

Discipleship, Development, and Discernment:

A Plan for Young Adult Formation

by

Joe Allen Gunby

The Divinity School
Duke University

Date: 9 December 2022

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Project submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Young adults find it difficult to transition to life beyond college—in their relationships, professional work, and most especially in their faith. This project explores the practical steps necessary to start a fellows program in Athens, Georgia that would help young adults flourish and integrate their faith into the whole of life, concluding that through sustainable networks, funding, and detailed grained planning, such a program could become viable within one year.

Dedication

For the Rev. Dr. C. T. McAlilly

“It’s the same conversation we’ve had all these years.”

Thanks for keeping it going.

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1. Let Your Life Be Spoken To: Narrative Theology and Young Adult Formation

1.1 *The Need For Formation*

Recently, I found myself thinking about the relationship between human nature, flourishing, and what constitutes the good life at my seven year-old's baseball practice. I had been asked to help some of the more inexperienced kids with the fundamentals of hitting. I was talking with some of the other coaches about how I could get across the concept of "keeping the hands back" as the ball approached. One said, "I just think you ought to let them hold their hands how they want to. Just let 'em have fun." Perhaps I have been reading too many Christian sociological studies lamenting the failure of the church to form her young in anything resembling historic Christianity, but I couldn't help but hear in that remark an undertone of our culture's suspicion toward any type of formation.¹

Our culture's suspicion toward intentional formation is perhaps nowhere more felt than in our approach to young adults—an age-group that seems old enough to figure things out for themselves but that still manages to underperform given our expectations of them. Christian Smith and his colleagues note two general extremes in the ways that older adults think about the formation of young adults. The first is a variation of "just let 'em have fun." There can be a tendency to dismiss evidence of abusive behavior, self-harm, or lack of ambition with the wave of the hand, as though to say, "we smoked a little dope when we were young and we turned out all right." On the other hand, sometimes church growth experts, pastors, and leaders of religious institutions can over-react to the

¹ Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*. London; New York : Routledge, 2001. Bell argues that while the culture of late modernity tends to frame its anxiety about formation in terms of "formation vs. freedom," in fact, that same culture does an excellent job forming young men who play video games to such lengths that they must wear adult diapers. The question is always about formation for what?

numbers they see reported by Barna and the Pew Trust. There can be a tendency to feel like attendance and participation is hurtling downward at such a rate that it seems we're not likely to hit bottom anytime soon. Some reports of what "the kids these days" are up to seem so negative and dismissive that one wonders how any of these naysayers plan to do ministry with a group of people for whom they hold out such low hopes.

Both of these extremes are to be avoided—for reasons sociological and theological. As Christian Smith and his colleagues note, sometimes the sociological data does suggest some alarming trends in the moral reasoning and religious self-understanding of emerging adults, and this requires realism. On the other hand, emerging adults can be exceptionally entrepreneurial, inclusive, and thoughtful. This requires our appreciation. Smith encourages a disposition he calls "realistic care."² It's a desire to be honest about what young adults are and to engage them for who they are, and not for who we *think* they are or merely for who we want them to be. Realistic care is less interested in questions like, "why are these kids getting high all the time?" and more interested in asking something like, "what are the factors that would lead a 22-year old to trip on DMT while working at Chic-Fil-A?"³ It's less satisfied with lazy questions like, "why are the kids these days so lazy?" and more interested in looking at the patterns of life and work that we've created around our vocations that lead young people to feel like there is so little to work for.

² Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, New York: Oxford, 2009.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

1.2 Formation In A Particular Story

While various forms of over- and under-reaction may be possible in the culture at large, those in the church who have been shaped by the Biblical witness are called to proclaim and participate in the entire Biblical picture of the human person as made in the image of God, damaged by sin, redeemed by grace and sent forth to be a blessing. Our shorthand for this in the Athens Fellows is the “four chapter story.” While this shorthand may seem a bit obvious, when contrasted with more truncated versions of Christian witness and theology, it becomes clear why we want to emphasize each aspect of the story the gospel tells.⁴ For instance, certain ecclesial and theological traditions tell the story of humanity in two chapters—sin and salvation. Describing the lives of young adults in a two chapter gospel might look something like this: “young people today are falling away from the Lord what with their cultural Marxism and TikTok and they are in need of the saving grace of God.” The reality of sin and the need of salvation, while important, do very little to help young adults to assess cultural realities like TikTok because there is no account of what a human person is *for*, or how God giving us certain cultural gifts might relate to God’s call for our lives. Or consider another truncated telling of the gospel with different socio-political trappings—a version of a “three chapter gospel” that might go something like this: “Human beings are created with magnificent capacities to do all sorts of wonderful things, and if we could just help people see how much God loves the world, then they would be willing to do their part to make the world a better place.” True as that may in its assessment of the dignity

⁴ One could quibble over exactly how these “chapters” are named or how they relate to one another, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. For instance, Sam Wells describes the history of redemption as a “five act play,” and notes that we are currently living in the age of the church, or the fourth act, to be followed by the eschatological fulfillment of all things.

of humanity and the love of God, by leaving out a clear-eyed understanding of the effects of sin, it remains incomplete. A fellows program built on those chapters would be all development and no discipleship, and consequently, young adults would need not salvation but merely education.

In the Athens Fellows program, however, we want to form young adults to discern the possibility for the Scriptural portrait of human flourishing to come alive in every aspect of their lives—their work and calling, family life and relationships, and service through the church for the common good. It would be easy for a program of this sort to be construed as “helping young people make good decisions.” While we hope that they do make decisions that honor God and create value and flourishing for others, the ultimate aims of the program have less to do with the decisions that they make and more about the horizons they learn to see. In my experience with young people, there is often a fair bit of anxiety about the “big decisions”: the choice about whether to go this or that excellent undergraduate institution, or which nice-looking courteous young man would make the best boyfriend. In the Fellows program we want them to learn to see not whether to take a job at this bank or that bank, but rather that what might be required of them is to do their work in such a way that it brings value to the company and glory to God. Sometimes a spreadsheet is just a spreadsheet, but sometimes a spreadsheet is a radical attempt to bring flourishing to a city with a 40% poverty rate by showing that affordable housing can benefit the company, the people who receive the loans, and the welfare of the city. While I don’t want to oversell the prospect of that kind of kingdom vocation in the midst of an otherwise everyday vocation, I don’t want to undersell it, either. Flourishing at work might take the form of a former fellow who has enough emotional alertness to see that the talk around the water cooler is a kind of

character assassination and to be unwilling to participate in it. *How* their job becomes a kingdom vocation will be up to them, showing them *that it can be* is up to us. Discerning these possibilities for themselves will require formation in the difficult work of moral description.

1.3 Narrative, Description, and Formation

Some Christian leaders like James Emery White who have thought a great deal about how to minister to Gen Z think that the church must learn how to translate the gospel into the terms that young people can understand.⁵ But simply putting gospel answers to Gen Z questions lacks explanatory power because it fails to describe why secular culture has failed them in the first place. True conversion requires not just a change of mind, or even just a change of heart. True conversion requires an increasing ability to help a person relate who they are and what they do to the way the world truly is. Achieving this kind of explanatory overhaul requires not just that a person learn a new story, but that one learn why the old story left them with an inability to tell a coherent story about the whole of life.⁶ Attempts to merely add Christian language and vocabulary onto a secularized story arc results in the kind of linguistic slippage that Christian Smith and his cohort have noted. A true story is one that allows the person to locate themselves in it by explaining how they came to adopt that story not just as a newer installment among a menu of options, but how their adopting that narrative frame was a necessary consequence of having previously lived amid the ruins of secular logic.

⁵ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017).

⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (New York: Notre Dame, 1981)82.

In his essay “Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science,” Alasdair MacIntyre describes the kind of situation that ordinary people often encounter in the course of a life that makes them realize that the interpretive schema by which they made themselves and the world make sense might no longer be equal to the task.⁷ His examples are wonderful for our purposes because they are exactly the kinds of crises that young adults leaving university are constantly grappling with. As a matter of fact, he draws his primary examples of epistemological crises from the life of one particular young adult—Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Hamlet is often decried in the critical literature for his “indecisiveness,” but MacIntyre sees in him a young man struggling to live into any one narrative frame over all the others available to him. “Being decisive” would require him to choose a character to play—vengeful son of a Danish king, lovelorn boyfriend of Ophelia, intellectual trained in the modern university, or what have you.

Like Hamlet, the young adults I’m trying to recruit often don’t know how to act because circumstances leave them living in stories that they don’t have the resources to narrate. For instance, let’s say a young man fallen madly in love with his college sweetheart is told to take a hike. Not only does this fact itself cause a tremendous amount of emotional turmoil, but the deeper struggle that he comes to grapple with is something like, “if I thought that her love for me was true to the extent that I would have staked my entire social media presence on it, how do I now know if *anything* is true?” Or to take another example: a

⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, “Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative And The Philosophy Of Science.” *The Monist*, Vol. 60, No. 4, Historicism and Epistemology (October, 1977), 455. This entire paragraph draws on this essay of MacIntyre’s, which is a wonderfully succinct version of his entire project. Similar points could also have been drawn from his early essay “The Intelligibility of Action,” wherein he makes a similar point when he says, “intelligible action is a more fundamental category than action as such.” In other words, the story in which we think we are characters is probably more determinative than what we do at any given moment, especially over the course of an entire life.

new intern at a law firm during her second quarter review is berated for a host of mistakes after thinking that she was performing with the same level of commitment that earned her excellent grades in school but is now devastated by a poor performance review, not just for what it says about her production in that role, but for her overall sense of herself as a competent person. Her best friend may attempt to cheer her up by saying, “It’s only one bad review; it happens to everybody,” but she wouldn’t be able to escape thoughts like, “How could I have been so silly to have thought that I was on top of it?” Examples of this kind abound, and are important for being so common.⁸

The gospel is not merely an answer or new set of answers to the questions like “who am I” and “what gives my life meaning and purpose?” The gospel is the grammar by which all such questions are formulated. A young adult growing into a mature faith needs not merely to ask merely, “how do I make sure I perform well at the internship that my father has pulled strings to get for me?” but rather, “how can I pour out my life as a drink offering?” Notice, I’ve chosen a biblical concept that puts the matter somewhat radically—in idea and vocabulary. But reframing the issue in this way need not change her path at the level of action, but at the level of description. That is, she may take the internship at the law firm, working just as studiously as she would have otherwise, perhaps more so, but she would tell her reasons for acting by appeals to Scripture, tradition, and the everyday stories of her fellow-Christians. All of these are aspects of the “enlarged narrative” that MacIntyre sees as crucial for the resolution of the sorts of epistemological crises that plague young adults. He writes, “When an epistemological crisis is resolved, it is by the construction of a

⁸ All of these examples are updated and adapted versions of those MacIntyre gives in his essay.

new narrative which enables the agent to understand both how he or she could intelligibly have held his or her original beliefs and how he or she could have been so drastically misled by them. The narrative in terms of which he or she at first understood and ordered experiences is itself made into the subject of an enlarged narrative.”⁹

More often than not, the stories that young adults have been told to live out begin and end with telling one’s own story.¹⁰ But the church must give young adults an ability to re-frame the stories that the culture has taught them to tell. As Thomas G. Long describes it, even those inside the church are not “blank tablets on which the gospel can be freshly inscribed. The culture has been scribbling on those tablets a religion of individual spiritual quest...[they] are less like catechumens needing to be taught and more like interfaith dialogue partners...”¹¹ The terminology, grammar, practices and tradition of modern secularized discourse is so total that it is no longer even recognized as a total formation. Fortunately, a diverse range of thinkers have alerted us to the ways that (post)modernity is more than simply “the way things are” or “the way things happen to be,” but is rather a deliberate disciplining of bodies and minds. Theologian Tracey Rowland puts it well when she says, “what will matter in the coming decades is less whether a church is Protestant or Catholic but the degree to which it is alert to the formative power of modernity.”¹² Similarly, Daniel Bell demonstrates in great detail that the question facing the church and her young

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, “Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative And The Philosophy Of Science.” *The Monist*, Vol. 60, No. 4, Historicism and Epistemology (October, 1977), 455.

¹⁰ In one of the most popular and damaging books ever written about vocational discernment, Parke J. Palmer encourages readers to “let your life speak.” Leave to the side the vocational mismatch that would result in pursuing only the jobs that related to one’s desires (without equal attention to skill and experience), for the purposes of this paper the problem with Palmer is that he rarely if ever makes reference to the call of God which seems so central to the Scriptural vision of vocation. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*. New York: Wiley, 1999.

¹¹ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching From Memory to Hope*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009, 76.

¹² Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*. London; New York: Routledge, 2003, 45.

adults is not whether they will choose the freedom of secular existence *or* the discipline of the church, but rather *which form of discipline* will be decisive.¹³ Simply by virtue of being in the world, they've learned the language(s) of secular modernity. So then, how should we set out to re-form them in the strange form of life called the church?

