

Mary's Path

Anchor Church Discernment

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Introduction

Conferences don't birth churches.

Churches birth churches.

Our Office of New Faith Communities simply acts as a midwife in the process. We come alongside existing faith communities in order to help them discern their call and to walk alongside them as holy friends along Mary's Path. Beginning to walk down the path does not obligate a community to plant a church or create a new faith community. It does,

however, obligate them to discerning if they are called to that work. It is a means for an existing community to listen for The Annunciation within their own community.

Mary's Path Process

Mary's Path is a year-long process of contemplation and action designed to help an existing church hear God's call for their community, and begin to align their resources towards the call that is discerned. The team (outlined below) meets once a month along with an assigned Holy Friend from the Office of New Faith Communities in order to discern their call to join Mary in the work of bearing the Body of Christ anew in the world. At the end of the first six months (the Season of Contemplation), the church discerns if they are going to continue down the path or not. If they discern a call to continue, they will begin the Season of Action. The first six months are set aside for the contemplative work of prayer and paying attention to the particular gifts God has given the local church and community. The second six months are focused on the actionable work of developing leaders and community partnerships in order to answer the call that has been discerned during the season of Contemplation.

The Team

Ideally, the team is 6-8 people. This allows the group to be small enough to allow everyone to engage in conversation and prayer, but large enough to represent the congregation and community. The team should be approved by the Leadership Team of the local congregation, and commissioned in worship. Here are some suggested roles for the team:

Mary's Path & Putting Together the Team

- Captain: leads the team, communicates standards, and keeps the decision-making process front and center. Are we moving forward?
- Maven: a collector of information and ideas, the Maven will make sure decisions and ideas are clearly defined and understandable. Are we staying on target and being clear?
- Reporter/ Salesperson: shares the information with the church's leadership and congregation to keep everyone apprised of their progress. Knows how to present

information in an engaging manner to garner support. What, to whom, and when do we need to report our findings and recommendations?

- Host: takes care of logistics and makes sure the room is ready for each gathering. How can we improve the team experience?
- Recorder: records details and decisions of gatherings for future review. Ensures accuracy of information shared with the leadership and the congregation. Did we make any important decisions? What are the key points of this meeting that need to be shared with the team?
- Cheerleader: promotes team unity by encouraging and supporting team members. Is everyone contributing and working together?
- Outsider: a voice from outside the congregation to ensure that the voice of the “people” are part of the process. There is nothing worse than answering a question nobody is asking, this person will provide a grounding voice for the “church people.” Does this matter to the “people” who are beyond these walls?
- Advocate/Connector: listens to the feedback, concerns, hopes, and dreams of the congregation and shares with the team. When the team needs to know who to consult about an issue, they will know who has the essential information. How might we expect the congregation to respond?
- Strategist: assigns responsibilities, follow-up homework, and preparation for the next session. The strategist is the second “chair” to the captain. Are we clear about next steps?
- Pastor/Staff: keeps overall mission, vision, and values of the congregation in mind to ensure alignment of the Anchor Church process in accordance with the overall work of the church. Does this align with where God is leading us as a church?



How will we meet?

The orientation gathering will be scheduled by the Office of New Faith Communities for Marty to do an orientation with your team. Part of that evening will be to create a calendar to work through the Mary's Path Discernment process. The expectation is the online full group session with Marty and one group session where your team gathers to work on the topic of the month. Monthly assignments, support material, and videos will be available through Google Classroom. You will get an invitation to join the class and online discussions once you sign up for [Mary's Path here](#).

What Will We Cover?

Month 1: _____

Orientation

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim

Rhythms of Mary's Path: daily prayer, weekly worship, and vulnerable conversations.

Introduction to the five-fold order.

Lifecycle of the Church

Introduction of the Anchor Church Process and Rhythm

What is a Common Table

How do we listen deeply?

Respond

Who are we?

Where we're headed?

Give Thanks: What is the key learning point or take away today?

Send

Have ten conversations in the community, beyond the local church and listen for the assets and needs of the community. Do not offer solutions. We will report back what we heard at our next session in October.

