



WHAT TO EXPECT



WHEN YOU'RE STARTING



A NEW EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY



What to Expect...

When you're starting a New Episcopal Community

Welcome to the What to Expect Guide to New Episcopal Communities! This is a living document, and we expect it to grow and evolve as we source the wisdom emerging about what makes a new faith community hearty and resilient in the 21st century. This initial version is a reflection on themes that tend to arise in approximately the first three years of a church plant, from Discerning, to Planting your new ministry. There are also short reflections on the Re-potting and Composting Seasons. As we move forward, we'll add more about some of the later stages – the Growth, Harvest and Sharing Seasons.

This Guide was compiled by The Episcopal Church's Office of Church Planting and Redevelopment and the Task Force appointed by General Convention in 2018. However, its contents were sourced from dozens upon dozens of courageous leaders who offered their stories and insights from serving in God's harvest field. We offer it in prayer that the Lord of the Harvest will continue to send out workers, and that Episcopal dioceses will continue to respond to new, yet-untouched fields for mission.

Remember, you are not alone in your discernment and planting. We are praying for you!

The Rev. Tom Brackett

Manager for Church Planting and Redevelopment
tbrackett@episcopalchurch.org

The Rev. Katie Nakamura Rengers

Staff Officer for Church Planting
krenders@episcopalchurch.org

The Rev. Canon Janet Waggoner

Chair, Task Force for Church Planting and Congregational Redevelopment
janet.waggoner@edfw.org

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Introduction

Never has the learning of church planters been more important than in this moment! Even as we prepare this resource to be posted online, the Church is rapidly changing. A viral pandemic is sweeping the world, demanding compassion and innovation from leaders who are pastoring their communities through illness, isolation, and economic fear. Our ever-present pandemic of racism has flared up, uncovering past traumas and demanding that we challenge assumptions long held by individuals and institutions. It is vital that we begin learning from our missional leaders – the people who most often question the status quo, and who frequently ask the question, “what is church really supposed to be?”

Though some key characteristics remain the same, church planting must happen differently than it once did. More so than leaders who ventured out in the late 20th century, today's church planters are confronted with a culture that increasingly no longer supports church membership and attendance. People are more transient, moving often to new jobs and communities. Neighborhood demographics are changing, sometimes reflecting new levels of diversity, and sometimes increasing efforts to remain homogeneous. The Millennials, now the largest living generation in the U.S., have different attitudes toward institutional membership, religion, and stewardship of resources. Missional leaders are finding that this new context compels them to shift their own expectations about what church community looks like, and who it is for.

In 2012, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church launched an exciting initiative to encourage a new wave of church planting across the denomination. The "First Mark of Mission" grants were renewed in 2015, and in 2018 became grants for "New Episcopal Communities." In the last 6 years, the church has benefited immensely from the faithful work of dozens of church planters and mission developers who have loved their neighborhoods, labored to turn vision into reality, experimented with new liturgies and leadership models, and risked their own financial security and future job prospects for the sake of mission. Some of these early plants have securely taken root and will likely produce long-lasting Episcopal communities that eventually themselves become part of the established institution. Others came to a crash landing but are no less valuable for helping us learn what works and what doesn't. Though much is still unknown about how to plant sustainable and resilient churches in this new age, we are actively harvesting the fruit of these initial endeavors and believe that the time has come to begin sharing their learning with future planters and diocesan leaders.

Church Planting is a beautiful and messy endeavor. At times, the best practices for effective church planting contradict the best practices for running an already-established church. Not all clergy and lay leaders have the skill set or vocational call to do this work. In the drafting of this manual, difficult stories were told, and tears were shed. At the same time, the majority of planters say that their own relationship with God and vocational call have been forever transformed by the experience of “being sent” to start a new community from scratch.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to share the wisdom and learning gleaned from New Episcopal Community leaders across the last three triennia. It is not intended to be prescriptive. In church planting work, context is key, and both planters and diocesan leaders must respond by developing appropriate vision and expectations for the new ministry. Rather, this guide is a harvest of the vital questions, helpful practices, potential pitfalls, and both spiritual and tangible insights that our planters have reaped over the last few years. We hope that it will be read by *both* leaders of new initiatives AND their diocesan leadership. Ideally, the blessings and challenges of planting a new Christian community are not shouldered by the planter alone, but are shared among the visionaries, missionaries, and those who send them.

Because of the nature of Episcopal theology and polity, our experience is that new communities have their best chance of taking off when the visionary leader, their core team, and their diocesan leadership start with and maintain a mutual feeling of “being in this together.” We suggest that point leaders and their diocesan leaders read this manual and take time to answer some of the guiding spiritual questions together.

It can be helpful to think of church planting in terms of seasons. The length and intensity of each season will vary from context to context, but most new communities will deal with aspects of all of them. The seven seasons are:

1. **Discerning:** Exploring who God is calling us to be in community with, and discovering what mission, church and living out the Gospel could look like in this context.
2. **Planting:** Tilling the soil and planting the seeds of relationship and structure that will launch the new community.
3. **Growing:** Resourcing and fertilizing the new community in ways that will help it grow toward hoped-for outcomes
4. **Harvesting:** Celebrating the fruit of the new community, and making sure you have the right tools to continue harvesting that fruit year after year
5. **Repotting:** Pivoting, tweaking, refining or even drastically changing your model of ministry in loving response to the needs of your new community
6. **Composting:** Valuing and learning from the experience of communities that have ended and seeking the nutrients they have created in the soil for future plants.
7. **Sharing:** Sharing the engaging and adaptive practices your new community is learning with other parishes and your wider diocese.

The Seasons won't always arrive in quite this order (though Discerning should almost always come first). Also, the themes we discuss in each Season aren't meant to be linear! Many themes will overlap, and grow, between Seasons – others may be less applicable to your specific context. Rather than being a step-by-step process, this work is about following the call of the Holy Spirit and together becoming a living expression of God's Church.

ABOUT NEW EPISCOPAL COMMUNITIES

New Episcopal Communities may assume traditional or innovative forms, but their primary gathering point is around bringing a community of new people together to hear and proclaim God's word and grow together in discipleship.

Mission and evangelism happen through many mediums, including as ministries of established parishes, online offerings, and social justice and social service ministries. This "What to Expect" guide will be most helpful and relevant if the ministry you are discerning meets, or is close to, the following definition of a New Episcopal Community:

New: Distinct and different from existing churches and institutions: NECs are not programs of existing churches or dioceses or restarts. NECs have entrepreneurial leadership, a pioneering and creative spirit and seek to bring into being a ministry that was not there before.

Episcopal: Grounded in the faith, doctrine and discipline of the Episcopal church: NECs are clearly, distinctly and overtly Christian in character, approach and identity. They can be churches, missional communities, or anything in between! While not all will have a worshipping aspect, NECs operate out of and give opportunities to know Jesus' love. NECs are under the oversight of the Bishop and governance of a diocese. They reflect the mission of their diocese and the Episcopal Church.

Community: Designed to be a place of encouragement, care and accountability: NECs commit themselves to love one another in relationships of mutual care and accountability. Patterned after the life and teachings of Jesus, NECs seek to help people grow in faith and life. NECs are committed to long-term growth and sustainability. While not all will be able to become sustainable from the communities they serve, NECs intend to grow in leadership and financial support with proper stewardship, development, facilities and accounting.

Season 1: Discerning

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. 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. (Luke 10:1-2)

THEME 1: FORMING A DISCERNMENT TEAM

The work of discerning any new expression of church should be done in community. Unlike some other entrepreneurial endeavors, a thriving community of Christians is not the vision and labor of a single charismatic leader. Whether the idea for a New Episcopal Community originated with the

Bishop, a priest, or a lay leader, the first step is to convene a group that will discern how God is calling them to respond. The discernment team should include:

- People who share a heart for reaching unchurched people (and who can define for themselves and others what it means to “reach” someone for the Gospel)
- People who have cultural sensitivity, and who understand the difference between mission and franchising (or “gentle colonialism”)
- People who are willing to take action, not just give advice. In the discernment stage, an active curiosity is essential - listening, gathering information, and communicating.
- People for whom this new expression will be the new community of faith they want to form and belong to (at least a third of your discernment team should be committed to this)
- People who can actively communicate the discerned vision to others and motivate them to join in
- People who bring a variety of gifts and talents
- A mix of “path finding visionaries” and “authority visionaries.” In other words, a complete team will include leaders who are called to leave the church walls, AND the leaders within the institution who will resource and support them.
- People who are more interested in flexibility and spontaneity than in acting as a formal governing body. (You may want these structural/policy driven folks eventually, but not until much later in the development of the NEC).

A Discernment Team will also need a primary “Instigator.” The Instigator may or may not turn out to be the leader of the New Episcopal Community that emerges. For now, their job is gathering the Discernment Team, send reminders, help assign tasks, gently remind about follow-through, and keep the ball rolling.

A discernment team should be built on, and out of, relationship. Consider drafting a very specific invitation to the people whom you hope will join you on this journey. What kind of spirit are you inviting them to bring to this work? Are there specific questions you are inviting them to discern with you? What actions, and time commitment are part of the invitation? Remember, it is often by allowing some people to say “no” to the invitation from the beginning that you end up with the strong team you need during this season of Discernment.

Use your first gathering to build relationship and trust among the Discernment Team members. You might ask them to introduce themselves (or re-introduce themselves, if some already know each other) using questions like:

- What part of the invitation to be on this Discernment Team are you saying “yes” to? (it’s helpful to have a printed copy of the invitation in front of you)
- What are your expectations of this Discernment season, and of your involvement in it?
- What is a story from your lived experience that represents who Jesus is for you?
- Are there any “ground rules” you’d like to see us set as we begin this work together? Write these down and begin living them out together.



Coaching Point: Your “ground rules” are the beginning of modeling a behavioral covenant. They might include things like active listening, using “I” language, respecting generational differences, or committing to follow through with tasks between meetings. A strong

behavioral covenant in this early season will help pave the way for how a future core team does its work.

THEME 2: ALWAYS START WITH “WHY?”

While it can be easy to get swept up into the excitement of “where” and “what” (starting a new, innovative ministry in a geographic area not yet touched by the Episcopal church is, indeed, a fun thought!), no new community will last if it doesn’t have a strong sense of purpose and missional theology behind it.

Why plant a new community? Starting new Christian communities is a tangible expression of our desire to live into Jesus’ call to share the Good News and to make disciples. At its best, the Church offers a remedy to the isolation, polarization and hopelessness of our world. Through planting new congregations, we have the opportunity to invite people to authentically and committedly follow Jesus, recognize their own “belovedness,” and participate in a healthy expression of community that mirrors the covenanted relationship God calls us all into.

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “the goal of all Christian community is to encounter one another as bringers of the message of salvation.” The act of being together in community, as messy as it can sometimes get, is a gift from God that allows us to see and participate in the Kingdom more fully than we could alone. Bonhoeffer’s words speak to this moment in The Episcopal Church’s Genesis (church planting and redevelopment) movement. Planting new congregations is no longer an act of gentle colonialism, in which we bring the Word to people in need of charity, or to those who haven’t yet encountered our enlightened forms of liturgy and worship. It also shouldn’t be thought of as “franchising” our brand into new neighborhoods in order to eventually increase Diocesan covenants and halt the numerical decline of The Episcopal Church. Rather, we should seek to look at new people as ones who might become, for us, “bringers of the message of salvation.”

