

Deacon Godsey

Lead Pastor

Vintage Church; Lawrence, KS

Interviewed by Emily Stratton at Signs of Life Bookstore; Lawrence, KS

June 21, 2013 at 10:00am

Transcribed by Kaitlin Manley

Abstract: Vintage Church is one of Lawrence's newer non-denominational churches. The church originally began under the name of "Heartland K-10" in 2003, as a multi-site operation to Lawrence from Heartland Community Church in Olathe, KS. But after a few years of being in Lawrence, Heartland K-10's leadership team worked with Heartland Community Church to shift the Lawrence campus into an independent church plant that would no longer be affiliated with Heartland Community Church—Vintage Church. More of this transitional story can be heard in an interview with Seth Davidson (former Heartland K-10 staff and founder of Vintage Church) conducted in 2010. After Vintage had gained stability in Lawrence, Seth Davidson brought Deacon Godsey into the leadership team. After co-pastoring for a while, Seth transitioned out of his leading role, where Deacon, then, became the Lead Pastor.

This interview features Deacon Godsey and picks up where the 2010 interview with Seth Davidson leaves off. Questions cover the leadership transition from Seth to Deacon as well as current 'forms & functions' in the church. In other words, Emily and Deacon discuss how Vintage sets up and takes down (since they do not utilize their own church building), how they get congregants involved in church, what it's like to be a younger church in a college town where there is a large population turnover each year and a large student population base, and some re-iterations about the vision for the church—why Vintage takes the form and goals that it does.

Note: Interview questions by Emily are written in **bold** type, Deacon's responses are in regular font.

Alright, well it's June 21 and I'm here at Signs of Life Library or not library, but bookstore and coffee shop in Lawrence and I'm meeting with Deacon Godsey, currently pastor at Vintage Church. So now that we've got that little introduction I will go ahead and ask questions.

So Deacon, I don't know very much about you and your background, could you tell me a little about where you're from, where you grew up, how you got involved in ministry to start with

Sure, grew up in the Midwest, was born in Minnesota moved to Indiana for a number of years and then moved back to Minnesota and that's where I spent the bulk of my childhood and then growing up. Grew up in a Christian home and attended church from the time I can remember. Gave my life to Jesus when I was twelve, committed myself to fulltime ministry when I was fifteen and approaching college sort of had the idea that I wonder if I'm doing ministry because I want to or because everyone else is telling me I should or whatever, so I kind of had the idea that I would go and be a public school teacher instead. I wanted to teach history, so I went to the University of Minnesota in Duluth and was pursuing that and it just wasn't working, all of the

courses I wanted to take that...it just, nothing was fitting academically and I was sort of reading the signs and I thought "Okay Lord, if you're not wanting me to go this route if you really are wanting me to go the route of working in a church fulltime then I will do that." And then everything opened up to get financial aid and scheduling and transferring of credits, etc. to a small private school called Minnesota Bible College.

So I went there and reconnected with a friend named Jill, who I had met in seventh grade at the same church camp that we went to and she and I started dating in college and got married and went into ministry right after college to be an associate pastor with an emphasis on youth ministry at a church in White Bear Lake, Minnesota that met in an elementary school building and we were there for about two and a half years. I had always said you know, "Lord, I will do anything you want me to do, I just don't want to work with kids," and so that's, I ended up working with junior (**Emily laughs**) and senior high students for a good five years. And then, through a series of kind of adventures and whatever, we ended up in Council Bluffs, Iowa where we both ended up working for a place called Children's Square which is a psychiatric mental institution for children. And we were youth workers there and then I became the spiritual life coordinator for the residents there.

And then we actually ended up both working in the children's ministry at the church we had started attending which was a large evangelical church called Trinity Church at the time in Omaha and we both worked in the children's ministry for a while and then I ended up becoming the executive director of creative communication and worked there for a number of years before being laid off due to some financial struggles the church was having in the midst of the economy and then was laid off again by the second employer that I went to. So I ended up getting laid off twice in about a year and it was in that stretch after the second lay off the...I had been looking for ministry work for quite a while and nothing was opening up and then I happened upon the Vintage job posting on a ministry listing site and connected with Seth over the phone and connected with him I think in September of 2010 and came down and interviewed in October and ended up being hired on January or in January of 2011 is when we moved to Lawrence and have been here for then now two and half years.

