



# STARTING NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO  
DISCERNING AND STARTING NEW  
WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

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## Welcome

A faithful group has been praying for over the past five years for the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest field (Luke 10:2). This movement of God's people has started slowly but has gained momentum. We are grateful that you are considering being part of this exciting movement.

As you look through this guide, questions are sure to come up. You can look at our website ([onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org)), Facebook page (@1001nwc), Instagram (@1001nwcpcusa), YouTube page (@1001newworshiping), or simply contact one of our staff. There are a number of resources for you.

Know that you are not alone in this process of prayerfully considering starting a new worshiping community. You are prayed for.

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## Introduction

The 1001 New Worshiping Communities movement is happening in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Across the PC(USA), God is raising up leaders in churches and presbyteries who are creating new worshiping communities. They are taking on new and varied forms of church for our changing culture. Primarily they are seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ, to change and transform the world.

In June 2012, the 220th General Assembly declared a commitment to a church-wide movement to result in the creation of 1,001 worshiping communities over the next 10 years. At a grassroots level, hundreds of diverse new worshiping communities have already formed across the nation. The Presbyterian Mission Agency is coming alongside to fan the flames of this movement, to inspire and equip the wider church to participate in the creation of 1001 new worshiping communities in the next 10 years.

Presbyterian Research Services continues to do reports on the development of the New Worshiping Communities initiative. Complete research from the beginning of the movement can be found on the Presbyterian Mission Agency website (search for “1001 New Worshiping Communities Report”). A brief snapshot from March 2018<sup>1</sup> shows:

- Half of NWCs have 30 or more regular participants
- The top priorities for NWCs are building relationships, worship and serving others
- 42% of leaders describe their NWC as nontraditional
- 78% of NWC participants were not attending a PC(USA) congregation before participating in an NWC
- 35% of NWC leaders describe their community as “unchurched”
- 63% report having either a missional, outreach or justice ministry focus

### GETTING TO KNOW NWC PARTICIPANTS

- 30% of leaders report that they are trying to reach a specific racial, ethnic or immigrant group for their NWC
- 68% of NWC participants are under the age of 45
- The largest age group is 26–45 within NWCs and over 65 in PC(USA) congregations
- 53% of participants in NWCs and 9% of members of PC(USA) congregations are people of color
- 29% of NWCs and 5% of PC(USA) congregations are racially diverse (i.e., no race comprises more than 79% of its membership)

### GETTING TO KNOW NWC LEADERS

- 43% of NWC leaders are paid for their work leading their community

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<sup>1</sup> “1001 New Worshiping Communities Leaders Report: Spring 2018,” Presbyterian Mission Agency Research Services

- 23% have a paid full-time job in addition to leading their NWC
- 61% of NWC leaders and 87% of PC(USA) pastors are white
- 35% of NWC leaders were born outside the United States
- 54% of NWC leaders have always been Presbyterian
- 60% of NWC leaders are ordained as PC(USA) ministers and 29% are in their first call

## Using This Resource

This resource was designed for either an individual or a discernment team. Please understand that discernment should ultimately be done in community, just like much of what we have done in Presbyterian circles. It may take an individual to get an NWC through its initial infancy, but individuals are highly encouraged to form a team. We are also reminded of this in Acts 4:13–14:

*13-14 They couldn't take their eyes off them — Peter and John standing there so confident, so sure of themselves! Their fascination deepened when they realized these two were laymen with no training in Scripture or formal education. They recognized them as companions of Jesus, but with the man right before them, seeing him standing there so upright — so healed! — what could they say against that? (The Message).*

In the past, we expected “professional” clergy to be the ones developing and leading the start of new churches. That no longer is the case and follows a biblical precedent of God using ordinary people for extraordinary purposes. We can rest assured that God calls those who are willing and not only those with formal education.

The purpose of this resource is to provide a process of discernment that a team can work through to form a new worshiping community. This process is not linear! It is tempting to make the work linear (A-B-C-D ...), but this process of discernment is about listening to the Holy Spirit and loving people as God loves them. Following the Spirit is rarely neat and linear.

There are two main sections to this guide: **Discerning** and **Starting**. Each of the two main sections have studies and activities to help your leadership team. Figure 1 shows the key resources that 1001 New Worshiping Communities offers and the potential places in discernment to use them. For a deeper understanding of the resources provided, see our website ([onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org)) or contact one of our associates. In this resource, we will work through the first two stages.



Figure 1

Through this guide you will be led through a process of discerning what God is calling you to the actual implementation of a strategy. The main tasks include:

**1. Determining why you are creating a New Worshiping Community:** How does the discernment team define Jesus, church, witness, gospel, disciple and other key elements of this new worshiping community?

**2. Discerning your values and a vision for the community:** The discernment team will spend time prayerfully being guided to the people God has called you to serve. There will be activities and conversations in your team and the community.

**3. Gathering a Team:** Who else can be a part of your discernment team and the beginning of your community? Identify those who would walk alongside you in these early steps.

**4. Embedding in the Community:** After a time of prayer, listening and understanding the context of the community, begin to experiment with some of the possibilities of interacting with the community. After spending time in the community, evaluate the results.

**5. Creating a Mission Plan:** Develop a concise plan based on your experimentations, values and vision. This will be the base of developing your worshiping community.

Starting a new worshiping community is a movement of the Holy Spirit. No single person or even a group of people can create a new community of faith alone. A new worshiping community is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is not your work. Seek the Spirit throughout this process. Make prayer a central priority, not an add on activity. Wrestle with the Scripture, as Scripture goes beyond any one culture.

After each section throughout this guide is a **Journal Activity**. Each member of the team should reflect after each meeting on the questions given. At the start of the following meeting, please share in small groups or in a larger group what questions or comments have arisen for you.

There is also a section entitled **New Worshiping Communities Resources**. These links will connect to videos and externally created resources to help you on your journey.

If you are just getting started, start with the first steps and proceed through the rest. The process will be more linear for you compared to a team that is starting with the pioneers in place or the plan already developed. Don't be afraid of being flexible and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you. This does not mean that you should skip the steps altogether. Revisit them. The process of discernment and implementation is designed to be continually reassessed.

Too often we have formed the "how" to reach the community, before we understand the "why." By going through this guide, you may begin to understand the theological and sociological background of the community you are called to. Please do not miss the initial sections of this resource.

### **Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made about the process: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about** for the future: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you **learned about yourself** as you start to discern being part of a New  
Worshiping Community: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Being a Matthew 25 Church

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. When the fulfillment of the vision of Matthew 25 comes to fruition, we will see:

- An increase in the spiritual energy of congregations
- An increased impact of the church in the world
- An increase in new disciples, and more participation in ministry and worship
- An ignition of the PC(USA)'s witness and work

Matthew 25 focuses on verses 31–46, the parable of the sheep and goats in which Jesus makes clear that what we do to the least of these matters to God. And when we say the “least of these” we mean the least privileged and the least protected of society. As the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, the executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, says, we must put feet to faith, hands to hope and legs to love.

*<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup> And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup> And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,<sup>[a]</sup> you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup> Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Matthew 25 provides a sound biblical and theological basis for the Presbyterian Mission Agency's 2019–20 focus on building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty.

**Congregational vitality** is determined by faithfulness to the gospel, which is shaped by challenging congregations and their members to deepen and energize their faith and grow as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with their community as they share the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Vitality is not determined by the size of the congregation or budget, but to the faithfulness in sharing the gospel in word *and* deed in our communities. A question to test one's vitality is who would miss your ministry besides the people who are now a part of it if you were to close your doors?

White privilege involves how Europeans benefit from the practices designed to promote them over and against people of color. **Dismantling structural racism** has to do with fearlessly applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.

Our focus on systems is important. If one fish rolls up on the shore, you ask what's wrong with the fish? If a school of fish shows up on the shore, you ask what is wrong with the water? **Eradicating systemic poverty** by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

The principle of Matthew 25 is active engagement — in your community, in your congregation, in your New Worshiping Community and in the world. Some scholars suggest that in Matthew 25, Jesus was speaking to the church, and letting them know how the “gentiles” would be judged. In “Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality,” Jim Marion writes: “[God's kingdom is] not just a place you go to, but a place you come from.”

Matthew 25 is a living translation of Jesus Christ — strengthening relationships, transforming your church, and bringing alive your commitment to “serve the least of these” in your community and around the world. As you discern a new worshiping community, we ask that you prayerfully consider being a Matthew 25 church.

## Discerning: What are New Worshiping Communities?

From its inception, it was important to define what a New Worshiping Community actually is. The following definitions were created to distinguish between New Worshiping Communities and innovative ministries that are being developed within a church. A New Worshiping Community is defined by the Presbyterian Mission Agency once it strives for the following six marks:

### Brief Definition

- **New**
  - Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ
  - Taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture
- **Worshiping**
  - Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament
  - Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world
- **Community**
  - Practicing mutual care and accountability
  - Developing sustainability in leadership and finances

### Long Definition

- **New**
  - **Taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture**  
*Living out the gospel demands ministry that engages today's cultures (John 1:14). New ways of joining Christians together for contextual ministry will use current and historic ways of "being church" as springboards for creative innovation (Matt. 9:17).*
  - **Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ**  
*NWCs witness in word and deed (1 John 3:18), continuing Jesus' own mission of discipling, feeding, teaching, healing, welcoming, crossing boundaries and proclaiming God's coming realm. Those with new and renewed faith join the Spirit's transforming work in the world.*
- **Worshiping**
  - **Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament**  
*We seek to hear, come to believe, and are equipped to live the promises of God revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. NWCs welcome new members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27) through baptism and are nourished by Christ's spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper.*
  - **Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world**

*The Spirit impels us outward, so that worshipers participate in the redemption of the world in Christ (Col. 1:20). Therefore, the primary beneficiaries of the NWC are not its own members, but rather its community and world.*

- **Community**

- **Practicing mutual care and accountability**

- We commit ourselves to love one another (John 13:34) in relationships of mutual care and accountability, as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Entrusting ourselves and the church to the Holy Spirit, we seek to grow to maturity in faith and life.*

- **Developing sustainability in leadership and finances**

- As distinct yet connected expressions of the body of Christ, NWCs have local leadership arising from their own community of faith (Exod. 18:21). Pastoral leadership, facilities and programs are all appropriately structured to demonstrate good and faithful stewardship.*

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made about what it is to be a new worshipping community:

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discerning: Why Should We Create New Worshiping Communities?