In his book *Interpretation and Obedience*, Walter Brueggemann uses a story from 2 Kings as a paradigm for how the church should engage the world—specifically, how the people of God learn to interpret reality in the midst of a world that has little use for the particularity of revelation. The way he deploys the story is suggestive of our work with young adults. As he sets it up, when Israel was besieged by the Assyria, it was necessary to engage in two simultaneous conversations. Firstly, the conversation “on the wall” occurred between Israel and the Assyrian foreign policy apparatus. On the other hand, there was another conversation “behind the wall”—the place of lament, worship, and memory. Kenda Creasy Dean extends Brueggemann’s distinction between “on the wall” and “behind the wall” to talk about the way the church should be forming its young people—not demanding that they merely learn our insider language by rote, or merely caving and accommodating ourselves to the pidgin language of Assyrian Aramaic, which may be good enough to exchange goods and services, but is incapable of communicating with the Lord and Giver of life, and so lacks the grammar necessary for an adequate description of human flourishing.

The problem with applying the 2 Kings story to contemporary ministry is that there are a number of ways that the metaphor is a bad fit. The militaristic setting is problematic because the Assyrians are physical, not just spiritual enemies. While it may be true the culture

¹³ Daniel M. Bell, 1966-. 2001. *Liberation theology after the end of history : The refusal to cease suffering*. London; New York: London ; New York : Routledge, 2001, 2-5.

of secularism threatens the church to some extent, that can't be the only relationship that we have to the world. This is, after all, the world that God loves and sent his Son to die for. True, the world received him not, and the world may be hostile at times, but we must always also say that this is our mission field. Of course, even "mission field" evokes a spatial and geographic concept that fails to name the complexity of the permutations between Christian culture and secular culture.¹⁴ And this illusion of bounded space plays out in Brueggemann's deployment of the story from 2 Kings, too. Israel was a geographically bounded and ethnically distinct people, while the church calls to all people, and tribes, and kingdoms. The scene painted in 2 Kings is helpful insofar as it presents an image of the church "over-against" the culture and the need for reflection "behind the wall," it doesn't account for the fact that the church is called to mission and evangelism.

But while we may have some hesitations in applying this image of "at/behind the wall" to as a total picture of the church's relationship to the culture, it nevertheless suggests some intriguing things about how we might understand our ministry with young adults. The most helpful thing it suggests is that like the Israelites in 2 Kings, the flourishing of young adults requires attention mainly to the language used behind the wall, and secondly, to the language used on the wall. Only by deliberate and faithful attention will language behind the wall not be forgotten; unfortunately, this has often been the case. As Dean notes: "The data from the National Study on Youth and Religion (NSYR) suggests that these behind-the-wall conversations are not widespread in American churches, or at least they are not happening

¹⁴ Kathryn Tanner and other theologians of culture have shown that cultural artifacts are never the product of a single culture, but are always permeable to other ideas and practices that were thought to be beyond them. Similarly, Charles Taylor's account of the secular resists any such easy distinction as well, noting that many of the things decried as "the secularization of our society" were actually rooted in debates within Christian theology, a point lost on many of the Christian popularizers of this thought.

with sufficient energy to involve young people, or with sufficient clarity for young people to be able to distinguish the conversation behind the wall from conversations elsewhere.”¹⁵

The Fellows Program is an attempt to train young adults in robust Christian speech in the hopes that they will then be able to carry on conversations with others beyond the wall. Our work doesn’t happen primarily on the wall. After all, our statement of faith and our counter-cultural practices make it clear we will be speaking the insider language of God’s people. But this is in no way intended to de-emphasize the the church’s missional communication on the wall. Quite the contrary. Because talk on the wall is so important, we want to form young people to know how to do it themselves, in whatever context they might find themselves—be it their nine-to-five job, their family life, or service to the community. We want to catechize them to be bilingual, to translate what happens in their life in terms of Scriptural and ecclesial narratives, and to be able to do this while simultaneously performing the work of cultural discernment, always alert to the fact that there are other ways of seeing the world that need to be engaged.

1.4 How We Will Form Young Adults

Many of the components of the Athens Fellows Program have been designed for the fellows to learn how to narrate and see their lives truthfully.¹⁶ This work will begin before they even arrive, as we will ask them to begin designing and illustrating a narrative and/or pictorial timeline of their lives. It will chart all of their major life events milestones, family heritage, geographic locales, relationships, and anything else that they see as important. On

¹⁵ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of American Teenagers is Telling the American Church*, 117.

¹⁶ In an unpublished essay called “Connecting the Dots,” Stanley Hauerwas said, “you can only learn to live in a world that you can see, and you can only learn to see a world that you can say.”

our very first retreat, each fellow will put up their story board for the others to see, and over the course of the weekend, we will take time for each one to tell us some or all of their story. As the Director, I will go first to set the tone of being open and vulnerable, and hopefully to model how one tells their individual story as an episode in the larger unfolding work of God and His people. This sort of narrative framing will continue in the fellow's relationship with their mentors, and the mentors will be coached on these matters, too. The idea is to show (not merely tell) what faith can look like in a concrete human life, with all its dead ends, unresolved cliffhangers, elisions and dead ends. It's been said that the lives of the saints bring the Scriptural narrative a bit closer to our own day, and it is my hope that the mentoring relationships do the same.

Learning how to see our lives in the scope of God's work continues throughout the year. Every week we will gather for Symposium, a time to eat, fellowship, and check-in about how things are going on the job and otherwise. In some small way at least, the fellow's part-time jobs are not important so much because they give someone "real-life work experience (because, let's face it, most fellows won't be doing that same job a year later), but because they give the fellows real life life experiences and provide a kind of narrative tension for the reflective capacity we are trying to build in them.

The theological reflection that we will do together is similarly geared toward helping them see themselves and the world truthfully. While many other programs offer a set course of graduate level theological education that no doubt provides a very similar pattern of reflection, I want our program to be highly adaptable and personal. In addition to the books and essays we will read together, we will help each fellow develop a personal reading plan based on their career interests as well as the feedback that we get from their mentor and the

church staff about what might help them develop along their growth edges. This also plays to the relatively intellectual culture of our church; we have a number of current and past professors, teachers, and thoughtful lay people.

1.5 A Unique Approach To Formation

If we want to help young adults develop skills to discern the call of God and to describe the world well, why is it necessary to immerse them in a nine-month program? Why not just build young adults their own personalized worship space, like so many churches do for their teenagers? What is about the idea of a fellows program that makes it better than all of the other things the church would do for young adults? Perhaps the most helpful way of describing what the fellows program accomplishes is by comparing it to other initiatives and ministries that are on offer to see what makes it better or different than the alternatives.

The first and most obvious place to look for ministry to young adults is the church, and at the outset I want to be clear that the fellows program is not an alternative to the life of the local church, but a pathway into it. The fellows program draws on the church for mentoring and pastoral support, and it provides deeper connection between a cohort of young adults and older adults. It gives and takes within the context of the church. In this way it is a bit different than the typical approach of those churches that have attempted to be intentional about ministering to this demographic. For instance, in one of the most widely read studies of how churches should respond to the needs of this community, James Emery White insists that churches in general need to shift their language, practices, and programs to accommodate Gen Z,¹⁷ while other church growth strategists insist that churches should

¹⁷ White, 34.

“skew young” or “think young” to engage a new generation. While it is true that every generation needs to be brought into the life, ministry, and decision making of the church, it remains to be seen whether this is a sustainable strategy—for two reasons. First, the sociological data is clear that what young people actually want and need is not for older adults to cater to them, but to help them form inter-generational relationships that draw young people into the historic teaching and life of the church. And this is related to the second reason. If churches change their language and practices every 15-20 to accommodate “the kids these days,” then in time the effect will be deform churches into generational silos. Yesterday’s “Awesome God” is today’s Liturgical Folk.¹⁸

There are a host of reasons why so many programs and initiatives within the church haven’t yet connected, and for the most part, it’s not for lack of trying. For years the church has been aware that we lose young people when they go off to college. For several decades the thought was, “well, we lose them in college because college is a very secular environment.” Framed this way, the solution was clearly to counteract secular forces through initiatives like Summit Ministries, a two- week intensive program that taught students a biblical worldview before their brains were ruined by liberal professors. This sort of worldview embattlement sends an unspoken message that what is most important about a person is what they think, and if we can influence them at the level of rationality, we can really help them be Christian. The implications and problems of the “brain on a stick” view

¹⁸ Greg Jones tells a story of giving a talk about “traditioned innovation” at congregation where afterward, a woman lamented that they never sang any of the “old songs” anymore. A bit surprised that a Boomer would reminisce about traditional hymnody, he asked her which old songs she meant. She replied, “oh, like Awesome God.”

of the human person have been persuasively discussed elsewhere,¹⁹ but for the purposes of this paper, it is clear that construing the issues this way doesn't seem to work. Adding or replacing content does little to create disciples of Jesus, and this became clear as a number of denominations and parachurch organizations developed on-campus ministries in the last 40 years. It turns out that college kids aren't opposed to Christian ideas or morality. If the church takes ministry to them, they respond. The overwhelming success of campus ministries suggests that college students are hungry for faith. But even though ministries like Young Life, Cru, and Wesley Foundation are so well-attended by students during their college years, why do so many post-college young adults fail to engage with the church?

There are several lines of reflection that may send us toward an answer. The first is that young adults are highly relational. They have time and space for others, and what is so beautiful about this age group is that their lives and relationships are permeable; they really do make space for friendship's profound affect. College ministries reach them through their relationality in the way that they recruit students (campus ministers tell me that kids come in clumps) and in the way that they structure their programs to incorporate connection and friendship. This works while they are students. They've got lots of friends and they've got Jesus. What tends to be missing is the church. Student ministries excel in creating small groups, but if there were room for growth it would undoubtedly be in the area of strengthening a student's ties to the local church. And this becomes clear once a student graduates. Many will move to a new city to take a job but even those who stay where they are will suddenly find themselves relating to their campus ministry in a very different way. In

¹⁹ James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 210.

my experience, I've met a number of young people who take jobs with their campus ministry without a clear calling to ministry simply because they didn't know how to relate to the larger church. As we've seen above, some within the church think that the solution at this juncture is to make the broader church more like campus ministry, but changing the graphic design template doesn't alter the fact that young adults have gone through a sea change in the transition from college life to adult life.

The Fellows Program will draw on the relational hunger of young adults by putting them in a cohort specifically designed to help them navigate the transitions from student life to adult life. It could be argued that this hardly mimics the full transition to adult living because so much of their life will be structured for them and their friendships will come ready-made. While that is true to an extent, how many adults think it would be a good idea to change their city of residence, their occupation, and 75% of their principal relationships all at the same time? Any wise counselor would suggest that undergoing all those changes at once would be unadvisable. Yet this is what we expect young adults to do regularly. The Athens Fellows Program draws on the relational strengths of student ministry as a baseline for helping them navigate these other changes, and in this way has some things to offer beyond campus ministry.

1.6 Conclusion

In spite of the culture's broad assumption that young people will be just fine if we just leave them alone and "let them have fun," it is my conviction that any life worth having requires formation toward the good life. And the good life is always a life that takes a particular shape. In our case, the life we're trying to form young adults toward is the picture presented in the Scripture of a humanity alert to the call of the One who knows us better

than we know ourselves. Learning to hear that call has more to do with listening for God in Scripture than it does with “letting our lives speak,” and it always involves obedience and commitment in the places where we find ourselves. For that reason, the work, study, and community life of the Athens Fellows Program will always be about responding to the call of God at the level of an individual life. In the pages that follow, I will present two handbooks—one for fellows and one for leaders-- that lays out just what this work looks like in the most in-depth and practical manner possible.

2. Athens Fellows Program Handbook

2.1 About Athens Fellows

Athens Fellows is a nine-month program to help recent college graduates live their faith in all aspects of life. The members, leaders, and staff of St. Thomas Anglican Church have developed this program as a way to serve young adults by combining Christian discipleship with practical life experience. Integrating faith and work, leadership and service, personal responsibility and community engagement, we seek to develop a new generation of leaders for the workplace, the church, and the Athens community.

2.1.1 Life After College

The Athens Fellows program is designed to give you a good start as you move from the life you lived in college to a life of vocation, service, and ministry. The Athens Fellows program will help you understand how to live with integrity, keeping Christ at the heart everything -- at work, at home, in the church, and in the community. Are you asking questions like these?

What is God calling me to do after I finish college?
How do I live a balanced life, including my job, spiritual life, (someday) family, friends, and church?

How can I become financially independent? Will I ever find a job that is both satisfying and lucrative?

What if I fail? What if I don't have what it takes to be successful?

What is life like on my own, without the social networks and friends I had in school?

What does my faith have to do with my work, especially if my job doesn't seem that important?

How can I find a place to serve the common good and the life of my city?

Is the Christian life just basically going to church and being part of a small group Bible study?

All of these questions are worth asking, and our goal is to reflect on them in community, because all of these questions are too important to answer on our own. That's why God has given us the church, and specifically, that's what we're hoping to explore in the Fellows Program—not so that you will find the one single answer, but so that you will be equipped to answer these questions as they re-emerge for the rest of your life.

2.1.2 The Athens Fellows Program Summary

The Athens Fellows program is for recent college graduates and combines a paid internship, graduate-level theological work, one-on-one mentoring, silent retreats, spiritual disciplines, conferences, reflective leadership, discipleship, and prayer, ministry opportunities in the church, service to the community, and the opportunity to live with a host family from the church.