I think I was talking with Seth around October of 2010, so I guess you just hopped on board right after then.

Yeah, that would have been it.

Right on. Well tell me a little bit about stepping into that role here and getting connected and whether you're carrying the same vision on (Yeah) or since you have a different, you're clearly not Seth (Yeah) and how things have changed with you with you as well.

Well one of the crazy things about Seth and I was just how quickly we connected, how similar our hearts were, which I think is one of the reasons why they felt comfortable bringing me here. I was brought on as a co-pastor...the vision at the time was to create a three-person leadership team and that didn't end up working out from a financial perspective but from a, from a shared vision perspective it was really a perfect fit from the start. Seth had took, taken a pretty good risk in bringing me here because he had a pretty clear sense of what he wanted to have happen, but he wasn't going to push that through until the new staff person came on and there was a sense of, "okay we both feel like going in the same direction." And his heart had been to grow the church through discipleship as opposed to growing it through events and programs (**Yeah**) and

production and he and I had both come from backgrounds of churches that were heavily seeker-oriented churches, heavily production-oriented and both had some positive experiences there, but ultimately felt like “you know what, this is not what we’re called to do.”

We feel like if we’re going to give our lives to something, we want it to be about clearly the assignment of making disciples and so we both shared that vision from the beginning and ended up connecting with an international organization called 3DM which is the American base for that is in Pawleys Island, South Carolina and then their real global headquarters started in England, but they’re an organization that has learned how to plant churches, learned how to make disciples on literally every continent in the world except for Antarctica **(Emily laughs)**. Um, **(“and how populous it is”)** yes, that’s right **(Emily laughs)**.

But so we connected with them and both just immediately felt a sense of kinship with that group and so the vision that Seth had initially was one that we fleshed out together. Ultimately Seth knew that his heart was for ministry, but that he wasn’t wired to be in a lead role. So we ended up going through a leadership transition throughout 2012 that culminated in him stepping down from fulltime ministry so that he could take a break and they had adopted a young girl and it proved to really be great timing because she had some health issues that he wouldn’t have been able to help address in the same way he was able to had he been doing fulltime ministry work.

But the vision that Vintage has currently is the exact same one that it had two and half years ago. We didn’t change a thing in terms of...our vision is to grow disciples of Jesus in authentic community for kingdom mission and that it’s been that way and it will continue to be that way. So everything we do runs through that filter. Does it help us make disciples, does it help them live in community and does it release them in demission? And if it doesn’t then we don’t do it and if it does we consider it how it fits in and but that’s the vision that has been there really since the beginning. It used to be expressed differently and that was one of the things that I was brought on to do was to help clarify some things and help simplify some things to provide a little bit of a stronger sense of focus and Seth and I worked on that together and it was because of the work we had done together that we were able to handle the transition well I think. He stepped down at the end of 2012. I was voted in as new lead pastor in, I think it was September or October of that year and then it was official on January 1st of 2013.

Alright. I believe that they were still meeting in Central the last time that I talked as well so I haven’t had a local change. How are things going there? I know some churches will start off when they plant meeting in community centers, schools, and then they have visions of building a building later. Is that the case with Vintage? Last I talked with Seth he was like “We really want to stay kind of in the community and not be seen as churchy.”

Yeah, we don’t have any plans to build for sure and we love Central, we love the relationship we have with them. We love the space itself. The only problem is we only have access to that space for four hours a week on a Sunday morning. So, we are currently exploring possibilities and opportunities of “how can we take advantage of the best of what Central has to offer, in a good way, but also position ourselves to be of more consistent presence in the neighborhood.” Position ourselves to have a space that we can use on a regular basis for the sake of ministry. For Vintage, owning space or leasing space will have to look very assignment-specific for us. We don’t have any interest in owning a big huge building, we can’t afford a big huge building, but we don’t aspire to one. What we do aspire to though is wanting to be positioned to be as

effective as we can at reaching people, at serving people, and if there's a way to creatively do that with additional space that we lease or that somebody gives us, then we'd certainly be open to that.