*“Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.”* —David J. Bosch, “Transforming Mission”<sup>2</sup>

Often, we put our ideas of developing a new worshiping community in front of the theological reasoning to do it. This section will build a theological framework for the work you wish to engage in.

### **Read: Matt. 16:13–20**

*<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” <sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” <sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

### Discussion:

1. What questions arise for you from these verses?
2. Who does Simon Peter proclaim Jesus to be (verse 16)? How does he know this (verse 17)?
3. Jesus asked his disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” Share with the group your answer to this question: “Who do you personally say Jesus is?”
4. In response to question 3, how do you live out who Jesus is?

**Content:** Often in the development of a new worshiping community, we come to the table with what we want to create rather than “why” we want to create a new faith community. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch describe this in their book “The Shaping of Things to Come”:

Our Christology informs our missiology, which in turn determines our ecclesiology. If we get this the wrong way around and allow our notions of the church to qualify our sense of purpose and mission, we can never be disciples of Jesus, and we will never be an authentic missional church. Churches that have got this basic formula wrong never really engage in mission and so lose touch with Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Bosh, “Transforming Mission,” p. 390

<sup>3</sup> “The Shaping of Things to Come,” Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch

Our ecclesiology or understanding of the church too often comes to the forefront when we discuss starting a new worshiping community. Many people come with a preconceived notion of what they want to create. Sometimes this can be based on a prior church experience and based upon what they “don’t want to be.” Putting our understanding of church first instead of our understanding of God shifts the focus to us rather than God.

***Missio Dei:*** The stirring of the Holy Spirit in the souls of those who sense the urge to do the work of God among the people is often that which convicts a person to leave a familiar space of comfort. It is not a simple need to roam around, like one who has the *sokugo* or wanderlust as Nigerian author Cyprian Ekwensi speaks of in his novel “Burning Grass”<sup>4</sup>. It is a yearning to serve God among a particular people in a prescribed location.

The leading of the Spirit to share the gospel in a way that is accessible to those who may have moved away from the church or may never have heard of or experienced a church family leads to the desire to develop a community that is accessible. “Mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in the purposes to restore and heal creation. ‘Mission’ means ‘sending,’ and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history.”<sup>5</sup>

The prophet Jeremiah invites us to envision a new way of being in the world that is different from traditional spaces for worship and gathering as a group, seeking to know God and to live as disciples in a distinct manner. Places to which we are called to go may seem foreign and strange, even though they may be in a pub or a diner that is down the street. Perhaps one is being called to go even further afield.

What does God desire of us? God invites into relationship with God’s self and with the people to whom we are drawn to share the Good News. When one carries the message of Jesus Christ to others, one needs to do a thorough self-examination as to why one might be sensing a call to go to a particular neighborhood to begin a New Worshiping Community. The *Missio Dei* or God’s sending is not just to deliver the gospel but to become a part of the community. Jeremiah encourages the people of God not to set themselves apart and remain in a closed group; rather, they are to become integrated in their new home. The admonition is that every effort should be made to ensure that the place to which one is sent will experience prosperity and renewal, and that folk will allow themselves to fall in love with and marry those who live in that place.

God is a missionary God, or as [“The Missional Church in Perspective” authors Craig Van Gelder and [Dwight] Zscheile put it, God is a sending God. This is most clearly seen in the Incarnation, when God sent God’s son for the life of the world, but Van Gelder and Zscheile extend and enrich it by introducing the notion of participation. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ means that God is not only the one who sends,

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<sup>4</sup> “Burning Grass,” Cyprian Ekwensi

<sup>5</sup> “Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America,” p. 4, Darrell Guder

but God is the one who, first and foremost, participates in the world. God's sending can only be understood when paired with God's participation in God's own mission.<sup>6</sup>

Too often the we believe that we are bringing the gospel to places that are without God. Our theology reminds us that God is always present. Our mindset needs to shift to one that we are joining God, who is already in the neighborhood.

Write your understanding of Missio Dei in your words. How does your understanding of Missio Dei impact what this new worshiping community does, how it worships and how it interacts with the world?



### **Incarnational Nature**

As New Worshiping Community Leaders, God's Spirit calls us to be present with the people. What does an incarnational ministry look like if we are called to serve with people who are different from ourselves? What if the people we are sent to look exactly like us? How do we ask the right questions of what things are needed by the community? The Dutch concept of *gezelligheid* comes to mind. It is the concept of conviviality or coziness that speaks to belonging, and spending time with family or close friends; it is a sharing of well-being that pervade the social context (and it's not easy to translate into English).

Why is being incarnational important? How does it affect new worshiping communities? Describe how your description of Jesus might be lived out in the practices of this new worshiping community. How does your understanding of Jesus impact the identity of this possible new worshiping community?

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<sup>6</sup> "Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time," p. 43, Alan Roxburgh



**Bridge Activity:** Prior to the next task, each team member should write down in a few sentences the answer to each of the following questions and have them ready to share:

- 1. Who is Jesus?
- 2. What is Church?
- 3. What is witness?
- 4. What is “gospel” (good news)?
- 5. What is a disciple?

When you have completed your responses, have conversations with those who are not active in a church and ask for feedback. Does it make sense to them? Can they understand what you are seeking to communicate?

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made in thinking about what it is to have a “missional” mindset: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discerning: Are You a Missional Leader?

The initial development of a New Worshiping Community will typically be led by a point person. As the leadership structure matures, it becomes more polycentric. In these initial stages, you will explore the characteristics of a missional leader and team.

**Read:** Luke 10:1–11

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*<sup>5</sup>“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup>If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*<sup>8</sup>“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ <sup>10</sup>But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’*

Discuss:

1. Reflect on this verse. What do you hear and feel?
2. In verse 2, who are “the workers”? Describe them. What do they do, think or feel about this new work?
3. What are your motivations to be a part of something new? Are you more interested in developing “what we are not” rather than “who you could be”? Describe your previous experiences with church and how it affects your motivations.
4. Read Mark 28:16–20. How does being sent by Jesus to “go” influence who you are to be? What holds you back from going?

**Content:** A missional leader is described as “all about paying attention to and participating in what God is doing in and around you, and opening space for others to do so well.”<sup>7</sup> Oftentimes we believe that we are going to become jubilant heroes by bringing God into the neighborhood. Instead, we sense what God is already doing in the neighborhood and participate in it. Being a missional leader in a community is not a short-term endeavor. Building understanding, trust and relationships can take years.

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<sup>7</sup> Ben Sternke, [teloscollective.com/what-we-mean-when-we-say-missional-leadership](http://teloscollective.com/what-we-mean-when-we-say-missional-leadership)

There are many different ways that people can be assessed for potential missional behavior, including through APEST (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers), Enneagram or StrengthsFinder. In the past several years, the PC(USA) has been using the StrengthsFinder model. Please note that there are no singular types or results that make better missional leaders than others. Regardless of the way you are examined, there are some basic questions and categories that can help you determine if you are a missional leader.

## Part 1: Personal Development

1. Spiritual Vitality — How am I growing in my life in Christ? Do I have a rule of life that helps integrate disciplines of prayer, Scripture, and sabbath into my life?
  - i) Do you keep a sabbath weekly?
  - ii) Do you have a spiritual director/mentor who can help you recognize God's presence and direction in your life?

### Resources:

"Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth," Richard J. Foster  
"Pray as You Go" podcast: Daily 20-minute guided prayer by Jesuit Media Initiatives. Available in the Podcasts app, or at [pray-as-you-go.org](http://pray-as-you-go.org).  
"The Sabbath," Abraham Joshua Heschel  
"Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation," Ruth Haley Barton

2. Motivational Fit — How can I grow in my knowledge of new worshiping community leadership to understand what I might be getting into? How can I examine my own motivations for this work?
  - i) Perhaps meet with a New Worshiping Community leader to understand their daily rhythms.
  - ii) Reflect on the appeal to this innovative ministry.

### Resources:

"The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church," Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch  
"Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the Neighborhood," Mark Lau Branson and Nicholas Warnes

3. Emotional Resilience — How can I grow in how I handle conflict, relate to failure and respond to stress?
  - i) What is your capacity to handle conflict?
  - ii) Learn to talk about failure and share with others.

### Resources:

"Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High," Kerry Patterson et al.  
"Zealots: Defying the Gravity of Normality," by Dave Gibbons

“The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church,” Dave Gibbons

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI),

[kilmanniagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki](http://kilmanniagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki)

4. Emotional Maturity — How can I grow in my capacity to receive feedback from others? How can I grow in self-awareness of my natural strengths and weaknesses?

Resources:

“Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ,” Daniel Goleman

“Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life in Christ,” Peter Scazzero

“Feedback You Can Fathom,” blog post from the Center for Creative Leadership

5. Social Base — What can I do to build more relationships and strengthen existing ones so that I am well supported in this work?
  - i) How do you build meaningful spiritual friendships? Is hospitality a spiritual practice? If you’re married, do you have honest conversations about the demands of this ministry? How do you set time apart for important relationships?

Resources:

“In Praise of Scruffy Hospitality,” blog post by Robin Sheeves at [mnn.com/your-home/at-home/blogs/in-priase-scruffy-hospitality](http://mnn.com/your-home/at-home/blogs/in-priase-scruffy-hospitality)

“Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction,” David G. Benner

## Part 2: Missional Development

1. Entrepreneurial Experience — How can I grow in my capabilities to gather others around a vision and turn an idea into an action plan?
  - i) How have you tried to create community among a group of strangers?
  - ii) What are your plans to bring others together?

Resources:

“The Art of the Start: The Time Tested, Battle-Hardened Guide for Anyone Starting Anything,” Guy Kawasaki

“Entrepreneurs on Fire” podcast available on the Podcasts app or eofire.com

“Good Idea, Now What? How to Move Ideas to Execution,” Charles T. Lee

“Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future,” by Peter Theil

2. Missional Practice — How can I grow in my ability to relate to unchurches and de-churched people, and have spiritual conversations with them?
  - i) Describe friendships with those outside the church.
  - ii) How do you interact with those who do not identify as “Christian”?