We are often asked why the Episcopal Church should start new communities when many of our existing parishes are in decline. Consider the following compelling reasons:

1. New communities are often more effective at reaching new people, as they create excitement and build momentum around missional work and growth.
2. New communities can be planted among people who are historically underrepresented in the Episcopal Church, allowing us to more fully represent our communities and see God’s Kingdom more vividly.
3. New communities have an opportunity to reach the growing numbers of people who find established parishes unappealing, or who are feel disenchanting with church institution.
4. New communities have more freedom to innovate and experiment with less traditional patterns of gathering, worship, leadership and formation.
5. New communities are an opportunity for missional discipleship for members of sending congregations.

6. New communities complement the ministries of existing churches, offering new opportunities for service
7. Demographic growth can demand new communities that incarnate themselves into the culture and life of that neighborhood
8. New communities often start out exhibiting missional behaviors and practices that established and redeveloping congregations can see and learn from.



Coaching Point: Existing congregations, particularly those in decline, may feel challenged by the presence of a New Episcopal Community - especially if the NEC is getting a lot of attention and resources up front. Diocesan leaders can work with these congregations to reassure them of the value and gifts they bring to the diocese, and to help them understand that the NEC is designed to reach a different target demographic. Perhaps the launch of the NEC is an opportunity for the “old” congregations to remember and share the stories of their own birth.

With your Discernment Team, consider using the story of the Call of Abraham as a prompt for asking the question “why?”

Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (Genesis 12:1-2)

You might then invite each team member to respond to questions like:

- What is a vision of future ministry that compels you to “go”?
- What is a blessing you have been given that you know you must share?
- What is a blessing that you seek from doing this missional discernment work?

Take careful notes as your team engages the “why?” question. Their answers now will speak to a step in a later season, “determining outcomes and goals.” The success of a new community will be revealed less by institutional numbers and more by its ability to live into the mission it shares with God in the world.



Coaching Point: Practice repeating your “why” over and over (letting it emerge and evolve), until it becomes clear, coherent, and true to who you are, and to who your community is.

THEME 3: WHO?

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

(Acts 1:8)

Who will this New Episcopal Community be designed to reach? A quick reading of Acts 1:8, or the Great Commission at the end of Matthew, will enthusiastically remind us that the Gospel is intended for absolutely everyone. Many missional leaders will also feel called to push against the ethnic and socio-economic homogeneity they see in The Episcopal Church and develop richly diverse congregations that represent a fullness of the Kingdom of God. However, no new ministry can reach everyone, and identifying who your new community is specifically called to love and serve will help you do that work better and with greater intention.

You might ask yourself, “Who is in need of the Good News that the Episcopal Church is not already reaching?” Sometimes this will be in growing, affluent neighborhoods with many high-functioning lay leaders who will help the church plant become self-sustaining relatively quickly. At other times, the Holy Spirit will call us into community with people who are ethnically, socio-economically or geographically less well represented in the Episcopal Church, and/or bring fewer financial resources.

Many New Episcopal Communities commit to reaching people who, for one reason or another, are historically underrepresented in The Episcopal Church. These may include:

- People of African, Asian or Latin American descent
- Recent immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers
- People of the Millennial and Gen-Z generations
- Lower income Individuals and families
- People who did not grow up going to church, and/or who have little prior experience of healthy community
- People who have been hurt by previous representations of Christianity

Even new communities that form in primarily Anglo, affluent areas will undoubtedly host people from some, if not all, of the groups mentioned above. Even a planter in a largely homogenous neighborhood will benefit from strong cross-cultural skills.

Discerning who you are called to reach will directly influence your model of ministry, including the way you gather people and communicate with them. Clearly defining your target demographic will allow you to be a good host, plan meaningful worship, and establish norms for how your community will live and pray together. It will also help you set goals for mission and sustainability. For example, a New Episcopal Community among historically underrepresented people will usually mean that building trust, relationship, structure and financial investment often takes longer than it might in an affluent, Anglo neighborhood. A faithful response to this reality is to engage your discernment team in a transparent and vulnerable conversation about who God is calling you to serve and be served by.

Remember, of course, that seeds don't always sprout where they are planted. This is the moral of Jesus' parable of the Wedding Banquet, in Matthew 22. When the invited guests fail to show up, the king throws open the doors to anyone on the street, resulting in a wedding hall that “was full of guests.” A church plant designed for young urban professionals might also become a haven for people in addiction recovery. A community that reaches out to LGBTQ persons may find that

its gentleness and authenticity also appeals to families with young children. Even as you discern the “who” of your new community, hold your preferred outcomes lightly enough that there’s still space to be surprised by the Holy Spirit.



Coaching Point: Remember, church planting is about reaching new people for the sake of Jesus, not about creating additional programs for those who are already Episcopalian, or “sheep stealing” from other denominations.

With your discernment team, consider the following guiding spiritual questions:

- Think about your neighborhood or city. Who is most in need of the kind of healthy, spiritual community that your new church start could offer?
- Who in your neighborhood is the Holy Spirit at work in? What would you like to learn about God through these particular people?
- To paraphrase Frederick Buechner, where might your deep gladness meet the world’s deep hunger?

THEME 4: WHERE?

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

Missional church planting is about making a commitment - usually a long-term commitment - to a community of people, and to the city or neighborhood in which you share your spiritual life together. This commitment goes far deeper than “franchising” the Episcopal brand in an unreached area. It is also different than identifying an area that needs Christian “outreach” or charity. As the passage from Jeremiah indicates, committing to a city means residing there, participating in its livelihood, making its people your people and its welfare your own.

It’s likely that you already have some idea of where to plant a new community. Ideas for “where” may bubble up from:

- A lay or ordained leader who has realized that their own neighborhood is fertile ground for a New Episcopal Community
- Your conversation regarding “who” may narrow the conversation about geographic location.
- A coaching session on data driven mission, which can help you look realistically at demographic shifts across a diocese

- The availability of vacant church property (a.k.a. “Free” for a new ministry), that would be hospitable to, and blessed by housing a new community

Now, it’s time to get moving! Send your Discernment Team on a neighborhood adventure! Split up into teams of 2 (no more than 3) to explore the communities you are considering. Go with God, but with great humility. You are a guest in these neighborhoods, not a potential savior or conqueror. Some questions you might ponder and clues that you might look for as you explore the neighborhood are:

- Are there people in this neighborhood who have already found a way to share a life of love together here? How do we connect with them?
- Are there people already leading movements toward justice, shalom, reconciliation and renewal here? How do we get to know them?
- Are there people already living on behalf of justice with the marginalized and poor here? How might we learn more about them and their work?
- Are there people already entering into relational forms of civic and economic life here? Could we share in what they are doing?
- Are there people creating reciprocal relationships of care here? How could we connect with them?

Talk to people and do some one-to-one interviews. If you’re having trouble getting started, or wondering with whom you could connect first, some potential bridge-builders (connectors who may lead you to the people with whom you seek to connect) are:

- Coffee shop baristas,
- Hair stylists
- Guidance counselors
- Estate and Family Law attorneys
- Gym owners/instructors
- Bank tellers
- Librarians
- Radio Station owners
- News reporters
- Interior decorators
- City/town development officers
- School district communications coordinators

When you set up a one-to-one conversation, be clear that you aren’t asking them to join your church or to make a donation. You’re just seeking their perspectives and insights on the community. It’s fine to tell people that you’re asking these questions because you’re discerning a new community (be prepared to explain what the Episcopal Church is, and what “discernment” means!)

Some possible questions to ask in a one-to-one are:

- How long have you lived here?
- What do you like about this neighborhood?
- Are there things in this place that concern you?
- Where do people hang out?
- Where do people worship, or do they?

- Tell me the story of how you became a _____.
- Why do you do _____ here in this community? What makes it different or special?
- Who are your heroes?
- You seem angry/passionate/convicted about _____. Where do those feelings come from?
- If money were no object, what would you do?
- Tell me what needs you see in this community. If you could wave a magic wand and invite a faith organization to meet this need, what would they be doing?
- Who else should I speak with?

Return to the same area on different days of the week, and at different times of day. Pray as you walk and bring back notes about where and how you felt the Spirit at work. Journal about if, and how, you sensed an opportunity for partnership with the Spirit in that particular place. What would be the barriers to partnership? What more information would you need, or what work would you have to do, in order to plant the seed for a new community in this place?

Share your observations and prayers with the team at large.

Buildings and Spaces

Several decades ago, a common pattern was for a diocese to purchase land for a new church plant, often in areas that were expected to grow over the coming years. Often land was invested in before a point leader was called, and before the discernment and core teams started their work. If you have agreed on the goal of establishing a traditional plant that will eventually build a building, having the Diocese purchase the land beforehand can be a real gift. It lowers the future cost of building and gives the community a visual goal to work toward. On the other hand, investing in property too early could hinder your discernment season and/or your ability to pivot (re-pot) the ministry later on. If you discern that a land purchase will be helpful in your context, consider property that is likely to hold its value and that could be sold should the new community take root in a different location, or with a different model.

A popular concept today is the “church without walls,” which often refers to a community that intentionally does not own its own building, that shares space with another church or business, that is nomadic, or literally meets outdoors. These models can allow a community to be part of a neighborhood in a profound way. As in the Jeremiah text, their own welfare depends upon the welfare of the school, park, restaurant or pub with which they share space. Do keep in mind, however, that many communities find that having a consistent meeting space is a contributing factor to the sustainability of their new communities. This is likely because a consistent invitation to a certain place allows a larger core group to form, thereby increasing the likelihood that the community will develop the relationships and leadership it needs to sustain.¹

THEME 5: WHAT?

¹ In its 2019 New Worshiping Communities Sustainability Report, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) noted that “Although geographic location seems to have a small impact on whether a NWC lasts, what matters more is that the NWC has a regular gathering space.”

What is the invitation to community that you will extend to your neighbors?

As you're discerning the "What?" of a new community, keep in mind that there's a difference between "novelty" and "innovation." The new, catchy ideas for evangelism, or hip communities you read about in books can turn out to be shallow and irrelevant when transported to a different context. Innovation, on the other hand, demands that you take your diocesan and neighborhood contexts seriously, spend time developing real relationships, and allow both context and relationship to inform what your nontraditional New Episcopal Community will look like. True innovation starts with the "why?" and "who?" questions and demands the willingness and ability to adjust the model as you go.

New Episcopal Communities fall into broad type categories that are helpful for planters, core teams and diocesan leaders to recognize as you're getting started. Many of the essential leadership competencies and missional practices are the same, yet each type will present its own unique characteristics and challenges for the planter, the new community and the sponsoring diocese. Some communities will fall clearly into one category, and others may be a hybrid of two or three of the following:

- **Traditional church plants**
- **Missional Communities**
- **Ethnic and/or language specific communities**
- **Restarts**
- **Redevelopments**

Traditional Church Plants

Broadly speaking, the goal of a traditional plant is to produce a community of faithful, committed Christians who will one day achieve Parish status, join together in Sunday worship, pay a full-time (in some cases, a part-time) Rector, own its own building, and become financially independent.

