

Effective Ministry Action Plans

Your MAP Out of the Wilderness of Ministry

By Dr. Marty Cauley

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For Danelle, who always believes I am better than I am.

*To every leader of a Christian ministry leader
who has ever felt like they were lost in the wilderness.*

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Preface

This e-book was originally created for the spiritual entrepreneurs creating new faith communities for the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. That means often it references beginning a new faith community (NFC) or being a “church planter.” It is not just for “church planters,” though. As our culture changes and the world becomes a different place with every generation, we must all create new faith communities, even if it is within an existing congregation. Using this tool, you can create a Ministry Action Plan (MAP) that will help you create and share the vision for a preferred future with your congregation’s leadership.

“Strategic planning” can seem rather unspiritual. However, when bathed in prayer, it is actually a spiritual discipline. It forces reflection and decision-making. A well-written MAP can be an object that sparks fruitful conversation and revelation in existing congregations. It can also serve as a unifying document that assists in decision-making that can shape the future.

1. Write a Vision and Make it Plain

“Then the Lord answered me and said, “Write a vision, and make it plain upon a tablet so that a runner can read it. There is still a vision for the appointed time; it testifies to the end; it does not deceive. If it delays, wait for it; for it is surely coming; it will not be late. Some people’s desires are truly audacious; they don’t do the right thing. But the righteous person will live honestly.”

Habakkuk 2:2-4

I get lost. I get lost so often that in my family we don’t even call it lost anymore, we call it “temporarily misplaced.” It is for people like me that the GPS was invented, and even more importantly, why it was created as an app for smartphones. I get lost walking across town, but now I can open the app and get step-by-step, turn-by-turn navigation to anywhere in the world. Whether it is across town, across the country, or even across the globe, I can get directions about the fastest way to get there, the shortest way to get there, or the way that avoids toll roads and traffic. However, before my phone can tell me how to get to my destination, it must first discover where I am; it uses cell towers and satellites to triangulate my location, my starting point, and then plots the course that is best for me.

A Ministry Action Plan (MAP) works in much the same way. It is a discernment tool that allows you to discover where you are and make intentional, prayer-directed decisions about where you are called to go. It is a valuable tool that is both spiritual and practical. It is spiritual because it is not just a document that is produced in a void. A MAP is prayerfully considered, and created in conversation with God. It is practical because it lays out objectives, goals, and plans in a way that will help you order your daily ministry life.

Many church planters share a common frustration: they know what the future looks like, but they don’t know what to do today to make it happen. The MAP is a tool to assist you in creating “to do” lists, weekly plans, monthly goals, and help you determine strategic milestones to keep you on track. It is also a dynamic document. It is meant to change, flex, and grow as your ministry takes shape.

Why Do I Need a Ministry Action Plan?

Every now and then I get a piece of mail that excites me. I don't mean email; I mean a piece of paper actually delivered to my mailbox. It is usually embossed with a monogram or has some special font that shares who sent it. It is often on heavier paper than normal and occasionally even has a fancy seal that is keeping it closed. It is an invitation to a party. Maybe it's a wedding of a friend or a child I baptized a long time ago. It could be a holiday gathering, a milestone birthday, a retirement, or even just a youth pool party. Whatever the occasion, I love getting an invitation. When I get an invitation I realize that I'm an important part of somebody's life (or that they just want a wedding gift, but I'm going with important). I learn what type of party it is, what I'm expected to wear if I show up, where and when it is happening, and what I need to bring. I love invitations.

A MAP is an invitation you create that lets others in on the dream that God has given you. I genuinely believe God has a unique plan, path, and purpose for your life. Part of that divine calling is creating a new faith community that will reach people who are seeking God, even if they are not aware that it is God that they are seeking. God has given you a dream of what can be, of a preferred future, of a community that authentically models God's Kingdom here on earth. Your job is to live out that calling in such a way that the dream becomes a reality. The best way to live out that dream is to invite others to the party.

The MAP does three things to facilitate the invitation: it helps you understand the dream. You must define the kind of party you are creating. It helps you communicate the dream. What fun is a party if nobody knows the theme or reason for the party? Lastly, and maybe most importantly, it helps you invite others to join the dream. It is the invitation to be part of the party.

