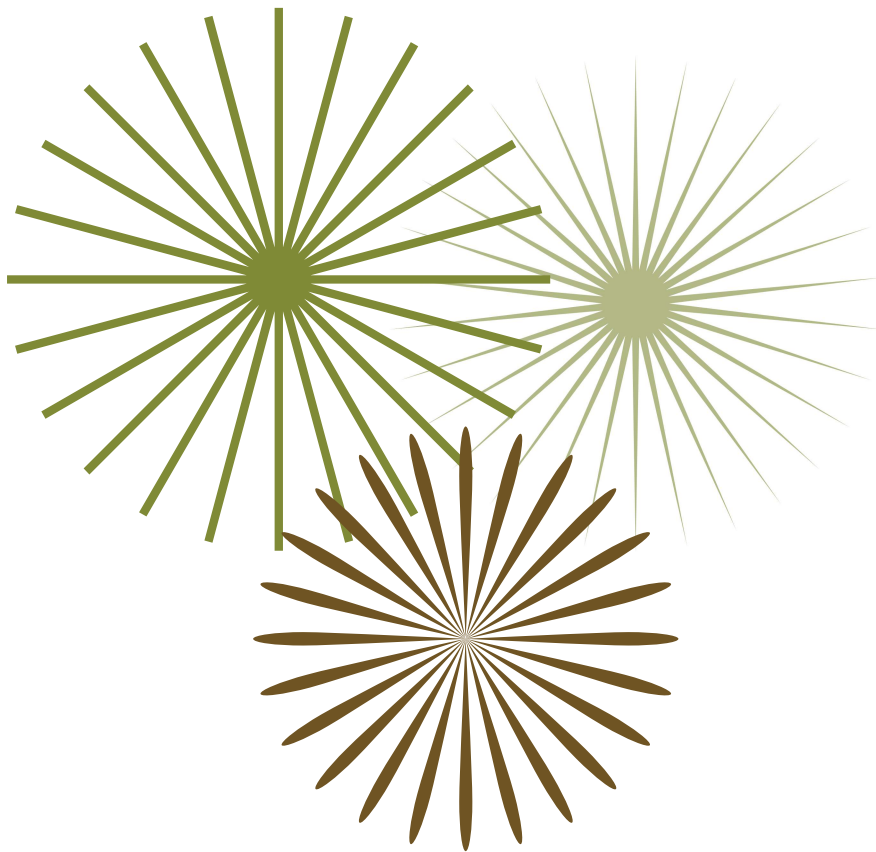


DREAMING

new possibilities

A discerning guide for churches seeking new life.



DISCERNING NEW POSSIBILITIES

God is already at work in your church and in your community.

This guide is designed to help you notice where God is moving, discern where you are being invited to join in, and respond with your next faithful step.

This is not about programs or quick fixes. It is about paying attention to what God is already doing and being open to where new life might emerge.

This guide is for churches of every size and season. Whether you are seeking renewal, exploring something new, or simply wondering what God might do next, this is a place to begin.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

You can use this guide on your own or with a small group. You do not need to complete it all at once.

As you move through it:

Take your time. You may not have answers right away.

Write freely. There are no right or wrong responses.

Look for patterns. What themes, people, or ideas keep showing up?

Pay attention to what gives energy, not just what sounds good.

As you reflect, you may begin to notice where God is already at work. That is where new possibilities often begin.

You are not being asked to come up with something big.

You are simply being invited to notice, discern, and take a next faithful step.

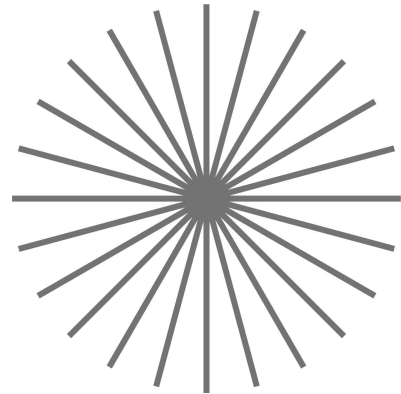


A FINAL WORD AS YOU BEGIN

You do not need a large church, a large budget, or a perfect plan to begin. God often starts with small, faithful steps taken by ordinary people.

