



WHO ARE WE *Becoming?*

A Discipleship Formation Journey

TWO OPTIONS TO ATTEND:



SUNDAYS
AT 4PM



WEDNESDAYS
AT 10AM

STARTING SEPTEMBER 13



CONTACT PASTOR MATT TO SIGN UP



mmorris@tabernaclemethodist.com

A Letter from Pastor Matt

Dear Friends,

Everything seems to be changing. The world my children experience is so different than anything I could have imagined, and many of us wonder what's next. The same holds true for church: the next chapter of Tabernacle is coming, whether we plan for it or not. The real question is whether we shape that next chapter together, or let it happen to us.

That's why you're receiving this invitation. We want you to have a real voice in what's next for this church — shaped by prayer, Scripture, and honest conversation with people you know and trust. We'd love for it to be you at the table.

Growth often begins with a single question: "Why?" For us, that question is, "Why do we 'church' the way we do?" Not why we believe what we believe — our faith is rooted in God's Word — but the practical things: why we worship, organize, and lead the way we do.

If you've been around church long, you know the answers are often, "That's what Scripture says," "That's what our community needs," or "Our denomination requires it" — or sometimes nobody really knows. It's just "how we've always done it."

Churches are like families that way. I make Kerri's and my coffee every morning before our devotions — my favorite part of the day. If you asked why, I'd say it reminds me to seek God before the demands of the day. But the tradition didn't start that way; I was just the first one awake and wanted to serve my bride. Over time it became something more.

I have attended and/or served eight churches in fifty-one years. I have experienced church at its best and church at its worst. As a young man, I loved Jesus but my relationship with the church was complicated. That began to change when I encountered Young Life as a young adult — an entire ministry united around one clear mission: introducing young people to Jesus. Every leader, every game, every talk supported that mission. (I still keep a picture on my desk of me dressed as Cupid for a Young Life event — ask me about it sometime.) Like Wesley's call to "do all the good I can," and Paul becoming "all things to all people," I just knew why we did what we did.

Later, at Chestnut Ridge Church in West Virginia, I saw that same clarity in a local church for the first time. It wasn't the worship style or the building. The church was united in its desire for reaching

their entire community and state for Jesus. They were not simply preaching to the lost but making and training Jesus followers who made and trained Jesus followers. Every ministry was designed to work towards that goal. And everyone knew why the church existed.

I've carried this question — "What if every church lived with this kind of purpose?" — through every church I've served since, and now I find myself asking it about Tabernacle. For two centuries, faithful people have worshiped, served, and raised families here. Like every church with that kind of history, we carry inherited traditions — some timeless, some suited to a particular season, some maybe still exactly what we need. But how do we know? Before we ask what to change or preserve, we need to ask why we do what we do — because without that answer, we'll spin our wheels debating what.

My dad taught me to drive at twelve (probably a questionable call). Once, stuck in mud at the bottom of a hill, I gunned the engine and just dug in deeper. My dad didn't take the keys from me. He said:

"Slow down."

"Listen to the engine."

"Give the wheels time to grip."

When I stopped spinning my wheels, I climbed the hill.

We face what many churches face today: changing communities, financial pressure, aging facilities. Those realities deserve real conversation — but I think we've been giving it more gas debating what we should do instead of gaining traction by asking why.

Healthy churches aren't defined by worship style, buildings, or budgets. They're shaped by people whose hearts are being continually formed by Christ, who understand why they do what they do.

That's why we're inviting all of us into this journey — so we can slow down, listen, and let the Spirit gain traction in our church. This fall we'll begin with a church-wide conversation, "Why Do We 'Church' the Way We Do?", followed by a Discipleship Formation Journey. Notice the word formation: before budgets, staffing, or strategy, we'll spend time in Scripture, prayer, and discernment, reading Tozer's [The Pursuit of God](#) together.

Our hope isn't that we emerge with a better strategic plan, but as better disciples — because before we determine what Christ is calling us to do, we must first become who He's calling us to be. That conviction is the foundation of this journey, and why Proverbs 24:27 has become one of our guiding verses:

"Put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready; after that, build your house."

