



The Church List for the Rest of Us

2013 • ISSUE #3

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN • RENOVATUS

SCUM OF THE EARTH • TRINITY GRACE

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The Story Behind the List

We all love great stories. And if you are a church leader, you especially love fresh stories of our Savior-King, Jesus.

A few years ago, I began to grow weary of church success stories that were exclusively about worship attendance. Don't get me wrong—we celebrate, as readily as anyone, the work of God that explodes with numeric fruit. But we all know that Jesus is moving in ways less visible—or should I say, less platformed—across North America.

So the Auxano team decided to create “a list for the rest of us.” We want to salute the hard work of creative and faithful visionaries that will never make the “100 largest” or “fastest growing” list. We want to inspire worship of Jesus, the chief visionary and kingdom entrepreneur whose follower-leaders are taking small towns and niche communities by storm. We want to

stoke vibrant imagination in every pastor and see new models emerge where photocopied strategies have kept us stuck.

We hope you enjoy the third release of the Unique 19. Every year we will highlight the 19 churches we have selected for that year. Month by month we will give a peak under the hood a few at a time—different sizes, distinct locales, and various faith tribes. What unique vision has God given to these pastors? What bold values and emerging strategies have come to life? How are leaders redefining the scorecard of business-as-usual church?

May these stories stretch your mind and strengthen your heart.

– Will Mancini

The Unique 19 is a resource brought to you by Auxano, a vision clarity consulting group founded by Will Mancini, the author of Church Unique. Auxano is committed to helping local churches become local movements by guiding them to discover and live out a unique mission.

