

# Update from HOPE Team

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By Larry Arthur

One of Dr. Schuler's sermons was about the fact that all things are possible through faith. Think about it. All things are possible through faith. I believe it and that is why I'm here.

Today I am talking about the positive direction our church is taking. If we have visitors, I hope you become as excited as we are about what is happening here at State Street.

As disciples, our mission is to make disciples for Jesus Christ. As a disciple we have dual roles. We need to continue to love, respect and care for each other. We also need to make our church better in a way that helps us to pursue our mission. To create an environment for discipleship. A side benefit as we move forward is our community will see us better as a place of hope; a place they can come to.

Several of us attended sessions to learn what we need, what to do, as well as what not to do to move forward with discipleship and church growth.

Based on what we learned, the council decided we needed to refocus on our real mission of discipleship and to better prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually to continue our journey.

We started by changing the name of the Leadership council to the HOPE Team to constantly remind us our true mission is to make disciples for Christ.

Personally, I don't like the word Leadership attached to any team or committee because every attendee, every member, every disciple in this church is a potential leader.

We are leaders by our faithful attendance for Sunday service, by our gifts, by giving our talents and time.

Pastor Monique is guiding the HOPE Team through a study series to help us understand our roles and spiritual readiness to move forward. If you noticed, our pastor's sermons are guiding us to an awareness of what member and disciple means.

The Team is also in the process of changing our internal structure to better represent the needs of our church. For example: do we need all the committees we have? Can we effectively combine some committees? Our goal is twofold. We want to create a church internal structure that will most effectively move us toward our mission. We also want to reduce the need for our members to serve on multiple committees.

Good things happen when you refocus. For example, at a team meeting Betty Dork said we need to phone our membership and attendees - not to say " Hey, why weren't you in church Sunday?" but "how are you doing? Things OK? Do you need us?" Let every one know we care. Guess what! Betty and her volunteer team took responsibility to make it happen. We have already had favorable feed back – she can always use more volunteers.

There are many activities we are already doing that promote our mission. A few examples are:  
1. The Back Pack Program 2. The Summer Lunch Program to provide lunches for children week days. 3. Vacations Bible School 4. Bible Study Group at Shields Comfort Care where Esther Anderson and Dora Moore reside. They started with 4 people and have now had as many as 25.

There were many elements covered in the seminars critical to fulfilling our mission of making disciples for Christ and growing our church. We will talk about the three that are absolute musts.

First - music is a key part of discipleship and church growth. It is a fact that Praise music is a regular part of the service in churches that are growing. I think our Praise team does it beautifully and they are getting better. Remember, praise music is another way God has to bring His message of Love and Devotion. The second element is tolerance versus acceptance. Two examples of this: 1. Music – As individuals we like different kinds of music. We have two choices, we can accept and respect each others' music. Or we can tolerate a song until it is over. Our body language' good or bad, tells the people around us how we feel.

Second – Acceptance includes how we treat our friends, each other and new comers when we meet. When we greet a person, it is more than a smile, hand shake and move on. Acceptance means whether a person is black or white, young or old, rich or poor, we need to know who they are, their interests and needs. They need to know we respect and welcome them. Tolerance will not lead to making disciples for Christ nor help our Church to grow. The attitudes of acceptance, respect, love, compassion and forgiveness will make a difference. We sometimes forget the impact forgiveness has on all of us. This is an area each of us can have a positive impact on the future of our church. These attitudes are powerful tools to do God's work.

The Third "must" is: Love and take care of each other. Remember our traditions with the understanding some of them may change to meet the needs of our Church family. Most of us love the old hymns. They have special meaning for many of us. We enjoy choir music. We intend to have the choir back in action by Fall. Hilary said she would be happy to make the last hymn one of your favorites each Sunday. You need to write your favorite on a card and place it in Hilary's box in the parlor. A third of Sunday's music is in your hands.

We have stressed our mission – making disciples for Christ and some of the things all of us can do that make a difference.

Will the HOPE Team please stand? This is a good team. We have a serious mission but we are having a good time together doing it. Thank you. If you have a question or comment, please talk with them. They care about what you have to say. If you want to learn more about the HOPE Team, you are welcome to sit in on a meeting.

If you want to become more involved, I have mentioned many activities that could use volunteers. As a thought, the activities mentioned started with someone's idea and involvement. We welcome new ideas with your involvement to expand the activities happening in our church.

If you want to learn more about discipleship, Pastor Monique is conducting a study at 12 noon on Wednesdays, resuming in July. It is a good way to find your readiness as a disciple.

We have a good Pastor. She is pouring her heart into our church. She needs our support and our prayers. She recently told me she is excited with the direction our church is going. I know the HOPE Team is excited. I'm excited. I hope you are excited too. You should be because together we can make a good church an outstanding church.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to talk about the church we all love.

Larry