

**The Christian University as Messianic Community
in Missional Engagement with Church and the World
By Brian M. Kelly, Ph.D.**

If one were to ask Dr. Mark Rutland, past president of Southeastern University, whether he considers his work at the school to be just as missional as his efforts in Ghana as a missionary evangelist, or in Thailand as director of an orphanage, his answer would likely be the modern equivalent of “Yea and Amen!”

Most presidents of Christian universities would probably affirm the missional focus of their institutions. But how does Christian higher education serve as a missional community to the church and the world? Is there a model in the life of Christ for how his disciples are to engage the world in their effort to fulfill the *missio Dei*? What is the practical outplay of these implications?

This essay will show how Christian higher education in general and Southeastern University in particular is both messianic and missional in its engagement with the church and the world. Furthermore, it will explore how Christ, as the quintessential great Teacher serves as a model for his disciples to follow. Christ-followers in the messianic educational community, like their Lord and Savior, engage the church and the world by fulfilling prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles in dynamic interaction with them. The key to this engagement is the discernment of God’s activity in the world and the anointed transformative interactions that result.

Christian Higher Education is Messianic

There can be little doubt that Christ as the anointed one, synonymous with the Messiah (Mt. 27:17, 22),¹ fulfilled the *missio Dei* through an incarnational witness which was lived out among those he came to seek and save. His entire life was devoted to the mission the Father directed, whose will is “that none would perish but that all would come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The heart of God (*missio Dei*) is most adequately expressed through the sending of his son. The incarnation of Christ and his example as the quintessential Great Teacher provides a model for how the Christian University can be a messianic and therefore missional community to the world. “God is personal and identifies with us by incarnating himself, becoming himself the message he sends.”² As the *apostolos* or “sent one,”³ the Teacher taught his disciples what their continual ministry to the world would be like upon his ascension. This is clearly depicted in his prayer to the Father in Jn. 17:18: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Before going much further it will be helpful to provide some specific definitions of the freighted terms used here in articulating this missional theology of education. By interacting with

¹ W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Trans. by W.F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; Rev. and Augmented by F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker; 2nd ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “*Christos*.” As “the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ...The transition [as a personal name] is marked by certain passages in which *christos* does not mean the Messiah in general (even when the ref. is to Jesus), but a very definite Messiah, Jesus, who now is called Christ, not as a title, but as a name,” *Ibid.*, 887.

² Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory For Christian Witness*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, rev. ed, 1994), 23. “In this strategy he is receptor-oriented, entering our frame of reference in a trusting, dependent, even vulnerable manner to show his love, acceptance, and respect toward us in a way that we cannot misunderstand,” *Ibid.*

³ G. Kittel and G. Gerhard, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974, 68. In the NT *apostéllō* certainly begins to be a theological word for “sending forth to serve God with God’s own authority,” but only in context and not with any radical departure from its normal sense, *Ibid.*

various biblical, sociological, and empirical sources, a dialogue may ensue that is crucial to facilitating missional engagement between the academy and the world it intends to reach.

The Nature of Messianic Community

One of the more distinctive aspects of contemporary American society is “the division of life into a number of separate functional sectors: home and workplace, work and leisure, white collar and blue collar, public and private.”⁴ However, the unique Messianic community, a community of loving wholeness, counters the characteristics of loneliness, isolation, and separation within the contemporary culture. It does so by reconciling persons back into genuine communal relationship with God and each other.

Because the very essence of God’s existence is communal, any relationship with him must be expressed in the context of community. Colin Gunton argues persuasively that a Trinitarian view of the way God communicates to the church is necessary, as the church is a “finite echo” or “bodying forth” of the divine personal dynamics that exist ontologically in the Godhead.⁵ Since Christ’s relationship with the Father and the Spirit is ontologically one of community, the presence of the messiah to his body of believers reflects such a relationship in community. A practical theology of mission then, embraces the conviction that the messianic community is the context of all genuine Christian conversion.

Messianic community is Christ-formed and Christ-directed

Furthermore, the Christian university is understood to be an educational *messianic community* of faith that is Christ-formed and Christ-directed. The work of Christ to form the community through his atoning sacrifice, and to direct the community towards its mission of incorporating new members, is foundational to its role as God’s redemptive agency in the world. Christ is the source of its existence, the *sine qua non*, without whom such community would cease to exist.

The messianic community is by definition thoroughly Christological. The Greek word *Christos* is often used to translate the Hebrew term *māšiah* (45 times in the LXX). It means “anointed (with oil)” and was given to those of special office such as a priest or king.⁶ The Gospels’ “dogged insistence” on retaining this title for Jesus indicates that Jesus was thought of as the messiah for all nations, not just for Israel, and that the early Christians “tied their confession of Jesus as ‘the Christ’ to the biblical heritage and Israel’s hope of a redeemer.”⁷ The term “*messianic*” is used synonymously here with the adjective “Christian” in order to conscientiously link this community of faith in Jesus Christ with the ancient traditions from which it was formed.⁸

⁴ Robert N. Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985) 43.

⁵ See Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy, ed. *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989) 62-75, for his argument for reconsideration of the relation of pneumatology and Christology, involving “a reduction of stress on the church’s institution by Christ and a greater emphasis on its institution by the Spirit.” Ibid.

⁶ Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992), s.v. “Christ,” 107.

⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁸ According to C. Norman Kraus the work of Jesus as Messiah was twofold: First, he presented and ratified the new covenant agreement from God; Second, under the terms of the new agreement he formed the *koinonia* or *ekklesia* of the Spirit. “This act of forming an ongoing community in which he himself would be present as savior is an essential part of Jesus’ saving mission,” C. Norman Kraus, *The Community of the Spirit* (Scottsdale: PA: Herald Press, 1993) 110, 112.

