

# STARTING NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

A PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT



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# PREFACE



There is an exciting movement happening across the world. God's Spirit is stirring God's people to do new things. In places that seem desolate and forgotten, God is doing a new thing. From the UK to Kenya, from Vietnam to New Zealand, from Hawaii to Maine, God is stirring the church to reach new people, change lives, and transform communities. Our Reformed heritage demands that we pay attention to this movement.

*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda!*  
Church reformed, always reforming!

This call from the Reformation invites us, as disciples who worship and serve a living God, to be open to being “re-formed” according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit. It is in this spirit that this resource is being “re-formed.” What used to be *Starting New Churches* is now *Starting New Worshiping Communities*. It's more than simply replacing old words with new ones. We have listened to those who have used this resource over the past four years and we were challenged to make some significant changes to our assumptions about leadership and how new worshiping communities are birthed.

The first edition of *Starting New Churches* was written with the intention of helping those who were starting new churches do a better job of discernment and planning, while being faithful to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit. At the time, we were still in the midst of a massive shift in the way new communities were being formed, who was forming them, and who would be leading them. It was a necessary step to get to where we find ourselves with this revision.

There is intentionality in using the term “new worshiping community.” What was New Church Development in our system, Presbyterian Church (USA), is now more broadly termed New Worshiping Community. The hope is to broaden involvement in starting new communities and contextualize the work in such a way as to spark a new imagination for our existing congregations.



We acknowledge that any definition we use to describe what God is creating and doing in the world will be incomplete. For the purposes of the 1,001 movement in the Presbyterian Church (USA), the definition of a New Worshiping Community is:

- New
  - Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ
  - Taking on innovative 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 self-sustainability in leadership and finances

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this resource is to provide a process of discernment and contextualization that a team can work through together 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. Rarely is following the Spirit neat and linear. There are five Tasks with Steps to work through each task. Some steps may take more time than others. There is freedom to proceed at your own pace but this is not a quick process. It is not imperative to go in a particular order, although those seeding to start new works of ministry should deal with all five tasks along the way. The five tasks are:

1. **Establishing our Identity:** How does the discernment team define Jesus, Church, witness, gospel, disciple and other key elements of this new worshiping community?
2. **Discerning the Vision:** The discernment team will clearly define the “who” that your new worshiping community is being called to engage, as well as the “why” of starting such a community.
3. **Exploring the Possibilities:** Experiment based on the vision developed in the task of discerning the vision!
4. **Finding the Missionary Leaders:** The discernment team will develop a one-or two-page description of the people needed to be the missionaries (sent ones) of this new worshiping community.
5. **Developing a Plan:** The discernment team will develop the plan that will be implemented to form this new worshiping community.

If you are just getting started, start with *Task One* and proceed through each of the tasks. The process will be more linear for you compared to a group that is starting with the missionaries in place or the plan already developed.

Don't be afraid to be flexible and follow the Spirit, but also don't skip a task. If your discernment team has already completed some of the tasks you will still need to address the tasks that you have not completed. There are some helpful questions and reflections in each task that will continue to deepen your understanding of the work and your ability to engage others with the good news.

Regardless of what you've done to this point, each discernment team should start with *Task One: Establishing our Identity*. This is a critical task that sets the theological "center" for the new worshiping community. Many groups will want to minimize this task with the assumption that we're already on the same page about who Jesus is and what church is. This is not the time to proceed on assumptions. Hopefully the team is on the same page, but having these discussions as early as possible in this new work prevents many future issues and conflict. From there, it will be up to you to work through the necessary tasks to help prepare you for this life-changing work.

One of the first things you will need to do is form a discernment team if that has not been done already. This process is designed for a team. It is the task of this group to discern God's leading among a particular people as the group considers beginning a new expression of church. This is a process by which the team will not make a right or wrong decision but will discern the moving presence of God's Spirit. God goes before the team and the goal of the team is, through the Spirit, to go with God to where God is moving.

The discernment team should be:

- People who share a common vision for a new expression of church for unreached people.
- People who will be champions. These are people who will champion the cause in public ways. People who will believe this is what it means to be doing God's will. These are people who invest time and money and expertise for the success of this work.
- People for whom this will be the new community of faith they want not only to form, but also belong to. People who are committed to being with those we are called to engage in ministry.
- People who have a discipleship that sees missional behavior as normative. These are people who believe in being sent and will go where they are called. They are not content to stay in established church.

- People who 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, learning.
- People 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.
- People who have a variety of gifts and talents.

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

- Some will be in established churches, but have not been in leadership roles in established church.
- Some will be people you know whom you share the initial vision with.
- Some will be people who you naturally share life with.
- Some you will find by being in conversation with those you have initially been inspired to engage. You will need to do some conversations with those God is calling you to be with.
- Some might be members of a small group you participate in.
- Some might not be followers of Jesus yet!

The team is built out of relationships with those who share the vision. This is not something that can be built by announcements and newsletter articles. It should be done by invitation. It does not need to be a team of professional church people. It should be visionaries and workers and sent people. If you have a sponsoring church or presbytery or covenant group, make sure you have representation from their leadership so at least you have a someone who can interpret the progress.

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 you send. The discernment team may have people who are "sent" to be a part of this new community or they may be mostly "senders" who will provide the behind the scenes support. Experts say that in non-profit organizations, board members have to have two of the following three qualities: Work, Wisdom, and Wealth. You're not creating a board of directors, so instead of wealth it is suggested that you

consider gifts and talents. Some of the specific gifts and talents needed will be things like writing, research, group organization, the ability to engage others, time, language skills, communication skills, vision, faith. People need to bring two of the three: Work, Wisdom, and Gifts or Talents.

Appoint a point person. This person needs to be a champion for this work. This person convenes the discernment team and keeps the process moving forward.

Start a new worshiping community is a God thing. No person or group of people can create a new community of faith. 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. Enjoy the journey.

## TASK ONE: Establishing our identity

The purpose of this task is to discuss together the Christian beliefs that will ground this work of ministry and to come to a shared way of understanding and talking about key components of the faith. The discernment team will ultimately develop a written Identity Statement that articulates core beliefs about Jesus, Church, witness, gospel, and disciples.



### COACHING POINT

This task can make or break the mission, so don't rush this. Understanding what each person on the team means when they say, "Jesus" or "Church" is crucial to the mission that is beginning. Listening to one another will also prepare the team to listen to those for whom this new mission is about to start.

For a list of suggested readings related to this task, see the Resources listed in the back of this book.

## STEP ONE: THE BIG PICTURE

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### Opening:

Because this may be the first gathering of this team, you need to spend some time getting to know one another, or getting to know one another better.

Introduction: Go around the team, inviting each person to share:

- Your name
- A person instrumental in your being a Christian.  
Talk a little about the characteristics about this person, how he or she engaged you, and how he or she impacted you.

Now, take some time to check in with one another about this discernment you are embarking upon.

- What brings you into this conversation?
- What are your expectations of this process?
- What are your expectations of your involvement?
- What are your expectations of others on this team?
- Are there any “ground rules” that you want to set as you begin this work together? Write them down on and begin to live them out as a group throughout this discussion.



### COACHING POINT

These ground rules may include things like: actively listen to one another, commit to engaging in the conversation, commit to doing the Bridge Activities between meetings, commit to pray with and for one another, etc. Setting the ground rules may seem like an exercise in stating the obvious, but it is helpful in setting the tone for your work together.

### Bible Study:

Read Matthew 9:35-38

*<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and*

*every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’ (New Revised Standard Version)*

- What images, pictures, words, phrases stood out for you?
- Why does Jesus have compassion?
- What does “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” look like today in our lives/community?

### Content:

Why would you work towards a new worshipping community?

People typically want to jump in and consider *how* to start something new. But an even more important question is *why*? It’s tempting to focus all your energy on the detailed plans of a new work of ministry, but it’s important to get the big picture in view.

Think about this parable:

*Three bricklayers were working on the same area, placing brick on top of brick. A passerby walks up to the first bricklayer and says, “What are you doing?” The bricklayer says, “I am laying bricks.”*

*When asked the same question, the second bricklayer says, “I am making a wall.”*

*When asked, the third bricklayer looks up with a smile and says, “I am building a cathedral.”*

There is no difference in what these three are doing, but there is a huge difference in what they feel about what they are doing. Who will keep going on a difficult day when times are tough? What has happened that this third bricklayer has connected with a much bigger and profound vision of his work? How can leaders connect themselves and the people around them to something bigger than the operational activity of their day-to-day labor? How can a team pay attention to how each isolated decision is moving towards a bigger picture?

As your discernment team looks at building this new ministry, you are not building a cathedral, but a community. Even so, if this ministry looks at only “brick by brick” and not the bigger perspective, you will be uninspired and the new worshipping community will lack identity and spiritual depth. How is your team’s identity connected to your team’s view of the final outcome?

Go back and reread Matthew 9:35-38.

- Why do you sense that you might have the stirring to start a new worshipping community?
- How does the Scripture passage help frame how you think about starting something new?
- What would you say is the purpose of this new worshipping community that you feel God is calling this team to develop?
- Finish this statement: People need Jesus because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Finish this statement: People need church because \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Bridge Activity:

Have each team member ask one or two people active in a church and one or two people not involved in a church, “What comes to mind when you hear the word, ‘Jesus?’” and “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘Christian?’” Be prepared to share what you heard at the next meeting.

## STEP TWO: WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

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#### Opening:

Have a volunteer pray for God’s Spirit to guide this time.