- iii) Build your capacity to relate to unchurched people from a place of powerlessness.

Resources:

“Assimilate or Go Home: Notes from a Failed Missionary on Rediscovering Faith,” D.L. Mayfield

“Growing Local Missionaries: Equipping Churches to Sow Shalom in Their Own Cultural Backyard,” Dan Steigerwald

“Refresh: A Not-So-New Guide to Being Church and Doing Life,” Michael Moynagh and Rob Peabody

“The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community and the Tangible Kingdom Primer,” Hugh Halter and Matt Smay

3. Risk-Taking — How can I get more used to living outside my comfort zone? How can I grow in discerning when risk-taking is necessary?
  - i) What have you done that has taken yourself outside your comfort zone and gives you the feeling of being vulnerable?

Resources:

“Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone” and “Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead,” Brené Brown

Luke 16 and the Parable of the Shrewd Manager

“The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure & Courage,” Michael Frost and Alan Hirsh

### Part 3: Leadership Development

1. Building a Successful Team — How can I grow in my own understanding to know who I need on the team? How can I develop my skills in vision-casting? How can I grow in my capacity to build and maintain trust?
  - i) Reflect on healthy teams that you have worked on. What qualities helped the team flourish?
  - ii) Do you have a vision that is percolating? Start inviting others to share in your vision.

Resources:

“The Five Dysfunctions of a Team,” Patrick Lencioni (See also the companion workbook.)

“Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action,” by Simon Sinek (See also Sinek’s TED Talk at [ted.com](http://ted.com))

“Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow,” by Tom

Rath

Personality/gift inventories that can help you and your teammates understand one another:

- CliftonStrengths — [gallupstrengthscenter.com](http://gallupstrengthscenter.com)
- Enneagram — [enneagramspectrum.com/testing](http://enneagramspectrum.com/testing)
- APEST — [theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx](http://theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx)

2. Grit — How can I grow in my stick-to-it-iveness and my ability to keep myself and those I am leading on the right course even through challenges?
  - i) Invite feedback and suggestions for a proposed vision that has been developing.
  - ii) Identify a project you left unfinished and return to it.
  - iii) Set multi-tiered goals.

Resources:

“Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance,” Angela Duckworth (See also Duckworth’s TED talk at [ted.com](http://ted.com))

3. Leadership Development — How can I grow in my ability to equip and empower others?
  - i) Invite someone to take on a task that you are good at. Offer to help them prepare and debrief the experience at the end.

Resources:

“Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness,” Robert Greenleaf  
 “Situational Leadership” — [situational.com/the-cls-difference/situational-leadership-what-we-do](http://situational.com/the-cls-difference/situational-leadership-what-we-do)

**Bridge Activity:** If you have not taken the Missional Leadership Quiz (MLQ), please do so on the 1001 New Worshiping Communities website ([onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org)). Reflect on the questions above. Make a list of people who are not yet followers of Jesus in your sphere of influence. What are they like? What are their interests? What are their joys? Challenges? Do they represent a larger group of people in your life? What do they have in common with each other? How are they different from each other?

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Starting: Gathering a Team

Starting a New Worshiping Community is not solitary work. It requires the gifts and talents of a team.

**Read:** Luke 10:1–11

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two<sup>(a)</sup> others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*<sup>5</sup>“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup>If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*<sup>8</sup>“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ <sup>10</sup>But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’”*

Discuss:

1. How many disciples did Jesus send out to the community? Was there a risk of conflict or failure by sending the disciples out? Describe it.
2. How did Jesus develop leadership beyond himself? How do you do it?
3. Compare this verse with another account in Matt. 9:35–37. What does “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” look like today? Who are those that you see?
4. Why do you want to be a part of starting a new worshiping community?
5. What are your initial hopes and dreams?
6. Have you prayed for “the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers”? How can you make it part of your daily life?

**Content:** You feel that God is leading you to do something, but it’s not something you can do on your own. You need a team around you to partner with you. God isn’t sending you out by yourself but who is God calling to go with you on the journey? It is an important part of visioning to develop a team that can develop the vision and work faithfully toward God’s

plan. Some will catch the vision quickly and others will take their time. It is not a race; it is more important that the right people are involved.

A discernment team most likely includes people that are:

- Naturally inquisitive and interested in gathering and deciphering information and experiences. The earliest stages of the work are busy with tasks of listening, watching and learning.
- Who are good communicators of the vision to others? There will need to be those who know how to motivate others to join in the work.

Where can you find the people to be a part of the discernment team?

- Some will be in established churches.
- Some will be people you know with whom you share the initial vision.
- Some will be people whom you naturally share life with.
- Some you will find by being in conversation with those in community while participating in these exercises.
- Some might be members of a small group you participate in.
- Some might not be followers of Jesus.

The team is built out of relationships with those who share a passion for the community around them. One does not have to be ordained, in church leadership or have special skills. Rather they are following a God given-desire for those in their community. It should be visionaries, workers and sent people.

There is no magic number for how many members should be on the team, but between eight and 12 would be reasonable. Have enough that if a third of your people are missing at any one gathering, there is enough energy to keep moving forward. At times it will be good to add to your team, as there is always attrition. Sometimes you need to add talents to the group for different tasks. The group that you start with may not be the group that sees you through. The discernment team may have people who are from partner churches that may be with you for a season.

How do we know it works? As you develop a plan through the discernment process, there will need to be continual and frequent re-evaluations of the team and the new worshiping community. As you begin your ministry, there will be changes in the community and the members of the team. There needs to be continual evaluation as new concerns arise.

Take time to personally and collectively consider the activities in the community and how God is using you. Jeremiah says: *“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (verse 7).”* The word “welfare” can also mean “shalom.” A Jewish understanding of shalom is peace, harmony, wholeness and tranquility. This is not some accident that we are where we are located. You need to pray for the city in which you live. You need to pray to the Lord on behalf of the city. To find shalom, though, requires more than just prayer — it requires

work. Who is called to be a part of the team to go and do the work and ministry? The ministry of Jesus Christ is for all people, but who is called to lead the ministry? In the discerning process, who needs to be a part of the team? Jeremiah wasn't sent into exile and instantly started a ministry. Instead, Jeremiah was sent into exile and set down roots in the community (*"Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters"*).

- Who on the team has roots in the community?
- What roots does the community already have that are important for this ministry?
- Are there connections in the community that need to be made to help the team?

Prayer is central to God's prompting to Jeremiah. It should not take a secondary spot to the other work of discerning. On the following pages is a sample prayer guide for walking through your community. Pray for the neighborhood in your walks. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Pray Scripture for guidance and the manifestation of God in your community. This should not be a singular occurrence but a regular part of engaging the community.

Look at the demographic information and review it. Jeremiah was not dropped in by parachute into a community, but first was a part of the community. For your new worshiping community to flourish in ministry, there needs to be a connection to the community with depth. It is important for the team to be inclusive of God's children.

The 1001 New Worshiping Community is designed to take on new and varied forms of church for our changing culture. Primarily, the community seeks to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ, to change and transform the world. Members of the team need to be open to the movement of the Spirit and cannot think of how we have always done it before.

Throughout the process, the team needs to continually explore if this is the correct group of people to lead this new worshiping community. There may be a need, but at times individuals may not be the best ones to respond. Each of us is called as disciples of Christ to follow. As part of our call as disciples, we sometimes are called to places that require work and commitment and dedication. Each one of us have gifts and talents that can and should be shared in a community. The team needs to explore and identify individuals to lead and participate. This is a way to express one's faith.

**Bridge Activity:** In your time between meetings, take regular times to pray for the community (use the prayer guide on the following pages). Pray for the new worshiping community you want to partner with. Pray for one another and how God will form the work. This task may take more time. Remember that this is God's work and Kingdom work and you want to be as careful to listen for the small voice of God. It is important that God continues to shape the hearts and guides our desires to lead a new worshiping community.

1. What is God calling you to do?

2. What is God saying to you?
3. Where do we engage? How do we engage?

Begin to share your passion for the community that you feel God is bringing into your team. Invite them to be a part of this discernment journey. Begin to talk with other partners as well (churches, community partners, etc.).

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Prayer Walk Guide

"There are parts of our calling, works of the Holy Spirit, and defeats of the darkness that will come no other way than through furious, fervent, faith-filled, unceasing prayer." — Beth Moore<sup>8</sup>

Walking your neighborhood involves taking our prayers to the very place we feel God calling us. Take in the sights, smells and sounds to engage yourself in prayer for the neighborhood. You don't have to prayer walk by yourself. We encourage you to go with your small group, family, friends, neighbors or your discernment team.

Prayer walking is about taking our prayer to the place in which we desire to see God's presence manifested and answered. This is a slow deliberate walk.

As you walk, pray for:

1. The people in the neighborhood.
2. For those in gathering places such as coffee shops, hair salons and liquor stores.
3. Those whose homes and businesses you pass.
4. Those who live in the neighborhood and the city.
5. Schools, preschools, senior living facilities, and other places people live and gather.
6. Those who work at City Hall.
7. The ability to plan and work with minimal distraction, those who are participating in the prayer walk and the people whom you will encounter along the way.
8. A keen sense of God's presence by each person as God challenges them to take the next step in joining the NWC, hearing the story of Jesus Christ and beginning a new way of being with God.
9. God's provision of time, energy and resources for each person who has stepped out in faith to embark on this journey.

Some Scriptures to pray:

**Zech. 4:6** *He said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts."*

**1 Cor. 15:57–58** *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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<sup>8</sup> Beth Moore, [blog.lproof.org/2015/02/its-prayer-thats-the-thing.html](http://blog.lproof.org/2015/02/its-prayer-thats-the-thing.html)

*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

**1 John 4:4** *Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

**Isa. 57:14**

*It shall be said,  
“Build up, build up, prepare the way,  
remove every obstruction from my people’s way.”*

**1 Tim. 2:1–4** *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

**Luke 10:2**

*He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

**Matt. 11:28–29** *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls.*

**Joel 2:12–14** (The Message) *But there’s also this, it’s not too late — God’s personal Message! — “Come back to me and really mean it! Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins!” Change your life, not just your clothes. Come back to God, your God. And here’s why: God is kind and merciful. He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot. This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to cancel catastrophe. Who knows? Maybe he’ll do it now, maybe he’ll turn around and show pity. Maybe, when all’s said and done, there’ll be blessings full and robust for your God!*

**Ps. 46:1–5** (New Revised Standard Version) *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; through its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tumble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city, it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.*

As you pray, remember:

1. The worship of God is to be accessible and inviting, community, discipleship, a thriving ministry and mission — to be joyously lived out in each person’s life to the glory of God.