Understand the Dream: Interpretation

"[The Lord] asked me, 'Human can these bones live again?'
I said, 'Lord God, only you know.'" Ezekiel 37:9

Consistently in the scriptures when someone had a dream it required some level of interpretation. They could be divinely interpreted like the prophets who shared their visions and explained their meaning, or humanly interpreted; the way Daniel did for the king. Dreams need interpretation. The MAP is a tool that will help you take the amazing dream that God has given you for a new faith community and begin to make it come alive. Like Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, your dream needs to move from idea, to understanding, and finally to action. All of this will not happen by accident, but by intentionally living out God's dream.

The act of interpretation allows you to clarify the dream and get clear on the language you want to use regarding it. You will learn how take the abstract idea of a gathering of people to

serve God and make it so real that others will desire to be part of such a divine endeavor. Interpretation will allow you to create the culture of the community you are called to lead and understand how it is unique. The MAP will help you understand the dream, and by understanding you will be able to communicate it with others.

Share the Dream: Communication

The Ministry Action Plan also acts as a tool for communication. It provides you a tangible document that describes an intangible endeavor—a dream. The MAP takes the dream and clearly paints a word picture so clear it seems to already exist.

Most people do not regularly think in abstracts; we like concrete ideas. The MAP takes the abstract concept of creating a small piece of God's kingdom and makes it seem possible through careful descriptions, specific goals, and real life examples. One of the tasks you must master is what I call the one-minute; one-cup of coffee; one-hour method of communicating your dream. God has given you a dream. Now, you have to be able to communicate the key concepts, values, and aspirations of that dream in one minute. This brief encounter will help you establish a connection with whomever God puts in your path.

Then you need to be able to share it over one cup of coffee with enough passion that they actually ask to read your MAP. This time of casual conversation can be a divine appointment. Excitement is caught, not taught. During coffee conversations your passion for God's dream can be transferred and ignite their passion to be part of something great for God's kingdom.

You must also have a one-hour presentation to share with groups who might desire to partner with you (thirty-five minutes with plenty of time for questions). Whether it is to churches you desire to ask for support, groups in the community who are wondering what you are up to, or to your denominational supervision team, this presentation should generate interest and excitement. The presentation needs to be well rehearsed, clear, and invite a minimum of three levels of partnership moving forward.

The MAP acts as a guide for you and provides you the language and guidelines for each level of communication. When you communicate it passionately, clearly, and have real ways to invite others to join in the dream you will be amazed at what can happen.

Invitation to the Dream: Participation

One author writes that we live "lives of quiet desperation." We have forgotten how to dream and most of us crave to give our lives to something bigger than a mortgage and SUV payments. We fill our days, but have empty lives. We cram our calendars, but go to bed empty, wondering if anything we did really matters. A powerfully sculpted MAP invites others to join you on a dream journey that will have eternal consequences. Isn't that why you are called to

create a new faith community? You want to provide people who are searching and hurting a way to connect with God, the One who loves them and seeks to make them whole?

On a practical note, the MAP also acts as a way for you to share the dream with your district superintendent, other clergy, and anyone else who might want to assist you make the dream a reality. It shows that you clearly understand the challenge that is before you. It demonstrates responsibility for the gift of a year or two that you have been given to get the dream up and running. A MAP includes goals, benchmarks, milestones, and funding objectives that assist you in establishing priorities and making decisions. Every great journey needs a MAP.

Last Words on “Why?”

A Ministry Action Plan is really an invitation to a party. It is a document that takes an incredible amount of time to create. It requires you to articulate abstract ideas in tangible goals and timelines. It is also so much more than that. It is an invitation that allows others to give their time, resources, and gifts. There are many Christians who desire to do something significant for God, the MAP you create will act as an opportunity for them to do just that!

However, that is not all your MAP will do. In addition to acting as a conduit to invite Christians to be part of a God-sized dream, it also can be part of an invitation to somebody who has given up on God. Studies consistently reveal that new faith communities are the most effective way to reach people who have either no faith experience or who have given up on previous versions of “church.” The MAP intentionally invites those people to reconsider their faith. It invites them into the presence of God to experience the healing power of God. The MAP may be the invitation they need to create a better future for themselves and their family.

Your MAP is an invitation that is waiting to be written. Dream the dream that God has uniquely given you, then wake up, write it down and share it. What are you waiting for?

2. Purpose of a Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.” Proverbs 16:3

In my twenty-plus years of ministry, I have been asked multiple times to create some sort of plan to present to my district superintendent, at a charge conference, or as part of a ministry presentation. Rarely has anyone defined exactly what type of plan they wanted. Either I had no examples of what was required or a description so vague that anything could have fulfilled the requirement. Those were not MAPs; they were exercises in aggravation.