Step One Bridge Activity and follow up discoveries:

1. Ask everyone to share what they heard as they listened to churched and non-churched peoples respond to the questions.
2. Google “Jesus is” and discover what comes up as suggestions in the search engine. (All you need to do is type into the search box without clicking enter. You will see several suggestions pop up below the search box with suggested searches). Now Google “Christians are so” and see what comes up as suggestions in the search engine. What does this tell you further about how the culture views Christians and the faith we claim?
3. What do you need to hear? What do you think this might mean for a new worshipping community?

#### Sharing with the team:

Ask everyone in the group to respond to the question, “When was the first time God’s love for you in Christ Jesus became real?”

#### Bible Study:

Read Matthew 16:13-25

*<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. <sup>21</sup>From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’<sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things. <sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (New Revised Standard Version)

- Have two or three people share, “What phrases or ideas jumped out at you in this passage?”
- Have two or three people share, “What were some of the differences between Peter ‘getting it’ and Peter being a ‘stumbling block’?”
- Have each person share an answer to Jesus’ question: “Who do you say that I am?” Who is Jesus to you?

#### Content:

Consider how you described who Jesus is to you. Did you use “churchy” language to describe Jesus? Or did you describe Jesus in such a way that someone who has never intersected with Christianity could understand?

- How would you change your description if asked to talk about Jesus in non-churchy language? Is there a metaphor you could use?

*One person described Jesus as a comforter and a friend. When asked to describe further, he described Jesus as the “queen-sized mattress I fall into at the end of a long, hard day.”*

If this new worshiping community is going to connect with those outside the church, the team needs to get clear on who Jesus is, and be able to articulate Jesus to those who do not speak the language of church. It is no accident that Jesus used parables and metaphors to describe the kingdom of God. The discernment team must practice how you would articulate the gospel in ways that connect with the culture around you and express the core of who you are. These conversations will prepare the team for ways to talk about the Christian faith as you engage with the community around you and the questions arise.

In addition, how you understand Jesus as a community will have an impact on future decisions for this new worshiping community.

- How does your understanding of Jesus impact what this new worshiping community does, how it worships, and how it interacts with the world? 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?



#### COACHING POINT

This is not about a narrow orthodoxy of Jesus or of any other key terms. We are not asking you to limit Jesus and who Jesus is. No one description can fully capture the many facets of Jesus. However, there is value in naming the qualities of Jesus that reside deep in the heart of this team and will be embedded in the life and practices of the burgeoning community.

#### Pray:

First, let there will be a long time of silence when each of you should:

- Confess the ways you have been stumbling blocks to Jesus.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to lead you to see Jesus a little more clearly each day.

Following the silence, spend some time praying for the person on your right. Thank God for the person and ask God to give him or her the eyes to see the community God wants to form through the work of this team.

#### 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, try them out with a couple of non-church-going friends. Have them read and give you feedback on your

statements. Does it make sense to them? Can they understand what you are seeking to communicate?



### COACHING POINT

Trying this out with non-church friends may seem intimidating because you may be used to keeping your faith conversations in more church focused circles. However, this exercise will help you to pay attention to how those outside the church experience the ways we talk about faith, and help you hone a way of talking about these things that resonates with the non-churched. In addition, you are beginning to take the first steps of engaging people outside the church walls.

## STEP THREE: ALL ON THE SAME PAGE?

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### COACHING POINT

Often this will take more than one meeting. Don't get discouraged or try to rush through or jump over this work. The journey together as a team in this conversation is as important as the finished statement. This is also the work that gives spiritual depth to all the decisions that will be forthcoming as you decide how you will start this new work of ministry.

*One team wrote this about this part of the journey:*

*"We really struggled with a couple of the definitions; one session became extremely heated. As we all left that session, there was some question as to our future together - I think we all left feeling somewhat uneasy. But, as only the Spirit could do, the next session together everyone was there, everyone was honest, but compassionate and able to see the others' viewpoints more calmly. It was beautiful to see such a change in spirit. And I think that because everyone did return, and everyone tried so hard to be more peaceful and community-oriented, it showed me just how committed everyone is to this process."*

#### **Opening:**

Take five minutes to silently pray for one another, this process, and the new worshipping community that will possibly be formed from this work.

#### **Pray:**

Take a little bit of time (about 15 minutes) to clear the decks. You come to this time with many concerns. Rather than dismissing your concerns or pushing them aside, put those concerns in God's hands. By trusting God with the details of your lives you learn to trust God with the whole of your lives. Take time to personally consider the events of the day, week, month, and place those things that come to mind in God's hands. You might visualize God holding outstretched hands to you and you placing each person and circumstance there for God's keeping and direction.

## Bible Study:

Read Acts 15:36-41

<sup>36</sup>After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.'<sup>37</sup>Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. <sup>38</sup>But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. <sup>39</sup>The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. <sup>40</sup>But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup>He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (New Revised Standard Version)

- Have two people share: "Tell about a time when a disagreement was helpful? What was gained by the disagreement in Acts 15?"
- Have two people share: "Give an example of a time when a disagreement was hurtful? What was lost because of the disagreement in Acts 15?"
- The goal of today's conversation is to come to a shared statement around each of the homework questions. What if we reach an impasse we cannot agree upon?

## Content:

Have everyone share your homework sentences on "Who is Jesus?" Write down those statements so all can see them.

Once everyone has shared, ask:

- Is there anything missing that must be included to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" Why? (Add those statements.)
- Is there anything written there that you would like to see removed? Why? (Remove those statements.)
- Is there a better way to say something you want removed or is it already noted in a better way?

Have everyone pair up. Have each pair take what is on the white board and write a statement answering the question, "Who is Jesus?"



### COACHING POINT

Seek to write statements that don't use "churchy" or "theological" language. Write your statements so people outside the church can understand them.

As a group, share your responses and come up with your group answer to "Who is Jesus?"

Your next conversation will be around "Church." Because you are seeking to start a new worshiping community, it is important for the team to develop a shared sense of what the Church of Jesus Christ is meant to be about. Use the same process you used above for this question. Repeat this process for the next three questions, "What is witness?", "What is gospel?", and "What is a disciple?" Are there other questions or terms you need to define as a group to help you establish your identity? If so, go through the process defining those questions or terms.

## Outcome:

You should wind up with one group statement for each of these questions:

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

Together, the answers to these questions are your Identity Statement. You will refer to it throughout the rest of the process. This Statement will define the team now and the work before you, but be open to the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you. Be ready to revisit your Identity Statement throughout this process.

Read aloud the complete Identity Statement for this team one more time. Ask everyone: Is there anything in this statement that goes against your personal absolutes? Is there anything in this statement that would prevent you from going forward with this team?



### COACHING POINT

If some members do not feel comfortable with the Identity Statement of the group, they may choose at this time not to continue. While this may feel difficult, it's much better to know this is not a fit from the front end, than to move forward in conflict or the potential for conflict.

Ask the group that is willing to go forward to covenant together. Revisit the ground rules you developed in Step One. Is there anything you need to add at this point? (For example: pray daily for this venture, be open to starting the community that the team discerns Jesus to be leading you to start even if it is very different from what you expect, etc.)

**Communication:**

Brainstorm as a group: Is there anyone with whom this team needs to share the Identity Statement? (Maybe a partner church, a session, a presbytery team, a New Worshiping Community coach) Is there anyone who needs to know about the work this team is doing? Determine who will take responsibility to make the contact/s and share the Identity Statement.

**Bridge Activity:**

Contact the people with whom the team has decided to share the completed Identity Statement. Reread the Identity Statement daily, and pray for this potential new worshiping community to be built upon a solid spiritual foundation.

## TASK TWO:

### Discerning the vision

“Discerning the Vision” is intended for you to describe clearly the “who” that your new worshiping community is being called to engage, as well as the “why” of starting such a community. The temptation is to run forward and declare that you are starting a church for everyone without considering anyone in particular. Often people say, “The Gospel and the Church are for everyone! Won’t we be exclusive of others if we narrow our mission?!” The Gospel and the Church are for everyone. The Gospel is also contextual. This task is discerning the context in which this new worshiping community will share the Gospel so that it can be heard as good news. If you begin your work with no one in particular in mind, then you are really for no one in particular. If we do well with someone in particular, then there is a good chance you will do better with his or her friends and acquaintances as well. God revealed God’s self to a particular people, Israel. Tighten the focus of your work and you will engage well. You will have an impact far beyond your focus. Far from being exclusive, you become remarkably inclusive. This is the work of the Spirit in you and your community to be a witness in a particular context.

God brings whom God will into our communities, regardless of where we begin. Your Vision will be developed after visits in neighborhoods, talking with local leadership and regular folks, prayer, and reflecting on how these encounters are moving you. All this will result in a concise one-page description of who God is calling you to reach out to and why.



#### COACHING POINT

Tasks may take more than a meeting or the time allotted. Remember you are doing Kingdom work and you want to do this as thoroughly as possible. Very likely you will need to go back to neighborhoods and “third spaces” — social gathering space such as a coffee shop or restaurant [as opposed to “first spaces” (homes) and



“second spaces” (workplaces)] — more than once in order to listen well to the people you are considering reaching with this new work. We’re trying to discern the heart of God. Listening, not rushing, is the key.

For a list of suggested readings related to this task, see the Resources listed in the back of this book.

## STEP ONE: DEVELOPING A HEART FOR THOSE GOD LOVES

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### Opening:

This step will help you care for those you want to know and experience the love of God through the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You don’t have to start a new worshiping community to reach people with the Gospel. People who are “not-yet-followers” of Jesus right now surround you. Rather than wait until you are finished with this process to begin reaching out, it is important to have practices that you can incorporate now that you will use in the future.

- What does it mean to you to “love as God loves”?
- How can you increase your capacity to love as God does?

