

Core Values, Beliefs and Practices

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor 13:13)

What is the essence of the Early Christian Church?

The essence of the Christian Church, early and since, is embodied in its story. The early Christian churches, comprised of handfuls of people meeting in private homes, were formed in response to the witness of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth both during his ministry in the flesh, and afterwards. At that time most devout Jews believed that a resurrection of the dead would occur at the end of history. Early Christians, however, claimed that Jesus' resurrection had already occurred, not at the end of history, but in the middle of history, with mind-boggling implications: the continuation of Jesus of Nazareth's ministry through his followers.

The claim of resurrection by Jesus' followers was reflected in the repetition of Jesus' words and deeds of liberating power in public space as well as the more private gatherings of his assembled followers. They remembered Jesus' ministry as a witness to the in-breaking, here and now, of God's liberation from sickness, sin and oppression. This transformative way of thinking and of being flowed through their house churches, in which members embraced a new vision, identity and purpose given them by Jesus Christ, their resurrected and continuing leader. Breaking down long-established barriers, women played a central and visible role as co-workers in the community, while previously despised peoples were welcomed as brothers and sisters in the faith.

Over time the intensity of this new beginning subsided. Year by year, Jesus did not return in visible form. Instead, early followers of Christ took comfort in the invisible presence of God in their growing sense of spiritual life. They concluded that God must be telling their Kingdom of God movement to prepare for the long haul, which they did by hard and self-effacing acts of community building based on principals of love, integrity and spiritual unity. Early Christians:

- Prayed together in one another's homes.
- Gave each other support and encouragement.
- Shared communal meals of thanksgiving.
- Shared resources and risked their lives for one another.
- Used the rhythms of family life and hospitality to spread the faith.
- Understood faithfulness as a relationship of hospitality, trust, loyalty, love - not as simply a system of belief or ritual.
- Worked through conflicts and challenges as an engaged community.

What is the essence of the Church of the Saviour?

The Church of the Saviour formed out of the desire to re-experience and replicate the radical commitment and joy evident in the early Christian Church. It claimed the original story as its own and set out to recapture, translate and embody that story in the context of the late-modern world. This is a contemporary movement, witnessing, here and now, evidence of God's reign, in solidarity with the risen Christ and all people seeking justice and peace within and among people and nations. The Church of the Saviour's approach to church emphasizes integrity of membership, the ministry of the laity, and communal intimacy and accountability.

Membership and Ministry of the Laity

Those who seek membership are asked to commit to engaging in disciplines to help them on their spiritual journey in response to God's call for relationship and service. The primary function of disciplines is to draw us individually into a deeper spiritual journey, which, in turn, nourishes the life of the community as a whole. The spiritual journey is described as having inward and outward components, each with its own disciplines.

The inward journey is that part of the spiritual journey that comprises dialog with oneself, God, and others. We are strengthened to greater authenticity, discovery and growth in our inward journey by the spiritual disciplines of daily Bible reading, reflection, prayer, journal writing, spiritual retreat and other spiritual practices.

The outward journey is undertaken through specific mission and service that expresses the Gospel, often with particular attention to poor and marginalized people. Outward journey disciplines include giving tithes, offerings and service to the church (e.g. giving teachings, leading worship or music, setting up for service, or leading a church group or process) as well as service to the larger community outside of the church in response to call. Strength for the outward journey proceeds from the disciplines of

our inward journey and each enriches the other.

Communal Intimacy and Accountability

The desire for intimacy and accountability led to the formation of mission groups, made up of 2 to 15 members, gathered around a shared sense of vocation or God's calling. Accountability to others provides a support to encourage us to faithfully follow the path of our spiritual journey and deepen our relationship with God. Mission groups provide the fundamental unit of community and accountability in the church, with each person following her/his own sense of response to God's call for relationship and service.

What is the essence of the 8th Day Faith Community?

In 1976, the Church of the Saviour divided into smaller communities in order to be more faithful to God's call to do justice and love mercy. The Eighth Day Faith Community, one of the first sister communities formed, takes its name from the title of Elizabeth O'Connor's book, *The Eighth Day of Creation*. Our name reminds us of our story: after God created the world in seven days, we humans became co-creators with God for the continuing creation of God's dream. In our church services, smaller group meetings, friendships and relationships, we affirm that we are united in God's love and grace. We offer our gifts, strengths, and weaknesses to the community and pledge to open our hearts to what others bring. We accept the responsibility to build, sustain, celebrate, and challenge our community to do God's will in the world.

What are current agreements of the 8th Day Faith Community?

Membership and Ministry of the Laity

Inward Journey: In the commitment statement, Covenant, Intern and Community members each agree to: endeavor to follow Jesus in paths of peace, forgiveness, healing, justice, and mercy; to accept God's call as the highest priority; to commit to engage in the spiritual disciplines and practices that are expected of membership; and to affirm that the practice of spiritual discipline is necessary to deepen both spiritual growth and engagement with the world.

For covenant members, **Inward Journey disciplines** comprise: forty-five minutes of time spent in quiet daily and yearly weekend silent retreat. For Intern members the daily quiet time is 30 min. In consultation with a covenant or other community members, the community member will decide the most appropriate disciplines for their spiritual journey.

In its vision statement, 8th Day agreed to work between 2012-17 to:

- Expand the opportunities for spiritual formation and growth in youth and adults.
- Welcome, teach and encourage young people to prepare them for leadership in the community and the world.

Outward Journey: In the commitment statement, members agree to: "build, sustain, celebrate, and challenge 8th Day to do God's will in the world and to respond to Christ's call to stand with 'the least of these' by committing resources of time, money, and energy to help build a world of inclusiveness, love, and equity."

Outward Journey disciplines are: proportional giving to the community (beginning at 10% for covenant and 5% for intern members). In addition, most members dedicate their further proportional giving to other forms of Christian work (e.g. direct service and advocacy justice work) outside of the 8th Day community.

In its vision statement, 8th Day agreed to work between 2012-17 to: "Face the challenges of climate change by becoming more green and advocating for change in religious congregations."

Communal Intimacy and Accountability

In the commitment statement, members: "recognize the need for support, challenge, and discernment in order to grow spiritually, walk humbly, and act in faithfulness; agree to offer their gifts, strengths, and weaknesses to 8th Day and pledge to open their hearts to what others bring." In the commitment statement, members agree to **community disciplines** of: "weekly attendance at worship (to the extent possible) and participation in a mission group." Members are accountable to their mission group, a spiritual director, or another member for keeping the disciplines.

In its vision statement, 8th Day agreed to work between 2012-17 to:

- "Move towards deeper relationships, healing, and community building";
- "Increase the sharing and pooling of resources, so that all in the community can live with economic security."
- "Value and celebrate the dignity of differences and work to break down the barriers of race, culture, age, gender orientation, money, education, ability and religion."

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