

North Texas Conference

Genesis Cohort Rhythm 2: Relate

Project Coach Contact Information

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Coach Bio: I am a wounded healer! Husband to the most courageous woman I know...father to a creative girl who I am pretty sure teaches me more than I teach her! Prior to my role with the NTC UMC I served as an urban missionary/church planter in the great city of Chicago and directed a multi-site urban church planting network that focused on developing church planters / urban missionaries to plant the gospel and disciple people in cities throughout the Midwest. Prior to moving to Chicago, I planted a Foursquare church in Bettendorf, Iowa. I have been serving in church leadership for over 20 years.

I am committed to lifelong learning. I received my BA in Ministry and Leadership from LIFE Pacific College in San Dimas, CA and my MA from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. I am also a Professional Life Coach through Lifeforming Leadership Coaching.

North Texas Conference Vision for Church Planting

In the Center for Church Development we believe that it is churches that plant churches. Because of this, our vision for planting is simple: **we want to partner with every church in the North Texas Conference and provide support in order to see the majority of churches transforming communities through planting.** In the CCD we define planting as any endeavor that seeks to engage a neighborhood in discipleship and gospel renewal through the creation of new and/or innovative missional strategies that include; sacraments, regular worship times and discipleship. In short, the CCD will endeavor to create a discipleship movement by supporting churches in developing new spaces for new faces.

Rhythm Purpose

We have identified ten core competencies that fit into four distinct themes around which we have designed the Genesis Cohort. The 12 months of the Genesis Cohort have been divided into four separate rhythms with each rhythm devoted to one of the four themes. For Rhythm 2 we will take a look at a few of our key relationships...namely, how we relate to ourselves, how we relate to God and how we relate to our local context.

At the heart of gospel transformation is harmony in our relationships. In Genesis, when God creates humanity, God says that we are made in God's image or to bear God's image. Each of us has been

designed uniquely to put certain aspects of God on display for the world to see. As image bearers we were designed to be a unique filter that allows the world around us to encounter the presence and mission of Jesus through our lives. Our filter is made up of three distinct parts; 1) Our story 2) Our personality 3) Our gifts/talents. As God's mission moves through us it takes on a unique shape that reflects these three aspects. Our ability to discover innovative expressions of the church is intrinsically tied to our understanding of our unique "filter." Therefore, as church planters who desire to incarnate the mission of God in authentic and creative ways we must commit ourselves to continually growing in an understanding of who God has made us to be as well as creating margins in our lives that allow us to rest and trust in the work God's spirit is doing through us.

Honoring and caring for our relationship with ourselves leads directly into how we seek to relate to the world around us and follow Jesus into the neighborhood to put God's Kingdom on display. Theologically we refer to this as incarnation and, as such, incarnation serves as our template for how we posture ourselves in relation to the world around us. There is an old Sufi parable that speaks to this posture...

Once upon a time there was a man who strayed from his own country into the world known as the Land of Fools. He soon saw a number of people flying in terror from a field where they had been trying to reap wheat. "There is a monster in that field," they told him. He looked and saw that the monster was merely a watermelon. He offered to kill the monster for them. When he had cut the melon from its stalk, he took a slice and began to eat it. The people became even more terrified of him than they had been of the melon. They drove him away with pitchforks, crying, "He will kill us next, unless we get rid of him." It so happened that shortly afterward another man also strayed into the Land of Fools. But instead of offering to help the people with the monster, he agreed with them that it must be dangerous, and by tiptoeing away from it with them he gained their confidence. He spent a long time with them in their homes until he could teach them, little by little, the basic facts, which would enable them not only to lose their fear of melons, but also eventually to cultivate melons themselves (Shah 1968, 207 – 208).

Eugene Peterson does a brilliant job translating John 1:14 in the Message bible. "The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." Incarnation literally means "In the flesh." Jesus' willingness to enter the mess of humanity reminds us, as Jude Teirsma-Watson professor at Fuller Theological Seminary writes in her book *For God so Loved the City*, "The Gospel does not exist in a vacuum, but must be incarnated, 'fleshed out' anew in each context" (1994, 10). We must learn to change our posture towards our culture from the privileged host to the humble stranger, or as renowned missionary Lesslie Newbigin puts it in his book *The Open Gospel*, "We must learn afresh what it means to bear witness to the gospel from a position not of strength but of weakness" (1995, 5). This is the posture we learn from incarnation.

The incarnation is essential in our understanding and practice of mission. We must ask ourselves what kind of church we want to be. Will we be a church for the city, a church in the city or a church with the city? A church for the city approaches its context from the outside. When it looks at its context it sees mostly evil and only wants to go in and rescue the city and then leave. A church in the city has made a home geographically in its context but it has not listened, engaged or participated with its context. It lives in the city but has not become a part of the city. It does not engage in the life and programming of its context but rather is constantly competing and creating alternative programming. A church with the city sees itself as part of the everyday rhythm and life of the city. Not only has it chosen to come near and engage people in their world but it has done so realizing that God is already at work in that world. We do not bring God's activity to the city rather we seek to join God in it (Teirsma-Watson 1994, 15).

