

highpoint

ascending leaders

equipping churches for Christ-centered discipleship

Why Churches Return

"I returned to Ascending Leaders for coaching with Mike because he had the insight and expertise with discipleship that I needed with a discipleship initiative I was pursuing. I am grateful for Mike's perspective, asking good questions and offering thoughtful ways to have us disciple people in the way of Jesus!"

Rev. Andy Sytsma
New Life Christian Reformed Church
Spring, TX

"Chapelwood United Methodist Church in Houston, TX first engaged Ascending Leaders in 2017 for discipleship coaching. They guided us through taking the REVEAL survey and creating a discipleship pathway that we call My Next Step. Our congregation responded well to these initial steps that Ascending Leaders helped us discern, to move our church to deeper, broader Christ-centered discipleship. We could sense the change but wanted data to back up the anecdotal evidence, so we re-engaged AL for a second REVEAL survey in 2020. We found that there were measurable results of improved discipleship. Two years later, we are still implementing what we learned from the second season with AL!"

Teresa Rossy, Director of Adult Discipleship
Chapelwood UMC
Houston, TX

Church Needs Are Our #1 Priority

That is why Audra Dezfulian has started as our "Church Liaison."



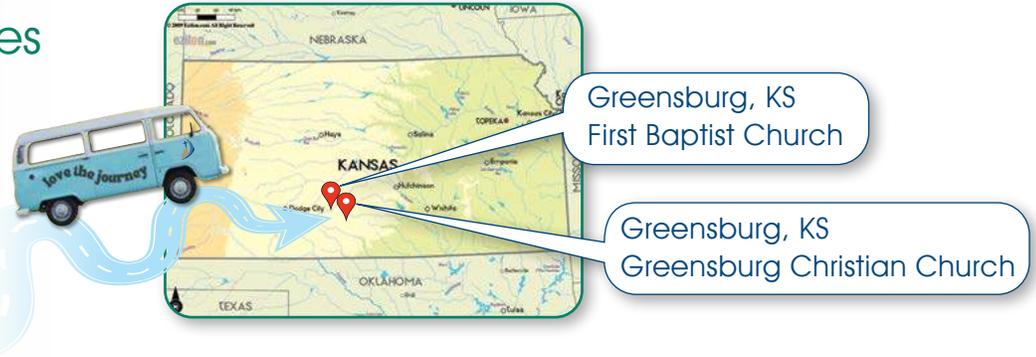
Audra has a passion for discipleship. She holds a Masters in Evangelism & Leadership from Wheaton College. One of her more recent accomplishments includes growing her local chapter of the faith-based Mothers of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS) program from 20 members to over 70 members with a waitlist! Audra is definitely someone pastors and discipleship leaders will want to meet. She is focused on the well-being of your church.

equipping churches for ...



Ascending Leaders Launches Third Co-lab

#1: Kansas Churches
2019-2021



#2: Texas UM Churches
2021-2022



#3: Kansas Churches
2022-2024



...Christ-centered discipleship.



Discipleship for Millennials: An Interview

The Hallings are members of Solana Beach Presbyterian Church (SBPC) in Solana Beach, CA where Cristy sings in the chancel choir, Mark is an Elder, and the children are active in Sunday School. Fellow church member and AL board member Judy Enns asked Mark about his discipleship journey and how the church drew the family into its doors.

Mark, what stood out and drew your family to SBPC as your church home?

The biggest draw was how the church fit our entire family. We had been attending a church with a young adult demographic, but it did not have a well-developed program for children. We wanted a church with a pathway for our kids. They were learning so much in the SBPC pre-school, so we decided to try the Sunday School. The SS experience made us decide this church was a place for our whole family. SBPC preaches and practices an intergenerational, neighborhood church community which was really appealing to us. The leadership for every age level was impressive.

The senior and associate pastors made us feel very, very welcome. The senior pastor reached out, excited to meet us. He and His wife visited us in our home, which was amazing because we barely knew the senior pastor at our prior church after worshipping there for seven years. Their visit left a big, positive impression on us.

What changes have you seen at SBPC between the first and second time the church took the REVEAL assessment?

We have seen a real commitment to spiritual growth among congregants. After our church got results from the first REVEAL study, staff responded by challenging the church with the message that “we are going somewhere.” In small groups, sharing was enthusiastic. We got deeper into the Word. People seemed genuinely interested in their own spiritual growth, and not just those new to the Bible.