What is meant by the phrase *Christian higher education* is a localized messianic community of faith that is Christ-formed and Christ-directed for the distinct purpose of equipping the saints for works of service in redeeming the world in the context of a localized institution of higher learning. While such an institution is an aspect of the Church universal, and performs certain redemptive roles in the world, it is decidedly not a church in the localized sense of a Christian organization with church polity and structure organized for primarily church purposes (i.e., worship, preaching, discipleship, service, ministry/service to a local community).

The *Church*, in this essay, is spoken of as the body of God's *ekklesia*, "called out ones"⁹ who serve him in various capacities around the world. They are called out as *disciples* or *Christ-followers*. The nature of such a *mathētēs* is one of "learner, pupil, and disciple"¹⁰ and in the example of those who followed Christ; it was a matter of life-long learning under the master.

In this sense then the Christian university is seen as a messianic community of life-long learners that is distinctly missional in its focus. Furthermore, *missional* is an adjective describing those "sent ones" who advance the kingdom of God in fulfillment of the *missio Dei*. They could be said to be of the nature of the *apostolos*, which "is a technical term for the sending of a messenger with a special task; the messenger himself does not have to be named (Gen. 31:4; 41:8, 14, etc)."¹¹ The emphasis is not on the one sent but the one doing the sending (Is. 6:8).

The locus of their going is the *world*. Using the NT's idea of *cosmos*, from both John¹² and Paul's writings¹³, the world is understood as those individuals and systems that have not yet come under the reign of God's redemptive peace. It represents those diabolical and sinful structures that deny the deity of Christ and remain in unbelief toward his redemptive purposes.

Discerning of Theopraxis as the basis for genuine missional engagement

The effectiveness of Christian higher education is determined by its ability to facilitate the discernment of *theopraxis* in the lives of those it serves within and without the academy. Yet, what is meant by this?

The Greek word *praxis* has five meanings according to Bauer's lexicon. It can mean "acting, activity, or function; a way of acting, course of action; a plan of action or undertaking; an act, action, or deed;" and, finally, "a state, condition, or situation."¹⁴ In the context of this study, the subject of *praxis* is God himself. It is his activity, his course of action, his deeds, and the situations that arise from his presence, that are of primary interest. *Theopraxis* is, simply stated, *the intentional activity of God in the midst of situations*. Its discernment entails the discovery, or recognition of how and where such activity occurs. *Theopraxis* is God's purposeful activity which involves a two-dimensional interaction between both the human and the divine.

For Thomas Groome, God's self-disclosure can be discerned through a "participative and dialogical pedagogy,"¹⁵ in which God's activity in the world is realized. *Theopraxis* can be seen

⁹ Here "what matters is not assembling as such but who assembles and why. In the case of the church it is God (or the Lord) who assembles his people, so that the church is the *ekklesia* of God consisting of all those who belong to him." *TDNT*, 398.

¹⁰ Bauer, *op.cit.*, s.v. "mathētēs."

¹¹ Kittel, *op.cit.*, 1:400.

¹² "... the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved." Bauer, *op.cit.*, s.v. "kosmos."

¹³ "The world is condemned by God (1 Cor.11:32); but also the object of the divine plan of salvation (2 Cor 5:19). The Christian is dead as far as this world is concerned. . ." *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Bauer, *op.cit.*, s.v. "praxis."

¹⁵ According to Groome this is done by access, with others, to the "Christian Story/Vision" and the result is what he calls a "shared Christian praxis," nearly synonymous with a discernment of *Theopraxis*, Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco:Harper,1991), 135.

as a purposeful interaction between God and his people with the intent of transforming individuals, culture, and creation. Discerning theopraxis then, is the process whereby humans recognize their own and God's identity within the community of creation, and participate in the redemptive work of God in their midst. Such a process is imperative for Christian higher education to accurately determine how it is that God intends for them to missionally engage the world.

The *missio Dei* in the world entails both evangelism (communicating the “good news”) and social action, as any depiction of the two as “separate segments or components of mission are unsatisfactory, since it may- and often does- lead to a battle for supremacy.”¹⁶ But what specifically is meant as “missional”? Missional is an adjective that describes the activity of the messianic community that is purposeful in its intent to bring others into the reign of God. It is “the total task God has set for the church for the salvation of the world.”¹⁷

The emerging church literature has made much of the need for the church today to be “missional” in its character, to which one might respond “Duh?” However a renewed focus on the need for the church to re-frame the way it sees itself in respect to culture, especially in the U.S. is a welcome corrective. This calls for a new epistemology, or way of thinking, whereby the church sees itself as missionaries rather than having a missionary department,¹⁸ not as a place to go but something Christians are, recognizing God is already active in the culture and his children are to be as engaged as he is - yet not conforming to it (Rom. 12: 1-2).

Four Phases of Dynamic Interaction as Missional Engagement

The messianic and missional nature of the Christian university is distinct from its secular counterparts whose purpose is merely educative but not redemptive in a messianic way. Missional engagement in the anointed community was modeled by the dynamic interactions between the anointed One and his disciples. The master teacher’s work with his students defies any easy encapsulation into some standardized pedagogy. Yet, it is advanced here that institutions that implement four phases of dynamic interaction in their structure of education are indeed practicing a missional theology of education.

The pattern of Christ’s ministry as rabbi/teacher¹⁹ provides a theological basis for the Christian university’s missional relationship to the church and the world. Arduous theological reflection is built upon a comprehensive understanding of the formation of a “fundamental practical theology,”²⁰ that applies the process of ordered learning to the specific concern of missional engagement as an outflow of theological education.²¹ Christ’s pedagogy could be said

¹⁶ David J. Bosch. “Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today” in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 8.

¹⁷ “In its missionary involvement, the church steps out of itself, into the wider world. It crosses all kinds of frontiers and barriers; geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological. Into all these areas the church-in-mission carries the message of God’s salvation. Ultimately, then, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.” *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ Cf., Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 20.

¹⁹ “His disciples stood to Him in the relation of students to their master, and showed him the respect due by calling Him *rabbi*.. Jesus was also a teacher for the common people, and was greeted by them with respect and addressed as *rabbi*. On the other hand, there was a basic difference between the relation of Jesus to His disciples and that of scribes to their pupils, for Jesus had called them to discipleship and was thus their Lord. Kittel, *op.cit.*, 6:964-965.