As we move through this rhythm we will continue to dig deeper into your current context. If you know where you would like to plant use that context for the development of your Missional Action Plan. If you do not know yet what context you would like to plant in then either pick an area you think you'd like to be or use your current ministry context. For those that do not yet know your context this means when you finally do discern your location you will have to go back and do some of this work again for that space, but you will have some experience on how to do it.

Rhythm 2 Outcomes

When participants complete Rhythm 2 of the Genesis Cohort they will have:

1. Developed a personal rule of life and reflected with peers on the experience of living into that rule.
2. Developed a method for contextual engagement with the goal of listening to their context and will have begun to design a plan for missional engagement in that context
3. An understanding for what community and connection mean in their context and begun to discern how they will foster that in their project and how they will move people in their discipleship journey towards forming community and authentic relationships.
4. Practiced sharing the gospel in a way that is meaningful to their culture and explained to their peers their rationale for why they believe the gospel as they have described it connects uniquely to their context.

Learning Environment

The learning environment for the Genesis Cohort will take place both online and face-to-face. For the online portion of the cohort we will be using Canvas as our online learning management system (LMS). Over the 10-week time period participants will engage in discussions and learning activities that will help them understand the changing culture, challenge and broaden the way they see the world and will help them begin to formulate a strategy for local missional engagement in light of what they are learning. Learning activities include:

Weekly Reading: During Rhythm 2 we will read through the book's *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu as well as portions of *Center Church* by Timothy Keller.

Online Discussions: The true benefit of a learning environment like this is that you get to learn from each other. The discussions will give you the opportunity to clarify your thoughts and get feedback from one another in a safe space. This is a crucial part of the innovation and design process. Within each discussion you will be encouraged to respond to at least two other posts made by your fellow cohort participants. The sooner you do these the better as this will create more time for a conversation to develop. If you want to be notified when others in the cohort respond to your posts you can subscribe to get notifications within Canvas.

Video: Some weeks there will be a video for you to watch that will help bring greater clarity to the subject matter. Often times the video will be integrated into the discussion question or learning task.

Learning Tasks: The learning tasks are meant to help you integrate what you are learning into what you are doing. True transformative learning must work its way into our everyday life. The learning tasks are meant to help you as you move towards your final goal of designing a Missional Action Plan (MAP) for a new faith community. At times the discussion will be combined with the projects so that you can share with the cohort and get feedback on what you are doing and planning. The projects being developed

each week are meant to build upon one another in helping develop and clarify your planting strategy.

What's Happening: Each week in the online cohort there is an overview of what is happening that week. It would be ideal for participants to login to the online cohort early in each week to take a look at this section in order to schedule accordingly. The earlier you participate the more depth that can emerge in discussion and feedback.

Conferences/Webinars: Within the Canvas LMS there is the ability to do face to face video conferencing. Each Rhythm of the cohort we will offer 3-4 conferences/webinars that dig deeper into the content, provide feedback in what you are developing, and allow you to hear from other practitioners, etc. We understand that people's schedule is busy so we ask that you participate in at least two of the conferences per rhythm. Conferences will be recorded so if you are unable to be at the live conference you can go back and watch it on your own time. However, the limitation of the recordings is that they do not allow for you to engage in dialogue or Q and A.

Retreat: Following the 10-week online portion of the cohort there will be a Friday - Saturday retreat. The Genesis Cohort retreat is designed for the lead planter and their team (spouses are encouraged to attend as well). The purpose of the retreat is to dig deep into the design process helping participants clarify their Missional Action Plan through creating a safe space for innovation and creativity while also thinking through the necessary components of a faith community. There are four essential aspects to each retreat:

- **Input** - Participants will be given new material in a workshop setting (often from practitioners from around the country). As participants hear stories and get ideas from others they will be invited to engage in dialogue centered presentations.
- **Implement** - Participants will have the opportunity to bring their own stories/experiences/learnings into the dialogue.
- **Integrate** - Participants will have the opportunity to integrate new learnings into the development of their own unique MAP
- **Introduce** - Participants (and their teams) will have the opportunity to present elements of their strategy to peers for the purpose of getting critical review, feedback, and encouragement.

Don't be a perfectionist. Learning and design are more than just retaining information. There is a process of transformation that takes place in learning that happens below the surface as we participate in the different learning activities. Trying to prove you have all the answers or have absorbed all the information actually hinders the transformational learning process. This means we must welcome the challenges along the way and the disagreements we have with one another that give us the opportunity to think through what we believe and how to embody that belief into our vision. There is a right way and a wrong way to engage in constructive dialogue in an online environment. Stay away from making personal attacks or assuming someone's motive. Also, remember that it is God who is at work in us to will and do according to God's good purposes. We do not need to strong arm or bully anyone into thinking the way we think or believing what we believe. The purpose for dialogue and even disagreement is not to convince someone else that you are right but rather to stir up an opportunity for thought and reflection within both the people participating in the conversation

Course Schedule

Prior to Rhythm 2

- Login to the Rhythm 2 course on Canvas and make sure you are familiar with how to navigate the online learning environment.
- Purchase **Center Church by Timothy Keller** (there is a link to both the English and Spanish translation on the home page in Canvas) and **God in My Everything by Ken Shigematsu** (there is not Spanish translation for this but there is a link on Canvas).

