**Process for Planting House Churches**

**Diocesan Timeline**

1. Articulate a basic plan/flow chart of the process
2. Identify 5-10 churches or other Episcopal Communities (schools, institutional chaplaincy, etc.) that have the capacity (particularly people) to sponsor planting a “house” church.
3. Finalize Getting Started Guide as well as suggested bible studies and prayers
4. Approach those churches and pitch the idea. Get a sense of their willingness to proceed with exploring the process. If they are interested in moving forward, provide them with the below template and other resources.
5. Follow up with churches. Assist in crafting specific rollout plans. (as needed)
6. Get 1-2 churches meeting regularly with 3-4 in process of launch to establish proof of concept
7. Organize support network for the leaders

**Process for Recruiting**

1. Identify a group of functional clergy/leaders who are well-established (2+ years) at their church
2. Lay out incentives/hook (what’s in it for me?)
   1. Contextualize as a way to help reverse decline and engage/re-engage the lapsed, non-members and those members who wish to go deeper in their faith
   2. Boost not only numbers but also vitality of the sponsoring church
   3. Seed money to pay for food/drink or other essential supplies
   4. If all goes as planned, their story will featured at Convention
3. Explain simplicity- low bar of 3-4 members to start, provide toolkit
4. Introduce process
5. Provide assurance of support

**Potential Participants**

Identify parishes and leaders (lay and clergy) who understand the vision and have enthusiasm to energize this kind of planning, and create a list of them.

**Parish Process/Timeline**

While every process will be unique, the planting of a new “house” church will follow a basic progression.

1. **Affinity.** Identify a group that shares a common interest or circumstance that is not currently connected to the worship of your church. For example: people who have not come back since the pandemic, new parents, dog owners, or people connected to community partner that meets at the church for exercise, support groups, etc. All that matters is that they have a spiritual hunger and a common interest/bond.
2. **Leadership**. Do they want to go deeper in their faith and help others do the same? Are they willing to invite people?
3. **Location.** This can be someone’s home (or a series of homes) but it can also be a public space like a coffee shop, park, dog park, or other location that fits the new community.
4. **Promotion.** The sponsoring church and house church leader(s) should promote both in advance of the first meeting and throughout your first weeks and months.
5. **Time.** Once you have a core group establish a regular meeting day/time
6. **Community.** Encourage and foster a sense of connection and trust among participants.
7. **Support.** Participate in a Home Church leadership group to find support and best practices. The Offices of the Diocese will help organize one.

**Helpful Hints**

As you proceed in organizing and launching this new church community remember these helpful tips:

1. Don’t be afraid to fail!
2. If things don’t go as planned, don’t be afraid to make changes. This can include the time, place, or even the focus of the church.
3. Don’t focus on numbers. Success is not always measured in terms of size. Are hearts being reached? Are lives being changed for the better? Are people drawing closer to Jesus Christ?
4. Never forget that it does not depend upon you or your efforts alone. The Church is the Body of Christ. By faith we trust that God can do those things that we cannot!

Above all remember, what you are doing is “real” church. Jesus taught us that whenever two or three gather in his name, he is in the midst of us (Mt 18:19-20). Acts tells us that the earliest Church was a gathering in a home for prayer and a common meal.

**Sample House Meeting** (60-90 min)

Gathering time (10-15 min)

Bible Study (30-45 min)

Prayer (5-10 min)

Closing social time (optional)

**Resources and Support:**

Getting Started Guide

Bible Study Templates

Sample Prayers

The Offices of the Diocese will organize a cohort house church leaders so they can offer mutual support and best practices

In Scripture, Christians gathered in houses around a meal. There was a simplicity and depth to focusing on relationships with one another and on how to know God deeper through prayer and the study of Scripture. The beauty and power of such an initiative is that you really need is a living room, a bible study, and two or three people. That’s it. The Holy Spirit will take it from there.