Field Guide Overview

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What do we mean by “Missional”?

The word “missional” has become like the word “love” in our society. People have overused it to describe so many different aspects of church life that it is difficult to uncover its true meaning. Mission is more than an activity of the church, a particular program emphasis, or something we do in another country.

Mission is about God’s activity in human history to bring reconciliation and wholeness to all dimensions of life in Christ. It is about our willingness to be faithful to Christ’s vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on earth (See Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a). Congregations and other expressions of the church are called to be totally shaped and sent by a clear and compelling understanding of God’s mission in Christ both locally and globally.

David Bosch, a well-known theologian on the topic of mission, writes,

In attempting to flesh out the missio Dei concept, the following could be said: In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God (cf Aagaard 1973:11-15; Aagaard 1974:423). “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.” (Moltmann 1977:64). Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission (Aagaard 1973:13). There is church because there is mission, not vice versa (Aagaard 1974:423). To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love. 1

Alan Hirsch, in his book The Permanent Revolution, describes what it means for the church to be missional:

A missional church is a church that defines itself and organizes its life around its real purpose as an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. Therefore, when the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. 2

President Stephen M. Veazey in April 2011 describes mission in the form of a question:

The most important question for a missional church is not about long-term survival. It is about how we passionately pursue Christ’s mission in a suffering world that groans for the liberating truths of the gospel (Doctrine and Covenants 155: 7).

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The question before the church is how we passionately pursue Christ’s mission in a suffering world as ones who have been transformed by “something not fully explainable but utterly transforming.” We pursue Christ’s mission because God first pursued us in Christ. This has changed everything. We no longer view ourselves and others from the same perspective (see Doctrine and Covenants 164:5). We can't help but respond out of the overflow of God’s incredible love and grace in our lives!

Jesus put it in simple terms to his disciples,

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (John: 20:21)

Mission is about sending. God sent Jesus to be the embodiment of God’s love. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (in sacred community) send us, the church, to pursue Christ’s mission through the five mission initiatives:

- Invite People to Christ
  Christ’s mission of evangelism
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
  Christ’s mission of compassion
- Pursue Peace on Earth
  Christ’s mission of justice and peacemaking

An important way of looking at this is to consider the image or concept of movement. In President Veazey’s 2005 World Conference sermon, he described Christ as “the movement of God to bring reconciliation and wholeness to all dimensions of life”.

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God moved toward us in Jesus Christ. We are now called to join God’s movement toward others in Christ. We are also called to have a movement mind-set that calls us to discern and follow the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit in mission.

In Jesus’ missional proclamation contained in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus declared the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. Immediately emerging from the wilderness experience, he was now ready to declare and live his mission in his time and place. His message and mission was difficult for many to grasp because it represented a radical departure from their understanding of God and the world. Jesus used stories and symbols understood by those who lived in the first century. In short, Jesus became a cultural interpreter of the gospel by conveying the gospel in stories to people and fully living it in their neighborhoods.

Like Jesus we are called to live and convey the good news (i.e. the gospel) in ways that connect with our surrounding culture. First, we admit it is challenging to grasp fully Jesus’ message and mission in the first century. None of us lived in first century Palestine and we only have glimpses of it from reading historical depictions of the time period. Even with thousands of books and articles written on every aspect of Jesus’ life and ministry, it is challenging to

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3 2005 World Conference sermon, Stephen M. Veazey
interpret fully the essential meaning of Jesus for our time and place. We must begin by recognizing our need to spend time in our spiritual wilderness where we encounter Christ, the One we follow.

Second, we recognize we can’t simply transport the gospel through time in some locked pure form and set it down in our time and place. We must continue to reinterpret its meaning, discover how it shapes us as disciples, and work out what it looks like to live it in community (in the church and in our neighborhoods).

 Doctrine and Covenants 162:2e calls each generation of disciples to reinterpret and live out the gospel:

*Again you are reminded that this community was divinely called into being. The spirit of the Restoration is not locked in one moment of time, but is instead the call to every generation to witness to essential truths in its own language and form. Let the Spirit breathe.*

Although essential truths remain unchanged, how we express and live them out (in successive generations) must speak to our contexts (environments) in ways that open new pathways of understanding. We, as the people of God, must allow ourselves to be shaped by that Spirit that has shaped and guided Christian faith communities throughout the centuries. This is not solely an intellectual exercise. This is about our need for conversion or a reconversion to the One who call us to new life!

Richard P. Howard and Barbara Howard state the challenge in their well-known hymn, *Now in this Moment*:

*Now in this moment, now in this day,*
*God is creating and leading the way;*
*Life is behind us, life is before;*
*We write the story not heard before.*

We are living in the continuing, unfolding story of God’s active and redemptive movement in our world today in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We bear witness in word and action with the gospel writer of John:

*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.* John 1:14 (*The Message*)

We, the church, are to become the physical manifestation of the living Word in our neighborhoods. *The question that must guide every thought, action, and ministry of the congregation is:*

How are we called to become “the Word made flesh” in our congregations, neighborhoods, and world?

**Invitation to a Missional Journey**

The themes of invitation (God’s movement toward us in Jesus Christ), journey (our willingness to go), and transformation (disrupted and shaped by God) are at the heart of what it means to be God’s people engaged in Christ’s mission. It is about pulling up our tents, wandering in the wilderness at times, discovering new things about ourselves and God, and responding to the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit in mission. This story of invitation,
journey, and transformation is a pattern of meaning that runs through the scriptures and reveals to us God’s desire to work out God’s purposes in us and through us.

These themes run throughout the centuries in the Christian tradition and provide the foundation for our story of invitation, journey, and transformation – Community of Christ. From our roots when a young man prayed in a grove to our 21st century call to pursue peace, God has been doing a new thing in our midst. We are on a divinely inspired quest to understand how God’s invitation to a journey is a call to the continuous shaping and sending of a people to fulfill God’s purposes, not our own.

Our spiritual home is not found in bricks and mortar but in relationship with God and one another on a continuous journey of transformation. It is for a journey of transformation in our time and place that the navigational tools in this overview are presented. The navigational tools are what we take with us as leaders and congregations to truly discover, experiment with, and live into the concerns and passion of Christ in our local neighborhoods and world.

Our Backpack: In LCM we are accepting an invitation to discover, experiment with, and live into the concerns and passion of Christ in our neighborhoods and world. The backpack symbolizes our willingness to be ready, adaptive, and willing to go where the Spirit leads us in mission. We always have our backpack and of course some very important items for the journey:

Our Missional Lens: Eight foundational principles form a missional lens that help us see the big picture of what God is up to in our individual lives, congregations, and neighborhoods.

Our Compass: Missional (Shared) Leadership, Missional Process, Missional Practices, and Missional Context form the four points of our compass that help us embody and live Christ’s mission in a changing world.

Our Thingamajig: Everyone needs a thingamajig! It is that handy tool for the expected and unexpected. LCM provides a variety of tools to help with expected and unexpected bumps or detours along the way.

One of the most important compartments in our backpack is the one left empty for you to place and bring all the shared experiences, stories, and meaning that equip and form your lives and that of your congregation. We want to bring with us everything good that we have come to appreciate about our congregational life together.

Foundational Principles – Our Missional Lens

Leading Congregations in Mission (LCM) is built on eight foundational principles. These principles are drawn from our sacred story as recorded in scripture and missional experiments in the fields of the church. The principles combined form a missional lens through which we see more clearly what it looks like to live into the radical and transformative ways of Jesus.

We represent this missional lens with binoculars to remind us to step back often to see the big picture of what God is up to in our lives individually, together, and in our neighborhoods.
The eight foundational principles provide a lens for our missional journey:

1. **Mission begins with encounter.**
   - God’s nature is missional or *outward moving*. Our response begins and is formed by God’s enduring love for us revealed in the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and continuing presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.
   - We encounter God, God’s love, and God’s mission in Christ through missional practices, in our relationships in community (congregations, small groups, and neighborhoods), in ministry with others, and in situations and places that don’t yet reflect Christ’s vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on earth. It is in our encounter with Christ that we increasingly see ourselves and others from a changed perspective (Doctrine and Covenants 164:5).

2. **Mission is most fully lived out in Jesus’ proclamation in Luke 4:18-19:**

   The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.
   - Mission in Community of Christ is built on Jesus proclamation in Luke 4:18-19 and defined by five mission initiatives –

   - Living out these initiatives in their totality brings the full reconciling and restoring power of Christ’s ministry to all dimensions of life.

