

Missional

★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

SET

Getting Relationships Set for Starting a Missional Community

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Missional Bible Study series, you have had an opportunity to experiment with different kinds of spiritual practices or holy habits. These practices have prepared you to consider who God is calling you to start a missional community with and where this community might be located (eg. the neighborhood around your parish or home possibly). Over the next 4-6 weeks, the group that has been meeting may continue meeting to prayerfully reflect on their experiments in applying the next steps below.

NEXT STEPS

In preparation for starting a missional community ...

- *Who is God calling you to listen to?*

During the Missional Bible Study you were regularly encouraged to consider others in your neighborhood; to greet them, pray for them, etc. Now it is time to begin meeting these individuals and exploring their interest in participating in a missional community. Invite individuals out for coffee or tea. Your invitation might go something like this:

“Hi! Myself, along with other members of my church, are hoping to start a new gathering in this neighborhood. This group would ideally be a community that nurtures our spiritual lives and healthy



SET

relationships, but also get to know this neighborhood and do our best to care for it along with others that care for this community. I'd like to hear about our thoughts about the neighborhood, what you're excited or concerned about. I'd like to know if this is something you'd be interested in participating in. In either case, I'd appreciate suggests of other people who might want to get involved. Is this a good time?"

If yes, continue. And invite them to start participating in your group that is already meeting. If not, arrange for a follow up meeting in person and aim to take up no more than 45 minutes of their time. Do 30% of the talking and 70% of the listening. Try to have 1-3 of these conversations a week. For more tools for one-to-one conversations visit epicenter.org/missional. When you gather weekly with your group, share with others what you are learning from these conversations and pray together for those you have met with.

- *Where is God calling you to serve?*

Consider these questions: Who could I be learning from? Who should I be collaborating with? Whose story needs to be heard? Wherever we see acts of justice and mercy the Spirit of God is work. In meeting with neighbors, as prescribed above, you may have learned of opportunities to engage the community in meaningful ways. In either case, find a way to get involved in loving others. This may be coaching a soccer team, tutoring students, attending city council meetings or any number of other ways to serve. Find a way to bless others in your community in a meaningful way every week and share what you are learning with the others in your group. At epicenter.org/missional you will find resources for mapping the assets of your neighborhood.

- *What is God calling you to pray for?*

God is already at work within your community. This is good news! As followers of Jesus, our task is to get involved in what is already doing in the community. But this means we need to actively listen not only to our neighbors but to God. Find a time to regularly walk or drive through the area you are hoping to start your missional community. Just as Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs, go on these prayer walks two by two. Pray for clarity about what God is doing in the community. You may pray quietly to yourself a prayer as simple as, "Your kingdom come, your will be done ...". When you gather with your small group, reflect on what the Spirit is revealing to you as you spend time praying through the neighborhood. Visit epicenter.org/missional to find other prayer walking resources.

As you gather week to week with your small group, invite someone to document what you are learning about the surrounding community through conversations, service, and prayer. Over time, you will gain clarity on who this new community is called to serve, where and how it will gather and how it will seek the goodwill of the surrounding neighborhood. Guess what? A missional community is starting to take shape!