Chapelwood UMC, Houston, TX

A Grace-soaked culture leads to Grace-soaked lives

Revolution 216, Cleveland, OH

The hip hop church where misfits fit

Meadow Heights, MO

An unstoppable force in an improbable place

Flood Church, San Diego, CA

Reaching an unreached generation

Northwest Bible Church, Dallas, TX

Where it's OK not to be fine

Mosaic Church, Little Rock, AR

Pursuing unity to create real community transformation

Redemption Church, Tempe, AZ

We can accomplish more together than we can apart

360 Church, Sarasota, FL

Building a courageous church with a 1-to-1 relational mindset

St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Newport Beach, CA

Redefining the Good Life

Renovatus, Charlotte, NC

A church of people under renovation - liars, dreamers, and misfits

Scum of the Earth, Denver, CO

A church for the right-brained and left out

Trinity Grace, NY, NY

Joining God with the renewal of the city

The Cove, Mooresville, NC

1000 Neighborhood Campuses in Race City, USA

WordServe, Fulshear, TX

Typical Suburb, Totally New Scorecard

LakePointe Church, Little Rock, AR

Making it harder to go to hell in Hot Springs

Harvest Christian Fellowship, Plainview, TX

After the father's heart amid the independence of west Texas

New City Church, Los Angeles, CA

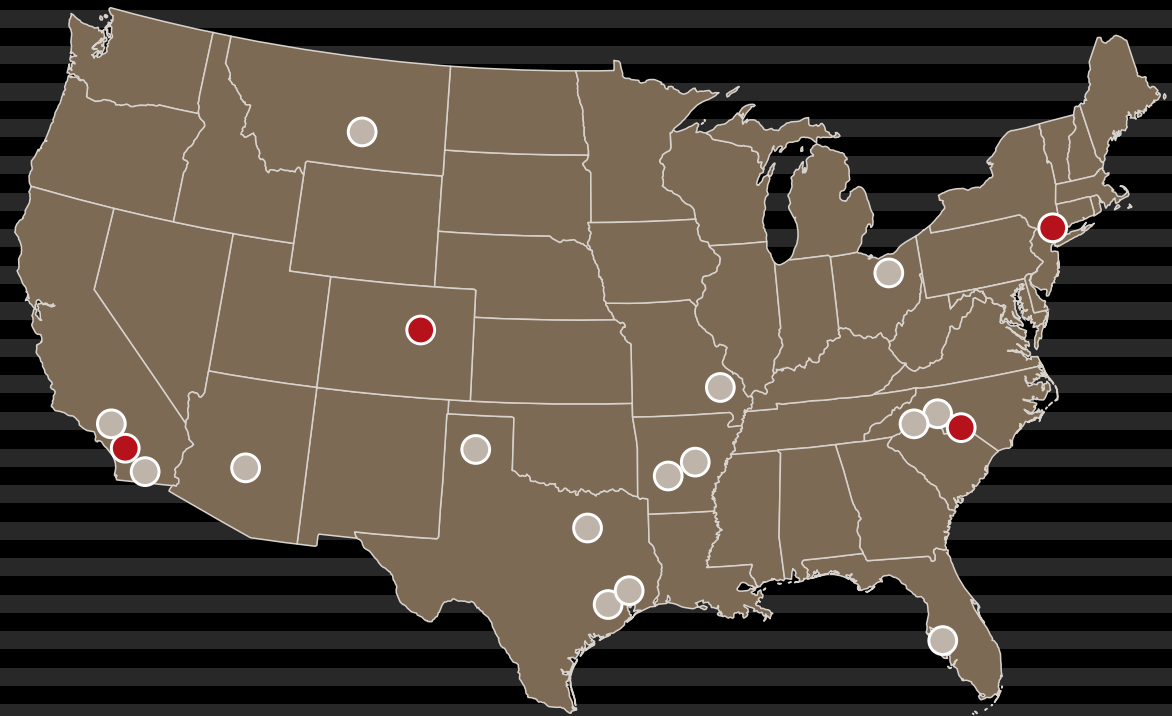
Bringing together the forgotten and the fortunate across Los Angeles

Good Shepherd UMC, Charlotte, NC

Deweirding the Holy Spirit

Harvest Church, Billings, MT

Living the Way of Jesus, Out of the Way





ST. ANDREW'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



NEWPORT BEACH, CA

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN REDEFINING THE GOOD LIFE

What do you think of when you hear the phrase "the good life"? Do you imagine a sunny place with palm trees where the ocean is just a few blocks away? If so, you're imagining Newport Beach, CA, the location of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Surrounded by all of the exterior trappings of "the good life," St. Andrew's is focused on redefining the good life into something more than palm trees and sunny weather.

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN

Following Jesus Christ to lead lives that reveal God's goodness.

At St. Andrew's, their unique expression of the good life centers around two words: missional and intergenerational. As a mainline denominational church, they've experienced 25% growth over the last 3 years ... mostly based on inviting people to experience this new "good life" that challenges people to think and live outside of themselves. Since 1947, when St. Andrew's began, they have expanded both physically and spiritually to both embrace and confront the culture of Newport Beach, beginning with a missional approach.

The Good Life is Missional

Almost every local church in the United States struggles to get people out of a consumer mindset into a missional mindset—moving from a me-first attitude to a you-first focus. In Newport Beach, CA, that challenge is multiplied because of its unique location. St. Andrew's is intentionally and consistently moving beyond the consumer mindset to serve their community ... one person at a time. One of their core values is "Relational Ministry: because real faith moves at the speed of friendship." This value is at the heart of a ministry that works with individuals who are coming out of prison or halfway houses, called Northeast of the Well.

The Northeast of the Well ministry currently serves between 140-180 people every week. Through engaging these individuals who are at a crucial point of transition in their lives, the people of St. Andrew's are displaying the love and grace of Jesus in powerful ways. The ministry invites those who are coming out of prison or halfway houses to be a part of a discipling process that helps them to reconnect with society. This is one example of how St. Andrew's is living out their value of Relational Ministry through being truly missional.

The Good Life is Intergenerational

On any given weekend, you will hear the laughter of children in the plaza on campus, see students hanging out at the onsite coffee shop, watch young families coming to church together, and marvel at the senior adults who are involved in many different ministries. This is a visible representation of another of St. Andrew's' values: "All-Generations Community: because real love involves the whole family of God." They offer both traditional and modern worship services as a result of this value as well, providing meaningful



watch the story of how St. Andrew's is "redefining the good life."

experiences that span multiple musical styles. And the connections between generations don't stop there.