### Bible Study:

Read Luke 15:11-32

*<sup>11-12</sup>Then he said, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’*

*<sup>12-16</sup>“So the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.*

*<sup>17-20</sup>“That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll say to him, ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father.*

20-21 “When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son ever again.’

22-24 “But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time.

25-27 “All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day’s work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, ‘Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.’

28-30 “The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn’t listen. The son said, ‘Look how many years I’ve stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!’

31-32 “His father said, ‘Son, you don’t understand. You’re with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he’s alive! He was lost, and he’s found!’” (The Message)

While we know this story as “The Prodigal Son” it has gone by many different names depending on whom you relate to in the story. Helmut Thielicke refers to this as the story of “The Waiting Father.” This is the main perspective we ask you to consider.

Form groups of two or three and discuss the following:

1. Who do you relate to in the story? Are you the younger brother/sister who left home in rebellion? Are you the older sibling who didn’t break the rules and was the “good child”? Or are you in a place where you are waiting for those you love to return?

2. What might it feel like to be in a far country? How might it feel crawling back? What would keep you from doing this?
3. How is the older brother justified? How is his position not justified? How might he overcome his objections?
4. What does the Father do after his youngest son departs? What does he do when this young son returns? With both sons what are the father’s actions? What does this say about the father’s heart?

Share in the large group what you discovered.

#### Content:

Prayer is one of the places where God can get at us and shape our hearts and wills. It is also one of the ways we express what’s on our hearts, unfiltered. We can tell God anything and God hears us. This exercise is intended to give you a way to pray and care for those in your life and sphere of influence who are not-yet-followers of Jesus.

Turn your attention to those who are not-yet-followers of Jesus. Who do you know who needs to hear that God loves them unconditionally and desires to be with them? Take some time to make a mental note and then share two or three of those names and their context with each other. Be as candid or as discreet as needed. Maybe just a name and how you know the person is enough.

The following is a prayer that you can use to lift up those who God has placed on your hearts. It is developed from Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church:

#### *A Prayer for Others*

*I bow before you God – you from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name – and I pray that out of your glorious riches you would strengthen \_\_\_\_\_ with power through your Spirit in his/her/their heart(s) through faith. And I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ being rooted and established in love, would have power, together with all the Lord’s people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that he/she/they may be filled to the measure of the fullness of Christ. (Based on Ephesians 3:14-19)*

Use this prayer by saying out loud the prayer as a group, with each individual providing the name(s) of those you want to lift up to God where there are

spaces in the prayer. This will be a “concert of prayer” with everyone saying it at once but filling in the names they have individually in the spaces provided. That way no one is focusing on each other’s prayers but simply doing this together. You can repeat this for one or two or more people you would like to raise up. Consider praying this prayer regularly for those God has placed on your hearts.

When you have finished the prayer for others, conclude the evening by praying this prayer again but instead inserting “me” and “I.” The purpose is to remind us that what we believe others need are the very things we need. It keeps us in an attitude of humility and solidarity with all God’s children.

#### Bridge Activities:

- Pray the Ephesians Prayer above with name(s) of someone you encounter in your everyday life.
- 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?
- Bring representations of the list above with you to the next meeting. Bring pictures, names, types, magazine images, newspaper clippings, anything that represents those above.
- Bring a map of the general area in which you believe God is leading you to start a new worshipping community.

## STEP TWO: PEOPLE & PLACES ON OUR HEART

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#### Opening:

This session will be devoted to considering and praying over those people God is placing upon our hearts to reach. Open by sharing updates on the people you have included in your Ephesians Prayer. Pray that together for one other person and then for yourselves:

*I bow before you God – you from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name – and I pray that out of your glorious riches you would strengthen \_\_\_\_\_ with power through your Spirit in his/her/their heart(s) through faith. And I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ being rooted and established in love, would have power, together with all the Lord’s people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that he/she/they may be filled to the measure of the fullness of Christ. (Based on Ephesians 3:14-19)*

#### Bible Study:

Read Acts 16:9-10

*<sup>9-10</sup>That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans. (The Message)*

The passage falls at a time after Paul and Barnabas had separated and gone different ways. Paul has joined with Timothy and they continue to travel while preaching and teaching. It says that they had a travel plan. They tried to go to Asia – they were blocked. They tried to go to Bithynia – the Spirit blocked them again. That night Paul had a dream...Macedonia!

Form groups of two or three and discuss the following:

- Why did God block Paul from going where he wanted to go?

- Who are the “Macedonians” in your community? Church? Presbytery? City? County?
- What might it mean to “get ready to cross over to Macedonia?”
- What dream has God given you about your “plans?”
- How will you discern if a set of plans is what God desires or is simply what you desire?

Share briefly in the large group what you discovered.



### COACHING POINT

At this point in the process you and your team should not be praying alone. Consider widening the circle of prayer partners. As part of your Bridge Activities in the coming days and weeks, invite others in to pray with you about this new work. Find a way to keep them updated on how God is leading your group and what you are doing. It would be good if some of these people became part of a prayer team for your work over the course of the remaining steps.

#### Content:

Begin by spreading out the map of your potential ministry area. You’re going to use this as a prayer guide. Take the pictures, articles, gathering spots, and all the things you brought with you. Share who and what they represent. Place them on the map. If you have locations where you believe you want to reach people — a particular coffee spot or park — circle those. Anything to help you visualize the place and people you’re considering.

Take time to pray for the people and places you have all brought to the meeting tonight. Also pray for the faces, the stories, and the places you’ve identified during the weeks prior. Take your time. Consider their lives; consider that you don’t know their needs. Pray for God to call you clearly as a group to a particular people group or groups.

Answer the following questions once you’ve concluded your prayers:

- Which people groups stand out? Where are they located?
- What images or phrases come to mind that describe them?
- Is one area or people group calling to you “from across the ocean?”
- Begin to list the possibilities of who and where that you are identifying.
- What is God saying to you? Is there a calling? Who is God placing on your hearts?

## STEP THREE: SITE VISITS – WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE

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#### Opening:

This is not so much about location, but is actually about the people you hope to reach. Who are they? What do they think? What do they desire? You will begin to hear these questions answered and more because you will be practicing active listening and observation among those God is placing on your hearts. You will visit at least one potential site where the people you’re considering gather.

Take time to pray for the people you will encounter. Ask for the ability to ask good questions and listen well. Ask for God to give you fruitful encounters.



### COACHING POINT

In the previous step 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 pointing you towards? 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.

#### Bible Study:

Read Luke 10: 1-2

*<sup>1</sup>“After this the Lord appointed 70 others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>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.” (New Revised Standard Version)*

- You’re going to go “out” into the harvest field. Do you have any reservations? Fears? Hopes?



- You are going as listeners, not preachers. How does listening demonstrate the Gospel of Jesus?

### 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.



### COACHING POINT

You will find this one of the most energizing experiences for your team. It can be the catalyst to getting a 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 is the only way to do this.

### Site Visit Observations: *A Windshield Survey*

(Do this as you are making your way into the area you’re going to visit.)

- Who is there?
- What are they doing?
- Are they talking to others?
- Are they alone?
- Are people out on the streets?
- How are they dressed? Notice details like jewelry or not, name badges, shoes, styles, tech toys.
- What are the sounds?
- Sidewalks or not? Streetlights? Signage?
- Toys in yards?
- People at home or not?
- What kind of housing?
- Fliers on telephone poles?
- What is your visceral response?

### Site Visit Activities: *Three Actions*

- Have a drink or something to eat in a local establishment. Listen in on conversations. It’s a chance to ask questions of locals.
- Talk with at least one person who is part of the people group you believe God is asking you to engage.
- 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 who are “like” those 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, no more than three — don’t gang up on people! Remember that though you are not “witnessing” — i.e. verbally sharing the Gospel — you are still a witness. How you behave speaks volumes!
- Be sensitive to the fact that there may be religious groups who do this regularly. Dress appropriately for the day out. Try not to dress similarly or appear as too much of group.

### 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?”
- “Are you aware of any churches in the area?”

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.

**Feedback from the Visits:** *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.

Using your token to begin, tell what it represents from your visit. Have each group share their discoveries and insights. Pray for those you’ve met and had conversations with on your Site 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.

- What questions have not been asked?
- Where and when do we need to go back to continue our finding?
- Interview people in person or on the phone:
  - o Law enforcement
  - o Educators
  - o City officials
  - o Business people
  - o Social services
  - o Churches
  - o Non-profit groups

Use your demographic studies to supplement and fill in your local area knowledge. The Presbyterian Church (USA) is partners with MissionInsite.com for up to date demographics across the U.S. Based on the latest census information, and updated regularly, MissionInsite is a powerful tool to affirm or correct as well as fill in the information you’re gathering.

More than general statistical information, MissionInsite can give you information on trends and patterns in your intended ministry focus group.

It can be used to “reverse engineer” your demographics. For instance, if the people you are called to engage are like those of you working through this resource, then you can put your data into the MI system and it can show you where you live and then show you where people like yourselves live. They may be in pockets all over the town/city, not necessarily in one neighborhood. For help with this, contact 1001 staff associates @onethousandone.org.

**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.
- Be prepared to share all these learnings at your next meeting.
- Commit to praying for clarity as well as for those you continue to meet in this process.

## STEP FOUR: WHO HAS GOD PLACED ON YOUR HEARTS TO ENGAGE?

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### Opening:

This step is devoted to identifying those God is interested in engaging through you. You will narrow your focus to identify a “someone” or “a people group” that will be the focus of your initial efforts. This people group will determine the context in which you share the Gospel.

Pray for God to give you clarity.



