

# Partnership for Missional Church - a one page introduction

## Partnership?

It's a Partnership in that it involves 12-15 congregations working together in a 'cluster' supported by experienced trainers, consultants and students and staff of St John's, Nottingham. This partnership is strategic and spiritual, including times of prayer, worship, sharing and learning (three per year) which strengthen the common journey into mission.

## Missional?

It is Missional in that the focus is on equipping each church to join together in God's mission of reconciling, restoring and redeeming the world. Being missional is more than just doing more social service activities or increasing the membership numbers. A missional church looks for how God is at work in the world today. A missional church chooses to join God in that mission in the world, to let God call and send it in that mission.

## Church?

The focus is on Church because we believe that people who 'see' the Church should be able to 'see' the gospel - the good news of Jesus Christ lived out. The PMC process therefore builds on the traditions and strengths of each congregation.

## How does it work?

To change from seeing mission as something that the Church does (a 'programme'), to seeing mission as underlying the very 'being' of the church, is no easy task. This is why Partnership for Missional Church proposes a three to five year process to enable the change to take root in the ongoing culture of a congregation.

The process has three initial phases:

### Phase 1 Discovery

Phase 1 could best be described as a time of learning to listen. We listen to Scripture, our congregations and our communities - and most of all we listen to God and allow ourselves to be shaped and formed for sending into the world. We also learn to listen to our partners, those who help us understand ourselves and the context in which we live and work. A number of reviews, self-studies and evaluations will be used to take the pulse of each congregation, which will aid in the second phase of the project.

### Phase 2: Experimenting

After learning about who we are, where we live and who we are sent to, the next logical step is to take action. The information uncovered during the first step will hopefully lead us into developing plans for taking action through missional experiments. This involves some risk taking, and while not every risk will be rewarded, there is as much to learn from the mistakes as from the successes.

### Phase 3: Embodiment

In Phase 3 congregations will begin moving toward living into God's preferred and promised future. After discovering and learning from the successes and failures of the experimenting phase, churches and their leaders will develop their own vision, strategy and plans for congregational transformation, and will better know how to focus attention and energy toward attaining those goals. The end result will be a culture change in the congregation.

## Spiritual Disciplines

One of the distinctive features of the PMC approach is that it recognises the need for a deepening spirituality to accompany enhanced strategic planning for mission within local churches. On the journey of this three-phase process congregations will be taught and learn six Spiritual Practices or what we call "holy habits": Dwelling in the Word, Dwelling in the World, Hospitality, Announcing the Kingdom, Corporate Spiritual Discernment (finding out together what God is up to) and Focus for Missional Action (doing what God desires of us and not all the things we could do).

## What are the criteria for participating?

The basic criterion is a deeply held desire to see the local church used by God to "be the change it wants to see" in the community. Additionally, churches considering the PMC process should have:

- An awareness that something different needs to be done to meet the rapid changes in society today
- A Willingness to take some risks and to 'go deeper'
- Commitment by the leadership of the church to the three-year process.

(see also [www.churchinnovations.org](http://www.churchinnovations.org))