

Missional Incubator

Missional: Loving people. Engaging community on their terms and their turf.

Incubator: Space to dream. Growing dreams into reality.

Believing: “Unless it is the LORD who builds the house, the builders’ work is pointless.”
(Psalm 127:1)

This Resource and The Secret Sauce: The secret sauce is captured in the words above: Missional, Incubator, Believing. This resource is the evolution of many resources. Many of the questions asked, like “Who is Jesus to you?”, have been asked for centuries. The cohort gatherings of the Missional Incubator are a part of a long chain that began as a Bible study at a small rural church, Sligo Presbyterian Church, and morphed into a discernment study at a new church, Riverside Presbyterian Church.

Many of the basics of those studies were expanded over time by several talented teams:

- “Starting New Churches” a self-published resource followed by “Starting New Ministries: A Process of Discernment”, both used as tools by the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- Ultimately, through the work of another team and input from the national new church coaches of the PC(USA), this work evolved into a resource, “Starting New Worshiping Communities” for the 1001 movement of the PC(USA).

The cohort gatherings are designed around what I have seen work, what needs to be added to the process, and how to get a group to move beyond discernment and implement a new expression of church to a particular community.

*The secret sauce is not the cohort content; it is the moving of the Holy Spirit within a small group who have been given the space to dream and the permission and encouragement to grow those dreams into a reality. **There are no shortcuts or A.I. summaries that can replace the time spent with others focused on the question, “God, what do you want me, us, to do here?”***

May God build something with you through this venture,

Brian Clark

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Intro

Missional: Loving people. Engaging community on their terms and their turf.

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*The Missional Incubator is a nine-to-twelve-month program designed to equip and empower missional leaders and entrepreneurs to launch innovative, **mixed-economy worshiping communities**. These are new expressions of the one Church, contextually informed, mission-hearted ministries that integrate spiritual and practical impact. The Missional Incubator provides space, resources, and expert guidance to develop both the ministry vision and the business framework that will sustain it.*

*The Missional Incubator is for pastors, church planters, community leaders, and faith-driven entrepreneurs who feel called to start **new worshiping communities** or **fresh expressions of existing churches**. Ideal participants are those ready to think creatively, engage their local context, and explore ministry models that reach people not drawn to traditional church.*

Declining church membership, the increasing number of church closures, and the widening cultural gap between the Church and emerging generations demand new strategies. A mixed-economy approach, offering multiple ways to be church alongside traditional expressions, provides both financial sustainability and broader community engagement.

Participants in the Missional Incubator will:

- *Develop a **mission plan** and **business plan**, identifying funding sources and potential investors.*
- *Partner with **outside experts** in ministry, entrepreneurship, and community development.*
- *Build **connections in the local community** through strategic introductions and relationship-building.*
- *Design a **ministry-business model** that both funds the mission and creates new entry points for people to encounter the Gospel.*

*By the end of the program, the hope is for leaders will be equipped with a clear, actionable, and sustainable plan to launch a new expression of church that thrives in today’s ever-changing cultural landscape. **Important, we will not all be on the same timeline and this is not a linear process.***

Overview: Big Picture of the Missional Incubator

- **Season One (First Four Months)**
 - Defining Identity
 - Discerning the “Who”
- **Season Two (Four Months)**
 - Exploring the Possibilities
 - Developing a Plan or Concept
- **Season Three (One Month to a Eighteen Months)**
 - Identifying the Leaders
 - Beginning the Work

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Introductory Questions:

- *How would you describe what it means to be:*
 - *missional?*
 - *a part of an incubator?*
- *What does it look like, in practice, to believe it is the Lord who needs to build this house?*
- *What do you sense God is moving in you and in your church community in the possible work of the Missional Incubator?*
- *What is already in place, or is moving in place, for this venture?*
 - *What do you have?*
 - *What do you lack?*
 - *Where have you seen energy and God moments?*
 - *What is your dream?*
 - *Initially, who is God placing on your heart to engage with in this venture?*
- *What do you think your church community needs?*
 - *A missional compelling business that creates:*
 - *The possibility of a new expression of church?*
 - *The possibility of a new worshiping community?*
 - *A missional social enterprise that creates:*
 - *The possibility of a new expression of church?*
 - *The possibility of a new worshiping community?*
 - *A combination of a missional social enterprise and a missional compelling business that creates:*
 - *The possibility of a new expression of church?*
 - *The possibility of a new worshiping community?*
 - *A missional compelling business or social enterprise AND a new steady income stream*