Twenty-five-year long Christians were interested in spiritual development, in helping others grow, too. In our small group, two men in their sixties began meeting one on one — one eager to explore the Bible more, the other eager to teach and see changes in their lives. REVEAL lit this path.

How is your discipleship journey evolving as you balance a busy professional, family and church life?

Balance evolves but is rooted in a clear sense of my destination. From time to time, I need to rework the circumstances of my personal commitment to my “15 minutes in my favorite chair,” which is how SBPC characterizes our personal spiritual growth disciplines — silence, solitude, prayer, Bible, journaling. Sometimes life has to be rearranged to ensure that spiritual growth happens. Otherwise, I can end up missing out. I watch what I say “yes” and “no” to. Do I want to coach little league or invest in my church and spiritual life? It is easy for good life activities to push us like the wind, away from what has highest value for our lives.

Taking REVEAL helped me ask myself, “What is my discipleship journey? Where am I? What stage(s) am I in? Where do I want to be?” It is exciting to be on this journey with all ages in our church, from families with new-borns to empty-nesters. We learn together, we see our fit in the global church, and we grow sturdier together. I am glad our pastors are staying the course with constant reminders of our discipleship path, our personal spiritual growth practices, and opportunities for us to take responsibility for our own spiritual well being.



Interview by Judy Enns

Measurable results.



Ministry Is Happening Internationally Despite Persecution

On March 24 & 25, two of our Discipleship Coaches traveled to a rural village.

- They held a two-day discipleship workshop for many young Christians on the basics of the faith.
- One church leader they met was Meg (not her real name), a Christian for approximately six years.
- When her family came to know about her decision to follow Jesus, they severely beat her, and threw her and her family out of the farming business and their home. Her husband beats her regularly because of the hardships her faith in Christ has brought them.
- Her in-laws gave Meg the opportunity to return home if she would leave Jesus, but she decided to suffer for Jesus and not give up. She told her in-laws, "I have received Jesus in my life, I do not want anything. My share and my treasure are in heaven."
- She has been questioned about her faith by the village people many times. Each time gave her the opportunity to share the gospel.
- During the two-day workshop, Meg's husband surprisingly attended some of the sessions. She was very happy that he came to the Church, not to beat her, but to listen to the Word.
- **Please pray** for Meg and her family. Please pray that the Lord would deliver her from all the abuse and hardships. Please pray for our international discipleship coaches who will reach out again to this village and other villages with the discipleship so needed by young Christians.
- Please give to the "international fund," to support more visits like this to rural villages.



**Churches
who are
ripe for being
equipped in
Christ-centered
discipleship,**

have a pastor who
knows something BIG
must be done.

Eternal outcomes.



Why Foundations Support Discipleship Co-labs



The **Helm** Foundation

We scholarship small churches to be part of an Ascending Leaders Texas UMC Discipleship Co-lab because Mike and his team produce predictable, tangible, and verifiable results.



The **Artevel** Foundation

We scholarship small churches to be part of an Ascending Leaders Kansas Discipleship Co-lab because we know a rural church is a vital part of a small community, and when healthy, these churches provide not only spiritual guidance, but also help people walk through issues in their lives and provide services not readily available in the rural communities they serve.

**If you
keep
doing
what
you
have
always
done,**

you will **NOT**
see more
Christ-centered
discipleship in
your church.



What has COVID-19 taught you.

Growing gracefully-resilient disciples is hard!

NOW, equip your disciples for life's challenges.

 ascending
leaders
equipping churches for Christ-centered discipleship

Churches' Discipleship Needs Don't Take a Vacation

Summer is here, vacations abound, and the ministry of churches continues on. Since churches continue on, Ascending Leaders continues on as well.

- Our coaches in the Texas UMC Co-lab meet each month to coach their churches.
- Our coaches in the Kansas Co-lab 2022-2024 are facilitating a two-day gathering of their churches in July.
- Over the month of August, Mike will be teaching the adult Sunday School of a church in the principles of Christ-centered discipleship.
- Our international coaches are discipling more new Christians in new village churches.
- So much more support work is happening behind the scenes.

Help make all this work happen this summer, by clicking on "donate" on the Ascending Leaders website (or mailing a check to our address on the "contact" page of the website).