Week 1 (September 30 – October 6)

- **Reading** - Read Part 1 of *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu
- **Discussion** - Log into the cohort on Canvas, watch the video, and answer the discussion prompt under Week 1 Module.

Week 2 (October 7 – October 13)

- **Reading** - Read Part 2 of *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu
- **Practice** - Complete the learning task on practicing centering prayer
- **Reflection** – Complete the reflection on your centering prayer experience.

Week 3 (October 14 – October 20)

- **Reading** - Read Part 3 of *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu
- **Learning Task** – Complete the learning task called “My Spiritual Life Scaffolding”
- **Webinar/Conference:** Theme - *Creating a Rule of Life*
 - Conference will take place on Thursday, October 18 from 7 - 8 PM. You log into the conference in Canvas by clicking onto the "Conferences" tab on the left-hand side of the page.

Week 4 (October 21 – October 27)

- **Reading:** Read Part 4 of *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu
- **Discussion:** Complete the discussion question on spiritual life as a form of resistance and log in later in the week to read and respond to a few posts made by other participants.

Week 5 (October 28 – November 3)

- **Reading:** Read Part 5 of *God In My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu
- **Resource:** Read the brief description for the Prayer of Examen and then practice the Prayer of Examen at a minimum of two times during the week.

- **Reflection:** When you have completed your practice of the Prayer of Examen take some time to reflect. Your reflection can be on anything that seems relevant to you and your current spiritual journey.
- **Webinar/Conference:** Theme - *The Art of Listening to Your Community*
 - Conference will take place on Thursday, November 1 from 7 - 8 PM. You log into the conference here in Canvas by clicking onto the "Conferences" tab on the left-hand side of the page.

Week 6 (November 4 – November 10)

- **Reading:** There is no reading for week 6
- **Video:** Watch the video of Ken Shigematsu sharing about the development of a rule of life.
- **Context Survey:** Take a couple minutes and answer some questions about your context. This is a timed activity and it is intended to be completed without doing any research. Just guess on the answers based on your own thoughts and perceptions.
- **Learning Task:** Complete your personal rule of life and share some or all of it (as well as why you developed it as you did) with the cohort and give feedback to one another.

Week 7 (November 11 – November 17)

- **Reading:** Read the Introduction of *Center Church* by Timothy Keller
- **Learning Task:** This learning task covers week 7 and 8 (so you have two weeks to work on it and think about it). You can find the task under the week 8 tab. The theme of the task is developing a method for contextual engagement.
- **Create a MissionInsite account:** If you do not have a MissionInsite account then download the pdf attached to this week's module and follow the instructions to create your account.
- **Optional Discussion:** Read the article entitled *Mission and Power* and respond to the discussion prompt.
- **Webinar/Conference** – Theme: Developing Relationships in Your Context (one on one's)
 - Conference will take place on Thursday, November 15 from 7 - 8 PM. You log into the conference here in Canvas by clicking onto the "Conferences" tab on the left-hand side of the page.

Week 8 (November 18 – November 24)

- **Reading:** Read Part 3 of *Center Church*
- **MissionInsite Orientation:** Take some time this week to watch the orientation videos that will introduce you to the MissionInsite tool and how to utilize that tool in seeking to understand your community.
- **Learning Task:** Develop a method for engagement with your context for the purpose of listening to your context.

Week 9 (November 25 – December 1)

- **Reading:** Read Part 4 of *Center Church*

- **Insight report from MissionInsite:** Take some time and answer the questions on page two of the PDF in regards to your own ministry context (do not worry about the group aspect of this for now). Bring this with you to the retreat.
- **Learning Task:** In week 10 you will be submitting Section 3 of your MAP to the rest of the cohort. Take some time this week and next to develop each part of Section 3 in your MAP.
- **Retreat:** Because of the holiday season coming up we are doing the retreat a week early. The rhythm 2 retreat will be taking place this Friday and Saturday (Nov. 30 - Dec. 1). Make sure you bring both your rule of life and your plan for missional engagement with you.

Week 10 (December 2 – December 8)

- **Reading:** Read [Part 5](#) of *Center Church*
- **Learning Task:** During the retreat you had an opportunity to further develop your plan for missional engagement. Complete section 3 of your MAP and post it to the learning task discussion board to get feedback from others in the cohort.
- **Assessment** - Complete a follow up survey assessment to help us make the Cohort better

Rhythm 2 Retreat

- **When:** Friday, November 30 @ 10 AM - Saturday, December 1 @ 6 PM
- **Where:** First United Methodist Church Richardson (503 N Central Expy, Richardson, TX 75080)

We are doing the retreat at the HUB at First McKinny so that most people will be able to travel home on Friday evening. If you are coming in from out of town and need a place to stay overnight let us know and we will arrange a host home for you and your team.