

Memorize & Ponder

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
July 28, 2013**

Making Disciples

**Matt 28:18-20 & Ps 85
(626, 478, 644, 648)**

Being Christian is not easy,
but it does bring out our best selves,
the selves God created us to be.

At the heart of being Christian
lies the privilege to nourish ourselves and others
to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.
That's the core of discipleship.

That's what we say we are about here at Brentwood Presbyterian.
That is the focus of our mission and ministries.
From the time we baptize and support
until we bury and comfort,
throughout the whole life cycle of our members, adherents, and neighbours,
we do our best to cooperate with the Holy Spirit
in attracting attention, listening with compassion,
offering encouragement, and supporting transformation
as people discover and grow into their calls to discipleship.

The primary responsibility of disciples
is to witness to the presence, power, and promise
of Jesus, the Christ.

The Christ, in the Judeo-Christian faith,
is the One in whom the loving energy who created,
and who sustains and transforms the world,
finally reconciled that world to its true source of being.
The Christ is the One in whom we see human being
as it is meant to be lived –
in faith, hope, and love.

So, we centre our life together here at Brentwood Presbyterian
around the lordship of Jesus Christ,
around the community that has faith in his redemptive act,
around the witness that offers the world flourishing life
in all its divinely-desired abundance.

We've tried to capture that witness
in the words of our mission statement
that appears on the front of the bulletin every Sunday.
It's there to remind us of whose we are
and what that relationship gives us the privilege to be and do.

*. The friendly folk at Brentwood Presbyterian Church warmly invite you
to get centered in Jesus Christ in worship and learning,
enjoy community with Jesus Christ in fellowship,
and experience the compassion of Jesus Christ in service.*

This is a congregation – a gathering together –
of people baptized into Christian discipleship
and of those attracted to and considering it.
Our growth into trusting Jesus Christ and each other
begins with the welcome God offers through us
to all who come into contact with this community.

It is an open welcome,
meeting you where you *are* in life
for the sake of where you *might be*
in companionship with Jesus Christ and his people.

We do this in four ways,
four forms of active witness that nourish souls to flourish.
We worship, learn, enjoy fellowship, and serve.

We currently worship together
primarily on Sunday mornings.
That is when most of us come together with Jesus Christ
to be nourished in our discipleship.
We gather, we greet, we sing, we pray, we ponder, we give, and we go out to serve.
That rhythm of coming together and dispersing to serve
is the heartbeat, the pulse of making Christian disciples.

But we are considering expanding our offerings of worship services
to other times during the week to attract new people
involved in or intrigued by Christian discipleship.

To be specific,
Daniel and I have proposed to the Session
that we do a jazz service every week beginning in September
on Wednesday night at 8:00PM –
a Jazz Evensong, we've called it.
The basic idea is to provide a different time and a different form for worship.

As you all know all too well,
we are a small congregation of Christian disciples.
A lot of people think of learning in terms of programs,
but we think differently here at Brentwood.

We see worship as our primary centre of learning –
how we welcome, the music we offer, the words through which we pray,
the Scriptures we choose, the reflections we share and consider,
the conversations we have over lunch after.
All of these Sunday morning activities are used by the Holy Spirit
to nourish our souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.

And we offer opportunities to deepen that learning during the week –
the sermon text to ponder in the inserts and on the website,
Bible studies twice a month on Friday evenings with a light supper,
special events and speakers from time to time,
invitations to other opportunities for learning with other congregations.

We do all of this
dependent on the promised presence of Jesus Christ in our midst,
equipping, encouraging, and empowering us
to witness of his grace and mercy to all peoples.
Whether we are with people in their initial encounter with Jesus,
in their growing intrigue with the possibilities he offers,
in their fresh realization of new dimensions of his salvation
into which they might grow,
or in their faithful resilience in times of difficulty and stress,
Jesus Christ is the real presence that makes all of this happen.

People flourish better when they know they are in a caring community,
when they know they are accepted and loved.

It's just the way we are created.

So much of the anxiety and stress that marks our daily lives,
that we see leading to conflicts and calamities around the world,
arises from a sense of deep alienation from community
or a narrow view of community.

With that kind of isolated individualism or tribal communitarianism,
we divide the world into good guys and bad guys
and justify violence against the bad guys.

It's not a view of fellowship that nourishes flourishing.

What people encounter here at Brentwood Presbyterian,
at least what we intend and strive for,
is a warm welcome into the grace of Jesus Christ
that we trust the Spirit will use to lay a solid foundation
for growth into the transforming power of Christian discipleship.

But all of this means nothing
if it is not carried with us as we go out into the world to serve.
Christian disciples are known by their resilient and redemptive love.

It is a love that is broad and durable –
reaching out to all of God's creation and able to face fierce resistance.

It is a love that is realistic and focused –
applied in our circles of influence in ways best suited to have an impact.

It is a love that is nourishing –
bringing life-giving hope to both those who give and receive it.

These are the four things
that congregations of Christian disciples
do all the time –
worship, learning, fellowship, and service.
We gather for the first three in order to do the fourth better.
Big congregations do it differently than small congregations,
but we all do it.

As we begin planning for the fall here at Brentwood,
if you have any ideas about how we can do it better,
please share them with a member of Session –
myself, Pam Wong, Winston Reckord, Emmanuel Boadu, or Dorothy Sung.
Let us know how we can improve
how we nourish souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Because everything we do here at the church when we are gathered
is designed to make disciples who can step into this Great Commission
when they go out into the world.

Because everything we do here at the church when we are gathered
is designed to form and strengthen you
to be the disciples Jesus Christ is enabling **you** to be
when **you** go out into the world.

*May the Spirit take these ponderings
and provoke in all of us
a witness of love and good deeds.*

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