A few terms to define:

- *missional compelling business:*
 - *missional –*
 - *compelling –*
 - *business –*
- *missional social enterprise:*
 - *missional –*
 - *social enterprise –*
- *new expression of church –*
- *new worshiping community –*

Season One (First Four Months)

- *Defining Identity*
- *Discerning the “Who”*

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TASK ONE: Defining Our Identity

Gathering 1

*The purpose of this task is to discuss together the beliefs and the values that will ground your work and to come to a shared way of understanding and talking about key components of this venture. Your team will ultimately develop a **written** Identity Statement that articulates core beliefs about Jesus, Church, witness, gospel, disciples, justice, salvation, missional compelling business, missional social enterprise, and your understanding of mission.*

Bible Study:

When was the first time God's love for you in Christ Jesus became real?

Read Matthew 16:13-20 (NRSVue)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Questions for the Group:

- **What phrases or ideas jumped out at you in this passage?**
- **What is your answer to Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?" Who is Jesus to you?**

Read Matthew 16:13-20 (MSG)

¹³ When Jesus arrived in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "What are people saying about who the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ They replied, "Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." ¹⁵ He pressed them, "And how about you? Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter said, "You're the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Jesus came back, "God bless you, Simon, son of Jonah! You didn't get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am. And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out. ¹⁹ "And that's not all. You will have complete and free access to God's kingdom, keys to open any and every door: no more barriers between heaven and earth, earth and heaven. A yes on earth is yes in heaven. A no on earth is no in heaven." ²⁰ He swore the disciples to secrecy. He made them promise they would tell no one that he was the Messiah.

What phrases or ideas jumped out at you in this translation of the passage?

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Discuss as a team the following questions as time allows.

Who is Jesus?

What is Church?

What is witness?

What is “gospel” (good news)?

What is a disciple?

What is social justice?

What is salvation?

What is...?

Ponder the Content:

Consider how you described who Jesus is to you and your other definitions. Did you use “churchy” language to describe Jesus? Or did you describe Jesus in such a way that someone who has never intersected with Christianity could understand?

Homework: before the next gathering write out your answer to the above questions in a sentence or two.

Groupwork: as a church teamwork through this first gathering, including the homework assignment.

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TASK TWO: Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 2 (Continuing to discern identity and beginning to discern the “Who”)

The purpose of the second task is to clearly define the “who” that your church is being called to engage, as well as the why of starting a missional compelling business or social enterprise.

God will bring whom God will into our communities, regardless of where we begin but we need to begin somewhere. Your vision of the “who” will be developed after visits in neighborhoods, talking with local leadership and regular folks, prayer, and reflecting on how these encounters are moving you. All this will result in a concise one-page description of who God is calling you to engage and why.

Review (your sentence or two)

- Who is Jesus?
- What is Church?
- What is witness?
- What is “gospel” (good news)?
- What is a disciple?
- What is social justice?
- What is salvation?
- What is...?

Bible Study:

Read: Acts 16:6-10 (NRSVue)

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸ so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

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Questions for the Group:

- Where have you felt or experienced your church being “forbidden by the Holy Spirit”?
- Who are the “Macedonians” in your community? Church? Presbytery? City?
- What might it mean to your team to “get ready to cross over to Macendonia”?

Read: Luke 10:1-3 (NRSVue)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.

Questions for the Group:

- You’re going to go “out” into the harvest field. Do you have any reservations? Fears? Hopes?
- You’re going as listeners, not preachers. How does listening demonstrate the Gospel of Jesus?

Pray:

- Thank God for the person on your immediate right and left.
- Pray for the person on your immediate right and left to see who God wants them to see.

The Three “sight” Visit Activities:

1. Have a drink or something to eat in a local establishment. Listen in on conversations. It’s a chance to ask locals questions.
2. Talk with at least one person who is part of the people group you believe God is asking you to engage.
3. Bring back a token, something that represents what you learned about the people you met. You’ll use this to tell part of the story you are learning about these people.

Possible “sight” Visit Questions: *Casual Community Conversations*

- “Excuse me, do you work or live in the area?”
- “If I were to move here, what do I need to know?”
- “Who lives here?” (Age groups, race, class, families, singles, etc.)
- “What do people do for fun?”
- “Do you like living/working here?”
- “Do people live/work here for a long time?”
- “What are the challenges in the area?”
- “What are the benefits of this area?”
- “What could make this community better?”
- _____
- _____

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Feedback from the “sight” Visits:

The site visit can be as brief as a couple of hours. Plan time in your day to gather your group to share first impressions and any learning you’ve had. You could gather at a café or a pub or a park to do this.

