

EPIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

# PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

WELCOME TO A LIFE ON PURPOSE!

# LETTER FROM PASTOR DUANE

Yes, it's true... Jesus really was about more than just getting people into heaven. He was launching a new kind of God-movement like nothing the world had ever seen before. Jesus invited people to join this movement by trusting in his life, death and resurrection. And as a result the world would be turned upside down through a message of unconditional love and a lifestyle of service and sacrifice.

The Bible says that all of creation is groaning for redemption and, believe it or not, the church community (the body of Christ) was initiated as the primary vehicle in which God would use to restore the world. The body of epic is one church community out of thousands that is dedicated to advancing the message of Jesus and sharing the Kingdom story. That's why we're here and that's why we do what we do.

Even though there are many different types of faith communities, most individual church communities have found wisdom in offering their specific body a chance to strongly identify with their unique mission and vision. Usually, this opportunity is called membership. However, at epic, we prefer the term "partnership" to "membership." Partnership implies moving, joining, locking arms, giving and connecting with something greater than oneself. We believe that in order for the church of Jesus Christ to be the hope of the world once again, we need more partners rather than just members.

Jesus modeled partnership for us and he called his disciples to be selfless people who get more joy out of sacrificing and giving than receiving. The reality that Jesus understood is that through sacrificing and giving, a person actually gets more. In short, a partner is a person who is willing to give more, ask for less, and build the community stronger and deeper through their various gifts and talents.

This partnership process is intentionally designed to be a discipleship journey. It is not an "institutional," "legalistic," or a "one-size-fits-all" approach. It is designed for you to journey through at your own pace, to process what we believe God is calling us to be as an epic community and to discover how you can find your role in God's great epic. I hope you enjoy the ride!

For Jesus' sake,  
Duane



# PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Why partner with Epic Church?



01.

The concept of church partnership is implied throughout the New Testament (Philippians 1:3–6, Ephesians 4:11–13). Christ followers clearly identified with a specific local body and were challenged to be active participants.

Partnership is helpful to our church leaders as they seek to lead and guide the epic community. Our partners comprise a core group of people who can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church (1 Peter 4:8–11).



02.

Partnership benefits individual believers (Acts 4:32–35, 1 Corinthians 12:7–12). It moves us from good intentions to committed participation. We hope partnering with epic will serve as a milestone in your lifelong journey of following Christ.



03.

# The Partnership Process

Individual Study: Prospective partners will receive the Partnership Handbook and begin working through it. During the self-study, prospective partners are encouraged to interact with the Partnership Coordinator about their questions and learnings.

Partnership Wrap Up Meeting: As soon as the self-study is completed, the prospective partner will coordinate a wrap up meeting with the Partnership Coordinator and answer any final questions and dialogue about further involvement. If everything seems good, then the individual is considered a partner of epic.



## Criteria for Partnership



- Confession of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Experience of Christian baptism or willing to be baptized
- Willing to align with epic's basic faith statements
- Willing to support epic's mission, values and practices
- Willing to use one's gifts to serve the church and to give sacrificially
- Willing to be intentional about one's spiritual growth
- Willing to be connected in Christ-centered community
- Willing to maintain unity within the church

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP



You will be in-the-know: We want to make sure that partners know what is going on around epic. We have two primary channels where this information is communicated: 1) through the Partnership Newsletter; and 2) through our annual Local Church Conference. Occasionally we will hold a special Vision Chat to discuss urgent matters.

You will be needed: The reality is God wants you to help accomplish His mission and vision here on earth. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's masterpieces. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Partners recognize that everyone in the body of Christ needs to be doing something to help move the ball down the field.

You will be held accountable: As the body of epic deepens and strengthens, it is vital to know who is ready and willing to be held to a higher standard and held accountable for their lifestyle decisions.

You will be transforming others: You will quickly discover that partnership is less about you than it is about reaching others; it is actually all about "reaching others." Partnership allows our body to continue the outward mission.



# PARTNERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Partnership implies a vertical relationship with God. We recognize that God works through people, environments, and events in order to draw people into a relationship with Him. It is quite possible that God is even using this Partnership Handbook as a discipleship tool in your life. You may be discovering or re-discovering what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We think that is incredible. We do not want to force anyone into a relationship with God, but partners should have the understanding that the vertical relationship with God is the main reason to be involved in a church community. Partners also long to see all people experience a growing and life transforming relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

A question to consider...