God prepares the field before He builds the house. We believe He's preparing us for what's next.

Thank you for considering this invitation, for loving Tabernacle, and for your willingness to seek Christ together. If all we accomplish is a better plan, we'll have missed the point. But if together we become more like Jesus, we believe everything else will fall into place. I can't think of a better journey to take together.

In Christ,

Pastor Matt

Why This Journey?

"Do your planning and prepare your fields before building your house." (Proverbs 24:27)

This verse has become the foundation of everything we'll build together. Before continuing to build the house, we believe God is inviting us to prepare the field — because the work in the field determines whether the house will flourish. Two ideas will shape everything ahead: Mission Clarity and Traction.

Mission Clarity: Becoming Before Doing

Our hope isn't simply to become a more effective church — it's to become the church God is calling us to be. Before we decide what we should do, we need to become clear about who God is calling us to become, because our answer to who shapes why we "church" the way we do. That clarity is Mission Clarity. Once it comes, we can faithfully discern what needs to change to align our church with that calling — that's Traction.

In the late nineteenth century, the Prussian Army developed a leadership philosophy still studied today: Auftragstaktik, "Mission Command." Rather than dictating every decision, commanders made sure officers understood their intent so clearly that they could adapt wisely when circumstances changed — freedom not to pursue their own ideas, but to faithfully pursue the mission. Scripture reflects something similar: Christ is the Head of the Church, and His commands are clear, yet Jesus doesn't hand us a script. He invites us to know His heart, prioritize His mission, and use our own head and heart to guide how we live it out together.

I've seen this in ministry. Young Life leaders around the world approached ministry differently depending on their gifts and their community, yet shared remarkable unity because they knew who they were and why they existed. At Chestnut Ridge, hard conversations grew clearer whenever we returned to one question: "What is God calling us to become?"

This is a biblical pattern, not just a leadership one. Before God gives His people an assignment, He gives them an identity first — "You will be my people" (Exodus 6), "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5), "You are the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12). Jesus spent three years shaping His disciples' hearts and character before ever sending them out to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19–20). He never prescribed a worship style or budget — He gave a clear identity and mission, then trusted the Spirit to guide the methods. That's exactly what we see in Acts: the

mission stayed remarkably clear while the methods kept adapting, from Jerusalem to Antioch to Athens.

The early Church never confused mission with methods. That's why our first goal isn't to redesign ministries — it's to prayerfully discern, together, who God is calling the people of Tabernacle to become. Until we answer that, every conversation about programs, staffing, or budgets eventually becomes a conversation about preference.

Traction: Aligning Our Church with God's Calling

Once we're clear about who God is calling us to become, we can ask what needs to change to more faithfully live that out. Traction isn't movement for its own sake — it's movement in the right direction.

Scripture's healthy movements almost always begin by slowing down. Before sending Paul and Barnabas, the church in Antioch worshiped, fasted, prayed, and listened (Acts 13:1–3). Before the Jerusalem Council made one of the most significant decisions in church history, the apostles and elders gathered to listen — to Scripture, to testimony, to each other, and to the Spirit — before concluding, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). They slowed down, listened, gained clarity, then moved with confidence. That's the rhythm we want to practice.

We're intentionally slowing down — not from fear of change, but so any change grows out of faithful discernment rather than preference or pressure. Traction means our ministries, budgets, staffing, facilities, and even our traditions begin pulling in the same direction.

Preparing the Field

The people of Tabernacle have spent generations building this house — sacrificing, serving, giving, raising children, sending missionaries, loving neighbors. We honor that legacy, and because we honor it, we want to prepare the field well before building the next chapter. Preparing the field isn't a delay in the mission; it's part of the mission.

Our prayer is that years from now, we'll look back and say this was the moment we stopped asking merely "what should our church do?" and instead began asking, "Lord, who are You calling us to become?"

What Will We Do Together?

The answer is simple: we'll create space to seek Christ together before making decisions about our church's future. Everything ahead has two purposes — seeking Mission Clarity (discerning who God is calling us to become) and building Traction (aligning our ministries, leadership, and resources with that calling).