3. **Mission is relational.**
   - Authentic relationships provide the foundation for journeying together in discernment and mission.
   - Creating a safe community of trust is critical for people to feel free to imagine and risk something new for their own lives, their relationships with others, their congregation, and their local neighborhoods.
• The foundation for discerning and doing mission is a willingness to be vulnerable with God and one another for the sake of the world.

4. **Mission is disruptive.**

• Following God’s movement in the world is disruptive to our personal and congregational agendas. Our response individually and as the church is always limited by our human understanding.

• Becoming missional is about a willingness to follow the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit that cause us to see with new eyes people, situations, and relationships in need of the healing and restoring power of the gospel.

5. **Mission is risking something new.**

• God is constantly creating something new in Christ through the promised Holy Spirit. We are called to become a new creation by discerning and living out Christ’s vision that is emerging and yet not fully realized.

• Christ’s vision and mission challenges the attitudes, trends, and actions that are in direct conflict with the peaceable kingdom.

• We are called to risk living into the future of Christ’s vision – a future that is more real than the reality of the present. When we trust and risk living into Christ’s vision we co-create the future in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

6. **Mission is contextual.**

• Congregations and other expressions of the church have the capacity and imagination to engage meaningfully in their local contexts.

• The message and mission of Jesus Christ must be creatively lived out in each unique context. Each generation is called to live and express essential truths in their own language and form (see Doctrine and Covenants 162:2e).

• There is no one legitimate form for congregational life or small groups. Form follows missional imagination and function, and aligns with each congregation’s or small group’s unique expression of our identity, message, mission, and beliefs as expressed in *We Share, 3rd Ed.*

• We are a global faith community and are connected to local missional expressions occurring in many parts of the world. We share our gifts and resources in response to worldwide mission.

7. **Mission is a unique expression of giftedness and calling.**

• Mission emerges from the collective and unique giftedness of a specific congregation or small group. Becoming missional is not about developing a grand vision and then finding people skilled to realize the vision.
• Mission emerges when God’s people envision how they can use their unique gifts for the sake of others in local and global contexts. Becoming missional does not occur at one time but emerges as individuals begin to imagine how they can live out the gospel together in tangible ways.

8. Mission is a long journey in the same direction.

• Lasting change only occurs when the culture (the collective perspective and norms) shifts.

• Becoming missional is about living into the strange and new behaviors of the peaceable kingdom of God in community.

• Missional leaders lead by cultivating environments (cultures) of hope, discernment, discovery, and missional innovation – not by providing the answers. This is in direct contrast to leadership persuading a congregation, mission center, or field regarding a new program or direction.

• The Christian community has been striving to live into the strange and new behaviors of the peaceable kingdom for centuries. Culture change takes time. A true shift in an individual or group’s paradigm of mission is normally measured in years.

The following working definition of the word “missional” summarizes the eight principles for LCM:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missional is . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sacred community that is <em>shaped and sent</em> by their ongoing encounter with the living Christ in relationship with one another and their neighbors, locally and globally.</td>
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</tbody>
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The Misssional Process: *Stepping Stones to Living Christ’s Mission*

The first point on our compass is the missional process. LCM is a journey not a program. A program normally has a beginning and an end. LCM is about embodying and living the concerns and passion of Christ. It is not static but dynamic and is always changing as the Spirit leads into new situations and relationships in need of hope and healing.

The missional process helps equip the Pastor Leadership Team to cultivate a congregational or small group environment that:

• is shaped by an ongoing encounter with the living Christ in community,
• is grounded in the witness of scripture,
• is radically relational and invitational,
• shares the joys and challenges of leadership in sustaining mission,
• is safe to explore and experiment,
discerns and connects individual gifts and sense of call with opportunities to live Christ’s mission in all its forms.

embodies and lives the concerns and passion of Christ.

It is about creating an *adaptive culture* that is continually shaped and sent by Christ’s mission as it unfolds in multiple contexts and in multiple ways. **Simply put, we are striving to become tent people – people who are always discovering, experimenting, and living into new and expanding understandings of Christ’s mission.**

The missional process is not a cookie-cutter approach to church growth or effectiveness but will vary in application as it is expressed through the unique giftedness of congregations and new expressions of the church in mission.

There are six stepping-stones that comprise the missional process. The process is not linear although initially congregations and new expressions of mission may go through more of a sequential process. For example, although mission begins with an encounter, it is not the only time we encounter God. Encounters occur as we risk living into Christ’s mission throughout the journey. Likewise, experimentation as response to prophetic imagination can take place at any time.

The missional process is part of a broad framework for discernment, planning, identifying progress and challenges, and leading a congregation or small group into a living expression of Christ’s mission. **The specific stepping-stones should not limit the creativity of local leaders as they discern and lead mission.** They are not a substitute for the missional practices that cultivate new understandings and imagination for living Christ’s mission. The stepping-stones are a way of thinking about or experiencing how congregations and small groups can move from being stuck in a place or a rut to becoming an adaptive culture that discerns and lives Christ’s dynamic and disruptive mission.

The six stepping-stones of the missional process are:

- Encounter
- Discover
- Envision
- Experiment
- Evaluate
- Renew

For a closer look at each stepping-stone, see *The Missional Process – A Closer Look* on page 14.
**Missional (Shared) Leadership**

The second point on our compass is shared leadership. Our western corporate understanding of leadership makes leadership seemingly inaccessible to the average person. The story of scripture conveys something drastically different. It illustrates how God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. God’s people catch a vision of God’s future and then journey together to live into that future. It is often messy and not without struggle. The gifts of ordinary men and women are utilized to accomplish divine purposes.

Leadership in Community of Christ is about more than the giftedness of one (i.e. the pastor). Rather, it is about collective giftedness of those who answer yes to the call to serve. When we combine our giftedness, we discover ways we can discern and live Christ’s mission unique to the collective giftedness of our congregations. In LCM particular attention is placed on the Pastor Leadership Team and how they discern, discuss, disagree, and develop consensus as a team. This is not about a pastor or and his or her advisors. This is about diverse leaders learning to function as a team that shares their joys, burdens, and decisions of leadership together.

Leadership is not only shared but it is missional. The nature of Christ’s mission is relational as discussed in the “Introduction” and “Foundational Principles” sections. Mission is relational. If mission is relational, then our leadership is most effective when expressed in relationship with others. The focal point of providing leadership shifts from the individual to the group. The emphasis shifts from individual persuasion to cultivating group discovery. Integrity and authenticity become critical leadership skills for developing a climate of trust. A climate of trust is essential for people’s imagination to be set free and their willingness to risk something new with one another and God.

If mission is relational, it is essential that the gifts of all ages (i.e. priesthood, member, and friend) are discerned, developed, and utilized in order for mission to be fully expressed and sustainable. As gifts are discovered and shared in community it becomes clearer how the community is called to become a unique blessing based on their collective giftedness. The Pastor Leadership Team has a responsibility to lead by how they discern and engage the gifts of all ages.

**Missional Practices**

The third point of our compass is missional practices. Missional practices and tools shape what occurs inside and outside the congregation or a small group each week. For individuals, the missional practices shape what occurs on a daily basis. A missional practice is the repetition of acts or a series of acts for cultivating new understandings, ways of being and ways of living as disciples and communities of faith. Missional practices help disciples, congregations, and new expressions of the church live into new behaviors of discipleship and mission.

Learning any new skill begins by taking small steps. Learning to play a violin feels awkward and strange at first. It is difficult to hold the bow properly and to get a clear sound when drawing the bow across the strings. It takes weeks and then months of daily practice before playing the
violin begins to feel natural. Like first picking up a paintbrush to do water colors, initially it feels strange. It takes time for any new activity to feel natural.

Early in this overview we acknowledged our world is constantly changing. Like hiking in the woods, we may enter a clearing thinking we will recognize the way forward only to see strange territory. We may feel lost and very unsettled. Yet there is no turning back.

When we find ourselves in strange territory (our changed or changing context) we must learn to navigate in that space to get our bearings once again. This is where the missional practices are essential to leading congregations in mission. The missional practices are a navigational tool that helps us gradually live into new ways of expressing Christ’s mission that meaningfully connects with the world around us.

In LCM, Missional Practices are expressed through three primary relationships:

**Loving God** – Practices of Encounter
- Inward Individual/Community Practices
- Outward Individual/Community Practices

Examples: Breathing in the Spaces, Centering Prayer, Dwelling in the Word

**Loving One Another** – Practices of Relationship Building in Community
- Inward Individual/Community Practices
- Outward Individual/Community Practices

Examples: Dwelling in the Word, Sharing in the Round, Valuing the Other

**Loving Our Neighbor** – Practices of Hospitality and Healing
- Inward Individual/Community Practices
- Outward Individual/Community Practices

Examples: Dwelling in the Word, Mission Prayer, Walking the Neighborhood

Every participant in LCM is asked to engage in three *Shared* Missional Practices:

1. Dwelling in the Word
2. Mission Prayer
3. Sharing in the Round

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4 See Missional Practices tab in LCM Field Guide
The fourth point on our compass is missional context. This is simply how we learn about what is going on around us – school, work, and our neighborhoods. The more we understand about our context the more we can discern and creatively live and convey the gospel in ways that speak powerfully to people today.