²⁰ This is defined by Browning as a “critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation, with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation,” see Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 58, 36.

²¹ Farley argues that the essential elements of ordered learning are missing in most contemporary theological education. These elements are: subject matters with attending methods and modes of thought; cumulative, sequential stages of learning; and

to follow the 4 stage pattern of a fundamental practical theology, starting with description, moving to dialogue about the subject matter, followed by the eventual implementation of some reasonable intention concerning the teaching, and finally an assessment of its effectiveness.

This pattern is seen in a number of different instances in the gospel. Description (“living water”) and dialogue (concerning her religion, marital status, etc.) are crucial to the woman at the well account (Jn. 4), resulting in her going to the villagers and challenging them to “come and see a man who told me everything I ever did” (intentionality), with the result (application) that “they came out of the town and made their way toward him” (Jn. 4:1-41). Jesus uses the incident as an opportunity for assessment of the disciple’s discernment of *theopraxis* (Jn.4:34-38).

When Jesus sends out the 72 in Luke 10 (1-23) they are described as lambs among wolves. They are given explicit instructions for going from house to house, healing the sick, dealing with demons, etc. He cautions them about dealing with rejection as a result of their intentions. Finally, upon their return a private assessment of the ministry ensues.

Likewise, in his discussion with Peter in Matthew 16 (13-20), the Master begins with a question about description, “Who do the people say the Son of Man is?” Next he challenges them to continue the dialogue, “Who do you say that I am?” followed by an explanation of the divine source of Peter’s revelation. This leads to a prophetic prediction of his intentions based on Peter’s confession, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it” followed by a statement of the authority he intends to give the church. Finally, he colludes with them to maintain a level of privacy concerning his ministry – they need to be sensible in their application of these things.

The story of Jesus with those on the road to Emmaus, is just another example of this approach to teaching (Lk. 24:13-25). He engages the travelers in dialogue as they describe the incidents in Jerusalem. He then explains to them what was really intended from these things as he “explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Finally, the application is made clear in that they returned to Jerusalem and the “two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.”

The pedagogy of Jesus has been much debated, and it would be claiming too much to say that the four phases of dynamic interaction can be discovered in every incident of teaching recorded in the gospel accounts. However, this particular pedagogy can be helpful as a paradigm for explaining how God might use the Christian university to engage the world toward his redemptive purposes.

The first descriptive phase begins with a general overview of the dilemma facing the academy in reaching out to the world. The role of baccalaureate education is certainly one of dealing with “thick description.” In what is known as the General Education (GE) core, students are exposed to a broad range of disciplines (literature, natural and social sciences, etc.) for the purpose of providing a basic academic description of the world. As the student progresses into his or her more particular field of concentration, the description becomes even more thick and specific. But this is only the beginning of the dynamic process of becoming more adept at discerning God’s activity in the world (*theopraxis*).

The second component entails a genuine dialogue, first with God who superintends the whole process of missional engagement and second with the church and the world. Since we are

rigorous disciplines." See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 99.

constantly being "formed and deformed" by the culture around us,²² a genuine seeking to discern theopraxis will incorporate, on a continual and communal basis, significant dialogue with the Creator. This is true because all theology, as knowledge of the Truth, is essentially a dialogue between the Knower and the known, and takes place within community.²³ Dialogue is essential as a catalyst for the whole process of discerning theopraxis and its implications for spreading the Gospel. Likewise, developing a dynamic dialogue with the various "texts" of those both in and outside the academy, i.e., biblical documents, historical traditions, contemporary scholarly literature, political practices, is a purposeful activity and one of the key aspects of missional engagement. This can be described as a "play between question and text,"²⁴ and the dynamics of that conversation, including descriptions of the various participants, the role of the Spirit, the faith community, and the question of authority in the discussion, all impinge on the interactions that comprise missional engagement.

Academic scholarship, with the publication of various opinions and the subsequent public critique that ensues, is a clear example of this kind of communal correction which is essential in the dialogical process known as practical theology. As the dialogue continues, a larger truth is revealed, "a truth that is not only within us but *between* us."²⁵ For this reason, the academy, and the individual believers that form its constituency need to be open to dialogue with those outside the community of faith as well. Such a dialogue between the Christian university, the church, and the world occurs in the interplay between students, instructors, staff, employers, guest lecturers, chapel and symposium speakers, and all those committed to allowing God to speak in the process of discerning his activity.

Moreover, authority could never rest merely within the academy, perpetuating the false theory-to-practice paradigm in the church's thinking.²⁶ The preferred process includes all God's people, even those yet to come to faith, in a "dialectical unity between situations and theology" instead of the traditional "from theory-to-practice" mode.²⁷ Sincere missional dialogue is never between believers and God alone, but also occurs between believers and those whom they hope to reach with God's redemptive plan. This encourages the unbeliever's discernment of theopraxis by generating a genuine spiritual dialogue with God. If "truth exists in the interaction *between* persons rather than inside them,"²⁸ then the missional task must be seen fundamentally as a shared dialogue that would encourage a communal, as well as an individual encounter with the presence of God.

²² Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, ed. *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xxv.

²³ Parker J. Palmer. *To Know as We are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper Row Publishers, 1983). Palmer contends, "to know the truth is to enter with our whole persons into relations of mutuality with the entire creation-relations in which we not only know, but allow ourselves to be known," *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁴ Browning, *op. cit.*, 213.

²⁵ Palmer refers to a study in which the group score on a test is almost always higher than the average of individual scores, in fact, through the process of reaching consensus the group score is often better than the best individual score, "which suggests that through consensus the group can reach a level of knowledge higher than that of the group's most knowledgeable member," Palmer, *op. cit.*, 93-94.

²⁶ Browning argues that practical theology really begins in practice, but there is no practice that is not "theory-laden." The process really goes from "theory-laden" practice to a "retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices," cf., Browning, *op. cit.*, 7.