Using your token to begin, tell what it represents from your visit. Have each group share their discoveries and insights. Pray for those you’ve met and had conversations with on your Site Visit. Pray that God will clarify your direction.

Cohort Question:

- If you were emperor or empress, what would you do that engages this church community with the larger community surrounding their facility?

Homework: Plan the when and where of the sight visits for your team. Pre-walk/drive your proposed sight visits.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through this second gathering. Assign someone to take everyone’s identity statements and begin to summarize and edit them into one statement. Concentrate on “Who is Jesus?” and “What is church?” for the next group gathering.

Beyond the initial “sight” visit:

- *Before you leave this meeting, pair up and commit to going back and doing another “sight” visit or two at different times.*
- *Assign members of your team to interview in person or on the phone, law enforcement, educators, city officials, businesspeople, social services, non-profit groups, churches.*
- *Commit to praying for clarity as well as for those you continue to meet in this process.*

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Church Team “Sight” Visits

Read: John 4:1-42

Questions for the Group:

- **What words, phrases, jumped out at you?**
- **Reread verse 1, where, or to whom, is your “have to go”?**

Content:

- Review the team’s “sight” visits, community interviews, demographic research, and community encounters.
- Have each person on the team share “who” God is placing on their heart.
- Write a concise one-page description of who God is calling you to engage and why.

A few “sight” visit suggestions:

- Find places where people gather and look for opportunities to ask people questions.
- Look for those people who are “like” those you have sensed God’s call to engage.
- If you go into a business be sensitive not to interrupt someone’s work. Always ask, “Would you have time to answer a few questions about the area and the people who live here?”
- If someone asks you, “Why do you want to know?” be honest and tell them what you’re doing.
- Delay asking questions about church and whether or not one is needed. This will change the conversation. If you must, ask people if they are aware of churches in the area and what they are like.
- Go out in groups of two, no more than three — don’t gang up on people! Remember that though you are not “witnessing” — i.e. verbally sharing the Gospel — you are still a witness. How you behave speaks volumes!
- Be sensitive to the fact that there may be religious groups who do this regularly. Dress appropriately for the day out. Try not to dress similarly or appear as too much of group.

Site Vision Observations:

- Who is there?
- What are they doing?
- Are they talking to others?
- Are they alone?
- Are people out in the streets?
- How are people dressed? Notice details like jewelry or not, name badges, shoes, styles, tech toys...
- What are the sounds?
- Sidewalks or not? Streetlights? Signage?
- If there are yards, are there toys in them?
- Are people at home or not?
- What kind of housing?
- What are the fliers in store windows, electric poles?

What is your visceral response to your sight visit?

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TASK TWO: Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 3: A Second “Sight” Visit

Review:

How does your team answer these questions that form our Identity?

1. Who is Jesus?
2. What is church?

Bible Study:

Read John 4:1-42 (CEB)

Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was making more disciples and baptizing more than John (² although Jesus’ disciples were baptizing, not Jesus himself). ³ Therefore, he left Judea and went back to Galilee.

⁴ Jesus had to go through Samaria. ⁵ He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me some water to drink.” ⁸ His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

⁹ The Samaritan woman asked, “Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (Jews and Samaritans didn’t associate with each other.)

¹⁰ Jesus responded, “If you recognized God’s gift and who is saying to you, ‘Give me some water to drink,’ you would be asking him and he would give you living water.”

¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you don’t have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹² You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, get your husband, and come back here.”

¹⁷ The woman replied, “I don’t have a husband.”

“You are right to say, ‘I don’t have a husband,’” Jesus answered. ¹⁸ “You’ve had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn’t your husband. You’ve spoken the truth.”

¹⁹ The woman said, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem.”

²¹ Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You and your people worship what you don’t know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. ²⁴ God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth.”

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²⁵ The woman said, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us.”

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I Am—the one who speaks with you.”^[a]

²⁷ Just then, Jesus’ disciples arrived and were shocked that he was talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” ²⁸ The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ “Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done! Could this man be the Christ?” ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus.

³¹ In the meantime the disciples spoke to Jesus, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

³² Jesus said to them, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.”

