

2024-25

The Nature of Change

Friends who joined the Circle between April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. Darren, Amanda, Patti, Randy, Danny, Laura, Casey, Kelly, Kevin, Michele, Nichole, Jared, Matthew, Chyrl, Ian, Josh, Danielle, Nicole, Andrew, Judy, Scott, JT, Heather, Sherry, Scott, Scott, Derek, Genevieve, Barney, Matthew, David, Brandon, Michele, Jordan, Barb, Camille, Joel, Melissa, Christopher, Jamie, Whitney, Sam, Jesse, Rosa, Gregory, Tyler, Lauren, Brandon, Peter, Kyle, Aaron, Rebekah, Nathan, Jason, Maddy, Arin, Michael, Carrie, Jennifer, Doug, Tom, Paul, Betsy, Andrew, Rachel, Patrick, Austin, Tim, Laura, Julie, India, John, Vicki, Matt, DC, Yolanda, Brianna, Helen, Jay, Natalia, Doug, Tindell, Kristen, Grace, Timothy, Taylor, Daniel, Armand, Chris, Dave, Andy, Elena, Pam, Kalani, Peter, Annie, C, Laura, Craig, Denise, Leslie, Margaret, Greg, Bryce, Jordan, Frank, Carl, Aline, Amy, Rachel, Sarah, Christoph, Bonnie, Simone, Janelle, Calvin, Jess, Carolyn, Alan, Rebekah, Julie, Debbie, Dalton, McKenna, Emily, Mark, Michael, John, Taylor, Mike, Christina, John, Ivana, John, Stephen, Amanda, Ciera, Jacob, Jacob, Patrick, Beau, David, William, Heather, Adriana, Josh, Pam, Bill, Patti, Dalton, David, Rachel, Terry, Brian, Jacob, Chris, Craig, Natasha, Timothy, Trista, Austin, Tim, David, Matt, Matthew, Sacha, Mason, Tyler, Kelley, Christina, Breanna, Dave, Andrew, Jakob, Gregg, Chengling, Kate, Natalie, Christine, Paul, Benjamin, Storm, Travis, Alden, Gideon, Greg, Daryl, Victoria, Rondilyn, Garrett, Whitney, Penney, Larry, Carter, Ifeoma, Patricia, Paul, Shell, Hope, Brayden, Tom, Andy, Amee, Julia, Simon John, Katie, Jenell, Steve, Scott, Aaron, Holly, Leah, Naemi, Jez, Jude, Ryan, Mark, Lenka, Lori, Rebecca, Ryan, Cynthia, Emma, Nathan, Fernanda, Heather, Georgia, Rachael, Jennifer, Elizabeth, Jordan, Jessica, Greg, Jan, Jay, Ian, Warren, Cheryl, Mark, Logan, Joanna, Spencer, Kristen, Krystyn, Alex, Hilary, Lauren, Jordan, Wesley, Erin, Youanna, Chris, Larisa, Jeremy, Aaron, Joshua, Jared, Olivia, Ali, Antony, William, Hannah, Jonathan, Rebecca, Andre, Chris, Nicole, Ian, Sarah, Jillian, Tony, Amanda, Lauren, Daric, Ashley, Hannah, Matthew, Matt, Carrie, Jodi-Ann, Samantha, Sierra, Abraham, Evan, Madisson, Tavia, Jennifer, Harriet, Shelly, Casie, Bianca, Rebecca, Charly, Mike, Elizabeth, Gregg, Chuck, Courtney, Thom, Andy, Chad, Billy, Benjamin, Abbi, Curtis, Laurie, Jonny, Dee, Emma, Garrett, Jacob, Rebecca, Madelyn, Catherine, Lance, Katelyn, Jamie, Kyle, Andrew, Ryan, Jonathan, Susan, Breanna, Geoff, Ernest, Hannah, Nicole, Peter, Stephen, Vilma, Gena, Jason, Sebastian, Sophia, Callie, Jay, Aaron, Janice, Rachel, Joel, Quentin, Tonya, Julie, Lauren, Celeste, Nate, Erin, Brenton, Pamela, Justin, Beth, Nicole, Marilyn, Connor, Coleen, Elise, Anson, Andrew, Jordan, Matthew, Travis, Sandra, Abby, Rylea, Wes, Jeremiah, Jacob, Wendy, Melissa, Austin, Erin, Drew, Deb, Jennifer, Brandon, Elizabeth, Kristi, Teresa, Rob, Kevin, Tom, Allison, Danielle, Elizabeth, Michael, Laura, Sarah, Jerri, Jessa, Thy, David, Angela, Sharon, Mike, TJ, Kristine, Heidi, Wendy, Robert, Tim, Shaun, Landon, Isaac, Tammy, Dawn, Michael, Larry, Dekota, Timothy, Aleksandra, Cameron, Byranie, Cindy, Lauren, Jacqueline, Brian, Marlys, Richard, Ashley, Josh, Taylor, Gregory, Kiersten, Matt, Kristin, Laura, Blake, Nathan, Anna, Jaime, Suzanne, Sara, Anna, Eric, Gabi, Zach, Jordan, Ashley, Caleb, David, Tommy, Courtney, Ruby, Alan, Jalen, David, Brittain, Cambrey, Maryjo, Bruce, Sharon, Gita, Jennifer, Josh, Josiah, Marla, Erica, Chris, Lois, Rebecca, Tracy, Caleb, Nancy, Katie, Candace, Carrie, Dexter, Dan, Patty, Jonathan, Caitlin, Noah Blaine, Rondell, Roksana, Mike, Alastair, Kaly, Beckah, James, Peter, Denise, Carrie, Joshua, Jessie, Raymond, Stephen, Kryseana, Jack, Mary, Kathryn, Austin, Westley, Taylor, Elizabeth, Steven, Travis, Josh, Cheri, Kirsten, Casey, Jordan, Hedi-Lee, Heidi, Karly, Matthew, Jackie, Karli, Heather, Mark, Randy, Chanel, Brian, Lisa, Cierra, Yukai, Leslie, Holly, Sean, Dean, Amanda, Samantha, Bonnie, Katie, Joanne, David, Brad, Petra, Johann, Lisa, Denise, Lawrence, Carolyn, Igor, Tina, Sheri, BJ, Brennan, Nancy, Jill, Jack, Joshua, Jillian, Wynter, Khalil, Sam, Alex, Taylor, Dillon, Esteban, Javier, Karl, Ashley, Eric, Amy, David, Andrew, Galina, Jodi, Donna, Cassie, Caden, Ann, Ryan, Emma, Jason