Many traditional church starts are described as **Mother-Daughter** plants. In this type of plant, a "sending parish" (or multiple sending parishes) displays a powerful theology of abundance by sending a core group of its lay leaders to help plant a new congregation. As the new community develops, the sending parish might support this new community financially, with prayer, and in ways such as allowing it the use of their payroll system, photocopy equipment, office space, and the sharing of youth, outreach and hospitality ministries.

- A mother-daughter plant invites lay leaders into an act of discipleship and mission, as they venture together "into the unknown."
- This type of plant is may be lower-risk than a parachute drop (described next) and will likely become financially independent sooner.
- A potential pitfall is that the core team of Episcopalians may be tempted to create the new community in the image of their beloved home parish, or even attempt a "gentle colonialism" of the new neighborhood. The planter should do diligent work with the core and launch teams on their theology of mission and do everything possible to ensure that the core leadership matches the neighborhood demographic.

In a **Parachute Drop or "Apostolic" plant**, a planter begins forming core and launch teams without a sponsoring congregation. This is a notoriously difficult way to plant a new church but

may be necessary in some circumstances - particularly if a plant is geographically far from any other Episcopal parish, or if the target demographic is vastly different from the nearest established parishes.

- Before attempting a parachute drop, the planter must spend *at least* six months to a year in the neighborhood, making connections, forming relationships and building trust.
- The planter will still need and want the support of sister parishes and ministry colleagues. Ask for help and resources such as office space, sponsors for hospitality events, etc.
- Diocesan leaders will need to take on a larger supportive role in the parachute drop model. The diocese should also prepare to financially support the new ministry for much longer.

Missional Communities/non-traditional plants

There is some irony in talking about “missional communities” or “non-traditional” church plants. Many of the models we describe are actually far MORE ancient than the 20th century models we usually describe as traditional. However, there is energy around rediscovering and redefining these traditions for the people of our time. Because these new ministries and ministry leaders are constantly innovating, experimenting and responding to the unique context of their community, there is no standard way that they will unfold.

If launching a non-traditional New Episcopal Community, keep a few things in mind:

- A non/less “traditional” community will not necessarily build, or even own, its own building. This may be especially true in urban contexts where available property is scarce and expensive.
- Though metrics and goals may be different in a non-traditional plant, being able to define and work toward success and sustainability is just as important - for the sake of the planter, the new community and the diocese. We’ll talk more about this in the section on setting metrics and goals.
- “Membership” and “stewardship” are concepts that don’t quite work the same way in a less traditional community. A growing edge for these communities is to define what ownership and commitment look like in their context.
- Non-traditional and traditional communities are not in competition or at odds with each other. It is vital that innovative, new ministries and their leaders have strong relationships with other Episcopal parishes and with diocesan leaders.
- Most leaders of non-traditional communities are not paid full time by that ministry.

Though there are many models of non-traditional church plants, here are some of the models that we have found to be fruitful, and may have capacity for long-term resilience:

- **Dinner Churches:** Weave a simplified liturgy and sermon (or conversation about scripture) into the experience of a shared meal. The food is sometimes catered, potluck, held at a restaurant, or prepared together by the community.
- **House Churches:** Small, often networked, gatherings of people who may meet for prayer or another kind of worship in a home, laundromat, gym, or other gathering place.
- **Missional Communities:** Invite community and Christian commitment with or without a worshipping component. Some gather around a specific longing, or common “language”: nature, stewardship of creation, games, exercise, community health, play, or something else.

- **Intentional Communities:** Small, often networked, households of people who may commit to sharing a pattern of prayer, common meals, and service.
- **Holy Spaces:** Episcopal run gardens, cafes, co-work offices, or online spaces that invite people to engage with their community on a daily basis.



Coaching Point: Most missional (nontraditional) Episcopal communities are small (between 20 and 50 people). They respond well to our society’s growing hunger for intimacy, depth and authenticity. Their nontraditional gathering spaces tend to hold fewer people. Growing edges for these ministries are financial sustainability and developing a concept of ownership and stewardship in its members.



Coaching Point: As you discern a community model, look around and discover what resources are available to you. For example, unused church property, neighborhood businesses and space, etc.

Ethnic or Language Specific Communities

As neighborhood demographics shift, a parish or diocese might realize that they are called to start a New Episcopal Community with people from a different cultural, ethnic or language background. These efforts share many of the same experiences as other church plants, but a Latinx, Asian, African, Arab, or any other ethnic or language specific church plant comes with its own set of particularities and challenges.

There are at least three broad principles that may help you think about this kind of church plant.²

1. Intentionality.

- Is the Diocese planting this community in hopes that it will eventually become a parish? Or do you plan to support this community simply because it is part of the mission you share with God, regardless of whether it ever becomes self-sustaining?
- Do you intend to plant a “language-based church” or an “identity-based church?” As demographics shift and families establish roots in the U.S., younger generations may not speak the native language of their parents and grandparents).
- Will this community be “nested” within an existing mainstream congregation? Will it use a vacated church building? Would either of these locations be ideal based on their neighborhood demographics, or will you need to find another option?

2. **Citizenship.** Despite good intentions, minority communities are often marginalized. Prioritize behaviors, words and practices that incorporate them as full members of the Diocese. Consider:

- If you’re attempting a nested community, prepare the existing, mainstream congregation to be a good host. Remind them that different cultures can have different worship, parenting, and fellowship practices.

² See the Appendix, an outline of The Rev. Jesus Reyes’ presentation on Latinx church plants from June, 2020.

- Talk about your covenant of behavior when it comes to sharing things like the kitchen, sacristy, and children's Sunday School
 - Nurture a culture in which the leader of the minority community is seen as having equal status to the leader of the host congregation.
3. **Discipleship.** A minority community will likely play many roles in the lives of its members. Some will offer social services, such as assistance with tax preparation, immigration documents, etc. The community may also give immigrants and their families the opportunity to socialize with people who share the same language or culture and support one another through shared experience of hardship and joy. In a New Episcopal Community, consider how you will make Discipleship a top priority.

The Ethnic Ministries Office of The Episcopal Church has bountiful resources if you are considering a language or ethnic specific church plant. Contact them, along with the Church Planting and Redevelopment office, for guidance about discernment, ministry plans, materials, and coaching.³

Restarts

In a restart, a diocese may make the decision to close an established church - usually due to declining membership and diminished enthusiasm among remaining members to continue maintaining worship and/or church property in that location. At other times, a restart could look like a second attempt at a church plant that didn't go as planned the first time. Typically, a parish is allowed to lie fallow for some period of time before an attempt at a new start is made. This gives the remnants of the previous congregation time to grieve if they need to, and to find a new church home.

In a restart, do a lot of listening and pay careful attention to what the reputation of the previous parish has been in the neighborhood. The new leader and community will carry this baggage with them, for good or for ill! You will also be listening for what changes are happening in the neighborhood that the old congregation may not have heard. You might consider asking questions of neighbors like:

- What do you know/remember about the congregation that used to be in this neighborhood?
- When this church closed, what was the shape of their absence? How did it change the neighborhood for them not to be there?
- What do you think about when you pass this building?
- What are your hopes for this neighborhood? How could a new faith community, using this space, serve you?

A restart begins with a different kind of energy than a new plant, often because it already comes with a building. This is a positive in that a building can make your effort seem more "legitimate" to the public, and you aren't starting from scratch. However, be aware that the invitation to your core team and new members is different from that of a new plant, because the "where" has already

³ Visit the Episcopal Department of Ethnic Ministries' website: <https://episcopalchurch.org/department/ethnic-ministries>

been established for them. You will want to do discernment around how you will inspire co-creation and shared leadership with your team, given this context.



Coaching point: Closing, then restarting, a church can be quite painful for someone who was part of the old congregation. While most will support the new life that emerges out of their beloved church, a few may do their best to sabotage the new effort. A leader should be careful about how they invite the participation and leadership of past members. The diocese can help by making clear to the previous congregation that none of their traditions, bylaws, or leaders will be passed on to the new start. ⁴

Redevelopments

Redevelopments are congregations who have come to the realization that the old practices they utilized are no longer working, and who have made a commitment to prayerfully reengage with their neighbors and with one another. A redevelopment may be needed after a controversial church split, with cultural and generational shifts, or in a parish located in a neighborhood that had experienced a large demographic change. Redevelopment should not happen for the sake of mere survival. It should be a conscious and deliberate effort to see and engage anew the work of the Holy Spirit in a specific place.

The real work of redevelopment takes place outside of the church walls. It involves talking with neighbors and discovering together what role this parish plays in the community around it. Cleaning out filing cabinets and changing your music to something more contemporary don't necessarily hurt, but they won't help you learn more about your neighbors!

A parish is ripe for redevelopment when the existing community decides that they are ready and willing to change, learn, relinquish control, and invest time and resources into meeting their neighbors and following the Spirit. A congregation that is ready for this kind of work will find resources, coaching, and practicing community in the Episcopal Office of Church Planting and Redevelopment.⁵

THEME 6: DISCERNING A POINT LEADER

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to

⁴ Ezra 3:11-13 describes the rebuilding of the Temple after the Babylonian Exile. The restart is controversial and emotional. Consider using this text to ask how Christians might celebrate the faithfulness of a parish that has ended, while following the Spirit to the next new thing.

⁵ Visit the website for Genesis II: Revision and Renew for more about redevelopment work: <https://episcopalchurch.org/genesis-ii-re-vision-and-renew>

another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

Paul's words are true for any ministry context, but they have especially important implications for a potential church planter. The strengths and competencies of a strong planter are not all the same as those needed to pastor or manage an established ministry. For the wrong person, church planting work can be quite painful. Someone who is truly called to this kind of work will likely thrive in the challenge.

Who your point leader will be requires careful discernment. Whether you refer to this person as the "point leader," "church planter," "mission developer," or by another title⁶, the basic role is the same. This is the leader who casts and communicates vision for the new ministry, gathers people around that vision, nurtures a degree of order in the midst of chaos, and puts the structures in place for the enduring livelihood of the community. They are also responsible for developing and sharing goals and progress with diocesan leadership and, more often than not, doing a great deal of administrative work for the first few years.

Often, though not always, the planter will be the same visionary who first identified the opportunity for a new community. In other instances, a diocese has identified opportunity and is in search of someone with the particular gifts to carry out the ministry plan.

Though no one can accurately predict 100% of the time whether a particular leader will succeed at starting a sustainable, new church community, we have found that there are certain qualities that are very helpful in this work. Among these are:

- Having the vision and intrinsic motivation to start a new worshipping community
- Emotional resilience and the ability to manage conflict and personal failure
- A strong base of social relationships that support the call to leadership
- Entrepreneurial interest and experience
- A high capacity for risk taking
- Strong cross-cultural skills
- The ability to build a successful team, gather people into a shared vision and leadership
- Grit, including the perseverance to pursue long-term goals

These competencies, with others, are described in more detail in the Episcopal Church Assessment Grid, found in the Appendix.

The best way to assess a potential planter for these very specific gifts is to send them through an official discernment event through The Episcopal Church, or a comparable process through another denomination.

⁶ All terms used by various denominations to describe this role

Bi-vocational Clergy and Lay Point Leadership

In his book on bi-vocational ministry, Mark⁷ Edington points out that the “Standard Model” - meaning a seminary trained, full-time professional at the helm of every congregation - makes certain, and not always helpful, assumptions about what “church is.” To expansively reimagine the ministry of all baptized people in a community “is [in some ways] profoundly countercultural, at least in terms of traditional church culture, because it imagines a different way of structuring the ministry of the faith community, parish, or congregation, from the model we have received.”

