church offers for my continual growth in the knowledge of God and love of neighbor?
  - (Rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 (Faithfully)

4. Am I actively practicing the discipline of stewardship—of my time, talents, and resources?
    - (Rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 (Faithfully)
  5. Do I have an accountability partner or group to help me grow spiritually?
    - (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)
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**Stage 4: Partner—As with the early disciples, Jesus is ultimately leading us to maturity in humanness and to being full partners in the work of loving people, standing with those who suffer in the tragic gaps of injustice, and contributing to all people's flourishing "on earth as in heaven."**

1. Am I shepherding young people or discipling other adults on their faith journey?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Regularly)
  2. Do I contribute to the vitality of the body of Christ by sharing my gifts and talents with a ministry team or in leadership role?
    - (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Actively)
  3. How involved am I in advocating for justice, supporting vulnerable neighbors, or contributing to structures of care in the community?
    - (Not involved) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very involved)
  4. Do I actively encourage others' awareness and use of their spiritual and material gifts for the common good?
    - (Never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Frequently)
  5. Am I committed to sharing God's dream and my calling with others and to inviting them to participate and become partners with Christ also?
    - (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Fully committed)
-



## Reflection and Next Steps

### 1. Score Analysis:

- **Engage:** Total Score (5–25)
- **Connect:** Total Score (5–25)
- **Grow:** Total Score (5–25)
- **Partner:** Total Score (5–25)

Higher scores indicate you are finding ways to practice your faith and grow in your love of God and neighbor. Lower scores highlight areas where you can take intentional next steps to grow in the breadth and depth of your discipleship.

### 2. Personal Discipleship Plan:

- Identify one stage to work on in the next month.
  - Set specific goals (e.g., join a small group, start mentoring).
  - Seek support from church leaders or an accountability partner.
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## Practical Resources and Examples for Each Stage

### Stage 1: Welcome

**Purpose:** Draw people into the church, build relationships with those outside the faith, embody Christ's welcome to all.

- **Resources:**
  - **Hospitality Training Modules:** Equip greeters, ushers, and volunteers to create a welcoming environment. Resources like *Radical Hospitality* by Robert Schnase can be helpful.
  - **Outreach Planning Guides:** Develop low-barrier outreach events such as community dinners, sports leagues, or neighborhood service projects.
  - **Digital Outreach Tools:** Use social media platforms, blogs, or church apps to share content that resonates with seekers.
- **Examples:**
  - Host a "Big Front Porch" event such as a fall festival or movie night designed to meet people where they are.
  - Start a "Come & See" class for those exploring Christianity or our church, offering a relaxed introduction to the church's mission and values.
  - Introduce and distribute "Discipleship Assessment" to visitors and new members.

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### Stage 2: Connect

**Purpose:** Help people form meaningful relationships within the church community.

- **Resources:**
  - **Small Group Starter Kits:** Provide materials and training for leaders to begin small groups, focusing on shared interests, life stages, or spiritual growth.
  - **Connection Cards:** Use these to gather information from worship attendees and invite them to next steps like classes or group activities.
  - **Connection Books:** Consider resources such as *Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne for ideas on creating relational connections.

- **Examples:**

- Organize a "Pizza with the Pastors" monthly event to welcome newcomers and introduce them to small group leaders.
  - Connect persons to short-term small groups aligned with sermon series, such as Lenten studies or Bible-based topical discussions; start new covenant groups and Sunday morning classes.
  - Offer volunteer opportunities during worship or events, as ways to involve newcomers, like helping with hospitality or assisting with set up.
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### **Stage 3: Grow**

**Purpose:** Foster deeper spiritual formation through intentional discipleship practices and small groups.

- **Resources:**

- **Bible Study Opportunities:** Use short term and long-term materials, like *Disciple Bible Study*, for structured faith exploration.
- **Spiritual Discipline Small Groups:** Encourage practices such as fasting, prayer journaling, and scripture memorization using short term and long-term resources like *Three Simple Rules* by Bishop Ruben Job, *Companions in Christ*, and seasonal resources.
- **Accountability Group Models:** Create a framework for smaller, high-commitment covenant groups where individuals can reflect, share their faith journey, and help each other persevere in their spiritual practices.
- **Offer Discipleship Assessment and Spiritual Assessment:** Offer to Sunday School classes, WNAB, youth, and ad hoc small groups.

- **Examples:**

- Using WNAB as opportunity to offer short term studies and discussion groups on contemporary challenges, such as Christian citizenship.
- Provide a spiritual gifts assessment workshop to help individuals discover their God-given talents and use them in ministry.
- Schedule quarterly retreats focused on deepening faith, like the spiritual formation retreats offered by Heather Harriss.

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## **Stage 4: Partner**

**Purpose:** Equip disciples to lead, mentor, and serve both within and beyond the church. Train and challenge lay people to contribute to the life of the church with their gifts.

- **Resources:**

- **Leadership Training Programs:** Equip church members with the skills and theological grounding to lead small groups, ministries, or missions.
- **Faith Leaders:** Intentionally cultivate opportunities for partnership for experienced disciples to mentor newer members: Partners in Ministry (youth), Faith Companions (Encore), Sunday School teachers (all ages), Stephen Ministry, etc.
- **Service Opportunity Directories:** Provide a list of local and global missions for members to engage in hands-on service.

- **Examples:**

- Offer workshops to train ministry leaders in servant leadership.
  - Offer spiritual gifts assessment to help people find where their joy and gifts intersect with the congregation's needs and mission.
  - Sponsor global mission trips or local advocacy projects, inviting participants to reflect on their experiences and how they align with discipleship.
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## Tools to Implement the System

1. **Discipleship Pathway Map:** Create a visual guide that outlines each stage of Engage, Connect, Grow, and Partner, showing corresponding activities and opportunities.
  2. **Personal Growth Plan:** Distribute templates for members to set spiritual goals aligned with the four stages.
  3. **Milestone Celebrations:** Recognize when members complete significant steps, like joining a small group, leading their first ministry, or participating in a mission trip.
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## Integration into Congregational Life

- **Preaching Series:** Offer sermons that align with each stage, teaching biblical principles and inviting next steps
- **Annual Review:** Incorporate the discipleship system into administrative and ministry evaluations, ensuring programs and events align with the Engage-Connect-Grow-Partner model.
- **Feedback Loops:** Use surveys and focus groups to refine the system, gathering input from participants at every stage.

## Personal Discipleship Plan

### 1. My Current Stage:

- ☐ Engage
- ☐ Connect
- ☐ Grow
- ☐ Partner

### 2. Goals for This Year:

- ☐ Worship: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Service: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Spiritual Disciplines: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Leadership: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Next Steps:

- ☐ I will join: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I will attend: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I will serve in: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Accountability Partner:

- ☐ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_