Our Missional Journey as a Congregation

If you would truly be Community of Christ then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

—Doctrine & Covenants 164:9d
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.

Milestones are indicators of movement or progress. They help the Pastor Leadership Team reflect with the congregation where they are in 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:

- There is a growing awareness and hunger for something more than the current congregational experience is providing. Listen for these yearnings in conversations, missional practices like Dwelling in the Word, and worship experiences.

- New questions begin to emerge. Initially the tendency is to ask questions that have to do with changing existing programs, activities, or ministries. As we encounter God and receive the invitation we begin to ask deeper questions about our discipleship and the missional focus of our 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. The result is clear – more visiting, conversation, and connection outside of Sunday morning is occurring. Another indicator is the length of time people visit after church.
1. How are we (i.e. PLT and Congregation) doing with slowing down, being fully present with one another and God, and creating sacred space for encounter? Are there changes we need to make to create more space?

2. How are we (i.e. PLT and Congregation) beginning to identify essential questions that lead us beyond the familiar and into the heart of God’s vision for us as a people and our neighborhoods? Do we need support in identifying essential questions?

3. How are we risking deeper relationships with one another? How are we beginning to turn our focus outward to encountering our neighbors?
Missional Step and Milestones

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.

Milestones:

- During times of conversation and group missional practices individuals who don’t ordinarily speak are beginning to share perspectives and questions. This is an indication of deeper, safer, and more authentic space for sharing.

- The PLT and congregation are beginning to gain insight into a few essential questions for their journey.

- Individuals in the congregation are beginning to see connections between emerging insights and the current reality of the congregation. The positive attributes of the congregation’s journey are being affirmed and challenges/opportunities clearly identified.

- 20% of the active members are actively and consistently engaged in missional practices. There is recognition that discernment and missional practices are not steps to move past but an essential part of embodying and living Christ’s mission.

- Individuals and the congregation as a whole have a new appreciation for their shared sacred story. A renewed sense of hope about the future is beginning to emerge.
PLT Questions and Reflections

1. How are we creating safe space to free the expression of hopes, questions, and challenges/opportunities ahead?

2. How are we inviting the congregation to share fully in the three-shared missional practices? How is the congregation responding to the invitation(s)?

3. What is our sacred story as individuals and a congregation? What are the sacred stories of our neighbors and friends? What is God revealing about our future in these stories?
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 new insights emerge about what it might look like to “embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9d) in existing and new ministry contexts.

Milestones:
- 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 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. Conversation increasingly focuses on becoming more invitational with neighbors and friendly strangers.
- 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 enjoy being together.
- Relationships continue to deepen and a new sense of community emerges. Conversations are not as contrived and come naturally out of missional practices that connect individuals beyond the Sunday morning experience.
- Conversations are increasingly centered on matters of substance for both individuals and the congregation.
PLT Questions and Reflections

1. How are our discussions, practices, and insights beginning to shape *how* we are a congregation when *gathered and sent*? Specifically what is changing and why?

2. How are we beginning to experience new hope, energy, and insights as individuals and a congregation? What are we seeing and hearing that we did not see and hear before?

3. How is the substance of our conversations changing? What are we talking about and how is it shaping who we are becoming?

4. Are we paying attention to individual transitions and emotions that always accompany change? How do we best support one another?
EXPERIMENTS - As new ideas emerge, missional experiments are conceived and launched in pairs or small groups in prayer and expectation. The PLT continues to model and invite the congregation or small group into missional practices, conversation, and activities that lead to new insights and missional experiments. Special attention is given to matching the giftedness of all ages with missional experiments.

Milestones:
- 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 seeing new insights and having deeper understandings to incarnate (live out, embody) the gospel in specific and tangible ways.
- Ideas are emerging from congregational members and friends and not just the Pastor Leadership Team. This is a strong indicator the culture is shifting from a leader driven to a disciple-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.
PLT Questions and Reflections

1. What experiments are beginning to emerge that call us into deeper and new ways of being a loving Christ-centered community?

2. What experiments are beginning to emerge that call us beyond the familiarity of the congregation into new relationships of invitation, hospitality, and healing?

3. How are we helping all ages connect new insights with their gifts and opportunities to risk something new?
Missional Steps and Milestones

EVALUATE & RENEW - 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.

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.

Milestones:

- About 20-25% of the congregation is beginning to internalize the spirit of the LCM process in their discipleship. They are fully engaged in the shared missional practices, connected with an experiment in some way, and sharing insights out of their experiences with the process.

- Deeper and new understandings about living Christ’s mission as community are informing tactical and strategic decisions.

- Although there is positive energy by the congregation as a whole, there is anecdotal evidence that some are asking questions about sustainability. This is normal and should be facilitated by the PLT in discussions to determine what should be continued and what should be discontinued for the journey ahead.

- Members of the congregation are inviting new people to come and see what is happening. New people are coming
and some are deciding to express their discipleship through membership in Community of Christ.

- Everyone has opportunity to express his or her gifts in mission. It 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.

- Time is routinely set aside to have meaningful conversation about how the congregation and the PLT are doing as way to value the worth of each person. It is very easy to become driven to see results and to fail to pause, rest, reflect, adjust, and renew 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 conversation.

*Please see the Questions and Reflections on pages 12 & 13.*
PLT Questions and Reflections

1. Is the congregation invested in the process, practices, and experiments without the constant prompting of the PLT? What further steps can we take to cultivate more investment?

2. How have our decisions been impacted by our continuing encounter with the concerns and passion of Christ in relationship with God, one another, and our neighbors? How do we continue to keep Christ’s mission central to every decision?

3. How are we facilitating conversation about what we bring forward on our journey and what we leave behind? What ministries and activities can we realistically sustain and still find joy in our shared ministry together?
4. Have we done everything we can to help people find their place on this journey? Have we been attentive to feelings that accompany change?

5. Are we routinely stepping back to rest, reflect, celebrate, adjust, and renew for the journey ahead? **Do our people know how much we love them?**
Notes for the PLT:

- The milestones and questions above are provided for reflection by the PLT and congregation as they together discern how God is leading them into the next step of the journey.

- The most meaningful way to engage in this exploration is to gather together around tables, share in food and song, and share stories about what God has been up to in the lives of individuals, the congregation, and our neighborhoods.

- Consider taping newsprint paper to the walls and having a person or two begin to journal key words and phrases as people are sharing. Then take time to silently walk around the room and absorb the words, phrases, and images. Process together what you believe God is revealing about the next step of the journey. Share in prayers of thanks and expectation for the future.

- Spend time as a PLT after the gathering reviewing the stories, words, and phrases. Then come back to the questions and milestones in this document. Seek the Spirit’s guidance as you reflect on where you have been and where the Spirit is prompting you to go next. Trust in the slow work of God.
Missional Process Diagram:

**ENCOUNTER - A Divine Unsettledness**
New and Ancient practices lead to new understandings,

**DISCOVER - New Questions Emerge**
New understandings lead to new prophetic imagination,

**ENVISION - New Insights Emerge**
New prophetic imagination leads to new missional experiments,

**EXPERIMENT - New Ministries Emerge**
New missional experiments lead to new forms of missional life in community,

**EVALUATE - RENEW - Ongoing Journey**
New forms of missional life lead to a new clarity among competing priorities, and the process continues …