If we had to choose... we really feel like our assignment is specifically to the downtown area and to the campus. If we had two buildings, if somebody came to us and said "Hey, I've got two choices—you can have a building out west with parking, enough space for everybody to meet during one service, it will be the perfect set-up or you can have this space near downtown that you might have to get a little creative with," we would choose the one downtown because we...there's nothing wrong with out west, we just don't feel like that's where we're assigned to be in the city. So we're definitely thinking and praying and looking into possibilities on this side of town, but our question is not necessarily what's the biggest space or what's the coolest space, but our assignment—or our sense is: What is the space that would be the most effective at allowing us to be who we're called to be and provide the greatest impact in the community?

Do you have any examples of when you're thinking about well "maybe we'll get creative!" Do you have any ideas or examples to what that could look like?

Yeah, I mean, we would have to consider going to multiple services if we had a facility that was smaller. We would have to consider maybe staying at Central and using Central as our gathering space, but then leasing a different space for things like team meetings and neighborhood outreaches and things like that. We would have to consider "do we keep children's ministry at Central or do we do children's ministry at the other facility so that we're leasing less space from the school?" It's all that kind of stuff...and then thinking creatively about "Okay, if we have a building that we have access to, we don't want to use it just for internal stuff." How can we take that space and use it for ministry? How could we potentially partner with Young Life, which is very active in Lawrence and, and help them have space to use consistently? How can we partner with Family Promise which we have a great working relationship with so that we can better help them do what they do, etc.? So those are the kind of things where for us thinking creatively means thinking "How can we get the absolute most out of the facility, beyond simply things like office space and team meetings?"

Since you've been on the Vintage team then, has the congregation been pretty consistent the whole time or is there a little bit of fluctuation? I know having a relatively strong college population I'm sure there's quite a bit of flux there, but...

Yeah, we've had a good measure of both. We've had a good measure of consistency, but like you said because it is a college town there is a heavy turnover of that population every year and this year that really hit us hard for the first time, on an emotional level. You know, the people who are on our team who have lived here a long time are sort-of used to that rhythm. And for us, it was really difficult to have, you know, known and grown in relationship with and invested in some students for two and a half years and then to know that they're leaving. You know, that was personally really challenging and yet totally understandable.

In terms of the quote unquote adult population, we've had a pretty decent measure of consistency. The biggest area that we were struggling in was the young adult, young professional, who is out of college, starting to root themselves professionally, don't have kids yet. We were really seeing a huge vacuum at Vintage of that population and we were trying to figure out: What do we do about that? Is that just the way it is? Because there was really a mentality, a palpable mentality it seemed, from the college students that "Well okay, I've gone, I

went to Vintage when I was in college and now that I've graduated, maturity means I need to move on." And we've sort of challenged that a little bit to say "Hey, if you do move on we're still going to love and support you and encourage you, but you don't have to assume that Vintage is just the church for you when you went to college. It could be that God's called you to this because of things far beyond that."

So we've really started leaning into praying about and recruiting people of that age group to say "Hey, are you here? And if so, would you be willing to help create a space for people in your same season of life where they can feel like they can anchor to something." They're out of college so they don't want to hang out with college students, but they're too young to feel really kind of comfortable sometimes hanging out with all the parents with kids.

And so we're trying to provide space for them, but also trying to provide space where all of those different generations, so to speak, can connect together and the young can learn from the old, the old can be invigorated by the young and so we have these vehicles called missional communities where they're made up of people from, you know, all demographics, all age groups that are kind of rooted in a single, missional purpose. They all have...each missional community has sort of an outreach target that they lean in to and the people who are a part of that missional community are there not just because they're all the same age, but because they all have the same part or passion and they connect well relationally. So that has really helped. We've seen a number of young adult couples come to Vintage over the last I would say year and a half in particular, which was really something we have prayed about and are grateful to have been a part of and we have more to do.