The Athens Fellows program is not a stop-gap between the rigors of academic life and the demands of professional life. While there will be rest, fun, and festivity, this is an on-ramp for the road of real life. We are here to help you transition from your life as a student to being a student of life, to move into a place of balance, integrity, and focus that combines the most personal and internal aspects of your spirit and your heart with the most external demands of the market, church, and society. We're called to be servant leaders in every arena in which we find ourselves. Whether you find your call as a full-time mother or the CEO of

a major corporation, the need to balance faith, relationships, and community life never goes away. Your fellows years is an immersive and challenging season of preparation that will provide you invaluable experience for the future. There are some areas where you will be stretched more than in others, but your greatest challenge will be in learning to become yourself in all areas of your life, and to learn to worship and serve the one in whom all things hold together.

2.1.3 About St. Thomas Anglican Church

The Athens Fellows program is a ministry of the St. Thomas Anglican Church, a congregation of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). We are a vibrant, disciple-making liturgical church in the heart of Athens.

We recognize that Jesus is Lord of every aspect of the world and every aspect of our individual lives. We seek the Lordship of Jesus in the way we work, learn, serve, fellowship, and play. We know that we are recovering sinners, people who desperately need the gospel to transform every aspect of our lives. We don't do everything right, but Christ is in us, and God works through us. We view the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and we are committed to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We believe that we are saved solely by God's grace through the death of Jesus Christ. And we believe that the Holy Spirit teaches us to grow in the knowledge of God, and renews us in the joy of our salvation in ways that bring glory to the Father.

Athens Fellows are not required to become members of the St. Thomas, but those who stay in the Athens area are of course welcomed to join. Also, fellows are not required to agree with every aspect of our doctrine. However, since the fellows will have an active part

in the ministries of the St. Thomas, we ask all fellows show respect for Anglican teaching and worship.

2.1.4 Weekly Schedule

The schedule for Athens Fellows is rigorous. In order to participate fully in the program, you will need to be at all fellows events—barring emergencies, of course. One of the things that fellows often come to terms with early in the program is that life in the Fellows Program requires a great deal of time management that is more akin to professional life than college life. And we are here to help you make wise use of your days.

Below, you'll find an average weekly schedule. But there will be a number of weeks that are not average. Some weeks may include a talk given by a community leader in lieu of regular class time, while other weeks, you may be away on retreat. And there will no doubt be times when we must make an unplanned change to the schedule in order to accommodate one of our program partners. But of course we will try to keep this to a minimum and will do our best to let you know of any impending changes as soon as possible. Here are a few guidelines about using time well.

Time is a gift from God. Yes, we can budget it, but first and foremost it is something we receive with gratitude. We make wise use of our weeks and days because we want to honor the One who entered into time to redeem it. Therefore, we encourage you to prioritize Fellows activities. Some fellows will have friends and loved ones in the Athens area, and while we understand that you want to maintain those relationships, we also ask you to keep your commitment to the Fellows central. This is a very particular season in your life and it will never be repeated. Treasure it as such.

Sundays are spent in worship and fellowship at St. Thomas. Afternoons are generally free. Monday through Wednesday are regular work days, spent in your placement or internship. This is not separate from or other than that which we offer to God on the Lord's Day. It is our good and acceptable service to the world. Thursday mornings are spent in theological learning, book discussions, and break-out groups on an assigned topic. Many Thursday afternoons will be spent in smaller or more short-term service opportunities in the city of Athens. One Thursday afternoon per month, Athens Fellows will learn from Father Daniel, Father Bill, and other church leaders about various aspects of spiritual growth, discipline, and prayer. Fridays are spent in the Long Term Service Project with one of our community partners like Jubilee Partners or Downtown Academy, depending on the year. For the most part, Saturday is the fellows' day off. Three times a semester, we will engage in special events at St. Thomas, or go on retreat, or some other special event.

2.2 Discipleship Through Work

One of the core components of the program is a part time job—usually 20 hours a week, or so. This work experience is crucial to your development as a follower of Christ and as a contributor to the common good. After all, over the course of your life, you'll spend a lot more time at work than you do in church—and that's a good thing! Your job during your fellows year will no doubt put you in a variety of challenging situations that will be a preview of your future professional life. You'll need to meet deadlines, juggle conflicting expectations, establish good relationships with your co-workers, and in short, do some things that are hard, and not especially rewarding in the moment. You will be frustrated at times, but then there will be times when you find your work incredibly rewarding. While we

endeavor to find jobs that align with the interests and experience of each fellow, please be aware that these are entry-level jobs. We find that the challenges of the workplace can generate some important insights about faith, and develop leadership capacities that you didn't know you had.

2.2.1 Goals Of The Work Placement

The goal of your work placement is to give you valuable experience in the workplace, and to help you learn to follow Jesus in your day-to day activity. In short, the workplace is a crucible for discipleship. Placements are temporary; while some employers may want to hire a fellow full-time after their fellows year is ended, this should not be your expectation. Placement are also part-time; working more than 20 hours a week will simply not be possible, no matter how much you love it!

There can be a danger to place too much emphasis on this year's work in the belief that it sets the direction of your future work life. It's almost certainly the case that you will not have this job for the rest of your life, or work for this company long-term. Your work placement gives you an opportunity to enact the principles and practices that the Fellows Program engenders in you—the ability to put the virtues to work in your life. Don't get discouraged if and when your work seems unproductive, or even boring. There will be opportunities every day to live your faith in the marketplace or in your ecclesial setting—such as being a person your co-workers can depend on, using your time efficiently, managing finances, and in general, “working as unto the Lord, and not for men.”

2.2.2 Finding the Work Placement

The Director and Work Placement Volunteers have been working for a year to establish a network of potential employers for future fellows, including work in the

commercial, ecclesial and non-profit sectors. However, it is important to understand that the job is being offered and managed by the employer, not by the Fellows Program. We will work with you to make connections, to prepare your resumé, prep for interviews, and anything else we can to help you succeed. However, it is up to you to apply, interview, submit the appropriate materials in a timely fashion, and generally make a good impression. We will do everything to help you be successful in this, but applying—like the work itself—will be your job to do. You are also free to secure your own internship if you have the desire to do so, but make sure your employer understands the time commitment of the Program before hiring you. Please let the Director know if this is a possibility for you.

2.2.3 Some Guidelines for Work

While your job placement will be temporary and part-time, nevertheless it should be treated with the respect that you would give to a lifelong career. It's never too soon to develop good habits in your work. Things like:

- *Let your employer know when you plan to arrive in Athens and arrange to meet them ahead of your first day on the job—preferably a week in advance, at a time that works for them. Call your boss and inquire about any paperwork or identification you'll need to bring for your on-boarding (Driver's License etc.) This will create a good first impression, and will indicate your willingness to make things smooth for them.*
- *Be humble and teachable. Be willing to ask questions and admit you don't know how some things are done.*
- *Make sure that you understand and comply with your employer's requirements for sick leave, notifications of absence, and all other attendance requirements. Remember, while we have done our best to let your employer know of all the ways the program requires your time, it is up to you to let your supervisor know the specifics of your schedule, including any special trips or anything out of the ordinary.*
- *Do more than the minimum requirement. Those who work for the approval of men may work hard when the boss is watching, but those who work as unto the Lord work for an unseen audience of one. Come early, stay late, go the extra mile, and clean up the messes. You are representing not only Athens Fellows, but also your Lord.*

2.2.4 Change of Work Placement

In an extremely rare case, a need may arise for a fellow to part ways with his or her employer. This should only be done with the counsel of the Fellows Director and the

fellow's mentor. Communicating early is better than waiting until communication is nearly impossible! Keep us in the loop on any problems that may arise with your work placement. Should there be irresolvable differences, we will do our best to find you another job. In the event that we cannot find a new placement, the fellow will be asked to leave Athens Fellows.

2.2.5 Hours And Pay

Usually, fellows will work three 8-hour days during each week of the program. Otherwise, you will work normal working hours. Fellows are not necessarily compensated at the same rate as one another, or with their fellow employees. Your pay is negotiated with your employer, and not through the Fellows Program.

Occasionally, your employer may need you to stay late, come early, or work overtime, and you should make every effort to do this, given that it does not conflict with any Fellows events—including previous commitments with the host family. Should this need arise, contact the Director for permission ahead of time. Lastly, you are not permitted to take any employment outside of your placement during your fellows year.

2.2.6 What To Expect From Your Employer

We have prepped your employer and/or HR department about some of the unique demands placed on Fellows, and they have in most cases been selected because they will be a good partner for your career development and the program as a whole. They will make time every few weeks to discuss your performance, mentor you in your career goals, and in most cases, encourage you with ways to integrate your faith into the work that you share. You can ask them about how your talents might fit into the broader landscape of your industry or ministry, and suggest ways to tailor your work toward emerging opportunities. Of course, to take advantage of these opportunities, you will need to incorporate constructive criticism,

and it is this ability to adapt to feedback that is perhaps more important than your performance on Day One. Employers everywhere are willing to coach you beyond your inexperience if you remain teachable, hungry, and humble.

2.2.7 Occasionally Asked Questions

Can I get a different internship if I get into my job and have problems?

The internship is one of the cornerstones of the fellows experience. Learning to deal with difficulties at work are a major part of your transition into the adult professional world, and there will be no small number of times throughout your career that you wish you could just move on. But while you are in this program, switching jobs is very rare. We want you to stick with it. However, on rare occasions a situation may be beyond what you can bear, and the Director and your mentor can help you determine if perhaps a change is required. This is extremely rare, though, because we work hard to select our workplace contacts with an eye toward their character and concern to empower young people.

Can I find my own internship/employment?

Absolutely. We allow and encourage you to use your networking skills to locate employment. However, your employer will need to be fully on board with the time commitment required by the other fellows program activities. If you plan to bring an outside job opportunity to your program, let the Director know so that we can have a discussion with your supervisors about the expectations of the program. In general, supervisors will be more than happy to work within the demands the program places on you.

My interests are in the ministry/nonprofit sector. Can I have an internship that does not pay?

Absolutely. We understand that many of the entry-level nonprofit, government, and ministry jobs pay little or nothing. This need not be a barrier to entry. However, we will need

for you to demonstrate that you have enough money saved or outside support to allow you to cover your living expenses for the year, and we will ask that you pay your program fees in full upon arrival.

My job placement is not a good fit for my interests—what should I do?

While we make every effort to provide fellows with job placement that match their goals and skills in the workplace, sometimes we aren't able to provide an exact match. Or in other situations, a job that we thought would make a good fit turns out to have tasks associated with it that have little to do with the field in which you had hoped to work. This is true not just for the placement you have during the fellows year, but for the vast majority of entry level work. I once met a guy who worked for the Carter Center in Atlanta, doing international relief work through one of the most respected international nonprofits in the country. He introduced his work saying, "I work on the Angola desk, but the closest I ever get working for Angola is making copies of documents in Portugese." Such is an entry level job. If the job you've been given to do feels beneath you, be encouraged and know that it won't be the last time. And if the field you've been given to work in is not the one you had hoped for, don't despair. This time in your life is a time for garnering new and diverse skills which may come in handy down the road. For many people fresh out of college, the first job can be a source of great pride, and it may feel like swallowing that pride to be stuck in the copy room. But this program has been crafted to provide you an excellent opportunity for success not just in year one, but in year five, and ten, and twenty.

2.3 Discipleship Through Hospitality

We often think of hospitality as a description of what someone is doing when they host a book club or dinner party at their home. Christian hospitality includes that and goes beyond it, too. Our Lord Jesus instructed his disciples to go beyond the hospitality afforded by good manners and custom and instead, to invite into their home those who could not repay them. Similarly, Jesus said that hospitality isn't just about hosting people whom you know, but about having strangers into your home. He recognizes as his own those who host "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine," because in hosting them, they were hosting Him.

Your host family is welcoming you in spite of the fact that you are a stranger to them. Your customs, culture, and way of doing things will be strange to them at some level. But they are opening their home to you because in your face they see the face of Christ. It is one thing that they are offering their food, drink, bandwidth, and air conditioning to you, but something else altogether that they are offering you their very selves. Their gift to you is personal, and it should be appreciated as such.

We would encourage you to reflect from time to time by asking yourself if you have received the gift of their home and their family life with gratitude and generosity. Reflect on how you have shown in your words and your actions how much you appreciate them. Gratitude is not just a feeling. It must be expressed with purpose. In order for this year to be as meaningful as we hope it will be, you will need to work on your relationship with your host family. Exploring the balance between work life and home life is one of the crucial aspects of the program, and we hope you forge lasting bonds of affection with your host family.

2.3.1 Living with a Host Family

Those of you who will live with hosts families will have the chance to experience the daily ups and downs of regular family life with people who share your Christian faith and are trying to live it out at home. For many of you, there will be a number of things that will be done very differently than in your household growing up. Your host family may have a different daily rhythm, they may have different favorite foods, and overall, have a very different “feel” to what you’re used to. The first thing to recognize is that they are opening their home to you as a manifestation of Christian hospitality. While it may feel strange to you at first, no doubt they are experiencing something very similar. For many of them, having a young adult in the house is not something they’ve ever done before! The relationship between the host family and the fellow is difficult to name, exactly. You’re not like an Airbnb guest whose comfort is their first priority. You’re not here to rate your experience. On the other hand, you don’t become a member of their family, though it may feel like it at times. You aren’t simply under the rules and ethos of their family. You are your own person. You are a guest.