Jesus was amazing at understanding and utilizing context to convey important truths – liberating truths that changed peoples’ lives! And he did it all through story telling. For example, in Luke 5:1-11, Jesus uses a big fish miracle to convey to a few disciples he wants them to become fishers of men. This apparently made a connection with them because they left everything behind and followed him.

Sometimes we forget how foreign our language and forms of church are to those who have not engaged in organized religion for a number of reasons. Have you ever visited a church from another denomination? It takes some courage to walk into a totally strange place – it is no wonder so many choose not to take the risk.

Have you ever been in a conversation about a topic you knew nothing about? You might as well speak a different language. Strange terms and unfamiliar phrases – you feel like a fish out of water. The gospel to millions of people is a foreign language.

Context is everything! When the Pastor Leadership Team begins to frame initial questions for the missional journey, they will want to think about their context. What is the context inside the congregation? What is the context in the neighborhood around the congregation or where members live? As the congregation begins to engage in experiments, giving consideration to context will become increasingly important. What do we need to know about our environment so we can more effectively and relevantly interact with our environment? This is the challenge of context.

So how do we learn more about context? There are a variety of ways. In LCM we will utilize the following tools:

- Demographic and religious preference data through a tool called Percept.
- Missional practices that bring us into direct contact with our contexts for ministry.
- Engaging in peoples’ lives, listening to their stories, and discovering what God may be up to in their lives.

Discovering context is not a one-time exercise. Our contexts are constantly changing because the life experiences of real people and their environments are continually changing. An unexpected divorce, a sudden illness or career change multiplied by hundreds or thousands of people in a town or city shapes context. An economic recession, crime rate, or a recent shooting have an impact on local context. These life and societal events create challenges but also opportunities for the gospel to speak anew in relevant and powerful ways.
The six **stepping-stones** are similar to steps or stages of a process. They help frame the missional journey primarily for the Pastor Leadership Team. They provide a way to think about moving through a process that leads to a new set of cultural norms that are aligned to living and embodying the concerns and passion of Christ. The stepping-stones as a whole help create and sustain a culture that is always discerning, experimenting, and living into the concerns and passion of Christ.

**LCM was developed with the assumption that congregations have established a good foundation of ministry to build on.** LCM was designed to equip congregations to navigate an external environment that has significantly changed over the past several decades and continues to change. The missional process, missional practices, and associated activities are a set of tools to help the Pastor Leadership Team as they seek to discern and lead mission.

It is important not to be overwhelmed by what is outlined on the following pages. They provide a range of options for the Pastor Leadership Team as they share in leadership together.

The missional practices and activities outlined in this overview help to open our vision to new possibilities beyond the existing cultural norms that often limit our vision of congregational life and mission. The answers to questions regarding the future will likely not come from within our current norms of thinking. They will be sparked as leaders create safe environments for encounter, discovery, authentic relationships, and prophetic imagination beyond our typical routines and the walls of our sanctuaries. The missional process is about creating a sustainable culture into the future that is always discovering, experimenting, and living into new forms of ministry and mission. It is not about replacing one static model with another.

The following stepping-stones serve as a guide to help the Pastor Leadership Team discern and lead mission. As congregations begin the journey they tend to move from one stepping-stone to the next in a sequential fashion. Over time as congregations become more adaptive and create innovative cultures they will jump across stepping-stones as new challenges and opportunities present themselves. Ultimately, it is up to the Pastor Leadership Team and congregation to discover what it means to embody and live Christ’s mission today in their local context. It is an ongoing process. It is Spirit led.

**Key Question:** If God is truly moving to bring reconciliation and healing to all of creation then how can our congregational experiences be static?
For each stepping stone in the missional process you will find three specific areas of concentration:

1. **Initial Questions:** Framing Some Preliminary Questions

2. **Initial Path Forward:** Considering Next Steps

3. **Milestones:** Evaluating Progress on the Journey

You will not find step-by-step directions. The suggested activities and missional practices under “Initial Path Forward” directly link to the “Initial Questions” and provide multiple paths forward for the Pastor Leadership Team to consider. The “Milestones” help the Pastor Leadership Team evaluate how the congregation is responding and if progress is occurring. There is no timeframe associated with each stepping-stone. Congregations typically spend from 12 to 18 months journeying across the Encounter, Discover, and Envision stepping-stones.

The time spent journeying across Encounter, Discover, and Envision is extremely important. If congregations rush toward programmatic solutions they will likely be envisioned out of current understandings of congregational life and mission. Experiments will tend to be more tactical in nature and involve tinkering with existing congregational programs and structures. LCM is about discerning and living into the concerns and passion of Christ. It is God’s future and how we are called to live into that future in our local contexts that will shape new understandings and expressions of mission.

You have the gifts necessary in your team to discern, discuss, and lead through the various missional practices and activities. Approach the process prayerfully, humbly, and together and you will be blessed.

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**Note:** As a movement that believes “the purpose of the church is to form disciples who faithfully share the gospel of peace in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit” we have to seriously consider the role of the Holy Spirit in planning, organizing, mission, and ministry. Undeniably the Holy Spirit brings new life, imagination, and a willingness to risk new things with God. If we want to live into God’s future we must allow God’s Spirit to lead. As leaders we must ask this difficult question – to what extent have we allowed our best thinking, logic, and plans to obscure or totally hide what the Spirit is seeking to reveal right in front of us?

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5 We Share: Exploring Identity, Message, Mission and Beliefs – 3rd Edition
The following diagram suggests how the Pastor Leadership Team can utilize the Initial Questions, Initial Path Forward, and Milestones under each stepping stone in their planning:

![Diagram](image)

Note: The process flow above works for more immediate tactical issues as well as longer-term strategic or missional issues. It is helpful for the Pastor Leadership Team to differentiate whether questions identified are of an immediate or longer-term nature. This helps set expectations and gives permission to allow conversation on longer term questions to evolve over multiple meetings.

As conveyed previously, **Missional practices are absolutely essential to this process.** All other activities and questions are important but the missional practices begin to shape how we are and are becoming. How do they do this? By living into new ways of spiritual awareness and missional engagement. Though they may seem strange and awkward, over time with familiarity, they become more comfortable.

The real purpose of the missional process is to cultivate an environment (congregational culture) where the following occurs:

- New/Ancient practices lead to new understandings,
- New understandings lead to new prophetic imagination,
- New prophetic imagination leads to new missional experiments,
- New missional experiments lead to new forms of missional life in community,
- New forms of missional life lead to a new clarity among competing priorities, and the process continues …

**Note:** As important as the missional journey and associated stepping-stones are to cultivating a congregational culture that continually lives and embodies the concerns and passion of Christ, **LCM is first and foremost about living into new ways of being disciples in community (i.e. the church) in every context.** Missional practices lead us into a new awareness of relationships and how we are called to risk living out the gospel (i.e. Christ’s mission) in existing and new relationships.

**For smaller congregations** the missional process is often as simple as committing to a core set of missional practices that shape and transform how we are together in Christ and then risk relationships of invitation, hospitality, and healing with our neighbors. **The missional journey and associated stepping-**
Utilizing the Stepping-Stones for Discernment and Planning

For each stepping-stone in the missional process you will find three specific areas of concentration:

4. Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions

We begin with questions. There are many questions we can ask – asking questions that help lead the congregation on a missional journey require thoughtful reflection and conversation. We provide some initial questions for your consideration. Don’t feel limited by these questions. They are designed to get you started with each stepping-stone.

5. Initial Path Forward: Considering Next Steps

Next we consider missional practices and activities that help lead us into new experiences and understandings of Christ’s mission. The specific activities and missional practices are designed to help address the initial questions. Don’t feel limited by these practices and activities. They are provided to get you started with each stepping-stone. Activities and missional practices in BOLD are ones we highly recommend for consideration by the Pastor Leadership Team.

6. Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey

The descriptions under milestones are intended to provide the Pastor Leadership Team with a way to evaluate progress. The Pastor Leadership Team may identify some milestones specific to the congregation. This is encouraged.

The diagram on page 15 provides a good flow for meetings. It incorporates asking immediate and longer-term questions, having conversation, and charting next steps.