One woman's story can illustrate this all-generations value better than anything else. She was a mom in her 40s, with no real connection to a family ministry when she volunteered to be a part of a missions trip to Mexico with a group from St. Andrew's. There were a lot of college students who also went on the trip, and this mother quickly developed important relationships with several of them. Upon her return from the trip, she began the idea of "adopting a family," where families at St. Andrew's adopt college students that are living far from home while attending school. She regularly adopts girls from the St. Andrew's college group, having them over to her home and integrating them into her family's activities. Although her own children are much younger at this point, she is reaching across perceived generational boundaries because that's just a part of the culture at St. Andrew's.

So what is the good life, really? At St. Andrew's, it's a lot more than great weather and a beach nearby (although those things are pretty good too). The good life is about serving the world outside of yourself ... and serving alongside the whole family of God, no matter what age they might be.



RENOVATUS CHURCH

"A CHURCH OF PEOPLE UNDER RENOVATION -
LIARS, DREAMERS, AND MISFITS"

Liars, dreamers and misfits. It's an unlikely description of a church body, especially for a Pentecostal church in the South. Yet, those are exactly the "moths" Renovatus seeks to draw to the Holy Spirit's flame.

CHARLOTTE, NC



RENOVATUS CHURCH



joining God in the renovation of ordinary lives to embody the Kingdom

Taking its name from the Latin word for renovate, it is a church for people under renovation. Broken people. People who have stumbled and fallen. Those who've forgotten or never knew who God is. A mother who was mad at God because her infant son died. A young man who once offered his body for money. A recovering heroin addict.

Each Sunday, they are embraced by brothers and sisters who welcome them and share their own stories of the Lord's mercy and grace. They sit shoulder-to-shoulder with other believers in various stages of renewal. Each is reminded how beloved they are by the Father in messages delivered by Pastor Jonathan Martin. And they experience real change as they enter into meaningful encounters with Jesus Christ.

Launching the church in 2005 in an artsy district of Charlotte, North Carolina, Pastor Jonathan knew from the beginning that his church would be in the business of renovating people as in, "Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly, we are being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

You get a sense of Renovatus' overall vision by reading their Manifesto. (First, how cool is it that they have a "manifesto"?) **"We ARE your grandmother's church"** speaks to an inter-generational congregation. **"We will reach out without dumbing down"** addresses the challenging sermons that wrestle with Scriptures and lead to further transformation. **"We will practice the liturgy and the shout"** refers to such customs as reciting the Apostles' Creed and celebrating weekly Communion, as well as lively worship of praise and adoration for the Triune God.

And it's not just people who Pastor Jonathan and his team believe can be changed; it's much bigger. Their manifesto concludes, **"We are not looking to escape the world but to re-make it." Renovatus is intent on turning the world upside down.**

Locally, they pour love out on neighbors through social justice – like reaching out to "adopt" families in the Birchcroft community, a melting pot of refugees from many different nations such as Burma, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Nepal, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Congo, and Eritrea. Food and furnishings are gathered for new arrivals, new clothing and supplies are collected to send children back to school each year, moms are honored with flowers on Mother's Day, transportation is provided for job fairs, and everyone is invited to a Thanksgiving meal.

Renovatus Global is a mission's initiative that crosses cultural,

geographical, and philosophical barriers to embody and announce the love and glory of God as seen in Jesus Christ. The church sponsors its own missionaries in Asia, South America, and the Middle East, as well as funding an orphanage and building a church in India.

A weekly podcast reaches untold numbers of "podditioners" who write to say how much they have been touched and comforted and renewed by Pastor Jonathan's message from the Father of His unchanging love for all His children.

Ultimately, Renovatus seeks to re-make the world so God's will is done on earth as it is in Heaven. But they know it starts with renovating one life at a time. Admittedly, they say that being a church for people under renovation means embracing the awkwardness of ordinary people learning how to live a different story than the dominant one given by American culture. It's messy. But then again, there is a kind of reckless beauty to it.