An effective ministry action plan is a vital and useful tool to navigate an abstract concept into concrete goals, timelines, benchmarks, objectives, and tasks. It lays out a plan, creates a path, and shows how you anticipate paying for the endeavor. Here are some ways to understand what a MAP actually is.

A MAP Is...

- 1. A Spiritual Discipline:** A spiritual discipline is defined as, “a deliberately self-imposed habit that nurtures spiritual health and fosters spiritual growth leading to maturity.”¹ A MAP is an act of maturing and clarifying the vision God has given you for your ministry. It forces discernment, identifies areas where you might need additional training and discipling, provides space for deliberation, forces you to make decisions, and then gives you a method to create a development plan. Like with the GPS, once you know where you are, you must next input where you want to go. The MAP is where you input your ministry’s destination and begin to discover how you are going to get there. The route you take might not be the most direct, but if you allow God to order your steps, it will be the most fruitful.
- 2. A Well-Written Document:** I once heard a speaker say that everyone who has ever had a shower has had a great idea, but it is what you write down when you dry off that makes the difference. The process of writing down your vision provides you the opportunity to not only clarify it, but also to share it and gather suggestions from those you know and trust. Additionally, writing things down makes them “real.” They take on a more tangible component. Much of what we do in ministry is intangible, hard to measure, and difficult to see. The MAP becomes a tangible tool to assist you in tracking your progress, measuring your steps, and ordering your days. You will be able to discern if what you are doing is moving you closer to your eventual destination. It will keep you on track on those days when you are discouraged. It will also allow you to see how far you have come when you get stuck and begin to doubt if you are getting anywhere.

3. Well Researched: A MAP must be based upon facts, not just feelings. The NC Conference of The United Methodist Church uses MissionInsite² for our demographic and cultural information. It provides you not only population data, but also segmented information about the kinds of people that live in your ministry area. This is just one of many useful tools that will help you to properly exegete your community. While online data is invaluable, you also must do “field research.” You actually have to leave your home or office and walk around, visit the local restaurants, coffee shops, pubs, grocery stores, and major employers to gain an understanding of where God has called you to do your ministry. Engage people in conversation and inquire about their hopes and dreams. Discover what major issues face your community. Talk to elected officials and your next door neighbor. Volunteer in schools and have real interaction with students. It is amazing how often God arranges divine encounters when you get into your community to do “research”.

4. Culturally Relevant: The MAP you create must have clear connection points with the community you seek to serve. All too often we go into a ministry setting with answers to questions nobody is asking. Your research should create revelations as you document, journal and reflect. When you begin discerning the ministry you are called to do in the community, it connects you to hearts of those God has called you to serve. Your MissionInsite data will prove valuable in identifying places of interest and needs within your community. The key ministries of your community need to closely correspond with the concerns, hopes, and dreams of the people you are called to serve.

5. Indigenous to an Identified Community: The MAP you create should not only be relevant, but also indigenous. It must relate directly to the people who are in your ministry area. Contrary to trying to continue an existing “church” culture, the MAP should move you to take a missionary perspective on your community. A missionary enters the new culture, fully integrates into the community, and begins to understand it from the inside out, rather than as an outsider. The MAP you write must reflect the metaphors, meta-narratives, and heart of the people where you live. In order for the ministries you develop to be indigenous it is essential for you to spend time in actual, face-to-face conversation. I know it has fallen out of vogue to go door-to-door and do surveys, ask questions, and engage in field research, but you must find some way to actually communicate, in real life, with the people who live in the community you will be serving.

6. Specific to the New Faith Community that Creates It: Thus far, the MAP has been a document that could reflect generalities, but it must also be very specific. It needs to outline clear objectives, goals, and milestones to be achieved. An effective MAP provides clear ways to measure progress and ministry effectiveness. An important part of your

MAP is the goals you set. The goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive (SMART). A clear picture of the specific the vision God has given you with clear, concrete goals and milestones is easier to explain to those who want to invest in your ministry with donations of funding, ministry hours, or in-kind gifts.

7. Dynamic and Evolving: God is always new, and the world in which we live is ever-changing. The MAP is a dynamic, evolving document that will be written and re-written. Once you finish it, do not think you are finished with it. As God reveals new avenues and opportunities for ministry, it will need to be revisited and revised. With every challenge, change, and divine course correction you will need to come back and make adjustments. The community you envision might not be the one God calls you to lead, so you must listen at all times for God's voice and direction.