**Encounter** –
A divine stirring within provides the first glimpses of something deeper. The Pastor Leadership Team creates safe and sacred space for new questions, deeper conversations, and a holy unsettledness with the status quo.

1. Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions

It is very important to resist the rush to do something! This dimension of Encounter is about slowing down, creating space to listen and encounter God, and creating new space to be in relationships with one another. These initial questions will look different for every congregation. Here are some examples of questions to consider as you begin and continue the journey:
• How do we slow down and avoid the temptation to rush into tasks or solutions? (Remember, mission is a long journey in the same direction.) Is there anything to consider suspending to create time and space for what matters more?

• How do we intentionally create opportunities to deepen relationships with one another?

• What are some ways can we individually and in community create more space to “Listen to the Voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment.” (Doctrine and Covenants 162:1b)

• What might God desire to reveal to us about our sacred journey as a congregation?

• What are some new ways we can encounter the living Christ when we gather together and in our neighborhoods?

• What dimensions of our congregational experience have significant meaning for us and will help maintain a foundation to build on for the future?

Consider having conversation first as the Pastor Leadership Team and then with the congregation regarding these questions or the ones you develop. It is important that initial questions focus on process and not problem solving. It is helpful to frame the conversation in this way. It is also important to honor all questions shared in a congenational or small group setting.

2. Initial Path Forward: Considering Next Steps

There are multiple combinations of missional practices, exercises, and resources the Pastor Leadership Team can utilize to begin to move deeper into the holy unsettledness of this stepping-stone. There is no specific order or timing that must be followed. The Pastor Leadership Team is encouraged to consider the questions above and possible practices, exercises, and activities below thoughtfully and prayerfully.

• “Getting Started as a Pastor Leadership Team”

  In some cases the Pastor Leadership Team will be a new team and in other cases a continuing team of leaders. In both cases we want to explore and live out deeper expressions of discerning and leading as a team. Sharing leadership as a team is dependent on the diverse gifts of each person. This approach also develops others and results in more sustainable leadership. We strongly encourage everyone to utilize “Getting Started with a Pastor Leadership Team” for practical suggestions and practices. Also see “Connecting, Centering, and Dwelling” for ideas on how to begin Pastor Leadership Team meetings.

•
Leadership Team by reviewing “Exploring Call and Giftedness” (see practices index in The Pastors and Leaders Field Guide) and “Talking About Our Gifts” (a missional practice in the LCM Field Guide). These provide helpful suggestions to begin discussion on
the giftedness of each one on the Pastor Leadership Team. This is important in fully honoring and utilizing the gifts of the Pastor leadership Team members.

- **Invite Congregation into Shared Missional Practices** -
  There are three shared missional practices we are asking every congregation in LCM to engage in from the beginning.
  - *Dwelling in the Word, Mission Prayer, and Sharing in the Round.* It is helpful for the Pastor Leadership Team to review together “Missional Practices – What are They?” (in the LCM Guide). The Pastor Leadership Team may choose to engage in the Shared Missional Practices for a few weeks prior to inviting the congregation. Another option is to invite the priesthood into the missional practices early so they can share their initial experiences with the congregation. In smaller congregations everyone may begin the missional practices together. Whatever approach is utilized it is absolutely **essential that the Pastor Leadership Team is engaged in the missional practices and that they invite others to participate.**

- **Consider Additional Missional Practices** -
  Missional practices that focus on community building and begin to experience local contexts for ministry and mission are very helpful places to start. There is no need to feel pressure to start additional missional practices early. The missional practices are there to meet a variety of ministry and missional needs as discerned by the Pastor Leadership Team throughout the three-year process and into the future. The Pastor Leadership Team is encouraged to develop new missional practices that meet their specific needs. Please share your new missional practice ideas with the LCM Coordinator so we can share them with others.

For a complete list of missional practices refer to your LCM Field Guide under “Missional Practices”. Beyond the three shared missional practices, here are additional ones to consider:

- Breathing in the Spaces
- Centering Prayer
- Connecting, Centering, and Dwelling in the Word
- Valuing the Other
- Walking the Neighborhood

  - this activity is highly encouraged as a way to begin to identify gifts, frame questions, and assess the congregation’s perception of itself.

- **Integrate LCM Process/Missional Practices into Worship Experiences** - Here are just a few ideas:

  - Review “Approaching Worship as Encounter with the Holy” (LCM Field Guide) as a team for ideas.
into your Sunday morning worship experience. Consider these options:

- Integrate

Dwell

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Word
Replace the sermon with a Dwelling in the Word and then share a challenge.

Add a Dwelling in the Word as a worship element.

Do a Dwelling in the Word just prior to your worship experience.

Asking one or two persons to share their experience with Dwelling in the Word each week in the worship service.

- Consider integrating more personal testimony into your worship experiences as a way to learn more about one another's stories.

- Consider adding time for reflection or guided reflection in your worship.

- Consider inviting individuals from the community who are engaged in various aspects of ministry/mission to share their story as part of the worship experience.

3. Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey

Milestones are indicators of progress. They help the Pastor Leadership Team gauge how they are moving through the missional process. Every congregation is different. This is not a race but a long journey in the same direction. Here are some things to look for:
• Attraction to something deeper. Listen for this in conversations, missional practices like Dwelling in the Word, and worship experiences. Along with this growing awareness is increased concern and focus for how the worship experience leads the congregation into encounter with God.

• Broader missional questions begin to emerge. The tendency is often toward tactical questions or questions that have to do with congregational tinkering of existing programs. As we begin to encounter God and hear the invitation we begin to ask broader questions about our discipleship and the focus of the congregation. This takes time (sometimes up to a year).

• Relationships begin to develop beyond Sunday morning. This is facilitated by missional practices like Sharing in the Round or Hospitality but the result is clear – more conversation and connection outside of Sunday morning is occurring. Another indicator is the length of time people visit after church.

Discover
- The Pastor Leadership Team models and invites the congregation/small group into missional practices and activities. These help people move from vague questions and unsettledness to increasingly clear questions, conversation, and understanding of Christ’s mission in their changing contexts for mission.
1. **Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions**

In this stepping-stone, holy unsettledness moves to tangible questions and the ability to begin to describe current reality and glimpses of the future. It is the glimpses of the future or new missional paradigm that begin to generate questions. In this stepping-stone, we are beginning to immerse the congregation in conversation, worship, missional practices, and exercises that explore what it looks like to discern, live into, and embody the concerns and passion of Christ. The following questions for the Pastor Leadership Team help guide their conversation, discernment, and planning:

- How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we feeling tired, energized? What adjustments do we need to make so the burden and challenges of leadership are more equally shared?

- How do we continue to recognize and express through our leadership the call to slow down and create space to encounter God in relationship with one another?

- How can we infuse existing activities in the congregation with missional intent by utilizing the missional practices or creating some new ones that calls us into the sacred space of relationships and encounter?

- In Christian Education or Small Groups, what should we be studying together to help us go deeper and open our imagination to God’s future for us as disciples and congregation?

- How do we begin to discover our context for mission? How do we hear the stories of those in our neighborhoods who suffer both spiritually and physically?

- How do our questions change as a result of our encounter with our contexts on an ongoing basis? What is God up to in our neighborhoods?

- How are our understandings opening up as a leadership team? How do we create opportunities to stay in conversation with the congregation as we move through this process?

2. **Initial Path Forward – Considering Next Steps**

There are multiple combinations of practices, exercises, and resources the Pastor Leadership Team can utilize to begin to move deeper into the holy unsettledness of this stepping-stone. There is no specific order or timing that must be followed. The Pastor Leadership Team is encouraged to consider the questions above and possible practices, exercises, and activities below thoughtfully and prayerfully.
• **A Review of Congregational Activities and Ministries** –

In considering how to infuse current activities and ministries of the congregation with missional intent, it is helpful to develop and review a list of all current activities and ministries. This is also helpful in discussing what can be done to slow the pace.
down as discussed in the Encounter stepping-stone of the process. After developing the list, discuss the following:

- Are there activities that are sparsely attended and should potentially be discontinued? (It is important to provide opportunity for congregational input prior to making any decisions)

- Are there ways we can modify existing activities in order to integrate or add missional practices/exercises as part of the activity?

For example, the Valuing the Other missional practice could be integrated into Sunday morning Christian Education in the adult class and youth classes. This helps the congregation deepen relational skills while providing opportunity for study. In addition, the Pastor Leadership Team may suggest a specific resource that would be helpful to the LCM process utilizing “Suggestions for Christian Education or Small Group Study” or “The First Three Months – Getting Started with the Congregation.” These are two simply ways to use an existing activity and infuse it with missional intent.