2. God's salvific action in the lives of each person who has moved away from the church or is unchurched. Pray for the gospel to be communicated in a clear, loving and powerful manner.
3. God's preparation of everyone's heart to be open to God's guidance as each group discerns how this New Worshiping Community will conduct its ministry. Pray for each person who will participate in the ministry.
4. The wisdom of God is not always what we perceive how things should be. Pray for those in the leadership of the city to follow in the leading that God has set forth.
5. The Providence of God
  - The establishment that provides space for the ministry
  - The businesses in the immediate neighborhood

## Starting: Being a Part of the Team

As a discernment team is prayerfully being assembled, there needs to be a discussion on the amount of commitment and boundaries that the team should have. This section will encourage those discussions.

**Read:** Luke 10:1–11

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*<sup>5</sup>“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup>If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*<sup>8</sup>“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ <sup>10</sup>But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’*

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to be “a lamb among wolves”? What does that mean in your context?
2. What does it mean to bring “peace to this house”? What does it mean for you in your community?
3. Reflect on verses 8–11. What comes to your mind? Share instances when you dealt with the ups and downs of life. Who supported you? Who did not support you? What do you need in your life to keep balance?
4. What does it mean for you to be a part of a team that is sent by Jesus?

**Content:** Starting a New Worshiping Community is not an easy task. There will be ups and downs; frustrations and celebrations. In order for your leadership team to effectively move forward, you need to have some possibly difficult conversations.

As the team is created and developed, a covenant needs to be created and developed. Scripture contains many covenants between individuals and God. It is important that all participants on the team have a clear understanding about the expectations. A covenant, a written promise, helps to clarify what will happen and encourages accountability between the team members, the community and the presbytery.

The discernment team has begun to work together and not everyone is going to make it to the finish line together. There will be turnover on the leadership team. Some may move on due to jobs, families, God's prompting or their vision is no longer in line with where the team is going. Like God and Noah, we will create a Leadership Covenant. There is a sample of one on the next page. Using the following questions, make your own Leadership Covenant of your promise a guide for your leadership team.

1. What are some non-negotiables for you to be a part of the team? What are some non-negotiables for the team itself?
2. What are your boundaries?
3. What strengths and weaknesses do you bring to the team?
4. What do you expect each other to commit?

Share your responses and begin to build a leadership covenant.



## Sample Leadership Covenant

The concept of a covenant between God and His people is one of the central themes of the Bible. In the biblical sense, a covenant implies much more than a contract or a simple agreement between two parties. There are many examples of covenants in the Bible, some of the most famous being God's covenants with Noah (Gen. 9), Abraham (Gen. 12), the Mosaic covenant of which the Ten Commandments is the foundation (Exod. 20), and the New Covenant (Heb. 8) between God and humankind based on the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In this leadership community, a covenant is a solemn agreement between the discernment team to act together in harmony with the Holy Spirit as our guiding voice.

In covenant with God and with each other:

We affirm our unity in Christ and take faithful steps to live more fully into what it means to be a worldwide church in mission for the transformation of the world.

We commit ourselves to crossing boundaries of language, culture, and social or economic status.

We commit ourselves to be in ministry with all people, as we, in faithfulness to the gospel, seek to grow in mutual love and trust.

We participate in God's mission as partners in ministry, recognizing that our God-given gifts, experiences and resources are of equal value, whether spiritual, financial or missional.

We commit ourselves to full equity and accountability in our relationships, structures and responsibilities for the denomination.

We enter afresh into a relationship of mutuality, creating a new sense of community and joyously living out our worldwide connection in mission for the transformation of the world.

We commit ourselves to intentional spiritual development through regular worship or small groups.

We commit to supporting the New Worshiping Community with time, talent, treasure and attendance.

### **Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Starting: What Are Your Values?

Before you can begin to engage the community, you must determine your core values. This will be the filter that you see the world through and create ministries based upon.

If possible, gather with a person or people you don't know to discuss these questions:

- Share an experience of moving into a new neighborhood. (Think along the lines of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender or sexual identity)
  - Where was the new neighborhood?
  - What was comfortable and not?
  - How did you fit or not?

Jer. 29:1–9 Study (New Revised Standard Version)

*<sup>1</sup>These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>2</sup>This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: <sup>4</sup>Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. <sup>8</sup>For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, <sup>9</sup>for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.*

### **Some notes on the context of Jer. 29:1–9**

Chapter 29 is basically a letter that the prophet Jeremiah wrote to those exiled in Babylon (modern day Iraq) by Nebuchadnezzar (597 BC). The purpose of the letter is to encourage those in exile to accept their new reality and move forward with their lives, instead of clinging to the false hope that God will deliver them anytime soon. Resistance and rebellion will only cause more suffering not shalom (peace). If they want to thrive amid their unfortunate circumstances, they will need to let go. Until they let go of their dream of returning to Jerusalem, they can't adapt to their new normal.

The impetus for letting go is to remind them that God can bring good out of dire circumstances. New life, as the song goes, is created out of the dust of our lives. In essence, Jeremiah is providing them with the "how to live" as a captive (or stranger/outsider/minority/refugee) in a foreign land and flourish. The "how-to" is shocking to say the least: Embrace the very people who caused you suffering and submit to

their dominion. The advice is counterintuitive: Pray for the well-being of your captors, a pagan enemy, and become one of them by assimilating. In other words, tie yourself to the well-being of your enemy and only then will you experience shalom. Centuries later, Jesus will make the same paradoxical claim: To pray for your enemy as those who persecute you is part of “how” the kin(g)dom of God is realized on earth.

### **Questions about Jeremiah and starting a New Worshiping Community:**

- If Jeremiah wrote a letter to the inhabitants of Babylon, what would he ask them to do for the Judean exiles?
- What do you think the Judean exiles would have had to sacrifice in order to live in the dominant Babylon culture?
- How can those in privileged positions be sensitive and aware to those who are marginalized and invisible?
- Who are you and your church plant in Jeremiah?
- How is your church plant different or similar in Jeremiah?

### **Your New Worshiping Community: “You might think they need you, but you really need them.”**

- How can others be a source of blessings and help you to thrive?
- How can your church plant partner with the local community to enable your church plant to thrive?
- What do you want your church plant to be in your community?

**Content:** In this exercise, you will begin creating the core values of the group. These values will help you see as a group where you will be placing your passion. These categories are neutral, and one does not have a higher weight than another; your group may have a passion that prioritizes its values above others.

## Values Exercise

### Instructions:

1. Read and sort the following words into one of two categories: core values (things I firmly believe in and value) or negotiable values (things that are open to discussion or compromise). If there are important values that are missing, please add them.
2. Pick the 10 most important words from the core values pile.
3. From these 10, identify the five most important things your New Worshiping Community values.
4. Describe why these five core values are important to you in the columns below.
5. How is this driving you?

### **Honor**

A recognition for people who distinguish themselves from other people by living a life of superior standing

### **Justice**

Behavior that conforms to what is right, fair and reasonable

### **Spirituality**

Being in communion with, having obedience to and actively having a relationship with God

### **Passion**

The “fire within” that brings rewards beyond any monetary gain or satisfaction from your work

### **Family**

People with whom you have a bond and/or biological bond

### **Humility**

The ability to be honest with yourself; meek, teachable and open to change

### **Love**

Unselfish devotion that freely accepts another person

### **Honesty**

Truth, openness and fairness of conduct; integrity

**Relationships**

Being surrounded by people who like and care about you

**Ancestry**

Those who came before us; our line of descent

**Altruism/Hospitality**

Active concerns for the needs and values of others

**Dignity**

Demonstrating behavior and stature that earns the respect of yourself and others

**Aesthetics**

Appreciation and enjoyment of beauty and artistic experiences

**Autonomy**

The drive to be an independent, self-determining individual

**Health**

Soundness of body, mind and spirit

**Loyalty**

Maintaining allegiance to a person, group, institution or idea

**Emotional well-being**

Inner peace, abiding confidence, freedom from anxieties and tranquility

**Recognition**

Favorable attention and acknowledgement from others that makes one feel significant

**Harmony**

Unity in relationships; the absence of conflict and strife between associates

**Achievement**

Desiring outcomes resulting from persistent endeavor

**Community**

People who care about something and pursue it together

**Wealth**

An abundance of valued material possessions and resources; economic prosperity

**Physical appearance**

Concern for the attractiveness of one's own body

**Knowledge**

Facts and lessons learned; understanding or awareness of principles that organize and explain

**Creativity**

The ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods and interpretations

**Generosity**

The quality or fact of being plentiful or large

**Authenticity**

Being true to one's own character or self

**Joy**

A source or cause of great delight

**Empathy**

Action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experience of another

Additional Values:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Top 10

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Top 5

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Rationale for your top 5.

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Adapted from Gallup's StrengthsFinder "Values" Exercise

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Starting: Discerning a Vision for the Community

“If we think of belonging only as membership in a club, organization, or church, we miss the point. Belonging is the risk to move beyond the world we know, to venture out on pilgrimage, to accept exile. And it is the risk of being with companions on that journey, God, a spouse, friends, children, mentors, teachers, people who came from the same place we did, people who came from entirely different places, saints and sinners of all sorts, those known to us and those unknown, our secret longings, questions, and fears.” — Diana Butler Bass<sup>9</sup>

After determining our values and being grounded in who we are as a community, you turn to how to live those out for others.