Just as you filled out a narrative questionnaire about your living expectations and family life, so did your host family. We’ve tried to pair families and fellows according to their needs and expectations. As the start of the program approaches, you will be introduced to each other over email, and you will be free to talk with them about your scheduled arrival and any other details. Make sure that you express your gratitude and flexibility with graciousness.

In some cases, Fellows will need to come a bit early or stay a bit past the start date or end date of the program. Your initial correspondence with them is a good time to discuss

this. For the sake of both the fellows and the families, we will allow you no more than two weeks on each end of the program dates for move-in and/or move-out, but this will be completely at the discretion of the host family. While they may be able to accommodate you, if they cannot for whatever reason, you should thank them anyway.

2.3.2 Host Family and Fellows Expectations

While it would be tempting to establish one set of rules for all fellows and families to abide by, there is simple no one standard that can be applied to cover every situation. What we can do is encourage you to talk about a host of issues ahead of time so that all parties are clear as to the expectations. We cannot stress enough that while some of these topics may not seem applicable to your situation, it is better for everyone involved to state their expectations before issues come up, when the conversation can be had as a matter of mutual respect, rather than in reaction to something that has already happened.

It is crucial that you and your host family discuss a range of topics within a day or two of your arrival, including but not limited to:

- Daily and weekly schedules of family and fellow
- Expectations around meal times—when, where, who cooks, who cleans
- Orientation to the neighborhood—trusted neighbors, parks, trash day
- Household chores and how you can help
- Quiet hours—morning and evening, how late is “too late”
- Alcohol use (if any)
- Smoking, vaping, and smokeless tobacco (if any, where allowed?)
- Household electronics—WiFi, shared computers, stereo and DVD controls, proper care and handling of LPs (this is Athens!)
- Care and routine of family pets
- Celebration of Holidays, birthdays etc.
- Acceptable dress around the house
- Location and use of safety equipment (smoke/CM alarms, fire extinguishers, etc.)
- Kitchen appliances
- Dietary restrictions, allergies, preferences

As you discuss this with your hosts, be candid and open. Don't hesitate to ask clarifying questions about anything you don't understand. Rather than merely assuming that "everything is o.k.," be proactive about discussing things regularly. By getting into the habit of doing this even when things are good, it will be easier to do when they are not. On issues where there is a difference of opinion, try to accommodate your hosts while at the same time asking for what you need. Take notes about any compromises that are reached so that all parties are clear. Pray for your hosts and with them when you can. If a disagreement arises, don't discuss it with others before you've discussed with your hosts—preferably with both parents present. Express your gratitude frequently, always looking for something that you can genuinely praise.

As we've said, there will be a number of eventualities that were not discussed, and these should be clarified with mutuality and respect. Check in on expectations and address any concerns that arise at least once a week. Merely asking how things are going in this regard will go a long way in showing your concern for the well-being of the entire household.

2.3.3 Guidelines for Living with a Host Family

In addition to the general topics above, there are a few additional guidelines that you will need to know.

Forbidden items. No illegal or unprescribed drugs are allowed in any setting. Use or possession of drugs will result in immediate dismissal from the program. Weapons of any kind are also not permitted. Alcohol is to be used in moderation.

Web usage. At no time should a fellow visit websites that contain pornography or questionable content of any kind. Be aware of how your web usage affects the host family's

bandwidth and overall usage costs. If you have a gaming computer or console, talk to your host family about how you can pitch in for additional access.

Sex and romance. Fellows should not have members of the opposite sex in their host family's bedroom with the door closed. Mature Christian behavior is difficult to fully describe in this area, but we ask you to live with discretion and discernment as it relates to romance and sexuality. Fellows may not date any member of the host family household. If you were to develop feelings for a member of your host family (say, an adult child of the family), the same rules about dating other fellows would apply. See section below in the "Policies" section.

Cleaning Up and Helping Out. Fellows are expected to clean up after each meal. Your space is not your own, but is a part of your host family's space, too. Clean up your bathroom and bedroom on a schedule that you have pre-determined with your host family, and make sure to address these issues with your hosts. Be willing to help transport the kids or babysit from time to time. While this shouldn't be a standing commitment, you should offer to help out how you can. Being a part of the family means sharing the load of available work.

Privacy. One of the most precious things that the host family is giving you is their privacy. Every family has unique modes of being and doing that are theirs alone. Please exercise discretion as you discuss your living arrangements with other fellows and anyone outside the host family. Honor their gift of allowing you into their lives.

Meals. The host family is responsible for providing fellows with room and board. However, when fellows dine outside the home, their hosts do not provide funds or make arrangements. If you are not going to be at your host home for a particular meal, let your hosts know as far in advance as possible, so that they can prepare. While you are not

expected to eat all meals with your hosts, you are expected to have at least one evening meal per week with your host family. On mornings and nights when you do not dine with them, you will cook your own meals from ingredients provided and make certain to clean up afterwards. On nights that you do, offer to run by the store if there are any last-minute ingredients needed. Fellows provide their lunches on weekdays.

2.3.4 Expectations of the Host Families

Beyond providing room and board and the comforts of home, host families give fellows a picture of what family life actually looks like, with all of its mundane joys and hardships. The host family experience gives fellows insight into the routines and practices of mature Christian discipleship at home. Home life is a school for discipleship—for fellows and hosts. Both parties should live into this intentionally, praying for one another and bearing with one another.

Whether host families are comprised of empty nesters, a family with children at home, or a childless couple, hosts should remember that fellows are young adults moving into the adventure of mature adulthood. Most fellows will have lived on their own at some point, and host families should understand that they can and do make their own schedule and live their own life. On the other hand, host families shouldn't be shy about setting clear boundaries and expectations for what counts as reasonable, courteous, and mature behavior in their home. Fellows can expect to be welcomed into the family's life beyond what they could expect from someone who is merely a landlord. When family activities do not conflict with regularly scheduled Fellows Program events, host families should endeavor to incorporate their fellow into meal times, birthdays, holidays, and trips where it seems appropriate.

Just as fellows are asked to respect the uniqueness and privacy of the host family, hosts should also understand that fellows need to have their privacy. Decorum demands that host families refrain from sharing personal details about the private lives of fellows to others in the church, workplace, or community. Fellows are incredibly busy and need their own space and time. Family members are not to enter a fellow's bedroom or allow children to riffle through their belongings. Fellows will not share a bedroom with anyone else in the family.

2.3.5 Occasionally Asked Questions

Can I change host families during the Fellows year?

In general, this is not something that we allow. Remember that the length of your stay is nine months; it is not permanent, and in most cases, it's important to remember that it will be over soon enough. However, while extremely uncommon, a situation may arise that necessitates a discussion about a fellow changing host homes. Athens Fellows makes no guarantees that this would even be available, but in some cases, the possibility could be discussed by the Director, the hosts, and the fellow. If this uncommon scenario does arise—due to some unforeseen health problem or a flooded basement or something of that sort—members of the St. Thomas clergy team will be available to help each member work through the issues involved.

Can I stay with my host family after the program?

Typically, by early April, a fellow and their host family will need to have discussed plans for the fellow to move out in or around the conclusion of the program. The availability of things like flights, moving vans, and other contingencies may keep the move-out date from landing right at the end of the program. Occasionally, a fellow and their host family

may make plans well in advance for the fellow to stay an extra week or two, but under no circumstances is the fellow to remain past June 1st.

What if I have friends or family who live in the Athens area, may I live with them instead of host family?

The host family experience is a big part of the program, and it is a requirement, even if you have other living arrangements open to you. As you transition away from college life, we want you to develop relationships with a family not your own, and many fellows have described this as one of the most formative aspects of the fellows experience—especially as they see how other families do things, they realized that the script they followed in their own upbringing didn't have to be the only way.

2.4 Discipleship Through Service

Fellows serve through the ministries of St. Thomas Anglican Church and the initiatives of our community partners. This is a crucial aspect of the program.

Fellows serve through the ministries of St. Thomas Anglican Church and the initiatives of our community partners. Some will be involved with either children's or student ministry with St. Thomas. The members of the St. Thomas staff and ministry team will train, equip, and care for the fellows in their ministry in each of these areas. Fellows will be trained to engage in discipleship conversations with our children and youth, by learning how to build relationships that open the door to teachable moments and gospel demonstration and gospel proclamation.

2.5 Discipleship Through Fellowship

Symposium is the weekly gathering of Athens Fellows for checking in and encouraging one another. We gather at the Gamble House on Church Street for a meal and

fellowship, then we transition into an informal time of discussion, story-telling, celebration, and prayer. The Director will be on hand to guide our discussion and answer any questions that may arise.

In addition to an informal time of sharing, discussions will center around the primary themes of the program. Topics such as: what does faithfulness look like in the workplace, what is servant leadership, how do I hear God's voice in discerning my vocation, what gives me true joy, how can we build genuine community, and just what is the Holy Spirit up to with the church?

While the mood of Symposiums is warm, casual, and convivial, it is not merely a time to tune out and relax. We're looking for real conversation about things that matter, and in some ways, the courage it takes to be genuine with one another is the heart of the program. We will talk about how things are really going with your host family, what to do when their dog won't stop barking, or how to be polite when they serve canned pears with cottage cheese. We'll try to be honest about the people in our job placements who are always coming at us with an agenda like a sharp stick, and the work demands that never seem to stop. We'll talk about how our experiences in the world of work measure up to the ideals that we crafted in our school years, and what to do with the difference. At every turn, we'll be on the lookout for how to integrate the various demands on our time and our loyalty, and how to hear God calling us to be someone we can't quite imagine yet.

Whether our discussions tend toward the highest levels of abstraction, or whether we spend time in the nitty gritty details, in all our discussions we will endeavor to hear one another with charity and graciousness, to look for the best and encourage one another in love.

Symposium meets at the White House at 395 S. Church Street. Generally, a team of two fellows will plan and prepare dinner for the group. This includes selecting the recipe, shopping for the ingredients, setting the table, and serving the group. Making food for this many people takes foresight, planning, and creativity, but it is a skill that will serve you for the rest of your life in the church. We will also provide you with a database of recipes that are healthy, delicious and economical, if you need help getting started. At various times during each semester, the Director or other program supporter will host Symposium in their home.

2.5.1 General Guidelines For Symposium

- Symposiums are a time for intimate, community-building conversation. In general, it is for staff and fellows only, though occasionally guests may be permitted at the discretion of the Director.
- Dinner starts at 6:00 pm. You are encouraged to arrive early and help the cooking team set up and make last minute arrangements, but please don't be late.
- We are delighted to provide a box for you to place your cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices on your way in to the Fellowship. Please silence them before stowing them.
- In general, we discourage you from scheduling calls or other commitments directly after Fellowship. Sometimes we may go longer than the allotted time, and you will want to be free to linger.
- Help cleaning up is needed at all phases of meal preparation, not just the end. If you're available to help and don't quite know what to do, coordinate with the cooks to clean pots and pans as they finish with them. This not only saves time at the end of the night

when everyone is ready to go home, but it also saves elbow grease if you clean it right away.

Work quickly, but don't rush. Ask the cook or other meal co-ordinators how you can help.

- All fellows are expected to help with prep and cleanup, not just those in charge.

2.5.2 Meal Related Guidelines For Symposium

- Make sure that groceries are purchased well ahead of meal time. You may find it helpful to buy groceries the day before. Arrive onsite with ingredients in hand no later than 4 p.m. so that you have plenty of time.

- The ingredients will be purchased from Fellows Program budget (usually about \$5 per person). Prep teams are welcomed to prepare a meal that goes beyond that budget, but will need to make up the cost of ingredients that go beyond the budgeted amount. Give grocery receipts to the Director, who will reimburse you.

- Pick a meal that is neither too complex nor too simple. A big pot of spaghetti feeds a lot, but if that's all there is, your friends won't really feel the love. Include a salad, bread, and a side dish or two. If there is a celebration that week, consider a special dessert. We will send out a list of recipes that will give you some ideas of hearty meal plans that will feed a crowd.

- Also consider whether your meal preparation involves extensive preparation such as a lot of chopped fresh ingredients or a lot of mixing right before it is plated. If so, plan for that.

- If there are several items that need to go in the oven at the same time, how will you prepare for that? Can you work around it. (We all know baked beans aren't real unless they're made in the oven, but if you also have a casserole taking up space, maybe you'll need to make them in a pot.)

- If you use a lot of prep bowls or serving trays, you may want to sweet talk some friends into being on hand a bit earlier.
- In looking over all the dishes you plan to prepare, note which one requires the longest cooking time, preheat the oven to that temperature, and prep it first.
- Note how long each dish requires and plan backward from dinner time to ensure you have enough time. Have intermediate goals and set a timer for various points through your prep cycle to make sure you're staying on track. From time to time the bread doesn't come out right on time—that happens to everybody. It's far more embarrassing if your main course doesn't get done in time.
- Setting the Table This may be a good task for other fellows who are looking for something to help out with. Make sure that you give them explicit guidance about any special table setting needs—extra serving spoons, the location of the salad tongs or a carving knife. It is your job to know the whereabouts of these items ahead of time.
- Have someone fetch the extra chairs, and put the leaves in the table.
- As dishes are ready, place them on the sideboard or the counter in the kitchen if there is room.
- Designate one helper to prepare ice and drinks, including a pitcher of water for each end of the table (or else have the water dispenser on the sideboard.)
- If possible, start one round in the dishwasher as supper is being served, so that it can be reloaded afterwards.
- Cleanup after the meal is an “all hands on deck” type situation. No need to rush, but don't dilly-dally either. Learn to keep your conversation going while emptying the table or loading the dishwasher.