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Believing that the Church is a living, breathing organism—the body of Christ with its own particular smells and sounds and sights—means Renovatus is always growing and always changing. They say that the Lord is forming this church around the gifts and callings of the people that He sends, so things never quite stay the same. But the deeper ways of God remain constant.

Renovatus believes there is no better word than "renovation" for what happens when people start embodying the Kingdom of God in a place. They say renovation is what happens when people practice spiritual disciplines like prayer, worship, study, and confession. Renovation is what happens when people begin to read ancient Scriptures and start living into the stories they read. Renovation is what happens when people demonstrate the power and justice of God by living life together.

Eight years ago, a small band of believers set out to live that dream: to join God in renovating ordinary lives to embody the Kingdom. And, as it turns out, it IS changing the world.

SCUM OF THE EARTH CHURCH



SCUM OF THE EARTH CHURCH

A CHURCH FOR THE RIGHT-BRAINED AND LEFT OUT

DENVER, CO

Take “Art 101” at college and you’ll learn that good art is all about tension. Tension in art produces beauty. For instance, in music, tension is the perceived need for relaxation created by a listener’s expectations. The harshness of dissonance gives way to the release of consonance. An artist might create tension in a painting by featuring the interplay of harmony and disharmony—perhaps a small child collecting seashells just feet from a raging sea.

A textbook, explaining what makes art beautiful, explains, “Tension is very important for an object to be beautiful. ... Good art often is filled with tension. ... good art often ... shows

us great contradictions that life can bring in the worst possible circumstances. And we learn from the resolution of those crises, so that within ourselves we can learn how to surmount our own ugliness, brutalities, and hatred, whether from within us or from those outside of us. These bad things in life hurt, and art is a healer and in that healing lies true beauty.”

That is Scum of the Earth Church in Denver, Colorado. Tension. Loads of tension. A little ugliness, some hurt, and a lot of healing, in which lies true beauty. It’s good art.

SCUM OF THE EARTH CHURCH

SCUM OF THE EARTH

*seeking intimacy with God and
honest relationships with others*

You want tension? Well, then, have your church started by a band because music is all about tension. In 1999, the Christian Ska band Five Iron Frenzy and a Presbyterian pastor named Mike Sares, recently downsized out of his job, started a Bible study. Mike, the band, and the band's Bible study started Scum. What do you get when a just-fired Presbyterian pastor and a band famous for songs such as "These Are Not My Pants" and "Handbook For The Sellout" start a church together? A church called "Scum Of The Earth" (see 1 Corinthians 4:11-13) who decide, "We are a church for the right brained and left out." A church seeking to reach artists and people on the fringes. A church who would like to be known as a church that meets in an art gallery rather than have an art gallery that is housed in a church. Which is perfect because art is all about tension.

And Scum of the Earth is all about tension. They live in it all the time, and they have chosen to embrace it. There is a controlled balance between disharmony and harmony tattooed all over Scum.

And Scum of the Earth is all about tension. They live in it all the time, and they have chosen to embrace it. There is a controlled balance between disharmony and harmony tattooed all over Scum. For instance...

They have a church of 200 people, and a staff of 11. (For you math nerds, that's a staff member for every 18 people.) They can afford it because they don't pay their staff, who all raise their own salaries. (Talk about living in the tension!) The truth is that their congregation couldn't support just one person on staff.

Mike, the Lead Pastor, is a self-proclaimed "old guy" leading a staff of 20 and 30 year olds, reaching out to 20 and 30 year olds.

Which mode of baptism is practiced at Scum? Whichever. Some Christians debate how much water, in or under the water, and when there should be water. Scum lives in the tension and is fine with whichever.

One of Scum's values is "ask questions while seeking Truth." Which is it, do you have questions or do you know truth? Yes. They'll tell you they are about 100% grace and 100% truth. Sounds discordant. And they like it that way.