### COACHING POINT

We all begin somewhere with somebody. Where we end up is dictated by the guidance of the Spirit, life and cultural circumstances, and things beyond our control. But if you don’t begin with somebody, as said earlier, you’ll be a generalist. There are no “general” people! You may want to remind yourselves of this by sharing what is happening in the lives of those you are praying for using the Ephesians prayer.

### Bible Study:

Read again Acts 16:9-10

*“That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!”<sup>10</sup>The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans. (The Message)*

Review your answers from the Bible Study in Step Two on page 26.

- Have any new people groups emerged?
- Who is calling to you from “across the sea” inviting you to engage them with the Gospel?

### Prayer:

For as much time as it takes, pray over this passage. Pray again for clarity of vision for who God wants you to focus on.

### Content:

Reporting back on your Step Three bridge activities:

- Give everyone time to report on his or her “mini site visits.” Again, use your tokens to tell the story of your encounters.
- Have those people who contacted others, i.e. law enforcement or educators, by phone or email or in person share their findings.
- Let your “experts” on your demographics present their findings.
- With all that on the table, who rises to the top of your concerns? Who is the person(s) from Macedonia calling to you?
- Take time to have everyone give his or her insights and opinions. If there is more than one group rising to the surface, list each of them. Now make the case for who should be the primary focus. Maybe your secondary groups are worthy of a new work. Maybe they are going to be naturally engaged if you do well with the primary group God has placed on your hearts. Take time to come to agreement. If you can’t reach agreement, pray that God will provide the way forward.



### COACHING POINT

If a way forward can’t be reached, it could suggest many things. One would be that you have the potential for more than one new start and you need to divide and conquer or recruit a new team. Another could be that there isn’t enough passion in the group to go forward. Another suggestion is that now is not the right time. This is a time of discernment.

Pay attention to the possibilities.

### Bridge Activities:

- Pray. It can’t be said enough. Remember to pray your Ephesians Prayer for others. Maybe you want to include someone from the people you’ve met during this process.
- If you haven’t decided the “who,” then decide what steps you’ll take next to discern that. Do you need to revisit sites? Who more do you need to speak with? Who else needs to be at the table with you right now?

- If you have a good idea of the “who,” we have some other questions:
  - o Who is already doing ministry with these people?
  - o How is a particular “people group” being served? Do they need another expression of the faith?
  - o Identify the players and the ministries already present. Include churches and non-profit organizations.
  - o Are there any potential partners to be included?
  - o Each member of the team is to write one paragraph on the “who” we are being called to reach, and then one paragraph on the “why” we need to do this. A third paragraph needs to say “how” we are gifted/resourced to do this work. Bring them together at your next task meeting.

## STEP FIVE: ARE WE THE ONES WHO SHOULD GO?

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### Opening:

Spend time praying for those you’ve identified as the ones God has placed on your hearts to engage. Pray for those you’ve met along the way. Pray for the business owners you talked with and the city officials. Pray that you can be part of the answer to difficulties you encountered in your visits. Pray for the welfare of the city, for in it you will find your welfare. (See Jeremiah 29)

Have each member on the team read his or her paragraphs on “who,” “why,” and “how” from the Bridge Activities. Is the team on the same page? If the team is on the same page, assign one or two people to summarize the individual work and make one statement. **This is your Vision.** If you are not on the same page, take the time to get there even if it means another step.

### Bible Study:

Read I Corinthians 12:1-31

*<sup>1-3</sup>What I want to talk about now is the various ways God’s Spirit gets worked into our lives. This is complex and often misunderstood, but I want you to be informed and knowledgeable. Remember how you were when you didn’t know God, led from one phony god to another, never knowing what you were doing, just doing it because everybody else did it? It’s different in this life. God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can. For instance, by using your heads, you know perfectly well that the Spirit of God would never prompt anyone to say “Jesus be damned!” Nor would anyone be inclined to say, “Jesus is Master!” without the insight of the Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>4-11</sup>God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:*



*wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues. All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.*

*<sup>12-13</sup>You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you’re still one body. It’s exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.*

*<sup>14-18</sup>I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn’t just a single part blown up into something huge. It’s all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, “I’m not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don’t belong to this body,” would that make it so? If Ear said, “I’m not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don’t deserve a place on the head,” would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.*

*<sup>19-24</sup>But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn’t be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, “Get lost; I don’t need you”? Or, Head telling Foot, “You’re fired; your job has been phased out”? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the “lower” the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it’s a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes no difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for*

*the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn’t you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?*

*<sup>25-26</sup>The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don’t, the parts we see and the parts we don’t. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.*

*<sup>27-31</sup>You are Christ’s body—that’s who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your “part” mean anything. You’re familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his “body”:*  
apostles  
prophets  
teachers  
miracle workers  
healers  
helpers  
organizers  
*those who pray in tongues.*

*But it’s obvious by now, isn’t it, that Christ’s church is a complete Body and not a gigantic, uni-dimensional Part? It’s not all Apostle, not all Prophet, not all Miracle Worker, not all Healer, not all Prayer in Tongues, not all Interpreter of Tongues. And yet some of you keep competing for so-called “important” parts. But now I want to lay out a far better way for you. (The Message)*

### **Reflections:**

Everyone has gifts and talents. What gifts and talents do you believe God has equipped you with? Help each other in naming a few of those gifts represented in the room. Keep track of what you identify.

- Why are the gifts distributed so widely?
- Are there more gifts than what the text offers as examples?  
What might some of those gifts and talents be?
- What is the purpose of the gifts?
- How might we best demonstrate the presence of the Spirit in the work we’re proposing by how we use these gifts and those who have them?

Are we the ones?

- Who is already doing ministry with those we've identified as the ones God has placed on our hearts? (Make a list of what you've discovered.)
- What are the concerns and challenges you have raised? (Make a list of what you've discovered.)
- Are there needs, concerns, challenges that are going unmet by the current ministries and services? (Make a list for each.)



#### **COACHING POINT**

We are looking for champions—people who believe this is what God wants us to do and will be diligent participants to get this ministry going. Do you have those people in the room? Do you know who they are and should they be invited now?

#### **Final Question:**

Are we the ones to keep moving forward on this? Do we have the passion to move to the next task, Exploring the Possibilities?

#### **Prayer:**

Commit your work to God.

#### **Bridge Activities:**

Have those who are summarizing the work into one statement share the statement with everyone on the team. This will become your “marching orders” or as in Acts 16, your “map” of your next steps. This is your Vision.

## TASK THREE:

# Exploring the possibilities

In this task you begin experimenting based on the vision you have developed. This experience will give you the framework to deepen your discussion about the next two tasks, the Missionary Team and the Mission Plan. By exploring the possibilities you will gain valuable insight into what shape the new worshiping community might take. What activities might be necessary to engage the people you have identified in the Vision? Who might feel called to engage the people identified in the Vision?



#### **COACHING POINT**

Do not worry whether your experiment will “work” or not. This is the time to experiment and sometimes the best experiments when it comes to finding truth are the ones that fail.

For a list of suggested readings related to this task, see the Resources listed in the back of this book.

## STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM POSSIBILITIES BASED ON THE VISION

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### Opening:

In this step you are going to make a list of possible ways to engage the people identified in your Vision and pick two or three you would like to implement.

Review your Vision Statement as a group.

### Bible Study:

Read Luke 10: 1-11

<sup>1-2</sup>Later the Master selected seventy and sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he intended to go. He gave them this charge: “What a huge harvest! And how few the harvest hands. So on your knees; ask the God of the Harvest to send harvest hands.

<sup>3</sup>“On your way! But be careful—this is hazardous work. You’re like lambs in a wolf pack.” <sup>4</sup>“Travel light. Comb and toothbrush and no extra luggage. “Don’t loiter and make small talk with everyone you meet along the way.” <sup>5-6</sup>“When you enter a home, greet the family, ‘Peace.’ If your greeting is received, then it’s a good place to stay. But if it’s not received, take it back and get out. Don’t impose yourself.” <sup>7</sup>“Stay at one home, taking your meals there, for a worker deserves three square meals. Don’t move from house to house, looking for the best cook in town.” <sup>8-9</sup>“When you enter a town and are received, eat what they set before you, heal anyone who is sick, and tell them, ‘God’s kingdom is right on your doorstep!’

<sup>10-12</sup>“When you enter a town and are not received, go out in the street and say, ‘The only thing we got from you is the dirt on our feet, and we’re giving it back. Did you have any idea that God’s kingdom was right on your doorstep?’ (The Message)

- What were some of the implications of the command to the disciples to “travel light”?

- What might it mean for you to “travel light”?
- What is behind Jesus’ sending them out in pairs?
- What does it mean to have your “peace received”?
- What are the implications for the disciples to “Stay at one home and eat what they set before you”?
- How do you respond to the admonition to “heal the sick”?
- How might you know when your “peace” is not received and when to shake the dust off?

### Content:

Brainstorm a list of possible ways to engage the “who” of your Vision Statement. Think of this new initiative as a way to serve the people God has placed on your heart.

Brainstorming is a discipline itself. What you will do is write down every idea and possibility the group suggests. There is no editing at this time. A true brainstorm can generate hundreds, even thousands of possibilities very quickly if you don’t interrupt each other or evaluate each individual suggestion. Agree to not critique!

Brainstorm in the following areas:

- Acts of service in the community
- Events
- Classes
- Volunteering in existing community organizations
- Joining informal gatherings
- Community building activities
- Establishing a presence at a community event

Once you have exhausted the group’s imagination, review the list in light of the resources list you brainstormed in “Discerning the Vision” Step 5: Are We the Ones?

