

I want to begin by saying I am so excited about this new position and look forward to being part of where God is leading FUMC Pearland as we live out our mission to *'Follow Jesus, Build Real Relationships, Grow in Real Discipleship and Experience Real Transformation'*.

When Pastor Reggie talked to me about the possibility of stepping into this new role there wasn't a moment of hesitation about being part of the Discipleship process at our church. Okay well maybe a few 'Moses, who me?' moments but after some prayer and reflection on what brought me to this point in my life it was an easy YES.

As I began to prepare for the transition, I remembered a resource I had found back in 2017 or 2018 that was published by Discipleship Ministries of the UMC. It was written by Rev. Junius B. Dotson. I had the opportunity to attend a retreat that Rev. Dotson led here in the Houston area. Rev. Dotson died in 2021. Junius was an amazing speaker, leader and servant of God. I pulled out my copy of *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations* and began re-reading and studying the guide. This guide is just a part of many tools and resources that are part of the 'See All The People', a movement of the United Methodist focused on making Disciples. If you are interested in learning more go to their website: seeallthepeople.org. The 'Developing ... Guide' is not a lengthy read. It is divided into sections and following each section are some reflection questions. I will have copies available at the meeting on Monday night. I hope you will take some time to read through the material and spend some time with the reflection questions.

I would like to share with you something from the guide. I shared this with a small group of leaders planning for GIFTS Camp

"A story is told of a philanthropist who hired a number of people during the depression era to build a road. Although his intentions were good, the philanthropist had hired the people for a meaningless job in which they built a road that went nowhere. As the workers began to realize that their work had no end goal, their enthusiasm for the work waned and the road project eventually discontinued."

The writer goes on to say "When we talk about intentional discipleship, we must know the end goal, and we must know the reason behind our mission of making disciples. In this resource, we will call this the 'why' of discipleship. If we are going to intentionally build roads of discipleship, we must know why we are building them, the path they will take, and where they will lead. The stakes are too high and this moment is too crucial to build roads to nowhere.

The author offers the following definitions:

Corporate Discipleship (the church): *Doing everything that we can as a church to provide opportunities for disciples to grow and mature in faith.*

Personal Discipleship (the individual): *Equipping and empowering disciples for their own growth.*

The GIFTS leaders were invited to stop and answer a couple of questions as they are preparing for G.I.F.T.S. Camp 2024. I would like to invite you as you read these questions, replace GIFTS Camp with any other ministry here at FUMC.

WHY do we have GIFTS Camp?

HOW does GIFTS Camp align with our church mission statement? How does it help participants to grow in their faith?

WHO are we hoping to reach through GIFTS Camp?

I will close with this statement from "Building A Discipleship Culture, by Mike Breen"

***"If you try to build the church, you will rarely get disciples.
But if you make disciples, you will always get the church."***

I am available and would love to talk with anyone about the Discipleship Journey here at our church, both corporate and personally. Give me a call or send me a text 713.504-1239, or email smcelya@fumcpearland.org

Grace and peace,

Susan McElya
Director of Discipleship