Here are the things you need to clarify as you continue to develop your MAP. A Ministry Action Plan presents specific:

Position Statement—What makes this new faith community (NFC) unique?

Values—Why does this NFC do what it is called to do?

Mission—What is wrong with the world and how will this NFC address it?

Vision—What will the world look like when you are finished changing it?

Strategy—What will you do? How will you fund the work?

Goals—SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive) goals that are based on your values, congruent with your mission, vision that move you into the preferred future. The appendix contains a worksheet to assist with creating SMART goals.

Tasks—What is your timeline of daily, weekly, and monthly actions that support your strategy, help you achieve your goals, and help you “get stuff done?”

Positioning Your Ministry

Long before you and your team labor over a mission statement or create key strategy words I want to challenge you to discover what makes your new faith community different from the other churches, faith communities, and house churches in the town where you are called to serve. For a comprehensive text on discovering your community's uniqueness, you might want to read Will Mancini's Church Unique. In the meantime, you need to create a simple, clear, positioning statement. Key components of an effective positioning statement are:

1. It is simple, it should show laser like focus upon reaching a particular community, people group, or providing a unique ministry or experience that differentiates you from the hundreds of churches already in the community.
- 2 It provides an unmistakable and compelling picture of the community you seek to create.
3. It is credible; you should actually be able to deliver what you are promising.
4. Your faith community is the sole occupier of this particular position in the community.
5. It leaves room for growth.
6. It helps you decide what ministries and opportunities support the overall position of your faith community.

Here are some reasonably effective position statements I've seen for new faith communities:

Mosaic: a community of broken people creating a community of wholeness.

Imago Dei Community: Seeing God's image in people others don't see at all.

Covenant Church: celebrating the diversity of God's people.

These are not perfect examples, but they do a good job at capturing the heart of the new faith community they represent and positioning it in the minds and hearts of those who hear it.

Positioning Exercise

What makes your faith community unique? Write a positioning statement that highlights your faith community's uniqueness in a single, short sentence. For more help refer to The Art of the Start by Guy Kawasaki.

Understanding Your Values

A value is a deeply held idea or internal motivation that shapes your understanding of yourself, your relationships, and the world. Values act as guiding principles for your life and help you define your sense of “right” and “wrong;” “good” and “bad;” and “worthy” and “unworthy.” They are your internal compass that guides your life. As important as they are very few people take the time to do serious introspection to determine their defining values. Understanding your defining values is vital, as those same values will be imprinted upon the faith community that you establish.

Values answer the question “Why?” In order to start with why, you must first be able to identify your top five values. What are your top five values? Don’t know? Try the Values Card Sort activity online. This activity is just one of the ways you can help gain some self awareness about your values, the most definitive motivating factors of your life.

Understanding your personal values will also help you clearly establish the values of the new faith community you are seeking to plant. Values answer the “why” question of our life. Once you understand your values you will not be thrown off guard when somebody asks you (and they inevitably will if they haven’t already), “So why are you called to plant a new faith community?”

Simon Sinek explains the idea of beginning with “why” in his book, Start with Why.³ He explains that successful organizations begin with “why” they do what they do. That internal motivation drives how they work and what they produce. The same can be said for your new faith community. Your motivation for beginning a new faith community (the “why”) may well be more important than the discipling process you choose or worship style you embrace.

Complete the Values Card Sort activity and list the top five values that motivate your actions.

TOP 5 VALUES (list them here):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Based upon your values, why do you think God called you to begin a new faith community?

