

Discover and Live Your Future Overview

Community of Christ, " your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.¹

Imagine Transforming Community

Imagine the possibility of a big idea - the idea that authentic and loving communities can transform our world. Not just any communities, but communities shaped by Christ's radical hospitality, selfless love, and transforming peace. This is God's dream for our world – Zion, where we discover our true interdependence and learn to live as one.

Imagine a vision so expansive it can't be constrained by human form or structure. This divine impulse moves freely across space and time connecting and restoring relationships with one another and every living thing on this planet. This vision is revealed in inspired words to the church in 2007:

The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.²

Imagine a faith movement totally immersed in this vision of loving relationships in community. Gatherings of two or more generously living, loving, and sharing an alternative way to be together – a way that leads to mutual wellbeing and wholeness. This vision is not about a particular form of church but *a quality of being together* that is the foundation for everything we do. It is not about filling space with the right words or way to worship. It is about opening space in our lives for one another and the transforming possibility of the Spirit.

Inspired words to the church in 2010 reveal a deep need for a new level of receptivity to this vision:

When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be.³

In both relational and spiritual transformation, we need one another. The Spirit is seeking to reveal a treasure that often remains hidden beneath our highly structured church experience. The Spirit is inviting us to rediscover the power of authentic and loving communities to transform us and the world.

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 163:1

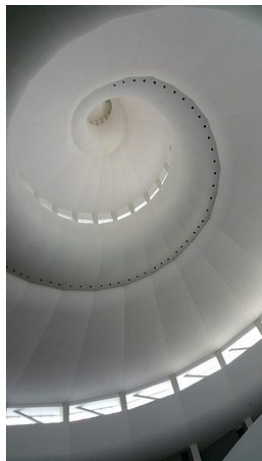
² Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

³ Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b

The Mission Prayer as Rhythm of Life

The Mission Prayer invites us to *discover and live* a way of life as individuals and communities where we slow down, truly see one another and the stranger, and risk a new level of openness in our relationships with God and one another.

Three simple words invite us to “spiritual and relational transformation”⁴ individually and in community:



Awaken to the movement of God in us, among us, and ahead of us. This is about implementing practices of deep listening in our relationship with God, one another, and our neighbors.

Risk new questions, conversations, relationships, and new forms of community. This is about experimenting our way into the future as we adapt to new experiences and insights.

Bless as we receive and share God’s love and peace. This is about reflecting on what we are learning and then committing to new actions of Christ’s love and peace.

This rhythm is not linear but deeply interconnected. Together these dimensions of Spirit-led living lead us to embody and live Christ’s love and peace in relationship with others in community.

Exploring the Rhythm: Going Deeper

This rhythm is about creating *receptive space* in our lives and relationships for relational and spiritual transformation. Creating receptive space first and foremost is about listening. It is about humbly acknowledging that we can’t make relational or spiritual transformation happen. It is a gift that occurs when we come together, share our lives with others, and make room for the Spirit’s transformative work in us, among us, and ahead of us.

We pursue two essential questions that guide us on this journey:

1. What is God doing in us, among us, and ahead of us?
2. How then shall we live as *disciples and communities* of Christ’s love and peace?

When we encounter God in relationship with others we are changed. This is the essence of *Awakening* - we see ourselves and others differently. There is a desire and need to share in loving community about what God is doing in our lives. We come with new questions and seek a place to explore new insights and ideas about how we might respond as *individuals and communities* of Christ’s love and peace.

⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b

We begin to think about what we do when we gather through the lens of our experiences with others. Christian community becomes *less* about us and *more* about how we adapt to create space for new relationships, exploration, healing, and renewal. In other words, we risk moving from a fairly predictable template we call “church” to a more responsive, open, and relational way of sharing in learning, fellowship, and worship.

We discover this way of being the church in Acts 2. After Peter’s moving message and the Spirit’s witness those gathered were changed. They asked the question, “*What shall we do? We have experienced this Spirit-filled message and want to respond!*” This early Christian community responded in two ways:

1. They committed to follow the way of the risen Christ through baptism.
2. They spent much time together. They broke bread together in their homes with glad and generous hearts. They shared together about what God was doing in their lives and in their neighborhoods. In response to their experiences, they sold their possessions, so they would have the means to help those in need.

The Acts 2 community was formed in response to their encounter with the living Christ and the needs of those around them. They did not have a program or guide book to follow. They were experimenting their way into the future with one another and God. The two essential questions above led them to *Awaken* to new life in Christ, *Risk* new questions, relationships, and forms of community, and become a *Blessing* of God’s love and peace.