³³ The disciples asked each other, “Has someone brought him food?”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “I am fed by doing the will of the one who sent me and by completing his work. ³⁵ Don’t you have a saying, ‘Four more months and then it’s time for harvest’? Look, I tell you: open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for the harvest. ³⁶ Those who harvest are receiving their pay and gathering fruit for eternal life so that those who sow and those who harvest can celebrate together. ³⁷ This is a true saying, that one sows and another harvests. ³⁸ I have sent you to harvest what you didn’t work hard for; others worked hard, and you will share in their hard work.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s word when she testified, “He told me everything I’ve ever done.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ Many more believed because of his word, ⁴² and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world.”

Questions for the Group:

- What phrases or ideas jumped out at you in this passage?
- What is the role of the woman in this story?
- What is the role of the disciples in this story?
- What is the role of Jesus in this story?
- Who do you most need to be like for God to create a new expression of church in your community, the woman, the disciples, the villagers, other?

Pray:

- Thank God for the person on your immediate right and left.
- Pray for the person on your right and this process.

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Second “Sight” Visit.

Remember the Three Tasks

1. *Eat Somewhere (find a place that “locals” would frequent for lunch)*
2. *Find a Token that Captures what you saw and experienced.*
3. *Have conversations, talk with someone (s)*

Feedback from the “sight” Visits:

1. Using your token to begin, tell what it represents from your visit. Have each group share their discoveries and insights. Pray for those you’ve met and had conversations with on your Site Visit.
2. Pray that God will clarify your direction.

Homework: Plan the when and where of the next sight visits for your team. Pre-walk/drive your proposed sight visits.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through this third gathering. Assign someone to continue to combine everyone’s identity statements. Concentrate on “What is justice?” and “What is salvation?” for the next group gathering.

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TASK TWO: Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 4, A Third “Sight” Visit

Review:

How do we answer these questions that form our Identity?

1. What is justice?
2. What is salvation?

Who is your team? Share your team’s progress, discoveries, pushbacks, energy, and other insights from your work with your team to date?

Identity Statement Example:

Our Identity in Christ: Urban Village (www.uvnicholasville.org)

Developed through conversation and Bible Study as a Discernment Team

We believe that Jesus is a friend, a teacher and a healer. In a dis-integrated world, Jesus is the home that we long for, and the “something more” that makes the experience of this life deeper. Jesus invites us into a way of life that joins us with the heart of God and love of neighbor. Jesus points us to the new heaven and new earth and invites us to participate in that future even now.

We believe that the Church is a community of faith living out the priorities of Jesus to love unconditionally, serve generously, and participate in the flourishing of people and communities. It is meant to be a safe place to experience love and acceptance, shared fellowship, and shared liberation. We are all part of the great epic Jesus story, in which love received, and love shared is primary value.

We believe that witness is not a presentation or a sales pitch, or a prayer to be rattled off, but a Jesus to be discovered. It is relational and not transactional. It’s a long game, investing for the long haul in relationships. It is more than just feeding the hungry but loving the hungry in the feeding. It is keeping eyes open and being present. It is an invitation to community, to life, and to the kingdom of God that people may not yet have experienced, offering a glimpse of God that is meaningful and relatable, while at the same time trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to open eyes and open hearts.

Bible Study:

Read John 4:35 (NRSVue)

³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.

Read Luke 10:2 (NRSVue):

² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

10:02 Spiritual Practice: Consider setting your watch or a timer on your phone for 10:02 AM daily. When your timer vibrates quietly ask God to send laborers to this venture.

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Read: Acts 17:16-23(NRSVue)

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this pretentious babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Questions for the Group:

- What phrases or ideas jumped out at you in this passage?
- What is "good news" that your community needs to hear?

Pray: Thank God for the person on your immediate right and pray for them.

Third "Sight" Visit.

Remember the Three Tasks

1. *Something to eat*
2. *Token of visit*
3. *Talk with someone (s)*

Feedback from the "sight" Visits:

1. The site visit can be as brief as a couple of hours. Plan time in your day to gather your group to share first impressions and any learning you've had. You could gather at a café or a pub or a park to do this.
2. Using your token to begin, tell what it represents from your visit. Have each group share their discoveries and insights. Pray for those you've met and had conversations with on your Site Visit.
3. Pray that God will clarify your direction.
4. Where else does your team need to visit and when?

Homework: Write a list of what your community needs, what it has, and any passions for your community you encountered in your visits.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through this fourth gathering. Take a copy of your team's summarized Identity Statement and review this week for the next gathering.