Have you begun your relationship with God by accepting Jesus Christ into your heart?

Partnership implies horizontal relationships. By definition, being a follower of Jesus implies that you have relationships with other followers and are a part of a church community, like epic. Without those relationships being in place, following Jesus' way can quickly become compromised. No Christ-follower can be a lone ranger—even the Lone Ranger had Tonto!

One biblical writer states, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Partners of epic are committed to meeting regularly. It's interesting to note that the original church met 'daily' to encourage one another in the faith. We know that this may not be possible in our cultural context, but it should make us pause and think about our desire to be involved and engaged with others on the journey. In sum, partners recognize that there is nothing better than "being the church" and accomplishing the mission of the church within the context of deep relationships.

Questions to consider...

How do you see yourself connecting with other Christ-followers? Are these types of relationships a deep value for your life?

# PARTNERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Partnership implies a missional mindset. Partners are not only excited about forming deep relationships with others as they do life together, but they are also passionate about being a part of something that is much bigger than themselves. At epic, even our name implies that we know we are involved in something bigger than ourselves. Partners understand that God has freely given them so much, and all that they can do in return is offer their life back to God in grateful service. Partners are moved to share God's gracious work in their lives with all of their friends, co-workers, neighbors, relatives, and strangers. Partners are not joining a church to be catered to, they are partnering because they want to be active in fulfilling God's mission in this world through a local church community. Partners are energized by this concept. They want to make it known to the whole epic community that they can be counted on to team with other partners in accomplishing a God-sized mission of reaching others with the Jesus message.

Questions to consider...

Are you committed to actively participate in accomplishing God's mission within the epic community?

How will you do this?



# ABOUT US

In October of 2005, Ed & Emily Love heard about the opportunity to lead this new church plant and they responded to God's call on their life. In February of 2006 a launch team of 12 adventurous people began to pray and develop the ministry. In June of 2006 the Epic community located a building (a former American Legion hall) that would be a perfect place for the start of Epic. The team spent the summer of 2006 renovating the building turning the upstairs into an inviting coffee-house type environment and the downstairs into a spectacular kid's ministry area.

On October 8th, 2006, Epic held their first public large group gathering and God began to do an amazing work in so many lives. Two years later, the leaders of epic realized that the building was becoming inadequate for the continuation of their mission. So, Epic initiated a spiritual growth and building campaign called Building for Life. Through this campaign, Epic was able to purchase & renovate the facility where epic currently operates.

In addition to finding a permanent ministry home in 2009, Epic also began the Kingdom multiplication principle by planting a church community in St. Johns called Pathway. In 2011 we sent out our lead pastor to plant another church community in Ionia called The Well, and at that time we adopted our current lead pastor Duane Bower, his wife Sadie, and their 6 kids.

Over the past several years, broken marriages have been restored, lives have found purpose, the local and global poor have been encouraged, and people who formerly had not taken part in Jesus' movement have begun impacting the world. Today Epic continues to maintain a passionate commitment to advance the kingdom of God and inspire people to be the light of our world. We are committed to meeting community needs, planting new church communities and making disciples that make disciples. The people of Epic are consistently amazed and humbled by what God is accomplishing through them for His glory.

## Our Name

The word “epic” means a grand story, composed with a hero. “Epic” is a good description for who we are; God is creating a beautiful story and He is using us as we follow our Hero—Jesus Christ. We believe that God is still writing His great story and He is calling all of humanity to find their role within it. In a unique manner, as we begin to discover our role, we begin to live epic lives.

## Our Compass

A compass is a tool which gives us direction and allows us to find our way when we are lost or confirm that we are on the right track. Within Epic, our compass is our mission, motives, and map. It is very important that our mission, motives, and map are rooted within the Scriptures and are in line with God’s purposes for the world. Similar to how God’s creation speaks purpose, vision, and organization, we believe that God’s church should also function with purpose, mission, and clarity of vision. When passionately owned and acted upon, the church’s mission can energize a church community for an impact of epic proportions.

## The Mission

The first component of the Epic compass is the mission. Our mission describes what we are doing. We believe our mission reflects the same mission Jesus Christ identified for us when he commanded his followers to go out into the entire world and make disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19-20).