²⁷ Groome, *op. cit.*, 64

²⁸ Newton Maloney sees this as the conclusion of organizational development consultants who "resist the temptation to say that truth is private and that change comes by the achievement of rational insight. Instead they suggest that truth is discovered in the dialogue persons have with one another and... change comes through group action rather than individual insight," cf., Maloney, H. Newton, "A Framework for Understanding and Helping the Church," in *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church*. Carl S. Dudley, ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 189.

Furthermore, an undue focus on what Rebecca Chopp calls a "constitution of Christianity in bourgeois society as individualistic, existentialistic, and private,"²⁹ points to a weakness in the locus of authority in the church. Such a view challenges participants to interact practically with the "form and function of religion in our culture," engaging those who are marginalized in the culture.³⁰ If, true dialogue "requires a frank exchange of convictions," and brings to the interaction "a commitment to respect the religious beliefs and practices of others,"³¹ then an authentic discussion with those outside the community of faith must be encouraged.

Dialogue is a significant aspect of discerning Theopraxis, and a genuine hearing prompts movement in obedience to what is understood (James 1:22). Yet dialogue remains the mere hollow words of the theoretician without movement toward implementing reasonable intentions and sensible applications.

The third phase of arriving at well-reasoned intentions where hypothetical solutions are offered emerges from an ongoing dialogue between the Christian university and the world it hopes to transform. Here, the reasonableness of the intentions, with their manifold ramifications (financial, social, spiritual, and physical) will bear the scrutiny of all the parties involved. The missional theology of engagement envisioned here uses Christ's example as prophet, priest and king as a paradigm the academy can use to engage the world.

The fourth stage is a dialectical process of attempting sensible measurable applications to resolve the dilemma. This step incorporates a Hegelian dialectic of thesis, anti-thesis, and eventual synthesis.³² The ultimate test of the fruit of the prior three movements, description, dialogue, and intention, occurs in the actual implementation of the theology in the concluding phase of sensible and dynamic applications. This is perhaps the most important stage of all, as the process comes to fruition. While not embracing a wholesale pragmatism, the ultimate test of the viability of this practical theology would be its success in helping the Christian academy fulfill its mission to engage the world in a redemptive way.

Are Christians involved in higher education able to easily discern Theopraxis, the activity of God in the midst of their interactions with the world? Moreover, can they readily articulate the *missio Dei* inherent to the Christian academy? Are they able to discern more accurately their own spiritual gifts in the area of missional engagement? Does the implementation of this process result in a greater theological understanding of God's presence in their lives? Is theopraxis more readily discerned in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike when this theology is in practice? Are individuals within the academy able to identify and move toward reformation of those systems or structures within their institutions that would hinder missional engagement with the world? The answers to these questions would be evaluative criteria for an outcomes assessment.

So far the reader has been provided with an explanation of the structure of a missional theology of education by using the dynamic interactions of Christ as an example. By providing

²⁹ See Rebecca S. Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation", in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*. ed. Lewis S. Mudge, and James N. Poling, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 123, 125. For Chopp, the primary text is a "living history of social practices" immersed in a "web of relations in which the individual doing and being is contained." Therefore religious tradition must be broadened to include other kinds of historical witnesses besides those authorized by the "ecclesial and theological elites." *Ibid.*, 130, 134.

³⁰For Chopp this is found in the a liberation theology that has to do with the "emancipation and enlightenment of persons" in history; the option for the poor in Latin American liberation theology; the "dangerous memory" of those who suffer in political theology; and women's experiences in feminist theology, *Ibid.*, 125, 129

³¹ Cf., William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 227.

³² The second movement of Hegel's dialectic is not an inevitable negation of the first, it could also be a "discerning one that perceives a problematic or alternative perspective and with dialogue can be a moment of peace rather than conflict," Groome, *op.cit.*, 475n.38.

definitions of key terms such as *missio Dei*, *messianic educational community*, *missional*, *church* and *world*, along with a description of the importance of discovering of the activity of God in the midst of situations (*Theopraxis*), the first phase of specific description has been inaugurated. The dialogue that hopefully will ensue through the publication of this *Festschrift*, of which this reflection is only a part, will help implement the second step of developing and encouraging dialogue both within and without the messianic community. The third phase of these dynamic interactions requires some sort of reasonable intention regarding these reflections and toward that end, the example of Christ provides a model for the dynamic interactions between the Christian university, the church, and the world.

The Example of Christ: Priestly, Prophetic and Kingly Roles

As has been shown, the "messianic" community differs from other grassroots organizations in that it is not only Christ-formed but also Christ-directed.³³ As such, its locus is three-fold in that it is directed by Christ and to Christ, while at the same time in Christ. The mediatorial work of this messiah is reflected in the three offices held by Christ as priest, prophet, and king. Each of these has implications for the way the Christian university as messianic community should interact with the world to bring about its redemption. Southeastern University provides a viable case study of what this might look like

As the great high priest of all time, Christ's life, death and resurrection completed the sacrificial system established in the OT. His priestly atonement makes it possible for the presence of God to be mediated through his Holy Spirit as a result of a "word that is proclaimed,"³⁴ and the consequence is a "primary initiation into the Kingdom of God."³⁵ The church does not make this happen. Rather it is the result of the Holy Spirit's action, who empowers the Body of Christ with the grace-gifts that make each individual unique and valuable to the whole "gathering."³⁶ So Southeastern University's motto appropriately embraces the idea of messianic or anointed community that is "Gathered in the Spirit- Equipping for Every Good Work."³⁷

Similarly, the divine priestly sacrifice of Christ illustrated how genuine leadership in God's kingdom is one of servant-leadership, a willingness to die to self for the divine blessing of all humanity. The Christian university also performs a mediatory function in its relationship to church and the world as a community of suffering servants on their behalf. Indeed, the very nature of Christian higher education in training persons for the helping occupations of educator, Christian therapist, missionary, and minister is one of ministering to the communities around them in sacrificial service, especially since most of these occupations are not known for their high salaries or monetary rewards. The whole idea of servant leadership is a central motif on the campus of Southeastern University. One has only to visit the prayer garden with its striking bronze rendition of Jesus' washing the feet of Peter to clearly discern what is central to the university's practices is serving others. This exemplifies the spirit of the Scripture – "no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (Jn. 13:16).

