



## What does it take to be an MCC “Church Developer”?

We are Metropolitan Community Churches! We are many people, forming many types of churches, a wide diversity of voices, all being called forward to lead MCC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some are ordained, others lay leaders, yet one thing each have in common is a desire to become a voice in the wilderness spaces of our communities and nations. There is room to live into the “Churches” of our name because every new ministry is formed with a commitment to the Mission, Vision, and Values of MCC.

Below are a few characteristics of “Church Developer”. Each characteristic has a brief description and reflection question or activity. Prayerfully engage each section and listen for the moving of the Spirit.

**Vision** – Today MCC needs people with vision to step in and share the revolutionary message in new spaces. As the Irish writer Jonathan Swift said, “Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.” Dreams are valuable, hopes are necessary, yet a vision is needed for the next generation of communities to boldly say “We are MCC.” The ancient proverb described a world without vision as wild and without direction.<sup>1</sup> If you are a leader with a vision, this is a ministry path to name your vision, share it with others, and lead others toward inclusion, community, spiritual transformation, and social action.

*Reflection question: What is your vision for new MCC communities?*

**Awareness of Call** – Knowing your call means you are aware of a clear call to the message and mission of your own ministry and the ongoing expansion of MCC. I Cor. 3:5-11 described those who plant, others who water, and how God makes the work grow. As a Church Developer, our particular call to ministry is unique. Whether ordained or part of the laity, awareness of your call is vital to answer, “Here I am.”

*Reflection question: What is the sacred text or event that describes your call?*

**Awareness of Context** – The process of discernment is rarely complete! Today you may be serving faithfully, but aware of a stirring in your spirit. Maybe you are answering a new call, or in time of transition toward new paths. The journey includes discerning the context of your ministry. It may be rural, urban, or small city, young, aging, the queer edges, center of the path, or other variations as the winds of the Spirit blow. To become aware of the people you are called to serve is a vital part of developing a church.

*Reflection question: Ask yourself, “Who am I called to serve?”*

**Creative “Maker” Energy** – The formation of a community which becomes a church engages the energy of creativity to form connections with others. A leader who can become what Bob Johansen describes as the “Maker,” is a person who can “approach leadership with the commitment of a job and the playful energy of a hobby.”<sup>2</sup> The “Maker” knows that one person, like an entrepreneur, is a starting place, yet the effort of many actually completes the work of creating a church.

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 28:19 (The Voice) “Where there is no vision from God, the people run wild, but those who adhere to God’s instruction know genuine happiness.”

<sup>2</sup> Johansen, Bob, (2012) *Leaders Make the Future - Ten New Leadership Skills For an Uncertain World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, p. 41.



*Reflection question and activity: Identify activities that bring the most energy into your being? Imagine yourself sharing that energy with others.*

**Openness to change** – Remaining “open” is an ability to adapt, live outside the box, or even remove the box when necessary. What does change mean to you? When developing a church, the “right” or “wrong” way becomes less important. Parker Palmer once wrote, “Each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up.”<sup>3</sup> As the ministry begins, who you think will “show up” may be very different than your vision. The perfect space may not be what was expected, but the right space becomes exactly what is needed, when it is needed. These few examples demonstrate what seems like a closed door may lead to an opening; a reminder that change is a constant reality of ministry.

*Reflection question: How have the boxes of your faith and ministry changed? What resources guided you through those transitions into openness?*

**Tenacity** – The drive, endurance, and resolve to follow the vision is living our faith. In the face of uncertainty or challenges, ministry continues through encouragement from God *and* a cloud of witnesses who came before us to forge the message we share in new places and in new ways.

*Reflection question: Recall a time of overwhelming challenge, what are your internal messages that helped you make it through?*

**Team Leader** – The ability to form small groups, network within multiple communities, and collaborate is vital to start new ministries. Volumes of books describe leadership and how to organize, and as a spiritual team leader the new ministry will follow the leader to become a community of gratitude, generosity, humility, and ability to accept the reality.

*Reflection question: Are you the type of person that can gather a group for a meal or event? If so, why do you think people show up?*

**Deep Spirituality** – Connection with the divine is an invaluable personal resource and deep well for anyone in all types of ministry. As a church developer, it is vital to engage in spiritual practices and then surround yourself with spaces and people which nurture your spirit and provide encouragement. The type of spirituality is less of a concern than the importance of being rooted and spiritually nourished.

*Reflection question: In times of deep challenge, what are your spiritual resources?*

Did you see parts of yourself in these few characteristics of what it takes to be an MCC church developer? If so, begin discernment with a spiritual director or trusted mentor and reach out to the Office of Emerging Ministries, [revrachelbrown@MCCchurch.net](mailto:revrachelbrown@MCCchurch.net) to discover how to begin “making” the MCC of the future.

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<sup>3</sup> Palmer, Parker. (1999) *Let your life speak: Listening to the voice of vocation*. Wiley