- **Review and Implement “Framing the Essential Questions”**
  This activity is highly recommended for the Pastor Leadership Team and congregation. Beginning to frame the questions that will guide the missional journey is essential to the process. If the questions are tactical in nature they will tend to lead to answers out of the existing paradigm of mission. If the questions are adaptive and explore the broader questions of mission, giftedness, and context they will tend to lead to understandings, experiments, and forms of ministry and mission at the edge of the emerging paradigm of mission.

- **Review and Implement “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”**
  This resource provides a guide for simply checking in with the congregation on how the journey is progressing. This is different from a more formal evaluation of the pilot process. This is about sitting in a circle and actively listening to what God is up to in one another’s stories and drawing out important messages for the congregation as they move forward.

- **Utilize “How We Got Here” Discussion Resource**
  It is helpful to have an understanding of how we got here. Understanding the forces that have shaped the broader Christian tradition and Community of Christ are an important element in understanding our local context for ministry. This resource helps congregational leaders and members understand the monumental shifts that have been occurring in the cultural landscape we call society. It also helps to re-establish hope in the future or our movement as a prophetic people called into the future with God. This resource can be utilized over a weekend or several class periods.
• **Consider Missional Practices That Help Discover Context** –
  Under the Missional Practice tab in your LCM Field Guide you will find a number of practices specifically designed to discover the local context for mission. They include:
  - Walking the Neighborhood
  - Missional Prayer
  - Sharing in the Round
  - Exploring Your Culture (Pastors and Leaders Field Guide)
• **Request and Review Percept Study** –
  Percept is an analytical tool that can provide demographic and lifestyle data regarding any targeted population around a congregation. This data is one helpful piece in better understanding the local context for ministry and mission. Contact your mission center president for help in requesting a Percept Study.
• **Inviting Leaders of Local Ministry and Service Agencies** –
  An inexpensive and excellent way to build awareness of the local context is to invite leaders from various organizations that are making a difference in the community. This can occur during the weekly worship service or other times where two-way communication can enhance the information received. The purpose is not to join the organizations or adopt their causes but to hear their stories and pay attention to the impress of the Holy Spirit. The congregation may be led to engage in some of these causes or the congregation may identify needs being unmet that could be met by the unique giftedness of the congregation. It is all part of the process of discovering the local context for mission.

• **Initiate Study Groups/Christian Education Based on “Suggestions for Christian Ed or Small Group Study” or “The First Three Months: Getting Started with the Congregation”** –
  Being intentional about what is studied and discussed is a simple but impactful way the Pastor Leadership Team can cultivate new understanding regarding mission. A list of suggested resources is provided that the Pastor Leadership Team can rely on in terms of alignment with Community of Christ Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs. *It is highly recommended the Pastor Leadership Team take the step of collaborating with the congregation in what is studied whether in small groups or Christian Education.*

3. **Milestones: Evaluating Our Progress on the Journey**

Milestones are indicators of progress. They help the Pastor Leadership Team gauge how they are moving through the missional process. Every congregation is different. This is not a race but a long journey in the same direction. Here are some things to look for:

• During times of conversation and group missional practices members who don’t ordinarily speak are beginning to share perspectives and questions. This is an indication there is a deepening of safe and authentic space to share.
• The Pastor Leadership Team and congregation are beginning to gain clarity on guiding questions. There is a level of confidence in the questions under consideration.

• Individuals in the congregation can describe current reality in contrast to insights that are emerging regarding how they live and embody mission together. The congregation begins to evaluate current actions, attitudes, and norms in light of new understandings.

• 20% of the active members are actively and consistently engaged in missional practices.

• There is a level of understanding about the nature of the journey – a recognition that discernment and missional practices are not steps to move past but part of the new emerging cultural norms of the congregation.

Envision
- Leaders continue to cultivate safe and sacred space for emerging questions, conversation, and the willingness to risk imagining and sharing new ideas. From the questions, conversation, missional practices, and activities emerge new insights about what it might look like to “embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ” (Doctrines and Covenants 164:9d) in existing and new ministry contexts.

1. Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions

This stepping-stone is a turning point in the overall missional process. As a result of the missional practices, activities, encounters, and conversation, prophetic imagination begins to emerge. We will simply define prophetic imagination as a glimpse of God’s preferred future in a situation or relationship. Individuals and congregations don’t neatly move onto this stepping-stone at one time. Prophetic imagination can emerge at anytime during the process as the Holy Spirit reveals the possibility of the future.

What we can say is that congregations as a whole will tend to lean into this stepping-stone after work has been done with Encounter and Discovery. This makes sense in light of our Foundational Principles. Mission begins with encounter and is disruptive both to our agendas and understandings. As we immerse ourselves in missional practices and activities that deepen our understanding of mission, we find blinders that once hid new ideas are removed.

As with prior stepping-stones, there is no particular order to the activities below. The Pastor Leadership Team has the flexibility to choose activities that will work best for the congregation over time. The following question will help guide the Pastor Leadership Team to cultivate an environment that leads to prophetic imagination.
ation:
• How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we feeling tired, energized? What adjustments do we need to make so the burden and challenges of leadership are more equally shared?

• Think about how you would tell the current story of your congregation. What assumptions or guiding story has shaped the current imagination of the congregation? How has the current reality caused you to question the future viability of these assumptions or guiding story? How do these assumptions or guiding story help or hinder you from seeing God’s future in this place?

• How are we creating wide space in our gatherings and personal discipleship for the Holy Spirit to move and inspire? Is the Holy Spirit playing a leading role or are we trying too hard to engineer success (however we define success)? What is the right balance? Are we having fun? Are we laughing and playing, embodying the hope and freedom of the gospel? (D&C 161: 1b) Or is it all about work?

• What pathways are we opening up other than words and abstract thinking/analysis to encounter God anew in art, nature, relationships, and even in some of the darkest places we would not expect to find beauty and hope?

• How are we continuing to deepen our relationships and create authentic and safe space for people to share new ideas? Do we have more work to do to create this kind of environment?

• Have we reached a plateau? Do we feel a pause in momentum that may signal a need to step back and be in conversation with the congregation on how things are going?

• What missional practices will help us encounter God in multiple ways (relationships, situations, culture, etc.) and lead to prophetic imagination?

• How can we create different physical space? Should we consider a retreat as part of our process of envisioning?

• Have enough of us committed enough time to a set of missional practices that lead to new understanding, encounters, and prophetic imagination? Do we need to reengage? Do we need to go deeper?
How do we weave our experiences and missional practices? How do we create safe space for their insights and questions?

2. Initial Path Forward: *Considering Next Steps*

- Review reflections from “*Sharing/Discovering Our Congregational Story*” –
  1. An important part of this exercise is drawing come common
themes out of the sharing as well as constructing what the story has been to date. This is more than just a collection of facts or events but the weaving together of events and common themes that result in a story line that shapes what the congregation believes about itself and God’s involvement with the congregation. This is critically important. This story may have never been publically articulated in any coherent way and yet shapes the expectations and imagination of the people for the future. Take the time to make sure you understand the underlying story beneath the events that have taken place and how they may be limiting or providing a foundation to build on for the future.

2. Now spend some time with the congregation reflecting on the story they would like to write with God going into the future. Use the Foundational Principles and reflections from the “Congregational Journal” and begin to discuss the desired future that is emerging. You can utilize “Foundational Principles and Our Emerging Story” as a guide for this exercise. Don’t rush the process. Let it evolve over time.

- Developing a Bias Toward Being Spirit Led.
  This is a very simple exercise. During the next several meetings or looking back on the past several meetings of the Pastor Leadership Team, estimate the amount of time allocated (percentage or actual time) to the following areas:
  
  o  Prayer
  o  Dwelling in Scripture
  o  Silence
  o  Imagining the Future
  o  Conversation
  o  Problem Solving
  o  Planning

We have a natural tendency to focus more on problem solving and planning. This is what we are taught to do and how good leadership is often defined. We need to struggle with this reality:

If we want to live into God’s future we must allow God’s Spirit to lead. As leaders we must ask this difficult question –

to what extent have we allowed our best thinking, logic, and plans obscure or totally hide what the Spirit is seeking to reveal right in front of us?

Discuss how you can reorient your meeting time so 50% or more of your time is allocated to prayer, dwelling in scripture, silence, and imagining the future together. This will be a real stretch at first but the nature of your meetings and results will change dramatically as you move toward the 50% goal.