What feels small now may be the beginning of something meaningful.

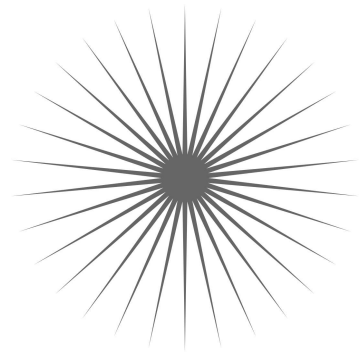
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Matthew 28:19-20 (The Great Commission): "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

WHAT ARE YOU GRIEVING?



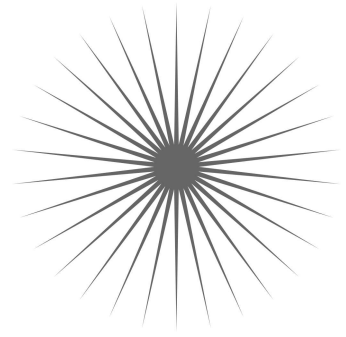
What feels heavy or discouraging right now often points to places where change is needed.

As you reflect, ask not only what is hurting, but what God might be preparing to transform.

(For example: We've noticed fewer young families attending.

Where do you sense something is ending or no longer bearing fruit? How might this grief be making space for something new God wants to grow?

WHAT ARE YOU CELEBRATING?



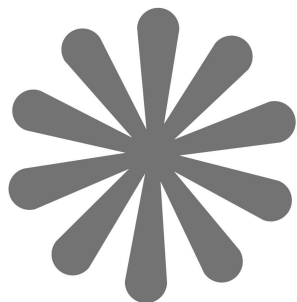
Celebration helps us recognize signs of God's activity.
Pay attention to moments of life, connection, and
transformation, even if they feel small.

Where have you seen unexpected growth, connection, or
openness?

*(For example: We've seen strong connection in our small
groups.)*

Who is stepping into leadership or influence in new ways?

***As you reflect on both what is hard and what is life-giving,
you may begin to notice patterns. These patterns often
reveal where God is already at work.***



WHERE DO YOU SEE GOD AT WORK?

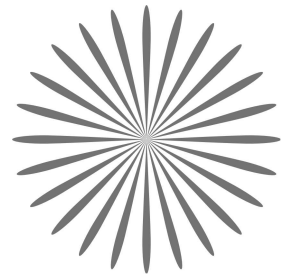
Where do you see God already moving in your church or community?

Who seems spiritually curious, open or hungry?

As you pray and listen, where do you sense God inviting you to pay attention?

What we notice begins to shape how we respond. One of the most important ways we join God's work is through relationships.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



God often works through people and relationships long before anything formal begins. You do not need a large church or a complex plan. God often begins through simple conversations and consistent presence.

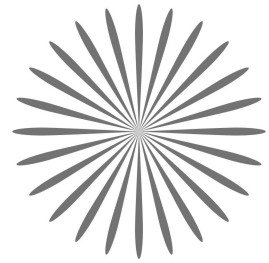
Where are relationships forming naturally?

Who are bridge-builders inside and outside your church?

How are you encouraging everyday people to notice, connect, and care for others?

As relationships grow, opportunities naturally emerge to share faith and invite others into deeper connection with Christ.

INTRODUCING PEOPLE TO CHRIST



People come to faith through relationships, trust and lived witness.

Reflect on the pathways people currently experience in the church and where new ones might emerge.

Which of these pathways feel most natural in your context right now?

Where might God be inviting you to try something small and relational?

As people begin to explore or follow Christ, the next question becomes how we help them grow and become a part of God's work in others.



GROWING IN CHRIST

Discipleship should naturally lead us to share life and faith with others. We grow not just for ourselves, but so others may grow through us.

What opportunities are you providing to deepen people's faith for all ages?

