



4 Steps of Starting a New Ministry of Intentional Gospel Impact

This guide follows the mission and ministry logic of the Pacific Southwest District to help congregations and schools start new ministries that reach new people with the Gospel.

1. DEFINE THE CULTURAL FIELD

"Know the people and place God is calling you to love."

Actions

- Identify Natural Gatherers and their Cultural Field
- Host prayer walks and neighborhood listening sessions.
- Gather demographic and spiritual needs data.
- Interview local leaders, educators, and business owners.
- Identify current ministries and outreach gaps.

Tools

- Spiritual Gift Inventories
- MissionInsite reports
- Cultural intelligence assessments
- Neighborhood exegesis worksheets

2. CREATE GOSPEL EXPERIENCES (Gather)

"Invite people into life-giving encounters with Jesus."

Actions

- Meet people where they are—homes, parks, cafes. Be willing to be gathered!
- Launch low-barrier events (meals, service, workshops).
- Provide prayer and practical care.
- Offer Rooted, Alpha, Discovery Bible Study, or similar.

Tools

- Community canvassing guides
- Digital invitation tools
- Table fellowship training

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Luke 10:2

3. FORM DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITIES (Shepherd)

"Nurture Gospel identity and spiritual practices in safe, relational groups."

Actions

- Team together Gatherer and Shepherd
- Start small groups for Scripture, prayer, and mutual care.
- Teach baptismal identity and grace-based discipleship.
- Establish rhythms of worship, Word, and service.
- Identify and equip potential leaders.

Tools

- Discipleship pathway frameworks (Rooted, Alpha, etc.)
- Rule of Life templates
- Bible study and prayer resources

4. EMPOWER HARVEST OUTREACH (Elder)

"Send people out to love and serve others in Christ's name."

Actions

- Commission teams to serve in workplaces, neighborhoods, and schools.
- Support them with coaching, encouragement, and resources.
- Celebrate stories of Gospel fruit regularly.
- Build local networks with churches and nonprofits.

Tools

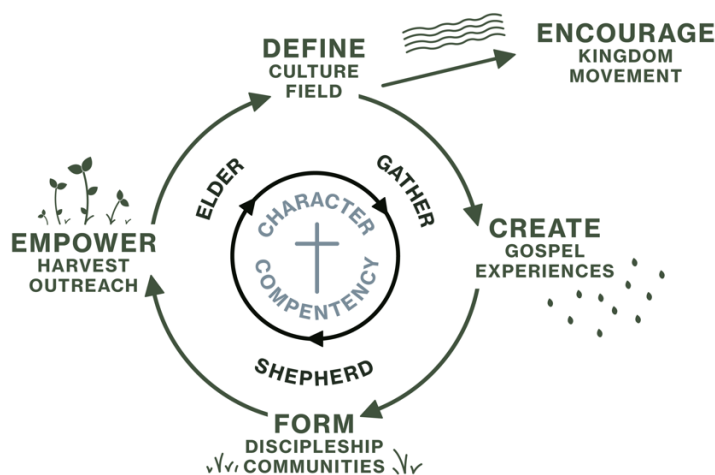
- Local Mission Societies or mission incubators (i.e. LINC)
- District innovation or incubation grants
- Testimony sharing templates

5. REPEAT AND EXPAND – ENCOURAGE KINGDOM MOVEMENT (All)

"Let the Spirit lead new cycles of Gospel movement."

Actions

- Reflect on what God has done and discern what's next.
- Train and release new leaders.
- Expand the mission field to reach new people groups.



New Ministry Discussion Guide for Teams

Use these prompts to reflect deeply, ideally over a shared meal or retreat setting.

1. Identity

- How would a newcomer describe our ministry's purpose after one visit?
- In what ways are we embodying the Gospel, not just talking about it?

2. Context

- What's something surprising we've recently learned about our neighborhood?
- Who are the "unseen" or underserved in our context?

3. Discipleship

- Are we forming people who follow Jesus in daily life or just attend events?
- Where are the places of apprenticeship, not just information transfer?

4. Hospitality

- When was the last time someone said, "I feel at home here"?
- Are we good at welcoming difference—not just sameness?

5. Simplicity

- What can we *stop doing* that might free us to be more faithful?
- If we had to multiply this in another place, could we?

6. Partnerships

- Who's in our "ecosystem of support"? Where do we feel isolated?
- What mutual gifts might we offer to and receive from others?

7. Leader Health

- How are we caring for our own souls, not just the souls of others?
- What signs of stress, fatigue, or joy do we notice in each other?