, Julia, Peter, Jennifer, Robin, Katelyn, Brandon, Luke, Diane, Ryan, Alexandra, Valerie, William, Donovan, Jordan, Josh, Alexis, Tommy, Jennifer, Linda, Funmilola, Cody, Timothy, Sam, Beth, Marianne, Luke, Karl, Tom, Jessica, Kari, Sarah, Shana, Jen, Austin, Chris, Nathan, Nigel, Steve, Tamara, Natasha, Luke, Meredith, Chris, Cassandra, Wingyeung, Caleb, Christopher, Margaret, Rick, Marjorie, Jamie, Todd, Monica, Chase, Sarah, Jackson, Kathleen, Courtney, Micah, Logan, Gavin, Amanda, Heidi, Sean, Adyera, Rev. Richard, Barbara, Laura, David, Rose, Lisa, Kyla, Ellis, Tanya, Ann, Brian, Marissa, Jeremy, Micah, Kyle, Cynthia, Lori, Bob, Shannon, Veranda, Jodi, Rebecca, Christopher, Katherine, Joseph, Travis, Hollybeth, Justine, Tyler, Ken, Nicol, Alisha, Emily, Taisa, Plyler, William, Noah, Jessica, Andrew, Jeremy, David, Julian, Eric, Olukemi, Natalie, Christie, Troy, Samantha, Kirsten, Jon Michael, Hilary, Gord, Nathan, Bryanna, Brenda, Matt, TJ, Susan, Charlotte, Keelan, Joe, Vanessa, Mliisa, Chris, Josiah, Emily, Jaclyn, Alexandra, Micah, Kaly, Caleb, Aubri, Taylor, Gage, Terri, Ilke, Sean, Cole, Logan, Joanna, Diane, Matt, Noah, Anthony, Lindsay, Markell, Adam, Elizabeth, Lydia, Alicia, Emma, Paul, Caroline, Amy, Tom, Jonah, Meg, Patrick, Rachel, Verne, Daniel, Dan, Molly, Evan, Chioma, Jesse, Brett, Michael, Chad, Gabrielle, Ryan, Hugo, Didier, Cori-Lynn, Megan, Jessica, Ashlee, Arlyn, Joshua, Jacob, Leah, David, Abby, Jacob, Liz, Christen, Susan, Rūta, Kristyn, Sharon, Camille, Stuart, Tiffany, Jesseca, Thomas, Bee, Candace, Garren, Josh, Jake, Martin, Alissa, Michael, Cierra, Sidney, Heesun, Derek, Dale, Jaimie, Annalyse, Banu, Kelli, Claire, Christy, Anne-Marie, Tyler, Naomi, Karen, John, Amanda, Mitzi, Kina, Tara, Charity, Tami, Rebecca, Lizl, Matthew, Jason, Sharelle, Luke, Tim, Jessica, Jeffrey, Colin, Kara, Jason, Daniel, Lesley, Ronke, Tyler, Peter, Radek, Phillip, JT, Thane, Jeri, Chris, Gabriella, Lin, David, Catherine, Patty, Mark, Ina, Jordyn, Tim, Melissa, Richard, Roger, Summer, Hannah, Yuli, Jane, Barbara, Marilyn, Heather, Olof, Annie, Kaitlyn, Courtney, Emily, Jeremy, Joel, Kylie, Jennifer, Robert, Jim, Deborah, Lexie, Andrew, Sam, Becke, Samantha, Kit, Craig, Eva, Travis, Christine, Christine, Stacy, Genevieve, Diane, Brittany, Jasmine, Anna, Barry, Peter, Hannah, Joshua, Austin, Kim, Summer, Evan, Lyla, Norman, Kimberly, Heather, Wilson, Terra, Ramona, Jennifer, Melissa, Mary, Thomas, Matthew, Stephanie, Jillian, Joseph, Spencer, Debs, Mitch, Anandi, Thomas, Rick, Phil, Jeff, Linda, Francheska, Vic, Sarah, Sammi, Tori, Landon, Nicole, Elena, Nate, Annie, Obi, Peter, Susan, Samuel, Serj, Barry, Jackie, John, Derek, Susan, Renee, Nick, Christina, Ben, Paul, William, Grant, Bruce, Ben, Daniel, Anne-Marie, Julie, Shawna, Peggy Jane, Anita, Tom, Richard, Claire, Amber, Alex, Vanessa, Frost, Colton, Christian, Sarah, Heather, Sandra, Russ, Andrew, Arlene, Katherine, Peggy, John, Janet, Emily, Vaughn, Sam, Katie, Peyton, Randy, James, Louise, Grant, Mack, Tony, Jessica, Morgan, Anki, Carsten, Faith, Eric, Melanie, Olivia, Angela, Kelly, Ashley, Lisa, Langston, Yuki, Berenice, Kirsten, Kate, Deanna, Alicia, Statia, Jenny, Allie, Caroline, Jasher, Victoria, Justice, Charlie, Susan, Karl, Lydia, Krysti, Craig, Joe, Debra, Ryan, Keely, Talitha, Bill, Steve, Kathleen, Mary, Seanna, Ryan, Katie, Ilene, Ali, Alina-Sarai, Tiffany, Avery, Justin, David, Tyrone, Anabel, Nathan, Rachael, Jeffrey, Dillon, Karlie, Cheyenne, Bobby, Nathan, Julie, Josiah, Dalton, Tyler, Colin, Katie, Jessica, Nathaniel, Julie, Laura, Rajesh, Tamara, Paul, Jorim, David, Wan Fung, Janice, Sue, Runner, Judy, Kristina, Bonnie, Abraham, Isabelle, April, Rick, Ruthie, Chibuzor, John, David, Barbara, Daniel, Laura, Brandon, Coty, Joel, Joshua, Brannen, Bob, Wendy, Justin, Sam, Mallory, David, Kim, Weston, Emma, Kathy, Cole, Stephen John, Frances, Amy, Will, Josh, Matthew, Cooper, Cindy, Phil, Darryl, Catherine, Joelle, Clare, Taylor, Kezia, Jannah, David, Jesus, Sam, Susan, Carson, Peter, Sean, Jason, Savannah, Taylor, Mark, Matt, Adam, Lori, Mason, Jasper, Danny, Dewana, Amanda, Shaun, Alec, Erin, Nollan, Jaclyn, Jonah, Tami, Walter, Joshua, Jayden, Kirby, Robin, Andrew, Chanaka, Melanie, Seth, Lucas, Nevetta, Maria, Lisa, Michael, Daniel, Emil, Stacey, Candace, Sara, Sophie, Hannah, Zac, John, Travis, Melanie, Laura, Bonny, Catherine, Dustin.



