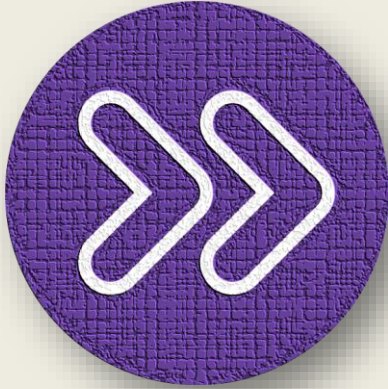


The Thriving Rhythms Project...



...challenges us to move with thoughtful purpose toward a deepened sense of identity—that we are spirited, creative, and connected, called to be present, grateful, generous, and missional with our lives. We're exploring what it means to intentionally live into this particular series of life rhythms, which helps us bring some good to each moment, something better to each day, and our best to each other as we encounter the world around us.

We are ... Missional

As image bearers of the Divine, a sense of mission is woven into our very nature. We thrive as missional people by nurturing the momentum for healing and unity by actively pursuing movements that generate hope and wholeness for all people.

WELCOME | CHECK-IN |

CENTERING | *MISSIONAL Thriving* |

Stepping – or jumping into our mission involves risk. Planning, persistence, and practice – not to mention a good bit of courage and faith are also part of the journey. Luke Aikins knows a bit about that kind of leap. Have a look...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPC_h9Vmlxw



Spend a few moments reflecting on this statement, noticing how it informs your identity as a missional person...

"The most human thing we have to do in life is to learn to speak our honest convictions and feelings and live with the consequences. This is the first requirement of love, and it makes us vulnerable to other people who may ridicule us. But our vulnerability is the only thing we can give to other people."

-- Father William Du Bay

ANCIENT WISDOM – GENESIS 12:1-9

^{12:1} Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring, I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there, he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

A MISSIONAL STORY | *Dead Pilot Playing*

I was buying a musical instrument from a dead man.

To be more precise, I was buying a trumpet from the dead man's widow - a young wife and mother who was suddenly and tragically without a husband and a father to her three little girls.

When I met her, she and her family were desperately trying to navigate the complicated grief that had completely washed over them. Tending to a seemingly endless list of details, she was selling her husband's trumpet—the instrument that her husband and the kids' dad had played so well in his life. But his music had come to an abrupt stop.

The symphony of his life ended somewhere in the first third of the performance. He was barely into his third decade of life. Now, he was dead.

He was a Navy pilot stationed at NAS Whidbey Island, home of the A-6 Intruder, an all-weather medium attack aircraft at Ault Field. And as young pilots often did, he was preparing to fly night maneuvers. So after taxiing his A-6 Intruder to the far east end of Runway #25/7, he turned the plane around to face due-west and continued through the pre-flight checklist. By the end of the process, he'd toggled every switch, tweaked every dial, and turned every knob that needed to be toggled, tweaked and turned. Then, a few moments later, he was cleared for takeoff by the tower.

Stretching out ahead of him lay 8000 feet of concrete runway. He was ready to go. With the two Pratt & Whitney jet engines revving and just moments before 9300 pounds of thrust from each engine would propel the aircraft into the inky, blue-black western sky over the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the A-6 Intruder stood at a standstill. With the brakes engaged and engines running, the tower again gave the "Clear for Takeoff" and waited for a response, but there was none. A third time, the tower tried to communicate with the pilot.

At some point in the next frantic moments, a security team was deployed to the idling jet over a mile away on the far east end of the runway. A member of the Shore Patrol climbed up to the cockpit and found the pilot—this young man in his early thirties, with a wife and family, hopes and dreams, goals, and desires—lifeless at the controls of the A-6 Intruder.

He was seconds from takeoff. He was just moments from going from a complete standstill to 18,600 pounds of thrust into the western night sky. He was a breath away from going from a complete standstill to almost 600 miles an hour.

And he was dead of a heart attack.

We can only wonder how the young pilot might have lived his life if he'd gotten a Do-Over. If he'd somehow known that his life would be shortened, how would he have then lived?

More "I love you," more "I'm sorry," more "I'm listening." Perhaps more "I am fully living!" is what emerges from this story.

It's been said that three of the most strategic and missional words in the Hebrew Scriptures are found in Genesis 12:4. "*So Abram went...*" is the writer's way of describing Abram's response to leaving his home, his people, his land and literally walking off the map into the unknown. His mission began with going. Every mission starts with going. Abram's action provides a way of looking at the art and science of making daily strategic and missional decisions.

God challenges Abram with a road trip. Abram will leave everything safe, secure, and known and head into the dangerous, risky and unknown. Hearts are pounding, right? God says, "*...leave your country, your family, and your home, and go....*" What's not secure about that? Well, everything!