³³ Kraus offers an alternative way of viewing Christ's messianic fulfillment: Jesus is first of all the "historical source of the new movement . . . second he is the theological ground of the new community . . . third, Jesus is related to the church as its exemplar . . . finally, Jesus is related to the church as its enlivening spirit and continuing leader," cf., Kraus, *op. cit.* 75-79.

³⁴ Jürgen Moltmann. *The Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 325.

³⁵ Abraham, *op. cit.*, 13.

³⁶ "Ekklēsia is not merely a human association, a gathering of like-minded individuals for a religious purpose, but is a divinely created affair." Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 31.

³⁷ Taken from Southeastern University's homepage on their website, <http://www.seuniversity.edu/index.php> (Accessed on March 14, 2008).

The messianic community is directed by Christ through his function as a prophet who provides divine guidance through his living Spirit. It is Christ who “gave gifts to men” for the purpose of building up and directing his Body toward all the fullness of Christ (Eph.4:7-12). His Spirit graces his Body with various *charismata* for the purpose of edification, encouragement and comfort (1Cor.14:3). These manifestations not only empower, but effectually lead and guide the community of faith in times of confusion and query for the "common good" (1Cor.12:7-11). Each believer is empowered in a unique way to do the work which God “prepared in advance” for him or her to do (Eph.2:10, 1Cor. 12:28-30).

Part of that work is not only the maintenance of the existing community but its expansion to include those not yet within the household of faith. One of the goals of God’s formation of the community through Christ and its maintenance and expansion through the gifts of the Spirit, is the establishment of peace in the world. This NT reality has its roots in the OT concept of *shalom*.³⁸ In this way, the prophetic office of Christ is administered via the messianic community as a witness to the world through the manifestations of the fruit of the spirit. All of this takes place within the community that Christ has formed and continues to direct.

As prophet, Christ brought a distinct “word of the Lord” to the sinful structures and systems of his day, declared them diabolical, and called for acts of repentance. In like manner, the Christian university has a teaching ministry to both the church and the world. As a prophetic institution, it not only calls into account those systems, in the academy, the church, the marketplace, and the home which encourage and support sinful behaviors but also speaks God’s redemptive word to them so that these spheres of being can be reconciled back into God’s best intention for them.

The dynamic interaction between students, teachers, employers and others outside the academy provides the venue for prophetic dialogue to occur. Not only do students bring with them fresh insight from the church and the world to inform the discussion in the classrooms, but they also take with them to the workplace, the home, and the church, fresh insight into the activity of God in the midst of their situations gleaned from the academic process. As they progress through their studies toward the accomplishment of degrees in their specific disciplines they not only incorporate the latest academic knowledge and research, but because of the messianic nature of Christian higher education, they are also able to integrate a divine wisdom in applying those truths because of the anointing of the Spirit. For Christian higher education not only embraces the best of secular knowledge but also invites sapiential knowledge (wisdom) which comes from dynamic interaction with the *Parakletos* or Counselor, who comes alongside with prophetic insight from the throne of God himself (Isa. 55).

For instance, in the discipline of psychology the study of the therapeutic process has provided numerous profound insights to help inform the day to day therapeutic interventions of Christians and pastoral counselors who work in a wide variety of settings. A renewed focus on the spirituality of the client as an essential element in counseling is supported by a substantial body of research.³⁹

Finally, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his hearers to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,

³⁸ In the Hebrew scriptures, "peace is not simply relief from guilt feelings, serenity, or individual peace of mind. Shalom refers to the harmonious social relationships which grow out of justice and equity in the public order." See Kraus, *op. cit.*, 135.

³⁹ “Over the past two decades the volume and quality of the literature on religion and spirituality in psychotherapy has increased exponentially,” so much so that recently revised ethical guidelines in psychology “called for attention to the religious diversity of clients,” Everett L. Worthington, and Steven L. Sandage. “Religion and Spirituality.” in *Psychotherapy Relationships That Work*, ed. John C. Norcross (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 384.

and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb.12:2). Christ as king reigns at the right hand of the throne of God and his heavenly presence there provides the messianic community with a "living hope" (1Pet.1:3). Thus, the community of life with Jesus is a "community of destiny."⁴⁰ In this manner the community is not only directed by Christ but to Christ as well.

Because of the resurrection, the messianic community waits for the Kingdom of God, and its life is "determined by this expectation."⁴¹ This involves a new kind of thinking about the world, an "expectation thinking" that shapes the community's concepts of the present and the past, because they are "expanded by hope and anticipate future being."⁴² Such a perspective focuses on the pervasive effect throughout history of God's purpose to ultimately reconcile creation. The transformation of the world is epitomized and mediated through the messianic community of faith whose faith and hope are inseparably bound up with its future in Christ as the exalted "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords." As the King of Kings, in the lineage of David, Christ speaks an authoritative word of direction for his disciples and indeed, the entire cosmos.

This kingly role of Christ is portrayed in the authoritative role the academy plays as trainer of leaders for church and society. Indeed, part of Southeastern University's motto speaks of a "Christ-centered education that prepares students for a life of world-changing leadership."⁴³ Educational communities inherently exercise considerable influence over their constituencies, not only in the conferral of degrees to those who would lead in the spheres of the church and the marketplace, but also in the analysis and presentation of key research regarding the mission of the church to reach the world with the Christian gospel.

Because of its unique objective stature in both the Church and the world, the academy led by Christ is able to speak with a degree of authority that no single church or denomination is capable of wielding. Academies are the leaders in most matters of professional life and the world recognizes this. Even more so, Christian higher education serves as the primary trainer of future leaders for the church in performing its missional capacity to the world.

