

Discipleship Through Service – Bama Wesley Discipleship and Servant Leadership Model

Thesis

When Jesus called His disciples, the call was not simply to attend temple services in which He was teaching. He called them to go with Him, to follow his steps, to respond to invitations to walk alongside Him, and to serve the communities in which they found themselves together.

This mentorship and immersive social journey is what formed the faith of the disciples and the leadership qualities they needed to make the transition from disciples to apostles, from students to servant leaders.

He told them “come and see”, “follow me”, and facilitated opportunities for them to “go and be”.

I propose a discipleship structure which follows the model of Christ’s mentorship, immersive community, facilitation of formational service, and opportunity to lead.

The essential source of discipleship in the United Methodist Church, and the Church Universal, is the local church. Student discipleship models that do not consider the importance of students being enmeshed and incorporated in the life of a local church risk excluding the very framework of discipleship, support, and spiritual health & wellbeing that will be the primary resource offered by the Church to students for the rest of their lives. Such discipleship models also risk missing the opportunity to connect students, who are the Christian leaders of the present and future, to the local churches who need the gifts and graces of these emerging servant leaders.

I propose a discipleship structure built upon the incorporation of students into local church communities so they might gain experience serving as valued members of a local faith community, gain confidence and trust in the ability of the local church to support them, and find the aspects of the mentorship and immersive social journey described above.

Basic Structure

Students will be surveyed in order to determine existing gifts and graces, along with perceived callings and interests. Inventories of these interests, callings, and gifts will be compiled.

Similar surveys will be given to the leadership of local churches. Local church surveys will seek to determine missional and theological foci of congregations, along with the strengths

of current leaders who may serve as mentors and potential needs of the congregation in terms of presented opportunity for servant leadership for students.

Surveys will also be given to leaders in key areas of service in the congregations that align with the needs, foci, and strengths of each church as well as the callings, interests, and strengths of the students.

Key leaders in each congregation will be matched with students for mentorship, which will be guided by the local church pastor and campus pastor/Wesley Director.

Students will begin participating in the life of the local congregation while working with their mentors and pastors to fulfill congregational and community needs while gaining experience, community, and support.

Student Commitment

Participating students will commit to participating in Sunday morning worship and one other weekly church activity where applicable.

Students also commit to serving the local church in an area that matches their gifts, callings, and interests, alongside their mentor and local church pastor for a minimum of five hours each week. When the servant leader role involves worship execution, worship time counts toward this requirement.

Students and mentors will meet with the local church pastor and the campus pastor/Wesley director once a month to report progress and struggles and plan upcoming discipleship and service opportunities.

Students will submit a short, written report on their experience at the end of the semester.

Student commitments will be for one semester at a time with the opportunity to continue serving in the same or similar roles the following semester.

Mentor Commitment

Mentors will commit to working alongside students to complete the tasks involved with addressing the determined servant leadership role. This will include instruction and support of the student in this role, as well as co-leading with the student in a partnership that addresses the servant leadership role.

Mentors will commit to being available for at least five hours of work with the student to accomplish the servant leadership role where necessary. When the servant leader role involves worship execution, worship time counts toward this requirement.

Mentors will commit to meeting with the student, local pastor, and campus pastor once a month to discuss progress and struggles and plan upcoming discipleship and service opportunities.

Mentor commitments will be for one semester at a time with the opportunity to continue serving in the same or similar roles the following semester.

Local Pastor Commitment

One pastor of the local congregation will commit to supporting the work of the student and mentor in a specified servant leadership role.

The pastor will commit to meeting with the mentor, student, and campus pastor once a month to discuss progress and struggles and plan upcoming discipleship and service opportunities.

The pastor will commit to serving the student as their pastor (in partnership with the campus pastor) while they are involved with the local congregation.

Local Pastor commitments will be for one semester at a time with the opportunity to continue serving in the same or similar roles the following semester.

Campus Pastor Commitment

The campus pastor will commit to coordinating the selection and placement of students and mentors in appropriate servant leadership roles which align with the needs of the local church, the strengths of mentors & students, and the interests and callings of students.

The campus pastor will casually check in with students once a week to discuss any potential progress, struggles, or issues with the servant leadership role or the relationships involved with this role.

The campus pastor will be available for conversation with the local church pastor, the mentor, and/or the student within a reasonable amount of time upon request to discuss

any potential progress, struggles, or issues with the servant leadership role or the relationships involved with this role.

The campus pastor will meet with the student, mentor, and local pastor once a month to discuss progress and struggles and plan upcoming discipleship and service opportunities.

The campus pastor will continue to serve as the students' pastor in partnership with the local church pastor while the student is involved with the local congregation.

The campus pastor will review the student's report and offer feedback, encouragement, and suggested plans for continued discipleship and leadership growth opportunities at the end of each semester.

Primary Outcome Goal

The primary goal of this discipleship model will be to develop servant leaders and disciples of Christ to serve the Body of Christ, giving them the resources, training, instruction, and support to continue into the next season of life characterized by faithful response to Christ call to lives of loving service.