Jesus,
we want to follow you.

There is no safer place
than your loving will.

Teach us how to give
you our whole yes.

We are deeply thankful for each giver who makes this work possible. Thousands of you chose to live with less, so that others could have space to experience more of Jesus.

This year 1,297 joined The Circle, our monthly givers who help sustain this work out of a desire to see communities formed into the person of Jesus. Thank you.

Have you ever loved someone so much that you begin sharing their loves?

Perhaps your spouse loves art history and you started studying Rembrandt. Or a roommate swears by cold plunges, and now you can't start your day without one.

Over time, we start to love what they love.

At Practicing the Way, as we grow in our love of Jesus, we find our hearts and intentions captured by what he loves. And he loves his bride, the Church — a love expressed in his commitment to form her into his likeness.

With your generous help, we believe he used Practicing the Way to help the Church form its members into people of love this year. And we are so grateful for the small part we co-steward with you in what God is doing.

How have we loved the Church this year?

We set out three years ago to create, in the words of Dallas Willard, a curriculum for Christlikeness. With God's help and through your generosity, we've made great progress.

The Course + Practices + Leader Training.

Most communities start with the eight-session Practicing the Way Course we released this year. It's a beautiful introduction to spiritual formation, and our most popular resource.

So far, we have released seven of our planned nine Practices. This past year, we released the **Generosity Practice** and, with help from our friends at BibleProject, the **Scripture Practice**. We also created **Leader Training** to help create the best possible experiences for groups running these resources.

And these things are all free to churches because you gave it to them. On behalf of the more than 16,000 churches who have used Practicing the Way formation resources, thank you.

Serving Churches Directly. Every tool needs skilled hands. For us, these hands belong to the thousands of pastors who use our work to shepherd their communities in the Way of Jesus.

These pastors are our heroes, pouring themselves out for us and our families. We've seen them at our Pastors Conference, via Zoom for Coaching, and gathered a cohort of them through our Church Formation Incubator. Pastors, *thank you* for what you do.

How will we love the Church next?

