

to resumes@fbcmonline.org

Do you agree with our church's statement of faith?

I have carefully read your church's statement of faith, and I am completely in agreement with it.

Is there anything you would change or add?

I would care to provide only one minor addition to "WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins, in the resurrection of His body, His ascension into Heaven, and His personal and visible premillennial return; and that salvation is received only through personal faith in Him. John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58; Revelation 20."

I would simply add *on the cross* in the first sentence, "WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ [on the cross] for our sins."

What is your view of the tribulation?

I believe in pre-tribulation and the rapture (Matt. 24:40; Rev. 19; 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

What is your experience with discipleship (please give some examples)?

I believe that the Great Commission is first and foremost about making disciples. This makes discipleship the prime objective of the mission to which Christ has called us all. Since God has called us to a missional life, therefore we are to live in discipling relationships. This means we are to disciple others and to be discipled ourselves by someone in our lives. In my experience, discipleship is happening all the time. At home I am discipling my children by teaching them everything that Christ has commanded, at church I am discipling our congregation by encouraging, teaching, and engaging regularly with fellow believers who are lacking in the area of discipleship, and with non-believers I am engaging in pre-evangelism discipleship relationships.

In my life, I have been discipled by my father, who is a pastor in Pakistan, my spiritual father who is an Egyptian missionary, and a few other godly men in Manhattan. Therefore, naturally my preferred method of discipleship is in the context of living everyday life rather than a classroom setting. I believe the following sums up my discipleship style:

I do. You watch. We talk.

I do. You help. We talk.

You do. I help. We talk.

You do. I watch. We talk.

You do. Someone else watches.

Here are a few examples:

In the beginning of the pandemic I started teaching an online Bible class and by the time I finished the book of James, I reached out to two of the attendees whom I have been discipling for some time and asked them to help me with the next book, Jude that I was about to start. Up until this point they had been helping to moderate the class. One Sunday I taught, the next Sunday I observed while they taught, and I just helped to facilitate the discussion along the way. When we started the next book of 1 Peter, I announced to the rest of the class of 25 people that Richard and Edwin would be teaching the next book. Now it has been three weeks since they fully took over, the group is going strong, and I have already started another sub-discipleship group working with a man that was part of the same class. I am meeting with him on a 1 on 1 basis and helping him to deal with some of his personal baggage from his past. My hope is that 3-6 months from now, he may be ready to launch his own discipleship small group.

Another example is of a young man whom I have been discipling for over 6 years now. He is a promising young man and is already discipling others. We are now to the point where we just check in every week or two and try to spend some extended time together, usually a few days at a time talking together.

There are several other examples of discipleship where I have been raising new leaders within our church family. Some of them have already been elected to the elder or deacon boards at our church, a position which is not taken lightly at our church.

What is your experience ministering to people of diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities?

To begin with, I was born and raised in Pakistan, and I love and appreciate diverse congregations. My current church in Manhattan, which I have been with for over 10 years, is extremely diverse both racially, socio-economically, and in many other ways. The congregation that I serve represents over 20 different countries and there is truly no major majority ethnicity. In my previous two pastoral positions in Philadelphia and Binghamton, I worked with second and third generation Korean Americans as well as an urban black majority congregation.

In my 22 years of ministry I can genuinely say that working with ethnically diverse people and congregations has been my greatest honor and pleasure. I have started an international conference called Heart for Muslims, which reaches across racial, ethnic, and even religious lines to reach out to our Muslim neighbors around the world.

Please give a few examples of spiritual conversations you've had with non-believers, describing the process. How would you engage the church to do the same?

My spiritual conversations with nonbelievers vary from person to person depending on their background, and it nearly always takes a little time to determine what kind of spiritual (or non-spiritual) background a person has. Allow me to demonstrate with some recent examples.

First, my wife and I were heading to the airport to attend a missions conference in Florida. We called an Uber, and had nearly an hour to get to know our driver. I struck up a conversation with him about faith when he inquired about where we were going. I mentioned the conference and

had the opportunity to briefly explain the concept of missions to him. This led to an explanation of my personal faith and then inquiring about what he believed. He appreciated that I follow my faith wholeheartedly and told me how his wife takes him to a Catholic church every Sunday for mass, and that he does it mainly for her as it makes her happy, but he doesn't personally get much out of it. He was essentially agnostic but seemed open to the message of the Gospel. In that short ride to the airport, I challenged him on two things: First, it will not be his works on this Earth that will save him. This means that attending church with his wife will not be something that would lead him to heaven on its own. Second, I shared with him that it is only through having faith in Jesus which can save a person's soul in the end. I also asked him why he was resistant to accepting Jesus after hearing about him every week with his wife. He essentially responded that he wasn't often confronted so directly about the topic and that he actually very much appreciated the discussion and the direct question. It had given him a lot to think about. I ended the discussion with giving him my card and an invitation to come to our weekly Explore program, which was a dinner discussion for skeptics of the faith.