- Pre-rinse all items headed into the dishwasher.
- Put leftovers into Tupperware with the date on the top.
- Wipe down the table, sideboard, and kitchen counters with hot soap and water. Dry if needed.
- Empty the garbage into the large trashcan behind the Gamble House after every Fellows event.
- These detailed instructions are intended to help you make a meal for a big group, which is a skill that will serve you in ministry and in life for years to come. While it may seem overwhelming, you'll be able to get your head around it once you've seen it done a few times. For those who do have experience in meal prep or restaurant work, I encourage you to sign up for one of the earlier slots in the semester in order to serve as an example for those who may have less experience.

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2.6 Discipleship In Community

The heart of the Athens Fellows Program is equipping you to work out your faith in all aspects of life—to integrate the demands of work, relationships, study and service to the church and city such that you grow up into maturity and balance between every aspect of who you are. The life of Christ in you is what brings wholeness across these disparate

aspects of your calling. Scripture tells us that “in him, all things are held together,” not least because they came into being by Him and through Him, but because when we are known and called by Him, all of these other things fall into proper perspective. As Jesus said, “seek first the kingdom...and all these things will be added.”

But this holistic picture is not easy to reach. It requires the pursuit of holiness, acceptance of failure, and an alertness to the call of Christ all along the way. Christ calls us not just to believe in Him but to learn from him, to become his disciples, his students. This connection between the holistic vision of the human person and discipleship to our Lord was summed up when He said, “take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and I will give you rest for your souls.”

When Jesus calls us along the way with him, we are bound to meet his friends. Discipleship is a calling toward community. We learn from one another by telling the truth and forgiving one another regularly. The difficulty of living with a group of broken people is not nearly as painful as realizing that they are also learning to live with our sin and shortcomings. We realize how hard this can be and want to provide you with every possible chance to grow into maturity in your faith in God and relationships with others. Toward that end, we will support you by providing a nexus of relationships that will provide you with feedback, encouragement, and accountability.

There are three points of one-on-one contact that will provide you with support and accountability: your mentor, the Director, and pastoral staff from St. Thomas. No one of these people will have all the answers. We work as a team because there will be situations and ideas that one of us will be more adept at. Across these three points of contact, you will be engaged as a child of God with a unique dignity and calling. We will try to pair you with

mentors and counselors who will bring distinct experiences and wisdom to your life and experience in the Fellows program.

Each of these persons should be engaged with a view too others. Anything that you share with one could potentially be shared with others, unless you expressly request privacy. When and if we discuss something that you have mentioned to us, we will do so with an absolute commitment to your privacy and dignity as a person, and will not mention it outside this team of three.

We encourage you to enter into all of these relationships with openness and honesty. We also understand that there will be certain times and situations that do not connect with everyone in the same way. Nevertheless, by taking a team approach and approaching your life with as many points of insight as possible, we hope to provide you with every possible avenue for growth and wholeness. Should there be a situation beyond the skills and wisdom of our team, we are willing to admit our limitations and to refer you to professional counseling services that may be a good fit for your needs. We happily admit to perfect wisdom; only our Lord knew what to say in every situation.

What follows is a guide to each one of these relationships—what you can expect and what you need to be responsible for. As you look over this material, you may want to make a note of any concerns or questions you have so that you can talk with Director about them during the onboarding process.

2.6.1 Pastoral Conversation

The pastoral staff of St. Thomas and the Program Director consider it an honor to be invited into your life, and to have you in theirs, too. We will make time to be available to you for individual conversations about your vocational discernment, concerns at work or in

your host family, hopes for the future, or doubts you may have about the shape of faith. We also welcome and encourage you to schedule more informal times to chat over coffee or lunch. We are delighted to talk about anything you have on your mind.

Several times a year, some of these discussions will be intentionally focused on matters of vocational discernment. We engage a range of skill assessment and personality tests (like MCORE & EQi), that are designed to help you know your strengths and weaknesses—especially as it relates to your communication style in the workplace. The reason we mention these assessments at this point and not in discussions about workplace guidelines is that we want to stress that these tools are just that. They do not predict your future or provide a perfect summary of your past, they are tools to help you in the work of self awareness, and they will be most helpful as a conversation starters with your mentor and trusted counselors. The conversation is what matters more than a number or a list of traits.

While these vocational conversations will be an important topic, they will not exhaust the things that we will be discussing together. Remember, the fellows program is all about integrating the different parts of your life with one another—with faith at the center. That means that you can talk about anything that seems important to you, and the more difficult it is to talk about, the more important it probably is. If you have something difficult that you need to discuss, we will not be surprised or bothered in the least. Given the age and experience of the church staff members, chances are high that one of them has encountered something similar to what you are going through either themselves or in years of listening to God's people in the church. In order for you to leverage the insight and compassion of our staff, you will need to be open and proactive about sharing your life. We can't listen well if

you don't tell us how it's really going. And while this is true of your conversations with the staff members, it is even more crucial for your interactions with your mentor.

2.6.2 Mentoring

In the entire constellation of relationships that a fellow has throughout the year, perhaps none is more important than the mentor. Your mentor will be your first sounding board. We have paired you with an older adult from within the church who we feel will be a good match for you, in the hopes that they will not only be a companion for you during your fellows year, but that they will potentially be a friend for life. The cornerstones for a positive and rewarding mentoring relationship are a commitment to meet regularly with one another, a covenant of discretion, and a common aim to become disciples of Jesus.

Furthermore, all of our Mentors serve on the Board Athens Fellows. If and when you have concerns about you experience or ideas for how to make the fellow's experience better, you can be sure that those things will be taken into consideration by the people who set policy for the program. They know the program inside and out, and that empowers them to come alongside you.

Mentors have been chosen for you based on any number of qualities that relate to fit—because they are the same gender as you, have experiences in your industry or chosen profession, or maybe because of similarities in your life story or personal style. However, the single most important quality of your mentor is that they are a person of spiritual maturity who cares about young adults. We have selected mentors because they are willing and able to “go there” with you—emotionally and spiritually. They are people whose life experiences have born the fruit of wisdom and know-how. They've earned the right to hear your story by virtue of who they are. They will be ready to be vulnerable and honest with you from day

one; it will be up to you to respond in kind. Wise as they are, they don't have all the answers. However, by being faithful to you, they will demonstrate the love of Christ to you.

For this relationship to work, both people have to do their part. So what does that look like? You and your mentor should touch base over the phone (or text) and/or in-person at least twice a week. If they ask, "how's it going?" and you reply, "o.k., I guess," you can rest assured that there will be a follow up question intended to elicit something more than a monosyllabic response. At first, this will no doubt feel awkward; lean into the weirdness, though, and it will pay off. This may seem like a forced friendship with an old person you've never met, but you'll be surprised how the proximity of a sympathetic ear is plenty strong as a foundation for friendship. They are here for one reason alone: to support you. So lean on them, be honest, and see what happens.

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2.7 Discipleship Through Stewardship

The program fee for Athens Fellows program is \$6,500. Fellows are responsible for raising the costs of program expenses which include things like education expenses (books, teacher fees, guest lecturers), retreat registration and lodging, vocational learning modules, and travel to special events. These program fees and donations are only used for the benefit of the program. St. Thomas Anglican Church does not earn any money from the Athens Fellows program. In fact, St Thomas covers those expenses incurred by the program which are not covered by the program fees.

2.7.1 Fundraising

We encourage every fellow to reach out to their home congregation, family, friends, and mentors for prayer and financial support. Even if you have the financial means to cover the cost of the program, when you tell the story of your fellows journey and ask for help, you create a community of love and support that is invaluable.

Upon acceptance to the program, fellows will be provided with a fundraising packet that will supply more detailed information and strategies. In general, we’ve seen that potential donors are far more willing to financially support and concrete and limited

commitment like a nine month fellows program than they are a vague ask that stretches out for an indefinite period. Asking for money can feel awkward, but you will be surprised at how well you will learn to articulate what you are doing and why in the process of asking for money. Furthermore, you will be more open to God's provision than ever before. The unique vulnerability of fundraising produces a gift all its own.

Contributions to your time with Athens Fellows should be made payable to St. Thomas Anglican Church with "Athens Fellows" written in the memo line. The fellow's name should be written on a separate cover letter. Funds can be submitted through the online portal on our website or mailed to:

St. Thomas Anglican Church
P.O. Box 49617
Athens, GA 30604

2.7.2 Tax Deductibility of Program Fees

The reason why these instructions for contributions are made with such specificity is not for our benefit or for yours, but for your contributor's benefit. If donations are made as we have spelled out above, then donations are tax deductible. However, if contributors make donations to and in the name of a specific individual, they are not tax deductible.

All funds received by Athens Fellows will be utilized for the program purposes listed above and will not be disbursed to fellows directly. To do otherwise would be a tax violation. This is why it is important that contributions you solicit should not have your name on the check itself, but on a separate cover letter or note sent alongside the check itself.

If you or one of your financial supporters pays your program fees, Athens Fellows will issue a receipt to reflect that a payment was made, but if you wish to receive a receipt for a tax deduction, the donation should be made to the church as noted above.

While some of the courses in the educational component of the program may be underwritten or administered by seminary staff, fellows cannot receive a 1098-T form for their educational work, meaning that the courses we offer are not sufficient for the purposes of student loan deferment.

Furthermore, any funds held in an account designated for educational purposes cannot be applied to your coursework. While we may have partnerships with academic institutions and/or their employees, we are not an educational institution as it relates to tax purposes.

2.7.3 Transportation & Insurance

Fellows are strongly encouraged to have a vehicle for the duration of the program. While Athens is a small college town that is relatively accessible by walking, biking, and public transportation, there will be events that are not in town and which are not easily accessible by other means. Your place of employment, your host family residence, and the required service opportunities are guaranteed to be in numerous and far-flung locations. Fellows are responsible for their own car insurance, license, and registration.

You must have your own health coverage for the duration of the program. Neither St. Thomas nor Athens Fellows will be providing health insurance or funds for health-related expenses to any fellow.

2.8 Program Policies

2.8.1 Statement of Commitment

As believers united by the love of God in the body of Christ, we commit to living out the implications of the grace we have received in every aspect of our life. Having learned to see the truth about ourselves through the person and work of Christ, we commit to

glorifying God with our work, our relationships, and with our minds. We commit to practicing our faith through the disciplines of prayer, study, and service.

2.8.2 Ministry of Reconciliation

Remember, you heard it here first: there will come a time when you get tired of everyone in this program. Someone will take the last bottle of water, or play annoying 80's music on a car trip, or worse, say something that hurts your feelings or enflames your deeply held political beliefs. You are committing to spend a tremendous amount of time with a group of strangers who will become your best friends before at some point seeming like the person that God put on earth to torture you. Conflict will come. You have the rest of your life to live in a gated community with windows sealed tight against the outside world. During these 9 months your lives will be permeable to those around you. And what may prove more difficult than having your feelings hurt by others is being the person who is the cause of the pain in the lives of those around you. In these situations, you will have the opportunity to practice and experience repentance and forgiveness that we affirm in worship. As the church father Tertullian said, "Christians are made, not born." Forgiveness and reconciliation requires patience, practice, and at times, hard work. Telling the truth and hearing the truth can be painful, but as in all other aspect of this program, we lean on the mercy of God.

Our practice in Athens Fellows will be to address conflict in a manner loosely based on our Lord's recommendations in Matthew 18. There, Jesus developed a simple process for what to do "if someone sins against you." The first thing is to determine whether or not the behavior or attitude was actually a sin or just something that rubbed you the wrong way. Was it intentionally cutting or intentionally careless? Assume the best and practice charity as you interpret the intentions of others. Second, if something needs to be said, go directly to the

offending party, and not to anyone else. Do not discuss the issue with anyone before discussing with that person, even if you think you're just getting a "second opinion." This is the most crucial practice for the maintenance of community life. When a private offense becomes a group consensus through careless words, the integrity of Christ's body is undermined. Lastly, if your attempt to confront the person to resolve the issue is not heard or taken seriously, that is the time to mention it to the Director, who will work with you and the other person as soon as possible to work through the issue.

2.8.3 Dating Among Current Athens Fellows

Athens Fellows are not allowed to date one another during the fellows year. Obviously, it would be silly to prohibit the development of romantic feelings between fellows, but we ask that these feelings be expressed through the context of friendship and the fellows community. If the feelings are mutual and deep, they will be there when your fellows year is over, and they will be the stronger for it. As stated above, fellows should not have members of the opposite sex in their host family's bedroom with the door closed. Again, no set of rules could enumerate what mature Christian behavior looks like in these matters, but we ask that you strive for friendship rather than romance during this year.

2.8.4 Marriage and Engagement

Athens Fellows must remain unmarried during the program year. Fellows can become engaged to be married, but we would strongly discourage you to postpone wedding plans until September or beyond following your completion of the program. Planning and putting on a wedding can be emotionally demanding and time consuming. Save yourself the trouble and focus on benefitting from your fellows year fully before becoming distracted by the next stage of life.