Now the next big, sort of the next big frontier for us is student ministry. We have a good children's ministry and we have a great college ministry and then we have a giant vacuum, black hole for middle school and high school. We have a great working relationship with Young Life in town and so we're partnering with them to try to figure out "How can we do the very best of the things that we do well and partner with Young Life to let them do the things that they do well?" So we're exploring doing a middle school missional community this fall where we will emphasize discipleship and spiritual growth and then students who participate with Young Life can use that for their outreach and providing a fun space and a evangelistic space with their friends who don't know Jesus. So, Young Life doesn't have to try to be everything and we don't have to try to be everything, but we can have a symbiotic relationship where we serve each other and we're going to see how that goes this fall.

Then also going back to the idea of being in this college town, about how much of your congregation would you say is mainly college students?

Yeah, obviously it's different over the summer (**Yeah**), over the summer it's probably, you know, a good 20, 30 percent and during the school year it's probably closer to 40 to 50 percent. Those are rough estimates, but because of our relationship with Young Life, we have a really good population of high school and college students that connect with us because their leaders have connected with us through Young Life and College Life and now Wild Life so we're...we definitely see a dip in the summer as everybody does when it comes to the student population, but I think that's probably a safe bet.

And I think when I was talking with Seth back in 2010, Vintage was doing evening services. When did you guys switch over to doing the mornings?

We switched last summer (**Okay**), June of 2012. It was a discussion that we started in the summer of 2011. It was becoming clear that for a number of people, we heard a number of stories coming up from young families and even from some older families that “Hey, we’ve got friends that would love to come to Vintage, they would love to explore it but the evening service simply isn’t possible for them to do.” We were also hearing things from, and feeling things ourselves, about the challenge of having young kids and doing church on a Sunday night, especially during the school year when it’s challenging to have dinner time, get them to bed on time for school the next day, etc. And sort of the running assumption, I think, had been that even for the college students, that Sunday night was the best time, but we were even hearing from them that “well not really.” Um, (**“that’s over crunch time” and laughter**) It’s not a horrible time, but it’s not necessarily the greatest time. So we thought about it and almost pulled the trigger in 2011 but wisely decided not to because we just didn’t have the volunteer infrastructure in place and didn’t have a clear sense of vision about it.

But then this...leaning into last summer, we knew we’re just shooting ourselves in the foot by keeping it that way. And it was hard for the people who aren’t morning people, it was hard for those who they could only come to church on Saturday nights, but the number of those people were so small that we didn’t feel like it was wise leadership decision to make the decision for the whole based on that small percentage. So we decided that we’ll go to Sunday mornings and we’ll make it at ten-thirty which is late enough for the college students, it’s late enough for parents with kids so that they don’t feel as rushed to get them out the door to an early service, and it’s still early enough that you can get done and go have lunch. And we had some people that were hesitant, some people that were unsure, but once we made the decision, the overwhelming response from the majority was “Man I can’t believe how great it is to have the rest of our Sundays free.”

And part of the strategy behind it was the missional community...that we wanted our missional communities to have the option of meeting on a Sunday evening so that they could determine what time they met, what they did when they got together, and if they still wanted to connect during that time. No one was going to do that on a Sunday morning, but there were people who would do it on a Sunday afternoon. It really has proven to be a wise move. I think we do have a number of people who started coming to Vintage because we had switched to the morning. Whether they would consciously know that or not, I just think that the evening was putting ourselves out of reach for a number of people. And rightly or wrongly our culture still sees Sunday morning as the time to receive spiritual input and we’ve definitely seen the fruit of that.

So kind of talking a little bit more about logistical things, when it comes to doing the set-up and take-down since you’re in a space that’s not your own, how do you organize all the people that make church happen?