This is not a strategic planning process. It's a season of spiritual formation and shared discernment. Rather than starting with budgets or structures, we'll start by asking God to shape our hearts. Before we consider the house, we'll prepare the field.

Phase One: Seeking Mission Clarity

Throughout August, our whole church family will join a conversation called "Why Do We 'Church' the Way We Do?" — short videos and reflections exploring how traditions form, how healthy practices can quietly become habits, and the difference between mission and methods. The goal isn't to persuade anyone toward change — it's to prepare our hearts for discernment, so that by the end we're asking not "how do we protect what we have?" but "who is God calling us to become?"

Phase Two: Living Into Mission Clarity

Beginning in September, any who calls Tabernacle their church home is invited to begin a Discipleship Formation Journey — a series of "studies" rather than fixed weeks, because discernment doesn't run on a schedule. Each study builds on the one before: we begin with Christ, then Scripture, then our own hearts, and only then move to ministries, leadership, and strategy.

Throughout the journey, everyone will practice five shared rhythms:

Read — one chapter of A.W. Tozer's *The Pursuit of God* per study, as an invitation to pursue God more deeply, not a homework assignment.

Pray — a spiritual practice paired with each study (silence, meditation, confession, intercession) and a 40-Day Prayer Plan for anyone who wants to pray alongside us, whether or not they're part of the journey itself.

Gather — about an hour each week for Scripture, discussion, teaching, and discernment. These are conversations, not lectures; the goal is to learn how to discern God's voice together, not to win arguments.

One-on-One Discernment — time with Pastor Joe or Pastor Matt to pray, ask honest questions, and reflect personally, because healthy discernment in the church begins with personal transformation.

Live — a simple weekly invitation to practice what we're learning, because formation isn't complete until truth becomes obedience.

Building Traction

Once we're discerning who God is calling us to become, we'll naturally ask what needs to change — worship, discipleship, outreach, leadership, staffing, finances, facilities, even our traditions — so every part of the church pulls in the same direction. Only then will we discuss specific recommendations, and by that point our hope is that we won't simply be sharing opinions but discerning together. Opinions compete; shared discernment creates unity.

Where the Journey Leads

Our goal isn't simply to complete a study. It's to become a church that continually seeks Christ before seeking solutions, so that every future decision gets measured by one guiding question: does this help us become the people God is calling us to be?

Learning to Discern Together

Most of us know how to make decisions. Far fewer of us have learned to discern. Decision-making asks, "What seems best?" Discernment asks, "Where is God already leading?" Discernment is the bridge between Mission Clarity and Traction — through it we recognize who God is calling us to become, then it continues to guide the changes we make together.

Our goal isn't simply to make wise decisions. It's to become a people who seek Christ together before making them — trusting that God is already at work, has already provided what's needed, and has already promised to be present.

Already.

Let that word sit with you a moment. It's a bold statement of faith — God is already present, already providing, already at work among us. Discernment is simply the practice of slowing down long enough to notice it: to let Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit open our eyes to what God is already doing. It doesn't mean every decision is predetermined; it means God is never waiting on us to catch up. Just ask the men from Emmaus.

The road to Emmaus (Luke 24) may be Scripture's clearest picture of discernment. Two grieving disciples, walking away from Jerusalem after watching Jesus die a criminal's death, can't make sense of anything — not even the women's claim that He's alive. Heads down, they head home. Where is God in all of this? Already with them — they just can't see it. As they share their story, hear God's story in Scripture, and break bread together, their eyes finally open, and they recognize the Lord had been with them the whole time. "Didn't our hearts burn within us?" (Luke 24:32) That recognition changed them — that's Mission Clarity. Then they got up and went back to declare it boldly — that's Traction.

That's discernment at its most basic: sharing our story, hearing God's story, worshiping together, and trusting He's already at work if we have eyes to see — then having the faith to change direction and declare what we've seen.

A few things are true about discernment as we practice it together.

It's active, not passive — prayer, Scripture, honest conversation, testing what we hear, humility, and courage, slowing down not because we doubt God is leading but because we believe He is.