**Read:** 2 Cor. 4:1–12

*Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. <sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup>always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. <sup>11</sup>For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

Discussion:

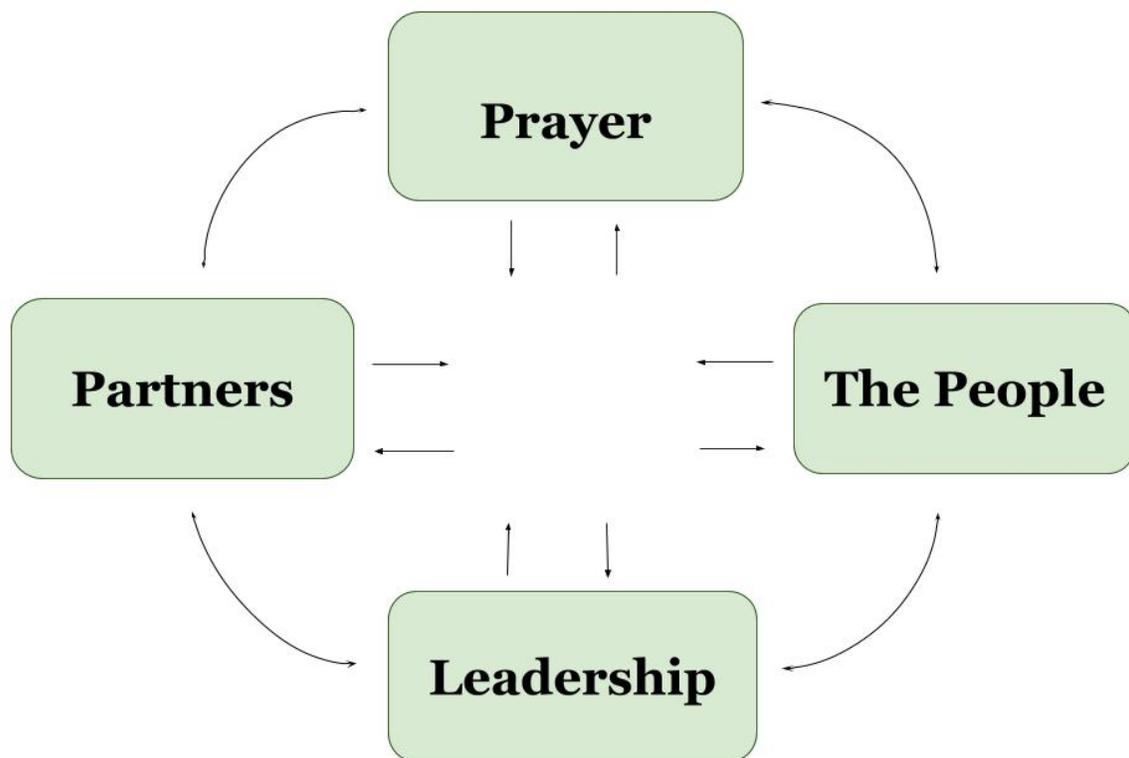
1. How does God use your weaknesses to show power?
2. In what ways is your faith defined by how you handle hardships? What steps can you take to look at hardships and weaknesses as opportunities to rely on God’s power?
3. Is this forming ministry need to about you/us?

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<sup>9</sup> “Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening,” Diana Butler Bass

4. Realizing that God is already working in a particular community, how is God shaping you to work in the community?
5. Are you all right with conveying the power to others? Share a time when you gave others power.

**Content:** The four sections of discernment overlap and spiral about, so it is clear that this section would be better drawn multi-dimensionally than on a flat piece of paper. There is no specific order to working these discernment steps, nor will you and your team be done considering them after a once-over. Context, positionality and the people on your team will shift constantly, and these questions should be revisited often in one order or another.



## Prayer

Prayer should be central in all that we do. In Nehemiah we see a person with a God-given burden and a sensitive heart. Before Nehemiah ever set foot in Jerusalem, the Scripture tells us he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for the city (Neh. 1:4). When he finally arrived, his eyes saw the rubble, the burned city gates, as had others before him. Nehemiah

committed himself to prayer over Jerusalem and was committed to interceding on behalf of the people. Through that deep prayer, he felt a deep connection to the people.

We should also be people of prayer. Be committed individually and corporately for the community you are being led to. Pray for the issues, people, hurts, wounds and celebrations that they have. Pray in an Iona (Celtic understanding of prayer as being everything we do: dishes, laundry, eating, planning, etc.)

Action:

1. Participate in prayer walks in the neighborhood. Walk regularly and at different times of the day.
2. Map out what is where (services, housing, restaurants, nonprofits, communal areas, etc.) and understand how your space fits in the area.
3. Understand your position: Are you a local? Commuter? Long-time resident? New on the scene? Who on your team lives here? How is their knowledge and experience centered? Who are you? How do you fit (or not) with the people of this area? What is your impact on the community?
4. Who else should be with you on these walks?

### **Who Are the People We Are Called To?**

Understand your context. What is the history of this community? What are the stories, myths and rhythms of this space? Who tells those stories? What are the different kinds of leadership in this community? Who fills those roles? Who is missing from that leadership? Who are you in relation to this context? Are you grass roots? Are you connected to grass roots? Are you parachuting in? Are you welcome here? By whom?

Where is God moving in this community?

1. What is the good and the beauty happening here? How might God be calling you to join with that?
2. Where are the most difficult and challenging spaces of this community? How might you be called to enter those spaces?

If you are called to seek the shalom of the community (Jer. 29:1–9), what do you or your team perceive to be preventing wholeness, health, joy, peace in this community?

How will your new worshiping community fit, interface and belong in this space?

### **Who Are Your Partners?**

As you are dreaming and visioning about programs and ministries in the community, there are undoubtedly social organizations or people involved in those issues already. Seek people or organizations that you can partner with. These partnerships may be ones in the field or a partner church that would like to walk alongside you.

1. Who is already organizing in the community (if you say “nobody,” look closer)?
2. Community groups: nonprofits, neighborhood gatherings, both formal and informal organizing
3. Churches and other interfaith worshiping communities: Who is here? How do they fit in this space? How will you fit among them? What resources might you share? When do they meet?
4. Other organizations: political groups, schools, scouts, etc.

**Am I the one to lead this or be a supporter?**

Do you have the skills, gifts or the calling to lead or participate in a new worshiping community? Not everyone is called by God to participate in one. There could be a number of reasons, and many are valid. Simply because we feel this is something that we should do is not the best reason to start a new community.

1. Revisit this often. The answer will change.
2. If you are the one to lead this, who will lead after you? Whom are you training?
3. Why are you the one? Do you have a community validating that call?
4. Is it just one person or many called?
5. Has anything changed recently suggesting that you should fall back or step forward?

**Insight:** “Any theology in America that fails to engage white supremacy and God's liberation of black people from that evil is not Christian theology but a theology of the Antichrist.” - Rev. Dr. James H. Cone.

Given the history of the United States, as a country built on stolen land and the labor of stolen people, before moving into the discernment process, take some time to consider your own socio-cultural location and that of your team. Consider the community you propose to engage. Consider the historic and current day systems of white supremacy, anti-blackness and settler colonialism and how your NWC will enter that milieu.

**Cultural context:** It is easy to simply pass by and not acknowledge the cultural context of the community you are praying for. There are important questions that unlock the depth of the community that need to be asked. Please engage in this by answering:

1. What native groups originally lived on this land? Where are they now? What native groups currently reside in this area? What possibilities exist for communicating with tribal leadership?
2. Are you a part of the gentrification of a neighborhood? How does this affect how you are viewed?
3. How did this geographic area engage in and benefit from chattel slavery?
4. Whose labor built this area (farms, roads, railroads, schools, churches, homes)?
5. What are the demographics of the larger geographic area? Who lives in poverty? How does poverty map with the racial demographics of the area?
6. What is the history of Presbyterians in this area? Has there been education and work toward reparations?

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you learned about yourself: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Neighborhood Exegesis

“It is not the church which undertakes mission; it is the *missio Dei* which constitutes the church.” — David J. Bosch

A neighborhood exegesis is not an all-encompassing demographic study of a particular community. Instead it is an “interpretation” of a community in which you feel God has called you. There are many ways in which you could seek interpretation of the community, but one of the most important ways is to engage the community. You will be not only looking at demographic data but at the history and context of the area.

**Insight:** This is an activity that should be done more than once while discerning. Go out at different times and on various days. The rhythm of the neighborhood often changes quite often. Perhaps a large demographic is at work — it may be a holiday, or an event that draws in people not regularly in the neighborhood. Take the time to get a good sense of the community.

In the previous section, you began to identify people God is placing on your heart. You still may not have that well-defined, but you are beginning to refine and focus your group. Many have challenges at this point, once again saying things like “Aren’t we for everyone?” The answer is yes and no. Yes, everyone is welcome, but no, you’re not equipped to engage everyone. So, who is it that God is leading you to? You may observe that the “who” is not in a single neighborhood. Where are those you want to engage most likely to hang out? Where do they get together? What services are they likely to use? Let those things guide where you go.

## Dwelling in the Word

**Read:** Luke 10:1–11

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two<sup>1a</sup> others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*<sup>5</sup>“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup>If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.<sup>7</sup> Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*<sup>8</sup>“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’<sup>10</sup> But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,<sup>11</sup> ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’*

### Discussion:

1. Listen to the passage.
2. Underline any words or phrases that stand out.
3. Sit quietly with those words.
4. What message do you hear?
5. Share with another person.

**Content:** The following is a guide to your site visit. This is intended for you to get a subjective view of the people God may be asking you to engage. The first set of questions is what some people call a “windshield survey.” What can you learn just by observing the physical context of where you’re going? What can you see from your car or by walking around that would either give you information about the people in the area or raise questions you want answered? The second part of the activity is to get you into the neighborhood. Others call this “neighborhood exegesis,” which is a term for getting a “read” on the people in a particular area.

You will find this one of the most energizing experiences for your team. It can be the catalyst to getting work started. It will be something you need to do at different times and places. Find out what and when that might be. Demographic reports don’t motivate us to care. Encountering real people and learning their story is the only way to do this.

Site Visit Observations: A Windshield Survey

Observe as you are making your way into the neighborhood. Fill out the observation questions prior to starting your walk. Let this be your first impression.