Yeah. During the summer, because we’re in a school, it’s a little bit easier because we’re allowed to leave our stuff set up over the school year, er, over the summer vacation (**that’s handy**) which is great. And we’re able to do that over Christmas vacation and over spring break. But during those times when we can’t, we have what we call a road crew and the road crew are the ones that organize the setting up and the tearing down. Much before I came, they had put a plan in place where they created moveable carts that carry all of the materials that are needed for children’s ministry, for the coffee, for the sound crew, and we have a trailer that the guy who leads the road crew puts on his truck and they have that thing unloaded on Sunday mornings and then they load it up again right after church and he parks the trailer in his driveway. We’re

just extremely blessed to have him. It would be a challenge if it—when they decided to move, but the road crew really is what makes it happen on Sunday mornings in terms of the logistics. And then we have a children's ministry road crew, at least we did, we're in the process of trying to re-recruit for that, that comes in and does set-up for the children's ministry team and those are, because we're fairly simple about what we do, and fairly streamline, it doesn't require a ton of people, but the ones that it does require, you know, it's great to have them in place. We've got people who do the coffee, people who do our Connect table where people can get information. I don't oversee all of that—we've got individuals who oversee those things and then I resource them and make sure that they have what they need.

Great. So on the road crew, is it a separate people? So say there's a person that does the coffee table, is the person that is on road crew that unloads and sets that up also the person that is at that table?

No.

Or—so it's different people. You have the road crew that does the set-up and then the other people that come in and then do their thing?

Yes. Road crew...they're the logistics, behind the scenes—they bring the carts in, they get the tables up and then the team leaders come in and set those tables up and organize them and then man them for the service.

Great. And then, social media too is another thing that I'm interested in as churches are starting to really hop on that bandwagon. So you guys have Facebook and Twitter, do you have any other social media accounts? I can't remember.

No. We have a Facebook page and that's the one I use the most often. We have a Twitter account, but I'm just not, I just don't tweet. So, it's not something that I use very often, but we do use the Facebook quite a bit.

Uh huh. So is it you that does most of the posting on it then?

It is, yeah. There was somebody else who was doing it prior to me coming, but it was really challenging to have a volunteer do that because they aren't...it's not their primary priority so the things weren't getting posted in a timely fashion and so we just felt like that was one of the things that needed to be centralized. We have a group of designers who do our graphic design, but I need them to get me the stuff early enough where then I can put it on the website, put it on Facebook. And then we have an online church network called, it's CCB but it stands for Church Community Builder and we use that to communicate with people who have signed up for that to receive regular updates and emails and shared contact information, that kind of stuff.

Great. So then on the Facebook page, are the kinds of things that you post typically about upcoming church events, an upcoming teaching series and like a promo for that, or what kinds of things do you post?

Yeah. That and special needs that might come up within the body or even like this morning I did a post for Family Promise. There's a nine year old boy at Family Promise right now who needs summer clothes, so I use the church Facebook to send out a post about that need and then I shared it from my personal page. So it—predominantly those three things; posting messages and updating series information, reminding people of different gatherings that we're having, and then other needs that come up ministry wise. Those are the three main reasons we post. I don't do a lot of just random—

“Hey I'm hungry!”

Inspirational quotes or—

“I really want a corndog right now!”

Yeah, yeah.

(Emily laughs) I'm just kidding.

Yeah, I mean. I don't do a lot of that through the church. It's mainly those kinds of things.

Great. And then in terms of leaders and volunteers in the church, how many people—you were talking about having some graphic design people—are those mainly on a volunteer basis?

Yeah.

To just get people that have various skill sets and found out and say “Hey, would you like to be able to contribute here?”

Yeah, yeah. We are ridiculously blessed with artistic people at Vintage. We've got a guy who's a lead professor in the graphic design department. We have a guy who owns his own design firm who does design for Fortune 500 companies all over the country and he—they do it for nothing. Basically we—it's called the Creative Expressions Team and I meet with them in advance of our teaching series and I tell them what the theme's going to be, what the message titles are going to be and we try to do that a ways out so that they can be thinking into what those series IDs are going to look like and then design powerpoint slides for the messages, then share that with the artist's missional community in case they have ideas of ways we can add visual things to the auditorium during that series or that message or whatever, but they're all volunteers. I'm the only fulltime staff person and then we have a 15 hour a week administrator.