It's communal, not individual — in Acts 13 and Acts 15, the church discerned together, not alone, until they could say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). That's the spirit of this journey: not what's practical or popular, but what we discern together with the Spirit.

It requires humility — none of us sees the whole picture. Sometimes God confirms what we believe; sometimes He stretches or surprises us.

It welcomes honest disagreement — real discernment doesn't always lead to full agreement, and someone can walk this whole process in good faith and still land somewhere different from the emerging consensus. That's not a weakness; it's a gift. Our goal is never to win an argument, but to understand each other and seek Christ's leading together.

It takes time — like a crop growing quietly in a field, discernment rarely arrives as a lightning bolt. It grows as Scripture speaks with fresh clarity, prayer deepens dependence, and the Spirit gently aligns our hearts. We're not looking for a clever idea; we're learning to recognize the quiet work of God.

And it leads to action — discernment is never an excuse for inaction. Eventually God's people must move. But when we move after seeking Christ together, our decisions carry a different spirit: less driven by fear or preference, more deeply rooted in shared conviction. That's what Traction looks like — faithfully aligning every part of our church with the Mission Clarity God has given us.

Our prayer isn't that everyone finishes this journey with identical opinions. It's that together we discover Mission Clarity, build Traction, and become a church that has learned to seek Christ together — by listening to the One who is already with us.

The Ten Studies

Each study builds on the one before, forming us to discern Christ's voice together and faithfully follow where He leads. Our progress won't be measured by decisions made, but by clarity gained. By the end, we'll have prayerfully shaped two lasting gifts: a Shared Covenant and a set of Mission Alignment Priorities — the foundation for every future ministry and organizational decision.

Our Shared Covenant

As we study, pray, worship, and listen together, common themes will emerge — the character, convictions, and calling we believe Christ is revealing for Tabernacle. We'll gather them into a Shared Covenant: a concise statement of who we believe we are becoming as faithful followers of Jesus here, and what it means to be mature disciples who make disciples. This is Mission Clarity, named and owned together. It won't be one person's vision or a committee's opinion, but the shared discernment of a community that has intentionally sought the Holy Spirit together — and it won't only be a covenant for those of us walking this journey. It will become the expectation and target we hold out for our whole church family. Rather than receiving something prepared in advance, participants will craft it together, then take it home for a week of prayer and reflection before deciding whether they're ready to affirm it. This is not a contract of perfection, but a shared commitment to humility, teachability, prayer, unity, courage, and faithful obedience.

Mission Alignment Priorities

Once we have that clarity, we'll ask what it will take to live it out — identifying the key areas, such as discipleship, worship, leadership, stewardship, governance, staffing, and facilities, where our ministries need to align to best produce mature disciples who make disciples. This document will intentionally stay unfinished, handed off to a future Mission Alignment Team to develop practical recommendations.

The Shape of the Journey

Studies 1–5: Seek Christ Together

Study 6: Discern Who Christ Is Calling Us to Become

Covenant Gathering: Commit Ourselves to That Calling

Studies 7–10: Discern What Faithfulness Looks Like Together

Study 1: Whose Church Is This?

Scripture: Matthew 16:13–20; Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 1:22–23

Big Question: How does remembering that this is Christ's Church change the way we lead?

Big Idea: Jesus remains the Head of His Church. Discipleship begins by surrendering ownership and embracing stewardship.

Case Study: Jesus' promise to build His Church and Paul's picture of Christ as Head.

Discussion: Where have I subtly acted like an owner? How does Christ's authority reshape leadership?

Practice: Pray each day: 'Lord, this is Your Church. Teach me to follow You.'

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 1

Coaching: Where is Christ inviting you to surrender control?

Live It: Practice saying 'My life, Your will' before every decision.

Study 2: Why Does the Church Exist?

Scripture: Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 4:11–16

Big Question: Why did Jesus establish His Church?

Big Idea: The Church exists to make disciples who make disciples.

Case Study: The Great Commission and the life of the early church.

Discussion: What is the difference between activity and mission? Which ministries clearly make disciples?

