

In Matthew 28:19 we read Jesus' final command to his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. We want to be faithful to Jesus so we must ask ourselves is HRBC making disciples? Do our ministries, programs and ministry teams make disciples of Jesus Christ? Have some programs, ministries or teams outlived their usefulness? Do we need to re-tool in certain areas? Simple Church offers a framework to answer these questions.

**Background:** Following Bert Browning's retirement HRBC entered into a transition period preparing for calling a new pastor. During that period, at the recommendation of the spiritual gifts team, the Church Council and Deacons agreed to spend the first part of 2017 studying the book, Simple Church, by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger. Based upon a careful study of over 400 evangelical churches, Rainer and Geiger concluded that churches which show sustained baptisms, growth and vibrant life have these common attributes in their pursuit of making disciples: clarity, movement, alignment and focus. After the conclusion of the study, a Simple Church Team was elected consisting of: D'Anne Early, Cathy Dickens, Rachel Jones, Parker Nash, our church staff and David Jordan.

**What is a Simple Church?** A congregation designed around a straight-forward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).

**Discipleship Process:** The Simple Church team met almost monthly from May 2017 – Sept 2018 to work through concepts and steps to help HRBC become a Simple Church, i.e., a church that is focused on making disciples for Christ. We have defined HRBC's discipleship process as: **Connect → Grow → Transform**. Connection means to follow Jesus by loving God and loving neighbors. Growing occurs when we live with Jesus as the disciples did, being molded into Christ's image. We offer our transformed lives as salt and light to a hurting world through the healing power of Christ.

You will recall that a Simple Church is based on the 4 principles of Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus. **CLARITY:** We are clear about our discipleship process. **MOVEMENT:** Members are actually becoming more mature disciples. Members are moving through the process. **ALIGNMENT:** All ministries, activities and events are aligned with the discipleship process. **FOCUS:** Ministries and activities are evaluated for effectiveness at making disciples and they are improved or eliminated so the church can stay focused on discipleship.

**Focus Through Evaluations:** As of May 2018 we completed our work on Clarity, Movement and Alignment. See Appendix 1 for the alignment of our ministries and programs with our discipleship process. We are now in the Focus stage where we are evaluating our activities and ministries. During May – July 2018 our lay leaders and staff evaluated the Wednesday night program for adults, youth, children and fellowship. Results were reported in the July 22 congregational meeting to support changes made for fall 2018. During Sept-Dec we will plan the evaluation of our Sunday activities with changes to take effect in 1Q2019. To help HRBC stay Focused, during 1Q2019 we will put in place a regular cycle of evaluation that synchronizes with our annual planning and budgeting process.

The evaluation of programs and ministries is a difficult task, especially when measuring spiritual growth. (See the articles referenced in Appendix 3 for measurement challenges.) We recognize the challenges of constructing an effective evaluation survey, however, it will get easier over time as we gain more experience and get smarter about the process and what to ask. Meanwhile we ask your indulgence as

we seek to build a church culture that sees evaluations as an important step for keeping our ministries focused on disciple-making. Our desire for evaluations is not because there is a problem but because we want to do a better job of making disciples. We really do want your feedback on these evaluation surveys. You will hear more about these surveys in the Dec 2018 – Jan 2019 time frame. We think there will be two evaluation cycles per year: early June (end of program year) and early January (mid-year review). To set your expectations, because of the elapsed time between evaluations, it will take several years to get 3-4 evaluation cycles under our belts.

**Evaluation of Ministry Teams:** Just as we have aligned our programs and ministries with our discipleship process, we must also align our Ministry Teams with our discipleship process. See Appendix 2 for that alignment. Our next step is to evaluate each team to determine if it needs to be continued, discontinued or be reconstituted (that is, restructured or given a new purpose or combined with another team). We are shooting for this evaluation to occur during 1Q2019 with recommendations to be presented at the April 2019 congregational meeting.

## Appendix 1: Aligning HRBC Activities and Programs with Our Discipleship Process

Below: Our working definitions for categorizing activities / programs under Connect – Grow – Transform. The **red** text is based on what we see in the Gospels and Acts about becoming a disciple of Jesus.