Okay. And then, if you don't want to answer this question you totally don't have to, but I'm always interested in hearing a little bit...in terms of churches that are a little bit newer tend to have younger populations in them or ones that have lots of college students... how are finances? Is it kind of a challenge each month or do you feel like you have a little bit of cushion since you been around for a little bit longer.

We do have a little bit of a cushion; we try not to keep too large of one because we don't feel like that's wise either. Our goal, I think, would be to be able to have a six-month cushion so that if something horrible happened we'd have six months of survival income (**Mhm**). But there is

partially a challenge with having such a large student population because you want to encourage them to give what they can and share what they can, but you know that those resources are limited. We try not to use that as an excuse, but we also try to be realistic about what a budget like ours can look like.

We went through a really tough stretch financially where we were discovering that we're not, we can't this time be a two fulltime staff person church and that freed up a significant amount of money to both put into savings and to build that cushion as well as increase what we're doing outreach wise. We made the decision a couple years ago that if we're going to tell our people that tithing is a healthy practice, that giving ten percent of your income is a good baseline practice, that we as a church needed to do that as well. So, as a church, we give away ten percent of everything that we receive. So when we do a deposit every week, ten percent of that automatically goes into a giving fund and we have local partners that we give to on a monthly basis, we have global partners that we give to, and then the extra we use for special projects and if needs come up within the body or locally we give to those.

You know, we do have a pretty small budget, all things considered and we try to keep it that way, we try to keep our overhead as low as possible and if we do something overhead wise we try to make sure that it's for a purpose. But we noticed that we were doing a bad job of approaching finances as a discipleship issue, so we've tried to improve on that. We also noticed that we were doing a bad job of keeping people updated on how the finances were going so that it was just in front of them in a healthy way. Not to guilt people into giving and not to twist their arm into giving, but being honest and upfront about "here's the very minimal streamline budget that we've created and if we're going to do that, it's going to require people giving and just being open and honest and upfront about it."

We don't pass plates, we don't have an offering during our service where people come forward or pass something out. We have offering boxes in the back of our auditorium. We mention them at the beginning of the service. We also have online giving that we encourage people to participate in. We don't hide it and we don't run from it, but we also don't beat people over the heads with it and we try not to approach it from a legalistic prospective either. We try to approach it from a discipleship perspective.

So then kind of hopping onto that discipleship idea as well, in terms of being a church that's not focused on the programmatics and the outreach and seeker emphasis, how do you go about discipling? How does that look?

We have a very specific plan that...the primary plan that we have is using the vehicles of what we call huddles and missional communities. Huddles are an intentional small group of either men or women that are recruited by invitation from the person who's leading the group. And that's somebody who says "Okay, I'm a disciple of Jesus and I see potential in you as you're walking your faith out and I am not a perfect person, but I have some things that I believe that I can share with you and I believe you have some things that I can learn from you, so I'm going to lead this group and I'm inviting you to be a part of it." And those groups are anywhere from nine to twelve months and the huddle is specifically designed to recruit people who are disciples, who will then go and make disciples themselves. So it's growth through multiplication. That's the goal.

Then we also have missional communities where anybody in the church and everybody in the church and in the community is invited to be a part of those. And we structure our discipleship

around a triangle concept which is—if you draw a triangle at the top it's the word 'up.' On the bottom right, it's the word 'in,' and on the bottom left it's the word 'out.' And this is based on the idea that Jesus lived his life in three dimensions. He lived it in his relationship with God, in his relationships with the disciples he recruited, and in the relationship of serving the world around him. And so, our goal as a disciple is to have the character of Jesus and to have the competency of Jesus. And if we're going to do that, then we need to be investing in those three types of relationships.

