

DISCIPLESHIP

A Ministry Magazine of Salem United Methodist Church

“... being conformed to the image of God’s son!”



DISCIPLESHIP

We use the word discipleship purposefully.

The phrase “Christian Education” – though common – doesn’t quite communicate what we want to communicate. There is “education” involved in the process of discipleship, without a doubt. But discipleship is so much more than education. It isn’t just (or even primarily) about information or inspiration, but transformation.

Another common phrase – “Spiritual Formation” – also doesn’t quite communicate what we want to communicate. Formation “in the faith” is, indeed, part of the discipleship process. However, the formation we seek is not merely concerned with who we are as generically spiritual creatures, but who we are as uniquely Christian believers; which, for all of us, is about more than just formation. We need transformation.

Accountable discipleship values knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Education and information ARE important; vitally important. But often we do not so much need “to KNOW” more as we need “to PRACTICE” what we already do know. That’s what discipleship is about ... actually becoming more like Christ.

Jesus, in John 8:31, says this:

If you make my word your home, then you will be my disciples.

THE JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP



We are bound for God's good future:

The VISION He has for us and the VERSIONS of us He longs to see!

As we make this journey together, there are — in truth — multiple destinations before us. There is OUR destination (the vision that God has set before us as a body) and there are YOUR destination and MY destination: the versions of ourselves God is calling us to become.

God's desire for each of us is that we be conformed to the image of His Son: Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God in whose image we are created. God's intention for us (from the beginning) is for us to be worthy image-bearers of the Holy One! That is His intention for us, together, as the Body of Christ. And that is His intention for each of us, individually. People should know more about who God is and what God's like on account of knowing us.

That doesn't always happen, though. We blow it sometimes. And when we blow it (when our walk doesn't match our talk), people can be quick to call us hypocrites; and, sometimes, they're right.

Hypocrites are people who are trying to be seen as someone they are not. And sometimes that word DOES describe us. But that is not the only word available to describe a person whose walk does not always match their talk. Sometimes the word

hypocrite is the right word: someone trying to be seen as someone they're not. But sometimes a better word is DISCIPLE: someone trying to BECOME someone they're not YET.

We are disciples. We are works-in-progress. And the purpose of our DISCIPLESHIP ministries is to grow-us into greater and greater Christ-likeness.

As we travel this road together, WE are on a journey to become the church that God wants us to be: the Body of Christ. At the same time, as we travel this road together, each of us are on our own individual journeys to become the men and women God created us to be.

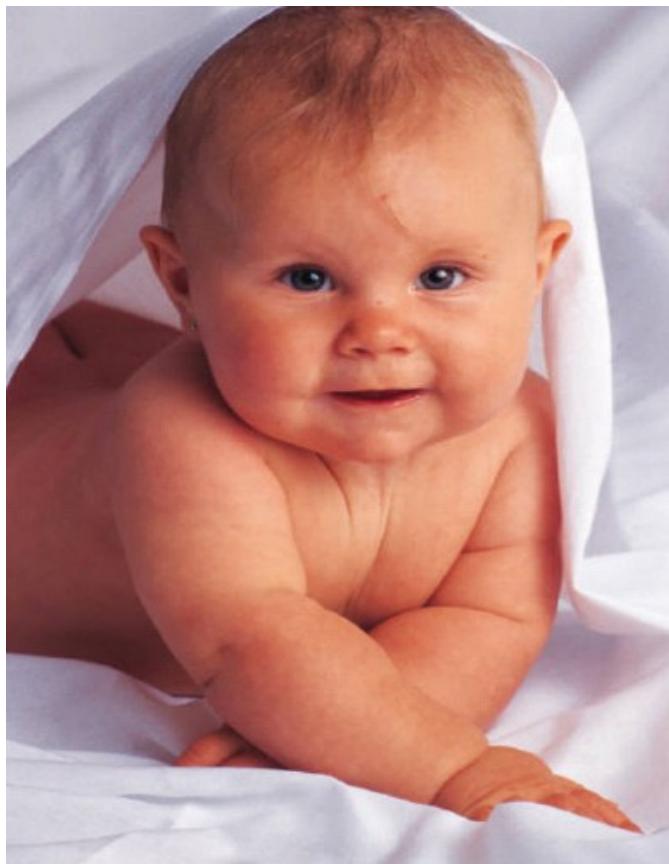
And here's the thing, and there's really no way of getting around it. The more we live into our individual callings (as men and women created in the image of God and being conformed to His image), the closer we will be to becoming the CHURCH he wants us to be. And as we grow closer and closer to being the CHURCH he wants us to be, the more we will each be helped to live into our callings (to become the men and women God created us to be.)