Pick two or three possible ways of engaging those you identified in your Vision that can be accomplished by the resources you currently have.

### Bridge Activity:

Between now and your next task, pray over these different strategies and ask God to reveal which new initiative you should begin at this time. Know that this might lead to doing more than one initiative but start with one!

## STEP TWO: EXPERIMENT

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### Opening:

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



### COACHING POINT

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

### Bible Study:

Read Jeremiah 29:1-7

<sup>1</sup>This is the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to what was left of the elders among the exiles, to the priests and prophets and all the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>including King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the government leaders, and all the skilled laborers and craftsmen. <sup>3</sup>The letter was carried by Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah had sent to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. The letter said:

<sup>4</sup>This is the Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Israel's God, to all the exiles I've taken from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>“Build houses and make yourselves at home. Put in gardens and eat what grows in that country. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have children. Encourage your children to marry and have children so that you'll thrive in that country and not waste away. <sup>7</sup>Make yourselves at home there and work for the country's welfare. Pray for Babylon's well being. If things go well for Babylon, things will go well for you.” (The Message)

Sometimes it may be the right thing to do to get on with the things that are important even while you are still discerning where God is at work and how the people are being formed into community. The Israelite people found themselves in a foreign land, with a decision to make about how they would engage these new people. While in the midst of discerning this, Jeremiah sends a word from God, “get on with life.”

### Discussion:

- What might it look like to “make yourself at home” among those God is calling you to engage?
- For this new work, how could you start to “thrive in that country and not waste away”?

### Content:

What is the result of your Bridge Activity? Which of the new initiatives you suggested is the one with which you want to begin? Decide on one. Then:

- **Pray and recruit others to pray about the new initiative:** This new initiative, if it is going to be of any earthly good, 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.
- **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 but that is not so far in the future that people lose energy for the new initiative before it ever gets started.
- **Determine how long you will try the new initiative:** A onetime 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, four 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.
- **Develop a list of the “pieces” that need to be in place before this initiative can start:** Dreamers are not the best for this activity. Find people who have the ability to see the steps to get to where the dreamers are pointing.
- **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. 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?
- **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.
- **Continue to pray:** Pray without ceasing. Maybe this entire initiative is really God's way of teaching your team to come together in prayer.

- **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, community leaders' participation, do you need?
- **Determine where the resources for this new initiative will come from or who is responsible for raising the needed resources:** Challenge a possible supportive congregation with what is needed. The more people are challenged to invest in this new initiative the greater chance that it will be impactful.
- **Assign a date when each aspect of the new initiative needs to be communicated:** The dates keep the communication flowing. Avoid trying to get everyone on board at the last minute. The more complicated the initiative the more communication will be needed.
- **Assign and recruit the right people to communicate each aspect of the new initiative:** There can be one person who is the lead communicator but if you get a variety of people communicating you will find a variety of people will support this new initiative.

#### Bridge Activity:

Decide ahead of the new initiative how you will assess its effectiveness. What measure will you use to determine whether it 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.

## STEP THREE: EVALUATING OUR NEW INITIATIVE

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

#### Bible Study:

Read Luke 10:17-24

*<sup>17</sup>The seventy came back triumphant. "Master, even the demons danced to your tune!"<sup>18-20</sup> 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."*

*<sup>21</sup>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."<sup>22</sup>"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."*

*<sup>23-24</sup>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)*

- How did the disciples return from their mission?
- How did you feel after your new initiative was complete?
- What did the 70 see upon their return?
- What did you see happen during your new initiative?
- Where was God in your experience?
- What have you concluded about your Vision? About your ability to move forward?



**Content:**

This is a time for course corrections and confirmations.

Review what you did. Where did you see Jesus? What did you learn? Did it work? Tell the truth. This involves honesty and self-awareness. Is this something on which we still feel called to move forward? Are we encouraged/discouraged? What is the potential? How was this similar/dissimilar to what we anticipated? How is the “fit?” Did our experiment fit the context? Would we do this again? This might be a place where some people will back out or the group may decide to take a different direction.

**Bridge Activity:**

If this is leading you on to begin a new work for those in your Vision, then proceed to Task Four: Finding the Missionary Leaders. If you have more questions than answers, would it help to do another initiative from your brainstorming step? Pray for God’s guidance forward.

**TASK FOUR:****Finding the missionary leaders**

This task is to develop a one- or two-page description of the people needed to be the missionaries and the lead missionary of this new worshipping community. During this task the team will determine who from the team is sent and who on this team needs to be a sender. The team will also determine during this task who is missing from the discernment team, both among the senders and among those who need to be sent.

**COACHING POINT**

The lead missionary and all of the missionaries may or may not need to be ordained. Each new worshipping community will have her unique needs for leadership. It is very likely that a business background is more important than a seminary education.

For a list of suggested readings related to this task, see the Resources listed in the back of this book.

## STEP ONE: ARE WE GOING OR SENDING?

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### Opening:

During this task you will consider what it means to your team to be “sent” and what it means to be a “sender.” You, as a group, will begin to discern who needs to go and who should be a part of a team that is sending. As a team, define “sent” and “sender”?

### Bible Study:

Read Isaiah 6:1-9

<sup>1</sup>In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

<sup>4</sup>The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” <sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup>The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

<sup>9</sup>And he said, “Go... (New Revised Standard Version)

### Biblical Reflection:

- Have each person in the group share what it means to them that God is “Holy.”
- What does it mean to you to be “sent by a Holy God”?
- Do you believe you have ever been “sent”? If so, describe that time.
- How have you experienced the Holy in your work so far? What have been the Holy moments in this discernment process?

Read Acts 13:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup>Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (New Revised Standard Version)

- What is the difference between “sent” and “sending”?
- What would be the challenges of being one who is “sent”?
- What would be the challenges for a person who was not sent but who remained in the group that was “sending”?
- What is required of one who is “sent”?
- What is required of one who is “sending”?

### Content:

Think of the many ways Isaiah, Paul, and Barnabas were uniquely wired for where and how God was sending them. Isaiah was sent directly by God, no committee was consulted. God sent Paul and Barnabas through the discernment of the church in Antioch. You are, like those in Antioch 2,000 years ago, a part of a team discerning whom God will send. Those who have had a direct encounter with God like Isaiah know who is sent and the real sender. Most likely you have not had a direct encounter with God so now God is working through you to discern who God wants to send. Looking at the example of Paul and Barnabas, consider the many visible characteristics and gifts the church in Antioch saw in Paul and Barnabas for where they were going to send them. Here are just a few:

- Barnabas was known as “son of encouragement.” Every hard mission needs an encourager, especially when it comes to difficult travel (Acts 4:35).
- Paul and Barnabas had a long-standing and deep relationship so they had a track record of working well together in new towns (Acts 9:27).
- Barnabas had experience in making disciples (Acts 11:25).
- Paul grew up in a Roman city in what is modern Turkey. He was sent to Roman cities in what is now modern Turkey so the customs and the culture would be very familiar to him (Acts 22:3).
- Paul was educated in Hebrew law and scripture. The mission plan was to first connect with the Jews in each city they visited (Acts 22:3).

- Paul could speak Greek and he knew Greek literature well enough he could quote it. He traveled to Roman cities where the educated citizens and the leaders of the cities spoke Greek and were well versed in Greek literature (Acts 17:28).
- Paul was a Roman citizen traveling in an area controlled by the Romans (Acts 16:36).

Look also at the attributes of those in the Church of Antioch that did the sending. Many new worshiping communities fail because the sending group does not exist or is lacking. Those doing the sending are very important to this work. Every missionary journey of Paul began after a considerable time back in Antioch with the “senders.” Those sending were the support for those being sent on many levels. Consider the Church in Antioch:

- The “Grace” of God was obvious to outsiders (Acts 11:23).
- The church in Antioch impacted a great many people in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:24).
- Antioch is where those who believed were first called “Christians” or “of the house of Christ”. They were obviously devoted followers of Jesus (Acts 11:26).
- The Church in Antioch was generous. This is especially profound considering the Church of Antioch sent a gift for the relief of the believers in Jerusalem when archaeologist have identified that most of Antioch was of the population density and living conditions of modern Calcutta slums (Acts 11:29).

Have someone read your Vision from Task Two of this discernment process. Review your experience from the task, “Exploring the Possibilities.” What did you learn in that process? What are the attributes needed for a person to engage those of your Vision? Consider life experiences, skills, attributes, gifts, life situation (single, with children, married...), language, education, work experience, career, age, and many more. It might become obvious to your group that you are talking about more than one person. You might start to consider “the team” that needs to be sent rather than the individual. List the attributes needed for someone to be “sent” in the context of your Vision.

Consider the church of Antioch. God sent Paul and Barnabas through the discernment and commitment of that church. As a group list as many helpful attributes as possible that those who are “sending” should or could have.

### **Bridge Activities:**

Review the lists your team developed in the content work of this task. Who in your group has many of the needed attributes to be sent? Who in your group has many of the needed attributes to be a “sender”?

## STEP TWO: WHO ARE WE? WHO IS MISSING?

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### Opening:

In this task you will identify the “senders” and those who will be “sent” on your current team. You will begin to examine who else is needed. How would you describe the trust among the discernment team for one another?



### COACHING POINT

This is potentially a very difficult step because, for the sake of the mission, the group will need to speak truth to one another.

### Bible Study:

Read Romans 12:1-9

*<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness (New Revised Standard Version).*

### Biblical Reflection:

- What does it mean to you to be a “living sacrifice”?
- How is “being a living sacrifice” of verse one connected with “sober judgment” in verse three?