So, for us, discipleship is very much a consistent investment in those three areas of life. So huddles are very much an 'in' type of thing. Now within the huddles themselves, they learn how to live in their 'up' relationship with God and in their 'out' relationship in the world. Missional communities is very much the same way but those are coed, they're intergenerational and they're designed to help people grow to the level that they're comfortable or that they're willing to grow in the 'up,' the 'in,' and the 'out.' All of the missional communities do things that are 'up' related to help people grow closer to God. All of them do 'in' activities together where they just get together to have fun and enjoy each other's company and to get to know each other and they all have a monthly service requirement where as a group they do something to get outside of themselves and serve the world around them. Ideally, they pick one specific target that they invest in on a regular basis and so for us, the discipleship is using our Sunday public's face for worship and teaching. We try to interpret things for people who are new and we want to make them feel welcome, but we would feel better knowing that people who didn't know Jesus were getting introduced through the missional community than we would about having big numbers on a Sunday morning.

We take attendance, but I rarely see those numbers, I don't track them. I have our administrator track them so that if and when we need to look at those numbers for logistical purposes we can. But for us, a big win is not "How many people did we have on Sunday morning?" A big win is how many people are getting disciplined. How many people are in a huddle? How many people are in a missional community? How are those missional communities serving the community at large? And so we use that filter of the 'up' the 'in' and the 'out' and the vehicles of our Sunday service, which is our public space, our missional communities, which is our social space, and the huddles or discipleship groups, which are the private space.

About how many people are in the missional communities? I don't think I remember hearing that.

Ideally, a missional community would have anywhere from twenty to forty people.

Okay, so it's pretty big then.

Yeah, it's...I can't remember who the sociologist was that came up with that whole private, personal, social, public...but the idea is that we're all designed to function in those various social groups and we explore and discover different things within those groups. The social space is really the space where we learn the most about ourselves. We learn the most about who we are, how we're wired, how we function in the community. We can know people and be known. It's not the same level of intimacy in say a small group, but it's also not the same anonymity that you can get lost in, in a public space. So the social space is really the one we're trying to cultivate so that people can connect and get to know one another. And anymore than forty people, that starts to become a little bit difficult depending on who's leading it. Some people have the ability to effectively lead a group of fifty people, but it's when it starts to get to

that point that we would seek to multiply the group. And any smaller than twenty, it starts to feel a little bit like a small group if it's not being led to the point where we're really having a critical mass that can go do something, that can really impact the target that it's trying to serve. There's nothing wrong with small groups, they just serve a different purpose. And for our missional communities we want them to be place where people can connect and grow and serve in a way that really makes a tangible difference.

I'm interested in the huddles as well. Who sets them up or who becomes one of the recruiters for them? And do you oversee those people?

Yeah. I oversee that process. The idea is that the only people who can lead a huddle are those who have been through a huddle. So if you have a heart to lead a Bible study, but you haven't been through a huddle then we're not going to call what you're doing a huddle. Doesn't mean that it's bad, it's just not that. You know, it's one of the axioms that an enemy of what is, is to take something that isn't that and call it that. So we try to protect that term, so we do have other discipleship groups that meet. We do have other Bible studies that meet, but a huddle is specifically designed to be led by someone who's been through the process and they've been invested in and then they want to take what they've received and turn around and invest in others and hopefully to grow that way. We try to keep those anywhere from four to eight to ten at the absolute most depending on the capacity of the leader. And like I said, they... we ask people to commit to those for nine months to a year so that they can receive the full curriculum and have the full experience of a discipleship process and then turn around and invest in other people that way.

Perfect. I was just going to follow up and ask if there was a curriculum that you follow? Is there like a progression of topics? You covered that, perfect.

Well that covers most of my logistical, churchy questions here, in terms of...I'm always interested in 'how do churches function?' it's the forms and the functions that I'm always after in interviews.

But to kind of close things off I wanted to hear, do you have any memories or any stories that you would be interested in sharing about your time that you've been here or anything that should go down on the books for the records?

Hmm.

It always kind of throws you for a...like "here think fast on the spot!"

I think...I guess there are some sort of corporate watershed moments and then also some personal ones that sort of highlight where things are going. You know as a leader you have a vision and you want to share that vision with other people and see them own it. And so things like...when things like that happen, those are the ones that sort of stick out.