This year, we want to spend even more time with pastors. Deeply formed pastors lead deeply formed churches filled with deeply formed people. So we're locking arms with pastors in a few ways:

Telling Church Stories. We need new stories of new heroes: pastors who do beautiful work in slower ways far from the spotlight. We are finding and telling these stories to cast a more multifaceted vision for what fruitful pastoring can look like.

Coaching Pastors. This year, we will help more pastors develop plans to lead their churches toward deeper formation.

Finishing the Practices. God willing, and with your help, we aim to release Service later this year, and Witness in early 2026. We're getting close!

Hosting Church Learning Communities. We aim to build on the success of the Church Formation Incubator by adding four cohorts of about 10 churches. While much of our work "scales," we are quietly delighted that this work doesn't. We aim to invest deeply in about 50 beautiful churches, becoming friends, and letting God shape us into a movement of formation, church by church, pastor by pastor.

Creating Tools for Churches. Churches rely on volunteer leaders to serve groups. We believe running a group should be easy, and that with simple tools, groups can avoid becoming "book clubs about the Bible" and instead be places of transformation. Watch for an improved Platform and Spiritual Health Reflection.

Thank you for loving Jesus, and for loving the Church that he loves. Slowly, peacefully, with God's help, we are seeing a shift in the ways that churches lead people toward Jesus and his Way. And for us, that's what it's all about.

With deep gratitude,



John Mark Comer,
Founder



Cameron Doolittle,
Executive Director



Change, by nature, can be a long and lonely process. This year, we created experiences and communal space to sustain the lifelong aim of becoming like Jesus.



Bright Coffee, a locally-owned shop in Northwest San Antonio and frequent site of weekly Garden prayer and planning meetings.

Laboratories, not lecture halls

In San Antonio's immigrant-rich northwest side, the ache for belonging runs deep. The Garden is slowing down to help.

Somewhere around early 2022, Caleb Saenz began experiencing what he calls "holy indigestion" — an unsettled sense that something needed to change.

The "indigestion" sparked a period of prayerful discernment that ultimately led Caleb and his wife Jennifer to a transition from their suburban church to a new plant in San Antonio's Medical Center, a community with a large, growing immigrant population but a shrinking church presence.

Caleb was drawn to the area in part out of his empathy for the displacement immigrants experience. "I grew up on the north side of San Antonio, my dad came from Mexico, so with my Mexican family I didn't feel Mexican enough, and on the north side I didn't feel American enough."

He says immigrant communities have "an ache for belonging, for dignity, for friendship, and for connection. People band together in groups, because they feel it's the only way to be seen, and the world around them can feel harsh or dismissive. That's where I think we have such a great opportunity to practice the Way of Jesus — set up tables, engage fellowship, do the simple things — as opposed to things that feel like great projects for the kingdom, which often miss the people on the ground."

To build relational connections with the surrounding Medical Center community, Caleb's church, called The Garden, hosts quarterly "Tables" — a low-commitment space to gather for a meal and heart-level conversations. For those seeking ongoing relational connection, Community Groups of around 20 people

meet weekly and practice apprenticeship together. “The phrase we use often is ‘Laboratories, not lecture halls.’” Caleb says. “We want people to make a mess as they practice what it means to follow Jesus, but in a space of grace. We were looking for opportunities to integrate that in a more systematic way, which is how we discovered Practicing the Way.”

The Garden’s Community Groups have already run several Practices and plan to run the Community and Generosity Practices in 2025, as well as the full Practicing the Way Course. “These practices are easy to invite people into, even if you’re exploring faith. We’ve had people who weren’t believers yet say, ‘What’s this prayer practice? What does it mean to pray?’”

“We want people to make a mess as they practice what it means to follow Jesus, but in a space of grace.”

As people move from spiritual curiosity to trust in Jesus, Caleb says the Practices help provide clear next steps. “With new believers, structure is such a gift to them, to say, ‘Hey, you don’t have to figure it out on the other end.’”

For Caleb and The Garden, these approaches — slowing down to focus on relationships and giving people a clear, communal path forward in their apprenticeship — are all part of healing the ache in northwest San Antonio.

“I think for the Immigrant experience in particular, dignity comes with being seen and then affirmed. And you can’t do that with drive-by ministry. You can only do that with relationships, which is how Jesus operated. And it requires a certain kind of pace and vulnerability and willingness to learn. And anything we can do to slow down enough to do that, is doing what Jesus longs to do in our community.”



The Garden’s Lead Pastor Caleb Saenz taking notes with Zach Liu, a planning team member, at a weekly staff meeting at Bright Coffee.



Enjoying communion together at one of The Garden’s Sunday gatherings, which the Garden practices weekly “to forge and reinforce the familial, cross-generational bonds of our faith.”

Formation

The Pastor Conference brought together leaders from across the world to look closely at the relational nature of formation.

Our third gathering of pastors featured Dr. Todd Hall, author of *Relational Spirituality*, as well as pastors Rich Villodas, Jay Kim, Tyler Staton, Gemma Ryan, and other luminaries. The conference featured stories and case studies from a broad range of church contexts to help stir pastoral imagination for creating cultures of formation.