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TASK ONE AND TWO: Identity and Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 5, Review Identity to Date (If Needed, 4th “sight” visit)

Bible Study:

Read: John 21:1-14 (NRSVue)

¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Questions for the Group:

- What word or phrase stood out for you in this passage?
- Why did the disciples go fishing?
- What would the impact of this story be for you if the reason they fished was because they needed funds?
- What would you do, outside of your current job, to raise funds so you can live and would make a difference in the world?

Pray:

- Thank God for the person on your immediate right and pray for them.
- Pray for a “laborer” you sense you need. “God, send someone who can walk with me to ____.”

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Review

10:02AM Spiritual Practice: "...ask the Lord to send laborers"

- What laborers do you sense you need now?
- What can you do to make this a reflective spiritual exercise for you and not the recitation of meaningless words?

Identity Statement:

- Share your Identity Statement to date.
- What did you hear in your Identity Statement?
- What needs to be added? Subtracted?
- Is this statement full of church language? Are there things we need to say differently so that anyone reading this would know what we mean?

"Sight" Visit.

Remember the three tasks from each of your "sight" visits:

1. *Something to eat*
 2. *Token of visit*
 3. *Talk with someone (s)*
- Share your homework: *"a list of what your community needs, what it has, and any passions for your community you encountered in your visits."*
 - What "stands" out for you in your "sight" visits? What are your takeaways?
 - Describe your feelings, emotions, of what you saw and who you met in your sight visits.
 - Who is God placing on your heart to engage with the Love of God in Jesus?
 - **If you were emperor or empress (unlimited resources, no approvals needed...), what would you do to engage the "who" God is placing on your heart?**

Homework: Write a list of who else you need to talk with or visit to truly get a clear view of your community.

Groupwork: As a church team work through this fifth gathering. Write a list of "key" community leaders that should be interviewed and assign group members to have those conversations. Assign one person to edit a final draft of your Identity Statement.

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TASK ONE AND TWO: Identity Statement and Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 6, Agree on Identity Statement and Continue to discern the “Who”

(If Needed, 4th “sight” visit)

Bible Study:

Read: Luke 10:1-9 (MSG)

1-2 Later the Master selected seventy and sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he intended to go. He gave them this charge:

“What a huge harvest! And how few the harvest hands. So on your knees; ask the God of the Harvest to send harvest hands. 3 “On your way! But be careful—this is hazardous work. You’re like lambs in a wolf pack. 4 “Travel light. Comb and toothbrush and no extra luggage. “Don’t loiter and make small talk with everyone you meet along the way.

5-6 “When you enter a home, greet the family, ‘Peace.’ If your greeting is received, then it’s a good place to stay. But if it’s not received, take it back and get out. Don’t impose yourself.

7 “Stay at one home, taking your meals there, for a worker deserves three square meals. Don’t move from house to house, looking for the best cook in town. 8-9 “When you enter a town and are received, eat what they set before you, heal anyone who is sick, and tell them, ‘God’s kingdom is right on your doorstep!’”

Questions for the Group:

- What word or phrase stood out for you in this passage?
- What would it look like to “travel light” into your community?
- If you sent out pairs to your town, what instructions would you give them? How do you want them to “travel” and what do you hope they will see? Who do you hope they meet?

Pray:

- Thank God for the person on your immediate right and pray for them.
- Pray for your “70”.

Identity Statement

- Read your Identity Statement. Is this statement a clear, concise, accurate statement of who we are?
- When you hear this statement read, how does this statement make you feel?
- What needs to be added or tweaked to this statement?
- What is your plan for sharing this with your session? Your church community?

Discerning the “Who”

- React to these statements:
 - God loves the world, and we need to learn to love as God loves.
 - “If you try and engage everyone, you will engage no one.”
 - “Every congregation has limited time and resources, have you ever considered that is a part of God’s plan?”
- Who are the “Who’s” in your church community (young families, singles, the wealthy, those with food insecurities, the educated, older adults...)?
- Who are the “Who’s” in the community where your church facility is located?
- Reflecting on your “sight” visits, WHO is God placing on your heart to engage with a new missional venture?

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Gathering More Information

- Reflecting on your team's conversation about WHO is God placing on your heart:
 - Who else do you need to have a conversation about the needs and possibilities of the community?
 - Review your lists of "key" community leaders.
 - Assign team members to have those conversations before your next gathering.
- What demographic studies, AI research, marketing research of the area are assessable to your team that you can bring to your next gathering?