CONNECT	GROW	TRANSFORM
<b>“Come follow me”</b>	<b>“Live with Jesus”</b>	<b>“Be salt and light”</b>
PRIMARY FOCUS: A beginning point to connect to God and connect to people. <b>Love God, love your neighbor.</b>	PRIMARY FOCUS: Events, opportunities and studies to learn more about God and Jesus, and His expectations of us as disciples. <b>Spiritual growth must inform our living to bring about real transformation.</b>	PRIMARY FOCUS: Putting into practice the Christian disciplines to change the world around us. <b>Live the Book of Acts where we are.</b>
ACTIVITIES: Events and opportunities that focus on people-to-people relationships, connection and community, and basic conversations about God.	ACTIVITIES: Small groups that focus on learning and mastering the disciplines of the Christian walk with Jesus: prayer, bible study, worship, witnessing and service.	ACTIVITIES: Those events, opportunities and commitments by disciples to meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of a hurting people.
EXAMPLES 1. Corporate worship services. 2.	EXAMPLES 1. Wed. night small groups. 2.	EXAMPLES 1. Mission opportunities sponsored or promoted by HRBC or other Baptist organizations. 2. External non-profits

**All : Everyone    A : Adults    Y : Youth    C : Children**

CONNECT	GROW	TRANSFORM
All: Worship	All: Sunday School <sup>2</sup>	All: Mission Events <sup>6</sup>
All: Fellowship <sup>1</sup>		
A: Community Outreach	A: Worship	A: Service Outside HRBC <sup>4</sup>
A: Bible study	A: Small Groups	A: Advocacy <sup>5</sup>
	A: Giving Time/Money	A: Caritas / Clinic
	A: Mission Trips	A: HRBC Teams / Teaching
Y: Large Group	Y: Large Group	Y: Mission Madness
Y: Camp/Retreats	Y: Small Group	Y: VBS <sup>3</sup>
Y: United Praise	Y: Camp/Retreats	Y: Disciple Now
	Y: United Praise	Y: HRBC Teams
		Y: Worship Care <sup>7</sup>
C: Worship Care <sup>7</sup>	C: Wed. Night Missions Study	C: Caritas / Clinic
C: VBS <sup>3</sup>	C: VBS <sup>3</sup>	C: Prep for Caritas / Clinic
C: Camp	C: Children’s Choir	
C: Family Events <sup>8</sup>	C: Children’s Sermon	
C: Parent/Child Dedication	C: 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Bibles	

Footnotes

1. Includes meals and other relational activities.
2. C: Includes Next Steps, Important Questions (IQ), New Christians. These short-term classes are offered as needed and occur during Sunday School time.
3. The majority of the children are from the community but are not associated with HRBC, so for this population, we intend VBS as a Connect event. For the ~40 HRBC children, we intend VBS as a Grow event. For our Youth, this is an opportunity to serve and impact young lives.
4. Our members should share where they serve outside HRBC walls, to inspire fellow members.
5. Action on behalf of others. We need some examples of such actions.
6. Includes evangelism and mission trips (especially to our partners: Paula Settle in Owlsey County KY, The Family Tree in Charlotte NC, Jon & Tanya Parks in Slovakia).
7. Worship Care is our new name for ETC (Extended Teaching Care). For our Youth, this is an opportunity to serve our children.
8. Includes Easter celebration, back-to-school bash, movie night, late night/lock-in, valentine brigade, etc.

**Appendix 2: Aligning HRBC Ministry Teams with Our Discipleship Process**

Ministry Teams provide the support necessary for the smooth operation of HRBC as we engage in making disciples for Jesus Christ. Every ministry team's primary purpose has been aligned with a step in our discipleship process of Connect → Grow → Transform.

<b>Connect "Come follow me"</b>	<b>Grow "Live with Jesus"</b>	<b>Transform "Be salt and light"</b>
Church Fellowship Team Communications Team Decorations Team Guest Services Team Security Team Ushers Team Worship Care	Bible Study/Small Group Teams Children's Ministry Team Disciple-Making Team Member Development and Mobilization Team Music Team Women's/Men's Ministry Teams Youth Ministry Team	Audio Services Team Audit Team Baptist Life Team Child Dev. Center Team Endowment Team Information Technology Team Mission Strategy Team Ordinances Team Personnel Team Properties Team Records & Media Mgmt Team Stewardship Team Tellers Team Transportation Team Treasurer

### Appendix 3: **Challenges with Measuring Spiritual Growth**

Here are two articles the Simple Church Team referenced that provided insight on the challenges with measuring spiritual growth.

1. 2018-07-24 Measuring Spiritual Growth - Small Groups.pdf
2. 2018-07-24 Thought-Provoking Articles on Measuring Discipleship.pdf