There are many ways that dynamic dialogue which results in missional interaction occurs through the Christian university. Feedback from business, church, and professional leaders who speak regularly on campus as guest lecturers, chapel speakers, and as speakers for a National Leadership Forum that is hosted by the university fuels the cycle of dialogue. By welcoming the next generation of leaders into its spiritual community and equipping them through the curriculum of the university, these future alumni are being shaped to impact church and society for God's kingdom. In addition, students, staff and faculty engage the world in the manifold ministries of local churches through student practicum, internships, pulpit supply, and itinerant ministry. Many of the faculty and staff at the university serve as pastors, preachers, teachers, counselors, etc. on local church and para-church staff. By publishing scholarly papers, theses, dissertations, and other works, such as this *Festschrift*, the faculty of the university speak authoritatively into their respective disciplines.⁴⁴ Finally, these same members of the Christian university are regularly taking part in missions work all around the world.

⁴⁰ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*. Transl. by John P. Galvin, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 33.

⁴¹ Moltmann argues that "all predicates of Christ not only say who he was and is, but imply statements as to who he will be and what is expected from him. They all say 'He is our hope' (Col. 1.27)." Moltmann challenges the contemporary Christian to see that hope in Christ is not relegated solely to the future, but anticipates the promises of God that result in power to change the world now. Yet, statements about Christ speak not only about who he was and is, but also who he will be. See Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 325.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁴³ Cf., <http://www.seuniversity.edu/index.php> (accessed March 14, 2008).

⁴⁴ As just one example among many, 5 of the full-time religion faculty were scheduled to speak or present papers at the 2008 annual meeting of the Society of Pentecostal Studies held at Duke University in Durham, NC in March of 2008.

Missional Character of the Messianic Community

As a community with a distinctly missional character, the genuine messianic community of faith is called to manifest the Kingdom of God.⁴⁵ The result is redemptive engagement with the world. The redemption of the world lies not in religion in general but within the mission of the messianic community of faith. The power of God to renew the individual is also capable of renewing the sinful institutions that are the foundation of diabolical world systems. Once individuals have been redeemed and become a part of the messianic community, they witness to the world of God's redemptive power.

The mission of the messianic community is born out of the authority and responsibility that result from the free gift of God's grace to the community (Matt.10:8; 28:18-20). Through the exercise of its authority in obedience to its responsibility as God's chosen people, the messianic community becomes a catalyst for change in the lives of individuals and subsequently the communities of which they are a part.

Community with a Distinct Missionary Mandate

Robert Banks noted that the primary purpose of the church is "growth and edification of its members into Christ and into a common life through their God-given ministry to one another."⁴⁶ Without ministry to one another the community will fail to attract outsiders into a relationship with its members.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, Bellah is right when he notes that "reasonable in themselves, the teachings of Christian morality are falsified because Christians do not actually live them out."⁴⁸

From the outset when Christ said "follow me," he was not advising people to go to church or even attend the synagogue. He was, instead, "asking for recruits in a company of danger. He was asking not primarily for belief, but for commitment with consequent involvement."⁴⁹ The challenge for the messianic community is to realize that all of its members are called to ministry involvement in some capacity.⁵⁰ As Trueblood puts it "the non-witnessing follower of Christ is a contradiction in terms."⁵¹ He cautions against the propensity to let the witness of the community be limited to "a small group of the professionally religious."⁵²

Decidedly then, a genuine involvement in the evangelistic mission to the surrounding culture is a hallmark of the messianic community.⁵³ This involvement commences from a relationship with Christ and a concern for a humanity that doesn't yet know him.⁵⁴ Through its

⁴⁵ "No person is really a Christian at all unless he is an evangelist or getting ready to be one." David Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), 70.

⁴⁶ Banks, *op. cit.*, 90.

⁴⁷ "The church is to call humans to change their ways and live in light of the new reality. Of course the church has a life of its own which must be nurtured and nourished, but it does not exist for itself," Kraus, *op. cit.*, 102.

⁴⁸ Bellah, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁴⁹ Trueblood, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁵⁰ Norman Kraus lists an order of priority for the church's mission; "First they were to identify with the culture to which they had gone . . . second they were to demonstrate the reality of God's saving authority . . . last they were to explain the significance of what was happening," Kraus, *op. cit.*, 66-67.

⁵¹ Trueblood, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁵² "Millions are back-seat Christians, willing to be observers of a performance which the professionals put on, ready to criticize or to applaud, but not willing even to consider the possibility of real participation. . . . The result is bound to be superficiality," *Ibid.*

⁵³ "The church however large its buildings, and however grand its ceremonies or vestments, is a denial of Christ unless it is affecting the world - in business and government and education and many other segments of human experience," *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁴ The NT shows the church to be "an expansive community, divinely commissioned to extend to all peoples the saving message of Jesus Christ." Jesus is both "the content and the principal bearer of the gospel," who dwells in the hearts of those who are

obedience to him who established it, the church flourishes as an organism that exists primarily for those outside its community, with the intention of somehow including them in.⁵⁵

Here is the most noble of all missions, to bring wholeness to all humanity, and to creation as well. It is a wholeness that is achieved only through the freedom that comes from a right relationship with the Creator and Sustainer of all things, within the community of faith that he has called into being, nurtures with his Spirit, and directs toward a destiny of eternal fellowship.⁵⁶

The messianic community of faith becomes the catalyst for change in two ways primarily: as a place of proclamation and witness to the good news that Jesus loves all humanity, and as the locus of God's redemptive power at work in the lives of believers.

