

Blue Ocean Faith, Ann Arbor

A Church Waiting to Happen: Jesus, Spirit, Scripture, Science, All-People Friendly

Quick guide to understand bewildering diversity of Christian landscape: **Liturgical**: Churches that celebrate communion each week, enjoy ancient prayers that have stood test of time; **Social Justice**: Churches that fight oppression, make room for previously stigmatized groups; **Evangelical**: love the Bible, share gospel; **Renewalist**: pursue Spirit, at ease with emotion, experience

If you know code, can walk into any church and determine where it fit on grid.

There has, of course, been blending going on between the various portions of the quadrant for some time. But most of the blending has happened within either the upper portions of the quadrant or the lower portions, with a strong wall between the upper and lower portions.

In upper part of quadrant no beef with modern science. Evolution & climate change aren't dirty words. **Contemplative prayer** is something Jesus/apostles did, not some new age heresy. **Social justice** isn't a lefty plot, but kingdom of heaven coming to earth.

In lower portion of quadrant people don't shy away from including Jesus in everyday conversation. Happily introduce others to him, even people in faraway places. Embrace the mysterious Spirit, believing we don't just talk to God, but God talks back. Know that Scripture is worth reading, studying, absorbing, interpreting aright, because its loaded with wisdom, witness, inspiration.

Too often, intense rivalry between different sectors on quadrant. No Scarlett-Gray allowed in UM section, no maize-blue on other side of the field.

Remember opening of Hunger Games? These gladiatorial games set up by a totalitarian State to keep citizens cowered-pacified.

The games start when representatives from each sector pop up onto the circumference of a field. In middle, island with resources. Games begin with a mad dash to island, everyone grabs as many resources as possible, and takes them to their corners.

Resources become weapons to confer competitive advantage.
Weak picked off, strong survive until there's one victor standing.

What if the resources at center aren't to be used that way at all?
What if they are treasures to be shared—stewarded by those who learn how to use them in order to share them with everyone?

This is the difference between **business-as-usual religion** which is just another way to divide people and **faith as way to connect us** to self, others, the wide world, God.

Blue Ocean faith is about breaking out of the hunger games and living by the ways of a new creation now.

This means combining things previously deemed “not compatible”
Jesus, Spirit, Scripture, Science, All-People Friendly

Some wines are made only from a single variety of grape. Others are blends. When you have a blend of grapes that haven't been blended before you have a new wine.

This new wine is needed to foster revival in Secularized West. In places like Ann Arbor, where “secular” isn't a bad word.

What we call secularism was a reaction to a formulation of Christianity called **Christendom** that blended the power of the State with the powers of religion. Many of the early secularists were broken-hearted Christians and their children-grandchildren.

There is an echo of Christ in the secular soul. There's a longing for a genuine experience of God that touches the whole person, not just an **intellectual** faith, but a **felt** one. Jon Rivard last week told

he felt “**verklemmt**” during worship. I said, “What’s that?” He said “It’s when you feel choked up, on verge of crying. I felt that throughout the service. Felt like I was home.”

But there’s also an awareness in secular world that religion can be toxic, dangerous. Can be employed as a weapon to further divide an already divided world. It can shame people, stigmatize them, or make us feel defensive and threatened by scientific discovery

The new wine that conveys the real Jesus to the secular soul has to blend the best of upper portions of quadrant with best of lower part: a **Jesus, Spirit, Scripture, Science, All People Friendly faith**.

If this combination were easy it would have been done before. But it’s **resisted** by the powers that benefit from the status quo. Trying to pour this newer wine into an older wineskin can be tricky.

Jesus said, *“No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”* (Mark 2: 21-22)

This church is a new wineskin for new wine to promote revival in the Secular West.

And we’re not just trying to “reach those people.” We are those people. Emily and I are co-pastors and both of us left faith as young people because the wine we were served (mine from upper portion of quadrant, hers from the lower one) didn’t taste like the wine you’d serve at banquet feast of the kingdom of God.

We recently gave up our jobs for the sake of this new wine because it apparently needs a new wineskin. Many of you have different versions of a similar story. And you have friends, neighbors, co-workers, and especially children, with a palate, a craving, a need for new wine. So we are about crafting, tasting, and serving this new wine for the sake of revival in secular west.

We are not only church doing this but we are among the first. BO is a network of churches doing this in Manhattan, Berkeley, Santa Monica, Iowa City, Boston, Wooster MA, Philadelphia, Madison. Some of you will start churches like this in other places.

When new things are in birthing stage, expect prophetic dreams - signs. Last year, Emily had a prophetic dream about giving birth. In October, I had one about a large ocean wave washing over me.