### **Epic’s Mission Statement:**

“We exist to inspire all people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ...”

Partners should feel passionate about the mission of Epic and should have the mission statement memorized. Partners at Epic are energized by reaching people in real and relevant ways which lead people to discover a relationship with Jesus, the way of Jesus, and their role in God’s great epic. Partners are totally convinced that the Epic Church community must do everything and anything possible in order to reach those who are missing.

## The motives of epic are what drives us; they are the core of who we are.

### 1. True Transformation: Guiding people towards God's best in life.

"For we died and were buried with Christ in our baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we may also live new lives." (Romans 6:4).

### 2. Real Relationships: Engaging in loving and authentic connection with God and others.

"For where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am with them." (Mt. 18:20)

### 3. Family Focused: Creating environments to help families thrive.

"At that late hour of the night the jailer washed their wounds, then immediately he and his whole family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them--he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family." (Acts 16:33-34)

### 4. Outward Oriented: Providing tangible ways to touch people who need God's love.

"Jesus said, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field.'" (Mt. 9:37-38)

### 5. Generously Giving: We choose to invest our talent, our time, and our treasure in the Kingdom of God, and we are generous with all of it.

"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity..." (2 Corinthians 9:11)

### 6. Meaningfully Multiplying: We seek to always be growing, in more ways than one.

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Timothy 2:2)

These six motives help define our community's objectives and help shape the type of people we want to be as we pursue our mission. Partners will understand and have a heightened awareness of these motives in their lives.

"They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all... All the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, shared meals with great joy--all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

# OUR MOTIVES

# OUR DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

We all need and desire direction. The Discipleship Pathway is the compass for our individual discipleship. It helps us to answer the question, "Are we making any progress?" Without intentional goals, we always fall short.



## DISCOVER...how to follow Jesus (Matt 13:31-32)

- Baptism
- Discipleship Groups
- Learning Cohorts
- Digital Content
- Gifts Assessment

## CONNECT...with God and with others (Matt 18:20)

- Weekly Gatherings
- Connect Events
- Wild Men Ministry
- Women of Epic Ministry
- Xplode Youth Ministry
- Wild Kids Ministry
- Partnership

## IMPACT...our community and our world (Acts 1:8)

- Serving
- Outreach Events
- Leadership
- Credentialed Ministry
- Church Planting

Do you have any questions about the mission, motives or pathway so far? If so, write them down to discuss with your Partnership Coordinator.

# RHYTHMS OF A DISCIPLE

The Discipleship Pathway marks out the direction we are heading and the Rhythms of a Disciple give us guidance on how to stay on the right path without becoming discouraged or weary.



These five rhythms -  
Multiply, Yield, Engage, Practice, Identify, and Commit -  
are essential to a balanced Christ-like and Christ-centered  
life.

Becoming a partner of Epic Church means you will  
be committing to these rhythms. Just as Jesus lived His  
life with healthy rhythms we must also commit to doing  
the same.

# RHYTHMS OF A DISCIPLE



## **MULTIPLY**

Disciples, Groups and Churches.  
Teach, Equip and Empower them.



## **YIELD**

To God's wisdom, lifestyle and  
His desired outcome for your life.



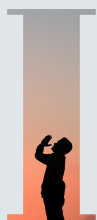
## **ENGAGE**

With believers and non-believers in  
spiritual conversation & meeting needs.



## **PRACTICE**

Spiritual disciplines like Bible study, prayer,  
and gathering with the church weekly.



## **IDENTIFY**

As a child of God under the authority of  
Jesus, relying on Christ for your salvation.



## **COMMIT**

To one another, be vulnerable & gracious.  
Hold one another accountable & serve one another

# CORE BELIEFS

The following are simple statements of some of the theological truths we believe as a community and that we value as fundamentally, historically, Scripturally, and spiritually true. 1 Timothy 4:16 states, "Watch your life, doctrine and beliefs closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." We make no apologies for these core beliefs; however, we must also note that within epic we place just as much emphasis on practicing the faith as we do in understanding our belief system.