The rhythm of the mission prayer invites us on a continuing journey of listening, experimentation, and compassionate action. This is how we embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ as disciples and communities of love and peace. If this way of being the church seems a bit unsettling, it is. It requires us to relocate our foundation from a static church experience to deep and meaningful relationships with one another, our neighbors, and God.

Expectations for the Journey

What are the outcomes of this journey? This is challenging to define particularly in light of the two essential questions above. How disciples, small groups, and congregations adapt and commit to new ways of gathering and responding in mission will depend on their openness to relational and spiritual transformation. This journey leads *less* to a particular model of church and *more* to a way of being church that will always be adapting to the Spirit’s movement in us, among us, and ahead of us.

Although the journey will look different for different size groups and congregations, *Discover and Live Your future* will focus on five areas of emphasis. This is not a checklist but does provide insight into specific areas of emphasis unique to our experience and challenges as Community of Christ:

- **Encounter Spiritual Depth and Simplicity** – We will intentionally move from a “highly structured church model” to a simpler more relational model of gathering. Individual and community spiritual practices will provide initial steps to living the rhythm of *Awaken, Risk, and Bless*. We will explore a

way of coming together that is sustainable, life giving, and aligns with our identity, mission, and strength as loving and inviting Christian communities.

- **Rediscover the Blessings of Community** – We will go deeper in relationships and engagement in one another’s lives. Practices of hospitality and relationship building will help us rediscover the power of loving community when we gather and when we engage with others during the week.
- **Experiment with New Connections and Entry Points** – We will risk new conversations, relationships, and forms of community beyond our weekly gatherings with spiritual explorers and seekers. We will explore practices that reorient our encounter with God to include experiences in the midst of our everyday lives with others. We will rediscover radical hospitality as a way of life. We will live and convey the gospel in new language and form. (Doctrine and Covenants 162:2e)
- **Embody and Live Christ’s Love and Peace** - We will explore ways we are called as disciples and communities to embody (i.e. live out) Christ’s peace in relationship with others. This is about a shift from preaching or teaching as the primary mode of delivery to actually becoming Christ’s presence of hospitality, healing, and transformation in relationship with others. The mission prayer will provide a foundation for how we live (i.e. establishing a rhythm of life – awaken, risk, and bless) and respond to the needs and opportunities around us.
- **Experience Renewal and Wholeness** – In all we do, we will continue to ask the question; *what is sustainable?* We will let some things go in order to embrace some new ways of being. We will commit to times of rest and renewal. We will evaluate our capacity for our next faithful steps. We will commit to finding hope and joy in the journey together.

Support for the Journey

There are a variety of ways to engage in Discover and Live Your Future including:

- Begin with the Mission Prayer. Ask yourself as a disciple, what does it mean to live this prayer in my life? Ask yourselves as congregations or small groups, what does it mean for this prayer to shape our experience together? Consider implementing one small experiment or step to more fully live the rhythm of *Awaken, Risk, and Bless*.
- Explore resources on www.missionalleaders.org. This website will be continuously updated with resources and practices as we continue to gain experience working directly with mission centers and congregations. Current Leading Congregation in Mission (LCM) practices, resources, and videos provide vision and practical helps for a more relational and Spirit-led experience through the lens of congregational life. *Discover and Live Your Future* resources will go deeper in envisioning our future through the lens of authentic, loving, and invitational Christian community.

- Join the facebook page “Living and Leading Missionally”. We will post thoughtful reflections and ideas for how to engage on this journey. Also look for reflections and ideas from leaders in the field who are engaged on this journey.
- Engage in formational retreats for congregations and small groups. The rhythm of *Awaken*, *Risk*, and *Bless* will be explored in depth over the three years along with practical resources, tools, and support to become communities of Christ’s love and peace in a changing world. Contact your mission center president or Ron Harmon at rharmon@cofchrist.org or Larry McGuire at lmcguire@cofchrist.org.
- Training/formation for leaders who desire to walk along-side congregations on this journey is available. A field guide will be provided as part of this experience. Contact your mission center president or Ron Harmon at rharmon@cofchrist.org or Larry McGuire at lmcguire@cofchrist.org.
- *Discover and Live Your Future: Initial Steps* booklet will be available as a tool for small groups and congregations. This tool will help congregations and small groups get started with initial steps for the journey.

The Vision Before Us

Imagine various expressions of Community of Christ meeting in homes, coffee houses, libraries, and church buildings across the globe. They gather to listen to what God is doing in them, among them, and ahead of them. Together they envision ways they can respond to what the Spirit is doing in their midst and ahead of them in their neighborhoods. They risk new conversations, relationships and forms of compassionate ministry in community as they take each faithful step into the future. They reflect on their shared learnings and experiences and commit to new ways of being Christ’s invitation, love, and peace.

And the adventure continues . . .