- What is required of you, of the team, of the church to speak truth about our own gifts and abilities and the gifts and abilities of others?
- How would you handle the situation of a person who believes they are gifted and called to a certain position but the rest of the team does not see that?
- What is required of your team to speak honestly to one another about your roles in this mission from here forward?
- Is your team at a point that you can speak truth in love to one another about your gifts, the gifts of each team member, the gifts needed in those who are to be sent, and the gifts needed of those who are to be the senders? If not, what needs to happen?

### Content:

The desire to “be with” people does not always equate to the ability to “be with.” If someone’s desire to be with people is not matched by the ability to be with them, that person is probably called to be a sender rather than to be sent.

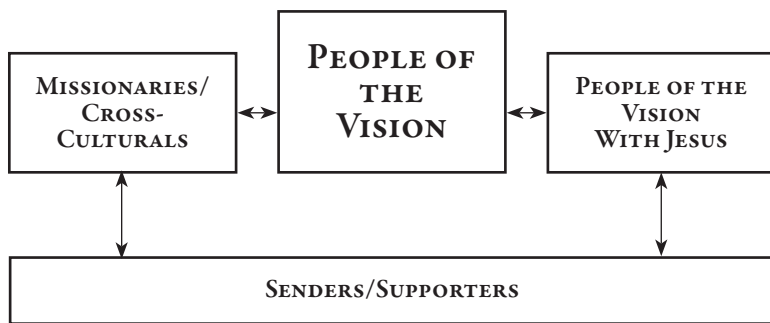
One way to look at who should go and who should send is to consider four types of people who are a part of this process:

1. **People of the Vision** – These are the people identified in your Vision during your second task of this discernment process. They are the people God has placed on your heart to “be with,” the reason you believe a new worshiping community needs to be formed.
2. **People of the Vision With Jesus** – These are individuals who are members of your Vision group but who already have a connection with Jesus. This connection and their desire to be disciples of Jesus have transformed their world view. This allows them to cross bridges to people who are very unlike them but who share their commitment to Jesus. This group “naturally” serves God, worships, and does life much differently than those around them. The apostle Paul would most likely have been in this group.
3. **Senders and Supporters** – Members of this group are “with” Jesus but culturally they are very different from the people of the Vision. They have a passion for the vision group, but differences in age, culture, language, worldview, economics, education, politics, or life stage make it difficult for them to express deep ideas and passion

directly to the people of the Vision. Like the Church of Antioch, they need to partner with someone who can translate their commitment to the vision group. Members of this group can serve in two different roles:

- Senders support the “sent” group at a distance with resources, prayers, and other things required to help realize the Vision.
- Supporters may accompany the “sent,” but in non-direct roles that do not involve direct leadership or “up-front” presence. Examples of this work could include helping to provide physical care for the vision group or earning income to support the mission or serving behind the scenes.

4. **Missionaries/Cross-Culturals** – These are people with the Holy Spirit-given gift to reach across cultures. This gift, like all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is not better nor inferior to the gifts of others but enables those who possess it to directly communicate complex ideas to the people of your Vision, even though they themselves are members of the senders group. They have a proven track record of being able to cross cultures and languages with ease. They are ready for the long term investment of living “with” people who are very different than they are. They do not have to force their way into other people’s lives because they are invited. The people of your Vision naturally open their homes and their lives to this group. Barnabas most likely was in this group.



Now might be one of the hardest exercises as a group. It requires honesty in love and it will determine the impact of your new worshiping community more than any other activity.

- Have each person share who they see on this team who belongs to:
  - o People of the Vision
  - o People of the Vision with Jesus
  - o Senders/Supporters
  - o Missionaries/Cross-Culturals
- Have each person also share where they see themselves.
- Have each person share his or her homework from the last task identifying who on the current team is “sent” and who is a “sender.”
- Reviewing the last two exercises, come up as a team with a list of those on the current team who are “sent” and a list of those who are “senders.”
- Who needs to be added now? Is everyone on the team “sent” and you now need to recruit “senders”? Is everyone on your team a “sender” and you now need to recruit people who will be “sent”?
- If you are all Missionaries/Cross-culturalists, it is most likely time to recruit a few Senders/Supporters to join the team. If you do not have any contacts with people who are “People of the Vision with Jesus” it is most likely time to recruit a few “People of the Vision” to join your team as advisors. Finding the right “People of the Vision” to join your team needs to be assigned to a few of your team as their task before you meet again.

#### Bridge Activities:

Develop a preliminary Mission Plan. Review your team’s list of those “sent” to be a part of this new worshiping community. What roles and gifts are there already in that group? Reread your Vision and write a paragraph describing how those who are sent should go. How will those sent “be with” the people of your Vision? Will you need to start a business, open a coffee shop, offer after school tutoring, begin some open-ended discussion groups in a public place, organize people around an issue of justice, feed the poor, heal the lame, proclaim in the town square? The fifth task is to develop a mission plan, but to consider the “right gifted” lead missionary and the right roles and gifts of those being sent develop your preliminary mission plan in a one- or two-paragraph statement. Share your paragraphs with one another before you meet next. This will describe what this new worshiping community will do to make the Gospel contextual for the people of the vision.



## STEP THREE: WHAT ROLES ARE NEEDED?

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### Opening:

The purpose of this task is to begin to form the missionary team and develop a one-page document describing the people needed to begin this new worshipping community. Read aloud your Vision Statement from Task Two.



### COACHING POINT

If you have added new members to the team, consider delaying this task and using this time to review all that you have done so far and what is expected of each team member.

### Bible Study:

Read Acts 18:1-11

<sup>1</sup>After Athens, Paul went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>That is where he discovered Aquila, a Jew born in Pontus, and his wife, Priscilla. They had just arrived from Italy, part of the general expulsion of Jews from Rome ordered by Claudius. <sup>3</sup>Paul moved in with them, and they worked together at their common trade of tentmaking. <sup>4</sup>But every Sabbath he was at the meeting place, doing his best to convince both Jews and Greeks about Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was able to give all his time to preaching and teaching, doing everything he could to persuade the Jews that Jesus was in fact God's Messiah. <sup>6</sup>But no such luck. All they did was argue contentiously and contradict him at every turn. Totally exasperated, Paul had finally had it with them and gave it up as a bad job. "Have it your way, then," he said. "You've made your bed; now lie in it. From now on I'm spending my time with the other nations."

<sup>7</sup>He walked out and went to the home of Titius Justus, a God-fearing man who lived right next to the Jews' meeting place. <sup>8</sup>But Paul's efforts with the Jews weren't a total loss, for Crispus, the meeting-place president, put his trust in the Master. His entire family believed with him. In the course of listening to Paul, a great

many Corinthians believed and were baptized. <sup>9</sup>One night the Master spoke to Paul in a dream: "Keep it up, and don't let anyone intimidate or silence you. <sup>10</sup>No matter what happens, I'm with you and no one is going to be able to hurt you. You have no idea how many people I have on my side in this city." <sup>11</sup>That was all he needed to stick it out. He stayed another year and a half, faithfully teaching the Word of God to the Corinthians. (*The Message*)

### Biblical Reflection:

- Describe the commitment Paul needed to have to be willing to "move in" with people he did not know well and to work making tents to pay his own expenses.
- What were the advantages to the mission that Paul earned his own support?
- We don't know for sure, but it is very likely that when Silas and Timothy arrived they came with a gift that supported Paul's living. He no longer needed to make tents to eat and pay expenses. How did the mission change when Paul no longer had to make tents for a livelihood?
- Why was it advantageous to the continuation of the mission in Corinth that Paul received his support from outside?

### Content:

Share your homework paragraph from the last task with each other.

- What did you hear from someone's homework that resonated with you or got you excited?
- Are there any major differences in the plans that you heard? Are the differences incompatible? If so, come to consensus on the plan.
- Write a paragraph that summarizes "how" you will be with the people in your Vision. This is your preliminary mission plan. Often there has already been much discussion of this informally so that consensus is often easily attained. If that is not true, dedicate the rest of this task to reaching consensus on the concept of how you will be with the people of the Vision and finish this task at another time.

Review your work from the last step together and the paragraph you just completed explaining how you will be with the people in your Vision.

- Do you have the senders you need to support this new work?
- What roles will the people on your list of senders play for the future strength and work of this new worshipping community?

- What roles are missing?
- Who will recruit the people who need to be added to the sending team?
- What is the timeframe required to add new senders if that needs to happen?

Review your work and homework from the last task and the paragraph you just completed explaining how you will be with the people in your Vision.

- Who is now a part of the team sent?
- What gifts do they have?
- What role will each play?
- What roles are missing?
- Do you have a lead missionary or do you need to add that person?
- Will the lead missionary be a “tent maker” (earn their living expenses apart from this new worshipping community), a person who begins a business related to this new worshipping community (earning their living expenses from the new worshipping community’s business income), or will the lead missionary be supported by the senders?
- Who else on the team sent are tent makers, part of the new worshipping community’s business, or supported by those who are sending?
- Do you have the right team to be sent? Who needs to be added? Who is missing?

#### Bridge Activities:

Assign two people to develop the rough draft of your Description of the Missionary Leaders from the work you have done in the last three tasks. Have them develop a one-page document describing the people and the roles needed for you to begin this new worshipping community.

## STEP FOUR: FINALIZE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF THE MISSIONARY LEADERS

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#### Opening:

In this step, you will develop a one-or two-page Description of the Missionary Leaders needed and their roles to start this new worshipping community. Take turns praying for each person on the discernment team.