Let's. Journey. Together.

NURSERY

Our Discipleship Ministries Start in Our Nursery.

We make our nursery available during our Sunday morning worship services, during our Wednesday night studies, and on special occasions. The Nursery is staffed from 9:15 to 12:15 on Sundays and from 6:15 to 7:45 on Wednesdays. The Nursery is staffed by paid nursery workers and by volunteers. We are a "Safe Sanctuaries" congregation!



There is, of course, a sense in which our nursery is a ministry to the parents and family members who bring their children to the nursery so that they can participate in the life of the church.



As seriously as we take offering the nursery as help to families, we also take seriously the privilege of making the church a place where little ones are safe and secure, feel warm and welcomed, and learn the name of Jesus while they experience the love of God through human hands and hearts inspired by the Holy Spirit.



*Jesus said:
"Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs
to such as these."*

Matthew 19:14

CHILDREN

Our Discipleship Ministries Include Our Ministries to Children.



On Sunday mornings – through Sunday school classes, children’s church during both services, and the outreach project they do every Sunday between services – our children study the stories of the Bible, experience the love of God through human hands and hearts, and learn who they are in God’s eyes: precious, beloved, and His.



We are grateful for the privilege and responsibility God has given us of partnering with parents and grandparents, aunt and uncles, friends and family in raising children in the faith.



Our Children’s Ministry is more than what we do here on Sunday morning. God’s plan for the faith formation of children is the family, and we want to be a resource for families as they seek to fulfill that purpose.



Our Children’s Ministry is also more than our ministry to our own kids. We want to reach the children of this community, too. That’s why Vacation Bible School and other community outreach events — like the Easter Egg Hunt, our Block Parties, Trunk or Treat, and Breakfast with Santa — are so important to us. They are, of course, wonderful and formative experiences for the children of our church, but they can also be that for children in our community as well.



*“Jesus loves the little children,
all the children of the world!”*

YOUTH

Our Discipleship Ministries Also Include Our Youth Ministry.

Middle School and High School students need us. At their age, they need our guidance and our patience, our wisdom and our understanding, and – most of all – our love and support! They face the same challenges we faced at that age. They face challenges we didn't have to face until we were older and more mature. And ... they faces challenges that many of us simply didn't!



They meet together on Sunday mornings and on Sunday evenings. They learn the Bible. They wrestle with questions big and small. They are figuring out who they are and who they want to be; what they want to do and who they will become.



They do fundraisers to help defray the costs (to the church and to their parents) of everything from ski trips to mission trips; even spiritual life retreats and Christian concerts.

WE PUT THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING

They serve in the church and they serve in the community. They are talented and gifted.



They are fun and they are fallible. They are the church of tomorrow AND the church of today. They are growing in their faith. They are owning their faith themselves.

ADULTS: SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Discipleship Ministries Include Our Ministries with Adults as Well.

Our approach to adult discipleship starts with Sunday school. We have three classes that meet during The Bridge and one that meets during the sanctuary service at 11:00.

The Otis Nixon Class meets at 9:45, uses the United Methodist quarterly curriculum available through Cokesbury, and does a wonderful job of looking after and caring for one another.



The Joy Class also meets at 9:45. It also uses the United Methodist quarterly curriculum; though it has been known to deviate from that plan from time to time. They, too, care for one another; especially through their prayer list.



A third class has been started which meets at 9:30 in the Education Office. The curriculum is the Bible. The approach is conversational and responsive to the questions and insights of the participants. The objective is transformation that comes through understanding.



Anita Anderson leads a sermon-based discussion class after The Bridge in the Family Life Center., around 11:00.



Sunday school classes at Salem provide opportunities for adults get into smaller groups where we tend to do a better job taking care of one another, praying for one another, studying the scriptures, and engaging the lessons God is trying to teach us.

If you have not yet found a home in a Sunday school class or haven't been to Sunday school in a while, think about visiting one of our classes; or find some time to talk to Joe or Carol about starting something new on Sunday morning (or at some other time).