A Place of Proclamation and Witness

Likewise, the messianic community is mandated to speak a message of hope to those in despair. Salvation is not strictly individualistic but encompasses the realization of justice, along with the humanization and socialization of humanity, and will result in peace for all creation. This is a certainty for all who would become participants in the messianic community of faith. The distinct mandate to its members is to share such an astonishing possibility, such "good news," to a world desperately in need of its redeeming message and that "will extend and deepen that new community itself."⁵⁷

Inherent to the messianic community as a catalyst for change in the lives of people is the evangelistic nature of this unique community. "In short a person cannot be a Christian and avoid being an evangelist," for evangelism is "the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs, even in the most modest way, to the Company of Jesus."⁵⁸

In this way, the messianic community of faith in its proclamation and witness to the Good News becomes an important part of God's redemptive work in the world. Inherent in the message itself is the power to change the world (1Cor.1:18). Change begins in the hearts of individuals who become testifying communities to the surrounding culture. Their witness, that God is present in the world to reconcile all humanity back to him, is embodied in their very existence. God has chosen such a community to be part of his revelation of the mystery of the ages and a sign of his authority in the world, to demonstrate his dominion over all things through his son Jesus (Eph.1:9-10; 22-23).

The Locus of God's Redemptive Power

God's redemptive power is displayed in the community that is formed from the transforming work of the Spirit's activity within each of the community's members. "God is not just saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather, he is creating a *people* for his name, among whom God can dwell and who in their life together will reproduce God's life and character."⁵⁹ The true Messianic community is one which allows the Holy Spirit to reveal its

initiated into his kingdom, and he is actively present in their witness to help them carry on his mission to seek and save the lost. See Avery Dulles, "Evangelizing Theology" *First Things* 61, (March 1996), 28.

⁵⁵ "The Church is never true to itself when it is living for itself, for if it is chiefly concerned with saving its own life it will lose it. The nature of the Church is such that it must always be engaged in finding new ways to transcend itself. Its main responsibility is always outside its own walls in the redemption of common life," Trueblood, *op. cit.*, 69.

⁵⁶ According to Banks, freedom within a community for Paul consists of three main components: Independence, dependence, and interdependence, *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁷ See Banks, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁵⁸ Trueblood, *op. cit.*, 55.

⁵⁹ Gordon D. Fee. *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 872.

imperfections, acknowledges beforehand its shortcomings in light of God's redemptive love, yet continues to "press on towards the goal for which God has called [it] heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil.3:14). It will always be in the process of formation until the perfection of the Lord's return.⁶⁰ Without this understanding, utopian ideals of community can lead to a pervasive pessimism and discouragement.

The result of the Holy Spirit's guidance, the community of faith, is created among persons caught up into the heart of God for lost. And it is the point at which this community of faith penetrates its surrounding culture which is the very place in which God's redemptive power is displayed, fulfilling its true mission and destiny as God's redemptive agency in the world.⁶¹ Practically speaking, the "point of penetration" is a matter of discovering the presence of God in specific situations or discerning *theopraxis*. This messianic community then is not only the end, but the means of redemption.

Missional Engagement at Southeastern University

It has been argued that the Christian university should follow the example of Christ in its efforts to effectively engage the world in fulfillment of the *missio Dei*. Furthermore, the locus of this engagement is the dynamic interactions and dialogue that ensue as a result of the Messianic community's discernment of God's activity in the world. In this final phase of sensible applications an attempt is made to discern how well Christian higher education, and Southeastern University in particular, are doing in their attempts to missionally engage the world. This begins with a brief empirical analysis of the status of education within the church and the world. Finally, the essay concludes with some qualitative observations from students who are involved in direct missional engagement at Southeastern University.

Education and the Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God as a voluntary cooperative fellowship traditionally has not required higher education as a criteria for licensure within their organization. The fact that routine data about the educational level of its licensees is not gathered, according to its statistician, may be indicative of a stubborn animus against formal education within Pentecostal circles. A recent study by the denomination showed that of the 827 new certified ministers in 2006 only 13.9% received their education at one of the 15 Alliance for the Assemblies of God Higher Education endorsed colleges.⁶² Fully half (49.5%) were trained through what was known as the Berean correspondence curriculum (a minimum amount of education for credentialing).⁶³ The Barna Research Group reported that there was a major distinction between "charismatic and non-charismatic" congregations when it came to pastoral education. A large majority of the Senior Pastors of non-charismatic churches (70%) graduated from a seminary but not quite half of the charismatic pastors (49%) hold a seminary degree.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Fee notes that the early communities had the self-understanding that they were "living between the times- between the time of the beginning of the end and its consummation at the return of Christ." See *Ibid.*, 899.

⁶¹ Trueblood argues that "commitment is never real unless it leads to mission, and the mission of Christians is always one which points forward." Trueblood, *op. cit.*, 26. He goes on to show that such a community has "caught a glimpse of the dynamic logic of Christ beginning with *commitment*, which, if it is real, involves *enlistment*, which demands the kind of *witness* which leads to *penetration*." *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶² Cf., <http://colleges.ag.org/about/about.cfm>, for their criteria for endorsement (accessed March 14, 2008).

⁶³ *Education for New Certified Ministers-2006*. Report from the Office of the Statistician, General Council of the Assemblies of God.

⁶⁴ "Is American Christianity Turning Charismatic?" The Barna Group, Ltd. 2008. <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=287> (accessed March 11, 2008).

Yet, a recent investigation of websites for the various District Councils of the Assemblies of God reveals that, of those who reported the educational level of the top three executive presbyters ($N = 144$), nearly half (45.6%) of those denominational leaders claimed some college training and just over a quarter (25.7%) had at least a bachelors degree.⁶⁵ It's not clear whether this is a growing or declining trend as such data is not available. While licensees in general are not highly educated, it seems that those who are more highly educated are somewhat over-represented among the fellowship's leadership ranks.

Among AG churches there is some interest in "theological or doctrinal study" as just over 70% of those surveyed in a nationwide survey taken in 2000 indicated such training was offered on at least an occasional basis in the church.⁶⁶

Furthermore, an investigation of authorship in the *Enrichment Journal*, a quarterly periodical disseminated to all licensed ministers in the movement, revealed that over the last 11 years the percentage of all authors with collegiate or graduate degrees was relatively constant over that period. Likewise, a comparison of the percentage of major articles that were authored by those with earned doctorates (D.Min., D.Miss., or Ph.D.), for the years 1995-1999 (43.5%) and the years 2000-2005 (42.8%) revealed no recognizable increase or decline. Still, this main leadership magazine for the Assemblies of God ostensibly recognizes the value of education, in that over 40% of the articles it published for those 11 years were authored by individuals with earned doctorates.⁶⁷ Notably, only 28 out of those 329 authors (9%) were female.