Most New Episcopal Communities are already rediscovering and reimagining “what church is” for their context. In many cases, their intimacy, shared authority, reverent informality, and emphasis on diversity provide an alternative to corporate and program-dependent models of church. As few of these NEC’s are (so far) able to pay salary and benefits for a full-time clergy person or lay leader, they are well positioned by need and ethos to create new models for leadership and sustainability. Consider also that a bi-vocational leader, whether ordained or lay, brings the gift of broader understanding of where daily life and church life intersect and diverge.

If your team is discerning a bi-vocational leader, ask yourselves a few clarifying questions:

- What outcomes and goals are we expecting from this project? Can these goals be accomplished by a person who is doing this job fewer than 40 hours per week?
- What will the Diocese (and/or sending parish) do that enables the leader to spend the majority of their time building relationships and gathering community? Consider helping with financial administration and other administrative tasks.
- How will we participate in helping the point leader raise up and equip others for leadership in this new community?
- What can be done from the Diocesan end to make sure this leader receives adequate health benefits, access to child care, mental health care, spiritual direction, coaching, vacation time and pension?
- What expectations will we have of this leader in terms of reporting to the Bishop, or presenting to diocesan staff and council members? How will we shift ourselves in order to accommodate their secondary work schedule?
- How will this leader be invited to share what they are doing and learning with the wider community of lay and ordained leaders?

In the Bible, apostles rarely are rarely sent out alone. Jesus sends out his disciples two by two, and Paul is accompanied by Barnabas, Silas or Timothy on his missions. Commissioning a church planting team is wise in any scenario, but especially if the point leader(s) are expected to be bi-vocational.

THEME 7: ACCEPTING RISK

Any effort to launch a new community involves a level of risk. Church planting is an offering of the Jesus we love, the church we love, and our own hearts to people who have the freedom to choose whether or not to say “yes” to our invitation. To do this work, we have to risk people saying

⁷ Edington, Mark: “Bivocational: Returning to the Roots of Ministry.” <https://www.bivocational.church/welcome/>

“no,” experiments failing, and money and time running out. The promises we are invited to trust are that our most powerful learning comes from failure, that transformation comes slowly but surely, and that the world truly does yearn for the Good News of God in Jesus. A conversation about the spirituality of risk is crucial at the discernment stage of a new church community.

When talking about risk, make sure that the Bishop, diocesan financial agent, any sending parishes, and the church planter are all part of the conversation. This is the moment to be vulnerable, and to verbally clarify the sense of mission that is driving you. In this conversation, you might read Ecclesiastes 11:4-6

Whoever observes the wind will not sow; and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.

Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother’s womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.

In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

Questions like these should be asked of everyone involved:

- “What’s at stake for you in this effort?”
- “What are you willing to risk so that we can take this step of faith together?”
- “What are you not willing to risk?”
- “What would be the consequences of not taking this risk?”
- “What would be possible in our Diocese if we gave this project the freedom to learn from failure and faithfulness?”



Coaching Point: Diocesan leaders should remember that the church planter assumes most of the personal risk in this work. Consider how you will care for them when the stress gets high, and things don’t go as planned.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus praises faithfulness far more often than he condemns failure. Think of the Parable of the Talents, Jesus’ entreaty not to “hide your light under a bushel,” and his defense of Mary “wasting” three hundred denarii worth of perfume. Of course, not all risk taking is faithful action. Use this Season of Discernment to pray the words of the song by John Bell:

“O Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few. Walk one step before me, I will follow you.”

Season 2: Planting

THEME 1: CASTING YOUR VISION

As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)

Jesus issues his vision in the form of an invitation: “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” A strong but simple invitation lets people know who you are, what you are planning to do, and sets the tone for how people will be together in this new community.

You may often hear church people adapt the language of Silicon Valley to describe their vision and plan for a new, “entrepreneurial” ministry. Leaders are asked to “prepare your elevator speech,” “pitch your idea,” or “sell us on your vision.” This language may make sense to you and work for your team. If you are more comfortable using theological, or biblical, language, that’s okay too. What is important is that you can articulate your mission in a way that compels others to join you on this journey. It will also be crucial that you are able to present your vision in a way that people who aren’t familiar with “churchy” language are able to understand it!

As you collect thoughts around your vision, ask yourself:

- Who do I believe Jesus is?
- What do I believe Jesus makes possible in this neighborhood?
- What is the role of this new community in the larger story of Salvation?
- What am I inviting people to do?

Repeat the questions in this exercise with members of your core team. Can you come to a common statement about who Jesus is, and how this new community is compelled to follow him?

THEME 2: TRAINING

Church planting presents a whole new set of challenges from working in an established congregation. It is helpful to attend some kind of formal training, whether online, in person or through an apprenticeship. Training will help equip/hone your skill set for this work. Attending an event will also introduce you to fellow planters who will pray for you, support you, and help combat the inherent isolation experienced by most point leaders at some time in their journey.

We will list some of the topics in which some type of training is crucial. Most, though not all, of them are helpful no matter what kind of new community you are hoping to start. Some of these we cover briefly in this guide, others make excellent one-on-one coaching points, and many you will want to attend an in-person training to make the most of:

- Building and nurturing your core team
- Engaging and networking in your neighborhood
- Telling your story and sharing your vision
- Stewardship and fundraising
- Developing goals and metrics
- Communicating and reporting to Diocesan structures
- Designing and leading worship in new communities
- Self-care, and maintaining a healthy social base

Options for Training

Learning never ceases for a church planter. However, it may be helpful, within your first year of this ministry, to attend an in-person training event for church planters. A 3-5-day training will cover most of the topics above and can be supplemented by online gatherings, participation in a cohort of practitioners, coaching, and additional training events as your ministry progresses. The Episcopal Church offers training for planters and mission developers. We've also found that even "bootcamps" led by other denominations can provide a very helpful foundation that will give you confidence as you launch this new ministry.

Coaching

There's almost nothing more valuable than coaching when it comes to launching a new community from scratch. Studies across denominations show that one of the best predictors of success is whether a new ministry leaders are receiving coaching. It is helpful from the Discerning Season through the Harvest Season, and for just about every step in between.

A coach can help you develop your ministry plan, refine priorities, and stick to desired outcomes; plus, they will encourage and support you along the way. A coach is different from a mentor; they are professionally trained to ask powerful questions that lead to actionable items, to help identify barriers to progress, and to hold you accountable to your goals. This is why the best coaches are outside your supervisory loop, and not a part of your diocesan system.

As you choose a coach, think about what you need out of the experience. Consider things like:

- What stage of the journey are we in? For example, some coaches are especially good at guiding Discernment Teams through the process of looking through and interpreting neighborhood demographic data. Others may have more skill and energy around coaching you through the steps needed to nurture your core team and prepare for launch. Still others may be better at walking with you through the process of planning for succession and leaving your plant.

- Do we know the next steps, or do we need someone to tell us what to do? Some coaches describe their style as “content rich,” meaning that they function more like a consultant, giving direction based on their own success at starting new ministries and coaching those who have. Others are “content free,” meaning that they will help you develop and execute a plan to find the resources you need in order to do your work well.
- What is our ministry model, and what part of our plan do we need coaching around? Do we need a coach who is familiar with the church planting world, or should we seek out someone who coaches entrepreneurs in the business world (or both?)
- What are you and your team’s noticeable weaknesses? Do you have plenty of ideas but need help with follow through? Or do you need someone to challenge you to take more risks?
- Does your coach need to live in the same city as you, or can you do coaching over the phone?

It’s fine to interview several coaches before settling on one with whom you know you can have a strong, productive relationship. There may come a time when it’s time to say goodbye to one coach and find someone with a different perspective or skill set.

Coaching can often also be helpful for core teams, or for diocesan leaders involved in a church plant.

Have a conversation with your diocesan leadership about who will pay for the coaching, and how frequently (we find that at least once a month is needed in order to be truly helpful).

THEME 3: EMBRACING YOUR ROLE

The Episcopal Church’s network of diocesan and denominational relationships can be a strong advantage for church planting and starting new communities. When working together, we have all the gifts we need to discern, equip, resource, and send out leaders to do the frontier-work of God.

Consider this passage from Acts of the Apostles:

“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. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”
(13:1-3)

Like Paul and Barnabas, New Episcopal Community leaders should go out with the sense that they are “being sent” by the wider community of believers. They are accountable to Jesus and the Gospel, of course, but also to the shared faith and hope of their diocese. Supporting parishes and dioceses must commit to the spiritual role of being “Senders,” and do everything they can to equip the ones they Send with the tools and prayers they need.

Many new communities fail because they do not have adequate support from their sending parish, diocese or diocesan leaders. Sometimes this is because the “Senders” want to distance themselves from the risk being taken; or because they simply do not know what their missional leaders need from them. At other times, it’s the planter who withdraws, self-isolates and does not reach out for the tools they need.

Before launching a new community, discern who is playing what role, and how these roles fit into the biblical model of “senders” and “ones sent.” Some roles to make sure are covered are:

Point leader (a.k.a. church planter, mission developer) - the visionary leader, chief instigator, and person who will lead a core team in carrying out the mission they’ve been sent on

Core team - Others who are being nurtured by the point leader, and sent forth into the mission field by the wider church

Sending parish(s) - Parishes that are supporting the new community with people, money, resources and prayers

Sending Bishop - the bishop to whom the point leader is accountable

Fiscal Agent - the parish or diocesan bookkeeper who will help the new community receive and account for gifts, and eventually set up their own accounting structures

Diocesan Advocate - an officially designated person who will help the new ministry navigate its diocesan system, and advocate for the church plant with diocesan staff and the wider diocese.

With your team, read the passage from Acts 13 again.

- What does it feel like to be sent? To be the sender?
- What do you feel is the responsibility of your role?
- What do you sense you will have to surrender control of, in order to fulfill your role?

THEME 4: COVENANTING

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the

believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.’ (Acts 15:22-27)

Among the many other profound implications of this text is that it demonstrates an early example of shared mission and commitment. In Acts 13, the church leaders laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, sending them out to preach the Gospel in unreached places. Two chapters later, when the messengers’ authority is questioned, the “apostles and elders” come to their aid by sending Judas Barsabbas and Silas to confirm their teaching on Gentile conversion. This affirmation by the wider church gladdens and strengthens the new community in Antioch. Similarly, having the blessing and consensus of the wider church will strengthen a church planting effort today.

The Episcopal Book of Occasional Services, 2018 offers liturgical resources for blessing church planters, starting a new community, and consecrating space for a new community.

Episcopal tradition and polity are that any new community that wishes to be Episcopal in identity then falls under the authority and canonical requirements of the diocese in which it is located. The collective experience and wisdom of Episcopal planters is that a new community has its best chance of success and longevity when its leadership shares a common vision and mutual accountability with diocesan leaders. New communities that don’t share vision and accountability with their diocesan leaders may still grow and thrive, but will likely experience pain, misunderstanding and lack of support.

Before launching a new community, a serious conversation, or series of conversations, should take place between the Diocesan Bishop and the church planter. Sometimes we refer to this as a period of “Covenanting.” Be sure to include all the major players in these conversations, including the church planter, the diocesan bishop, other bishops or Canons who may have direct authority over the new church start, the diocesan CFO, and a member of your diocesan council or parish development committee. The more partners and witnesses to the Covenanting process, the better!