Month 2: _____

Relational Discipleship

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim: Foundations of Wesleyan Disciple Making

Share from your conversations.

Clearly define “disciple” scripturally and within the context of your local church.

Relational Discipleship: Reclaiming a powerful practice.

Common Table Practice: Gather

Respond

Who are we?

Communal Practices: Are there consistent daily prayer and weekly rhythms practiced by your leadership (clergy and laity) and membership?

The number of Common Tables in homes led by laity?

The number of vital spiritual formation groups for adults, youth, and children.

Where we’re headed (five-year benchmarks for relational discipleship)

Give Thanks: What is your key learning point or take away today?

Send

Have a conversation with five people in the church and five people beyond the church related to their definition of “disciple”.

Month 3: _____

Liturgical Worship

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim: Foundations of Liturgical Worship

Clearly define “liturgical worship.”

Compare attractional worship, revivalist worship, and liturgical worship.

Liturgical Worship: Is your worship currently inclusive of lay leadership?

Common Table Practice: Proclaim

Respond

Five-year average worship attendance trend graph by year.

How many times in the previous 24 months has a non-staff person preached at the primary worship services?

Where we are headed (five-year benchmarks for liturgical worship).

Give Thanks: What is your key learning point or take away today?

Send

Each team member should visit one or two local churches in the next couple of months and report back what they observed.

Month 4: _____

Holistic Mission

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim: Foundations of Holistic Mission

What does it mean to “do good, do no harm, and practice the ordinances of God?

Who are our neighbors (demographic profile of the community)

Is our community stable, growing, or declining?

Common Table Practice: Respond

Respond

Who are we?

What is the demographic profile of our current congregation?

Do we reflect our community?

Have we kept pace with population growth for the previous decade?

Who is missing from communion?

Holistic Mission: are you engaged in mission with our neighbors on the margins locally and globally?

Where are we headed (five-year benchmarks for holistic mission).

What are your church’s local community engagement and invitation practices?

Give Thanks: What is your key learning point or take away today?

Send

Create a profile of one or two demographically typical families in the community and compare with the typical family within the congregation.

Complete a Comparative MissionInsite report for strategic planning done.

Review the comparison results with the team at our next gathering.

Month 5: _____

Financial Sustainability and Generous Living

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim: Foundations of Financial Stability & Generous Living

What is financial sustainability?

Begging & Brewing: creating multiple income streams

Cultivating generous living.

NFC Investment in multisite ministry. What we fund and what we do not fund.

Common Prayer Practice: Give Thanks

Respond

Who are we?

Income versus Expense report for the last five years.

Income versus Projected Budgets for the last five years.

Percentage of apportionments paid for the last five years.

Staff Cost related to overall budget 5. Cash on hand.

Estimated giving capacity.

The amount estimated available for investment in partnership?

Where we are headed (five-year benchmarks for financial sustainability)

Generous living & stewardship practices.

Give Thanks: What is your key learning point or take away today?

Send: Homework TBD

Month 6: _____

Lay Leadership Development

Gather & Daily Prayer

Proclaim: Foundations of Lay Leadership Development

Define mission, vision, values, practices, and measures.

How did Jesus prepare the disciples?

Common Prayer Practice: Send

Respond

Who are we?

Mission: Does the congregation have a clear mission embraced by lay leadership and understood by lay members?

Values: Does the congregation have a clear set of values as guiding principles for ministry embraced by lay leadership and understood by lay members?

Practices: Are the methods to pursue the mission grounded in the core values, consistent with United Methodist theology and practice, and working?

Measures: Are there clear sets of objective measures to determine the effectiveness of ministry methods?

Vision: Is the vision for a new multisite campus embraced by the pastor, lay leadership, and lay members?

Where we are headed (the five-year benchmark for lay leadership)

Leadership identification and equipping process.

Give Thanks: What is your key learning point or take away today?

Send: Schedule your local team gathering to do follow up discernment.

Links

Sign up for your free [ZOOM Conferencing](#) account to participate in monthly discussions [here](#).

Learn about [Google Classroom here](#).

Sign up for [Mary's Path here](#).