8. Adaptation

- What risks have we taken lately in faith? What did we learn?
- How is the Spirit inviting us to *shift*—even if it's uncomfortable?

Diagnostic Tool

Assessing a New Ministry's Effectiveness & Sustainability

Rate each item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (strongly true).
Use it quarterly with your team or oversight group.

Mission & Identity

- We have a clearly articulated mission rooted in the Gospel.
- Our Lutheran distinctive is clear and shaping our practices.
- Our “why” is compelling and regularly communicated.

Contextual Engagement

- We understand the specific needs, values, and demographics of our context.
- We are actively listening to and learning from our community.
- Our ministry expressions are culturally relevant and relationally grounded.

Disciple-Making & Leadership Development

- We have a clear pathway for making and multiplying disciples.
- Emerging leaders are being identified and equipped from within the community.
- Our leadership model emphasizes collaboration, mentoring, and spiritual growth.

Hospitality & Evangelism

- People experience radical hospitality and a sense of belonging in our ministry.
- The Gospel is shared relationally and appropriately in context.
- We are creating space for seekers and skeptics to ask real questions.

Simplicity & Scalability

- Our ministry model is simple, reproducible, and financially sustainable.
- We focus on rhythms (e.g., meals, gatherings, service) rather than events.
- We can adapt or scale without losing our core DNA.

Collaborative Ecosystem

- We have strong relationships with external partners (district, local churches, nonprofits).
- We benefit from mentoring, coaching, or spiritual direction outside our core team.
- We are open to shared mission initiatives and pooled resources.

Health & Sustainability of Leaders

- Leaders regularly practice rest, prayer, and spiritual disciplines.
- There is a culture of vulnerability, emotional maturity, and mutual support.
- We have margin in our lives and ministry rhythms to prevent burnout.

Evaluation & Adaptation

- We regularly assess what is bearing fruit and what needs pruning.
- We're open to pivoting based on Spirit-led discernment.
- We celebrate learning—even through failure.

TOTAL SCORE: _____

☐ 40–60 = Thriving

☐ 25–39 = Growth areas identified

● <25 = Urgent attention needed

Effective and sustainable new ministries in 2025 are shaped by a convergence of **contextual awareness, theological clarity, relational integrity, and adaptive strategy**. Here are the most critical factors:

1. Clear Mission and Theological Identity

- Rooted in a compelling **Gospel-centered vision** that articulates *why* the ministry exists.
 - Theological coherence prevents drift; clarity in **Lutheran (or denominational) distinctives** builds trust and authenticity.
 - A clear sense of call: not just "a good idea," but a discerned and affirmed mission.
-

2. Deep Contextual Engagement

- Missional leaders **listen well to the local community**, discerning its unique history, values, assets, and struggles.
 - Cultural intelligence: understanding generational shifts (e.g., Gen Z's skepticism of institutions, value of authenticity, and longing for belonging).
 - Ministry is not *for* the community but *with* the community.
-

3. Disciple-Making and Leadership Development

- Sustainable ministries **form disciples who make disciples**—not just consumers of religious content.
 - Identify, equip, and empower **indigenous leaders** early—those from the community who carry the ministry forward.
 - Leadership pipelines are intentional and relational.
-

4. Relational Evangelism and Radical Hospitality

- Gospel proclamation is relational, not transactional—trust is earned over time.
 - **Radical hospitality** is both practical and spiritual—ministries flourish when people are seen, known, and loved.
 - Posture of invitation rather than coercion; spiritual curiosity is nurtured.
-

5. Simple, Scalable Models

- Ministries start with **simple, reproducible rhythms**—like house churches, neighborhood dinners, or Scripture circles—that can scale as needed.
 - Financial sustainability grows from low overhead and relational giving rather than complex infrastructure.
 - Avoid premature institutionalization; be agile and flexible early on.
-

6. Collaborative Ecosystems

- Healthy ministries are rarely isolated—they grow within **networks of support**, including:
 - Denominational or district partnerships
 - Local churches and nonprofits
 - Civic and community stakeholders
 - These partnerships reduce burnout, increase credibility, and multiply resources.
-

7. Spiritual and Emotional Health of the Planters

- Leaders who practice **sabbath, spiritual direction, emotional maturity, and community accountability** are more resilient.
 - Burnout, isolation, and identity confusion are major threats—self-awareness and soul-care are mission-critical.
-

8. Ongoing Evaluation and Spirit-Led Adaptation

- Regular reflection: What's bearing fruit? What's not?
- Spirit-led ministries are **data-informed but not data-driven**—they make space for discernment, experimentation, and prayerful pivots.
- Failure is seen as feedback in the process of faithful innovation.