Homework: Have a conversation with your assigned key community leaders. Prepare for your next gathering the necessary demographic, AI, other research.

Groupwork: As a church team work through this sixth gathering. Make assignments for community leaders conversations and gathering research.

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TASK TWO: Discerning the “Who”

Gathering 7, Answering the question, who is God placing on our heart to engage in this venture.

Bible Study

Read: Exodus 5 (NRSV)

¹ Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.’”² But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go.”³ Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has revealed himself to us; let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword.”⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labors!”⁵ Pharaoh continued, “Now they are more numerous than the people of the land and yet you want them to stop working!”⁶ That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, as well as their supervisors,⁷ “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves.”⁸ But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’”⁹ Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labor at it and pay no attention to deceptive words.”

¹⁰ So the taskmasters and the supervisors of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw.’”¹¹ Go and get straw yourselves, wherever you can find it; but your work will not be lessened in the least.”¹² So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw.¹³ The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw.”¹⁴ And the supervisors of the Israelites, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and were asked, “Why did you not finish the required quantity of bricks yesterday and today, as you did before?”

¹⁵ Then the Israelite supervisors came to Pharaoh and cried, “Why do you treat your servants like this?”¹⁶ No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ Look how your servants are beaten! You are unjust to your own people.”¹⁷ He said, “You are lazy, lazy; that is why you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’”¹⁸ Go now, and work; for no straw shall be given you, but you shall still deliver the same number of bricks.”¹⁹ The Israelite supervisors saw that they were in trouble when they were told, “You shall not lessen your daily number of bricks.”

²⁰ As they left Pharaoh, they came upon Moses and Aaron who were waiting to meet them.²¹ They said to them, “The LORD look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odor with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

²² Then Moses turned again to the LORD and said, “O LORD, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me?”²³ Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people.”

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Questions to Ponder:

1. What words, ideas, or phrases “jumped out” to you in this passage?
2. Do you ever feel that you are being asked to keep making the same number of bricks but with fewer resources? If, “yes”, what are some examples of that?
3. When people react critically to you or oppose you, how do you react? What do you do to determine if you are following God or the opposition is right?
4. How do you handle saboteurs?
5. Who is your Aaron?
6. When you consider a new venture to engage the “who” God is placing on your heart, do you feel like someone is asking you to make bricks without giving you straw?
7. What do you want God to provide for you now?

Pray:

Thank God for the person on your immediate right and pray for them. Pray for clarity of their “who”. Pray for their Aaron(s).

Discerning our “who”

- Who, in your opinion, is God asking you to engage with this venture?
- Does our team have one to three possible people groups, that could be our who? If we have more than three possibilities, what do we need to do as a group to get down to three currently?
- Share your community leaders’ interviews and research.
 - Hearing the reports and research, does your Who live near your church facility?
 - Do community leaders confirm your sense of your Who?
 - What stands out for you from the interviews and research?
- Who is God asking you to engage with this new venture?
- Does our team have one to three possible people groups, that could be our who? If we have more than three possibilities, what do we need to do as a group to get down to three currently?

Beginning to Dream

What could you possibly do to engage your “who”? If you have more than one who, name possibilities for each who.

Homework: *Continue to dream of possibilities to engage your who? Share with session your work so far in this process.*

Groupwork: *As a church team, work through this seventh gathering.*

Season Two (Next Four Months)

- *Exploring the Possibilities*
- *Developing a Plan or Concept*

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TASK THREE: Exploring the Possibilities

Gathering 8, Beginning to answer the question, "What can we do that will engage the who?"

Bible Study

Read: James 1:2-4 (MSG)

2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

Questions to Ponder:

- What gets your attention in these verses?
- Describe a time in your life when you felt tests and challenges were coming at you from all sides?
- How can we "let" tests and challenges do their work without becoming crushed under the weight of tests and challenges?

Pray for one another

Review

Missional: Loving people. Engaging community on their terms and their turf.

Incubator: Space to dream. Growing dreams into reality.

Believing: "Unless it is the LORD who builds the house, the builders' work is pointless."

Psalm 127:1

- Reflecting on the statement above:
 - What aspect of the missional incubator most challenges you?
 - What aspect of the missional incubator most challenges your team?
 - What aspect of the missional incubator most challenges your church?

Where are you now?