3. Working Outline of an Effective MAP

Working Outline

1. **Assess**—what is the problem and what answers are you bringing?
 - 1.1. Ministry Summary/Leader's Summary
 - 1.2. Define the Problem
 - 1.3. Offer the Solution
2. **Analyze**—what are the facts and figures that lead you to this assessment?
 - 2.1. Exegesis of the Community
 - 2.2. Demographic Data and MissionInsite information
 - 2.3. Field Research
 - 2.4. SWOT Analysis: **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats
 - 2.5. Definition of Target Audience
 - 2.6. Definition of Missional Target Audience
 - 2.7. Other Faith Communities
3. **Assets**—what has God already provided?
 - 3.1. Identification of key leader's strengths, skills, and experience.
 - 3.2. Powerful Statements: position, mission, vision, values
 - 3.3. Who is already on the team?
 - 3.4. Unique strategy and/or ministry model utilized to reach the community.
 - 3.5. Scriptural and theological foundations.
 - 3.6. Secret Sauce—what makes you unique?
4. **Actions**—what is going to be done?
 - 4.1. Initial plan for community engagement.
 - 4.2. Evangelism plan.
 - 4.3. Discipling plan.
 - 4.4. Other Ministries
 - 4.5. Budget
 - 4.6. Goals: What are your three-month goals? One-year goals? Three-year goals?
 - 4.7. Timeline with benchmarks
5. **Ask**—who is going to help you?
 - 5.1. Invite Prayer Partners.
 - 5.2. Invite financial partners
 - 5.3. Invite core leaders.
 - 5.4. Invite participants.

6. Appendix

1. Assess

1.1 Ministry Summary—the Ministry Summary (in a business plan called the “executive summary”) is truly the heart narrative of the church planter’s dream. It engages the reader in a compelling narrative about how the new faith community will uniquely reach a new population or group with the gospel. In United Methodist language, how will it reach “more people, younger people, and more diverse people?” This is where your passion comes out. In the first paragraph, the reader is captivated by the hopes and dreams of the pastor/planter and feels the sense of urgency. If you cannot write the ministry summary with passion, then you need to revisit the new faith community you are creating.

1.2 Define the Problem—why are you called to plant a church here? What you do and how you do it are important, but the “why” is foundational. Your motivations need to begin with a spiritual burden, a problem that needs to be solved, and a unique, divine calling. The spiritual burden is your personal, internal “why.” It is something that gets you out of bed in the morning and sometimes disturbs your sleep at night. It is a personal sense of responsibility for something that is wrong in the world that you are called to help put right. The burden is the awareness of the problem you are called to address. Perhaps it is the problem that only 4% of people under 35 worship on a regular basis. Maybe it is the problem that the low-income people in the community have no sense of temporal or eternal hope and are living lives of hopelessness. Whatever the problem is, make it clear as a compelling reason to create new places for new people. The spiritual burden and presenting problem should coalesce into your particular unique, divine calling. When you answered your original call to ministry, you had a sense that God had a unique calling just for you. Perhaps you need to revisit that story. How has God brought you and your “team” to this place, at this time, to begin this work?

1.3 Offer the Solution—the burden, problem and the unique divine calling you bring should lead you to offer a solution. The new faith community you envision should bridge the gap between the presenting problem and the God-fueled solution you are discovering. It does not have to be fully fleshed out, but the seed of the idea needs to be present, and you should demonstrate that you are open to God’s continual leading.

2. Analyze

If the Ministry Summary is the heart, the analysis is the head. The analysis is the facts and figures that support your divine calling to create a new faith community. Using statistics,

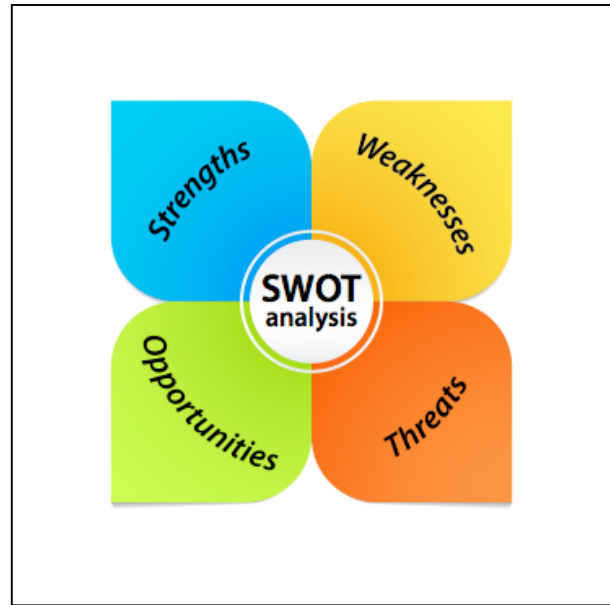
information, and research will demonstrate the potential that helps the reader understand the need for the community both intellectually and emotionally.

2.1 Exegesis of Your Community—The first step in the analysis is to demonstrate a deep knowledge of your community. You need to show more than a cursory knowledge of the population, statistics, and growth rates. That is just the beginning of your awareness of the community you are called to serve and the culture you are called to create.

