

Let's Go Make Disciples: a Vision for the United Brethren in Christ

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I believe the Lord Jesus Christ wants the Church of the United Brethren in Christ to become an intentionally relational, prayerful, scripture-informed, Spirit-empowered movement that fulfills our Lord's mandate to make disciples—individuals who learn and live the way of Jesus—in our neighborhoods and among the nations.

Since 2017, our team has focused on strengthening existing churches and starting new ones. Frankly, there was much cynicism and skepticism to overcome within the denominational family. Through our intentionally relational and spiritual engagement, we constantly pointed individuals to the Holy Spirit's track record of success throughout church history rather than rehash decades of perceived or real denominational, local church, and/or individual failure. As a result, we are seeing evidence and hearing more chatter that suggests to us that our vision for strong churches (communities of disciples) that start churches (multiplying disciples) is taking hold and is on the verge of becoming a reality.

We have invested in our pastors, leadership teams, and congregations, offering three vital continuing invitations. First, we invite our pastors to realign their hearts with Jesus Christ so that they can authentically, confidently, and humbly say, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Second, we invite pastors and church leaders to rethink their priorities and shape their strategies to fulfill Jesus' disciple-making mandate (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8). Given that prayer is critically essential to hearing the Lord and fulfilling his mandate, we invite our congregations, through their pastors and church leaders, to develop cultures of prayer where believers seek God's face with "Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayers" (*Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson).

Heading into 2021-2025, it seems that the seeds are sown for a fruitful harvest of church renewal and reproduction. However, there is an important focal shift in our disciple-making strategies that we must continue to make. Existing congregations that seek renewal will need to shift their focus to becoming equipped disciple-makers that are unleashed to reach those where they live, work, learn, and play. As for our church planting efforts, one of our considerations will be the least Christian places in the country. Much like the 10/40 Window has influenced global missions for the past three decades, we want to encourage local churches and potential church planters/planting teams to identify the "least Christian places and spaces" and develop disciple-making strategies that evangelize and equip. Much like Saul who became the Apostle Paul, it is quite possible that our most effective future pastors, church planters, missionaries, and persons of Christian influence haven't even been saved yet. There is much work to do.

During this quadrennium, in addition to communicating regularly with the United Brethren in Christ family, my attention will be directed to these six initiatives:

1. Identify, train, and send church planters to take new ground by starting new United Brethren churches in new places.
2. Encourage and train ministers to walk with God, build disciple-making leadership teams, and launch missional communities that help people learn and live the way of Jesus.
3. Raise and recruit next generation pastors and church planters.
4. Oversee and collaborate with stationing committees in the search for and appointment of senior pastors to local churches.
5. Realign and develop the UBNO team to effectively serve UB churches, pastors, and missionaries.
6. Renovate the United Brethren National Office building to accommodate a shared working environment for UBIC (USA), UB Global, and Huntington University.

Our optimal path forward is best taken by implementing our Lord's strategy in our everyday lives—"... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). The sure promise is that none of us will make disciples alone or in our own strength. We will benefit from the empowering, superintending, effectual presence of the Holy Spirit...always, to the very end of the age. So, with tremendous confidence and humility, let's go help people learn and live the way of Jesus!