But along with the challenge, God provides a promise. God says, "*I will...*" provide a new place. The promise is about a place to both be and to become. God says, "*I will...*" make of you a great nation. This is about bringing our spirited influence wherever we are to bring new life to others. God says, "*I will...*" make you a blessing to others. This is about bringing impact not just to make a difference in the world but to make a different world altogether. God says, "*I will...*" multiply blessings through you. This is about creating momentum for peace and justice in the world. Abram must have sensed that this would be a tall order. But we know two things for sure: Abram went, and God made good on the promises.

The best way to make strategic, important, missional, and difficult decisions is to ask ourselves four strategic and important questions: Will my response to God's call bring a deepening sense of being and becoming in and through my life? Will my response to God's call allow me to bring my own unique influence into the lives of others? Will my response to God's call positively impact the lives of the people involved in this decision? Will my response to God's call bring everyone the blessing of life and aliveness? If so, then may it also be said of us that we went headlong into the strategic, important, missional, and difficult decisions we face today with God's promise.

Centuries ago, a rabbi by the name of Jesus called a man named Lazarus out of death into life. Jesus breathed life back into his close friend. Maybe more "I love you," more "I'm sorry," more "I'm listening," and more "I am fully living!" is what gave Lazarus more of the life he intended to live as he lived out his new life, his second chance, his one-more-shot-at-it, his do-over.

Maybe what emerges from these stories, one ancient and one more recent, is an example of what happens when the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ gets loose in our lives. When that happens, there will always be more "I love you," more "I'm sorry," more "I'm listening," and more "I am fully living!" When that happens, there will always be more music.

Missional Conversation

- Reflect on a favorite story (from scripture, from your life, about someone you know personally, from a historical character that inspires you, or from a work of fiction) that provides an example of "I am fully living!"
- As a child of God, I am a 'missional' human being; I'm equipped to nurture momentums of thriving life and aliveness in others. What are the top two or three things you have learned about yourself through the Thriving Rhythms Project that helps you feel equipped to nurture momentums of thriving life and aliveness in others?
- Share about a time in your life when you figuratively jumped out of an airplane without a parachute. Why were you willing to take the risk? How were planning, persistence, practice, courage, and/or faith part of your journey? Did you land on target?
- It's been said that three of the most strategic and missional words in the Hebrew Scriptures are found in Genesis 12:4: So Abram went. Every mission starts with going. What challenging call/mission are you hearing from God? What unknowns are making you hesitant to "go?" What is God promising along the journey and at the destination? What makes you confident that God will make good on God's promises?
- Thinking more deeply about the mission you are hearing from God: How will your response to God's call bring a deepening sense of being and becoming in and through your life? How will your response to God's call allow you to bring your own unique influence into the lives of others? How will your response to God's call positively impact the lives of the people involved in this decision? How will your response to God's call bring everyone the blessing of life and aliveness?
- Brainstorm a list of practical ways to thrive as a missional person. Share and celebrate the ways you are currently thriving as missional people. What is one idea you can take away from this conversation to help you grow as a missional person?



- Reflect on these questions: Who are you? [identity] What are you doing here? [purpose] Where are you going? [vision] How will you get there? [mission] What is the next step you need to take, and when will you take it?

A MISSIONAL MANIFESTO

We believe that we are inherently missional and thrive as missional people by embracing a vision for "life and more life," creating momentums of unity, and pursuing movements of hope and wholeness that lead from awakening to awareness, availability to arrival.

MANTRA

As a child of God, I am a 'missional' human being; I'm equipped to nurture momentums of thriving life and aliveness in others.

INTENTION

Gracious God of life and more life, we are reminded of Abram's call to leave behind the familiar and step into the unknown with faith. Just as you guided Abram to a land he did not know, you lead us on paths we have not traveled before. Grant us the courage to leave behind the comfort of the past and embrace the challenges and opportunities of the future. May we, like Abram, trust in your promises of blessing and provision as we step out in obedience to your call. Help us reflect on our identity, purpose, vision, and mission as we remain open to your guidance and wisdom. Teach us to breathe in the oxygen of your Spirit, becoming aware of our connection with all creation. Help us to create space for belonging, where all are valued and cherished. Empower us to live each day as a missional response to your call to be your hands and feet in our communities and beyond. May we bring goodness, love, and hope to each moment, each day, and each person we encounter. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

BLESSING

As you move through this day, may you discover what it means to thrive as a Child of God. As a bearer of the Image of God, may you see yourself as one in whom the ancient story of faith comes alive! May you come to know the remarkable ways that God is continuing to write the story of faith in and through you. Finally, may you embrace your identity as spirited people who have been gifted with a creative impulse, called to deeper connections with one another, equipped to dwell in the fullness of the present moment so that by living gratefully, we can practice a kind of generosity that frees us to be missional people in the world.