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## God

We believe in one God, the Creator of all things, who reveals Himself in three ways: Father, Son, and Spirit. (Matt 3:16-17, 28:19-20; 2 Cor 13:14)

## Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ (the Jewish messiah), who was fully God and fully man at the same time, who became like us so that all people, from all kinds of backgrounds and religions, could see God and enter into a relationship with Him. (Matt 1:20-25, 16:15-16; John 1:1-18)

## Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who is active in the world, drawing humanity back to the heart of God. (John 14:15-18, 16:7-15; Rom 8:1-17)

## The Scriptures

We believe that the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are the inspired words of God, without error when they were originally penned by their authors. We believe the Scriptures to be the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of all people, giving us all which is necessary to know God and live a life pleasing to God. (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21)

## Humanity's Brokenness / Sinfulness

We believe that sin is anything which separates or alienates us from our holy and perfect God. Sin is the result of an attitude which thinks we know better than God or "wants to call the shots." Sin causes a wide range of unfortunate consequences for us and others. It is a universal human reality with no exceptions, crying out for a remedy. (Rom 3:23, 5:12-14, 6:15-23)

## The Great Fix / Atonement

We believe Jesus Christ died on the cross as the remedy for our broken and sinful nature and that only by accepting the free gift of His sacrifice, are we restored to a right relationship with God. (Isa 53:5-6; John 3:14-17)

# CORE BELIEFS...CONTINUED

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## Humanity's Free Choice

We believe that God, like a good Father, does not force His children to love Him. God has enabled and empowered us by His grace to freely turn from our sinful nature to His salvation. (Gen 2:16-17; John 1:12, 6:44; Gal 6:7-8)

## The 180 / Repentance

In order to be restored to a right relationship with God, we believe that everyone must repent, turn away from their sins, and trust Jesus Christ to forgive and cleanse them. (Isa 55:6-7; Acts 17:30-31)

## Re-creation / Justification and Restoration

We believe that when we turn from sin and accept Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross, our old record of sin is wiped clean, and we are born anew, thus becoming part of the family of God. (Acts 13:39; Titus 3:4-7; Gal 4:4-7)

## Pursuing God / Holiness

We believe that after being born anew, God calls us and enables us to move on to a deeper level of maturity. When God calls us to follow His ways, he also enables us to live in such a way with victory over our sinful nature. This holy calling involves cleansing our spirit, filling us with His perfect love, and giving us the power to live victoriously in this life. (2 Tim 1:9; Matt 3:11, 22:37-40; Phil 3:12-16; 2 Pet 3:11; 1 John 4:16-18)

## The Church Community

We believe that the church is the active body of Christ in the world today. It is sustained by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of fulfilling God's mission and purposes for the world. (1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 5:25-27)

## Baptism

We believe in baptism as a sacrament, commanded by Christ, which initiates new believers into the church. It is a public sign of being born anew and celebrates God's grace in our lives. (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41)

## The Lord's Supper

We believe in the Lord's Supper as a symbol of our redemption in Christ. It is intended as a sacrament for Christ followers to remember the Lord's death, which was necessary to save us from our broken and sinful nature. (Matt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-32)

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Do you have any questions about any of these Core Beliefs?

Do you affirm these core belief statements?

Do you affirm that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ? (John 14:6)

Do you affirm that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone and that no other religious system, ideology, spiritual philosophy, astrology, or person is sufficient to connect humanity with God in this life and the life to come?







# A GIVING CONVERSATION

We realize that the subject of financial giving is often confusing, so throughout this section we hope to bring some clarity to the subject matter.

It is important to know that the hearts of the early followers of Jesus were described as being "together" and "having everything in common, they sold their possessions and goods to anyone as he had need" (Acts 2:47). Everyone in the Early Church environments operated with the understanding that they had a financial part to play in order to help facilitate God's mission in the world.

From very early on in God's story, God asked His people to become like Him, be known for their generosity, and give financially into the things of God. All throughout the Old Testament God asked His people to give back into God's mission through the life pattern of tithing. The word "tithe" simply means a tenth or 10%.

In the New Testament, Jesus reaffirms the value of tithing in Matthew 23:23, noting that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were right to tithe to God on what they had earned (although they should also have paid attention to the important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness).

