

Ecclesia Clear Lake Elder Profile

Name: Michael Rice

1. How long have you been a part of the Ecclesia Clear Lake church family? What initially drew you to the community?

My family and I have been apart of the Ecclesia Clear Lake community since December 2019. We were initially drawn to the community because we are fond of the idea of smaller church communities. Having attended both larger churches and helping to plant smaller churches, something felt natural about joining Ecclesia Clear Lake. It felt like the right fit.

2. In what ways do you currently serve in the church community?

Currently, I am on the regular rotation for coffee and communion preparation. I have filled in, when needed, on the A/V side of things. My wife and I hosted the Clear Lake – North Community Group for a season.

3. Share an overview of your faith story.

Growing up I was resistant to attending church, it felt like a chore; something I was expected to do. When I did attend church, the service felt formulated, performative, and inauthentic. I was more drawn to staring at the large stain glass windows or the towering pipe organs. These things, the artistic side of the Gospel, were captivating.

When Tammi and I started dating, we began attending Ecclesia Downtown, and I was immediately enamored by that community's use of art in a worship setting. I, too, began to see God in these things. Ecclesia also encouraged the building of Community through small groups and outreach activities. After we were married, Tammi and I would routinely open our home every Sunday for dinner after the service. Eventually I was baptized in a fountain on a cold November evening.

While attending Ecclesia, we were approached by some long-time friends to help plant a church in Southeast Houston, Pasadena, more specifically. At the Basilica Community, I gave my first sermons.

So many events and people have been a part of my faith story from Saudi Arabian families seeking medical treatment at the Houston Medical Center while Tammi and I participated in Apartment Ministry to children in Nairobi and nuns in Tanzania looking to Tammi and I as teachers. It is so hard to sum up a story that still has so far to go.

4. At ECL we long to have deep roots in the historic Trinitarian Christian faith of the global church. Reflect on your understanding of the Trinity.

I understand that, in the context of the Trinity, God, the Father, is the Creator; God, the son (as Jesus), is the Redeemer, saving us from our sins, and God, the Holy Spirit,

sustains our faith. Mostly though, if I'm being honest, the Trinity is largely a mystery to me, but this mystery brings a great sense of comfort and hope to my life.

5. At ECL we long for deep bonds of connection in human relationships within our church and in our community. What is the role of authentic and healthy community in church and in faith formation?

If this last year has shown me anything it's that authentic and healthy community keeps churches together. I have seen churches exponentially larger than Ecclesia – Clear Lake dissolve after losing a member of core leadership. After Coby's departure, though, I have witnessed a more authentic community at Ecclesia Clear Lake than I have experienced in a very long time. It is these bonds that form believers of a vibrant faith.

6. At ECL we long to be actively engaged in matters of compassion and justice in our community and the world. Why is this an important longing? What does a healthy posture of pursuing this longing look like in our context?

Engaging in matters of compassion and justice is not just an important longing, it is the most important longing. It is the culmination of all of Jesus' teachings: Love one another. If we, as Christians, aren't doing this, then we are not Christians.

In the context of the Ecclesia Community, a healthy posture in the pursuit of this longing can be seen in the work we do at League City Elementary. It can be seen in our response to local emergencies. Can we do more? Always. I hope to help ECL find new pathways to enter relationships that further our longing for compassion and justice.