How about this for living in tension? A prodigal daughter poet in your congregation writes a poem about her journey to Jesus and wants to read it at the Christmas Eve service. Beautiful! The poem contains about 15 F-bombs. Ugly? So what do you do? Mike struggled with this at first but then realized to ask her to change her poem would be like "asking the widow to wipe off her coins before dropping them in the offering plate." He also sensed it would be as important for the church to hear the poem as it was for her to deliver it. The poem was being spoken as an honest hymn of redemption. Most churches might graciously tell the poet her poem doesn't fit the holiday program. Scum had an F-bomb laden Christmas Eve service. And what impact did she have reading her poem? Mike says, "It was the single most powerful moment I have ever had in a worship service. People were weeping, it was incredible." And a bunch of supporters left upset and offended, and Mike lost some of the financial support that makes up his salary. And the poet soon gave her life to Jesus and today is a leader in the church.

That art textbook says, "Why tension? Our lives are filled with opposites and with striving to move from point A to point B. ... good art helps us to recognize these opposites and, sometimes, learn how to accept or deal with them better."

And the church known as Scum of the Earth? It's good art.

TRINITY GRACE CHURCH

JOINING GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS

NEW YORK, NY



When Jon Tyson moved to New York City he wanted to be a part of what God was doing in his generation. He thought his ministry would look like what his friends were doing in the suburbs: casual, contemporary, and mega. It didn't take him long, however, to realize that the suburban models for church didn't fit his mega-city urban context. Eight years later, Trinity Grace Church turns seven and is preparing to launch its ninth parish neighborhood location, each of which range from fifty to four hundred individuals.

TRINITY GRACE CHURCH

We long for people not just to attend church, but to be the church.

God led Jon forward by taking him back to a more traditional approach to church that includes a network of neighborhood parishes, counter-formative liturgy, and the church calendar. The neighborhood parish model provides a central ministry office that utilizes logistical leadership support and unity for the parishes while allowing each location to be unique in missional focus, maximally contextualized in worship, and intimately relational in care, support, and discipleship.

Trinity Grace Church builds spiritual families in a city that very few call "home." In response to the transience of New Yorkers and the diversity of culture within neighborhoods, the church focuses on permanence, proximity, and priority in relationships. Within each location, missional communities (20-50) share a mission to a neighborhood or industry. Life Groups (3-15) help individuals experience the vitality that comes from the essential spiritual practices of Christianity, such as confession, prayer, Scripture, and shared meals. Each neighborhood parish, with weekly worship, missional communities, and life groups, forms spiritual families (made up mostly of young adults in their 20s) who share the vision to transform ordinary New Yorkers into passionately engaged followers of Jesus.

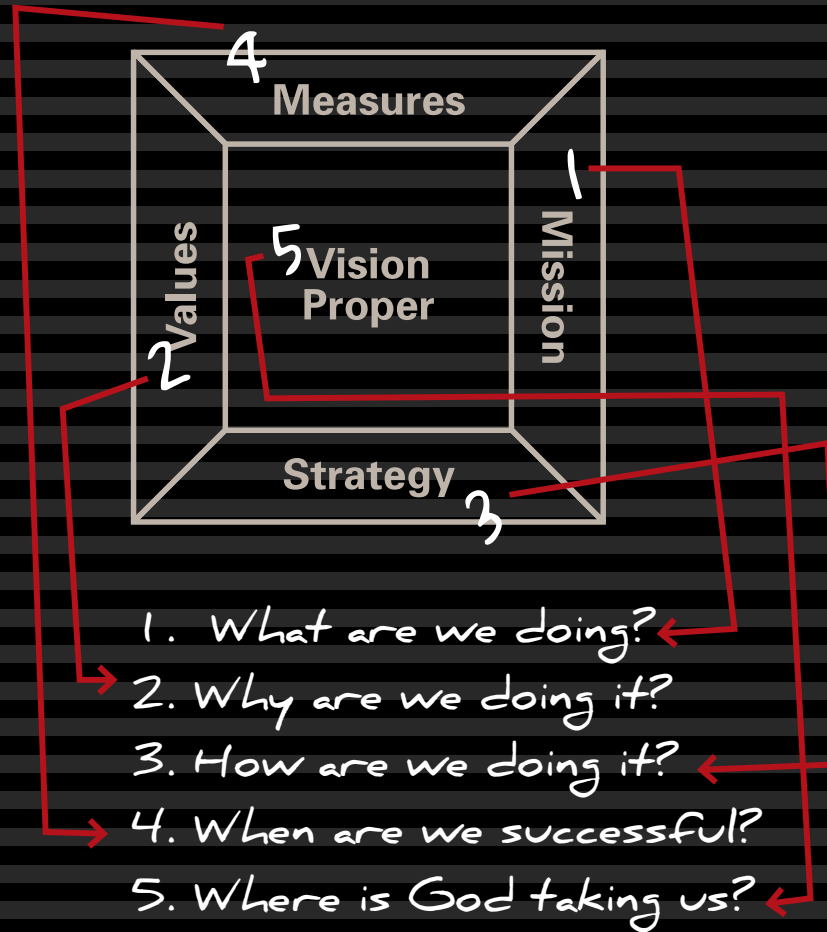
A picture of one such transformation is painted from the church's Washington Heights location. When an ordinary New York couple passed a homeless man on their street one providential day, they decided to invite him to in their shared missional community meal. After several meals together, the man was so moved by their demonstration of Jesus' love that he turned himself into the authorities to fulfill a jail sentence and for help kicking a drug habit. Since then, he has been baptized, found his own apartment, and considers himself to be a part of a family marked by Jesus' love. All because an ordinary New York City couple decided to passionately engage in following Christ.