It is arguable that the New Testament actually suggests an even greater calling towards generosity which extends well beyond the tithe. In one story, Jesus took his disciples to the temple to observe people (Mark 12:41-44). As they sat across from the offering box, they noticed how the crowd tossed money in for the Temple collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions, but one poor widow came up and put in two measly coins. Jesus quickly called his disciples over and said, "The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." Percentage wise, it is almost certain that this poor widow gave even more than the wealthy givers; and Jesus' comments suggest she gave much more than the minimum 10%. Similarly, in Mark 10:21, Jesus was talking to a rich man who wanted to follow the way of Jesus. "One thing you lack," Jesus said, "Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me."

We want to be a community of Christ followers who are willing to give all that we can. We view all that we have is God's and we are His financial managers on earth. As a result of viewing our finances in this way, we want to be a community where everyone is at least tithing or working towards the tithe and continuing to give above and beyond so that God's kingdom is fully funded.

There are 5 key reasons why God wants us to be epic givers:

1. Giving into God's mission constantly reminds us that God owns everything—including our money; we are simply His money managers.
2. Giving into God's mission is a form of worshiping and honoring God; it deepens our relationship with Him.
3. Giving into God's mission turns our selfish and covetous nature into a generous heart; it makes us more like Christ.
4. Giving into God's mission allows the leadership of God's people to devote their entire work-life towards the advancement of God's agenda and purposes in the world.
5. Giving into God's mission allows us to bring transformation to this present world and reach those in need.

There are 5 attitudes of the heart which should always be present when we give:

- As we give, we should maintain a cheerful heart.
- As we give, we should maintain a thankful heart.
- As we give, we should maintain a humble heart.
- As we give, we should give sacrificially.
- As we give, we should trust and pray that God is going to use it to further His purposes in the world.

The reality is, if epic is not a generous church community that is pursuing the life pattern of tithing and giving all we can, this church community will make little impact and will eventually fade out of existence. However, if everyone within epic is pursuing the lifestyle of tithing and giving all they can, then we can actually make a difference.

Questions to consider:

1. Write in your own words what you believe the passages are stating about the life pattern of tithing.

Leviticus 27:30, 32 says, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock-- every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod-- will be holy to the LORD."

1 Corinthians 16:2 says, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

1 Timothy 6:8-10 says, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

2. In Matthew 6:2-4 Jesus states that we should give in secret so that our Father in heaven will see what is done in secret and reward us. Why do you think Jesus made this statement?

3. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." How does this apply to tithing? What does God want to transform in you so that you can fully labor for the Lord?

4. Luke 14:33 says, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Jesus lays out for his followers what percentage of our worldly goods are His and what are ours. What is your reaction to Jesus' teaching in this verse?

5. Luke 16:10-13 says, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

What is the life application of the story Jesus told? What is the implication of these verses on your own possessions?

6. We realize that for some people the concept of epic giving is one that you need to process and reflect on, and that is okay. If tithing is a new concept for you, we realize that just the thought of living off of only 90% of your income or less may seem outrageous.

Practically speaking, even if you are being obedient, we recognize that a sudden and significant deduction in the family budget can be harmful. If budget changes need to be made over a 6-month period that is okay, but make a commitment to become an epic giver and work toward it earnestly. People wishing to begin percentage giving and the life pattern of tithing may want to begin with a 1% challenge and then each month add an additional 2% until they reach their faith goal. Upon reaching their faith goal, a great discipline to initiate is to tithe before your other budgeted payments. It is amazing how it works out and the neat principle which is built into that concept is that we give God our first and best. Plus, let's be honest, if we don't give to God first, we can always find ways to spend it.

For those of you who are already giving at least a tithe (10%) towards the mission of the local church this may be a good time to challenge your faith and ask yourself how much more you might give. If you have a lot of financial freedom you may want to spend some time in prayer and ask God how much you could live off of and how much you could give away to the building up of God's church community.

One wealthy businessman was coming towards the end of his life and word got out to his family of how much he had given away to the church during his life. Several concerned family members came to him and asked, "How could you give so much of your money away to the church during your life, when you could have had so much more?" His response was simply, "All that I gave is still multiplying in this world even when I am gone." His response clearly describes the transformed heart that God is longing for each of us to experience through a lifestyle of epic giving.

If you do not already tithe to a local church community, what is your action plan to get there? If you do tithe, solidify in your heart what further steps God may be asking you to take in your giving.

Do you have any questions about the concept of giving? If so, write them down to discuss.

# PARTNER PROMISE #4

I will protect the unity of my church community by...