Practice: Observe one ministry through the lens of disciple-making and note, specifically, how it makes disciples who make disciples.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 2

Coaching: Where have preferences replaced purpose?

Live It: Encourage one person in their walk with Christ.

Study 3: What Breaks God's Heart?

Scripture: Luke 15; Matthew 9:35–38; Micah 6:8

Big Question: Do we love the people Jesus loves?

Big Idea: Mission begins with God's compassion.

Case Study: Jesus seeking the lost sheep, coin, and son.

Discussion: Who is easy to overlook? What burdens God's heart in our community?

Practice: Pray daily for one person far from Christ.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 3

Coaching: Who is God placing on your heart?

Live It: Ask someone outside your circle how you can pray for them.

Study 4: Learning to Listen

Scripture: Acts 13:1–3; Acts 15; John 10:27

Big Question: How do we recognize God's leading together?

Big Idea: Biblical discernment is learned through Scripture, prayer, humility, and community.

Case Study: The Antioch church and the Jerusalem Council.

Discussion: How do we test impressions? How does Scripture shape discernment?

Practice: Practice ten minutes of silence before prayer.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 4

Coaching: Where have you sensed God speaking recently?

Live It: Keep a journal of discernment moments this week.

Study 5: What Did Jesus Actually Do?

Scripture: Mark 3:13–15; Luke 6:12–19; John 13

Big Question: If Jesus led Tabernacle today, what would He prioritize?

Big Idea: We imitate Christ before we imitate successful churches.

Case Study: Jesus forms disciples before sending them.

Discussion: How did Jesus spend His time, and with whom? What surprises you about His priorities?

Practice: Read one Gospel chapter slowly each day.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 5

Coaching: What practice of Jesus do you need to imitate?

Live It: Find a way to serve someone outside your normal circle.

Study 6: Who Is Christ Calling Us to Become?

Scripture: Romans 12; Colossians 3

Big Question: What kind of leaders is Christ forming us to be?

Big Idea: Mission Clarity begins with identity before strategy.

Case Study: Key character traits and practices for a follower of Jesus.

Discussion: What virtues must define us? What belongs in our Discipleship covenant?

Practice: Draft personal covenant commitments.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 6

Coaching: How is Christ reshaping your character?

Live It: Share one covenant commitment with someone outside our journey.

Covenant Gathering: From Mission Clarity to Shared Commitment

By this point we will have spent weeks seeking Christ together through Scripture, prayer, worship, conversation, and discernment, repeatedly asking one question: who is Christ calling us to become? Before we begin discerning Tabernacle's future mission, we believe it's important to first covenant together around the kind of disciples and leaders we're committing to become — the character at the heart of our Shared Covenant, and the bridge between Mission Clarity and Traction.

This evening will be different from our previous studies. Together we'll worship, pray, reflect on what God has been teaching us, and prayerfully craft this first layer of our Shared Covenant — written together, not presented finished — expressing a shared commitment to humility, teachability, prayer, love, unity, courage, and faithful obedience. We'll close around the Lord's

Table, remembering that our unity is rooted not in shared opinion but in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

No one will be asked to sign that evening. Each participant will take the covenant home, pray over it, discuss it with family if appropriate, and spend the week asking: Can I sincerely make this commitment before God and these brothers and sisters in Christ? Those who sense God calling them to continue will return ready to affirm it together — and only then will we continue discerning Tabernacle's specific calling, work we'll fold into that same Shared Covenant. Because before we ask what Christ is calling our church to do, we first covenant together around who He is calling us to become.

Study 7: What Is God Calling Tabernacle to Be?

Outcome: Review our Shared Covenant and begin discerning Tabernacle's mission priorities.

Scripture: Acts 16:6–10; Revelation 2–3

Big Question: Who is Christ calling Tabernacle to become?

Big Idea: We discern our unique congregational calling.

Case Study: Paul's Macedonian vision and Jesus' words to the churches.

Discussion: Where is God already at work? What characteristics and Scriptures keep surfacing?

Practice: Interview two church members about God's work.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 7

Coaching: Where do you sense God leading Tabernacle?

Live It: Write a one-page reflection on where you sense God leading Tabernacle.