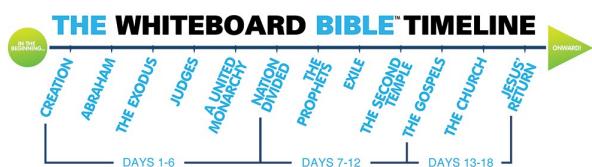
ADULTS: MIDWEEK

Discipleship for adults starts with Sunday school, but includes short-term studies (and long-term studies) at other times as well; most frequently (right now), on Wednesday nights.

The church offers a prepared meal on Wednesday evenings during the Fall and Spring semesters at 5:30 on Wednesdays, after which studies are offered from 6:30 to 7:30.



Our current study for the fall of 2016 is a three volume series called "The Whiteboard Bible Study." It is designed to provide a structure which will help us organize all the individual stories and people we've learned (or haven't learned) along the way. The goal is to value both the significance of individual stories (their lessons and meanings) AND the significance of the whole story (the epic story of salvation history).

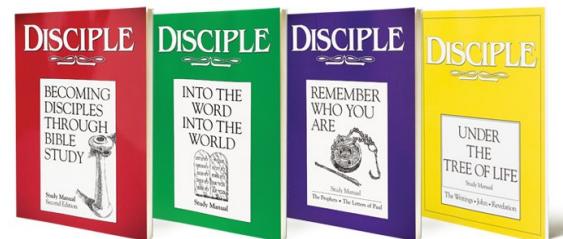


There are 18 lessons: three six-week units. It is playful and interactive as is led by various church leaders. At the heart of the presentation each week is a whiteboard sketch that gives an overview of the material for that week.

After the first of the year, we will be studying eight of the major images of God found in scripture. Each tells us something of who God is and has implications for how we understand creation, humanity, sin, forgiveness, salvation, sanctification, and the church.

This study will conclude in time for us to take a break from our pattern on Ash Wednesday, after which we will resume during the season of Lent. During Lent, we will experiment with a model for small groups that both harkens back the meetings that drove the revival in Wesley's day and the best practices in contemporary small group ministry.

In the past, Salem has offered the "Disciple" Bible study series. It is a long and intense study, but one which has been very rewarding for many people.



Because of the length of the study and the length of the meetings each week, the United Methodist Church has produced another resource: "Disciple Fast-Track." It is still a sizeable commitment, but more manageable for people living busy lives.



We are interested in your feed-back about whether there might be interest in either or both of these resources being made available next year.

MINISTRY TO WOMEN

At the Heart Salem's Ministry to Women is the UMW: The United Methodist Women.



The UMW is the official "women's ministry" of the denomination, with local units in the local church as well as district-wide and conference-wide opportunities. The UMW at Salem meets monthly.

They raise money for mission and ministry through their annual craft sale (which just raised \$1500), through their soup and salad luncheons, and through various other initiatives.



They encourage one another's spiritual growth through the devotions they share and the books they study.



They shepherd us through our grieving and healing by helping us remember and celebrate those we've lost through their annual candle burning service each summer and our Love Light's service every Advent.



And they do much, much more! They meet monthly on Thursday night and would love for you to join them.

In addition to the UMW, our ministry to women has included outreach and social events like our Girls Night Out painting parties and other special events.



MINISTRY TO MEN

At the Core of Salem's Ministry to Men Is the United Methodist Men.

Like the UMW, the UMM is the official denominational ministry to men of the United Methodist Church, with connections to men's groups in the district, the conference, and beyond.

Our United Methodist Men host our Valentine's Banquet each February. With live music, great food, and a beautifully decorated space, this evening is not to be missed!



With the help of the UMW, they also host our church-wide breakfast on "camp meeting" Sunday every July: a huge feast we can enjoy together!

The United Methodist Men raise money for the mission and ministry of the church through the annual Pumpkin Patch each fall. We receive the pumpkins on consignments: risking no money in exchange for staffing the patch and pricing the pumpkins according to the contracted agreement. The men and the church are grateful to all the volunteers who unload the pumpkins and staff the patch each year!!!



The United Methodist Men also sponsor a golf outing each spring. The level of competition is ... varied! The atmosphere is ... playful. The food is good and plentiful. Plan to come. Bring a friend. Sign-up a team or let us assign you to one.



They United Methodist Men meet monthly on Saturday morning ... often the second Saturday ... and they would welcome you to join them.

SENIOR ADULTS

Our Discipleship Ministries Include Ministries to Senior Adults.

In the past, our senior adults have gathered monthly for a shared meal.