- Coming Together for Fun and Fellowship
  Planning time for shared experiences of fun and fellowship actually helps foster creativity and imagination. Prophetic imagination and creativity emerge over time and can rarely be forced or summoned on demand. Sometimes insig
hts come at the
most unexpected times. It is important that the Pastor Leadership Team consider creating time to laugh, play, sing and embody the hope and freedom of the gospel.

- **Coming Together in Different Venues** –
  Sometimes a change in venue can make all the difference. As a Pastor Leadership Team, you can meet in many places that may begin to spark your imagination –
  a local coffee house, a home, a different place in the church building, in nature, etc. As you meet be particularly aware of your surroundings. Spend some time together discussing the setting and any feelings or thoughts that surface.

Congregations can also benefit from this practice. Consider having a service at a local park. **Consider a congregational retreat as a way to share together in a different setting.** Inspiration comes in many ways. What often is most needed is some cue or prompt to open us up to a possibility we had not considered before. Consider spending an afternoon at an art museum together. Be sure to reflect on the experience together including any feelings or thoughts that emerge. Discovering the future most often comes from somewhere outside current experience. Finding ways to engage in the unfamiliar can be very helpful to opening ourselves to God’s future.

- **Practicing Prophetic Imagination in Community** –
  Utilizing **How We Got Here**, Percept Analysis, and Walking the Neighborhood missional practice, begin to describe the various contexts for mission. These might include the local congregational neighborhood as well as neighborhoods where members of the congregation live. What are we learning? What are some of the needs that are emerging? Now prayerfully begin to discuss what the future might look like. In very specific terms begin to describe that future together. Utilize the Practicing Prophetic Imagination in Community exercise as a guide.

- **Review and Implement “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”** –
  Utilizing “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”, enter into a conversation with the congregation to hear how things are going for individuals engaged in the process. Congregations often hit plateaus. These plateaus can be important times of rest, renewal, and reflection. They can also be important times to reframe questions for the next part of the journey. **It is critically important for the Pastor Leadership Team to create a welcoming environment for people to share their stories and feedback.**

- **Encountering Spiritual and Physical Suffering** –
  God’s future is waiting to emerge in some of the most God-forsaken places. **It is important for the Pastor Leadership Team and congregations to place themselves in situations and places where they can encounter first hand the reality of their context for mission.** This is not about emotional manipulation but about hearing the voices and stories of those who struggle and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, envisioning God’s preferred future. This can occur in several ways:
  - Field trips to places/agencies that are reaching out to the marginalized
what is really going on around us.

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Evaluating

- Invitations to the people who are on the front lines of reaching out to the marginalized and forgotten. This can occur during Christian Education or be a very impactful part of a service focusing on listening to God’s voice through the stories of others.
- Consider a trip to a local nursing home and spend an afternoon in conversation with residents.

There are many places where people are either spiritually or physically suffering. If we are going to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ, we must first encounter these concerns and passions close up. It is important to note that the purpose here is not to immediately join or contribute to a community ministry, although some will feel compelled to do just that. It is to listen to the voice that envisions a different future and begin to imagine how we can become part of that future in our local contexts.

Spend time together reflecting on the questions that emerge from these experiences. They become part of the congregational journal and emerging sense of clarity regarding some initial missional experiments.

- **Application of Dwelling in the Word to Other Forms of Beauty** – Consider the importance of Dwelling in the Word. We are dwelling or residing in the living Word of scripture. We are discovering together the mystery and beauty and depth of God’s unfolding story and its meaning to us today. In a world that is about expediency, “dwelling” is about slowing down and rediscovering beauty and truths that inspire and tempt us toward God’s future. This simple activity is about taking the time to dwell in other forms of God’s creativity including:
  - Nature
  - Art
  - Music
  - Poetry

Through these cultural expressions our minds and hearts can be opened and we can begin to see connections between the good news of the gospel and how it can be lived and shared in various languages and form. This can be fun and, most importantly, it can be inspiring.

- **Review “Discerning and Utilizing the Gifts of all Ages”** – Engaging all ages is important throughout the process. This particular resource provides helpful suggestions for ensuring the congregation’s journey is blessed with the giftedness and insights of all ages.


3. **Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey**

Evaluating progress with this stepping-stone is a bit more challenging. In general, we are looking for a change in the focus
of possibility. This occurs as our encounter with the reality of suffering bumps from current reality to future.
up against the good news of the gospel. If we don’t sense a change in focus it may be that our missional practices and conversations have been insulated from the reality around us. It is out of the tension between the reality of the present and our deepening understanding of Christ’s mission that prophetic imagination is sparked and our language begins to lean into the future. A few indicators of movement through this dimension are:

- Individuals in the congregation begin to view current activities, actions, attitudes, and priorities in light of deeper and new understandings of the good news of the Christ’s mission found in Luke 4:18-19.

- The inertia in the congregation begins to shift from maintaining the status quo to a bias for risking something new.

- Questions begin to emerge about skills and resources needed to respond to emerging ideas.

- There is a spirit of adventure and even playfulness emerging. People genuinely enjoying being together.

- Relationships continue to go deeper and a deeper sense of community emerges. Conversations are not as contrived but come naturally out of missional practices that are connecting individuals outside the Sunday morning experience.

- Conversations are increasingly centered on matters of substance for both individuals and the congregation.

**Experiment**

As new ideas emerge, missional experiments are conceived and launched in pairs or small groups in prayer and expectation. The Pastor Leadership Team continues to model and invite the congregation/small group into missional practices, conversation, and activities that have shaped their journey to this point and will lead to continued new insights and missional experiments. Special attention is given to matching the individual giftedness of all ages with missional experiments.

1. Initial Questions: *Framing Some Preliminary Questions*

The congregation, through the leadership of the Pastor Leadership Team, will need to identify how to:

- foster a shared experience that continues to value relationships in community,
- create experiential opportunities to encounter mission and inspire new creativity, and
- cultivate a cultural bias for risking new things with one another and God.
The missional practices will continue to play a central role in shaping disciples and the shared experience of the congregation. The following questions will guide the Pastor Leadership Team in their ongoing discernment and planning:

- How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we feeling tired, energized? What adjustments do we need to make so the burden and challenges of leadership are more equally shared?

- How do we continue to keep our focus on core missional practices while engaging in new experiments? Do we need to consider introducing a new missional practice and/or discontinuing an existing one that may not be as effective as hoped?

- How do we foster an innovative congregational experience where we provide appropriate support but do not hinder experimentation?

- How do we set appropriate expectations for the nature of experiments (some will succeed, some will not) as opportunities to learn and grow into Christ’s mission?

- What does a missional experiment look like? What are some parameters we can establish that will help increase the probability of a good experience?

- As we begin to experiment, how do we continue to deepen our encounter with God, with one another, and with the reality of suffering in our world? What current missional practices do we need to emphasize? Do we need to consider new ones to bring new life into the process?

- How do we step back from the process and evaluate and celebrate learning?

- How do we engage all ages in this process?

2. Initial Path Forward: Considering Next Steps

Designing and constructing experiments are a critical part of the journey. It is important that individuals feel supported and that no one launch out on an experiment on their own. Blessings of Community, one of our most valued Enduring Principles, should inform our approach to experiments. A number of the suggested steps below will be an adaptation of principles and steps suggested in Mark Lau Branson’s *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*.

It is important to remember on this stepping-stone that core missional practices, as well as additional ones introduced by the Pastor Leadership Team, will continue.

- **Review “Connecting the Dots of Missional Practice, Experiences, Questions, and Insights”** – The experiments in this dimension of the process should emerge directly from the questions that have been guiding the missional journey and insights gained from the missional practices and shared experiences of the congregation. The Congregational Journal is one
place the questions, emerging themes, prophetic imagination, and possibilities for experiments can be found. The best place is in the reflections and stories of those participating in the missional journey. This is an intentional time to step back and review the journey so far and how it informs next steps.

- **Review “Constructing Experiments: Ground Rules and Guidelines”** – This particular resource will guide the Pastor Leadership Team in how to create a culture that is conducive to taking risk. A practical approach to designing and constructing experiments is also provided as a guide for the Pastor Leadership Team as they consider how to provide support and guidance.

- **Review “Discerning and Utilizing the Gifts of all Ages”** - Engaging all ages in the process is important throughout the process. This particular resource provides helpful suggestions for ensuring the congregation’s journey is blessed with the giftedness and insights of all ages.

3. **Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey**

Experiments are tangible expressions of a deepening awareness and understanding of the reality of suffering and the possibility of the gospel in bringing healing and wholeness. As the Holy Spirit shapes us, we develop a new sensitivity and unsettledness with the status quo and feel compelled to live and embody the concerns and passion of Christ. Here are some specific indicators beyond the experiments that the congregation is moving into experimentation:

- Individuals/pairs/small groups begin to respond in action to what they have seen, heard, and experienced through the missional practices and activities of the missional journey.