Group discussion

- *Who is God asking you to engage? Is there more than one "who" on your radar? On your team's radar?*
- *What has developed, not developed, since we last met?*
- *What is God stirring in your heart?*
- *What do you or your team need now?*

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Questions for one person at a time to answer

- Review your emerging “Who”.
 - Does anyone else, in your church community see the “who” your team sees?
 - Is your “who” loveable to you, your team, your church?
- “What” do you sense you are to do to engage the “who”? This is a check-in knowing the “what” most likely will change multiple times over the next few months.
- Today, which scenario(s) do you sense God is leading you to explore:
 - **Missional Compelling Business to engage the “WHO” _____?**
 - What I know _____.
 - What needs to be determined _____.
 - What needs to happen next _____.

AND/OR

- **Social Enterprise that engages the “WHO” _____?**
 - What I know _____.
 - What needs to be determined _____.
 - What needs to happen next _____.

AND/OR

- **We need to stay the course of our mission and what we do by creating an additional income stream by _____?**
 - What I know _____.
 - What needs to be determined _____.
 - What needs to happen next _____.
- *What questions does the group have for _____?*
- *Have one of two people pray for the person and their church before the next person shares.*

Homework: Find someone (not on your team) who will be able to lead you through a brainstorming session for the next time you meet, the ninth gathering. Having an outsider lead this will allow you to fully participate and share your ideas.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through this eighth gathering.

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TASK THREE: Exploring the Possibilities

Gathering 9, Continuing to answer the question, “What can we do that will engage the who?”

Bible Study

Read John 6:5-15 (NRSVue)

⁵ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” ¹⁰ Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” ¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Questions to Ponder:

- Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd. What does it mean in your context to see the “crowd”?
- Reread verse 5. What “impossible question” do you feel Jesus is asking you today? *Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd coming toward him. He asked Philip, “Where will we buy food to feed these people?”*
- Reread verse 7. What are the words of your “pushback” to Jesus as you start to get a sense of what Jesus may be asking you to do as part of the Missional Incubator? *Philip replied, “More than a half year’s salary worth of food wouldn’t be enough for each person to have even a little bit.”*
- Reread verse 9. Name your limited resources. *“A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?”*
- Reread verses 11,12. If Jesus took your limited resources and did what seems impossible now, what would be the results? *Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. ¹² When they had plenty to eat...*

Missional Incubator

Key Activity for Today: Brainstorming

For each member of the cohort, spend an hour brainstorming on the question, “What can we do to engage the “who” God is placing on our hearts?”

Homework: Review with your “moderator” your goal(s) for the upcoming ninth gathering of your church team.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through this ninth gathering.

Missional Incubator

TASK FOUR: Developing a Concept

Gathering 10, Continuing to answer the question, “What can we do that will engage the who?”

Bible Study

Read Luke 24:13-35 Luke 24:13-35 (NRSVue)

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹ He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Missional Incubator

Questions to Ponder:

- What words, phrases, ideas, “jump out” to you in this passage?
- Reread verse 16. Are there areas in your life, or the life of the church you serve, where you wish Jesus was more obvious? *“They were prevented from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast.”*
- Reread verse 27. What scriptures are guiding your journey today *“Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.”*
- Reread verse 33. If you just broke bread with Jesus, what do you imagine you would need to do next when he disappears from your table? *“They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem.”*

Key Questions Today:

- What do we need to know to get us all up to speed since we last met?
- What ideas, possibilities, concepts rose to the top in your brainstorming session with your church team?
- How do you feel about the ideas before you?
- If you were emperor or empress, what would you do? (Have each person answer that for themselves and then have everyone in the cohort answer as to what they would do at that church/community.)
- What obstacles do you see before you?
- What possibilities do you see before you?

The Hats Exercise, A process of ideation: With your church team as you work through this gathering instead of asking the above “Key Questions Today” do the Hat Exercise based on “Six Thinking Hats by Edward De Bono for one or two of your top ideas.

Homework: Review the Hats Exercise. IT is highly suggested you purchase the book, *Six Thinking Hats*” by Edward De Bono to familiarize yourself with the process.

Groupwork: As a church team, work through the Hat Exercise.

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Hat Exercise (based on “Six Thinking Hats by Edward De Bono)

White Hat: Facts, data, and information. The thinker strives to be neutral, objective in the presentation of information.

Red Hat: Emotions, feelings, and intuition. When a thinker is using the red hat, there should never be any attempt to justify the feelings.

Black Hat: Potential risks, downsides, or problems. The black has is the hat of caution, risk assessment.