How are people being equipped to lead others, not just participate?

What age groups are you targeting to grow leaders?

Over time, these patterns begin to shape not just what we do, but how our church feels and functions.

CHURCH CULTURE SNAPSHOT



WHAT DOES YOUR CHURCH CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

Every church has a culture. It shapes how people experience the church, how decisions are made, and what new things are possible.

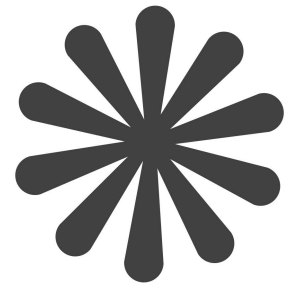
You may not always have words for it, but you can often recognize it.

As you review the characteristics below, simply mark whether each one feels true in your current context.

Check Yes or No for each statement.

Healthy & Life-Giving Patterns	Yes	No
People feel welcomed and included		
New people are noticed & connected quickly		
Relationships matter more than programs		
People are encouraged to invite others		
Members take initiative, not just follow		
Leaders develop other leaders		
There is openness to trying new things		
People feel safe to share ideas		
The church is connected to the community		
We regularly serve beyond the church building		

CHURCH CULTURE SNAPSHOT



WHAT DOES YOUR CHURCH CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

Challenging or Limiting Patterns	Yes	No
Most decisions are made by a few people		
New ideas are often resisted		
The focus is mainly on Sunday activities		
People tend to stay in familiar groups		
It is difficult for new leaders to emerge		
The church feels disconnected from the community		
Change feels slow or difficult		
There is a strong preference for “how things have always been”		
People are unsure how to get involved		
Energy feels low or reactive rather than hopeful		

Your responses begin to tell a story.

Culture is not about being good or bad. It simply reveals what is currently easy, what is difficult, and where change may be needed.

CHURCH REFLECTION



What strengths do you see?

Which areas did you most often answer “Yes” in the life-giving section? What do these strengths make possible in your church right now?

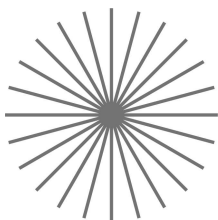
What challenges are emerging?

Which patterns showed up most often in the challenging section? Where might these patterns be limiting new possibilities?

What challenges are emerging?

Which patterns showed up most often in the challenging section? Where might these patterns be limiting new possibilities?

Culture does not change all at once. It often shifts as small, consistent actions begin to shape new patterns. Even a single new step can begin to open space for something different. As culture opens space for new possibilities, people begin to bring forward their gifts in new ways.



GIFTS & PASSIONS

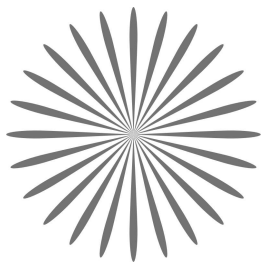
God has already placed everything needed for new expressions of church within your people. The question is whether those gifts have permission to be used.

Who in your church has gifts that could serve others in new ways?

What passions or interests could become starting points for ministry?

Who might God be calling to try something new, even if they have never done so before?

Many new ministries begin when someone is simply given permission to respond to what they care about. As you recognize the gifts around you, you may begin to imagine new possibilities for ministry and connection.



DREAMING AND NEXT STEPS

As you reflect on everything so far, you may begin to sense new possibilities taking shape.

What is one small thing you wish existed in your church or community right now?

Where do you wish people were connecting with God or others in a way that is not currently happening?

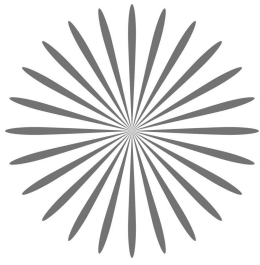
As you dream, consider where this idea might fit today and check a box below. It may grow or change over time.

Your idea does not need to be fully formed. Even a rough thought is a good place to begin.

These are not levels of success. They are simply different ways new life can take shape.

