

Developing a Lay Order and Growing as a Church

Over the next months, you will be invited to explore the possibility of joining a lay order. Exactly what a “lay order” is and why you might consider being a part of it is explored below. Part of my purpose in writing this introductory sheet is to speak about how the development of this Lay Order fits within the overall vision of the church.

For almost twenty years, we have been considering the possibility of developing a lay order. Here are a couple of reasons why:

- First, we want to find a way to encourage and resource those whom we have sent as a church who still find their spiritual home here and who desire to live out the vision of the kingdom that we have developed as a church. We hope that forming a group that commits to common practices will hold these folks in their desire to bear witness to the kingdom of God where they are currently planted.
- Secondly, we want to find a way to bless and encourage our church (and others) by developing a group who commit to a specific set of practices that will give imagination to the rest of the church as to how to live out these practices and the gospel in their particular circumstances.

As you reflect upon these purposes, you may come up with some further questions; read below for some answers and consider attending the Q&A Night. I encourage you to bring any other questions as to how the Order fits into the overall vision of the church to the pastors. While the Lay Order will be a way for a smaller group of people within our community to take up kingdom practices, our hope of course is that we will all continue to deliberately take up practices that form us and involve us in God’s restoring mission. In other words, joining the Order is only one way to go deeper in following Christ as part of Grandview.

To lead us deeper into discipleship, we will be inviting all of you to take up the “seven seeds” that we named in our visioning process a couple of years back. These seven seeds include:

Corporate worship

Prayer in diverse forms

Justice for the least

Engagement with scripture

Shared life

Creation care

Creativity

For example, we will be inviting you to read through the Old Testament books of Judges and Ruth as a precursor to begin reading through the entire Bible over two or three years beginning in January 2018. Also, we will be engaging in further conversations about seeking justice in your workplace personally and with our First Nations neighbors collectively. We will be reflecting upon our “external review” conducted in June at our October church meeting that calls us both to share what we have learned over the years creatively with others and to continue to pursue a thicker shared life together.

We are looking forward to the year ahead, - Tim, Joy and Mark

A Grandview Lay Order

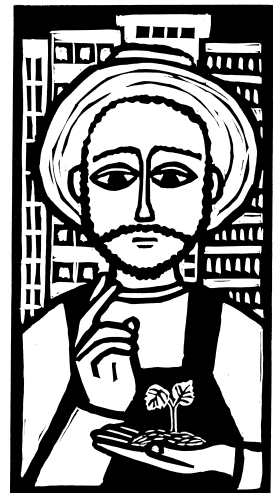
Explain ‘Grandview Lay Order’

‘Lay’ distinguishes the order from a Religious order. This is not a group of professional monks, nuns or clergy, but open to people from a variety of vocations, and whether single, married, or in families.

‘Order’ hearkens to a monastic heritage—a way of being together that both unites people with a common calling, and provides a means to seek Christ collectively as a counter-cultural movement. The Order is not set up to compete with or substitute for the church, but to bless it and the world around it.

What’s your ‘Who are We’ and ‘What do we do’ statement?

We are a dispersed community of Christ followers, drawn together by Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver, Canada. Relying on the Triune God to guide and indwell us, we seek the transformation and redemption of our world through pursuing right relationships with God, neighbour, self, and creation. By cultivating a spirit of listening and response, we engage this pursuit on interpersonal, systemic, and social norm levels, affirming what resonates



with the way of the kingdom of God and challenging what does not. We listen to the groanings and joys of the world, we listen to each other, and we listen to the heart and voice of God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. We seek to respond by carrying out what we hear, at times individually, at times corporately, in order to participate in God's redemptive purposes in the particular places we inhabit. We commit to support one another as we seek to follow the joyful and difficult way of Christ together.

Specific foci for listening and response include:

- Prophetic reflection, imagination, and action
- Shared life in a particular place
- Relationship with the margins for mutual transformation
- Holding tension for the sake of love and mercy
- Simplicity and Generosity

Where did this come from? Aren't we already doing enough as a faith community?

Actually, this yeasty dough has been rising for quite some time. Over many years at Grandview Church, amongst those who together were sharing life, following Christ and experimenting with living the upside-down Kingdom of God in our particular neighbourhood in East Vancouver, conversations occasionally turned to the idea of forming a lay order. There were notions of committing to a particular way of life, to one another, and to rhythms of prayer and action. We began to see our common narrative filtered through the lens of what we were being delivered from and called towards. A committee in 2015/16 sought to discern what the Holy Spirit seemed to be doing in our midst. This instructed and was followed by a pilot year in 2016/17 with 12 people living out the preliminary framework of an order. This fall, others are now welcome to consider joining.

This sounds like a rich experience, but intense. Will this feel like just 'one more thing' in our busy lives? Or worse, an exclusive club?

On Sept 19, a Q&A Introduction will give a better picture of what is involved in committing to a trial novitiate year—one of exploration and ongoing discernment. A 'Rule of Life' will be circulated, which explains the history, focus, commitments, and guidelines of the Order. Listen to what stirs in you as you take all of that in. The intention is not to create an onerous burden, but to provide a framework within which people can thrive in pursuing the values and calling they are drawn to live by—a container to hold busy and diverse lives.

On the one hand, the Order is a deep commitment, for a particular set of commitments that won't be for everyone. Not all of the deacons or pastors will join this. On the other hand, we anticipate the Order will be comprised of diverse people and challenging situations, no different from the life of a faith community. The bigger question is whether these commitments and relationships will be the most suitable ones in which to grow, give, and receive the love of Christ.

How will I know if joining this is right for me?

Between Sept 19 (the Q&A Night) and Oct 17 (the Orientation to Participating in a Novitiate Year), you will be asked to prayerfully write about your interests in joining, and then meet with a couple participants from the Pilot year to discern joining.

I'm still not sure why simply being part of a church is not enough.

The Order is not being established as somehow 'the next level' for 'super Christians'. For some people, simply journeying faithfully with a local church is entirely appropriate, given their calling and life circumstances. For others, an Order with a particular set of commitments summed up in a 'Rule' will be a grounding home to carry them in their longings, calling, and values.

As humans, there are unhelpful reasons to join an order as well, which we may or may not be aware of. Hence, discernment is encouraged before, during, and at the end of the novitiate year as to whether moving forward after a year makes sense.

If your interest is piqued and you would like to explore this further, come to the Grandview Lay Order Q&A, 7 pm, Sept 19. Please RSVP by Wed, Sept 13 to layorder@gcbchurch.ca, so that an appropriate venue can be selected for the numbers coming, which will be indicated by email and in Sept 17's bulletin. We will also be circulating the 'Rule' in advance.