I think it's a **prophetic sign** we are here in the Social Hall of St. Clare's Episcopal. It's where we hosted BO Summit in May.

We have strong roots in lower part of quadrant. SC firmly planted in upper one. We're known here as evangelical-charismatics.

SC shares a building with a synagogue. Might be only such arrangement in country. Food pantry is staffed by members of St. Clare's, Temple Beth Emmet, and Muslim Social Services. That's not typical. That's not Hunger Games rules.

After losing wife of 42 years who helped me plant church I led for 39 years, James introduced me to woman who led worship at SC for 23 years and has a daughter named Oceana, whose birthday is on same day as Ocean Brabbs (Feb. 28.) whose mother Cassie leads our worship. Had our wedding reception in this room.

When Emily and I learned we couldn't continue as pastors on Platt road and would be planting a new church in a hurry, the thing that unnerved us most was very practical: **Where could we find a place to meet on Sunday mornings on such short notice?** I texted Fr. James to tell him I was back in church planting business and he responded in about 30 seconds saying, "Do you need a place to meet? How about our Social Hall?"

James wasn't playing by Hunger Games rules. He made a prophetic move of cooperation between congregations from sides of quad-

rant that are supposed to be in competition. God is doing something here.

Today is first of 5 sessions in our first ever membership class. We'll fill in blanks of what we can't cover on Sunday with weekly emails. You are the people who by coming have said, *We want this kind of church to happen, not someday but now.*

God is ready to do this if we are. It's a **Mary moment** for us: a time to say, "I'm not sure what you mean Gabriel, but YES!"

Starting week 3 of series you can express your informed "Yes" by filling out a membership commitment sheet. Membership means three things: Yes, to vision, making an "intention to give" pledge for next year, Yes to serve as I am able.

Because this is new, inviting us to sign up for a one year renew-able membership. We'll try that for a few years. It's important for us to have an active, involved membership and that we know each year who are members really are.

Making an annual financial pledge (stating what you intend to give over next year, barring unforeseen circumstances) will be a part of our membership. Many have started giving already. Thank you.

We're about half-way to what it takes to sustain at a very basic level. We have about a month, maybe two to get up to that level.

We need everyone to give what you can, and many of you to tithe to the church—that means 10% of your income. New churches don't come into being without that kind of giving.

We all have different means, but it's important for us all to be giving according to our means to make this work.

We will become the founding members of Blue Ocean Faith, A2. Tone we set and the commitment we bring to this will have a

profound impact on what the church becomes. God is ready to bless us in extraordinary ways if we are willing to commit ourselves to what he's doing here. This could be a lot of fun.

Two minute Reflection:

Begin our two minutes of reflection with some charismatic style prayer. I want to pray over us, binding powers-that-be which hinder new faith ventures from coming into being, in this case, rivalry, party spirit, fear. These things, especially fear, can work in each of our hearts in funky ways that take advantage of our particular psyches. Risen Christ is Lord and has power over these things. I'm just going to speak that out over us to begin.

Then I'll invite HS to come over us with comfort-reassurance.

During that time, just open your heart to comfort and reassurance. Let God whisper anything he wants to into your heart.

Offering: Today the Church remembers the gifts of the Magi, the astrologers from Arabia, representing the outsider Gentiles who had a dream and followed it and brought their gifts to Bethlehem. At some risk to themselves. Receive our gifts today for your work in the world today through Jesus. Let's praise God singing....

Doxology

Communion Instructions

Senses for prayer ministry: if you head something during reflection time, go to prayer area and share it, and bless it; if Spirit touched a tender nerve during reflection time, receive prayer for reassurance-comfort. (Prayer for troubled dreams)

Try something new today: pray for those in need. Names are listed in Today's Service sheet. *We will simply speak each name aloud together in unison. Lord, hear our prayers for.....* Norma, Lisa, Casey, Liam, Alejandro, Mike, Tim, Kirk, Daniel, Jesse, Jane, Jonas, Hannah, Camille, And those we lift up in silence: _____.

Let us confess our faith with the words of this hymn from Philippians 2. I will say the phrase and you will echo the same phrase together in unison.

5 In your relationships with one another/ have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God/ something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Leader (Ken): **The Lord be with you!**

People: ***And also with you.***

Leader: **Lift up your hearts!**

People: ***We lift them up unto to the Lord.***

Leader: **Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.**

People: ***It is right to give him thanks and praise.***

Communion Prayer: As we lift up these gifts from your table, bread and wine, signifying your body and blood given for us and for the

life of the world, we give you thanks, and receive them with
thanksgiving,

Praying as Jesus taught us, saying "Our father in heaven...

Two lines down center as you come....