My second example comes from a recent missions trip to Albania where I am helping with planting a church alongside one of our church's full time missionaries. Our missionary asked me to help him to speak to a young Muslim man that he knew who was in the process of becoming an Imam, as a student at the local Islamic seminary. When meeting with this young man, he initially was hesitant to speak with me and did not want to discuss Jesus or the Bible, but he said he was ok with discussing the Quran and Mohammad with me. I invited him to open his Quran, and I opened the same version on my smartphone so that we could observe together. I began by showing him verses in the Quran where Mohammad used Christian scriptures in his time on earth, specifically where he directed his believers to consult Christian and Jewish scriptures to answer questions they may have about their faith. This young man objected, saying this referred to the Christian scriptures before they were changed and corrupted. This gave me the opportunity to ask him if he knew when exactly this corruption was supposed to have happened. He believed that it happened after Mohammad used them in his teachings but couldn't specify further.

I then showed him some documents from the Nicene creed, from around 300AD which specifically talk about the divinity of Christ, whereas Mohammad was not even born until the 6th century. It became obvious to the young man that the fundamental teachings of the Bible today versus 300AD have remained the same, which allowed me to open the scriptures to share the Gospel with him. The conversation then went on for another 2.5 hours, where he attempted to refute every claim that I made with the Gospel message. He was adamant in his faith, but in the end, he threw his face into his hands and declared that he simply had to consult with his Imam because he didn't have answers for what I was bringing to him. It was clear to me by the end of our conversation that the Gospel message had made an impact upon him and at the very least, he left our time together with many questions about his faith.

There are several other examples I could give where the person I met with did come to Christ and gave their lives over to follow Jesus after some time of discipleship, but in most of these spiritual conversations I usually leave things by offering an invitation to another meeting with me, or the person knowingly walks away all together. This is what I teach when I engage my current church to do the same.

I believe the two primary ways to engage the church to witness are first, to encourage these opportunities in their everyday lives (such as a cab ride). This includes understanding the responsibility to engage the world in such a way as well as equipping them with the Biblical training and confidence necessary to do so.

Second, I believe it also means intentionally seeking out ministry or missional opportunities to reach out to the world around us which will necessarily cause believers to engage in witness to non-believers in their community or around the world.

Finally, it is important for believers to know that ultimately, the conversion of a non-believer is in the hands of the Lord. Only He can bring someone to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. My job as a pastor is to encourage and equip the saints for the work of the ministry. They don't need to feel guilty if they fail to engage a person or to see fruit, but they do need to be reminded that this is the mission to which Jesus has called every believer.

What experience do you have working with those aged 20-35 and do you have specific thoughts on reaching them? In what ways would your ministry be specific to the needs of millennials?

My first two pastoral jobs in the United States in the mid-late 2000's were specifically working with youth and young adult (college aged) individuals. In Binghamton NY, I was the pastor for the English ministry college and young professional services at a Korean church, which included preaching at their weekly Sunday service, running discipleship groups, holding retreats, and the overall spiritual formation of the community within that age group in the church.

In Philadelphia, I was the associate pastor for the youth and college ministry groups. This meant holding special Sunday services just for those groups, mentoring the students, holding outreach events, and spending time on the local campuses holding small groups led by those that I was discipling that wanted to reach their peers.

Over the years I have developed a lot of insight into the needs and preferences of the millennial generation. I believe that millennials are drawn into ministry when it both meets their social needs and provides for them an outlet to engage with the world on issues pertaining to justice.

Holding less formal meetings which allow millennials to ask questions, get to know others in their group, and grow spiritually tends to produce more fruit than a traditional church model of only preaching and teaching. Furthermore, millennials are largely devoted to issues of justice around the world. Engaging them in ministries such as Heart for Muslims or International Justice Mission has shown a large amount of engagement from the millennials in my current church.

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In Christ
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On Wed, Aug 5, 2020 at 11:15 AM <resumes@fbcmonline.org> wrote:
Alfonse

We hope this finds you well and that you are still available. Before someone talks to you, we would like to get your written views on the questions below. These represent areas that are important to our church family. If you have any questions about them, please let me know. You may submit your answers in reply to this email or as an attached separate document. Thanks for your continued interest,

Best Regards,

Wayne Langholff
Chairman Pastoral Search Committee

1. Do you agree with our church's statement of faith? Is there anything you would change or add? What is your view of the tribulation?
2. What is your experience with discipleship (please give some examples)?
3. What is your experience ministering to people of diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities?
4. Please give a few examples of spiritual conversations you've had with non-believers, describing the process. How would you engage the church to do the same?
5. What experience do you have working with those aged 20-35 and do you have specific thoughts on reaching them? In what ways would your ministry be specific to the needs of millennials?