

Discernment Conversations

Once a church planter has completed a self-evaluation, it is important for them to listen to the insights of others who know them well. A Discernment Conversation includes the following steps for a potential church planter:

1. Identify 3 people who know you well, one of these being a Pastor/Minister that has observed you in a ministry context.
2. Send them a link to this page or PDF, which explains a Discernment Conversation and includes an overview of the characteristics of a church planter.
3. Ask them to prayerfully consider your strengths and areas for growth in relation to these characteristics.
4. Meet up with them to discuss your sense of call and receive their feedback.
5. Prayerfully reflect on what you hear from these 3 people and complete this form

Common Characteristics of a Church Planter

Visioning Capacity

This is a person who projects into the future, able to develop a theme highlighting the vision and philosophy of ministry; ability to persuasively sell the vision to the people; establishing a clear church identity related to the theme and vision. Challenges are approached as opportunities rather than obstacles, with ability to cope effectively with non-visioning elements, with the overarching belief in God's capacity to do great things.

Intrinsically motivated

This is a person who desires to do well with a commitment to excellence; persistence; willingness to start from nothing and work hard; self-starter with high energy level and physical stamina; having initiative and tenacity without negative connotations.

Ownership of ministry

This is a person who helps other people to feel responsible for the growth and fruitfulness of church; gaining commitment of people to the vision; establishing a congregational identity or culture; avoiding stereotyping of congregation by imposing unrealistic goals for which it cannot claim ownership.

Relates to people with non-Christian and different worldview

This person is a passionate and effective communicator to people of other faith or no faith. Seeing people find faith in Jesus is a central motivator. They can communicate in a style that is understood by people of other faith or no faith; understanding the "psychology" of people of other or no faith and breaking through the barriers erected by them. Ability to move and function in the "personal space" of people with a different worldview without fear; quickly getting to know them on a personal level. Able to empathise and handle crises faced by people with a different worldview.

Healthy relationship with self and others

This person demonstrates a healthy loving relationship with God, self and others. For a married church planter, this involves a solid marriage and family life, with a spouse who supports and agrees with God's call to church planting. There also needs to be a shared understanding of the type and level of involvement with the new church. For a church planter who is single, there is the need for a committed group of supportive friends, a spiritual family in Christ. A church planter with a healthy relationship with self will recognise their need for others but understand that God is the source of life. This allows them to stay calm and clear headed in the face of conflict, criticism, and rejection, alongside the strong practice of healthy boundaries.

Effectively builds relationships

This person responds with urgency to expressed needs and concerns of people, displaying Godly love and compassion to people, getting to know people on a personal basis, making others feel secure and comfortable in one's presence, not responding judgmentally or prejudicially to new people, appreciating and accepting a variety of persons, spending quality time with existing church members without overstepping them for new people.

Committed to reproduction

This person believes in reproducing disciples and churches as a theological principle and building this into every area of church life; committing to numerical growth within the context of spiritual and relational growth (more and better disciples); appreciating steady and consistent growth without preoccupation with the quick success factor; recognising that non growth is threatening and self-defeating; establishing the goal of becoming financially self-supporting within a specific time frame; not prematurely falling into a ministry of maintenance.

Responsive to community

This person understands the culture, character and "pulse" of the community and adapting the philosophy of ministry to the community profile; identifying and assessing community assets and needs; not confusing these identified needs with what the church wants to offer; responding to community needs on a priority basis such that resources are most efficiently used; partnering with good things that are already happening; determining successes and failures of other organised religious attempts to respond to community needs.

Utilises giftedness of others

This is a person who is discerning of spiritual gifts in others; equipping and releasing people to do ministry; matching giftedness with ministry needs and opportunities; not prematurely assigning ministry tasks before adequate equipping; delegating effectively in areas of personal limitation and to avoid personal overload; not placing unwarranted restrictions on others' spiritual giftedness.

Adaptive

This is a person with tenacity, agility and desire to adapt to changes, challenges and corrections; track record of learning from mistakes and navigating challenges that are difficult to identify; a lifelong learner; teachable; creative thinker.

Builds cohesive groups

This is a person who can develop a nucleus group (or groups) as a foundation and engaging others in meaningful church or community activity; quickly incorporating newcomers into a network of relationships, monitoring the morale of people; utilising groups effectively; dealing with conflict assertively, constructively and tactfully.

Resilience

This person experiences setbacks without defeat; expecting the unexpected; rebounding from loss, disappointments and failure; riding the "ups and downs" (i.e. attendance).

Exercises faith

This person's life evidences a strong lifestyle of worship and intimacy with God; possessing a conviction regarding one's call to church planting ministry and believing in God's action; having expectation and hope; having a willingness to wait for answers to specific prayer requests.