2.8.5 Presence and Absence

One of the ideas you will hear again and again during your Athens Fellows year is “faithful presence.” We will mostly apply it to the way that we are called to live our faith out in our vocational lives—not by changing the system or turning the world upside down, but by being present to our work and to the people we work with. We will have ample opportunities to practice this in our time together. First, we are present physically. We show up. We put our bodies where our commitments are and in so doing learn that our commitments follow along to the places where we put our bodies. As Jesus said, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” We don’t just show up when we feel like it, but we are faithful with our presence. Second, faithful presence involves mental and emotional commitment, too. It means listening to others with attention and engagement. It means allowing your attention to rest with another person or with a concept—not as one among a host, but as the one thing that truly matters. Fellows are expected to demonstrate a high level of situational maturity by being more present with people than they are on their devices, being on time and ready for the next activity, and proactively bringing your skills, personality, and engagement to every activity.

There will be times when the demands of the Fellows Program conflict with something truly important, like a family wedding or funeral, or a health emergency. In these situations, there will be a limited number of absences that will be allowed. Absences will not be granted for a vacation or time with friends. Other than an unexpected emergency or death in the family, absences should be requested as far in advance as possible, and approved by the Director. We discourage you from paying for travel arrangements before securing approval, given that the trip may not be approved.

Specific elements of the absence policy:

- Absence Request forms can be found under the “Current Fellows” tab on our homepage. You will be shown how to interact with all the documents and procedures found there during the onboarding process.
- You are allowed three absences per semester, but not for the same activity (i.e. you could miss your church assignment followed by Symposium, but not three church assignments.)
- On the other hand, a full day’s activities count as one absence. For instance if you needed to travel far away for a funeral, you would not be considered absent for both your morning studies and afternoon service project.)
- There are some events that absences will not be granted for: Fall Kickoff Retreat, Winter Retreat, National Fellows Conference, or Year End Retreat.
- Upon receiving permission for an absence, it will be the fellow’s responsibility to contact the program coordinators and/or supervisors for the missed event.
- The Program Director will record all absences, so please make sure that absences are only requested through the online Absence Request form.
- Also note that this policy on absences from program activities does not apply to your work placement, where employers are sure to have their own policies and procedures. Please consult your workplace supervisor separately.
- Also let us know as soon as possible of any potential absences. (For instance, “Uncle Jerry died and mom doesn’t know yet if they’ll have a funeral next Thursday

or if they will have a memorial service at a later date.”) Keep us informed as soon and as thoroughly as possible.

2.8.6 Dismissal from the Program

The vast majority of fellows who participate in the program complete it and find it helpful long term. However, in very rare circumstances (fewer than 5% nationwide), a fellow could be asked to leave the program. This decision is never made lightly, and is only done in consultation with the fellow, the fellow’s mentor, and the staff of St. Thomas. In some instances, the cause for dismissal made be behavioral, but in most cases, the issue is attitude. Attitude is everything. Most behavioral issues and one-time mistakes can be worked through, but if and when a pattern develops that demonstrates the existence of a problematic attitude, then the Director will meet with the fellow and the fellow’s mentor to develop action steps for improving the situation. If theses steps do not help us make progress, the Director may initiate a discussion with the leadership about dismissal from the program.

Again, these eventualities are incredibly rare, and chances are, this information will never be useful to you. We hope that is the case because we want you to succeed, of course. But we want to state the policy as forthrightly as possible in the event that you know ahead of time the consequences of sustained behavior and attitude problems.

2.8.7 Requirements for Program Completion

In order to fully complete the program, fellows must do the following: attend all the retreats and National Conference, (Kickoff, Winter, and Micah 6:8 Retreat); Complete all assigned theology material with a passing grade from the instructors; remain employed throughout the duration of the program (with the exceptions noted previously in the section devoted to Work Placement; stay in good standing with all the policies outlined in this

manual. Upon successful completion of these things, fellows will be cleared to attend the year end retreat and beach trip, attend and participate in the year-end Faith and Work Banquet, receive letters of recommendation and/or letters of reference for graduate programs.

2.8.8 Occasionally Asked Questions

Why do you have an absence policy? I thought I was going to be treated like an adult here, but now I've got to ask to go where I please, and with an online form? Can't we just trust each other to show up?

Yeah, I'll admit: the online absence request form is a real bummer. That piece of institutional apparatus is made necessary because your Director is simply unable remember off the top of his head who has asked to be absent for what, and how many times. We keep records out of a desire to fair to you more than out of desire to catch you slacking off.

While having an absence policy might seem contrary to the trust that we are trying to foster in our relationships throughout the program, we believe that in our attempts to develop young leaders for the marketplace, community, and church, it is really important that we teach you how to use your freedom within a set of constraints. After all, being a leader will always constrain you more than it will provide you freedom to do whatever you want.

"I'm Catholic and I believe in purgatory, but I notice in the 'what we believe' section that the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church deny purgatory." Or, "I'm a Baptist and we don't sign on to any creed or statement of Faith, can I still volunteer at church?"

As it relates to questions of faith and doctrine, there is a difference between what we can discuss among ourselves and what you should teach at church. In general, the Anglican Communion allows and encourage a tremendous amount of latitude in faith and teaching.

Among Anglicans you will find a broad spectrum of belief and practice—from Anglo Catholics all the way to hyper Reformed types. What unites them all is the centrality of Jesus Christ and a commitment to a high view of Scripture. We can talk about all those differences among ourselves at Symposium or during our theology training where you are not only *allowed* to express your views and tradition, but positively *encouraged* to do so. We will have friendly debates about all manner of theological issues and implications for ethical living as a Christian. But if there is a serious difference that you hold from the “what we believe” section at the head of this manual, we ask you to refrain from voicing that in your teaching and leadership at the church.

Can I leave the program before it's over?

Of course you can, but we encourage you not to. In the course of your time in the program you may get a great job offer, or meet someone and fall in love, or decide to try your luck with a #vanlife channel on Tik'Tok. In most cases, you will be in a much better position to respond to other opportunities after completing the program than quitting mid-year. Usually, the difference of a few months makes little difference. In the case of something like the start of a great job opportunity, most employers would respect your desire to complete an earlier commitment. If you have a situation arise that may take you away from the program, talk to the Director and/or your mentor about that possibility before making a final decision. In the vast majority of cases, situations that seem like they can't wait will in fact get better with time.

In the case of receiving a job offer that would require you to work full time before the completion of the program, there is generally a way to set the full time start date later, and/or to work part time for the remainder of the program. Again, your mentor and the

Director can help you walk through this situation. Most employers are very understanding and can appreciate how completion of the program puts you in the best position to serve their company or organization.

I have a very demanding commitment outside of my work and time in the Fellows Program (like work on a political campaign, a sports league, or time consuming non-profit service). How can I juggle this with the fellows stuff?

We really discourage you from committing to things that place high demands on your time. Between work, study, service, and other community events, you will be on the go six days a week, with quite a few nights thrown in as well. Saturdays and Sunday afternoons will be your only time with nothing scheduled, and you'll need those days just to catch up with things like errands, laundry, and some social time. Be careful not to over-commit to things other than the Fellows Program.

The handbook says no dating, but what does that mean, anyway?

Dating is hard to define, but you know it when you see it. It includes not only literally going out on dates and/or being involved physically, but also more subtle forms of romantic entanglement, like texting and calling late into the night. Again, we cannot know the intent of your heart, and we have no desire to police your feelings. Romantic attraction just happens from time to time. But we can discern whether outward actions by one or more parties constitutes acting on romantic attraction. If feelings develop and are acknowledged and reciprocated by another, feel free to talk to us about it. We can help you honor one another and remain engaged with the whole community in ways that are good for everybody. With this as in all things, communication is key. Saying something early is better than too little too late.

My boyfriend Billy from back home finally got up the nerve and asked me to marry him. What does it mean for my time as a fellow that I'm now engaged?

We're excited for you and Billy. Given that this program is for post-college young adults, it's only normal that many of you are in a stage of life where marriage is a possibility. Some fellows come to the program already engaged, and this is fine. The things that we said in the section on dating apply here. Please try to keep the whole community in perspective as you spend time with your fiancé. Spend time with your host family and stay engaged with the whole group. You hopefully have the rest of your life to spend time with the person to whom you are engaged, and in way, that only underscores the fact that your fellows year may be your last opportunity for engaging community discipleship at this level. In the policies section above, we recommended waiting until September to schedule your wedding. There can be an assumption that a wedding could be planned during the last month(s) of the Fellows Program so it could be put on in the summer. But the last month is not a gentle wind-down. It is a very busy and emotional time in itself. There are many extra activities, year-end celebrations, and travel during the last month. We say this for your sake more than ours: please don't kill yourself planning a wedding during this time.

If I have a friend or family member visiting, can I bring them to Fellows events?

It depends. There will be some events where guests are not only allowed, but welcomed and encouraged to attend. These events include things like guest lectures, the Year End Banquet, or maybe a Symposium where we will be celebrating your birthday, or something like that. You may bring a guest to one Symposium and one theology class per semester, except for Fellowships covering Family Systems and Identity. There are other activities and events that guests may not attend, including retreats, conferences, and

community service activities. If you have questions about which events are o.k., or if you want to invite a guest, please discuss with the Director ahead of time. Please do not bring guests unannounced.

If there are other churches in the Athens area that are a better fit for my tradition and theology, can I worship there instead of at St. Thomas?

One of the things we are trying to instill during your fellows year is what commitment to a local body of Christ means. Accountability to your fellows cohort, your mentors in the church, and your ministry supervisors has an ecclesial component that we want to honor. Nevertheless, there may be certain times of the year (say Holy Week) where another church in town has a special service or practice that you might want to participate in, and that is fine. But St. Thomas will be the church where we gather together on Sunday mornings. If there is something you would like to do with another congregation or a special observance that you would like to participate in elsewhere, talk to the Director about it. Communication is key.

Is there somewhere I can find counseling and mental health services?

St. Thomas has a variety of people and help available to you, including talking with a licensed therapist, priest, lay counselor, and leadership staff from the church and the fellows program, or some blend of those. We use a team approach as discussed above. This is low-cost as a service to you. However, should you need referral to initiate psychiatric care and pharmacological management, we have people who work in the field who can help you to find a professional who will fit your needs. If you are taking medications for mental or emotional challenges such as drugs for ADHD, anxiety, depression, personality disorders, or any other related issues, let the Director know so that we can make sure that you have

continuity of care as soon as you arrive in Athens. We want to ensure that there is as little disruption to your care plan as possible.

How can I get connected with the counseling services provided by St. Thomas?

If you are experiencing acute mental or emotional distress, call 911 or go to the emergency room. If your trouble does not constitute a medical emergency or acute mental distress, talk to the Director first, who will put you in touch with the appropriate member of the counseling team at St. Thomas. The leadership of the Athens Fellows program meets once a month with the counseling staff to discuss how the counseling fits in with the other aspects of the program for your complete well-being.

What to do in an emergency?

After you've called 911 and you and any others involved are safe, alert the Director to what has happened. The program leaders may need to contact family members or loved ones and we want to be able to do that with as much discretion and sensitivity as possible.

2.9 Sending Forth

We look forward to seeing where God will call you after the completion of the Fellows Program, and we send you out with joy in the power of the Holy Spirit. We encourage you to be open to wherever God calls you to go. Other Fellows Programs around the country report that between 50-70% of fellows stay in the same city where they undertook the fellows experience, while others went on to graduate school, or returned to the city where they were raised. For those of you who stay, some will remain at St. Thomas, while others choose to worship at some other local church. Some will move to start their

careers, while others will remain with the employer they had during their fellows year, as they realized they were in a good fit for their career goals and life stage.

Where you go, we cannot predict; what you will do, we can only guess. But wherever you go and whatever you do, we pray that you will listen not just to your own experiences and proclivities, but that you will be listening for the call of God. We pray that you will see yourself as the “sent ones.” Every week at St. Thomas, the worship service concludes with the Sending Forth, where the congregation that has until now been confessing, praising, reflecting, and praying now gets up and as a final act of worship, goes out from the place of worship to work and serve in the world. In the same way, Athens Fellows have learned, worked, reflected, laughed, and sang, but now it’s time to get up and go. We pray that you will go forth as representatives of Athens Fellows, ambassadors of Christ, and persons shaped by the unique witness of St. Thomas.

From now on, your life should bear the marks of servant leadership. Whether you’re working in private equity, a family of five, a small country church or in the halls of political power, we pray that you will look for ways to serve, to do the mundane tasks that don’t result in credit, and to care for the people you work with regardless of how they can further your success. And we pray that you will lead, that you will take the mantle of authority and vision that demonstrates a willingness to put your ideas at the center of the organization’s success. And we ask that you teach this blend of servant leadership to others who may not have had the chance to spend nine months reflecting on them and learning them in a fellows program as you did.

We look forward to seeing what God will do through you. If you choose to stay in the area, the St. Thomas family will welcome you with open arms and help you transition

into the next stage of your life. And whether you stay in Athens or move on, we heartily encourage you to join in with our alumni network and the growing opportunities for fellowship and development that they offer.

