



CRAFTING A NEW MISSION GROUP

A few ideas to help you respond to God's call to change

Sometimes we wake up to the realization that it's time for us to make a change to help the world become a better place, a place where community provides security and prosperity for all, without destroying the future. But that vision is so big the first step seems more than your legs can handle. Where can you begin? What's the first step?

It's time to let the Spirit speak to your soul, then pray for the freedom to let your head and your heart follow. Walking this path is a two-footed process – left-brain, right-brain; left-brain, right-brain. And it's easier if you don't try to go alone.

If this event has raised up within you a hunger to make a difference, it's time to explore God's new call on your life. Like most of God's callings, this one will come to life and grow to maturity in a community. Remember, Jesus knew what he was doing when he sent out those early seventy missionaries two-by-two.

Discovering and following God's call is the journey of a lifetime. Some folks find call by exploring God's gifts to them. Others join a group where something is already happening; something that needs them is some new way. Still others discover how to shift the way their organization works, nurturing justice in the process. In every case, the support of a faith community can be a big help.

You've had a glimpse of the Realm of God: Here are a few guidelines to help you invite a community to open the gates and let folks in.

Recognize that the Spirit has touched your soul.

- † **As you consider the need for change, feel the pain ... and the hope.** Let the event and the fresh insight you've been given open you to new possibilities.
- † **Let yourself know where your heart is open to the deep need of Creation.** So often these days, we live as gated personalities, paying to be isolated from the needs of Creation. God's Spirit stands outside the gates, inviting us to open our hearts.
- † **Focus your spiritual practice on compassion for God's Creation.** Pray, walk, reflect and journal – your feelings, thoughts and hungers. Let your reflection reveal the leading of the Spirit.

Find a Partner

- † **Pray for someone who can share this journey with you, watching for a compassionate companion.** It seems very counter-cultural in this land of rugged individualism and "self-made men." When Jesus sent the 70 out two-by-two they had support ... and accountability.
- † **Once you have a companion, share your hunger and your hope.** If you're not alone it's easier to remember that you're not alone.

- † **Begin a regular, prayerful period of discernment together.** God calls us from within community: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Matt 18:20)

See the Vision

- † **Let the Holy Spirit speak to both of you.** Share your leadings regularly. Even when they seem incomplete and imperfect, sharing will encourage your companion and help your discernment together.
- † **Listen for the still, small voice calling you into a particular place of engagement.** Although the need is big your starting place may be very ordinary and small.
- † **Write your vision so it can speak for itself.** Writing it down helps make it clearer. That will help mobilize the support you will need. Let this be your statement of God's call for you at this time.

Secure a Place for Mission

- † **Find an organization that shares your commitment: Ask for their affirmation and support.** Your church, your employer, a civic organization: If God's vision of change is to grow, it can take root in many places.
- † **Develop a common understanding of respect and mutual support.** Acknowledge the reality that many different – *different* – people can hear the same call God has laid on you. Learn to work together.
- † **Be realistic.** Identify the barriers you face – organizational, political, financial, emotional

Invite a Community

- † **Open your journey to others ready to share it.** Look for others who will share or support your mission; invite them to join you in your stated call.
- † **Prayerfully discern a specific spiritual practice to help sustain you.** Living out the common call expresses the ministry entrusted to us in baptism, in communion, and in deep moments of connection to God.
- † **Discern specific roles for each member of the mission group.** Once the gift of each member has been discerned (within the context of the group) and confirmed, roles can be structured to allow each participant to give to the group from a position of authority.
- † **Mark your commitment – and their support – with a public event.** Keep it simple: a prayer for the mission community during worship, a “ribbon-cutting” that yields a ribbon stole; table grace and a birth-day cake...

Grow in Faith

- † **Nurture your journey together.** Pay attention to the inner journey of each member of the group, the outer journey of God’s call on you as a group, and the faith journey of your mission Community.
- † **Each time you gather, take time to pray, share, work and celebrate.** Work, play and worship are all part of intentional life in a mission community. All three help you remember that this is God’s call.
- † **Follow God’s call, together, as the Spirit leads you.** Give yourselves permission to follow your growing discernment, even when it means setting down this call.