#### Bible Study:

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

*<sup>1</sup>I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

*<sup>7</sup>But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. <sup>8</sup>Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”*

*<sup>9</sup>When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working*

*properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (New Revised Standard Version)*

**Biblical Reflection:**

- Reread verses two and three of Ephesians 4. How has your team done with bearing one another and making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit? Is there anything that the team needs to address now?
- What does it mean to you that the apostle Paul connects God's gifts and grace?
- How can "grace" dominate your conversations about roles, gifts, and plans?
- What does it mean to you to "equip the saints"?

**Content:**

Read together the Description of the Missionary Leaders that two of your members prepared.

- What additions need to be made?
- What needs to be eliminated?
- Are all the roles and people described what you need now or are some for a future phase? If some are for a future phase either eliminate them or clearly state that.

Fine-tune your Description of Missionary Leaders until consensus has been reached.

- Looking at your Description, is the lead missionary position clear?
- Do you have a person to fill the lead missionary position?
- If you do not have a person identified as the lead missionary, does the team need to fill that role now, before the mission plan is finalized, or after the mission plan is finalized?

**Bridge Activities:**

If you need to fill the role of the lead missionary before finalizing the mission plan, organize a search team and fill that role.

**TASK FIVE:**

## Developing a plan

The purpose of the task Developing a Plan is to consider how a new worshiping community can engage a very specific group of people with Gospel in a way that is contextual allowing the community to hear and experience good news. This is the place where the rubber meets the road, where you will move from ideas to specific plans and strategies to form a new worshiping community. A tangible plan for carrying out the mission among a specific group of people will include:

- The core values of the community
- Key behaviors of the community
- A plan for engaging people and making disciples
- A strategy for financial sustainability
- Benchmarks for assessing the ministry



**COACHING POINT**

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.

For a list of suggested readings related to this task, see the Resources listed in the back of this book.

## STEP ONE: PREPARING TO DEVELOP A MISSION PLAN

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### Opening:

In this step you will begin to think about how a specific plan engages a particular group of people. What does it mean to you to engage people?

### Bible Study:

Read Acts 17:16-34

Have someone read aloud and then ask participants to read it again quietly as they circle key words and phrases that stand out to them.

*<sup>16</sup>While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup>So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup>Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) <sup>19</sup>So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup>It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.” <sup>21</sup>Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.*

*<sup>22</sup> Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. <sup>23</sup>For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. <sup>26</sup>From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, <sup>27</sup>so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from*

*each one of us. <sup>28</sup>For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’*

*<sup>29</sup>Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. <sup>30</sup>While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” <sup>32</sup> When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” <sup>33</sup>At that point Paul left them. <sup>34</sup>But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. (New Revised Standard Version)*

### Reflection:

- How is Paul’s knowledge of the people of Athens evident in this passage?
- What is Paul’s mission plan?
- How does Paul’s mission plan show awareness of context and culture?
- How was Paul’s mission plan successful? In what ways could it have been considered it unsuccessful?
- What are some cultural realities that you should consider in developing a plan for your new worshipping community?

Pray for insight and love for the people in your community.

### Content:

Because this task is where the ministry plan takes on a very specific character, it is important to emphasize that there is no “one-size-fits-all” plan. The plan is undergirded by the particular understanding of Church (Foundation) that your team has already developed. It is designed with a particular people group in mind (Vision). It will employ the gifts of a particular team of leaders in your Description of Missionary Leaders and it will be influenced by the experiments you have already designed and carried out in the community (Exploring Possibilities).

Review your preliminary mission plan from Step Two of *Who are We? Who is Missing?* (page 56), your Identity Statement, and your Vision Statement aloud. Lead a group brainstorming session using the following questions:

- How will we continue to build relationships with those identified in the Vision?
- How can those in the Vision be introduced to Jesus?
- What will be the core values of this community? (What matters most to the community we are trying to start?)
- What are some key behaviors that we want this new worshiping community to demonstrate? (or not demonstrate?)

In the middle of the nineteenth century a veteran missionary, John Nevius, suggested a model for world missions that urged:

- Trust the Holy Spirit and the converts the Spirit presents to quickly lead the church
- Trust the Holy Spirit and the converts the Spirit presents to quickly plan the evangelism of the church
- Trust the Holy Spirit and the converts the Spirit presents to quickly own their own finances

The Moffett family adopted these criteria for their work in beginning new churches in Korea. This approach was a radical departure from the missionary-centered model used by others. What we can glean from this is that a sustainable mission plan takes seriously local leadership, local evangelism, and local sustainability for the sake of the health and freedom of the new worshiping community. Ask the following questions:

- What will it mean in our context for us to trust the Holy Spirit and the “new converts” to quickly lead this new worshiping community?
- What will it mean in our context to trust the Holy Spirit and the “new converts” to quickly make their own plans for evangelism for this new worshiping community?
- What will it mean in our context for us to trust the Holy Spirit and the “new converts” to quickly own the finances of this new worshiping community?
- Why is it important and healthy for a new worshiping community to take responsibility for its leadership, finances, and propagation?
- What challenges will we encounter?

If time allows reflect as a group on the consistency of your answers from this step compared to your insights from your Identity Statement and Vision

Statement. If your time does not allow for that reflection to happen now, schedule another time for prayer and this reflection.

**Prayer:**

Pray for the people of the community God is calling you to engage. When possible, pray for specific people by name. Pray for wisdom and vision in engaging this particular community.

**Bridge Activities:**

Visit one or more new worshiping communities in your area. Visit this website [onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org) and look at the map on the home page to see if there are any new worshiping communities in your region. If possible, visit as a group and gather afterward to talk about what you have seen. Meet with the pastor or other key leader of the new worshiping community and ask the following questions:

- How did you discern a call to be part of starting something brand new?
- How did you identify the particular community (or people group) that you felt God was calling you to engage?
- What is your strategy for engaging this particular group of people and what makes this strategy uniquely suited to this particular group?

If there are no new worshiping communities in your region that you can visit, watch some of these videos: [youtube.com/1001NewWorshiping](https://www.youtube.com/1001NewWorshiping). If possible, set up a conference call with a key leader of one of the New Worshiping Communities represented in a video to ask the interview questions above. Are there people from other denominations or para church organizations doing something similar to your preliminary mission plan in your region. If so, contact or visit them.



## STEP TWO: “LET ME COUNT THE WAYS”

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### Opening:

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 of your Vision.

### Bible Study:

Read 1 Corinthians 9:22 aloud.

*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. (New Revised Standard Version)*

- What does it mean to “become all things to all people?”
- In what ways do you think Paul became all things?
- What are some dangers of trying to “become all things to all people?”
- 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? Tell some specific ways in which the ministry of these churches matched or did not match the communities they were trying to serve.

### Prayer:

Pray for the churches and faith communities that have nurtured you — for their pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, elders, deacons, and members. Remember them by name. Thank God for the gifts given to you through them. Ask God to use those gifts now to form a new worshiping community.

### Content:

Reflect on the new worshiping communities you visited as part of the Bridge Activity. If you were unable to visit at least one new worshiping community, watch three or four of the videos found on this website:

[youtube.com/1001NewWorshipping](https://www.youtube.com/1001NewWorshipping). Next, read together your Vision Statement as a reminder that God has called you to engage with a particular group of people. There are no models for starting a new worshiping community because each context is different, and each missionary 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:

- What practices or behaviors that you have observed in your visits or the videos particularly interested or impressed you?
- What (if any) ideas that you observed might influence the way you would do ministry in your chosen community?
- What new ideas do you have?
- 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)?

### Prayer:

Pray that the Lord would send laborers into the harvest field.

### Bridge Activities:

Each person will write a one-page plan for starting a new worshiping community within the context you have identified in your Vision. Keep in mind your Identity Statement, Vision Statement, and your Description of the Missionary Leaders. Reflect on what you have learned through your “Exploring the Possibilities” activities. At this point, the idea is to capture your ideas on paper, not to try to dot every “i” and cross every “t”. 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, when, will the community serve others?
- How will the community attain financial sustainability?
- How, when, will worship happen?

- How, when, will community prayer happen?
- How, when, will the study of scripture happen?
- How, 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 another congregation or the presbytery for purposes of care and accountability?

## STEP THREE: THE MISSION PLAN

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### Opening:

In this step you will begin to finalize your Mission Plan.

### 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. (New Revised Standard Version)*

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.

To examine what's going on in Acts 6:1-7, lead a discussion using the following questions:

- Who is leading this new worshiping community in Jerusalem?
- What are the needs of the community? What needs are not being addressed?
- How will new servants be chosen? What gifts do these leaders need? What will they be doing?
- How are decisions made?

**Content:**

Read aloud the Identity Statement and Vision Statement, and the Description of the Missionary Leaders.

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 the presentations have been made, ask the group to sit in silence with the plans 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 the plans?
- What else will we need to think about?

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:

**I. The mission of God**

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

**II. Outreach and Evangelism**

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

**III. Practices and Leadership**

- How will your Identity Statement 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?

**IV. Denomination and Other Churches**

- 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?

**V. Finances and Stewardship**

- How much money will it cost to fulfill your calling in your community?

- Develop a budget for the next two years that includes both income and expense projections.
- Is there a business plan that will help to sustain the worshiping community?
- How will you talk about money with the people in your new worshiping community?

**VI. Missionary Leaders**

- What roles, tasks, and responsibilities will the lead missionary need to fulfill?
- Will any of the missionary leaders be financially supported by the new worshiping community?
- Who are the needed "volunteer" or unpaid missionary leaders needed?

**VII. Discipleship**

- How will you articulate what it means to be a disciple?
- What will your community do to intentionally make disciples?