Along the way, pastors solidified connections with other leaders and were reminded that “they’re not behind,” that they need each other, and that ultimately, “we’re loved into loving.” The conference featured new Watch Gatherings, which provided an avenue for more than 100 church leadership teams to come together and engage with the conference remotely.

is relational

“The Pastor Conference was a timely encouragement for me personally and for our church. It affirmed that slow, faithful formation matters, even when it’s not flashy. We’ve been more intentional this year in creating space for people to be with Jesus, not just work *for* him, and that shift is already bearing fruit in our community. Thank you for investing in spaces like this. It’s impacting churches like ours in deep and lasting ways.”

—Alex Kulibaba, Anthem Church Northwest

723 Pastors attended the conference in person

640 Individuals attended online

More than 500 people gathered with their team to stream the conference at a Watch Gathering



Leading change the slow way

Pastors in Erin Lund's circle are re-imagining formation in their churches by first deeply living it in their own lives.

After high school Erin planned to leave Centralia, her hometown in western Washington, because she was "running, probably because of the lack of relationships." But through "a long process of a lot of random 'yeses'", she stayed and landed in a pastoral role at Centralia Community Church.

Erin attended a Practicing the Way Pastor Conference and by the following year, she and other denominational leaders were gathering on Zoom to walk through the Practices together. At first, "we thought our people for sure need the Practices ... and then it was a shift of — oh, wait, hold on. We need these."

Fasting and solitude have created space for the Spirit to speak clearly and bring her life more in alignment with Jesus — changes she knows are central to her leadership. "If I'm not growing closer to Jesus and paying attention to what he teaches, how can I effectively teach the people that I'm leading?"

Erin's growing closeness with Jesus isn't just a byproduct of solo spiritual practices. She's built a strong bond with Shay Pendergraft, one of the women in Erin's denominational cohort running the practices and the lead pastor at a church 80 miles north. Though in different stages of life — Erin is single, while Shay is married with a family — they have "one of those deep soul friendships that points back toward Jesus." It's a friendship that Erin sees as a contrast with the competitiveness and isolation that sometimes characterizes church leadership.

Old growth evergreens in Centralia, a small town in western Washington that Erin Lund had initially planned to leave.

Shay's intentionality in patiently listening to the Spirit has influenced Erin's approach to leading change. She and her team seek to avoid "getting ahead of the ball on what God is doing," which is why they are just now introducing the Practices to the church community after a year of walking through them as a pastoral team. Some of the Practices they've walked through twice together. They want to lead from a place of growth in formation, not just knowledge of formation.

"We thought our people for sure need the Practices ... and then it was a shift of — oh, wait, hold on. We need these."

This slower approach reflects another core belief: Pastoral ministry isn't about numbers or performance, but about creating space for genuine encounters with God. "Pastors should be some of the most life-filled, joyous people because of Jesus," she says, rather than competitive or comparative.

The bottom line is "what is God saying? And what are you going to do about it?" Erin says. Our team's focus has shifted from 'Okay, we have an empty calendar, what are we putting on it' to 'are we listening to God?'"

Viewing the pastoral role as a communal vocation marked by patient listening has given Erin the kind of experience that she longs for all pastors to have.

"There's a sense of being alone in pastors. And I have been fortunate enough, for the entire time that I've been a pastor — which hasn't been that long — of having the understanding that we don't do this alone. We're a team. That has been huge. And I wouldn't want to do it any other way."



Fasting has become one of Erin's favorite practices to help discern what God is saying and how she should respond.



Erin (right), Shay (middle), and Laurie (left) serve in different churches, but have found beautiful camaraderie together as leaders committed to deep personal formation.



Deep inner life → Deeply formed church

Practicing the Way is walking alongside pastors as they work toward putting deep formation at the center of their communities. This process tends to involve three movements.

Personal formation	Leading from a deeper inner life with Jesus.
Pastoral imagination	Developing a new imagination around church architecture that puts apprenticeship at the center.
Church integration	Moving from ideas of formation to implementation in their unique context.

01

Church Formation Incubator

Last year we launched our Church Formation Incubator's second cohort. Each cohort includes a select group of pastors who meet in person and remotely over nine months for camaraderie, personal formation, training, and ultimately, an actionable roadmap for integrating formation in their context.



Twenty seasoned leaders from 10 churches joined our second cohort. They understand that it will take multiple years — and lots of trial and error — to build a culture of discipleship, and yet remain deeply committed to the work. We are so grateful that through your support, we are able to walk alongside such faithful men and women.

“The Church Formation Incubator created space to explore best practices, share stories, ask better questions, and dream about discipleship in fresh ways — not to run someone else’s playbook, but prayerfully discern and craft our own.”

—Hoyt Denton, Life Community Church

02

Coaching

Reorienting a church around formation is long, challenging work. To help pastors on the journey, Practicing the Way added two new coaches to support pastors globally with one-on-one coaching. Last year, in one-hour sessions led by experienced practitioners, 70 pastors received much-needed relational connection and restored imagination in areas where they feel stuck, particularly with practical next steps to move their community towards a culture of discipleship.

“It was the personal touch point and care that our coach brought that took spiritual formation in our church from theory to actualization.”