*Who do you see? Describe the people.*

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*Who is missing?*

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*What are they doing?*

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*What conversations/interactions do you observe?*

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*Are they alone or in groups?*

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*Are people walking on the streets, biking or running?*

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*How are they dressed? Notice details like jewelry or not, name badges, shoes, styles, or technology.*

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*What do you smell?*

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*What does the infrastructure of the community look like?*

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*Are these apartments, single family dwellings, gated driveways, townhouses, RV parks?*

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*What types of signs do you see?*

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*What types of businesses are in the area?  
(mom and pop stores, big box, etc.)*

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*What gathering spaces do you see?  
(churches, library, coffee shop, etc.)*

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*How does the community make you feel?*

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## Site Visit Activities: Three Actions and Conversations

While you are in the neighborhood, we encourage you to do these three actions.

1. Have a drink or something to eat in a local establishment. Listen in on conversations. It's a chance to ask questions of locals.
2. Talk with at least one person who is part of the group you believe God is asking you to engage.
3. Bring back a token, something that represents what you learned about the people you met. You'll use this to tell part of the story you are learning about these people.

## Site Visit Questions: Casual Community Conversations

- Find places where people gather and look for opportunities to ask people questions.
- Look for those people you have sensed God's call to engage.
- If you go into a business, be sensitive not to interrupt someone's work. Always ask, "Would you have time to answer a few questions about the area and the people who live here?"
- If someone asks you, "Why do you want to know?" be honest and tell them what you're doing. We would suggest that you delay asking questions about church and whether or not one is needed. This will change the conversation. If you must, ask people if they are aware of churches in the area and what they are like.
- Go out in groups of two and no more than three — don't overwhelm! Remember you are taking an attitude of listening.

## Conversation Starters:

- "Excuse me, do you work or live in the area?"
- "If I were to move here, what do I need to know?"
- "Who lives here?" (Age groups, race, class, families, singles, etc.)
- "What do people do for fun?"
- "Do you like living/working here?"
- "Do people live/work here for a long time?"
- "What are the challenges in the area?"
- "What are the benefits?"
- "What could make this community better?"

This list is not exhaustive. This should give you some ideas of a starting point. Simply be curious and attentive. Have natural conversations. Be aware that people love to talk about themselves and where they live. You are usually giving people a gift by doing this.

## **Debrief: Telling a story of what you've learned**

The site visit can be as brief as a couple of hours. Plan time in your day to gather your group to share first impressions and any learning you've had. You could gather at a café or a pub or a park to do this.

Share what your token represents from your visit. Have each group share their discoveries and insights. Pray for those you've met and had conversations with on your visit. Pray that God will clarify your direction.

## **Beyond the Site Visit: *What more can we learn?***

Once you have done several site visits, there's still a lot more to learn. A comprehensive learning of the community is not done through one tool. What questions have not been asked? Where and when do we need to go back to continue our finding? Interview people in person such as city leaders, nonprofit organizations, local school, or other people that would have a good interaction with the community. Beyond asking questions in the community, there are other tools such as demographic information. You can use MissionInsite or Precept as well. Remember to use a balance of all the tools to get a good understanding of the neighborhood.

**Bridge Activities:** Before you leave this meeting, pair up and commit to going back and doing another site visit or two in the places and times you identified earlier. Have people volunteer to do calls with those you haven't talked with yet, educators, etc., to gather more information. One or two people need to collect the demographic information and be prepared to review it at the next meeting. Commit to praying for clarity as well as for those you continue to meet in this process.

## **Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Starting: Creating a Vision for the Community

*“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” —  
Frederick Buechner*

While processing the last few sections, you should feel a prompting for the community you are called to. You have walked and prayed in the community. Now you will begin to form a vision for the ministry you want to create.

### Read: Jer. 29:4–9

*<sup>4</sup>This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” <sup>8</sup>Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. <sup>9</sup>They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.*

### Discussion:

1. *Shalom* means peace, completeness, prosperity, and wholeness. Perhaps you need to look at what shalom is more deeply. In verse 7, shalom translated is underlined. What would it mean to bring shalom to Babylon and to the Israelites?
2. What is required to bring shalom? What does shalom look like to those around you?
3. How may you participate in bringing shalom to your neighborhood? How do we do this together? How do we do this individually?
4. How can you care for your community physically? How can you care for your community spiritually?

**Content:** In this section, your team will begin to develop a vision. This vision takes into account the values, partnerships, prayer and prompting of the Holy Spirit. You are not committing to specific actions but beginning to dream about the possibilities. The primary goal of developing a vision statement is to begin to put actionable items to your values. The following activity is designed by Communitas International.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Dynamic Adventure: A Guide to Starting and Shaping Missional Churches”; Daniel Steigerwald, Deborah Loyd, April Te Grootenhuis Crull and Michael Kuder

## Vision Exercise

### Instructions:

1. Break your team into small groups. Assign each small group a value. Write it on the top of a sheet of paper, then write out the possibilities for living out that value in the community. What outcomes would be possible? What would it look like? Take five minutes for this activity.
2. When the time is up, have everyone pass their paper to the person on their left. Continue with the exercise until each person has a chance to read the values.
3. Within your small group, develop a short paragraph that describes how that value will be lived out in the community as part of your vision. Write the vision on a sticky note.
4. Come together as a large group. When prompted, have each small group tell their value, then post their vision on a whiteboard and read it aloud to the group. After each presentation, the large group may ask clarifying questions. Repeat the process through all of the values.
5. Compile all of the value/vision statements on the board. These represent your unique version of the values for your community. Be sure to write the values/vision statement below, so that you can reflect on it.

### Values and Vision Statements

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Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible ways to live out vision with outcomes:

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Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible ways to live out vision with outcomes:

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Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible ways to live out vision with outcomes:

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Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible ways to live out vision with outcomes:

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Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible ways to live out vision with outcomes:

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**Bridge Activity:** Spend time in prayer over your vision/values statement. Begin to combine them into a concise statement that will be shared with the group the next time you come together.

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you **learned about yourself:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Starting: Embedding into the Community

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you (and your church) come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is more people (and churches) that have come alive." — Karl Vaters<sup>11</sup>

Daniel Steigerwald uses the term “embedding” to describe the posture that we must have while seeking the possibilities in a community. He describes embedding as “submerging deeply into context and establishing a stable long-term presence together.”<sup>12</sup> That attitude moved us from a hierarchical approach to one that walks alongside our neighbors.

In the next section, as you seek to embed yourself in the neighborhood, seek the natural intersections that you can be involved in.

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<sup>11</sup> “Grasshopper Myth,” Karl Vaters

<sup>12</sup> “Dynamic Adventure: A Guide to Starting and Shaping Missional Churches”; p. 30; Daniel Steigerwald, Deborah Loyd, April Te Grootenhuis Crull and Michael Kuder

## Determining Possibilities

As you continue to respond to our understanding of Jesus, it informs our ecclesiology (nature and structure of the church). In these steps, we begin to develop and experiment in developing ministries in the community.

Review your Vision/Values Statement as a group. Come to an agreement on the final wording of your vision.

**Bible Study:** Read Jer. 29:1–9

*<sup>1</sup>These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>2</sup>This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: <sup>4</sup>Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. <sup>8</sup>For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, <sup>9</sup>for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.*

Discuss:

1. Why do you think God called the Israelites to build houses and plant gardens? What is it about the marriage, harvest and settling that were so important to the Israelites?
2. What are the steps needed to accomplish what is needed in verse 6? How would they go about it?
3. Share a time when you were doing a project that you had no previous experience with. What did you do? Was it a success? What could you have done differently?

**Content:** In this section, you will brainstorm a list of possible ways to engage the community. Think of this new initiative as a way to serve the people God has placed on your heart.

Brainstorming is a discipline in itself. Write down every idea and possibility the group suggests. There is no editing at this time. A true brainstorming session can generate hundreds or even thousands of possibilities very quickly if you don't interrupt each other or evaluate each suggestion. All ideas are shared and written down.

**Insight:** Think also about those whom you have encountered in the community and have spent time praying for.

Some areas to think of:

- Service in the community
  - Local event or community gatherings
  - Classes or workshops
  - Volunteering in existing community organizations
  - Joining informal gatherings
  - Community-building activities
  - Establishing a presence at a community event
1. Give the team 10 minutes to brainstorm on the following page.
  2. Circle and number your personal top five.
  3. Take turns sharing your top five.
  4. Did some similar possibilities rise to the surface?
  5. Pick two or three ways of engaging the community, making sure that you can accomplish it while staying within your resources.

## Brainstorming Space



**Bridge Activity:** Between now and your next meeting, pray over these possibilities. Meditate on them and ask God to reveal which one you should be drawn to. Continue to pray and visit the community. Write down what you hear or feel during your time. Be open to where (or whom) you are drawn to.

### Journal Activity

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Begin to Experiment

In this step, you will plan your first new initiative to engage with the community. Pray as a group for discernment, courage and passion.

**Insight:** The experiment should not be something you do “to” or “for” people but something you will do “with” people.

### Read: Matt. 16:13–20

*<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” <sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” <sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

Discussion:

1. Who do you say that Jesus is? Through this discernment and experimentation process, has God been central or off center in your life? In your discernment team?
2. Share how your faith has grown, stagnated or decreased through the discernment process.
3. In declaring that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus declares that Peter will be the foundation of the church. Through the development of the New Worshiping Community, have you been faithful?

**Content:** What is the result of your Bridge Activity? Share with the team what God has been saying to you. Where is the group being led to? Which of these new initiatives is the one with which you want to experiment first? This does not mean that the others will not be done, but which become the collective focus of the team?

Then:

1. **Pray** and ask others to join you in pray about the new initiative. This new initiative needs to be a movement of the Holy Spirit. Our tendency is to get to work. The church of the Book of Acts was told by Jesus to get to prayer first.

Whom will you ask to join you in prayer?

2. **Assign a date** when the new initiative will take place or begin. The challenge here is to find a date that will allow you to prepare well. You want to gain momentum toward your start date. A date too far away will not be able to maintain momentum while a date too soon will not have enough momentum.

What date will this start?

3. Determine **how long** you will try the new initiative. A one-time initiative is easy — “We will do it and after we have done it we will decide if we ever want to try it again.” Other initiatives will take a month, several months or a year to really gain traction. Build into the implementation a long enough time to truly try the new initiative but a short enough time to end it if it is not fulfilling its goals.

