

Frequently Asked Questions About Church Innovations' Partnership for Missional Church (PMC)

For more information visit us at <http://www.churchinnovations.org>

1. *Why is PMC so long, 3-5 years?*

PMC is about the long term adaptability of a congregation, not quick fixes. PMC builds a congregation's capacity to deal with the adaptive challenges they face in today's world.¹ Deep cultural change takes time. PMC is built on an action/reflection model enabling a congregation to learn new ways of being and doing, which lead towards God's preferred future for them. This cycle of action and reflection takes time. A more thorough explanation of the PMC process is given in the book, We Are Here Now, by Patrick Keifert.² The change process also takes time, because the goal is to lead change that impacts the entire congregation, in a way that resistance and conflict is minimized. (See Appendix A for outline of PMC)

2. *Why are churches clustered together?*

✓ Learning Methodology:

At Church Innovations, we do everything in partnership. Experience has shown that churches people learn better when they find support for this process of spiritual discernment and experimentation. It is psychologically very helpful for people to know that other churches are going through the same struggles, and to process the changes needed together. The idea that people are more willing to try new ideas when paired with others in similar situation is based on a body of social science research called, diffusion of innovation.³ People are more willing to risk and try new ideas when they see and hear of others like them trying. Also, long term learning happens best when the entire system is involved. Through our research we have seen that to effect lasting change, we need to involve both denominational systems and the congregations in the process together.

✓ Accountability:

The process builds in accountability to others, each group knows that another cluster event is coming up, and they are accountable to do the work given to them by the next event. This accountability is crucial to long term learning and effective change within the congregational setting.

¹ Adaptive Challenge: See Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). An adaptive challenge is one where there are no clear, easy answers. The group doesn't possess the answers within themselves, nor is there an outside expert who can fix the situation. Adaptive challenges require a group to adapt through learning new attitudes, skills and behavior.

² Patrick Keifert, *We Are Here Now* (Eagle: Allelon Publishing, 2006).

³ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

✓ Theology:

And lastly, it fits with our understanding of God and the church. God is a trinity, of three in one, a community. We get to know God through Christ, and Christ through the Spirit. We need each other and we learn best through each other.

3. *Why the number 12-16 churches?*

Research shows that 12 is the ideal number. It can be less than 12, and will work with as few as 8. Less than 12 churches it becomes less economically viable for both the churches and for Church Innovations. So it's best to start with 16, because a few churches may drop out.

4. *What if you can't get 12-16 churches to form a cluster?*

The costs would be higher per church.

5. *If there are big and small churches together in a cluster, would the little churches get lost or overpowered?*

No. Each church sends a team, who come for the training and learning. They take the learning and the assignments back to their congregation to work on between cluster events. So the team sent would be about the same size. There are always two consultants at these events, and part of their job is to make sure some congregations don't have more power than others. Some churches think that the large church can't learn from the smaller, or vice versa, but we have found that this is not true. Churches learn much from the other.

6. *Is it ideal to have churches within one denomination within a cluster, or churches across the denominations?*

It can work either way. It might make it easier to estimate judicatory costs within one denomination, but that can be dealt with. There can be a richness added in meeting across denominations, but there can be an appeal to being with all churches from one's own denomination and presbytery/district/synod, what have you.

7. *Why have two consultants working with each cluster?*

Church Innovation's work is built around Luke 10: 1-12, where Jesus sends out the 72 disciples in pairs. Thus, everything we do is in pairs. Two consultants provide a greater richness in experience and wisdom. Many people relate better to one person than another, there is that variety built in to this crucial role of consultants.

8. *What are the costs?*

The costs are \$3,000 per year per church, and \$25,000 per year for the judicatory for each of the 3 years. These numbers are based on having 12 churches per cluster. The cost per year would start for the first phase of PMC, the discovery year, and would not start the year of gather churches into a cluster.

9. *If churches are clustered across different denominations, how do you assess the judicatory costs?*

Cost would be broken up by percentage of churches involved.

10. *What are the outcomes that can be expected?*

The Partnership for Congregational Renewal helps congregations grow by developing:

- A God-centered, biblical vision for mission
- A greater sense of God's activity in their congregation and community
- Ownership of the mission of the congregation by more members
- Members committed to and capable of making disciples
- Both a vision for mission and a practical plan of action to achieve it
- Strengths of the tradition of the congregation
- Practical skills for managing change and attending to conflict
- Dramatic expansion of lay involvement
- Higher participation in continuing education
- A decision process for planning activities and budget
- A faithful and hospitable congregation
- Beneficial long term relationships with other Partner congregations

Church Innovations also learned that congregations *who stay in through all phases of the partnership* showed a . . .