As you begin the Covenanting process, read Acts 15:22-35 together. What does this passage say to you about the relationship between the “senders” and the “ones sent?” What aspects of this church planting mission must you agree on? What might it be okay to disagree about?

Questions for Covenanting may include:

- Does this vision for a new community fit into the Dioceses’ larger strategy for mission? How?
- What would success look like for this ministry?
- What is expected from this ministry in terms of financial self-sustainability? At what level and for how long will the Diocese support it? What are the other resources the diocese will put toward this ministry?

- What will happen if the ministry doesn't become financially self-sustaining in the amount of time hoped for?
- What are the goals and outcomes by which we will gauge success?
- How do we covenant to talk about this ministry with the wider diocese?
- How often will we meet together to discuss progress and challenges, and what kind of behavioral norms will we commit to when discussing success and failure?
- How will we commit to talking about the legacy of this new community if it should end?

The Covenanting process may also include the Letter of Agreement a new ministry leader has with either their Diocese, or their sending parish. Some elements of a Letter of Agreement that may be especially helpful for church planters are:

- A written understanding of salary and benefits, including how long and at what level the diocese will fund them. A commitment to annual re-evaluation based on the growth and stewardship practices of the new community would be helpful.
- A list of questions that will be discussed in an annual mutual ministry review.
- Have continuing education funds built into the Letter of Agreement, as well as funds for spiritual direction, coaching and mental health care.
- A commitment to how long salary and benefits will last if a decision is made to end the new church plant.

THEME 5: DEVELOPING A MINISTRY PLAN

Developing a ministry plan is a way to clarify your path forward, record hoped-for goals and outcomes, wrap your mind around finances, and keep grounding spiritual principles in front of you. A ministry plan can also be a helpful tool for holding yourself accountable to following through on the vision, keeping your core team on the same page, and for presenting to diocesan leaders, councils, and others who have oversight of your work.

Ministry, of course, is full of unexpected turns. Your plan should be agile enough to adapt to new learning about your neighborhood, the creativity of your team members, unexpected financial twists, and the unwieldy movement of the Holy Spirit. Make sure your diocesan leaders and core team understand that a ministry plan is a tool, not a prescription. Keep the doors of communication wide open so that they know when edits and adaptations are being made, and why.

Your coach can work with you on developing your ministry plan and will help hold you accountable to the deadlines and outcomes you decide on. A sample Ministry Plan template is included in the Appendix of this manual. Any strong ministry plan will include:

- A statement of vision, and answers to your discernment questions of “Why,” “Who,” “Where” and “What.”
- A strategy for exploring your neighborhood context, including finding demographic information, visiting local businesses, having conversations, and answering key questions you may have.
- Goals for convening a core team
- A vision with measurable goals about how you will launch this new community

- A strategy for networking and communicating with other parishes and your diocese about the ministry
- A short-term (1 year) and longer term (3-7 year) financial strategy, based on your model of ministry.

THEME 6: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.' (Luke 25:37)

In the Planting Season, you will take neighborhood exploration to the next level. This is when you and your core team will begin to make this neighborhood, *your* neighborhood, and see the people there as your neighbors. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the neighbor isn't the one who receives help, but the one who gives mercy. In the first weeks and months of church planting, you will likely receive far more help and mercy than you are able to give. Neighbors will serve you in restaurants, humor your inquiries for information and directions, and accept or decline your invitation to deeper conversation.

Here are a few things you may be doing in your neighborhood:

Living with the community. It can be hard to know what to do on the first day of a church plant. There's no worship to plan, no hospital visits to make. Instead, simply start living life in the neighborhood where you hope to be planting. Have morning coffee at a local shop, walk or run the streets, befriend the tellers at the bank. Consider creating a routine so that you are in predictable places at certain times during the week.

Networking. Through your life with this neighborhood, you will start to form a series of social networks. Attend neighborhood association and business owner meetings. Get connected through any neighborhood apps. Have meetings, formal and informal, with other business owners, educators, and religious leaders in the area. Let them know that you're interested in starting a new community in that area and ask about their own stories of entrepreneurship and/or ministry. Be humble in these conversations - don't talk as though you will be bringing something

missing to their community. Instead, tell them your idea, and ask what service they think a New Episcopal Community might provide.

One-to-one conversations. If there is someone whose wisdom you'd like to source more deeply, or a person who you think might be interested in joining your journey, invite them to a one on one conversation. Have a budget that you can use to buy them coffee, tea, or lunch (always at a local spot!) Ask for their story and listen, listen, listen. After listening, share your vision for a new community, and ask for feedback! Over the course of planting a new community, you should find yourself having hundreds of these kinds of conversations. See the section on "Where?" in the Discerning Season for more ideas about who to invite to a one-to-one conversation, and what questions you might ask them!

THEME 7: CONVENING YOUR CORE TEAM

"I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another." (John 15:15-17)

Having a strong core team is a nonnegotiable of church planting work. You need to have a core group of healthy people around you who share a commitment to the vision and are willing and capable of doing what it takes to make that vision reality. Some of your core team members may also have served on the discernment team. In general, diocesan leaders are not part of the core team; while Bishops or Canons may wish to sit in on occasional gatherings or hear a regular update on your progress, core team members are the people who want to belong to the new community you are starting.

Like the discernment team, core team members are not merely a council of advice, nor are they just "worker bees." These are also the people who will model for others what it means to belong and commit to the new community.

Characteristics to look for in a core team member:

- Spiritual maturity: someone with wisdom in their life of faith, a deep knowledge of who Jesus is for them, and their own expectations of "what church is"
- Emotional health and maturity: can host themselves and others, can tolerate and manage conflict, and is participating in this new community because they view it as a call to discipleship (not because they've burned bridges elsewhere)

- Has a “preparation” mindset about church: someone who is interested in helping build the Kingdom and the structures of the church; doesn’t need a “finished product” in which to worship
- Represents the target demographic: The majority of your core team should represent the people you are trying to reach, whether residents of a particular neighborhood, families or singles, younger adults, or members of a specific ethnic or language group.
- Brings needed skills to the table: Core team members should represent skills and competencies that the planter is less strong in (financial management, attention to detail, communication, etc.) The Clifton Strengths Finder is a good tool for assessing the top themes brought forth in your team members.



Coaching point: Emotionally unhealthy people can be drawn to a new church community because they are seeking love, acceptance and, sometimes, an opportunity to lead. Of course, it’s important to express love and belonging to everyone. However, people who arrive angry with their past church, with untreated mental illness, or who come during a time of upheaval in their personal life may not make good core team members.

It requires long term commitment to launch a new ministry. This commitment is needed from the core team members as much as from the point leader. Be very specific in your invitation to potential core team members about what you are asking of them. Based on your ministry model and context, you might be asking core team members to:

- Leave their home parish and attend your new community for at least six months to a year
- Tithe (or give sacrificially) to the new community
- Join you in having one on one conversations with potential community members, and even host people in their homes
- Tell others about the new community that is being formed.
- Talking to your core team members about financial stewardship. It’s never too early for full financial transparency, and for setting an expectation about what it will take to eventually bring this ministry to its defined point of sustainability.

Expect that some people will not want, or will not be able, to join your core team. These people may be supportive of your effort in other ways. You may also find that core team members leave, by choice or by necessity, at various points in the development of your community. Just as it is a very specific call to lead a New Episcopal Community, so it’s also a particular vocation to be part of a core team. Allowing the possibility of a “no” from some folks will ensure a strong team of people who God is calling to help you establish the new community.

THEME 8: LAUNCHING YOUR MINISTRY

So they took Paul and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.' Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, 'We will hear you again about this.' At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. (Acts 17:19-21, 32-34)

Healthy, Small Starts

Paul spends his first visit to Athens testing the waters. His speech at the Areopagus is a “pop up shop” of sorts – he preaches the Gospel, then steps back to see what seeds may have been planted. Some grow immediately, others fall on rocky soil, and still others may take longer to root.

Consider how new businesses launch these days. It's not uncommon to see entrepreneurs get their start at farmer's markets, or in pop-up storefronts. A coffee or popsicle shop might start out as a small cart on the sidewalk before renting or purchasing a building. A specialty t-shirt company may start out selling only online before expanding to a physical shop. Particularly if your new community is imagining a less traditional model, a smaller scale, less risky “proof of concept” venture may be a good way to start out. For example, consider launching a dinner church by meeting just once a month for the first few months, and with volunteer leadership. If dinner church turns out to be a compelling way to gather your target demographic, and it takes off, that's when you might move to a weekly service and begin asking for funding. Consider setting a goal (“if we get x number of people at monthly dinner church, or if x number of attendees see this as their only, or primary, worship experience, we'll move to every week”).

Inviting a launch team

Another entrepreneurial concept is the Grand Opening. This isn't inconsistent with a healthy small start – most businesses have days or weeks of “soft openings” in order to make sure their staff, equipment and workflow are working and ready to go. “Preview” or “practice” worship is a way to build momentum, prepare your core team, and invite others to support you. Many planters say that gathering people before their official launch was vital to building community and excitement.

Inviting people to be part of a launch (or Grand Opening) team is a wonderful way to include folks who could not commit to being part of your core team, but who want to support you and the new community. Some may be people who you are hoping will become members of the new community. Others may be folks from surrounding churches or even neighborhood businesses. Many will be people you've had a one-on-one conversation with at some point in the

Discerning or Seed season. Be intentional with your invitation to launch team members! You might ask them to:

- Commit to attending services with your community for six weeks, or for another amount of time.
- Serve as a greeter, reader, or coffee hour host at your first public service, or be part of the setup/breakdown team
- Commit to bringing a new friend to church for the first six weeks.

Communication and Support

Use your networking skills to communicate with your community, neighborhood and diocese about your launch! Work with a coach to determine what means of communication will reach people in your target area. Social media and advertising are great, but don't forget that a personal invitation goes a long way. Let other congregations know about your launch by asking them to say a special prayer for your new community in the weeks leading up to it, and by asking them to contribute something special (communion vessels, musicians, or even hosting your first few coffee hours). Ask your bishop and other diocesan staff to be talking up your launch with the parishes they see and visit – reminding them of their crucial spiritual role as “senders.”

Funding your new community

Almost all church planters (whether they were successful at this themselves or not) will advise you to talk about money early and often with your community. Grants – such as those for New Episcopal Communities – will help give you the capital to experiment, launch, purchase needed supplies, and sometimes help pay your mission developer for the first year or two. It is true that some new communities (particularly those serving lower income people) will always be partially dependent on grants. However, most will need to achieve some degree of financial self-sufficiency when grant timelines run out.

A fundraising course for non-profit leaders can be an invaluable way for you to gain experience, and comfort, with talking about and raising money with your community. If your new community is launching (or hoping to launch) a social enterprise, there are religiously affiliated consultants who offer classes and will coach you one on one.

It is important that your diocese make as much of a financial contribution as possible. This might be a line item in their budget, a grant from a church planting fund, or in-kind contributions (like the use of a church-owned building, office space, or equipment). Be sure to have a transparent conversation about how long diocesan support will last, what it takes for that support to be renewed from year to year, and when and how it will taper off. See our sections on “Defining Sustainability” and “How long will this take?” for a fuller discussion on diocesan support.

