

Frequently Asked Questions about Missional River 2.0

- 1. *Why are we calling this the Missional River?*** Church life has changed a lot in the last 5-10 years or so. A lot of what we used to do isn't working any more, but it's not exactly clear yet as to what the new will be like. So we're on a journey together as a synod. And we're calling that journey the Missional River. We have so many wonderful rivers all over Texas. If you've ever been on a river, you know that it's not a straight ride. There are twists and turns, and you can't see too far ahead. There are some places and times when the river moves quickly, and others where it seems to not move at all. There are parts of the river that are all dried up, but there's always the possibility that the water will flow. That's the missional river that God is calling us to stick a toe in, or maybe jump into. The Scripture passage that informs this journey is Luke 10:1-12. Jesus invites 70 ordinary people to go on a journey into their surrounding communities where they're not in control – but God is. It's a journey where we don't know the answers, but we're going to learn along the way. It's a journey where we are called out of our churches and into our neighborhoods, to connect with our neighbors and with what God is already up to out there. It's a journey where God promises to be with us, to lead us, to provide for us, and to re-form us as God's missional people for the 21st century.
- 2. *What will we be doing in the Missional River?*** In the River your team will begin by learning and practicing some behaviors as they go through a listening process to tune in to God in the neighborhood or to wake up to God's purpose for them as a congregation. The team will attend three learning seminars throughout the year, and then meet at least monthly with their coach to move forward in the process and to reflect on what they've been doing. In a lot of ways, we are training people to be mission developers/connectors – to develop practices that connect people with God and God's mission in the world.
- 3. *In what ways will the Missional River help us to grow as a congregation?*** Participating in this journey will deepen the faith of all those involved and will clarify how you as a congregation and as individuals are called to join in to God's mission where you are. It will equip you with tools and resources that you can use in all sorts of ways in your congregation. It will also give you and your congregation fresh energy and vision to see God working in all sorts of ways.
- 4. *Will this process grow our worship attendance/membership?*** That could be a byproduct of other ways of growing but it is not the focus of this process. We find that congregations are often most interested in growing their membership numbers out of fear of survival. That isn't the Gospel, and outsiders can smell that a mile away.
- 5. *But we already do a lot of serving in our community. What's different about this?*** We as Christians are pretty good at identifying or assuming what the needs of people "out there" are, and then filling those needs. We have lots of experience with food pantries, collecting money for this cause or that, providing shelter for the homeless. These are all worthy ventures, and they all keep us "in charge" of the situation and on an uneven footing with those in our communities. In the Missional River, we are invited into our neighborhoods without cans of food or hammers, or our wallets to build relationships with those around us. The assumption is that God is already up to something out in our neighborhoods, and that we will encounter God in our relationships with the other.

6. ***How do you define neighborhood? The area surrounding the church? Our personal neighborhoods? What if I live out in the country?*** The neighborhood is really any place beyond the doors of the church where you encounter people – it's all a place of God's activity, and wherever we go, we have an opportunity to pay attention to what God is doing and to join in. Your congregational members will have the opportunity both as individuals and as a community to tune in for God's presence and to join in to God's mission.
7. ***How do we know if we should participate in the Tune in or the Wake up process?*** After you complete your application to join a cohort, LEAD will be in conversation with you to assess which process is right for you. This will depend on a number of items, including the congregational vitality assessment, the LEAD assessment, and conversations with your leadership.
8. ***My congregation didn't participate in MR 1.0. Can we still participate in 2.0?*** Yes! MR 1.0 is not a prerequisite to participate.
9. ***My congregation participated in MR 1.0. Why would we want to participate in MR 2.0?*** If you participated in the first Missional River you know that this is not a program with a beginning and an end. Rather, it is a new way of behaving, and that takes time, practice and accountability. In order to continue the benefits you saw from the first MR, we encourage you to deepen your neighborhood connections and even serve as a mentor congregation for others who might be starting this journey.
10. ***What if my congregation is in transition and doesn't yet have a called pastor? Is this still a good time?*** Absolutely. In fact, this process can help a congregation gain clarity around their purpose and priorities, which will strengthen the call process.
11. ***How can we fit this into our budget?*** We have structured the costs so that money does not become a reason for not participating. If you join cohort 1, you have the cost split between two calendar years. You can also negotiate a monthly or quarterly payment plan if cash flow is an issue. Some congregations may want to do a special offering for the funding of this effort.
12. ***How does the coaching work?*** You will meet in person with your coach at the first learning seminar. You will be paired with another congregation, and approximately once a month your two congregations' team leaders will participate in an hour long gotomeeting with your coach, as you look back on your learnings from the last time and look ahead to what your plans for the coming month will be.
13. ***How many people do we really need on our LEAD team?*** Although the recommendation is 6 to 8 including your pastor, we recognize that for smaller congregations this presents a challenge. The minimum number would be 3-4 people plus your pastor/interim.
14. ***What kind of commitment do we have to make?*** Signing the covenant means your congregation will be part of a year long process initially involving 4-8 congregational members and your pastor. There are 3 learning seminars (Friday night/Saturday) to attend, plus a monthly gotomeeting with a coach (your pastor, team leader and communicator). The activities you undertake between meetings vary depending on how your team chooses to engage the process. More details about the Tune in and Wake up

processes can be found at <http://waytolead.org/portfolio-item/tune-in-process/> and <http://waytolead.org/portfolio-item/wake-up-process/>

15. ***What kind of people should we ask to serve on this team?*** Key competencies for team members include: maturity, openness, interpersonal skills, healthy boundaries, well respected and a good work ethic. More details on this can be found on at www.swtsynod.org/missionalriver2
16. ***Where will the learning seminars be held?*** That depends on the location of the first cohort of congregations. We will try to find a central location; likely somewhere in/between Austin and San Antonio. We will let you know as early after the June application deadline as possible.
17. ***Who should attend these learning seminars?*** At a minimum, the Pastor and the team need to attend each of the three seminars. In addition, we suggest you invite as many people as you want from your congregation to attend. The more people you can get the better your congregation can understand what you're up to. The cost is \$30 per person for each seminar; that includes lunch, snacks and all materials for a Friday night, Saturday seminar.
18. ***How many congregations will be involved in this cohort?*** We are not sure yet, but we are planning for between 6-10.
19. ***What if we're not quite ready yet? When is the next cohort?*** What do you mean not quite ready? ☺ The second cohort is planned to begin in February 2017. The deadline for application for that cohort will be November 15, 2016.
20. ***Why are we partnering with LEAD?*** Based on our learnings from the Missional River 1.0, we recognized that we needed to strengthen the coaching that we provided to congregations in order to strengthen and sustain the initial team, as well as spread the learnings/behaviors more broadly within the congregation. LEAD has developed a cadre of very professional coaches, including Jane Triplett who was with us in MR 1.0. They also have had several years of experience with the Tune in process, which closely aligned with the process we followed in Missional River 1.0.