- 17% median growth in worship attendance over a 5 year period
- 77% correlation to the longevity of pastorate
- 64% correlation to growth in adult conversions
- 74% correlation to increased lay leader base
- 73% correlation to increased participation of young adults after confirmation/high school
- 62% correlation to developing a new constituency base in situations of high social change

11. What if one church is further along in the missional conversation than others, will that impeded those further along from making progress?

Our experience has been that churches further down the road learn so many new things that they soon forget that they are further down the road. Clusters will always have churches at different points in their journey, and at their different points they learn from each other. Most churches who have engaged in a dialogue of how can we...become a missional church...grow our church...etc... have a committed core who are engaged with this discussion, but a majority of members who do not. PMC is geared toward reaching the entire congregation, and helping each congregation develop practices that can help them keep the conversation and growing vital for the years after the PMC process.

12. What do you mean by “missional church”?

The word **mission** in “missional” refers to **the mission of God in the world (all of creation)**. Thus, missional church refers to the position and role of the church as **participants in the mission of God in the world**. This use of the word “missional” is different from how people in years gone by have understood mission. The popular understanding of mission is for the church to send missionaries, or to be involved in mission work outside their immediate context (their own country, immediate neighborhood). That has changed with the realization that the church in the western world cannot take its own context for granted as “Christian” anymore. Therefore, the **focus of the missional church** is especially within a congregation’s **own context** of the culture and community in which God places it and calls it to participate.⁴

Those wanting a further picture of missional church could read Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness,⁵ which examines 9 congregations of different size and denomination to see how they live out missional patterns. The book seeks to answer these questions-

- How would you know a missional church if you saw one?
- What in the life of the church indicates that a congregational is missional?
- How can our congregation find enough encouragement to move toward becoming missional?

⁴ Excerpted from the article, “What is Missional Church?” by Jannie Swart, Church Innovations Newsletter, volume 7, issue 2, June 2007. Accessed at Church Innovation website, http://www.churchinnovations.org/05_news/pii_v7_i2/pii_v7_i2_swart.html

⁵ Lois Y. Barrett, ed., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

Appendix A

Overview of the Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) Process:

Partnership for Missional Church is a three to five year journey that engages denominational systems and congregations in practices that help them discern what God is up to in their place, what we refer to as God's preferred and promised future. We work with judicatory staff (Executive Presbyters, Bishops, District Superintendents), pastors and many levels of lay leadership to guide and assess the process. The partners we develop at all levels enter into a journey that begins with conversations that will ultimately bring together clusters of 12-16 congregations in a three year journey, with a possibility of a 4th year of learning and reinforcing the change. The PMC cluster meets for three times per year for three years, called Phases.

Phase One: Discovery

Congregations meet together to use tools, learn processes and share what they are learning about themselves and the ways they act as a community. The primary tools, developed by Church Innovations, include Church Future Finder and the Congregational Discovery process. The congregations are lead to learn about themselves and their community context. They are called to discern how they function, how they might look to the surrounding community and how they might want to respond to all that they have learned with a new understanding of what God has in mind.

Phase Two: Experimenting

The discoveries of the first year's work are translated into experiments. Missional Engagement Teams (MET) take on the task of identifying and addressing the needs, challenges and desires identified in the Discovery Phase. They then experiment with how they might shape and change how the congregation responds to the preferred and promised future God has in mind for them. The teams are invited to use their imagination, try new things, and enjoy both successes and failures. These are short term experiments that allow for learning and responsiveness. Sometimes the chosen experiments create a whole new energy; sometimes they help the congregations discern a way to refine their dreams. It is an exciting time, a time of tension, as systems adjust to change. It is always a time of fruitful learning/action engagement.

Phase Three: Visioning for Embodiment

Having learned much in the first two years, Phase Three turns to the development of five documents that will help shape and guide the congregation into its future. The congregation will carefully take up the planning and implementation through developing their own:

- ✓ Statement for Missional Vocation
- ✓ Vision for Embodiment
- ✓ Strategic Plan
- ✓ Smart Plans of Action
- ✓ Staff Covenant

Phase Four: Learning and Growing (Optional)

All through the three year process pastors have been involved in developing spiritual disciplines and recognize ways to grow leadership within their congregations. Many congregations realize at the end of Phase Three that they were just at the beginning of significant and long lasting change. There are many ways for them to move forward and continue the journey of learning, experimenting, planning and effectively executing their plans. Some clusters elect to continue using Church Innovation services for a fourth year of learning and growing and reinforcing the changes and the new practices of spiritual discernment.

Adopted from "PMC From 50,000 Feet," by Barbara Miller. Church Innovation Newsletter, Volume 7, Issue 2, June 2007. Found at the website: churchinnovations.org.

Bibliography

- Barrett, Lois Y., ed. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- Heifetz, Ronald A., and Marty Linsky. *Leadership on the Line*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
- Keifert, Patrick. *We Are Here Now*. Eagle: Allelon Publishing, 2006.
- Rogers, Everett M. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.