—Benji Horning, Light Church



03

Leader Training

January saw the release of a new Leader Training resource to help pastors, discussion leaders, and facilitators create beautiful spaces of formation when running Practicing the Way resources. Since we released this new video library nearly 2,500 pastors have used it to bolster their own leadership and to equip their teams.

Beginning small in the formation journey

Practicing the Way has walked alongside Michael and his church as they seek to put formation at the heart of everything — including a reimagined academy for children.

Michael Fagan doesn't like managing symptoms. Prior to his pastoral role at Auburn Community Church (ACC), he practiced family medicine but had grown dissatisfied. "The system wasn't allowing me to get underneath the symptoms and talk about deeper issues."

Michael's passion to deeply understand human flourishing — in mind, in body, in relationships — led him to embrace a daunting job: maintaining a community of health and depth in the midst of ACC's rapid growth. "Everything about where we're at as a church would say, 'start catering to the masses'. But we feel like we're called to double down, to raise the bar, and be honest about what it looks like to follow Jesus."

A focus on spiritual formation drives the church's vision. It also helped shape the ACC Academy, a school born out of the conviction that more needed to be done to invite the next generation into the Way of Jesus.

ACC Academy launched in the fall of 2024 with 36 students from kindergarten to second grade, with plans to add a grade each year through eighth grade. But the school isn't just about children and academics. The school is a formation pathway, and entry requires "a very high level of buy-in from parents and families — that if they're a part of the school, they're committing to coming along on a discipleship journey with us."



A classroom at ACC Academy in southeast Auburn, where children from kindergarten to second grade learn about spiritual formation and emotional health alongside math, science, and reading.

Inside the classroom, formation is integrated into every aspect of education. Math becomes an opportunity to discuss God's order, environmental studies a chance to explore stewardship, classroom management a pathway to emotional health.

“It’s such a blessing to have trusted resources from Practicing the Way. And the fruit is being evidenced in how people are following Jesus.”

Outside the classroom, ACC Academy hosts monthly Formation Nights, where the families of students come together to share meals, engage in conversations, and try spiritual practices. Exploring topics like sexuality or the difference between “cultural Christianity” and discipleship have led to beautiful stories of change. But it isn’t easy. “We’re having to unearth a lot of things. Sometimes it would be easier to manage symptoms, but we’re trying to do root-cause type stuff.”

As Michael’s team finds ways to implement a culture of formation at ACC, they’ve found support in Practicing the Way’s Church Formation Incubator (CFI). The CFI helps them “think about what the deep end of the pool looks like for our church as a whole. And then I really just love the community of it. These CFI cohorts are becoming a thing where you feel like you have pastor friends in the trenches.”

And that’s important, because Michael wants to be able to stay in the trenches. “The deep conviction we have is that if we want to be a part of what God is doing in 30 years, and still have healthy marriages, it requires a deep commitment to formation personally. Leading a church is intimidating and fun and a deep honor. And It’s such a blessing to have trusted resources from Practicing the Way we can give our people. And the fruit is being evidenced in how people are following Jesus.”



A child at one of ACC Academy’s monthly Formation Nights, which brings entire families together for conversations around apprenticeship to Jesus.



Michael Fagan leads worship for students during the inaugural year of the ACC Academy.

The Practicing the Way Course

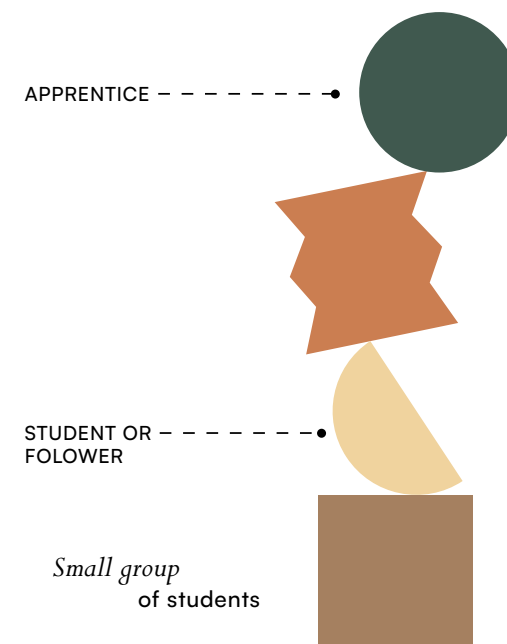
A foundation for lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus

23,862
groups experienced the
Course since we launched.

The Practicing the Way Course, an eight-session primer on what it means to follow Jesus, arrived in April.

The Practicing the Way Course encapsulates a vision of life as an apprentice to Jesus and a pathway for churches to introduce (or re-introduce) people to following Jesus — whether they are spiritually curious explorers coming out of Alpha, new followers fresh from baptism, or long-time Christians longing to go deeper in their formation journey.

The Course begins by retracing our steps 2,000 years to understand what Rabbi Jesus meant by “follow me” — and from there, explores the basics of formation, the practices of Jesus, the role of suffering in formation, healing from sin, creating an intentional discipleship plan (a Rule of Life), and the centrality of community in apprenticeship. Taken together, the training and practices offer an entry point to a life more deeply rooted in the Way of Jesus.



