

bringing the heart of the church to the heart of the city



What are you?

"You are French, aren't you? You're from France, right? I've heard they do weird things in France. People think you're the freakiest people to ever move into the neighborhood. People think you're nice, and they like you, but they think you're weird." As my neighbor "Joe" said this to me last Friday, my mind went spinning, "What have we done that is so weird?" We have known this family for almost a year. Their kids have come over to our house quite a bit, and they had invited us to their house to celebrate the 4th of July. Only now, waiting for the burgers and hotdogs to cook, did they feel like they knew us well enough to tell us how others in the neighborhood perceive us and to maybe get some answers themselves.

Joe asked me that shocking question after telling me that he's taken it upon himself to explain us to all those inquiring. Unbeknownst to us, he's come to our defense against those who think we're undercover cops or narcs, saying that we would have turned them in by now. He's also defended us against those who think we're hippies who might be putting some kind of wacky drug in our pancakes on Saturday mornings. We aren't fitting into any understood category. Most people know we're Christians, but even still, we don't fit the expected stereotypes. We do weird things, like walk our dog down streets they expect us to avoid. We talk to people on the other side of the street. Even the families who live on our side of the street don't sit on the front porches on the other side of the street to talk with the dealers, addicts, mentally ill, prostitutes, and near homeless folks. So, in order to put people at ease, Joe defends us, and explains us the only way that makes sense to him. We're from France.

We aren't from France, but we are from a different culture. Some of our cultural habits are weird, simply because a Christian life looks different. Those things we don't want to change. However, some of the weird things we do are from our own suburban background. We will need to adapt those in order to better connect with our neighbors. For example, recently, we learned that we didn't take seriously enough the importance of the front porch stage of relationship. We knew that levels of trust are built from casual acquaintance on the street, to friend on the front porch, and then to closer friend inside the house, but we jumped to "inside the house" too soon. You let family inside your house, not acquaintances. We grew up in areas where front porch relations were restricted to girl scouts selling cookies and UPS deliveries. Here, if you skip the front porch relations, you are weird. Learning from our cultural mistakes, when a neighbor said he couldn't come in for pancakes, I asked if he would like to sit on the front porch for coffee. He immediately accepted, and we all moved to the front porch with coffee.

Stereotypes and categories shape people's perceptions before they get to know the person. People – real individuals – and their lives shape roles that have important places within a community. As we gain cultural understanding and trust, we will be able to move "into the house" of people's hearts, earning the role of witness, sharing the most intimate and important aspects of our faith. But, we start as learners, learning how not to be weird in the wrong ways, standing firm in the weird of the right ways, and sitting on the front porches of people's lives.

the beat

to get the full scoop. www.downtownpulse.org

Interarsity Mission Trip :: St. Patrick's Day Party
Compassion Weekend :: Commissioning at FUMC
WE ARE NOW FULL TIME MISSIONARIES!
[Check out our YouTube video on our website.]

who we really are

“While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw them, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’” – Matthew 9:10-11

As Jesus and his disciples journeyed across the Judean countryside, a questioning crowd followed, watching and wondering. They saw him touch the untouchable and love the unlovable. They cringed when he acknowledged the faith of prostitutes and gentiles. And they were shocked when he ate with tax collectors and “sinners”. They wondered, “Isn’t he supposed to be a religious teacher or something? How could he be so oblivious of the kind of people who are gathering around him? Everyone knows that these people are ‘sinners.’ Isn’t he aware of how scandalous this could appear? Why does he treat these people with such dignity? Doesn’t he know who they are?”

Jesus was truly the freakiest person to move into our human neighborhood. He did things that were not only out of the ordinary but clearly wrong. He responded to people differently than he should have. He seemed to blatantly disregard the categories that define the way people relate to one another. Jesus didn’t encounter people as prostitutes, tax collectors, Pharisees or gentiles. Instead, he embraced each person as if he or she was a beloved long lost brother or sister.

So, Jesus ate with sinners. From the perspective of those looking in from the outside, all they could see were the categories: tax collectors, prostitutes, gentiles, maybe even drug addicts, felons, illegal immigrants, homosexuals, alcoholics . . . “sinners.” But, within the little room, sitting around a common meal, Jesus looked deeply into the faces of those at the table and saw them for who they really were: the beloved children of his Father God.

The Pharisees couldn’t see beyond the categories. They were stuck on the outside looking in. How could they dare enter and sit at that table full of “sinners?” It would mean giving up their illusion. It would mean acknowledging that they themselves were sinners. Yet, Jesus called and continues to call us to join him at this table, to sit among the sinners and share a meal. When we accept that invitation, when we enter that little room crammed full of “sinners,” when we partake of the meal, the moment will arrive when his loving eyes come to rest upon our faces, and we will know also who we really are.



This summer is primarily focused on establishing a good missional foundation in the city and planning for discipleship/missions opportunities for FUMC for the fall.

Among those events are:

an intensive, 9-month, hands-on curriculum for urban missions

monthly book and movie clubs

missions workshops/city events



contact us!

John and Katheryn Heinz
P.O. Box 34173
Lexington, Kentucky 40588 -4173
john@downtownpulse.org
katheryn@downtownpulse.org
www.downtownpulse.org

Please contact us if you would like to be added to our monthly email prayer letter.

PULSE

points

**“What are you?”... The people ask because they want to know how to relate to the newcomer.”
– Paul Hiebert, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School**

“Missionaries” have at times come across as rich landlords, colonial rulers, parents, and empire builders. Hiebert recommends that we come humbly as students, siblings, and servants.

Another respected missiologist, Donald Larson warns missionaries of entering a community as teacher (“I know it all”), seller (“do I have a deal for you?”), or accuser (“look at all these problems”). He strongly suggests coming in as learner, then earning the right to become trader/sharer, and then finally earning the respect to become a storyteller/witness.