3. Steering Team Handbook

The development of the steering team is a crucial step in allowing the Athens Fellows Program to become fully operational. As we begin communicating and recruiting our first cohort of fellows, we will need to recruit a variety of people who can work together to govern, discern, and lead the program. Even if the Program Director had enough time and energy to do everything that the program needed done, the program would not be as strong without a variety of perspectives present. What is true of the church more broadly is also true of the ministry we do in the Fellows Program. We are joined in the one body of Christ, but there are many different members. There is one Lord and one Spirit, but a variety of gifts. Athens Fellows is a complex, multi-layered program that requires discernment of a host of different issues related to those we're called to serve, and that complexity requires a tremendous amount of wisdom. We could not do this without the skills and gifts that God has given the church.

The Steering Team is not a board, council, or committee. Those terms often reflect a group of people who plan and decide important matters. The Steering Team does all that, but much more besides. This is an *active, working community* that comes alongside the director to facilitate the overall success of the program. Let's look at some of those terms individually. First, the steering team is *active*. The members work on recruitment, admissions, fundraising, hospitality and event coordination, work placements, mentoring, and pastoral care. There is a tremendous amount of work to do, but because we share the load, the "ask" of any one person will be manageable. Second, the team is a *community*. Through prayer, conversation, and our annual retreat, we will try to discern what the Spirit is doing in the lives of the young adults we serve. The work of discernment can be frustratingly open-

ended, but it will be our hope that we are all growing up into the Head of the Church—Christ Himself. This is our most important work.

Members of the Steering Team will represent all aspects of the congregation's demographics, and as much as possible, will model the diversity that we hope to recruit in our fellows. The most important quality we're looking for in the steering team is the willingness and ability to work for the flourishing of young adults. While there may be professional skills that will be useful to the team, we want people who care about young people. Furthermore, members of the Steering Team will need to be wise in balancing the core components of the program in their own life and ministry. For instance, are they reflective about how their faith influences their work? Are they alert to the signs of the times, and aware of opportunities to live gospel-centered lives in the real world in which God has placed them? Have they demonstrated skill in working well with others and seeing ministry goals through to the end? Can they be trusted with sensitive and personal information? Due to the all-encompassing nature of the Fellows Program, it is crucial that we have leaders and servants who embody the kind of integrity that we are hoping to cultivate in these young adults.

3.1 Team Position Descriptions

Admissions Director—Establishes deadlines for admission to the program (probably three a year, roughly—late November, mid-May, and the end of June). This gives the would-be fellows specific targets to aim at, and will streamline the admissions process. The Admissions Director also handles all incoming applications, by setting standards and targets, following up with recommendations, checking resumés, and filing records and documents. This person needs to be detail oriented, conscientious with the calendar, efficient at

processing data and personal information, and capable of keeping a team on track. The workflow will be most intense in the two-week period directly following the deadlines mentioned above. As the class fills, the workload will decrease (as there are fewer applications to consider).

Work Placement—This coordinator will pair fellows with potential employers, make initial introductions, and scout potential sites of employment. They will check in throughout the year to ensure that things are running smoothly, and work with the Director to resolve any conflicts that arise, and will help to show our gratitude at the end of the year to all the employers. This needs to be someone who has deep ties in the community.

Host Family Liaison—Once fellows have been admitted into the program, the host family liaison will evaluate their housing needs as it relates to proximity to employment, compatibility with host family, allergies/ food preferences, and cultural fit. They will also work to develop hosts, check in as the year progresses, and work with the Event Coordinator to communicate our gratitude several times a year. With the exception of helping the Director troubleshoot issues throughout the year, Host Family Liaison will do most of their work from early summer to early fall (after the majority of the class is filled up through their arrival in Athens).

Hospitality / Event Coordinator—Working with Director, the Event Coordinator will plan and execute a number of events throughout the year to celebrate the work we are doing together. This will include a kickoff event in the fall to welcome the fellows and introduce the volunteers, a midyear dinner for Advent/Christmas, and a year end banquet. Throughout the year, we may want to provide the occasional meal for a “Lunch and Learn” type event with local business and nonprofit leaders. This person needs to have good taste.

The following work areas will be handled by the Director and/or St. Thomas staff initially, but in time may come to have their own work teams as the program reaches maturity.

Education Coordinator—develops theological curriculum, gauges its efficacy for the needs of the program; recruits and works with professors to help them understand the uniqueness of the coursework; follows up with fellows regarding workload and applicability of materials within the overall program. The majority of this work would happen at the beginning of the first semester and at the end of the second, for about 15 hours each. A good education coordinator will themselves be intellectually engaged with the culture and the church.

Service Director—identifies potential future placement sites; gauges appropriateness of workload and efficacy of the fellow's work; solicits feedback from host site(s) about any problems possibilities that emerge through the year. The Service Director would need to be a good listener, have a heart for ministry among the least of these, and be able to communicate well. Unlike some of the other jobs, this would go on throughout the main part of the year, but would not require more than an hour a week on average.

Mentoring—This person identifies potential mentors, evaluates the needs of the fellows, and pairs them. Ideally, it would be a person with deep knowledge of the gifts of the congregation—a people person with a love for discipleship.

Alumni Advancement—Organizes reunions for former fellows, and champions them in the workplace and the church; helps former fellows get connected in new cities and find places to serve. Eventually, this role would be filled by former fellows themselves.

3.2 Recruiting

3.2.1 Target Class Size

Recruiting poses a significant challenge in our goal to build a mature and sustainable program. There are a number of ministries and initiatives that benefit from the adage to “start small, do it well, then grow it sustainably.” But in order to grown our program over the next five years to a total class size of 12-15 fellows, we will not want to start too small, because the greatest boost to our recruiting will come through our alumni. Fellows alumni have access to personal networks, institutions, and communities that are more organic and personal than those we will try to create strategically through recruiting. Alumni will have worked as counselors at summer camps, led campus ministries, and have countless friends at their alma maters. If we were to speculate that each fellow could potentially give us contacts to 20 potential fellows for our next year, it quickly becomes clear that starting with a class size of 4 reduces our recruiting reach significantly from a first class size of 8. Compounding this over the course of a couple years would not only limit our ability to increase the size of each year’s class but also our ability to be selective about who we welcome to our program. The top programs in the country accept 30-40% of applicants, while those in smaller markets and more remote locations sometimes accept every single applicant. My sense is that our program will eventually be somewhere in the middle—hopefully arriving at a point within the first two years where we can accept 40-50%, while also growing our total class size. So, we want to try to recruit 6-8 fellows this first year. Now that we have a target number, we need to work backward through a chain of causality to the total number of contacts that we need to make to fill the class.

In this first year we can't be certain of what these numbers will look like, but we must hazard a guess about them so that we can check ourselves later. It's not enough to have a plan. Plans are what we do internally. Strategies require risk and assessment and are focused on external outcomes. At any one link in this chain, we could do better or worse than what we had thought, but by attending to every link in the recruiting chain, our oversights will be less likely to compound. For instance, let's say that we think we will have 30 people start an application, who for whatever reason, never complete the process, leaving us with 22 completed applications. We can do our best to start with good numbers so that our targets are as accurate as possible, and what may be more important is that we attend to any breaks in this chain so that we can reconnect each part to the others. If we were to see 50 applications started but only 20 completed, we would need to ask why. Could we improve our online form-building to make it easier to navigate, or is the issue that we are pushing people to start an application before they are ready, thus preventing us from achieving our actual goal, which is the target number of fellows to fill the class. Or let's look at the last two links on the chain. What if we felt really good that we had with great joy accepted 6 fellows for the coming fall, only to have two drop out over the summer because their plans had changed? What then would we need to do to strengthen their connection to us during that time? We will answer some of these questions in the Admissions section below. But for now, it is enough to stress the importance of having this structure in place so that we have targets for recruiting and retention at every step.

3.2.2 Recruiting Strategy

In the first three years, we will focus our recruiting in the Southeastern region. Our primary targets will be campus ministries at major universities (especially UGA),

private/Christian colleges in the Southeast, and Anglican churches in our region who have college students. Given that St. Thomas is the church home of leaders at Intervarsity, Christian Campus Fellowship, Wesley Foundation, and The Navigators, we already have a head start on this. We should find ways to genuinely serve these campus ministers so that we aren't merely looking at them as resources, but as partners who benefit one another for the work of the kingdom. For instance, instead of asking these ministers to let us come and give a pitch for Athens Fellows, is there a way that we can help them staff and resource the events that they have already planned? Rather than asking them to provide a group of ten seniors to hear about our program, could we instead ask if they needed any programming to help their seniors address the challenges they will face after college? Of course we would promote the program, but that would not be the first goal. We want to embody the kind of servant leadership that we hope to instill in the fellows throughout all aspects of the program, especially in those areas like recruiting where it requires the most trust in God.

Extending the recruiting net a bit further, we will want to target private and Christian schools within a 3 hour drive—schools like Berry, Furman, Young Harris, Shorter, Kings, Milligan and Johnson. Some of these are overtly Christian schools that will allow us and encourage us to contact the students through the Career Services department. In those with looser Christian commitments, we might connect through the chaplain's office in order to ensure that we are meeting students who would have an interest in an intense program of Christian discipleship. We may also find students who fit this description by working with our networks of Anglican churches throughout the Southeast. While there are a number of strong churches in cities that already have a fellows program (like Knoxville, Chattanooga, or

Greenville), students in those places may be drawn by the more explicitly Anglican commitments of offered by our program.

3.2.3 The Application Process

After making contact initially, it should be easy for Fellows to apply, and this goes beyond the simple mechanics of an accessible and clear application process. For the vast majority of potential fellows, they will not know what this “fellows program” is about until we tell them. For instance, if we were at a career fair at Berry College and a student was impressed with our pitch, in all likelihood they would need some time to ruminate on the idea of a fellows program, the pros and cons of moving to Athens, and how this may improve or hinder their professional plans. If we ask them to apply 5 minutes after we have met them, the chances of their completing the application are almost certainly lower than if we were to bring them along a bit more gradually. Instead of asking them to do all of the literal and emotional work of applying all at once, we should offer them a number of intermediate stepping stones. These might include things like filling out an online form with their name and address, following up on that by sending them clear and concise emails, inviting them to a webinar, and directing them to begin an application.

Once their application is begun, we will want to send them timely reminders of the admissions deadlines. Having multiple deadlines throughout the year achieves several goals. First, it provides a recruit with a definite target. While they are of course free to submit an application at any time, knowing that there are specific windows for submission will give them something on the calendar to plan around, and will help them get serious about moving toward a decision. Secondly, having several specific targets throughout the year allows our Admissions Committee to focus their work as well. We don't want to leave

recruits in limbo as to the status of their application, so focused work with 5 applications over a two-week period will be far more efficient than assembling our Admissions Committee every time we have a single application come in, and it will furthermore allow us to compare applications to one another in a single batch to discern the right fit for the program.

The application deadlines will be November 30, March 15, and June 15. To apply, students will either fill out the application online or download it and upon completion, email it to us with all reference materials by dates above. In the two weeks following, the admissions team will review the materials, contact the references, and interview the student in person (if possible), or over the telephone/Zoom. At the end of that two week period, we will notify them of their admissions status—either accepted, rejected, or waitlisted. If accepted, they will have two weeks within which to accept the offer of admission. Structuring the process this way allows our team to work in a concentrated way and also allows the student a clear roadmap to follow.

The application for Athens Fellows will be hosted on our website using a “form building” tool allows an incomplete application to be saved and completed over time. Once an application is begun, the tool automatically sends us an email notifying us of that. We will make every effort to respond within one business day with encouragement and support. Using a separate form builder will also enable us to target our email correspondences specifically to that incomplete application, and these will be programmed to go out automatically ahead of any deadline.

When an application is completed and submitted to us, we will send them an email thanking them for their application and assuring them that it will be read in a timely

fashion and a decision will be reached within two weeks. We will offer them the opportunity to ask questions about the process, assure them that their personal information will be stored and accessed through secure formats, and invite them to visit the program or to talk with an alumnus over the phone.

3.2.4 Admissions Criteria

Given our goal to form leaders for the marketplace, church, and society, we will be looking for young men and women who have demonstrated willingness and ability to commit themselves. This will be determined by assessing their past performance in the classroom, workplace, church and their relationships. We will be looking for students who have demonstrated their commitment to study with a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Their references should be able to vouch for their commitment and teachability on the job, and their faithfulness to the church. We will want to ensure that applicants have a real and vital commitment to Jesus Christ, and a willingness to follow Christ in the context of a local church. There will most certainly be areas where applicants will have less-than-stellar records in one or more areas, and it is very likely that the Admissions Committee will rely on feel more than metrics to some degree. Nevertheless, performance standards in school, work, and church are the baseline. More than anything else, we will be assessing applicants for their humility and teachability. One of the beautiful things about the Fellows Program is that these young adults are old enough to have made some mistakes but still young enough to learn from them as they develop into the person Christ has called them to be--as long as they are willing to learn. We will want to determine the degree to which each applicant is committed not just to one aspect of the program—seeing it as a job placement only or a way to “pick up a few grad credits”—but to the program as a whole.