Two different contexts, equally beautiful responses.

Kendall Potter, the discipleship pastor at Living Word in Pennsylvania, is patiently pursuing a tall task: re-orienting their nearly 50-year-old church around discipleship. Church staff have seen an encouraging start. In the fall of 2024, they encouraged the entire church to walk through The Course, and 650 responded.

The Course is now a next step after the Alpha course for the spiritually curious, and part of their planned small group leadership training. “It’s one of those tools that we’re using to establish a new discipleship pathway in the wake of a changing church. We are a large suburban megachurch with about 2,000 adults on a Sunday morning. It feels like we’re trying to change the direction of a very large ship, and Practicing the Way is helping us do that.”

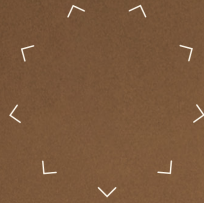
Kendall has been encouraged that some of those who experienced The Course have gone on to run the Fasting Practice and formed small groups that continue to meet together. She’s also seen The Course stir fresh encounters with God. One woman shared that she’d never before brought her emotions to God. Jeff, a man in his sixties, approached Kendall and said, “I’ve been a Christian my whole adult life, and this has changed the way I think about my faith.”

Pradeepan and Amreitha Jeeva have seen similar responses. In 2017, they planted the Seattle-based Kalos Church in one of the most diverse zip codes in America. To create discipleship pathways for people from varying backgrounds and life stages, the Jeevas launched annual 12-week “discipleship campaigns”, and used The Course in their fall campaign. “We have a lot of unchurched people at our church,” Amreitha shared, “And the cool thing about the way we use The Course is that it’s great for the seasoned believer as well as the new Christian.”

The Course has helped people feel more at peace in their journey and released from shame. “I think it helped people feel a sense of belonging. People can come to church and feel so insecure about where they’re at with the life in God, or compare themselves. But The Course evened the playing field. It helps people focus on the fact that we are all together, growing in God and understanding what it means to become more like Jesus.”

At Living Word Community Church in southeastern Pennsylvania, teenagers have joined more than 600 others—from students to retirees—in experiencing The Practicing the Way Course.





The Generosity Practice



A community of contentment in a culture
of consumerism, through the practice of generosity.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

—Acts 20v35

A biblical theology of generosity does not start with tithing, or even Jesus' command to be generous to the poor. It starts before time and space — with who God is.

Since the beginning of Scripture, the world itself was created as an act of generous love.

From the inner nature of God, giving becomes our nature — and little by little, he makes our souls incandescent.



The Generosity season of the Rule of Life podcast was hosted by John Mark and Christian. It included stories from people who've experienced the joy of generosity, and roundtable discussions with luminaries like Reward Sibanda (World Vision), Jimmy Mellado (Compassion International), Sara Miller (Praxis Labs), and many others.

1,805
groups ran the Practice

“The Generosity Practice helped expand our imaginations for how to think about and steward our resources! As a practical step, most of us have re-worked our budgets to look for better balance of giving vs ‘selfish’ spending.”

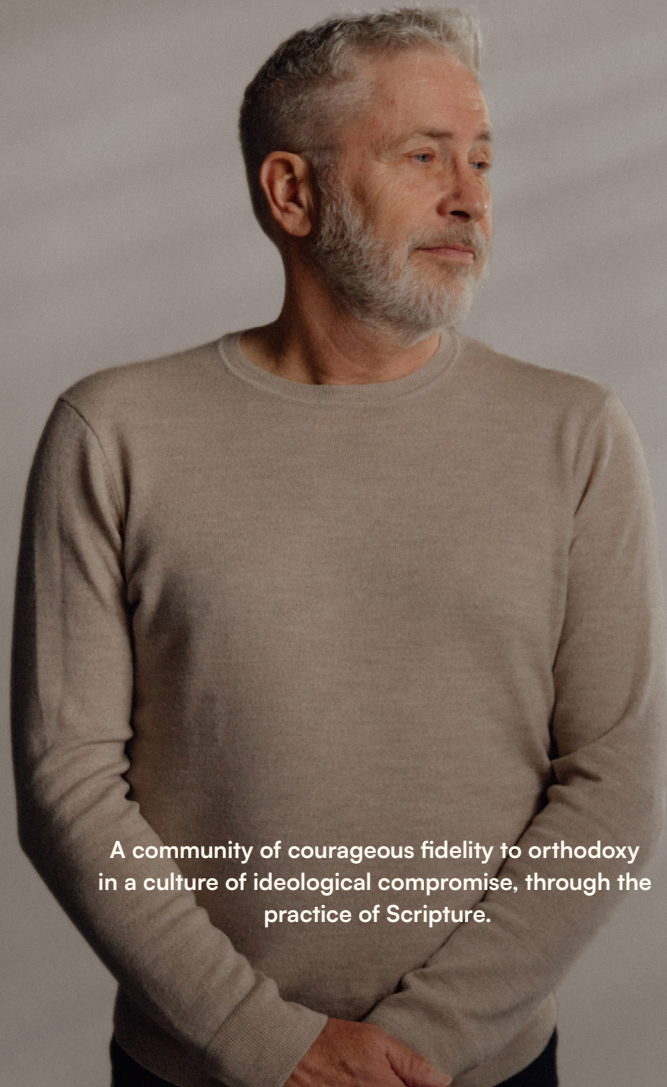
—Andrew from Utah

“Before the generosity practice, I have struggled with serious anxiety regarding money, even to the point of needing to go to therapy. This practice paired with a very gentle God truly changed my life.”