- Acting in love towards others
- Refusing to gossip or talk negatively about people
- Following the leadership

"May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other; each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other." Romans 15:5

"For I am afraid that when I come to visit you I won't like what I find, and then you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfishness, backstabbing, gossip, conceit, and disorderly behavior." 2 Corinthians 12:20

"Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow; that would certainly not be for your benefit." Hebrews 13:17

What is the message of the verses listed above?

We recognize that one of the major hindrances in the outreach and spiritual growth of the church community can be "church politics" or the inner feuds of how things operate. Many people choose not to be a part of a church community because of the unfortunate politics. Within the epic community we want to avoid this major hindrance at all costs, and in order to operate efficiently we utilize what we call an Accountable Leadership Structure.

On the next page is a brief glance at the epic leadership structure.

## PARTNER PROMISE #4 CONT'D

The Eldership Team is responsible for epic's governance which includes vision development, spiritual leadership for the congregation, and encouragement and counsel for the Pastoral Team and Ministry Leadership Team (MLT). The MLT is responsible for coordinating the ministries of the church. The Pastoral Team consists of three people: Lead Pastor Duane Bower, Associate Pastor Melanie Pierce and Youth Pastor Lee Shafer. The Pastoral Team is primarily responsible for teaching, connecting, and equipping people for ministry. Partners are on the front lines of ministry caring for one another, reaching out to the community and doing the work of the ministry.

<u>Positions</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Functions</u>
Partners	Ministry	Outreach & Care
MLT	Management	Coordinating
Pastoral Team	Shepherding	Equipping & Teaching
Eldership Team	Governance	Accountability & Support

Does this type of leadership structure make sense and feel comfortable to you? Do you trust and support the leadership of epic? Will you constantly encourage your leaders?

- Mathew 18:15-17 says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."
- MT 18:15-17 is the biblical model for handling conflict within the church community. By design it prevents gossip, negative conversations and dishonoring each other. From this passage we have adopted a conflict resolution policy of always going directly to the person who has offended you or created a relational tension. As a partner you are committing not to engage in gossip or negative talk about epic, people within epic, or the leadership within epic. If you have questions, wonder about a decision, or were offended, your biblical responsibility is to go directly to the person who offended you. The leadership of epic will always do everything possible to restore the relationship, discover the issue, and resolve it.

Are you aware of how easily engaging in negative talk or gossip can lead to the destruction of epic's ministry to the broken and lost? Are you committed to handling conflict the way Jesus commanded his followers and to also help others handle conflict with maturity?

Are you willing to commit to the fourth partnership promise?

# OUR WESLEYAN STORY

During the eighteenth century, a revival or reawakening took place under the leadership of John Wesley and continues in various ways until the present. Nurtured in a devout home, John Wesley committed himself to a search after God from earliest childhood. While at Oxford, together with his brother Charles and a few other serious-minded collegians, he methodically pursued a life of holiness through systematic Bible study, prayer, good works, intensive self-examination, and accountability. The group earned the nicknames of the "Holy Club" and "Methodists," but Wesley still did not have the assurance of salvation which he yearned for.

In May of 1738, Wesley had a life changing encounter with God where his heart was "strangely warmed" and he was birthed anew and as a result he was inspired to go minister to the multitudes in the open fields. When John Wesley began his ministry, morality and faith in God had collapsed in England. As he went on to share his story and Biblical teachings with others, a spiritual awakening spread across the British Isles and to America. It was not Wesley's intent to found a church, but the awakening brought about the spontaneous birthing of small groups which grew into what became known as the Methodist movement.

Wesley developed a covenant partnership concept within his ministry, and he even developed some general guidelines which helped guide the bands of Christ followers in holy living. The Wesleyan Church still uses many of the same guidelines found within our ministry guideline book, The Discipline.

The Wesleyan/Methodist movement spread to America as a result of immigration. In 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was birthed and experienced much growth, especially on the frontier and it quickly became one of the major faith influences in the new nation. John Wesley and the early Methodist leaders in America were uncompromising in their denunciation of slavery. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was founded in 1843 as a result of many churches and leaders withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church because of the desire to see slavery eliminated. Moral and social reform was strongly emphasized, with slaveholding and all involvements with intoxicating liquors being prohibited because of their social destruction.