On a personal level, when we went through the transition with Seth stepping out and me stepping in, so to speak, you know that was a pretty...that was a pretty powerful thing because I had only been here for a year and a half when that process really got started. But, I really felt like we connected quickly with the church and the church connected quickly with us. And so it felt really good to go through that process and I think Seth and I and the team handled it as well

as it could possibly be handled so that people genuinely trusted us when we were walking through that process. We were able to take a two person leadership team and have the existing, kind of founding pastor step aside and hand it off to the quote unquote new guy and the vast majority of people stayed. And those that didn't stay left for various reasons but it was a small number. And we really felt like coming out of that transition that we had done the very best that we could to, not just lead people through a transition but to really care for them through that.

Sometimes, and I've heard and I've been a part of horror stories where churches get led kind of like, you know, the senior pastor's in the driver's seat of an open flatbed truck and he's got the vision and he's driving at 65 miles an hour and he has an idea of where the church should go but that requires a hard right turn and rather than slowing down they just take the corner at 50 miles an hour and they're following the vision but everybody just fell off the flatbed truck and is lying on the ground, bloody and bruised, and we did not want to do that and I don't think that we did. I think that we went slow and went deliberate and we cared for people in the midst of that and I think that was a huge moment of unifying for our leadership team, it was a huge moment for the people to see the level of character that Seth had and to discover the level of trust they had in me at the time. So that was a big thing.

I think when we made the decision to tithe as a church, that was a big deal because that put some integrity behind some of the things we were saying and doing and it's led us into some really cool partnerships with people with organizations that we're very proud to be a part of.

When Jill and I moved, this sounds like a weird thing to include here but, when we moved we were living in a townhouse over on the west side of Lawrence and we needed to get to a place that had more space. And so we moved to a house around 21st and Louisiana, the total opposite side of town and that day from start to finish was one of the most eye-opening, encouraging community church body experience I've ever had. Because literally from start to finish at various phases throughout the day, we had different people from the church from all different walks of life and from all different professions—people who were single, people who were married without kids, people who were married with kids, people who were old, people who were young...the way God just orchestrated it throughout the day, we had exactly the right help from who we needed it from, when we needed it, and we were able to move across town in a day and get the vast majority of our stuff set up even.

We set up a trampoline, we had, I mean like, we had all of these things that I didn't think would get done got done and it was specifically because we saw a community of people come together to help us, which we were very humbled by, but it was a picture of what was going on in the growth of the church. Because when we moved there, we had a lot of great people who were willing to do great things, but none of them really knew each other. And so we were trying to create a culture where that group of people could get to know one another and marshal their efforts in a specific direction. And it just so happened that that day the direction was moving us across town, but it wasn't about us, it was sort of, I was going through the process that day, but I was also standing outside of it, observing, seeing what was happening by the way both God orchestrated it and by the way people were willing to help, willing to serve.

And you know, it started at 8 o'clock in the morning and it didn't end until 9 o'clock at night. But every phase, somebody stepped in to help do something and we got twice as much done as I thought we would and it was just because of that. And so, you know, we were grateful to receive that on a personal level, but as a leader, it was exciting to see that and to see that people worked together that way and it was sort of a picture of what was possible with our missional

communities when people are in relationship and when they're connected and when they serve together in a common direction that huge things can happen.

So it was a very small thing but it really spoke a lot to the...and right now we're in the midst of another potentially watershed moment where we're thinking and praying into this facility issue of where can we be positioned to be the most effective, to be who we're supposed to be in Lawrence. I can't say where that's going to end, but I told our team "I'm not so much concerned about where we're going to end as much as I that once we get there, we're there together."

And that's going to be the goal...that's going to be the mark of 'did we do this well?' It's not going to be where we end up and what we decide. It's going to be that we did it together, that we're all on the same page and that if anybody wasn't on the same page they were willing to trust the rest of the group to make that decision. And so I feel like we're in the midst of that now and the months ahead will tell whether or not we saw that process through well. I feel like we're in the process of writing a chapter in the story of Vintage that has the potential to be a defining chapter. But it's too early to tell how that will end up so we'll see.

Good. Well thanks again for taking the time to meet with me and chat things over and answer those questions, it was great.

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for asking.