- ☐ **Tier 1:** *Supporting something new happening with prayer or sharing gifts and resources.*
- ☐ **Tier 2:** *New ministries to reach the unchurched*
- ☐ **Tier 3:** *New worshiping communities targeted to a new cultural group or Church within a Church*
- ☐ **Tier 4:** *Fresh expressions & Micro-Communities*
- ☐ **Tier 5:** *New Church Starts*

Your idea may stay small. It may grow over time. Both are faithful.



DREAMING AND NEXT STEPS

What is one small step you could take in a few weeks?

Who could you invite to explore this idea with you?

What feels simple and doable, not perfect or complete?

Faithful steps often begin small. What matters is not how big the idea is, but whether you are willing to begin. You do not need a perfect plan or full clarity to begin. Many meaningful ministries begin with one small step and a willingness to try.

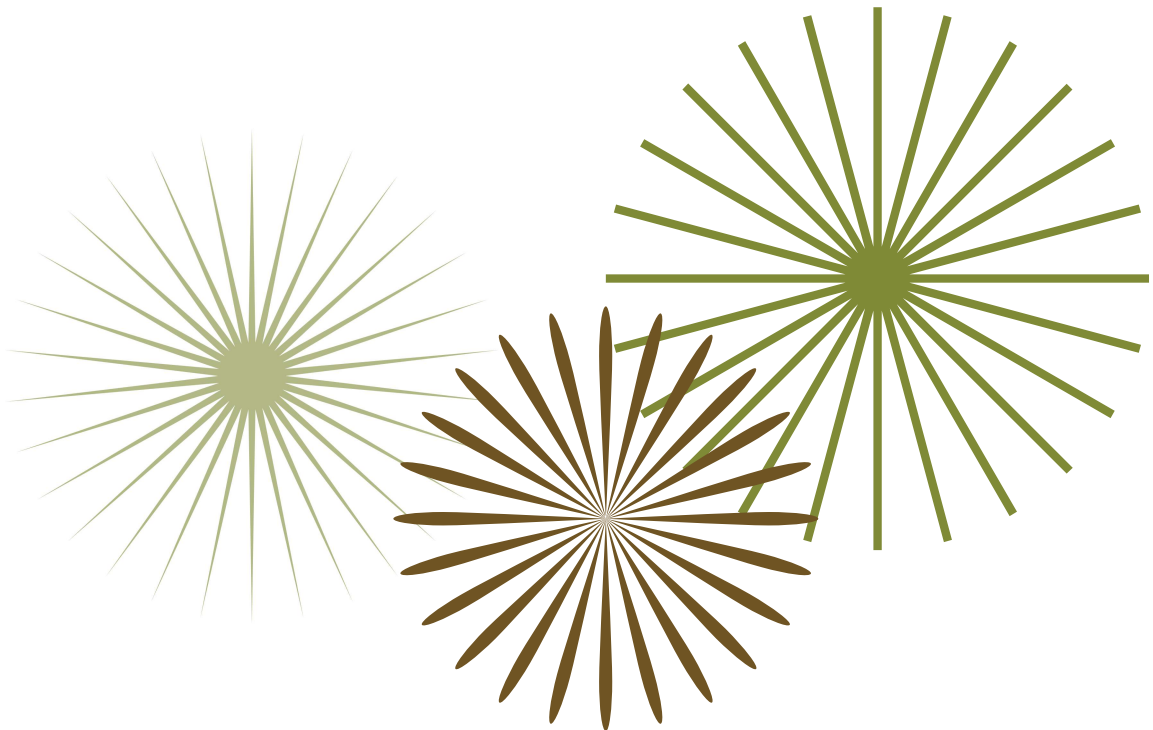
God is already at work.

Your role is not to create something from nothing, but to notice, trust, and take the next faithful step.

You are not expected to do this alone.

The Office of Fresh Starts and New Beginnings is here to walk alongside you, help you discern next steps, and support you as you explore new possibilities.

Please contact Brad Aycock at bradaycock@wocumc.org or Terri Rodriguez at trodriguez@wocumc.org.



*"In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.*

Acts 2:17