2.2 Demographic Data—Begin with a comprehensive, comparative demographic report like the ones available from the MissionInsite report. Do more than read the report, take the time to understand the lifestyle profiles, average household income, and racial make up of the community. Is the community in transition? What is the community's growing edge? Are long-term residents moving out or dying off? Are homes being purchased or rented? Is this a final settling place or a transition step for the people in this zip code? What is the average educational level? What are their reported hopes and aspirations? How religious do they self-report being (remember most people over report their spiritual interest and their church attendance)?

2.3 Field Research—Reports are a great tool, but nothing compares to getting out of the office and simply walking through neighborhoods. You should make a point to visit every local restaurant, pub, grocery, and shop in your area. Have conversations with servers, shop owners, and long-term residents. Meet your next-door neighbor (assuming you are living in the target area--which you should be). Usually "commuter plants" have failed. You need to breathe the air in the community you serve to really understand the heart needs, hopes, and aspirations of the people you are called to serve. You need to do the work of a sociologist for the community. That means having at least half a dozen in-depth conversations with long-term residents to learn the story of the community. They might initially be suspicious of your curiosity, but enter into the relationships with no agenda other than a genuine sense of inquiry. Additionally, you need to get the "official version" of the community. Make an appointment to see the local town council person for the community you are called to serve. What perspective do they have of the community? Talk to area principals about the needs that are showing up in the students and families. Ask them what they think is the greatest need of the community. I have found school official and city council persons to be incredibly open about the challenges their community is facing. Volunteer somewhere in an organization or ministry that is working on this concern so you can see in real life, up close, what the real needs are.

2.4 SWOT Analysis⁴—this simple business tool can be invaluable in helping you see the community you are called to serve in a brief snapshot. Identifying the strengths and opportunities might help you discern where to begin. Identifying the weaknesses and threats the community faces might reveal places of need and ministry possibilities. Once you have completed the analysis, review it with others who have lived in the community for a while and see if it rings true with them. In the strengths area, include the community development projects already underway in the area you are called to serve. There is no need to “reinvent the wheel.” Sometimes, rather than calling us to create something from scratch, we simply need to get on board with what God is already doing. Finding a volunteer group or ministry that you can synergize with will allow you to multiply your effectiveness.



Remember, this is about Kingdom building more than simply creating another new organization. Where is God calling you to invest your life for the greatest kingdom good?

2.5 Definition of Target Audience—using both demographic data and field research create a sociological profile of those God has uniquely equipped you to reach. As a NFC leader you should have at least two definitive targets. The first group of people, your initial target audience, probably has similar values, culture, and worldviews to you. Often these become “persons of peace” who will help you engage the missional target audience.

2.6 Definition of Missional Audience— The missional target audience are those people who populate your ministry setting. They might be radically different in race, creed, or culture from the NFC leader. Creating a specific target audience and a missional target audience no way implies excluding anyone from the NFC. Instead it allows you to focus your evangelistic efforts in the direction where you are most likely to be effective. God can, and often does, provide divine encounters outside of your target audience. These encounters will open doors for ministry and might call you in an entirely different ministry direction. It is up to you to discern God’s leading as you seek to engage the myriad of people you encounter.

2.7 Other Faith Communities—it is also imperative that you are fully aware of what other faith communities are doing in the area you are called to serve. Being missionally mindful will help you avoid the appearance of competition and ministry duplication. Take time to discern if there is a significant “ministry gap” that your NFC can fill. You could discover one or more people groups or sub-groups completely ignored by other churches. For example, in one area populated with hundreds of military families, no church in the area was effectively reaching out to inter-racial couples and their children. For one congregation, this became the core of their identity and evangelism efforts.

3. Assets

3.1 Key Leader—this is not the time for modesty. In the beginning, the only concrete expression of the NFC is the passion of the key leader(s). This is another place in your plan to express your call to the work of creating a new faith community. Highlight the skills, giftedness, and calling that you bring to this vital work. Share your heart and calling to reach people everyone else overlooks.

3.2 Powerful Statements—here is where you present the powerful statements that are shaping the creation of the NFC. Provide the position statement, mission, vision, and values that are the foundation of the movement you are starting.

3.3 Team Members—Who is already on your team? What strengths do they bring? What are their divine callings?

3.4 Unique Strategy—The rest of this section is dedicated to the explanation of how you plan to create the new faith community. Describe the ministry model and organizational structure as you envision it. Scriptural foundations?