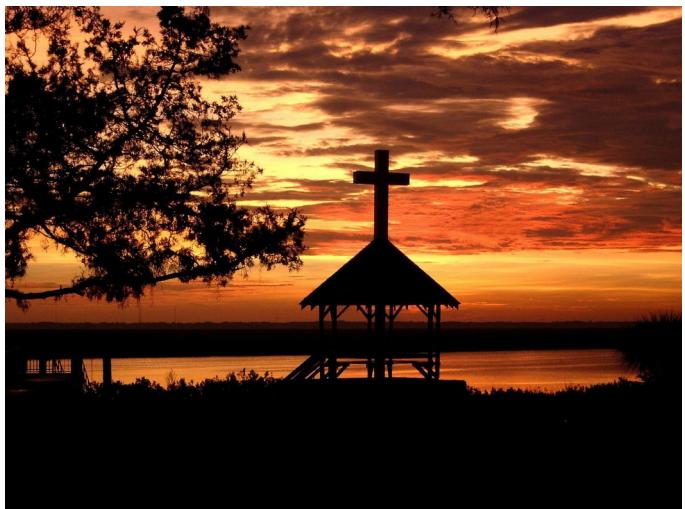
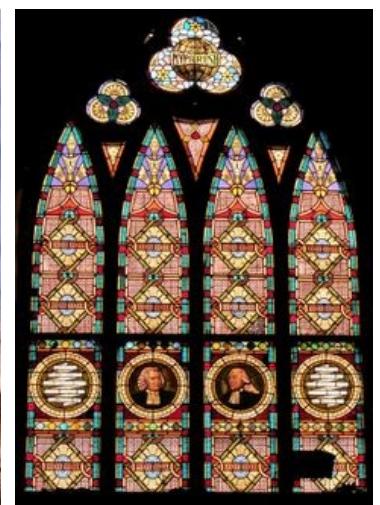
Currently, we are hosting “senior seminars” twice a year. These events highlight timely issues important to seniors (and their families). Earlier this year we hosted an event focused on several end-of-life issues: funeral planning, hospice care, and so on. Our next event will address safety, security, and scams.



Our ministry to seniors also includes social outings and trips. They just got back from a trip up to Blue Ridge to enjoy views of the fall foliage and visit one of the apple orchards.



We have also begun to discuss the possibility of making a trip to the coast to explore Methodism's roots in colonial Georgia: Savannah and St Simons Island.



RESOURCES

CAROL RODOCK Director of Discipleship

Carol Rodock, our Director of Discipleship, provides administrative support and logistical oversight for all our discipleship ministries. Her job is not to DO all the DISCIPLING that takes place here. Her job is not even to LEAD each of these different areas of ministry. Her job is to coordinate our work in these important areas by organizing the efforts of so many wonderful volunteers.



DEBBIE ANDREWS & BETH STORY Nursery Workers



THE WALK TO EMMAUS

In addition to the resources we have in Salem's outstanding staff members who lead and serve in the area of discipleship, we have fabulous volunteers; and, in addition to those fabulous volunteers, there are the ministries themselves and the friendships we build.

Beyond all of that, there are resources beyond our local church which may be worthy of your interest. For a long time, I have been an advocate for a ministry out of the Upper Room, in Nashville Tennessee. This is an official resource of our denomination which parallels similar resources in other denominations.

The Walk to Emmaus is a weekend retreat designed to encourage the spiritual development of Christian believers. There are youth, college and young adult versions: Chrysalis, Young Adult Chrysalis, and The Journey. There has even been a senior adult version called Face to Face, created for those no longer willing or able to "rough it" in a camp or retreat setting.

I have been active in the North Georgia Emmaus and Chrysalis communities, the Foothills Emmaus Community, the Athens Area Emmaus and Chrysalis communities, the Atlanta South Emmaus and Chrysalis communities, the Green Country Chrysalis community (Tulsa, Oklahoma), and now — with my move to Salem — with the Pathways East Emmaus community. I was even part of the teams that led the first two Chrysalis Weekends in Ghana, West Africa.

I believe in Emmaus. It was a great experience for me and has been for many people I know and love. It is not for everyone. It is not always the right time. However: it may, at the right time, be the right thing for you! I would love to talk about it and answer your questions if you are interested.

Salem United Methodist Church

Covington, Georgia

Everything a Simple Country Church Should Be!

More than You Ever Thought One Could Be!

Mission: *to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ*

for the Transformation of the World.

Vision: *to Know Christ and Make Him Known*

to our Neighbors, the Nations, and the Next Generation