A spiritual revival in 1867, soon established wholehearted devotion as the major principle of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, which had formerly majored on social and cultural reform. The revival of holiness which swept the Wesleyan Methodist Connection introduced a new emphasis on outreach. Growth led to the gradual development of a more formal organization of a church rather than a loose-knit connection. In 1891, the name of the movement was changed to The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America. In 1966, the Pilgrim Holiness Church and The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America merged to form The Wesleyan Church as we know it today. Since then, thousands of lives have been impacted and many churches have been planted both overseas and in America.

In Romans 1:16, the Apostle Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the good news of Jesus Christ." In the same way, let us be thankful for the Wesleyan story.

# COVENANT PARTNERSHIP

Along with epic's 4 major partnership promises, as you partner with epic you are also partnering with our broader historical connection—The Wesleyan Church. Following our historical partnership guidelines, it is important to be aware of and give prayerful consideration to the following lifestyle commitments which can serve as a general guide and help for following Christ with your life.

Epic Covenant Partners within the Wesleyan Church are:

- Willing to revere and respect the name of God
- Willing to rest one day a week and participate in spiritually renewing activities
- Willing to abstain from all forms of obscure occultism, spiritualism, and psychic practices
- Willing to wisely manage one's time, talent, and treasure
- Willing to be compassionate to those in need and do as much good as possible in this world
- Willing to financially support the local church ministry and move towards the life pattern of tithing
- Willing to follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding sacred marriage and divorce
- Willing to demonstrate Christlike love within one's home and family life
- Willing to be the primary motivator and encourager for one's children to follow Christ with their life
- Willing to support and encourage the church body any way possible
- Willing to continue spiritual formation by participating in weekend church gatherings, family and personal devotions, utilizing the life pattern of fasting, and other spiritual disciplines
- Willing to prayerfully consider refraining from forms of gambling which contradict wise money management
- Willing to prayerfully consider refraining from involvement in secret societies which contradict the way of Jesus
- Willing to abstain from illegal drug use and drunken states
- Willing to pursue a life pattern free from addictive habits and substances which hinder personal spiritual growth and the collective witness of the church
- Willing to not promote extra-biblical forms of spirituality and practice
- Willing to treat all people equally
- Willing to live with honesty and integrity
- Willing to uphold the Wesleyan Faith Creed as stated below:

# Our Wesleyan Creed

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We believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ the Son suffered in our place on the cross, that He died but rose again, that He now sits at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge every person at the last day.

We believe in the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

We believe that by the grace of God every person has the ability and responsibility to choose between right and wrong, and that those who repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified by faith.

We believe that God not only counts the believer as righteous, but that He makes such persons righteous, freeing them from sin's dominion at conversion, purifying their hearts by faith, perfecting them in love at entire sanctification, and providing for their growth in grace at every stage of spiritual life, enabling them through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to live victorious lives.



## Wrapping Up...

As you complete this self-study, you will need to contact your Partnership Coordinator and schedule your partnership wrap up meeting. At the wrap up meeting you will be asked to:



- Summarize what you learned in your partnership study
- Share one or more personal spiritual growth goals
- Communicate some of your personal faith story
- Describe how you would explain the message of Jesus with a spiritual seeker
- Affirm your agreement with epic's faith statement
- Affirm your commitment to be actively involved in biblical community, service, and giving

Each year you will reaffirm your partnership with Epic Community Church at our annual Local Church Conference. In these meetings, ministry leaders will share the current state of Epic Church. You will hear from several different leaders on the state of each ministry area, you will have opportunity to vote when needed, and the annual budget will be shared. You will get a better picture of where Epic Church is at, where we are headed and how you can be a part of that future.

At this time, contact your Partnership Coordinator to schedule a final meeting. If you do not have a partnership coordinator assigned to you, please contact:

Duane Bower

Email: [Duane@epic-community.org](mailto:Duane@epic-community.org)

Office: 517-647-7750

# ■ Partner Information Sheet



DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Email

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been baptized as a Christ-follower?

Yes

No

Children Name(s) and Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My spiritual gifts are...

\_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in serving. Please help me find the right place.

I would like to find a group to connect with.

Are you ready to say "Together we are Epic!?" If so, please sign below...

Partner:

\_\_\_\_\_

Partnership

Coordinator:

\_\_\_\_\_