3.5 Scriptural and Theological Foundations—what are the primary biblical texts that center the new faith community you are beginning? What are your theological underpinnings?

3.6 Secret Sauce—what is absolutely unique about your new faith community? What sets you apart from the hundred other churches in this town?

4. Action Plan

4.1 Initial Plan—in the business world this is known as “bootstrapping.” What is your strategy to get things started? Explain the strategy you will use during the first six months to fully integrate into the community. List who you will interview related to community needs, concerns, and challenges. Define how you will move from being an “outsider” to becoming an “insider” within your new town or neighborhood.

4.2 Evangelism Plan—the reason we begin new faith communities is to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people. As a new faith community leader you can not

be afraid to use the “e-word.” If you are going to establish an outpost of God’s kingdom then you have to have a way to invite those who have little or no faith experience into a living relationship with Jesus. How will you help people make proactive, intentional, faith filled decisions to follow Jesus?

4.3 Discipling Plan— to reach people who have little or no “church” experience, you must have a plan to move them from an irreligious worldview to becoming a radical Christ follower. In this section, you will lay out how that will happen. Matthew 28 is clear, the primary purpose of any faith community is the making of disciples. As the primary task of your new faith community do you have a plan to help engage, equip, and empower the people you encounter to become fully devoted followers of Jesus?

4.4 Other Ministries—what ministries are central to the identity of your NFC? Perhaps you envision a café or an afterschool program. Maybe you want to begin an arts school or a fitness center? Here is where you explain the other ways your NFC will interact and engage the world.

4.5 Budget—Nobody likes to talk about money, but it is a reality the NFC leader must face. I encourage you to dedicate at least two pages to shows that you are realistically considering the financial future of the new faith community. The old adage is true, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. How will you fund the first year? The second? What are your donation milestones? What revenue flows are you counting on to fund your ministry? Create and include a working budget for your first two years. This shows responsibility and honors the commitment of those who are willing to contribute to the establishment of the NFC. It will also give you a clear picture of how much money you need to raise in the coming months.

4.6 Goals—Along with the discipline of creating a budget comes the importance of creating goals that align with the larger vision you have for the NFC. There is more about SMART goals in the appendix. Remember, when you create these goals they will act as benchmarks for your progress. It is usually best to decide where you think the NFC should be two or three years from now, and then work backward to establish annual goals, then quarterly goals, then monthly goals, then weekly goals. The discipline of goal-setting and strategizing demonstrates your willingness to be held accountable for your actions. It also allows you to determine your own measurement and assessment matrix.

4.7 Timeline—the creation of goals provides a framework for creating a timeline. Since all goals, if effective, have time specific milestones tied to them, the timeline almost creates itself. Providing the reader a timeline shows them where you are in the process and what you anticipate to be your next steps. It also becomes a self-regulating matrix for you.

5. Ask

5.1 Prayer Partners—every NFC should begin with prayer. During the first weeks of your appointment as a NFC leader you should begin cultivating a list of people committed to praying for you and the missionary work you are called to do. The goal is that within the first 100 days you would have at least fifty committed prayer partners. I also encourage you to send them regular correspondence and updates, at least monthly, related to your progress. Your prayer partner letters should offer them the opportunity to pray for challenges you are facing, for ministries you are considering, and for strength and endurance for you as a NFC leader. By its very nature, creating a new place to reach new people invites spiritual struggle. The more committed Christians you have praying for you, the better.

5.2 Financial Partners—in addition to the foundation of prayer, it is vital that you begin to cultivate financial partners. An entire workshop will be dedicated to establishing multiple streams of funding to assist you in creating the new faith community. God has uniquely gifted some believers with the ability and willingness to fund ministry. Part of the reason you create a MAP is to provide those donors with an explanation to what you are asking them to help support.

5.3 Core Leaders—as you establish the NFC you will begin to disciple the core leaders that God will send you to lead. A well-written MAP is a document for the core leaders to provide them with goals, plans, timelines, and benchmarks so that they can prioritize their leadership and focus their ministry actions.

5.4 Participants—the MAP helps you communicate to those considering becoming part of the NFC. It paints the picture of the God-shaped dream that you are called to create.

6. Appendix

The final section of your MAP should include supporting documents, detailed descriptions of potential ministries, and other information you determine is important but that might not fit in the above categories. You can also want to include documents related to leadership such as leadership covenants and expectations.