—Conner from New York



The Scripture Practice



A community of courageous fidelity to orthodoxy
in a culture of ideological compromise, through the
practice of Scripture.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but
be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...

—Romans 12v2

For many of us, the library of Scripture has yet to become
what it was designed to be — a pathway into life with God.

God “speaks” with us through Scripture. Our part is to
remember — to live in it. To stay connected to God all day
long by “letting his thoughts inhabit our minds completely.”

Immersing our minds in Scripture will shape us, soften us, and
make us more and more beautiful in God.



The Scripture season of the Rule of Life podcast,
made with help from our friends at BibleProject,
features John Mark joined by Tim Mackie,
Hakeem Bradley, and Brittany Kim.

1,207
groups ran the Practice

“Our group has fallen in
love with God’s word after
running the Scripture
Practice. We have enjoyed
reading chunks of the Bible
in special get-togethers, and
it has drawn us closer to the
Lord and to each other.”

—Hannah from England

“As I sit with Scripture and
meditate on it, I have begun
hear his voice speak with
me in ways I have never
heard before. And as I
memorize Scripture, God
has recalled his words to
me in ever increasing ways.
That is becoming the lens
through which I see and
understand life.”

—Ellie from Illinois

A Bible built for the age of distraction



Lectio

May God meet you on every page as you slow your life down to sit at Jesus' feet and listen for his words.

The Lectio Bible helps us read the Bible differently — slowly, prayerfully, and attuned to the Spirit's voice.

More than 16,000 have already made the Lectio Bible part of their apprenticeship to Jesus.

Download our Lectio Bible reading plans on page 41. 

Charting our apprenticeship to Jesus

We keep track of the things we care about. With your help, we created a tool to help chart our trajectory on life's most important journey.

I find myself increasingly enjoying just being with God.



“The Holy Spirit used the Spiritual Health Reflection to lovingly convict my heart to draw near to him and to love others more.”

—Chris from Indiana

The Spiritual Health Reflection is a free diagnostic designed to be taken periodically to reveal the trajectory of the life-defining question: am I becoming more like Jesus?

The questions were crafted with help from experts in formation to not only get at outward areas — our external habits and practices in the Way of Jesus — but also at deeper layers of the heart.

Each time the Reflection is taken, the respondent's dashboard is updated with visuals showing change in key aspects of our apprenticeship, along with concrete next steps in areas that may need growth. The prayer is that through the tool, each of us would sense Jesus' gentle invitations as we walk the slow, winding path of discipleship.

Since we released the reflection in April more than 100,000 have set aside time to honestly review their apprenticeship to Jesus.

290,900

Podcasts

About 290,900 people have listened to our podcasts, streaming a total of 106 million minutes. We added 114,000 new subscribers across our three podcasts this year.

151,893

Tools

151,893 people engaged our online tools in the past year, and 40,114 have created a Rule of Life since the launch of the Rule of Life Builder in 2023.

56,472

Practices

56,472 total groups from 16,924 churches in 147 countries have experienced a Practice since we started.

7,949

Pastors

7,949 pastors now receive our quarterly Pastor Newsletter. Each month, scores of pastors join us by Zoom to ask questions and build community.

2,744

Prayer Team

2,744 intercessors subscribe to our prayer email list. We're honored that each month a number of intercessors also gather online with us for an hour of prayer for our team and our work.

Numbers are one way to express the extent to which communities are pursuing a deeper life of love in Jesus. May you share in God's joy, knowing that your generosity is woven into his beautiful work.

Great gifts call for great stewardship

From everyone who has been given much, much
will be demanded; and from the one who has been
entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

—Luke 12v48

\$5.3M Total Received

\$2.06M Gifts from those led to give \$5K+

\$1.37M Gifts from the The Circle

\$232K Gifts from churches

\$691K Funds from conferences, honoraria

\$976K Other wonderful gifts

\$4.158M Total Expenses





The Witness Practice



Coming February 2026

A community of hospitality in a culture of hostility,
through the practice of witness.

Continue your journey with us



Join the Prayer Team

Receive monthly prayer requests from our team by email, plus an invitation to gather with us on Zoom.



Take the Spiritual Health Reflection

Reflect on how you embody Jesus' love in your daily life and chart your progress of spiritual growth over time.



Download Lectio Reading Plans

Choose between four slow-paced guides designed to help you explore the library of Scripture at a peaceful pace.



Listen to the Rule of Life Podcast

Watch or listen to conversations that go deeper into how to follow Jesus through our nine Practices.

Father, let us not
go without your
presence, that in
all we do we may be
pure and pleasing
to your heart.