Yellow Hat: Potential benefits, advantages, or positive aspects. Being positive is a choice. From yellow hat thinking come concrete proposals.

Selected Idea:

Yellow Hat (5 min):

Red Hat (2 min):

Black Hat (4 min):

White Hat (3 min):

Red Hat (2 min):

Green Hat: The deliberate allocation of time to lay out options and possibilities. Lateral thinking that changes concepts and perceptions. The search for alternatives to obstacles.

The Blue Hat: Typically, the blue hat is worn by the facilitator, chairperson, or leader of the session. It is the organization of thinking.

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TASK FOUR: Developing a Concept

Gathering 11, Begin to develop clarity as to, “What can we do that will engage the who?”

Bible Study

Read Luke 14:25-35 (NRSVue)

²⁵ Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Questions to Ponder:

- What words, phrases, ideas, “jump out” to you in this passage?
- Reread verse 27: What does it mean to you, your church, to “carry their own cross”? *Whoever doesn’t carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*
- Reread verse 28: Relating to your work with the Missional Incubator, what costs do you need to calculate and what risks do you need to take to move forward faithfully? *“If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it?”*
- Reread verse 33. What are you willing to give up for the mission? What are you unwilling, or would be hard for you, to give up for the mission? *In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions can be my disciple.*

Pray for the person on your right.

The Key Questions Today:

- What is the person on your right’s “who” and “what”?
- What word of “encouragement” do you have for them?
- What word of caution do you have for them?
- What are “Saboteurs”? Do you believe they are a part of every decision? How do you address saboteurs?
- What is “Adaptive” Change vs. “Technical” Change? How can the missional Incubator lead to adaptive change for your church?
- What do you need to take your “what”, your concept, into a plan?

Missional Incubator

Dolphin Tank: A kinder version of Shark Tank. Review the key elements of a Shark Tank and discuss the audience that would create a room of encouragement as each person next gathering does a 3-5 minute Dolphin Tank Pitch.

Key Elements of a Shark Tank Pitch

A successful Shark Tank pitch blends a compelling story with clear, credible business data. Based on expert breakdowns and analysis of real deals, the core elements are:

1. The Hook

Start with an attention-grabbing opening — a vivid story, a striking fact, or a relatable problem — that immediately captures the Sharks' interest.

2. The Problem

Clearly define the specific pain point or unmet need your product/service addresses. Explain who experiences it, how often, and the financial or emotional cost of ignoring it

3. The Solution

Present your product or service as the direct, effective answer to that problem. Show how it works, its benefits, and why it's necessary rather than optional

4. Value Proposition & Differentiation

Explain why your solution is unique, defensible, and better than competitors' offerings. Highlight your competitive edge, scalability, and market positioning

5. Market Size & Validation

Demonstrate the size of the target market and provide evidence of demand — such as sales figures, customer growth, partnerships, or testimonials — to show real traction

6. Financials & Valuation

Share credible numbers: revenue, margins, costs, growth projections, and a realistic valuation. Be clear on how much you are asking for and exactly how the funds will be used

7. The Ask

State your investment request (amount and equity) and outline the plan for using the capital to scale the business

8. Founder Credibility & Story

Briefly share your background, expertise, and passion, showing you can execute the vision and handle challenges

Pro tip: Combine these elements into a concise, structured pitch (often 3–5 minutes) that answers “Why should I care?” and “What’s in it for me?” while balancing excitement with data

Homework: Invite the “right” people from your church and Presbytery to be the audience for the Dolphin Tank.

Groupwork: As a church team, prepare for the dolphin tank.

Missional Incubator

TASK FOUR: Presenting the Concept

Gathering 12, The Dolphin Tank



Welcome and Overview of the Missional Incubator

Dolphin Tank Pitch #1

- Two people from the audience share a word of encouragement from what they just heard.
- Prayer and the laying on of hands of the team.

Dolphin Tank Pitch #2

- Two people from the audience share a word of encouragement from what they just heard.
- Prayer and the laying on of hands of the team.

Dolphin Tank Pitch #3

- Two people from the audience share a word of encouragement from what they just heard.
- Prayer and the laying on of hands of the team.

Dolphin Tank Pitch #4

- Two people from the audience share a word of encouragement from what they just heard.
- Prayer and the laying on of hands of the team.

Dolphin Tank Pitch #5

- Two people from the audience share a word of encouragement from what they just heard.
- Prayer and the laying on of hands of the team.

Wrap Up

Meal Together