

3 CHARACTERISTICS

OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Missional communities have the same identifiable characteristics – collaboration of leaders at all levels of parish life, a clear parish strategy for making disciples, and a renewed culture of generosity. The rediscovery of our missionary identity requires a paradigm shift. It takes approximately 1-3 years to establish each characteristic. Note that the characteristics below have been simplified for the sake of brevity. In practice, expect them to overlap. Also, because every parish situation is unique, adaptations to local circumstances will be necessary.

Characteristic 1 | Collaborative Leadership

Start small by gathering specific leaders to pray and discern the local expression of God's vision for your parish.

Priorities:

- Form a parish leadership team
- Pray as a team to discern God's vision for your parish
- Begin casting the vision to specific leaders and to the broader parish
- Discern the general steps of your Clear Path of Discipleship
- Equip parishioners to pilot a small-scale conversion engine

Characteristic 2 | Clear Path of Discipleship

Broaden your reach as you align all the activities and structures of the parish with the vision.

Priorities:

- Assess the fruitfulness of all ministries in light of the parish vision
- Address missing steps in your parish Clear Path of Discipleship
- Align all the people and groups of the parish with the vision
- Commit to forming and supporting new missionary disciples and leaders
- Train leaders in the method of Jesus (i.e., investing deeply in a few)

Characteristic 3 | Culture of Generosity

Reach the peripheries of your community by bringing missionary disciples to full maturity.

Priorities:

- Emphasize the baptismal call to witness and proclamation in the secular arena
- Set clear expectations of disciples in terms of stewardship and generosity
- Encourage personal apostolates related to evangelization and living mercy
- Commission and support teams of disciples based on their charisms
- Demonstrate a tangible commitment to the spiritual and material well-being of the wider civic community

Glossary of Terms

Missional Community

An outward-looking group of disciples, under the care of a pastor, sent by Jesus to make disciples.

Collaborative Leadership

A way of exercising authority in which the pastor invites and equips certain of the faithful to use their gifts in service of leadership.

Clear Path of Discipleship

A simple, step-by-step strategy for a parish to make disciples and lead people toward full maturity in Christ.

Culture of Generosity

A way of Christian living where we come to know that all we have is a gift from God and are invited to return those gifts with love to our Lord, our parish, and our community.

Leadership Team

A small group of key leaders (4-6 people, including the pastor) that help the pastor lead the parish toward becoming a missional community.

Conversion Engine

A program, retreat, or small group experience that removes obstacles to faith, offers an explicit proclamation of the Gospel, and fosters an initial conversion to Jesus Christ.