Congratulations! You are finished. Now, before you run to the local printer and print fifty copies to send out to your prayer partners and your district superintendent, find a friend who has an eye for detail to proofread it. Ask for insight from them to help you edit it for clarity and brevity. While this may be a massive document, it should also convey a sense of urgency. It needs to be well written and well edited before being widely distributed.

Now that you have a MAP, it is time to go wherever God is leading you.

Appendix

SMART MINISTRY GOALS Planning Form⁵

SMART goals help improve achievement and success. A SMART goal clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed.

A SMART goal is:

Specific (and strategic): Linked to a particular ministry area with a person responsible for leading their team to reach the goal. Answers the question—Who? and What?

Measurable: The success toward meeting the goal can be measured. Answers the question—How?

Attainable: Goals are realistic and can be achieved in a specific amount of time and are reasonable. Answers the question—Is it reasonable?

Relevant (results oriented): The goals are aligned with current tasks and projects and focus in one defined area; include the expected result. Answers the question—What is the expected result?

Time Sensitive: Goals have a clearly defined time-frame including a target or deadline date. Answers the question—When is it to be completed?

Examples:

Not a SMART goal:

- We will be a friendly church.

Does not identify a measurement or time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.

SMART goal:

- The Welcome Team will create a method to track and record member and guest attendance that includes a system to follow up with those who are absent and first time guests by May 10, 2015.

SMART Ministry Goal Planning Form

Specific – WHO? WHAT? WHERE? HOW MUCH? HOW MANY?

Measurement/Assessment – HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF IT IS A SUCCESS?

Attainable/Achievable – REASONABLE?

Relevant – EXPECTED RESULT?

By

Timed – WHEN?

SWOT Worksheet⁶

The image shows a SWOT analysis worksheet template. At the center is a white circle containing the text "SWOT analysis". Four colored, rounded rectangular tabs extend from this central circle to the corners of the page, each labeled with a component of the SWOT analysis: "STRENGTHS" (blue, top-left), "WEAKNESSES" (yellow, top-right), "OPPORTUNITIES" (green, bottom-left), and "THREATS" (orange, bottom-right). Each of these four quadrants is enclosed in a matching colored border and contains ten horizontal dashed lines for writing. The entire worksheet is set against a light gray background.

About Dr. Marty Cauley

At twelve years old Marty told his family he would be a writer. Now, thirty-eight years later he is finally living the dream while facing death.

Coming from a low-income home in Raleigh, North Carolina he learned the value of hard work, determination, and getting back up when life knocks you down. From his first job mopping the floor at the local Piggly Wiggly to serving as a pastor in a struggling community, he has always thrown himself into everything he has done. His passion for life and desire to invest in others have made him stand out in the communities he has served.

Fueled by a love for gourmet coffee, North Carolina BBQ, and a desire to make the world a better place Marty currently serves the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church as Director of Content and Coaching. He is a professional ministry and life coach committed to helping pastors and congregations more effectively connect with their community.

An ordained elder in United Methodist Church, he previously spent five years traveling the Southeast as the Director of Ministry with Young People for the Southeastern Jurisdiction. He has also journeyed to Africa to work with orphans after raising tens of thousands of dollars to fund an empowerment project with ZOE Ministry. He has volunteered in his local community to build homes with Habitat and he helps build community by working with a local low-income school and as a board member for Peacemakers Family Center. A blogger, speaker, and motivator, Marty uses humor and story telling to engage his audience and help them find hope during difficult times.

Now Marty is facing the biggest challenge of his life. How to love deeply, live passionately, and listen to God while facing a recent diagnosis of terminal cancer. Look for his next book, *Dying to Go on Vacation: My first twenty-one days dying*. It is a humorous, and sometimes heart-breaking story of dealing with why bad things happen to good people.

Dr. Cauley holds the Doctor of Ministry, concentration in Church and Culture, from Columbia Theological Seminary; the Masters of Divinity from the Divinity School at Duke University; and the Bachelor of Science in Social Work from East Carolina University.

If you would like for him to speak at your next event, help you strategize to reach your community, or if you desire coaching, he can be contacted at mjcauley@gmail.com

Follow his blog at www.martycauley.org for updates, speaking engagements, and ministry insights.

For more information about the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, visit www.nccumc.org

¹ www.authenticdiscipleship.org

² www.missioninsite.com

³ www.startwithwhy.com

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⁵ Adapted from hrg.stanford.edu/documents/**SMARTGOALS**Template2012.doc

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