3.2.5 Post-Acceptance

What can we do to begin welcoming fellows after they have accepted entry into the program? The process actually begins before they accept the offer. For instance, as we interview them or call to confirm receipt of their materials, we want to embrace them in such a way that shows them that we are not merely interested in what they can do for our program. They are not just a number in our spreadsheet. How can we encourage them and let them know that we really want this to work out for them.

It is crucial that the packet that we send them be very professional and substantial. We do not want them to think that we are merely a gap year slapstick operation. Of course, we will also want to call each one personally and let them know how much we appreciated their time and the seriousness with which they took the process. Even if they do not accept our offer, or if they decide to go to another program, we want to encourage them in that. If they decide not to take our offer but want to move to this area, we still want to be involved in helping them in any way we can. People will feel this concern and they will appreciate it.

For those who do accept the offer to become a part of Athens Fellows, we want to begin working on their work placement. This is more than merely finding them a job—important as though that may be. When the job placement team calls to discuss options for their employment, we want our conversations to be a part of adopting them into our program and into our church. Work placement calls need to integrate their anxiety and hopeful energy with their overall well-being.

We will also want to send them a book and/or some videos and blog posts to get their mind working toward the kinds of issues that want to introduce at all levels of the program. This is a way for them to feel connected to the program. In their acceptance

packet, we will also include a set of books that will help them as they begin to develop an intellectual framework for the significance of the step that they are about to take.

Set up a group chat with icebreaker questions. This allows even the folks who work as counselors or who travel during the summer to engage more sporadically. All our communication with accepted fellows should be intentional and strategically linked to the actual work of the program. For instance, we might have an icebreaker question that we ask them over a group chat that starts a thread that we can later pull on to build community and trust. We might ask, “what is your favorite snack or junk food?” Easy enough, right? It gets them talking and sharing, but then when it comes time to get snacks for the Fall Welcome Retreat, we will make a point to have on hand every snack that was mentioned. They will feel cared for and heard.

But there will be other preparations that will make the way for a more serious set of transitions. For instance, we also want to prepare them for the difficult and important work of telling their story at the beginning of the fall. Many of them will not have shared in this way and anything we can do to prepare them will also go a long way to show them that we understand the difficulty of what we are asking them to do. Any point of anxiety can become a node where we may potentially gain their trust--from the apprehension of staying with a host family to living in a new town.

3.3 Work Placements

One of the core components of the fellows program is to give each person the opportunity to work in an area that corresponds with their interest and training. This will give them an “on-ramp” for the world of work, provide them with transferable skills, and most importantly, to help them reflect on the meaning of work, their skills and

commitments, and the relationship between faith and work. Often, young people report that their faith and church commitments do very little to inform the kind of work they choose to do and how they go about doing it. The Athens Fellows program will attempt to instill the virtues of humility and service so that fellows will know how to contribute not just to the bottom line of their company, but also to the mission of their company's contribution to society as a whole.

As mentioned above, the work placement process begins soon after a fellow is granted admission into the program. It will be important to begin actively listening to what they need and want in a work placement as soon as possible so that a good match can be found. In consultation with the Director, the Work Placement Team will develop a questionnaire and some conversational talking points to help the fellow describe their past work experiences (good, bad, and ugly), their skills, passions and any limitations they might have. Along the way, we will need to manage expectations about the difference between a dream job and an entry level job.

The work placement team will need to establish good lines of communication between the fellow and potential employers. From the fellow's end, the Work Placement team may need to work with the fellow about crafting their resume to fit the available job, or help them with interview skills, or convince them of the importance of professional attire and a mature communication style—online and in person. On the employer end, we will need to do everything we can to find employers who are Christian—preferably from our church community, though this will be more difficult. When that isn't possible, we do need to insure that employers are persons of integrity who have the confidence of the wider business community. We need to communicate the goals of the program as a whole and

make sure that the employers understand that fellows are very busy and will not be available to work beyond their part time commitment or on short notice or for long hours. We can assure them that while we understand the downside of their not being able to increase their hours that fellows work, this is the necessary trade-off of getting a very committed, smart, and loyal employee whose workplace performance will be optimized by their involvement in these other activities.

All parties need to understand that Athens Fellows is not the employer, but it only facilitating the relationship. After initial matches are made, fellows and employers will need to communicate directly. A fellow may have one or two possible employment situations that they will want to interview for, and employers may have one or two fellows who may be a good fit for the job. It is up to them to complete the hiring process. Employers and fellows may be interested in exploring the possibility of a single overarching project for the fellow to complete during their 9-month stint. If that isn't possible, they will nevertheless need to be as clear as possible about the scope of work and the range of responsibilities that the job entails. As the year progresses, the Work Placement Coordinator will want to check in with both parties to see how things are going. On the employer's side, we will need to check in on the fellow's performance every quarter, and encourage them to do both a mid-year and year-end review. And to the fellows we will want them to connect the theological concepts they learn in the educational component with concrete examples from the workplace. The Work Placement team will work with the Hospitality and Events Coordinator to plan several events throughout the year that both express our gratitude to the employers and also makes them more aware of the connections between faith and work that we are trying to foster among the fellows.

In spite of all the work that we will do to foster cheerful relations between fellows and their employers, no doubt situations will arise that require conflict resolution, wise counsel, or maybe even an altered course of action. Without a doubt there will be times when fellows will be certain that their job is no match for their skills and intelligence, and our job will be to instill an understanding the test of one's commitment never comes when things seem tolerable. There will be many teachable moments about fidelity, toughness, grit and all the rest. We will counsel the fellows on the difference between hard and soft skills in the workplace, and how employers remember your willingness to learn the latter long after they have forgotten your skill in the former. The Fellows Handbook is very clear about the requirements of maintaining gainful employment while enrolled in the program, and serves as a kind of primer for the kind of "tough get going" mentality that we are trying to inculcate.

Once all the pep-talks have been given and the upper lips stiffened, we may determine that a change is indeed in order. While 90% of the workplace conundrums can be solved by renewed resilience, if the Director or the members of the Work Placement Team determine that the employer is causing serious harm, we will help the fellow to find another placement. Of course, we will not tolerate abuse or ethical malpractice of any kind. If the employer fails to abide by the scope of work or scheduling limitations, or does not pay a fellow the right amount for the right time, or does not provide a safe work environment, the Director will address the issue immediately, and if the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of all involved, then the fellow will be placed elsewhere. Of course, this breach of trust would hopefully be rare or unheard of, and most problems in the workplace will be the kind that are addressed in the Fellows Handbook.

3.4 Community Service

The Service Director and the Program Director will work together to identify long-term and short-term service opportunities throughout the year. The long-term service placement will need to fit several criteria. First it will need to be faith-based. While no doubt many area schools would benefit from having fellows serve as teaching assistants, we want the fellows to be in an environment where they can connect their faith to the work that they are doing in the community in explicit ways, hopefully with the help of their on-site supervisors. Second, the long-term service placement will need to be a place that can accommodate all of our fellows at the same time, so it will most likely need to be a fairly large organization. We want the fellows to go on the same day and serve together as much as possible. And finally, the long-term project will need to be just that—a place where we can be for long enough to develop genuine relationships. For some of our fellows, this may be the most intensive service they have ever done, and it will require them to learn new scripts for how to understand poverty, race, and the complexities of extending the love of Christ to people who may not recognize it as such. Possible locations for long-term service projects might include Jubilee Partners, Downtown Academy, or The Northeast Georgia Foodbank.

We will also need to develop various short-term service projects. If the goal of the long-term placement is depth, the short-term projects will foster breadth. While these will be less frequent and less intensive, we want each class to experience the different forms of service that make a town like Athens a real community. Possible opportunities could be found through The Northeast Ga. Foodbank, The Sparrow's Nest, the Boys and Girls Club, Bike Athens, Historic Athens, or the Athens Homeless Shelter. Some of these organizations offer many different ways to serve that will fit into our overall program structure.

3.5 Budget and Finances

The goal of each year's program budget is to set student tuition to within 90-95% of the program expenses, so that adjustments could be made to the tuition in year 2 based on the expenses from the previous year. To prevent the first-year budget numbers from being a complete stab in the dark, I started with the number that I was most sure of—the target tuition. Having spoken with a number of people who run similar programs all throughout the Southeast, I've been able to determine that they all charge the students somewhere between \$5000-\$7500. This includes both programs in the TFI network, more academically oriented programs like Brazos Fellows, and some other Faith/Work Initiatives, too. Many of these folks also shared their line-item budgets with me, too, and that gave me a lot of the specifics that are shown here.

Two things seemed to determine what a program charged for tuition within that range: first—programs in large cities closer to the major population hubs pay more for the same things, and second, the single largest determining factor in this tuition cost swing was whether or not the fellows were paying for graduate school/ seminary credit. Those programs that offer a Th.M. or the equivalent noted that almost 1/3 of the tuition was to cover courses in an accredited school. Given that we are a new program with no nearby schools to draw from, I felt that we would forgo accredited courses in an attempt to keep costs low(er). Furthermore, given that the cost of living in Athens, Ga. is roughly 17% below the national average, I felt that \$5500 seemed like a good target for first year tuition. And while I don't think that cost will be an important deciding factor for the students who would come, I don't want their fundraising to be any more difficult than it needs to be.

Working backward from this tuition number, I multiplied by ten to get a total program budget. Then, I lined out the costs that I could estimate most accurately—things like career assessments, speaker fees, and TFI conferences and membership. Then there were a host of line items that are more of a guess—the cost to rent a beach cottage for a retreat and the amount of gas that I would use in recruiting. Unfortunately, the items requiring the most guesswork are also the most susceptible to inflation. Before publishing this number on our website this fall, I will make some final adjustments to this number.

Fellows will pay their tuition from a number of sources: personal savings, fundraising, and their earnings during the year. Other program directors have indicated that most fellows have no trouble fundraising the vast majority of their tuition. In the event that a student could not come up with the full amount through fundraising, we will work with them to fundraise the remaining balance through local partnerships. I am asking the St. Thomas Vestry to fund the equivalent of one full tuition in the event that we recruit someone from a financially difficult situation.

Of course, it may not be the wisest path to develop budget number by working backwards from the target tuition amount. So going back the other way, I tried to see if my numbers made sense. Based on the budgets of other programs, I identified the four primary expenses (from most to least expensive) were as follows: conferences and retreats, theological education, special events (with guest speakers, host families, etc.), theological education, and recruitment. I've already talked about keeping the theological education in-house, which would make it less expensive. But the ordering of the list that jumped out at me was the recruiting budget. As a new program, I'll need to emphasize recruiting—in part to raise visibility, and in part because I simply don't know which venues and relationships

will be fruitful. For instance, I could anticipate that a single chaplain or campus minister who bought into our vision could send a fellow every year, while a highly visible national conference might generate few leads. Knowing one from the other will mostly be a matter of trial and error. I want to ensure that our commitment to recruiting is reflected financially.

Beyond the program expenses discussed so far, the program will also need to develop a long-term plan to fund staff expenses. To become sustainable in this area, some programs and/or host churches do not fund staff salaries, instead requiring the director to raise support, or paying the salary based on the number of recruited students. This is especially true where the idea for the program came not from the leadership of the church but from a person who proposes the program to the church. The church leadership in this case takes a “wait and see” approach. While this could engender tenacious commitment and creative funding partnerships, it has serious drawbacks. For instance, if the director finds better funding support from another church or nonprofit, the church could potentially lose out on the partnership. If the director’s time is taken up with fundraising, recruiting will be the objective to suffer the most, and if the class size is reduced as a result, the church is less likely to see the benefit for quite some time. And most importantly, while directors who take this route can do it for a while, burnout comes in time.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the church could hire a director and pay them from the general budget. While this option provides a more sustainable foundation, the entrepreneurial drive to spark something new is probably also reduced. St. Thomas and I have chosen to take a hybrid approach. My salary comes out of the general budget, but I am committed to helping fundraise for it. Approaching donors to help the church supplement my salary seemed awkward at first, as though I were approaching people to fund my work

because the church didn't have enough money. Having been a pastor in a mainline denomination for a number of years, I had experience asking for money for everything from hymnals to parking lots, but not for my salary. However, the more I reflected on the goal of the Fellows Program to integrate the sacred and the secular. Fundraising simultaneously with casting a vision for a new program like this, and is better engaged in from the start rather than waiting until we experience a budget shortfall or other need.

Currently, the Director is not offered benefits beyond base salary. St. Thomas is a church plant in a startup denomination. The ACNA does not offer any denomination-wide clergy benefit plans, health insurance or pooled retirement fund. This comes with tradeoffs. The upside is that the clergy and paid staff members that such an organization tends to draw is a more entrepreneurial type—eager for the opportunity to be in on the ground floor of building a new organization and being part of a network of startup churches. The downside is that this model is not particularly sustainable. In the specific case of Athens Fellows, there is a good chance that the program may eventually become a stand-alone 501C3, in the hope of having a bit wider latitude in forming community partnerships. Additionally, as it relates to staff benefits, acquiring nonprofit status may give us the ability to participate in some pooled health benefits through the Center for Nonprofit Advancement.

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Biography

Joe Gunby received a bachelor of arts in 1999 from Berry College, where he studied English and Creative Writing. He was a Sherman Scholar at Candler School of Theology, where he graduated with an M.Div. in 2010. He is a priest at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Athens, Ga., and also serves as the Director of the Athens Fellows Program.