Season 3: Growing

THEME 1: DEFINING OUTCOMES AND GOALS

“But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)

What difference does your community want to make in its neighborhood?

What does this ministry make possible in the world that wasn't there before?

For whose, or what's, sake do you hope to transform lives and perspectives?

These are the kinds of questions that will help determine your community's hoped-for outcomes. They should first be asked in the Discernment and Seed Seasons (see the section on “why” start a New Episcopal Community). The Growth Season is a good opportunity to remind yourself, and your diocesan leaders, of those hoped-for outcomes. It's also the moment to re-evaluate what goals you'll need to set for yourself in order to live into those outcomes.

There is, of course, a degree to which the results of any new community cannot be predicted, controlled or measured. Budgets, spreadsheets and parochial report measurables fall short as a means of telling the compelling stories of transformation that happen in these communities. However, it's also important to remember that a new church community represents (usually deep) emotional, spiritual and financial investment on the part of the planter, the core team, the diocese and others. It's crucial to honor that investment by discussing what outcomes are hoped for in this effort, and how they will be measured.

A significant responsibility for the church planter is to initiate and lead the conversation about outcomes and goals. *If you do not name the goals for yourself and your community, it is highly likely they will be named for you by people who are less involved and invested in the neighborhood.* For example, you might know that the best goal for your community involves getting 50 people actively engaged in weekday ministry groups. However, if this isn't explicitly stated, the diocesan leaders who help fund you might assume that Sunday attendance is the best way to measure your progress. Learn to talk about your goals frequently, and with language and images your team can understand.

Stated goals may demand flexibility, but they do offer some sort of roadmap by which to evaluate whether your new ministry is living into the vision the Holy Spirit has given you - and a way to show others what you've accomplished. Reviewing goals and outcomes will help you know whether to keep investing time, energy and resources the same way, or whether a pivot is needed. They can also represent a clear commitment between the planter and their sponsoring

parish or diocese, and a mutually agreed upon way that the planter will present their case for future support and ongoing funding.

How are Goals set?

Think back to the conversations you have had about mission. What is this community for? What difference is it making in the world? In the scripture passage above, Jesus instructs his disciples to “strive first for the Kingdom of God.” What should that look like in your context?

After clarifying your motivations for starting this new community at all, begin asking:

- How will we know we’re being successful?
- What resources do we need to track?
- What actions do we need to track?

For example, a new community might define their ultimate desired outcome as proclaiming the Gospel with Asian Americans, who have historically been underrepresented in our denomination, and whose fuller presence in worship and leadership will benefit the diocese as a whole. As a response, the point leader may plan to create a parallel community of first- and second-generation Korean Americans who will fund their own half-time priest and share worship space with Saint Timothy’s established Anglo congregation. Measurable goals, for the first year, might be for the church planter to have one hundred one on one conversations Asian American neighbors, and build a core group of ten families who are interested in helping launch the new church.

Other examples of measurable goals might be:

- What percentage of our congregation is involved in service and/or leadership?
- When our community worships together, do we reflect the ethnic and economic makeup of our neighborhood?
- How many members of our community have never before been part of an Episcopal congregation?

Of course, average Sunday attendance and a community’s plate and pledge total can also be measures of success. If this is true for your community, be clear with your core team, diocesan leaders (and with yourself) about why these numbers reflect the Kingdom-driven mission of your community. However, because budget and ASA are inherited ways of measuring success, most new communities will instead find themselves in the position of explaining why these goals do not tell the full story of their hopes and results. When communicating with diocesan leaders and other stakeholders, tell a story that connects “inputs” with “outputs.” How are resources being used, and why do the specific outcomes they are resourcing matter? Ongoing conversation is crucial.

THEME 2: DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

(Matthew 7:24-25)

Many of the ministries we undertake are meant to address a specific, time sensitive need. Others are seasonal, meaning they last for a few months or years, transform many lives and hearts, and come to a natural end. Most church plants have some expectation that their community will endure for a number of years, make a long-term commitment to the neighborhood they're in, invest in relationships, and develop a consistent pastoral presence with those who come for spiritual refuge and growth.

You and your core team may spend a good bit of time asking what it means for this new community to be "sustainable." You will likely be asking it over and over, from the Discernment Season through the Harvest. Include Diocesan leaders who support and have authority over your work in these conversations. Ask questions like:

- What kind of house is God calling us to build? To extend the metaphor, are we called to build a family home or apartment complex? A palace? Or to pitch a tent?
- What would it look like to build that home, palace, or tent on "rock?"

Just as in the conversation about goals and outcomes, your community will be best served if it is the church planter and their core team who define what sustainability means in their context. The typical, default definition in The Episcopal Church is to define sustainability as "one full time priest per congregation." But we are increasingly seeing that this traditional definition isn't sufficient to describe the mission and ministry of most new communities. As the point leader of an NEC, take ownership of the sustainability question and encourage people on your team to look creatively beyond the default definition.

There are multiple dimensions to the question of sustainability. The first is around the community of people itself.

- Is there a core group of people, in addition to the planter, that is committed to gathering around the vision for this ministry?
- Does the ministry have a core group of leaders who are equipped and willing to carry on the ministry after the departure of their visionary leader?
- Are there systems of accountability in place that will continue to nurture this community after the departure of the planter?

The second dimension is financial sustainability.

- What are the resources - including monetary resources - that must be invested in order to reach desired outcomes?
- How many paid hours of point leadership are necessary for this new community to carry out its ministry?
- Is it expected that the community will self-sustain through pledges? Through grants and gifts from other parishes? Or is it expected to be permanently supported by the Diocese?
- Could the community adjust and continue if Diocesan or grant funding had to end?



Coaching Point: It will be important for the planter and her/his diocesan leadership to be clear who their target demographic is when setting community sustainability goals, and to do diligence to demographic work in their neighborhood. We know that a college chaplaincy, for example, will be in constant transition. The same is becoming truer of ministries with young adults and young professionals, who are relocating with greater frequency than they did some decades ago.

THEME 3: HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO TAKE?

New Episcopal Communities aren't fast or easy. A planter and their diocese are committing to a minimum of three or four years to build a healthy community, and often seven years or more before that community can financially sustain its own leadership and program costs. To use a culinary metaphor, church plants are cooked in the crock pot, not the microwave.

There do tend to be certain intervals where you can take the top off the crock pot, just to make sure the stew is boiling, and the flavors are mixing together. Likewise, there are points in time where you can check to see if a new community is going to be seasonal, or a long-term endeavor. Often, the 3rd year is a healthy time for this kind of ministry review. At this point, you might be asking questions like:

- What were our desired outcomes when we first started dreaming of this community? Are those still the outcomes we are hoping for, or have they changed?
- What goals did we set for the first 2-3 years, and how many of those have we reached?
- What have we learned about the neighborhood and people we're hoping to reach? Is their ability to commit to our community seasonal or long term?
- Does our point leader have the ability to continue providing visionary leadership for another two, three or more years?

If your primary reason for asking "how long?" is financial, know that the answer will be highly contextual. During the Discernment Season, you probably did plenty of research into income levels in your chosen area. Knowing the giving capacity of people in your area will give you an idea of how many members you will need in order to raise your budget goal. You probably also considered what percentage of your target demographic are unchurched. In a highly unchurched area, it will take 2-3 years for people to learn what it means to be a contributing member of a faith community. This is another reason why "taking the top off the crockpot" and doing a thorough ministry evaluation at about year 3 can give you insight into what direction God is taking this community.

Most dioceses fear failure. Often this prevents them from taking the church planting risk at all, or from investing enough upfront to give the ministry solid footing. On the other end of the spectrum, the fear of failure can also create a reluctance to have a vulnerable, authentic conversation about seasonality and longevity. The result then is that a diocese funds the ministry for longer than is needed. Avoid misunderstandings and surprises by having the “how long is this going to take” conversation transparently and often.

THEME 4: COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Sharing vision, goals and hoped-for outcomes necessitates regular communication and accountability between the church planter and their diocesan leadership. In the first year of a plant, we recommend a regularly scheduled meeting once a month. During this time, the planter can communicate progress, setbacks, agreed upon numerical measurements, upcoming goals, as well as ask for things they need from the Diocese in order to support their work. Depending on how the project progresses, a quarterly meeting in the second-fourth years is helpful, followed by at least bi-annually after year four.

If you are the church planter, you may find yourself needing to initiate these check-in conversations. If this is the first church plant in your diocese for many years, you may find that your diocesan leaders aren't trained in identifying benchmarks, creating goals, or naming possibility for a brand new community. It's up to you to fill them in on what you're learning through training and coaching, and to help them understand what is important to communicate about on a regular basis.

AGENDA

Both the church planter and their diocesan leadership should be clear about who is going to attend each check-in event, and what constants will be on the agenda. An example agenda might include:

- A check-in question asked of all participants (“How have you felt the Holy Spirit moving this week?”)
- Ask the church planter to share a story of spiritual transformation that has occurred in the new community since you last met.
- Ask the planter how their social base and coaching relationship are holding up.
- Report on agreed-upon measurements (attendance at worship, persons elevated into leadership, financial reports, etc.)
- Ask: what are our mutual goals for this ministry in the next month/quarter/year? What does the planter need from the diocese in order to meet those goals? What does the diocese need from the planter?

BEHAVIORAL COVENANTING

Because it involves such high risk, church planting can be emotionally messy work for both the planter and her diocesan leaders. It can be helpful to establish a covenant of behavioral norms for your check-ins. Some questions you might ask as you draft a covenant are:

- Who initiates each check-in meeting? Who crafts the agenda?
- Where will we meet (at the diocesan office? At the church plant site?) Who will be there?
- Is the content of our check-ins confidential? With whom and under what circumstances can it be shared?
- How will we covenant to talk about experiments that fail?

The fruit of regular, constructive communication between church planter and their diocesan leaders cannot be overstated. We see again and again that a relationship built on mutual trust, accountability, creativity and problem solving is directly related to a new community's chance of long-term sustainability. Being in regular conversation now will spare you much pain, shame and surprise further down the road. God has shaped our branch of the Jesus Movement into one that cherishes relationship and shared mission – use these to your advantage!

Repotting (Pivoting)

A graceful pivot can become a necessity for an innovative ministry. You might realize that your personality as a leader doesn't actually lend itself to the type of ministry you were asked to start, or that different people are coming than who were your initial target demographic. The restaurant your community met in closes, a vital core team member gets a new job and moves away, a social enterprise doesn't take off as expected, or a recession hits and your diocese has to withdraw funding. However, your community is strong and valuable to those who are part of it, and it's not time to quit. It's time to pivot or change direction.

Consider the following passage from Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16:

6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Arriving at a pivot point might feel like running into a wall. No matter how well developed your ministry plan was, unforeseen circumstances can and will pop up. Or sometimes a pivot will give you the opportunity to correct course from a plan that wasn't fully baked. Possibly, as in this passage from Acts, God wants you to pivot because taking the other road will lead you toward more people who need the good news of the Gospel.