Study 8: Organizing Around Mission

Outcome: Identify areas of church life that require alignment with our mission priorities

Scripture: Nehemiah 2; Ephesians 4

Big Question: Does our organization serve the mission?

Big Idea: Traction aligns every ministry with Mission Clarity.

Case Study: Nehemiah organizes people around God's work.

Discussion: If this really is who Christ is calling us to become — what aligns, what doesn't, what needs strengthening, what deserves further discernment?

Practice: Evaluate one ministry through the mission lens.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 8

Coaching: Where do you see needs for greater alignment?

Live It: Identify one practical improvement for aligning our ministries.

Study 9: Seeking God's Confirmation

Outcome: Prayerfully craft our Mission Alignment Priorities Statement. This study includes reading the draft Covenant aloud, praying over it, revising it, and seeking consensus.

Scripture: Acts 15; Proverbs 3:5–6

Big Question: Where do we collectively sense Christ leading?

Big Idea: Before moving on, we pause and seek confirmation.

Case Study: The Jerusalem Council as communal discernment.

Discussion: Where do we sense peace? What still requires prayer?

Practice: Fast one meal and pray.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 9

Coaching: What gives you confidence this is God's direction?

Live It: Share one affirmation you've heard with your prayer partners.

Study 10: Affirmation and Commissioning

Outcome: Celebrate what Christ has done — affirming our Shared Covenant and our Mission Alignment Priorities together.

Scripture: Joshua 24; John 13:1–17; Matthew 28:18–20

Big Question: How will we faithfully live what Christ has shown us?

Big Idea: The journey culminates in renewed covenant and commissioning.

Case Study: Joshua renews covenant; Jesus washes feet and sends disciples.

Discussion: How has Christ changed you? How will we lead differently?

Practice: Celebrate with the washing of one another's feet.

Reading: A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Ch. 10

Coaching: How will you continue discerning?

Live It: Share your testimony and next step.

The Journey Beyond the Journey

Following this journey, discernment gives way to faithful implementation. A new Mission Alignment Team will be formed to prayerfully translate our shared discernment into recommendations for ministry structures, staffing, finances, governance, and facilities — not inventing a new direction, but faithfully aligning Tabernacle with the Mission Clarity we've discerned together. These recommendations will be offered to Church Council, where further prayerful conversation will intentionally shape our next chapter together.

In this way, we honor Proverbs 24:27. We prepare the field before building the house. We seek Christ before making plans. We discover God's "already" before deciding our next step.

And we trust that the One who has faithfully led His Church for two thousand years will continue leading Tabernacle into the future.

Ready to Join the Journey?

Who Are We Becoming? A Discipleship Formation Journey is more than a study—it is an invitation to seek Christ together, listen for the Holy Spirit, and discern who God is calling us to become as individuals and as a church family. We hope you'll prayerfully consider joining us.

How to Register

Contact Pastor Matt at mmorris@tabernaclemethodist.com
or the Church Office at (336) 674-2941 or office@tabernaclemethodist.com.

What We Ask of Participants

- Come humble and curious. We're seeking Christ together.
- Commit to attending every session.
- Complete the weekly reading and come prepared to engage in thoughtful conversation.
- Pray consistently for God's guidance throughout the journey.
- Meet (by phone or in person) weekly with Pastor Matt or Pastor Joe for a brief coaching conversation designed to encourage spiritual growth and accountability.

If travel or illness prevents you from attending, Zoom participation may be available, and we will do our best to provide notes from each session so you can stay connected.

Resources & Commitment

There is no anticipated cost to participate. Each participant will receive a complimentary copy of "The Pursuit of God" by A.W. Tozer as a companion resource for the journey.

About halfway through the journey, participants will be invited to prayerfully consider a covenant of continued commitment. Choosing not to continue beyond this covenant milestone is perfectly acceptable. The covenant simply marks the transition into the shared discernment phase for those who sense God calling them to continue.

Our Hope

Our prayer is that this journey will deepen your relationship with Christ, strengthen our relationships with one another, and help us discern together who God is calling us to become.