

My Journey: Talk to Leadership Academy

Good Morning! I was pleased to learn that interaction with our leaders is a part of the LA now, and honored to be asked to share with you my journey.

We are in many ways the result of the choices we have made in our lives: mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

You may have given, or heard, a similar Lecture I am told I gave to our children (later referred to as Lecture 101). It goes something like this:

There are three foundational questions that largely determine who you will become along life's journey:

1. What are you going to do about Jesus?
2. How will you develop and deploy your gifts and talents?
3. Who will become your soul mate, or where will you find deep love, support, and encouragement?

All other decisions in life seem to be connected to these life-forming questions.

I want to address the first two questions and share my journey with you.

First, thanks for stepping up to the opportunity to participate in the Leadership Academy. You have made a choice that helps answer the first two questions about your faith and your talents.

Those who are asked to lead are not necessarily ready, or willing. I was contacted about a year ago by the Committee on Nominations asking that I move into the sequence leading to Chair of the Church Leadership Council; serving first as Vice Chair this year, and then Chair for two more years. I asked for time to prayerfully consider it. In my reflections, I found myself wondering much as I suspect Moses did when God asked him to lead His people out of Egypt. You may recall how Moses responded:

He asked God:

- Why me? They won't listen to me. I am not very good at public speaking.
- Oh my Lord, please send someone else!

Moses' plea expressed complete exasperation, fear, and near despair at the overwhelming task ahead.

Moses' conversation with God in the Burning Bush, was very convincing; and, mine with Mickey Rainwater was also.

I have been asked to serve the church on numerous occasions. I am comforted in knowing from personal experience that God will provide and lead me through my insecurities and self doubts. The letting go of control and trusting Him is the toughest part. Reordering priorities is also tough. On priorities I am reminded of this story:

Tell story of "Slow Group" about Alison.

So here are the highlights of My Journey:

First spiritually:

- My initial wakeup call was when I was ushering at a Billy Graham Crusade. Attending every night I came to realize I was missing something. That was a turning point.
- My Walk to Emmaus was another very profound experience. (My daughter sponsored me while she was at Furman. Janie Hobbs drove me to the Walk)
- Continuing my accountability through weekly meetings with a reunion group for the past 20+ years has certainly helped me stay the course
- I participate in a Contemplative Prayer Group where we intentionally take time to listen and experience God through the Holy Spirit. This has taken me to new levels.
- I found opportunities to learn and grow while in WDC for 4 months this year: Wesley Seminary Leadership Center, Metro, Nat. Cathedral and the wonderful Christian witness that occurred.
- I strive for daily practice of the means of grace, following the three simple rules: **Do no harm, Do Good, and Stay in Love with God**

I find myself in a different place today than a year ago. My hope and prayer is that by the grace of God I will continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom making decisions pleasing to Him.

Now, my journey of Leadership Positions:

This year has been one of transition:

- First to step down from leader of the Leadership Academy design team. I think Fred Wallin and his team has done an outstanding job.
- And then, to recruit and train new Stephen Ministers and Brad Overturf to replace me as a member of the Stephen Leader Team.
- I am participating with the Next 100 Team's work to reset and refocus our church given the changing demographics and trends in church membership.

Previously I served as:

- COM Chair when it was first formed as a new church structure. Spurgeon McCartt was Senior Pastor. I was in my early 30's with three children.
- Committee on Nominations
- Leadership Development Committee
- Stephen Ministry Leader Team
- Leadership Academy Design Team
- CLC Vice-Chair

We do have challenges ahead: As Yogi Berra once said: "**The future is not what it used to be**"- I stand in wonder and awe as I read the book Mickey gave me: **I refuse to lead a dying church.** Yes, we do have challenges. But we are a very talented, resourceful community of faith that will rise to the challenges in the future continuing to make a difference in the lives of our members and community.

I encourage you to prepare for these challenges. You will learn in the Leadership Academy that to lead effectively one must first give attention to leading yourself in intentional faith development. The UMC mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. That is a daunting task. Only **Transformed people transform people.** You cannot lead where you haven't been. So, have a plan to continue your faith development. That is foundational to church leadership.

Welcome to the First Broad Street's leadership cohort of 2012. We need your prayers, time, talents and presence as leaders. May your journey be fruitful!

Now, what questions do you have?

Day 35: Inspire the Next Generation

I am especially impassioned about the next generation. They seem to have nothing. We have given them less than crumbs, only our own criticism and cynicism about things. As much as I have given my own priesthood to work for reform and change, I must admit that this does little of itself to inspire, transform or unite. It does not of itself point toward Someone to adore, something worth living for, and some things worth dying for. As Vaclav Havel also says, all we have left in the West are "things worth buying." More liberal reforms, all the married and women priests in the world, will not fill the enormous spiritual vacuum of the young — or the old, for that matter. Our people are dying for lack of vision, for lack of transcendent meaning to name their soul and their struggles. What good is inclusive language if no one is even listening to our message? Why would a young person join a group of fifty-year-old complainers who are unwilling to speak of God and joy and peace beyond comprehension? These are the obsessive preoccupations of my generation who have had more freedom, change, our-way-of-arranging-the-world, than any generation in human history. Why are we unwilling to join in the cosmic dance that invites and thrills the would-be searchers? Why are so many of us, deconstructed more than we are aware, afraid to kneel and adore what is — in the only lifetime we will ever have? Don't we know, in the words of Anne Lamott, that a hundred years from now it will be "all new people"? We must give them something good to build on.

I think it is time for reconstruction. We need to know what we *do* believe, why we are proud of our-only-past, what is good about even the broken things (life, church, state), and how we can begin a new language of responsibility. At this point, I think anything else is a waste of time and refusal of grace. Human life is too short to waste it on the negative. It is too easy to be cynical.

— Richard Rohr in *Grace in Action*

To Practice This Today: Write a letter to someone in the next generation (or a generation or two beyond that). Speak positively of the gifts of your faith; give them something good to build on. Remember that to get their attention, you will need to reach them where they are living.

In the Day 35 thread in the Practice Circle, post a slogan or a statement that you would like to share with the next generation.