**VIII. Community Life**

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

**IX. Worship**

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

**X. 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 people of your vision?

**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.

## STEP FOUR: ADOPTING THE MISSION PLAN

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### Opening:

In this step you will review the draft of the mission plan, spend time in prayer, make corrections, and adopt the plan. Have each member of the team pray at least once a prayer that starts out with the words, “Thank you God \_\_\_\_\_.”

### Bible Study:

Read Philippians 1:3-11 aloud.

*<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. (New Revised Standard Version)*

Pray for the people God has called you to engage. Take your time, encouraging each person on the Discernment Team to pray. 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 discernment 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 God-given 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:

- Identity Statement
- Vision Statement
- Description of the Missionary Leaders
- 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.

### Prayer:

God, reveal to us the ways you want to work in the community you have given to us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

### 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.

## STEP FIVE: ESTABLISHING BENCHMARKS

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### Opening:

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:

Read Luke 10: 1-11

*<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near. (New Revised Standard Version)*

Read the passage twice, once aloud and again silently, asking participants to underline words or phrases that speak to them. Allow a time of silent reflection on the passage. Each person then sits with one partner and shares the words or phrases that stood out during the reading and any insights or new understandings that came from the reading.

Pray for the wisdom and courage to address the need to hold the ministry to a high level of accountability.

### Content:

- What are some ways the institutional church has used to measure success? Write your responses.
- What are some scriptural examples of “success” in ministry?
- 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? It may be helpful to reflect on what you have learned in the Task: Exploring the Possibilities.

One at a time, ask each person on the discernment team to name one measure of faithfulness or fruit bearing for the new worshiping community (from Bridge Activity). 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.

Follow the same procedure for the signs that would show the community was not bearing fruit or successfully making disciples.

In the Luke 10 passage, Jesus asks his disciples to invest themselves in some communities and to wipe the dust from their feet in others. Although it is difficult to define “success” in ministry (and some may even find that word to be offensive) 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 \_\_\_\_\_ (name) community is faithful to God and to its God-given mission, it will \_\_\_\_\_.” The benchmarks may address the following questions or others that seem meaningful in your context:

- Involvement of previously un-churched or de-churched people
- Impact on the wider community
- Contacts with people not currently part of a church community
- Feeding the hungry
- Financial support for the ministry by the participants
- Partnerships with other organizations
- Development of new leadership
- Growth in number of participants



- The number of participants that actually live in the community you are called to engage

If, one year from now, we see (or do not see) \_\_\_\_\_, we will consider wiping the dust from our feet and moving on to a different town or 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.

#### Bridge Activities:

Show your Mission Plan and Year 1 Benchmarks to your coach and to leaders of your partner congregation or presbytery. Ask if they have anything to add. Ask your coach and your partner congregation or presbytery to keep you accountable to the benchmarks you have established.



#### COACHING POINT

- The Benchmarks must be linked to the Identity Statement. Keep these documents before the team at all times.
- As the team identifies benchmarks for accountability, it is important to keep clear and ongoing communication with the partner congregation(s) and/or presbytery.

## CLOSING: ONE MORE TASK TO WRAP UP THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS AND CONTINUE THE WORK!

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*“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20 (New Revised Standard Version)*

We want to end with this encouragement. You can do this. Not because you are perfect or because you have all the answers. You can do this because the power of God is at work in you and through you. God has a history of using ordinary people to do things they never thought they could do. Jesus took a group of people who seemed the least likely to start a movement, and the Church was loosed into the world.

If you have completed this discernment process, you have been faithful to pay attention to God’s call into the community. You have listened to how God might be calling you to shape a ministry that will incarnate grace and hope into the lives of people in your midst. And now God is asking you to take a leap of faith and do this work you have been moving towards.

When you have completed the five tasks of this discernment process you have accomplished a lot. Again, this process is not linear. The first task in this booklet may not be where you began and the last task may not be where you ended. But from research and experience those who complete the five tasks and don’t short cut the work stand a better chance of moving forward than those who don’t. When you have finished the five tasks you also have the content for a grant proposal through the Presbyterian Mission Agency! You can apply for funding fairly quickly. For information about Mission Program Grants, please contact: *Tim McCallister, Associate, or Bill Moore, Administrative Assistant, at The Office of Mission Program Grants, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY 40202-1396, 800-728-7228, x5230, 5251 or email Tim.McCallister@pcusa.org or Bill.Moore@pcusa.org.*

## REFLECTION AND EVALUATION:

Answer as a group:

1. Did we do our best in each task?
2. Did we complete each task?
3. Are we ready to move forward?

If the answers are “yes” to these questions, use the following process to move forward. You’re going to define:

1. What is?
2. What could be?
3. What will be?

These are three simple questions that can move you forward.

### 1: What is?

Together as a discernment team define the reality of where you currently stand.

In other words, “What is?”

- Who do you have on your team?
- What financial resources are gathered?
- What momentum do you have in the team?
- What people resources do you have?

Ask as many “What is?” questions as you can give answer to.

### 2: What could be?

Again, as a discernment team try to look out six, twelve, and eighteen months and consider “What could be?”

- Where could we be in six, twelve, and eighteen months?
- How many people could we engage?
- What ministry could we complete?
- What reputation could we have?

Ask as many “What could be?” questions as you can give answer to.

### 3: What Will Be?

This is where you will map out, as a discernment team, your most immediate steps. This is not a dreamer stage but a feet-on-the-ground moving forward stage. Complete each of the following sentences:

- In the next few hours we will...
- In the next six weeks we will...
- In the next three months we will...

## 4: Considerations

If you haven’t already:

- Consider registering at the [onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org) website and let others know what you’re doing.
- Consider contacting one of the 1001 regional associates to get assistance with your work @onethousandone.org.
- Consider being in a covenant relationship with other church planters, both in our denomination and outside.
- Consider church planting gatherings in our denomination and elsewhere.
- Consider widening the circle of prayer partners who will pray for your project.
- Consider applying for a grant from the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Know that this might just be one of the greatest adventures of your life. To intersect with all the messiness of people’s lives and to have the opportunity to connect them with God and with one another to form a worshiping community is one of the most life-giving things you could ever do. In the midst of this process, you will experience great joys, and likely many challenges as well. There may even be days that you wonder, “Am I really the one to do this?” Take heart. Be strong and courageous. Trust in a power that is greater than your own. Because if God is in this thing, the promise is that God’s power is going to accomplish the work. It is not all up to you. All God asks is that you be willing and God can do amazing things through willing servants.

Again, congratulations on completing this part of the journey. Know that you have all that you need to do what God has asked you to do today. And God will provide what you need for tomorrow. God bless you in this work. In the name of Jesus, AMEN!

## RESOURCES:

# Recommended Reading

### **Task One: Establishing our Identity**

The Gospels – Worth reading a gospel while establishing your identity

Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission*, Orbis Books 1991, 2011

Guder, Darrell, *Missional Church*, Eerdmans 1998

Dally, John Addison, *Choosing the Kingdom*, Alban Institute 2008

Branson, Mark Lau & Warnes, Nick, *Starting Missional Churches*, IVP  
September 2014

### **Task Two: Discerning the Vision**

Newbigin, Lesslie, *Open Secret*, Eerdmans 1978, 1995

Newbigin, Lesslie, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Eerdmans 1989

Guder, Darrell, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Eerdmans 2000

### **Task Four: Finding the Missionary Leaders**

Halter, Hugh & Smay, Matt, *Tangible Kingdom Primer*, CRM 2009

Steigerwald, Dan, *Growing Local Missionaries*, Urban Loft Publishers 2014

Roxburgh, Alan, *The Missional Leader*, The Leadership Network 2006

Breen, Mike, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 3 Dimensional Ministries 2011

### **Task Five: Developing a Plan**

Moynagh, Michael, *A Church for Every Context*, SCM 2012

Williams, Rowan, *Mission Shaped Church*, Church House Publishing 2004/2009

Barrett, Lois Y., *Treasure in Clay Jars*, Eerdmans 2004

Logan, Bob, *The Missional Journey*, Missional Challenge 2013

Woodward, JR & Hirsch, Alan, *Creating a Missional Culture*, IVP 2012

### **Web sites:**

[onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org)

[freshexpressions.org.uk](http://freshexpressions.org.uk)



**Starting a New Worshiping Community** is not the implementation of previously effective models or techniques. New Worshiping Communities are formed from faithful discernment of God's mission in your context.

This work is not rocket science; it is much more complicated! A new worshiping community is the work of the Holy Spirit, which immediately puts this task way beyond our understanding.

*Starting New Worshiping Communities* is a series of tasks that include assignments and steps that can take you from zero to a new worshiping community. Each of the tasks suggests a Bible study and an extended time of prayer. Unfortunately, starting a new worshiping community is not linear; it is organic, contextual, and based on relationships between God and people. It is reformed and always reforming.

We provide you with a process that addresses the key aspects of starting a new worshiping community and encourages you to listen to the sometimes still voice of God, rather than ours or anyone else's. While discernment does not guarantee success, we believe it will steer you away from things that will guarantee your failure.

Only God knows what God wants to accomplish through you and the new worshiping community the Holy Spirit is placing on your heart. Trust God. Strive to be faithful rather than successful. Faithfulness brings a success beyond our imagination and wildest dreams.

As you proceed through these tasks, wrestle with the scriptures, listen and discern, fall on your knees in humility and wait for God's right time.

For more information contact 1001 national associate Vera White, [vera.white@pcusa.org](mailto:vera.white@pcusa.org), or visit our website at [onethousandone.org](http://onethousandone.org).

Cover Photograph(s): Top Right —The Fellowship Place, Center Left— Team Sweaty Sheep, Bottom—Four Points Church

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