Like the beautiful moves you see executed by Olympic skaters, pivots are more difficult than they look from the outside. Unlike skaters, you are leading a whole community of people through the turn - not to mention convincing your Diocesan leadership and key funders that this pivot is necessary and will be fruitful. *Trust is the most vital component needed in a new community to execute a successful pivot.*

A Pivot will compel you to host new conversations about your community's "Why?" and "Who?" Though it will be tempting to skip to the "what next?" conversation, this is an opportune moment to build a solid base for your pivot by asking your community and supporters to restate their missional theology and reasons for being together at all. Some powerful questions that might be helpful to lay on the table are:

- What are the crossroads we find ourselves at?
- What seeds have we sown that will only blossom if we re-pot the new growth?
- What are we willing to sacrifice in order to let the seeds we've sown blossom?

- What is at stake for each of you (the point leader, core team members, Bishop, etc.) if this ministry pivots?

If you are the ministry's point leader, here are some of the things that will help you lead gracefully in this time of change:

- Do some reading, praying, and seeking out the wisdom of mentors about how to be a strong, trust-worthy leader in times of transition.
- Create a timeline for your community's pivot. Your timeline should give ample time to prepare for the transition, while being careful not to lose the momentum created by the excitement of change.
- Talk with Diocesan leaders about how news of the ministry's changes will be communicated across the diocese. Pivots can be powerful moments to laud innovation for the sake of mission, and to model flexibility and adaptation for established parishes.

You may be worried about whether your new community members will come with you to a new location, or new model of ministry. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. People who share your vision and investment in the community will likely be willing – perhaps even enthusiastic – about the Re-Potting season. Seeing your commitment to the ministry (and to them) will give them the courage to venture with you into the unknown! Understand, however, that change is difficult for people who come to church out of a need for security and consistency. There likely will be folks who can't or won't make the pivot with you – and that is okay.

How Diocesan Leaders can be supportive:

- Participate as fully as possible in conversations leading up to the transition. Support the new community in answering the “who,” “why” and “what” questions, and offer your perspective on how this transition could fit into the Diocese' broader strategy for mission.
- Use the language of “pivot” and “opportunity” rather than “failure” when communicating with the wider Diocese about a new community. The last thing you want is for other parishes to decide that the new ministry isn't worth supporting, or, even worse, for them to decide that the uncertainty and risk of planting a new community isn't worth it.
- Be willing to consider adjusting your funding strategy for this new community in light of a pivot.
- If the proposed pivot does not fall within your missional or financial strategy, and cannot, make that known to the point leader and core team.
- Check up on your point leader frequently during this time. Assure them of your support and prayers. Help pay for other resources they need - coaching, counseling, spiritual direction, etc.

Season 6: Composting

*“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:38-39)*

Not every church plant, restart, or missional community goes as we hoped it would. Neighborhood dynamics weren't what you expected them to be, a financial recession hit, the point leader moves away or decides they aren't called to this work after all, the core team never gels, or the momentum and energy just aren't there. The way you end a new community, and the nutritious compost you choose to receive from it, are just as important and missionally driven as the launch was. The compassion with which you close a ministry - or lack thereof - will be noticed by the community and neighborhood... not to mention other potential church planters in your diocese.

If you are the point leader of this new ministry, you are preparing to make a tough decision. Very likely, this church plant is your “baby.” Ending it will feel like letting down people you've grown to love, and who have labored next to you to make the vision a reality. Closing will feel like failure. Remember, however, that in light of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, Christians are compelled to experience failure very differently than the world understands it.

For the church planter

If you are the point leader, you may feel that it is your job to pastor this new community to the end. Very possibly, you are the best person to cast a vision for how this ministry will wind down with dignity and purpose. Prepare to host powerful conversations with your community members that don't shy away from the current reality. Now is the time to be vulnerable and transparent about finances and other challenges. Or, if it feels appropriate, ask a strong facilitator to host these conversations with you. Some revealing questions might be:

- What time is it in the life of our community?
- What is the lasting impact we've made on individuals, and on our community? Would we be okay with stopping here?
- What's at stake for us, as a community, and as individuals, in this moment?
- What is God's hope for us today?

Consider reading the following passage from Luke with your community:

“On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,

praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him." (Luke 17:11-16)

Then, ask:

- What are the mighty acts of God that we have witnessed in this community?
- What are the moments of healing, transformation, and love that have happened among us for which we are thankful?
- What are the seeds we've sown that will only bloom after our season together is over?

Remember to care for yourself throughout the process of nurturing your community to the end.

Have conversations with your spouse, partner and other family members about what closing this ministry means for you financially, emotionally and spiritually. Fear is a natural feeling in this season. You may be worried that the closed church plant will leave you with a stigma, and that it will be hard to ever find another job in the church. You may be worried about letting down the core team who has labored alongside you. Allow others (lay leaders, diocesan leaders, mentors, friends, a spiritual director, etc.) to journey with you and help bear the burden of this loss. Take heart that you are participating in "costly" learning, not easy learning. What you've learned about mission, who Jesus is, and leadership will

For diocesan leaders

Diocesan leaders have a crucial role to play in the ending of a new community. Most importantly, do not wait until the bitter end before initiating the conversation about winding down a ministry. The qualities of transparency and mutual accountability mentioned in other Seasons are especially pertinent now. Remind your church planter from day one that many communities are seasonal, and that failure to create a is an acceptable option. Have frequent reviews of how the ministry is going and ask questions about whether it is meeting its defined goals. Making this constantly part of your conversations will help take the fear of making mistakes out of the picture and allow you to make a wise decision together about if and when the Composting Season has started.

- Journey alongside the community as it prepares to end by attending community conversations and liturgies of closure.
- Understand that your church planter will likely experience the loss of their community as a real tragedy. Now is the time for unconditional pastoral support, not shame.
- Help your church planter transition to their next call. Help them navigate insurance, pension and salary gaps that may occur. Some dioceses have continued to pay their planter's salary and benefits for a specified amount of time after the end of the church plant.
- Initiate a conversation with your point leader and other core leaders about how the end of this ministry will be communicated to the rest of the diocese. Remember that the way you communicate about this venture will set a tone for how mission and innovation are perceived in your diocese for years to come.
- Commit to using the rich compost created by the ministry. There is much to be learned from new communities that don't go as planned. After the initial emotion has subsided,

plan to use a professional facilitator to help you debrief the ministry experience and uncover the costly learning that will help fuel future endeavors.

Liturgy for ending a New Episcopal Community

It is pastoral and fitting to hold a simple liturgy for the closing of a church plant. The circumstances under which your community is ending will dictate the tone of this liturgy. Consider how long the community has been going, why you've decided to end, and how attached to liturgy and sacred space your community has been (a liturgy of "de-consecration" could do more harm than good in some cases).

There are plenty of liturgies for the closing a church online. Don't try to use them word for word – create a ceremony of closure that is relevant and speaks to your community and circumstances. Tangible expressions of remembrance and thanksgiving might include:

- Writing down names of people who this ministry has touched, in chalk or on butcher paper on the wall
- Co-creating a scrapbook of photos, hand written notes, printed emails, and other collage items that documents the life of the new community
- Ceremoniously gifting a sacred object – a decorative key, communion vessels, an icon, or monetary gift - to another person or community that is making a difference in your neighborhood

Suggested Scriptural texts for the ending of a New Episcopal Community include:

- The healing of the 10 lepers, Luke 17:11-16
- The parable of the talents, especially Matthew 25:23
- The ascension of Jesus, Luke 24:50-53
- Paul's exhortation to rejoice, Philippians 4:4-9

The end of a New Episcopal Community should usually not be perceived as tragic! Give thanks for the difference this community has made in the world, for the risks you've taken, the neighbors you've loved, and for the people who will now disperse and share their ministry with others.

By: The Rev. Jesus Reyes

1. Introduction - Framing our conversation:

Two questions that could help your Diocese discern a Latino Church Plant aspiration:

- a. Is the Diocese planting a church to establish a mission, so it become a parish, ***eventually***?
- b. Or, are you planting a Church to create a Mission because that is the mission of the church?

Ask these two questions from the **practical** and the **theological** perspectives. Another way of asking the question would be, “is our church plant Kingdom driven or addition driven?” (Matthew 6:33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.)

2. Some considerations before you start a Latino Church Plant

- a. Is the diocesan intent to plant a “language-based church” or “a Latino identity-based church”?
- b. Church planting is a risky business – it is expensive and there are no certainties. The answer to the previous question will help you determine the level of required financial commitment.
- c. Risks can be minimized by following these basic principles:

- Intentionality
- Citizenship (Ephesians 2:19 - 22)

“So you are no longer outsiders and strangers. You are citizens together with God’s people. You are also members of God’s family. You are a building that is built on the apostles and prophets. They are the foundation. Christ Jesus himself is the most important stone in the building. The whole building is held together by him. It rises to become a holy temple because it belongs to the Lord. And because you belong to him, you too are being built together. You are being made into a house where God lives through his Spirit.”

- Discipleship –
 - You can add any other principle that you may find essential to secure what you may consider a success
- d. Some practical observations about the church plant model:
 - Is it a nested congregation?
 - Is a self-standing congregation using a vacated church facility?
 - Is it a “classic” church plant? i.e. starting at a school, movie theater, storefront space, newly acquired property?
 - Will your church plant be...?
 - Apostolic?

- Seed based?
 - Developmental?
 - Re-Development?
- e. Requirements to preserve an “Objective Relational Dynamic” and a healthy level of mutual accountability between the Diocese and the Church Plant
- What the Diocese should offer to the Church Plant:
 - Visionary leadership
 - Well defined managerial structure
 - Support system
 - What the Diocese should require from the church plant(er)
 - Commitment to the three principles and accountability
 - Specificity in vision and strategy
 - Performance – Timetable
3. Nuts and Bolts - Church Planting Process to secure a good Latino/Hispanic Church Plant:
- Be ready to test Feasibility – Capacity – Strategy (See the 90-day=Micro-Strategy Map)
- b. Stage One – Testing Feasibility –
- Go beyond the natural assumptions and gather solid demographic data about the place
 - Focus on identifying actual numbers of Latinos residing in the area where the Plant will be initiated. Percentages may provide you with a false picture of actuality
 - Scrutinize the Latino demographic composition (cultural component)
 - Study the competition (demand and supply)
- c. Stage Two - Church Planter selection – Testing Capacity
- The church planter’s solid theological formation
 - Strong, rich spiritual life
 - High standards regarding professional work ethics
 - Missional mindset
 - Entrepreneurial attitude – self-motivated
 - Creativeness
 - Passion for **Kingdom** work
 - Local vs bringing someone from another country?
- d. Stage Three – Plan development – Testing Strategy
- https://episcopalchurch.org/files/documents/strategic_vision_7-09.pdf
- Target Population
 - 1st generation – Spanish speakers only with low wage employment
 - **1st generation – “up and coming” (bilingual) semi-professionals, solid employment, homeowners, small business owners**
 - 2nd generation – “Strugglers” – population with big social service needs
 - **2nd+ generation –semi-professionals and small business owners (bilingual)**
 - 2nd+ generation – professionals /mostly English speakers with very limited Spanish