How long are we committed to this initiative?

Is this reasonable?

4. **Develop a list** of the “pieces” that need to be in place before this initiative can start. Find people who have the ability to see the steps to get to where the dreamers are pointing.
5. **Assign a date** for when each “piece” needs to be completed. Many new initiatives never get off the ground because leadership teams do not have anyone who holds the rest of the team accountable to fulfilling each piece in a timely fashion. Go back to what you just wrote down

What needs to be done the month before the initiative begins?

What needs to be done the week of the initiative?

What needs to happen the day of the initiative?

6. Determine if each “piece” is done by an **individual or a team**: Think of the complexity of the task. It is frustrating to have too few or too many people involved.
7. **Continue to pray**. Pray without ceasing. Maybe this entire initiative is really God’s way of teaching your team to come together in prayer.
8. Develop a list of the **financial and people resources** needed to begin the new initiative.

Do you have the people and skills needed to move forward with the initiative? What expenses, facilities, supplies and equipment will you need? What community resources, approvals, permits and community leaders' participation do you need?

9. Determine realistic expectations and goals **before** the launch of the initiative starts.

What is a short term "win"?

**Insight:** The next chapter will wrestle with the idea of evaluating the project. It is important to have realistic goals.

**Bridge Activity:** Decide ahead of the new initiative how you will assess its effectiveness. What measure will you use to determine whether it was accomplished what you hoped it would accomplish? Raise your awareness as you plan and execute the initiative about the various leadership roles that are present on the discernment team, issues that cause confusion and places of celebration.

### Journal Activity

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about:** \_\_\_\_\_

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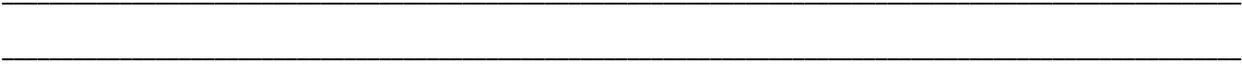
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One thing you **learned about yourself:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Launching of New Project Worksheet

Project:  
Launch Date:  
Completion Date

What is needed?

Steps Needed:

Team or Individual?	Action	Responsibility of	Completion Date

Whom do we need to partner with?

Do we have enough resources (financial or people)? Where can we find more resources?

## Evaluating the Experiment

What did we learn about those we identified in our community? What did we learn about ourselves (our ability, capacity and passion for the work)?

**Bible Study:** Read Luke 10:17–24

*17 The seventy came back triumphant. “Master, even the demons danced to your tune!”*

*18–20 Jesus said, “I know. I saw Satan fall, a bolt of lightning out of the sky. See what I’ve given you? Safe passage as you walk on snakes and scorpions, and protection from every assault of the Enemy. No one can put a hand on you. All the same, the great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God’s authority over you and presence with you. Not what you do for God but what God does for you — that’s the agenda for rejoicing.”*

*21 At that, Jesus rejoiced, exuberant in the Holy Spirit. “I thank you, Father, Master of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the know-it-alls and showed them to these innocent newcomers. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.*

*22 “I’ve been given it all by my Father! Only the Father knows who the Son is and only the Son knows who the Father is. The Son can introduce the Father to anyone he wants to.”*

*23–24 He then turned in a private aside to his disciples. “Fortunate the eyes that see what you’re seeing! There are plenty of prophets and kings who would have given their right arm to see what you are seeing but never got so much as a glimpse, to hear what you are hearing but never got so much as a whisper.” (The Message)*

1. How did the disciples return from their mission?
2. How did you feel after your new initiative was complete?
3. What did the 70 see upon their return?
4. What did you see happen during your new initiative?
5. Where was God in your experience?
6. What have you concluded about your vision? About your ability to move forward?

**Content:** This is a time for course corrections and confirmations. As a group, come together and review what you did. Take the amount of time since the starting of the project into account. This is a time to be honest and self-aware.

1. Where did you see God?
2. What did you learn?

3. Did it work? Tell the truth.
4. Is this something on which we still feel called to move forward?
5. Are we encouraged/discouraged?
6. Do we need more time?
7. What is the potential?
8. How was this similar/dissimilar to what we anticipated?
9. Is our experiment a “fit” for the community?
10. Would we do this again?
11. Are the right people doing this with us?

After discussing with the group, determine if this is something that you are going to continue, if corrections are needed or if it is simply time to stop.

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_  
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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Starting: Creating the Mission Plan

*The great ends of the Church are:*

*the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;  
the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship;  
the preservation of the truth;  
the promotion of social righteousness; and  
the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (F.10304)<sup>13</sup>*

The purpose of the developing a plan is to move from how you can harness your experimentation to creating a new worshiping community. In the previous sections, you have learned about the context in which the people you wish to engage are in, the values you hold onto and the vision you have cast. In this section, you will begin to develop specific plans to develop a new worshiping community.

**Insight:** In developing the plan, it is important to spend as much time in the community as possible. Is there a restaurant, coffee shop or library in the community where the discernment team can gather for its weekly meetings? That venue choice will help you to stay connected in a very tangible way with the people you are called to engage.

**Bridge Activity:** Visit some church plants and/or new worshiping communities in your area. If there are no new worshiping communities near you, look at our website ([onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org)) for videos we have created. Understand that each of them come to their context with different backgrounds and teams. What works for them will not necessarily work for you. Be careful of the desire to want to replicate. What works with their people might not work for you.

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<sup>13</sup> Book of Order, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II

## What Do We Want to Be?

“Christianity did not begin with a confession. It began with an invitation into friendship, into creating a new community, into forming relationships based on love and service.”

— Diana Butler Bass, “Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening”

In this step, you will identify many possible ways to begin a new worshiping community and begin to distinguish specific strategies that will work in your context. Pray for the people you have been called to.

**Bible Study:** Read 1 Cor. 9:19–23

*19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.*

1. What does it mean to “become all things to all people?”
2. In what ways do you think Paul became all things?
3. What are some dangers of trying to “become all things to all people”?
4. Consider all the churches to which you have belonged or which you know well. What are some things they have in common? What key differences did you notice?
5. Tell some specific ways in which the ministry of these churches matched or did not match the communities they were trying to serve. What was your role in the church?

**Content:** Together, read and reflect your values and vision statement as a reminder that God has called you to engage with a particular group of people. There are no models to replicate in starting a new worshiping community because each context is different, and each team brings unique skills and passions to the job. However, there is much to be learned from other innovative disciples who are also engaged in this work of starting new worshiping communities. The examples that you see can help to generate some new ideas. With your own context firmly in mind, reflect on what you have seen and heard using the discussion questions below:

1. What practices or behaviors that you have observed in your visits or the videos particularly interested or impressed you?

2. What (if any) ideas that you observed might influence the way you would do ministry in your chosen community?
3. What ways to start a new worshiping community would you not attempt, given the particular group of people God has led you to engage (vision statement)?
4. What new ideas do you have?

**Bridge Activities:** Each person will write a plan for starting a new worshiping community within the context you have identified in your vision. Reflect on what you have learned through your experimenting activities. At this point, the idea is to brainstorm ideas. Consider the following questions as you write (but it is not necessary to address every question):

- What activities will this new worshiping community do to be a witnessing community?
- What core values will this new worshiping community hold?
- What practices or behaviors will it demonstrate?
- How will the community make new disciples?
- How will the community make decisions?
- How and when will the community serve others?
- How will the community attain financial sustainability?
- How and when will worship happen?
- How and when will community prayer happen?
- How and when will the study of Scripture happen?
- How and when will service to the larger community happen?
- How will the people in this community care for one another?
- How will this new worshiping community stay connected with your partner congregation?
- What does worship look like?

Brainstorming Space:



**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Creating the Structure of a New Worshiping Community

*The Church is sent to be Christ's faithful evangelist:*

*making disciples of all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; sharing with others a deep life of worship, prayer, fellowship, and service; and participating in God's mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from sin, suffering, and oppression; and to establish Christ's just, loving, and peaceable rule in the world. (F- 1.03)<sup>14</sup>*

In this step, you will begin to finalize your plan for ministry.

**Bible Study:** Read Acts 6:1–7

<sup>1</sup>Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, <sup>4</sup>while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." <sup>5</sup>What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Pentecost has happened. The church is growing. Miracles, dangers and all kinds of exciting and scary things are happening fast. And now, the followers of Jesus have reached a situation where organization is needed.

Discuss:

1. Who is leading this new worshiping community in Jerusalem?
2. What are the needs of the community? What needs are not being addressed?
3. How will new servants be chosen?
4. What gifts do these leaders need? What will they be doing?
5. How are decisions made?
6. What gifts do you bring to the community?

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<sup>14</sup> Book of Order, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II

7. How will you devote yourself to the community?

**Content:** Start by reviewing your values and vision statement. Are you still in alignment with them or have they changed?

Develop a budget or fiscal plan for the next two years that includes both income and expense projections. Is the leader of the community going to be bi-vocational or full time? Is the leader a lay leader or clergy? What major expenses will you have? Is there a plan that will help to sustain the worshiping community with income? How will you talk about money with the people in your new worshiping community? How will you discuss it with your leaders and your partners?

Ask each team member to read aloud the mission plan he/she has written and to describe it to the whole group. Make copies so everyone can see each plan. After all of the presentations have been made, ask the group to quietly reflect for a few minutes. Then ask the following:

- What patterns do you see?
- What ideas do you want to make sure we use?
- What ideas are interesting but could be put on the back burner for a while?
- What ideas do not seem to fit after hearing all of the plans?
- What else will we need to think about?
- Is this what God is calling us to?

Spend some time together sharing ideas for a complete plan that combines the best of the individual plans and fills in the areas that need additional work.

Your complete plan should address the following areas:

**The mission of God**

- How will you be God's sent people?
- How will you live out your calling in your community?
- What "activities" will the new worshiping community do to engage the people?

**Outreach and Evangelism**

- How will you build relationships with people in your community?
- How will you talk to people in your community about Jesus?

**Practices and Leadership**

- How will your vision and values be reflected in what you do daily?
- What is your plan for developing leaders?
- What types of leaders are needed now, in six months and in a year?