Everything the church does is in response to the question, "How do we make disciples of Jesus in life together?" A disciple has made five missional shifts, from: death to life; shame to acceptance; self to others; consumer to mission; striving to abiding. These shifts are helping to transform ordinary people who live and work in one of the world's most significant culture-shaping cities into followers of Christ who are stewarding extraordinary influence in worldwide culture.

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Churches that live out their vision with laser-focus make up the Unique 19. These churches are able to answer the five irreducible questions of leadership with clarity and conviction. How about you?



Use these stories to enrich your own.

When I read stories of unique vision, I feel as though a window has been opened to let in a fresh breeze. The wind that blows is the freedom and the passion that comes when you know what you have been called by God to do. Can you see how the intentionality of the mission of Trinity Grace, “to be the church” is expanding their reach in the city? Are you moved by the passion of Renovatus with their intent to re-make the world rather than escape it? Do you see how “Scum of the Earth” has leaned into the uniqueness of “tension” to define their mission?

We hope the testimony of these churches takes you a step closer to a liberated leadership. Too many churches are stuck in the proverbial strategy of “being all things to all people.” So may I ask you... Do you sense a deep-down-in-your-soul kind of the conviction that comes from stunningly unique vision? Do your leaders share it? Have you ever named it with just the right words? (Like St. Andrew’s in Newport Beach, as they challenge their congregation to rethink “the good life?”)

If these questions prompt you to progress, consider engaging the following team exercise:

Distribute the Unique 19 to your leadership and have them read it in advance of your next meeting. When you get together, follow this guide for dialogue and application:

TEAM CONNECT QUESTIONS

- What story inspired you the most? Why?
- What church reminded you most of your own? In what way?

TEAM CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Which one of the following terms best describes what you wish you had more of in your personal leadership? What about in our team leadership? Share a story that illustrates the word you selected.

Freedom | Confidence | Passion | Momentum

- What is the single greatest barrier to experiencing more freedom, confidence, passion, and momentum as a team? Make a list on a white board.

TEAM ACT QUESTIONS

Consider the following questions and related actions steps in order to remove your identified barriers:

- How have we relied on photocopied vision (another church model) from a book or conference instead of discovering our own? What can we give ourselves permission to “stop doing” some things as a church right now?
- How have we been “running too fast” on a ministry treadmill as leaders? Do we need to take dedicated time away to reflect, pray, dialogue, and discern our unique vision? If so, when is that time?
- Do we need more than a day away in order to fully discern the what the next chapter of our ministry will look like? If so, calendar even more time.
- What is the best thing that God is doing in our church or ministry right now. How are we joining with him? How are we talking about this? How can we put more energy in this?

May God richly bless your vision from Him and for Him!

– Will Mancini





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