- Mission field
 - Shift from a congregation focus mindset to a regional understanding of “being church” (*Parish*)— a church community starts with a congregation, but it shouldn’t stay there
 - Use community development approaches and strategies
 - See the context – assess the context – respond to the context (SWOT instrument)
- e. Stage Four – Implementation – Demonstrating Viability
 - Intentionality (sense of purpose - design)
 - All efforts should be oriented to generate community (community development approach)
 - Community is defined by the quality of relationships
 - Personal (supportive of each other) & communal (good communication systems)
 - Internal (good fellowship) & external (good outreach)
 - Engage value added programs and initiatives only (avoid duplication of services – clergy should not become a “Social Worker”)
 - Citizenship (process - content)
 - This is the synergy (combined effort) and focus of all church activities
 - Develops identity (Episcopal)
 - Create stakeholders
 - Oriented to be people of “hope” rather than “blame”
 - Creates a healthy system
 - Discipleship (intended outcome – “missional church”)
 - Living your faith in community (dwelling in community)
 - Solid personal spirituality (dwelling in the Word)
 - Recognition and use of individual “gifts of the Spirit” (ministries)
- 4. A Menu of Strategies and other Topics to Be Considered:
 - a. Formalize congregational membership
 - Provides a sense of congregational ownership among members (responsibility)
 - Essential for Discipleship/leadership development
 - Work from the start on a solid stewardship program
 - Do not rush the internal governance/management of the church (rule of thumb Vestries do not grow churches)
 - b. Develop a more organic pastoral work instead of having isolated congregations
 - Network your church plant – Create a support system
 - Clergy can help each other in trainings church leaders and develop materials
 - Structure special large events
 - c. Sacramental services
 - They must be connected to the community development vision
 - They generate special income for congregations (this is a fine line to walk)
 - The pre-sacramental preparation is fundamental (educates, forms and relates)

- The Sacraments are to be experienced in community (avoid private services)
- d. Folk religion (only recommended if the congregation is open to it)
- Benefits:
 - It is ingrained in the culture – Do not fight the culture, but avoid assumptions as well
 - Folk religion is a practice owned by the people, not the Roman Catholic church
 - If managed well, it provides a basic spiritual practice (devotion)
 - It touches large numbers of people at once
 - Dangers:
 - If not managed well, it could convey a RC light identity
 - It can create a passive religiosity
 - It is a pre-modern religious experience – i.e. vs Reason, agency
 - Magical mindset
- e. Cursillo
- Initial congregational leadership platform – still very viable in this community
 - Lay lead program
 - The fourth day can be a good instrument for continuing leadership formation
- f. Prioritize children & youth programs
- Sunday school
 - Youth groups - “Pandillas de Cristo”
- g. Network outside the church
- Social service providers – avoid duplication of services
 - Latino formal organizations – chamber of commerce, clubs, etc.
 - Identify power players in the community
- h. Develop an economic development system for members of your congregation

Assessors' Grid: Arriving at a Disposition

What Are We Looking For?

Assessing participants will always be a balance of objective data we have gathered during the sessions, interviews and exercises plus our subjective intuition and judgement about this person. However, we want to ensure that our assessments are as fair and consistent as possible. We've identified 13 qualities, divided into 3 categories, that we believe anyone "fit" for point leadership of a new worshipping community should exemplify.

I. The Person

1. Faithfulness: *Demonstrates a vibrant and compelling relationship with God; responds to the power of the Holy Spirit in daily life; is obedient to Christ's mission to go and make disciples.*
2. Motivational Fit: *Demonstrates motivational fit for new worshipping communities including vision, and intrinsic motivation.*
3. Emotional Resilience: *Demonstrates ability to manage conflict and personal failure. Utilizes biblical principles in resolving conflict, is able to overcome failures and press forward. Is able to manage stress well. Demonstrates resilience.*
4. Emotional Maturity: *Demonstrates the ability to understand and manage emotions; possesses a realistic sense of self; knows own heart and spirit; demonstrates maturity in relationships with others.*
5. Social Base: *Operates from a base of healthy relationships who support the call to new worshipping community leadership. Is intentional about maintaining healthy family, collegial and friendship network.*

II. Missional Competencies

1. Entrepreneurial Experience: *Demonstrates interest in entrepreneurial activity. Has the ability to envision possibilities and take concrete steps to make that vision a reality. Is able to overcome obstacles and challenges with flexibility and courage. Has successfully started something from the ground up.*
2. Missional Practices: *Demonstrates ability to develop authentic relationships with unchurched people and engage in a local community.*
3. Risk Taking: *Initiating action that tries to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage when potential negative consequences are understood.*
4. Cross cultural skills: *Demonstrates appreciation for cultural differences, able to see own cultural bias, and works toward communication and cooperation with others from posture of humility, and affirmation of diversity in the body of Christ.*

I. Leading and Working With Others

1. Building a Successful Team: *Uses appropriate methods and a flexible interpersonal style to help build a cohesive team; facilitates the completion of team goals. Gains the trust of others.*
2. Human gathering: *demonstrated ability to gather people towards participation in a shared vision sustained over time.*
3. Grit: *Commits to a course of action to accomplish a long-range goal. Stays engaged over a long period of time despite setbacks. Plans ahead. Maintains perseverance and passion for long-term goals.*
4. Leadership Developer: *Empowers and equips others in the pursuit of a team's purpose and vision. Doesn't micromanage or hold tightly to control.*

Sample Ministry Plan

This template is an example of the way you can begin organizing thoughts and tasks and communicate them to your team and supporters. You may find it helpful to create a “90-day micro strategy” for each task. This will help you see the steps involved in reaching each goal.

Demonstration Ministry Plan

Diocese of:

Ministry Developer:

Coach:

Date ministry began:

Mission and Vision

What is the “why” behind this ministry?

What is the scriptural text that drives this mission?

What is the scripture that supports the purpose of your ministry and why? Will the name of the ministry reflect this passage? Why or why not?

Define the vision for this ministry

A vision statement provides strategic direction and describes what the core team wants to achieve. A vision statement is usually short, 1-3 sentences.

Create a mission statement that can be easily shared and understood

A mission statement describes the purpose of the ministry and answers the "why" question.

Coaching points

What are your coaching points for this area? See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY75MQte4RU>

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for the completion of your mission and vision statements. Include a completion date. See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6gEPGG5eXQpaTNxMnFTdnJOWIk/view>

https://www.dropbox.com/s/i2jriy65x335uoi/StrategyMap_8.5x11.pdf?dl=0

Reading the Context

Make a list of the steps needed to become informed about the community in which you are planting

Who do you need to know? Where do you need to visit? What are the unique characteristics of this particular community? How will you find out?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy around the work of becoming educated regarding your community. Include a completion date.

Identify the ways in which you will become culturally competent in relationship to your community

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact with people across cultures. It encompasses being aware of one's own world view, appreciating cultural differences and gaining knowledge of different cultural practices.

90 Day Micro Strategy

Complete a 90 Day Micro Strategy around the work of becoming culturally competent. Include a completion date.

Create a list of the people with whom you will set up One to One Relational meetings

The One to One Relational Meeting is an intentional, well-framed conversation between two people and is the building block of relational organizing. Who do you need to meet? What can you learn from them?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for the completion of 20 One to One meetings in your community. Include a completion date.

How will social media play a role in the development and marketing of your ministry?

What aspects of social media will support the ministry? Who will support the social media tasks?

Create a plan for branding your ministry

How will you be known in the community? Do you have a logo, tag line, specific colors associated with the ministry? What makes you easily identifiable?

Develop a communications strategy for the ministry

How will you share your ministry with the community? What are the various platforms you will use?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for the creations of a social media and communications plan. Include a completion date.

Leadership

Identify your leadership style in Clifton Strengths Finder terms:

What makes it "worth it" for you to do this work?

What will keep you invested? What makes you willing to pay the price of leading a church plant?

Identify the first fractals that you will need and how they will expand

Fractals are a repeating pattern of organization rather than a hierarchical organizational system. Refer to this intro on fractals: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxmjx9XMvXU>

90 Day Micro Strategy

Complete a 90 Day Micro Strategy that includes the work of setting up your organizational system using the fractal model. Include a completion date.

Core Team

Please list the first name, last name, email, and phone number for each person on the core team.

<i>First Name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Phone number</i>

Launch Team

Please list the first name, last name, email, and phone number for each person on the team planning the first worship.

<i>First name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Phone number</i>

How will new leaders be identified and multiplied?

What traits will you be looking for in leaders? What makes a good leader? Look for leaders who compliment/supplement your own leadership gifts.

List ways that new leaders will be identified.

How will you care for yourself? How will you care for your leaders?

How will you care for yourself? When is your day off? What boundaries do you have in place to honor your Sabbath? Do you have retreats planned? Vacations?

How will you care for your leaders?

Coaching points

What are your coaching points for this area?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for creation of an organizational structure including members of core and launch team. Include a completion date.

Discipleship

Worship: Pre-launch gatherings

How will you gather with people before your launch?

Worship: Planning the launch

Attach a launch plan that you develop with your launch team.

Worship: Post-launch worship

What are your plans for post-launch worship?

How will you facilitate guest welcoming?

Guest welcome begins in the parking lot and continues with every encounter. Most people make up their mind about a ministry in the first 10 minutes in the building (well before the sermon).

What are the plans for new member integration?

What does membership mean today? Will you use a membership model? What will that look like? Refer to Peter Block's work on 6 conversations.

http://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/posts/peter_block/parms/1/post/20110705_six_conversations_that_matter_a_quick_review.html

Small groups

Explain your strategy for using small groups in discipling people.

Faith Formation

How will you address faith formation across generations?

Coaching points

What are your coaching points for this area?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for the completion of a launch plan. Include a completion date.

Add your 90 Day Micro Strategy here...

Stewardship

Establish your fiscal agent relationship

Who is your fiscal agent?

Name	Phone	Email address

How will you maintain a strong relationship with your fiscal agent? What will you expect from them? What should they expect from you?

Develop a budget for mission

Create a budget based on the mission of your ministry. A budget can be developed based on income alone or with a focus on mission. What would a mission-based budget look like for you?

Create a culture of giving

A culture of giving must be part of the fabric of the ministry from day one. How will you do this?

Identify opportunities to show examples of tithing

Coaching points

What are your coaching points in this area?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for the completion of a mission-based budget. Include a completion date.

Housing the Ministry

Pre-launch gatherings

Where do you plan to meet for pre-launch gatherings? Identify possible meeting places and types of pre-launch gatherings.

Worship

Where do you plan to meet for worship?

Office space

What space will you use for an office? Where will you meet privately with people? What space will you use for office tasks?

How will your office needs be provided for? Computer, printer, copier, phone, etc.

Shared space options

Do you have shared space options? If so, what are they?

Legalities, liabilities, insurance, contracts

What resources do you have to help you navigate the housing needs of the ministry? Who do you need to work with before signing any contracts, rental agreements, etc.? Have you taken care of meeting any state or local requirements? Incorporation?

Coaching points

What are your coaching points in this area?

90 Day Micro Strategy

Create a 90 Day Micro Strategy for a plan to house the ministry. Include a completion date.

Accountability and Reporting

Coaching

Do you have a coach? If so, enter their information below:

Name	Phone	Email address

If you have a coach, what is the coaching plan? How often will you meet? In person or by phone?

If not, do you need help finding a coach?

Reporting

How will you communicate the progress of the ministry with your fiscal agent and other parties?

Cohorts and Partners

Are you part of a co-hort, and do you meet regularly?

Who are the key diocesan, ecumenical, and community partners in your ministry?

Ongoing Training

When is your next scheduled training or continuing education opportunity?

Coaching Points

What are your coaching points for this area?