### **Denomination and Other Churches**

- Do you have a partner congregation? How will you engage one?
- What do you need and expect from your presbytery?
- What do you need and expect from other churches?
- How will you be a blessing to your presbytery and the existing local churches?

### **Finances and Stewardship**

- How much money will it cost to fulfill your calling in your community?
- How will you talk about stewardship?
- How will you develop outside funds?

### **Leadership**

- What roles, tasks and responsibilities will the leaders need to fulfill?
- Will any of the leaders be financially supported by the new worshiping community?
- Who are the volunteers and support people that are needed?

### **Discipleship**

- How will you articulate what it means to be a disciple?
- What will your community do to foster intentional discipleship?

### **Community Life**

- What will your community do together?
- How will you care for one another?

### **Worship**

- At what point will a form of worship be introduced as a practice of the community?
- How will your worship and content appropriately fit the cultural context of your community?

### **Prayer**

- What will you do to help your community spend time talking with God rather than just about God?
- How will you make prayer available to the community?

**Bridge Activity:** After the ideas are generated, one person should be assigned to write a first draft of the Mission Plan and send it to the whole group for review before the next task.

### **Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Finalizing a Mission Plan

In this step, you will review the draft of the mission plan, spend time in prayer, make corrections and adopt the plan.

**Bible Study:** Read Phil. 1:3–11

*<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*

Pray for the community God has called you to engage. You may choose to use Paul's words and pray the following: "that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God."

**Content:** Have the writer read aloud the Mission Plan from the last bridge activity. All members of the team should have the opportunity to offer suggestions for changes or additions. Refine the plan until it reflects the vision of the whole team, but keep in mind that the plan needs to be flexible and adaptable. If you spend too much time perfecting the plan, the circumstances may change, and you might miss a Holy Spirit-led opportunity. When you are satisfied with the plan, pray that the plan would be an accurate reflection of God's vision for the community to be formed.

At this point, you should have a:

- Vision Statement
- Mission Plan  
This is a great time to share your plan with others who are partners in ministry with you. Spend some time in discussion concerning who should be invited to see the plan. Then set up meetings with your partners in ministry. Here are some suggestions:
  - Coach: Invite a new worshiping community coach to review your materials and offer feedback.
  - Partner congregation: Is there a congregation (or more than one) that has supported your efforts with prayer, people, meeting space or money? This

will be your best support group. It should be brought into the planning process now.

- Presbytery or synod: Is there a presbytery or synod committee that provides oversight for new worshiping communities?
- Other churches in the neighborhood: Are there congregations in the neighborhood who are trying to engage the same people you have been called to engage? Ministry is most effectively done in partnership. Try to engage other congregations as missional partners as early as possible.

**Bridge Activities:** Before the next task, write five things that would provide evidence that this new community was bearing fruit. Also, write five things that would illustrate that this new community was not working. Seek to find both quantitative and qualitative ways of assessing faithfulness. Bring these contributions to your next meeting.

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_  
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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## Making a Stewardship Commitment

**Bible Study:** Read 2 Cor. 8:1–12; 9:6–15

### 2 Cor. 8:1–12

*We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup>for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints — <sup>5</sup>and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, <sup>6</sup>so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. <sup>7</sup>Now as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you — so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.*

*<sup>8</sup>I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup>For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. <sup>10</sup>And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something — <sup>11</sup>now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. <sup>12</sup>For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has — not according to what one does not have.*

### 2 Cor. 9:6–15

*<sup>6</sup>The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written,*

*“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever.”*

*<sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; <sup>12</sup>for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup>Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, <sup>14</sup>while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

Discussion: The saints in the mother church in Jerusalem are in great need and Paul has gone out to take a collection among the new churches in Asia to relieve their suffering.

1. Why would the Macedonian churches *plead* for the privilege of serving the saints in Jerusalem, and give beyond their ability?
2. What things did the Macedonian churches excel at?
3. How had the Macedonian churches become rich?
4. What is the ultimate result of the gift given by the Macedonian churches?

**Content:** Ask one person to read aloud the draft of the mission plan to the entire group. Have the group sit in silence for a few minutes. Then ask the following:

- What activities/events/meetings will this plan result in?
- What funds would be required to execute the activities/events/meetings?
- Will the time and talent of individual leadership be paid? At what level?
- What level of annual expenditures will we commit to?
- How will funds be raised to cover expenditures?

Despite the potential availability of outside grant funding, a financially sustainable community is one in which participants become stewards and give a portion of the resources that God provides. Faithful stewardship requires sacrificial giving, first and foremost, by the leadership team. And yet, the missional church does not teach stewardship primarily to float a budget, but as a way of life, because stewardship is formational for the steward and a witness to the community. To lead in this area, team members need to be able to openly and frankly talk about their posture relative to money. Take some time to talk about money in your lives.

- How and when was money spoken of in the house in which you grew up?
- Did you grow up knowing your family's income or charitable giving practices?
- How do you talk about money in your home today?
- What does it mean to be a steward rather than an owner of all you have?
- What role does money play in discipleship?
- Will making a gift make it easier for you to ask others for a gift?

**Bridge Activity:** Write a draft statement that includes 1) who your group is to be and what it is to do in the community; 2) what the annual budget will be to realize this; and 3) how much money you can provide from your own resources to fund that budget.

**Insight:** The Stewardship Commitment is the foundational piece used in seeking future gifts from those both inside and outside of the community. Who we are, what we do, what it costs and how one can make a difference thorough a gift in support of our mission are key points in inviting others into our work.

**Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Suggested reading:**

“A Spirituality of Fundraising,” Henri J.M. Nouwen

“Bounty: Ten Ways to Increase Giving at Your Church,” Kristine Miller and Scott McKenzie

“Kitchen Table Giving: Reimagining How Congregations Connect with Their Donors,”

William G. Enright

## Establishing Benchmarks

In this step, you will develop some goals and measures of accountability for the first year. What does it mean to you to be accountable?

### **Bible Study:** John 15:1–17

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*<sup>5</sup>“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

*<sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other.*

Discuss:

1. How has God provided and cared for you?
2. Have you ever gone through the “pruning” process so you can produce more fruit?
3. How many times does Jesus use the word “remain”? What is the key to producing fruit in the life of a Christian? What does it look like to “remain”?
4. Is it difficult to “remain” in the ups and downs of experimenting in the community?
5. Where is your fruit? Or are you off course?

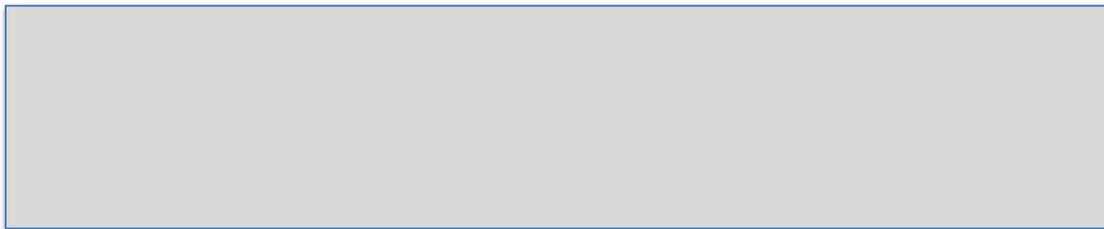
**Content:** Success looks different in each context. For some, it may be simple conversations, and for others, it will be the tangible reality of possibilities. Success cannot be measured by what others define it. Success is your predetermined outcome.

What are ways that churches usually measure success? Write your responses.

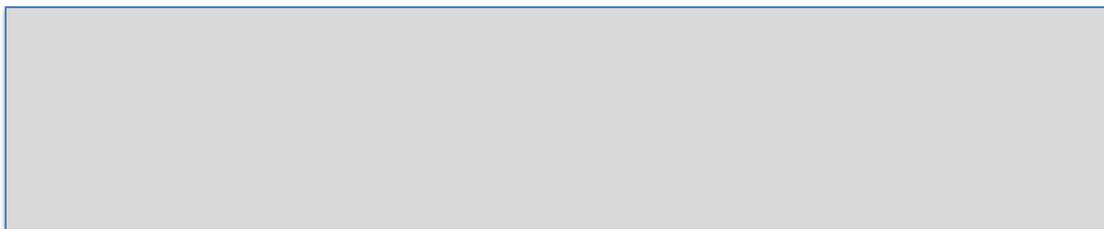
What are some biblical examples of “success” in ministry?

Ask the question: “If this new worshiping community we are about to start is faithful and bears fruit for the gospel, what will we see a year from now?”

1. Ask each person on the discernment team to name one measure of faithfulness or fruit-bearing for the new worshiping community. Write down each suggestion so that all can see. Keep going around the circle until everyone has contributed all of the suggestions they generated. Do not debate or criticize the suggestions at this point. The goal is to generate ideas that would show that the ministry was bearing fruit.



2. Follow the same procedure for the signs that would show that the community was not bearing fruit or successfully making disciples. Although it is difficult to define “success” in ministry, it is important to invest resources in places that are bearing fruit and transforming lives.



- Using the list of suggestions the group has generated, create a set of benchmarks for the first year of ministry that would indicate that the new worshiping community is bearing fruit.

You may find it helpful to write down this sentence: "One year from now, if we are faithful to God and to its God-given mission, it will \_\_\_\_\_."

- If, one year from now, we see (or do not see) \_\_\_\_\_, we will need to re-evaluate the entirety of the ministry.

Ask participants to sit in silence for several minutes and then write down a few words that could be used to fill in the blank.

Out of the silence, ask people, as they feel motivated, to read the sentence aloud with one possible response. Continue doing this until everyone is finished. Allow a moment of silence after each response. Close in prayer.

### **Journal Activity**

Please take time after each section to pause and reflect. In each following gathering, share your reflections on the prompts below.

One important **discovery** you made: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you are **wondering about**: \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing you **learned about yourself**: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Acknowledgements

This movement would not be possible without those with a visionary leadership within the Presbyterian Mission Agency who created this movement.

The development of this discernment guide would not be possible without the direction and shaping by many leaders. We wish to thank the Rev. Dr. Cheni Khonje, the Rev. Dr. Martha Jordan, the Rev. Katie Mulligan, the Rev. Sam Chung and the Rev. Jacoba Vermaak. Without your guidance and direction, this guide would not be what it is.