- Ideas emerge that are adaptive rather than tactical in nature. By this we mean the ideas are coming from the inspired well of prophetic imagination. Tactical ideas relate to doing more or improving what we already do. Adaptive ideas come from a new place as a result of a deeper understanding of what it looks like to incarnate (live out, embody) the gospel in specific and tangible ways.

- Ideas are emerging from congregational members and friends and not the Pastor Leadership Team. This is a strong indicator the culture is shifting from a leader driven to a member-initiated culture.

- Everyone has opportunity to express his or her gifts in mission. Here it is important to recognize that mission is broadly defined as the five Mission Initiatives. Whether a person connects through engagement in missional practices, sharing as a prayer partner for someone engaged in an experiment, or on the front lines of a new expression of ministry, they have found a place to connect and contribute.
**Evaluate** - New ministries and experiments lead to new forms of missional life and the need to evaluate what matters most among competing priorities. Leaders utilize the congregation/small group’s growing capacity to engage in meaningful conversation to discuss how structure, individual gifts, ministries, and activities can be oriented around a deepening understanding of Christ’s mission.

1. Initial Questions: *Framing Some Preliminary Questions*

As the congregation moves deeper into the missional practices and activities, prophetic imagination will lead to different experiments. Depending on the size of the congregation and number of individuals involved the experiments will begin to stretch the resource capacity of the congregation. In addition, new ways of being together and living Christ’s mission are evolving. This will naturally lead to discussions about what matters most in light of competing priorities and an emerging vision for how the congregation can move into the future together. The following questions help the Pastor Leadership Team begin to think about this conversation:

- How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we feeling tired, energized? What adjustments do we need to make so the burden and challenges of leadership are more equally shared?

- How do we continue to encounter God in times of our sharing together? Are we creating the space necessary to let the Spirit lead?

- How do we continue to keep our focus on core missional practices while engaging in new experiments? Do we need to consider introducing a new missional practice and/or discontinuing an existing one that may not be as effective as hoped?

- Have we reached a plateau? Do we feel a pause in momentum that may signal a need to step back and be in conversation with the congregation on how things are going? (This would occur prior to conversation around missional priorities and the future. It may be a signal the congregation is not ready for evaluation but needs to spend more time with the four stepping-stones of Encounter, Discover, Envision, and Experiment)

- What is our best sense of how the congregation is responding to new understandings and engaging in experiments? Is the timing right to enter into a conversation about what we take with us into future and what we need to leave behind?

- How do we best facilitate a conversation around missional priorities that draws on the positive energy and experiences of the process while making difficult decisions about what is sustainable going into the future?

- How do we engage the perspectives of all ages?
2. Initial Path Forward: Considering Next Steps

The discussion above under “Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions” sets the context for the suggestions below. This is about continuing to create safe and welcoming space for individuals to share their stories and perspectives. It is helpful to continue to build on positive energy and focus on what we are trying to create in contrast to a more negative what needs fixed approach. Richard Foster in *Freedom of Simplicity* suggests it is easy to say no when there is a deeper yes burning within. The question at this point in the journey is whether there is indeed a deeper yes that is calling the congregation into the future. The following suggestions are ways to help the Pastor Leadership Team facilitate the conversation:

- **Review and Implement “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”** –
  Utilizing “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”, enter into a conversation with the congregation to hear how things are going for individuals engaged in the process. Congregations often hit plateaus. These plateaus can be important times of rest, renewal, and reflection. They can also be important times to reframe questions for the next part of the journey. **It is critically important for the Pastor Leadership Team to create a welcoming environment for people to share their stories and feedback.**

- **Review “How Mission Can Shape Congregational Form and Structure”** –
  What does it look like allow a new way of being a congregation shape form and structure? What are some ways to approach this conversation? What are some examples of different configurations?

- **Review “Connecting the Dots of Missional Practices, Experiences, Questions, and Insights”** –The Congregational Journal is one place that the questions, emerging themes, prophetic imagination, and possibilities for experiments can be found. The best place is in the reflections and stories of those participating in the missional journey. This is an intentional time to step back and review the journey so far and how it informs next steps. This can be a particularly helpful piece in evaluating the missional culture and priorities we wish to sustain into the future. It is very important we help people connect the patterns of meaning along the way that inform our journey in the future.

- **Review “Facilitating Conversation During Evaluation”** –
  What is the best way to enter into conversation about sustaining a desired missional culture and priorities going into the future? Where should the conversation begin? How does the Pastor Leadership Team utilize the positive energy and momentum that has been a part of the process in envisioning the future together? The scope of this task often depends on the size of the congregation and level of engagement in experiments as well as other dimensions of the LCM process. In some cases the discussion can be pretty informal and in other cases a little more structure and methodical approach will be important.
3. Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey

It is important for the Pastor Leadership Team to understand when it is time to have a conversation with the congregation about the future. This is a conversation that most often does not occur in congregations, and people often get tired and become disengaged as a result.

The key is to be proactive in the conversation but not too early. The congregation needs to be in the Discover, Envision, and Experiment mode for a while to discover the unique challenges with sustaining this type of congregational experience. It will be important for the Pastor Leadership Team to continue to be in conversation with individuals and the congregation as a whole to keep a pulse on how people are doing and when the time is right for these conversations. Here are some indicators the timing may be right:

- People (a core group of about 20-25%) are beginning to internalize the LCM process in their personal discipleship. They are fully engaged in the core missional practices, connected with an experiment, and sharing out of their experiences with the process.

- The congregational decision making process is increasingly informed by this process. More specifically, deeper/new understandings about living Christ’s mission as community are informing the congregation’s decisions.

- Although there is positive energy by the congregation as a whole, there is anecdotal evidence that some of the core group is asking questions about sustainability. This often occurs when exciting new things are happening and all the existing structure and programs of the congregation are still continuing.

- Members of the congregation are inviting new people to come and see what is happening. This is a strong indicator that the congregation has discovered a new way of being that is beginning to take root. People are excited, and they want to invite others to join in.

Renew –
The Pastor Leadership Team creates intentional opportunities to pause, reflect, process learning, celebrate, rest, and renew their commitment to an ongoing adaptive process of being shaped and sent by Christ’s mission and emerging vision.

1. Initial Questions: Framing Some Preliminary Questions

We have many examples of Jesus drawing away from the crowds for rest and renewal. Although initially opportunity for reflection and renewal will occur after a congregation moves through the five other stepping-stones, renewal will be an important part of the natural rhythm of the congregation going forward and will weave in and out of other stepping-stones.
The following questions address both the initial process and ongoing process:

- How do we celebrate the learning and new expressions of mission that have evolved throughout the process?
- How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we finding balance in this process? If not, how do we engage more people? Are there new people we need to bring into the Pastor Leadership Team? Have we committed to too much in the Evaluation dimension?
- What does rest look like for our congregation? How do we integrate rest as a natural practice of congregational life?
- Looking to the future, how do we commit to this new way of life as a congregation? How do we best articulate the principles that have guided us and will guide us into the future? How do we continue to discern and evaluate what matters most among competing priorities?
- What is the best way for us to covenant with one another into the future? Should we consider a worship service that celebrates where we have been and affirms where we are going?
- Are we truly engaging the gifts of all ages? Do we have more work to do in engaging the giftedness of children and youth? Have we engaged our more senior members?
- How do we keep the journey fresh and not settle into a set of missional practices that simply become another routine? How do we continue to challenge ourselves to be fully awake and present to God’s movement that is continually leading us into relationships with our neighbors?
- How do we hold one another accountable to share leadership and ministry so no one person is overwhelmed with responsibility?

2. Initial Path Forward: Considering Next Steps

- Review “Identification and/or Development of New Missional Practices” – What is a good outline for developing a missional practice? What differentiates a missional practice from an activity of the congregation? How can we engage the congregation in suggesting and developing missional practices?
- Review “Resources for Mission” – There are some good resources that can help renew the journey and conversation and challenge the congregation to Sabbath practices.
- Review “In the Name of Jesus Reflections” and Book – A very real temptation throughout the process will be to over-control or try too hard to drive the process. If real culture change is going to occur and be sustained, leaders have to learn a new kind of leadership. It is very helpful to go back and connect with this resource. Consider how this calls the leadership team to lead differently
and even the consideration of individuals that are invited into the Pastor Leadership Team.

- Review “Discerning and Utilizing the Gifts of All Ages” – Engaging all ages is important throughout the process. This particular resource provides helpful suggestions for ensuring the congregation’s journey is blessed with the giftedness and insights of all ages.