An early study (1990) revealed that among adult AG adherents, 32.8% had less than a high school education, 37.9% were high school graduates, only 15.2% had some college, 11.5% were college graduates, and 2.2% had completed some post-graduate work.⁶⁸

In comparison, according to the General Social Survey the percentage of Americans who report their highest grade completed was 4 years of college has doubled between 1972 (7.4%) and 2006 (15.3%), indicating that the general population is becoming more and more educated. Since the percentage of AG adherents with some college or with a 4 year degree and that of the general population were so similar, it could be inferred that a similar increase in the amount of higher education might likely exist within the Assemblies of God as well. Of the "main" respondents who completed the General Social Survey who said their highest degree of education was a Bachelor's degree (30.7% in 2006 which is nearly doubled from 1972), only 6.3% of those respondents said they were associated with a charismatic movement.⁶⁹

Though no current data could be found indicating precisely the level of education of AG adherents or the educational level of credential ministers overall within the movement, it seems clear to this researcher that the need for an increased focus on Christian higher education is imperative if the leaders in the messianic community are going to be effective in fulfilling their task of missional engagement with a more and more complex world.

⁶⁵ Based on data gathered from all AG District Council websites (accessed Feb. 25th, 2008).

⁶⁶ *Fact Survey Results: A 2000 Survey of Assemblies of God Churches*, Report from the Office of the Statistician, General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2000.

⁶⁷ This data was based on bio-sketches provided for each author in *Enrichment-A Journal for Pentecostal Ministry: The First Decade*, CD, 2005.

⁶⁸ *National Survey of Religious Identification, 1990*. Office of the Statistician, General Council of the Assemblies of God, December, 1992.

⁶⁹ The "main" respondent is normally the head of household and the likely primary wage-earner as well, *America's Research Project: The General Social Survey*, <http://www.gss.norc.org/>. Accessed March 11, 2008.

Student Observations

When students in a practicum class were asked to write about the missional nature of their work at Southeastern a number of interesting insights concerning their time at Southeastern surfaced,⁷⁰ including statements like “once at Southeastern, [my] missional outlook shifted from isolated ministry events to a life-long and daily impetus,” and “its not just preparation for a missions trip or missions retreat, it is the mission to live a life that is constantly a witness to the lost and dying world.”

Students report that the formation which occurs in classes and chapel impacts their vision for missional engagement, but also the long-term relationships they form with other students and people off campus influence students. As one student noted, “since I’ve been here I have learned grace, love and many other lessons through relationships.” Furthermore, many students’ zeal for the lost is inflamed as well, as “the education here has coupled passion with substance in a way that makes for optimal ministry capacity.”

Students see their involvement with the church as a way of touching the world, but the world has come to the university too. One Resident Assistant observed, “Not all of the students in the dorm are Christian,” yet she believed her leadership effort to introduce them to the messianic community of Southeastern could “bring light to their homes and their high school friends.” One student offered a poignant challenge to the university in regard to its missional engagement; “we see an emphasis on missions as a whole, but if the college cannot impact the very city it resides in, how will it be successful anywhere else?”

These same students had much to say about how the time in Christian higher education is helping them to reach the world. One student remarked that, “I can honestly say that the emphasis this campus and the faculty puts on missions has changed my heart. I know that God has called me to give financially and physically to the mission field.” Another commented that the time he spent preparing lessons for a children’s ministry “was a testament to how much I care about them and their relationship with God.” He went on to emphasize how important living according to God’s word was to his preparation to be an effective missionary. “God’s mission – that men [sic] may know him – must be lived out in my personal life before I attempt to teach others the same way . . . Perhaps instead of saying “Lord here I am, send me,” I should say, “Lord here am I, **equip me**, then send me!” (emphasis his).

If the primary fruit of the Christian university’s missional interactions with the church and the world is an assessment of that community’s ability to discern the activity of God in those interactions, then these qualitative responses from the student population provide some insight into God’s activity in the lives of the university’s students. Perhaps the best way to end this attempt to explain those interactions is to let one student speak for herself regarding her missional involvement through Southeastern:

The Christian university is a university that with the unique grace and empowerment of Christ sets up a lifestyle of learning, crucial to the daily disciplines of any student of Christ. This fulfills the function of the messianic church which is all too often overlooked. Any disciple (or student/learner) has as his or her highest prerogative to mimic, copy, follow or imitate his or her teacher. The messianic teacher is Christ and it is thus his lifestyle which Southeastern students, such as myself and other Christians in the universal church community, must study with the intent of taking on or putting-on the very character traits and personhood of the one called Jesus . . .

⁷⁰ Statements were gleaned from a written assignment submitted March 10, 2008 at Southeastern University for a Student Practicum class the author taught at that institution.

She went on to write about how Christ's teaching about discipleship provided an illustrative instruction on how the life-long learner, as part of an educational messianic community should live. Her observations provide a fitting challenge to the Christian university to fulfill the mission of Christ to engage both the church and the world:

Whatever ministry I or any student is involved in is only effective if we seek to look like Jesus. A beautiful picture of what the true student of Christ must seek to become and embody during ministry is painted in Mt. chapter 5. The student is commissioned to become poor in spirit, to weep and mourn with the hurting, to be meek at heart, to hunger and thirst after what is right, to be merciful to those around them, to seek purity of heart and motive, to always be a peacemaker, and to be thankful that they are becoming more like the great teacher (Jesus Christ), even in the face of persecution. Only then, as heart imitators of our teacher, will we as a messianic community of students, be successful at our missional engagement with world. - Laurie Holland, Southeastern University student

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