

Seminary Experience

WESLEY

JOURNAL

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What Does a Disciple Look Like?

WJ Staff Thoughts on Discipleship

MDiv, Year 2, United Methodist - I lived in Southern Germany for two years while in the U.S. Army.

To spread the love of Christ.

MICHAEL POTESTA

Design Editor



MDiv, Year 2, United Methodist - I won the best bagger competition at Martin's Grocery Store.

Using what your strengths are to follow and lead.

ALEX WOODY

Managing Editor



MDiv, Year 3, United Methodist - I lived in West Germany as a kid before reunification.

To love others as Christ loves us.

DENISE HASKINS

Editor-in-Chief



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Disciples in Leadership

Ellen LaCroix Fillette
President, Student Council

When you take the time to think about it, the phrase “a disciple in leadership” is really an oxymoron. To be a disciple and to be a leader are seemingly opposite tasks. To be a disciple means that we are passionately modeling our life after our leader. A disciple of Jesus commits their whole being to living a life that follows the example of the one we call Christ. To be a disciple is to be a committed follower. On the other hand leadership implies that others are following you. As a matter of fact, being a leader, by standard definition, necessitates that you have followers. It is not possible to call yourself a leader if no one follows. So if we take these two definitions and try to smash them together we end up with a distorted idea of a linear relationship starting with God and then trickling down: leader, follower, leader, follower, and so on.

The image that comes to mind is the scene from Peter Pan where the lost boys are “following the leader.” As they journey together each lost boy –one after another in line- is both a leader and a follower doing exactly as the boy ahead of him in line did. But this can’t be a right image of disciple leadership. It runs the risk of ending up like a particularly difficult game of telephone, and it looks nothing like the Kingdom of God that belongs to the least of these or the Kingdom of God where the last will be first. But like any oxymoron (Some of my favorites include “jumbo shrimp,” “known rumor,” “act naturally,” and “freezer burn.”), I think these two words take on a different meaning altogether when they are combined.

Being a disciple in leadership means that I am passionately modeling my life after Christ and inviting others to join me in following. A disciple does not lead from in front of others, but rather alongside of others. It is faithfully living into the vision of the Kingdom of God and inviting others to participate in working towards the manifestation of this vision. Disciple leadership requires that I recognize that I am only one part of the body of Christ, no more or less important than the others. Most importantly, disciple leadership offers the assurance of knowing that I never walk alone. God goes before me, and my brothers and sisters walk beside me hand in hand.

Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson
President Wesley Theological Seminary

I sometimes think: Pick one. You can either be a follower of Jesus or a leader of people. Jesus doesn’t care about much of what we do to be effective leaders in the church and its institutions. I like to reconcile that by remembering Jesus’ direction to the disciples: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” But I know just before that he says: “You received without paying, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts,” and that doesn’t square with my lifestyle.

I also know we don’t ever get to start from scratch. As disciples or leaders, our DNA, family history, relationships, the way we see the world, the neighborhood we live in, our need for food, water and shelter, and the individuality of everyone we work with – all these require us to try to be faithful in our current reality. Jesus began by reminding them: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” I believe a disciple in leadership is a trust walk through the world the way it is toward a vision for what God wants it to be.

The way I try to live and lead in that tension is first, to seek humility and wisdom. I get this from prayer and study and from other disciples, which includes my family, the faculty and staff, members of our board and the people who are a part of our extended seminary community. I surround myself with people who are also trying to be disciples and I try (sometimes), to let Jesus lead me through them.

And then, I try to practice a leadership guided by a vision of the kingdom of God and the way the organization I lead can be a part of that. When I was inaugurated as president in 2002, I saw the vision for Wesley this way: “The challenge to Christian disciples in this generation is to live the Great Commandment and the Great Commission on a global scale. This requires hopeful people of character who practice Christian values such as compassion, forgiveness, generosity, justice and humility, and who have the conviction and courage of their faith to lead sacrificial lives.” That is still how I see our mission.



Disciples Across Traditions

The first course approved for the new Certificate of Study in Ecology and Theology being offered by the Washington Theological Consortium is scheduled to be hosted at Wesley this semester. The 2-credit Liturgics Practicum on Ecology and Worship (PW-316) will be taught Monday evenings 5:30pm-7:30pm by Professor Joseph Bush, who also serves as the coordinator of the certificate program. Students interested in earning the certificate will complete 12 credits through the Consortium in the following four areas: Religious Heritage in Ecological Perspective, Ecology of Religion in Socio-Cultural Contexts, Ministerial and Public Leadership for Ecological Integrity, and Elective in Ecological Studies.

The Consortium is already promoting courses in each of these areas for Fall, January, Spring, and Summer terms. This year, the courses will be offered at Wesley Theological Seminary, Virginia Theological Seminary, Howard University School of Divinity, and Gettysburg Seminary. For more information, visit www.WashTheo-Con.org/ecology.



Disciples & The Arts

The Dadian Gallery presents "Ordinary Objects in Ordinary Time," an exhibition of sculptures by artist Ginger Geyer. These surprising and delightful replicas of everyday items are crafted from hand-built, glazed porcelain. The artist is also a seminarian with experience in pastoral ministry and spiritual formation. The show opens August 31st; the artist will speak about her work at a reception on September 24th from 4:00 – 5:00 pm in the gallery. All are welcome.

Upcoming Events

Sat 8.29 @ 7:30p on the Wesley Lawn == Wesley Does the Drive-In: The Lego Movie! (Housing, ABS, OSW)

Mon 8.31 @ 5:15p == Plumblin Meeting

Wed 9.2 @ 10:00p on the Refectory Lawn == Capture the Flag (WF)

Thu 9.3 == BBQ Party (KSA)

Mon 9.7 == Welcoming Service (KSA)

Mon 9.7 == Labor Day Cookout (Housing)

Mon 9.14 @ 7:30a in Elderdice == Second Monday Lecture: Called and Sent (Rev. Dr. Susan Henry Crowe)

Thu 9.17 @ 5:00p in K105 == Faith & Politics Society Meeting

Thu 9.24 @ 4:00pm in Dadian Gallery = Reception & Artist's Talk: "Ordinary Objects in Ordinary Time" (Ginger Geyer)

Sat 9.26 == Awareness Walk with DC Stop Modern Slavery (Plumblin)

Sun 9.27 == 911 Unity Walk (Plumblin)

Sun 9.27 @ 6:00p in NRH Millian Lounge == Game Night (WF)

Sun 10.4 == Prudential FREE 5K (Literally Active)

Recurring Events

ABS Community Forum == 1st and 3rd Tuesdays 6:00p-7:00p beginning September 15

ABS Worship == 2nd and 4th Tuesdays 6:00p-7:00p in Oxnam Chapel

Chapel == Tuesdays 11:00a-12:00p in Oxnam Chapel

KSA Prayer Meeting == Thursdays 9:30p-10:30p

Wednesday Night Chapel == Wednesdays 6:00p-7:00p beginning September 9

In need of musicians for Wednesday Night Chapel. Please contact Carol Cook Moore for details.

Wesley Fellowship Meeting == Every Other Tuesday 5:00p-6:00p in Bess Jones