- Review “Developing a Cohesive and Effective Pastor Leadership Team” – It will be helpful for the Pastor Leadership Team going forward to reconnect with the importance of sharing leadership and ministry. It will be particularly important to have frank and honest discussion as to how the leadership team is functioning. It will also be important to discuss needed changes for the future.

3. Milestones: Evaluating Progress on the Journey

The most important milestone for this stepping-stone is to commit to taking the time to actually have the conversation. It is very easy to become driven to see results and to fail to pause, rest, reflect, adjust, and renew ourselves for the journey ahead. Most important is the challenge of timing. It is critical not to wait until people are totally burned out and withdrawing to have this conversation. It needs occur at points throughout the journey as an essential way we honor the worth of each person.

Initially this conversation will occur as a natural culmination of the process. Going forward it will need to be integrated as an ongoing practice of leadership.

Our Thingamajig

Over the course of the next three years tools and resources will be added to the backpack to address anticipated challenges as well as a few surprises along the way. Everyone involved with LCM will have the opportunity to influence the additional tools and resources provided to the Pastor Leadership Teams. We want to hear about what is working and not working. We want to share the good ideas, experiments, and new practices developed in congregations with everyone participating in the pilot.

We will begin our missional journey with some additional tools but look forward to the contributions of everyone along the way as we learn together. Please share ideas and suggestions with any of the following LCM Support Team:

Rob Borkowski  ☏ 816-206-3095  Email: rborkowski@cofchrist.org
Ron Harmon  ☏ 502-938-8146  Email: rharmon@cofchrist.org
Tom Mountenay  ☏ 816-377-1550  Email: tmountenay@cofchrist.org
Shaping a Community of Christ Culture Together

Congregations and small groups that learn to utilize the tools of LCM over time develop a congregational culture that:

- is shaped by an ongoing encounter with the living Christ in community,
- is grounded in the witness of scripture,
- is radically relational and invitational,
- shares the joys and challenges of leadership in sustaining mission,
- is safe to explore and experiment,
- discerns and connects individual gifts and sense of call with opportunities to live Christ’s mission in all its forms,
- embodies and lives the concerns and passion of Christ.

The purpose of LCM is to support the Pastor Leadership Team in their intentional efforts to cultivate sacred communities (congregations and new expressions of the church) that are shaped and sent by their ongoing encounter with the living Christ in relationship with one another and their neighbors, locally and globally.

LCM places intentional emphasis on leadership teams to increasingly make available a diversity of gifts, continuity, and support for discerning, leading, and sustaining Christ’s mission in congregations and new expressions of the church. The missional principles, process, and missional practices translate into specific leadership behaviors that will be explored in greater depth throughout the LCM process.

The Congregation Support Minister (CSM) plays a vital role. Just as the Pastor Leadership Team is called to cultivate an adaptive culture that fosters discernment and creative response to Christ’s mission, so, too is the CSM called to cultivate a relationship with the team to model these attributes. The CSM’s most important role is being a spiritual companion and guide. By their presence and through their spiritual and relational sensitivity, CSMs will provide helpful external reflections as well as affirmation of places and ways the Spirit is moving in the congregation.

By placing emphasis on the role of spiritual companion and guide, CSMs will continue to provide helpful perspectives and frame important questions, always deferring to the Pastor Leadership Team for key decisions. Over time, this supportive presence will instill confidence in the Pastor Leadership Team’s ability to lead.

LCM Specific Outcomes

Primary Outcome:

LCM will equip the Pastor Leadership Team to cultivate a congregational or small group environment that:

- is shaped by an ongoing encounter with the living Christ in community,
- is grounded in the witness of scripture,
- is radically relational and invitational,
- shares the joys and challenges of leadership in sustaining mission,
• is safe to explore and experiment,
• discerns and connects individual gifts and sense of call with opportunities to live Christ’s mission in all its forms,
• embodies and lives the concerns and passion of Christ.

Secondary Outcomes:

• Opportunities created for developing, supporting, and using young adult leadership and giftedness
• Increased levels of missional engagement in the larger community
• New forms and expressions of congregational life aligned with missional focus and We Share: Exploring Identity, Message, Mission, and Beliefs – 3rd Edition
• Increased generosity to local and global ministries
• Increased baptisms and new disciples
• Increased participation in leadership and ministry by all ages
• Missional practices become the norm and are leading to new insights
• Congregations connected to the mission of the global church

The outcome of LCM is not a new set of congregational objectives, but a new culture (shared experience) where discernment, experimentation, and creation of new forms and expressions of ministry and mission are the new norms. Congregational culture shifts to a new paradigm of mission when leaders cultivate experiences that lead to encounters with God, one another, and Christ’s mission in all its forms.

Recent counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 163 calls for the “the establishment of signal communities of justice and peace that reflect the vision of Christ.” We are seeking to become signal communities that look and feel like the peaceable kingdom of God on earth. Our call is to pursue Christ’s mission together in a world that yearns for the liberating truths of the gospel. This will take many forms as we are open to how God is calling us to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ in a changing world.

Glossary of Terms

**Missional** - A sacred community that is *shaped and sent* by their ongoing encounter with the living Christ in relationship with one another and their neighbors locally and globally.

**Movement** – Mission is about movement or sending. God sent Jesus to be the embodiment of God’s love. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (in community) send us, the church, to pursue Christ’s wholistic mission through the five Mission Initiatives. Another way to look at this is that God moved toward us in Jesus Christ and we are now called to move toward others. President Stephen M. Veazey describes Christ as “the movement of God to bring reconciliation and wholeness to all dimensions of life.” This is in contrast to an expectation that individuals will move toward us to hear or experience the message and mission of Christ.

**Cultivate** – A dictionary definition references breaking up soil in preparation for planting. When we apply this definition to leadership we are referring to leadership that cultivates or prepares a rich soil for spiritual formation, relationships, discovery, development of giftedness, and experimentation. Cultivate here refers to specific leadership practices that “break up” the hard soil of complacency or satisfaction with the status quo by first modeling specific missional practices or ways of being and then inviting others into this experience. Cultivating is also
about sharing leadership and ministry in ways that develop giftedness in others and promotes
certainty to discern and pursue Christ’s mission. We use the image of soil because LCM is
about discerning and leading mission from the ground up, not from the top down.

**Context** – Includes the circumstances, facts, or conditions that form the setting for mission. It
also refers to the landscape, the broad view of one’s surroundings, to interpret response-able
application of mission. In scripture, we refer to literary and historical context so we might better
understand the specific circumstances associated with a particular passage. In ministry, we look
at the relational and broader cultural conditions of a situation to provide a relevant response in
ministry. Without an understanding of context we can significantly misread a situation and
cause more harm than good.

**Adaptive Culture** – We begin with culture. Culture is a collection of a group’s shared beliefs,
values, and stories that over time result in accepted norms of behavior. These norms of behavior
become so imbedded in every day experience they often go unnoticed by the group.
Continually examining beliefs, values, stories, and associated norms in light of context is an
example of an adaptive culture. Why is this important? We know our context will change. We
also know the underlying message and mission of Jesus have remained unchanged throughout
the centuries. How these relate to each other and are lived out in faith communities is what
LCM is all about.

How we live out the gospel with one another in a constantly changing world is about being
adaptive. We are not to be adaptive to the prevailing norms and attitudes contrary to the
message and mission of Christ. We are to be adaptive to live out the message and mission of
Christ in ways relevant to a changing world. **When we adopt group norms or ways of being
together that respond faithfully to our changing contexts, we have an adaptive culture. This is
the purpose behind missional practices and experiments.**

**Missional Practices** - The repetition of acts or a series of acts for cultivating new
understandings, ways of being, and ways of living as disciples and communities of faith.
Missional practices help disciples, congregations, and new expressions of the church live into
new behaviors that discern and respond to a changing context.

**Missional Experiments** – The application of a new ministry idea to a specific opportunity or
need for ministry. Inherent in the word ‘experiment’ is the possibility of success or failure. This
is an important understanding. Creating an adaptive culture fosters a willingness to try
multiple ministry experiments multiple times. Equally important is knowing that though some
experiments will fail, we will learn together how to better pursue Christ’s mission.

**Prophetic Imagination** – “The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish and evoke a
consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant
culture around us.”

What does this mean for us? It means as we are shaped by the concerns
and passion of Christ, we begin to see things as they are and as they could be. A prophetic
people begin to live as though the reign or kingdom of God is the dominant cultural norm and
thus co-create the future with God.

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6 Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: FORTRESS