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**GOING LOCAL**

# Welcome to Transformation 2.0!

You are embarking on an exciting journey, and we are honored to be sharing the journey with you. We believe that it is conceivable for this journey to take us into unexpected places none of us can see or imagine from here. You will be in good company as you join with teams from other congregations periodically along the way.

Make no mistake about it. This has the makings of a real adventure. There is the potential for profound change, reweaving the very fabric of who we are, rather than just patching up or adjusting or even fixing selected parts. Over time, congregations can easily become closed circles that have lost the capacity to connect with and listen to the people in our neighborhoods. This journey is about learning how to follow and join with what God is doing out in our own neighborhoods and communities.

The reweaving of our life must be the work of the people not the plans, visions, and strategies of leaders. Most change processes are designed from the top down, and while this kind of change works for a while (as long as a key leader is involved) but doesn't become part of a congregation's way of life. We are inviting you into a new space; a space of transformation as God's people move forward listening to one another, to God, and to your neighbors.

Navigating this journey, in this new world, takes a different approach. The Missional Network (TMN) has years of experience working extensively with clusters of congregations in rediscovering how they become vibrant nodes of God's life in their communities. Reweaving congregation life so that it becomes a place where God's transforming work in the world is lived out requires the people of a congregation to develop some new habits, practices, attitudes, and values. This is not an easy task. It takes work, persistence, and an understanding of the rules of the road.

We begin by asking, "How do we go about cultivating new habits and practices to enter and engage our neighborhoods and communities in a new and different way?"

## **We learn by acting our way into new thinking.**

Not just by reading books, listening to sermons or watching videos, or by being given some big vision. We act our way into new ways of thinking and seeing the world. We reflect on what we've done, adjust and try new experiments. Too often we get caught in the notion that we have to change the internal life and structures of our church. We may eventually need to do that, but it's not where we begin. In fact, we suggest that you don't start changing lots of things inside the church.

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# **WELCOME** *and introductions*

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## COHORT #2

## **Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church**

Welcome to Transformation 2.0: Going Local. We are grateful you are able to join us today as we continue this journey together.

Today, we hope you will learn a few things in our time together:

1. Understanding of why “Discerning” is the second major step in this process
2. Practical training on how to discern and determine where God wants you to focus your efforts
3. Be able to categorize the nature of some of the challenges you are facing

### **Agenda - COHORT #2**

Welcome and Introductions	9:00 – 9:30 am
Listening to God through Scripture	9:30 – 10:15am
Discerning God's Leading - Conversation Group	10:15 – 11:00am
Break	11:00 – 11:15am
Learning Cohort Time	11:15 am – 12:00pm
Lunch	12:00 – 1:00pm
Your Assignment - Planning Your Next Steps	1:00 – 2:40pm
Where Have you Seen God at Work Today?	2:40 – 2:50pm
Worship and Communion	2:50 – 3:30pm

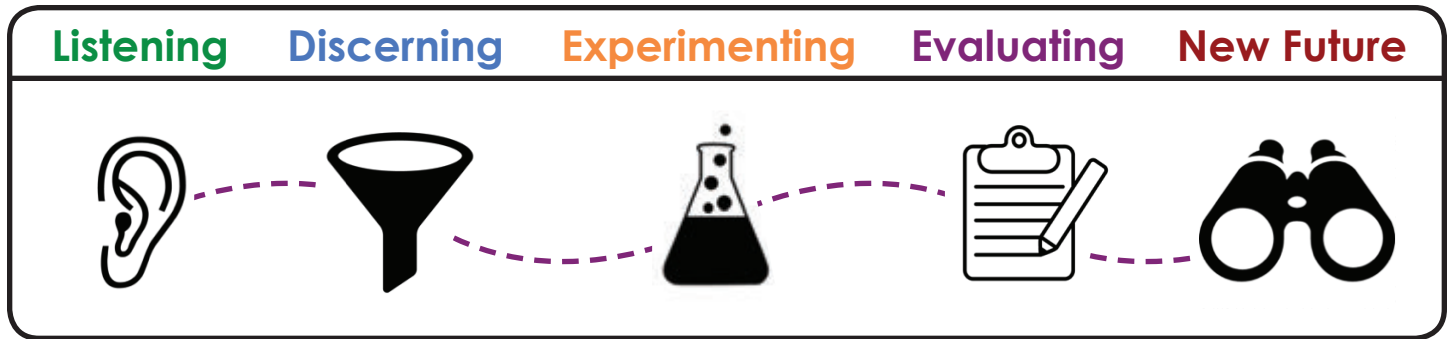
**Next Training Date – Saturday, January 21st**  
**SAVE THE DATE!**

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**OUR DAY**  
*together*

5-Step Process



**Listening** - What might God be saying to us?



**Discerning** - Why might God be saying this to us?



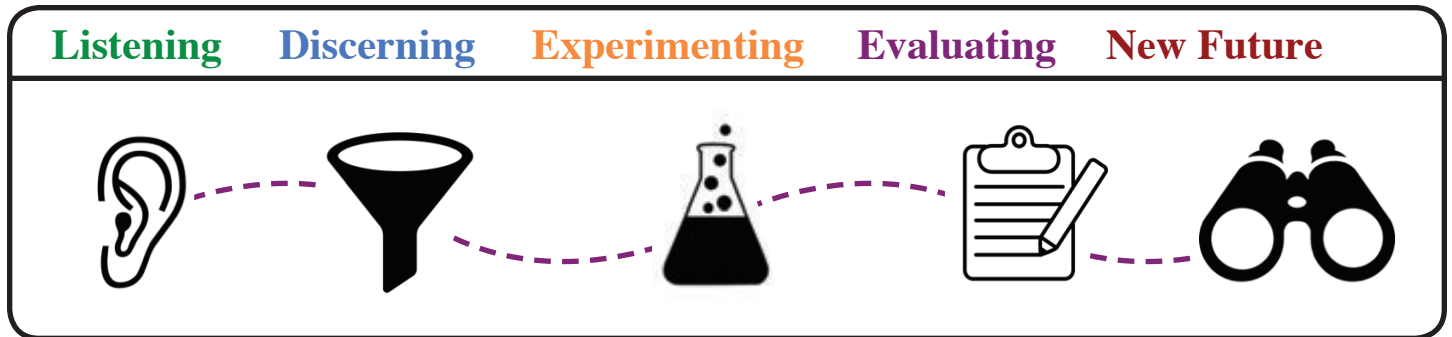
**Experimenting** - How can we learn more about where God is leading us?

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**5-STEP PROCESS**  
*journey images*

## 5-Step Process



**Evaluating** - What did we learn from our experiments?



**Living into a New Future** – How can we incorporate the way we have done these steps into our future life as a congregation?

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# 5-STEP PROCESS

*journey images*

Dwelling in the Word is an ancient way of reading the Scripture. Dwelling in the Word is a way of spiritually submitting to the text as one way God speaks to us, with a willingness to be shaped by what God might want to say through the Scripture. In this way, we are being interpreted by the text together as we listen to it.

Three questions guide our listening:

1. What caught your attention?
2. What question would you want to ask?
3. What are we hearing in this text (where might the Spirit be nudging us)?

The process of dwelling in a particular text is as follows.

Listen to the Word Together

- Pray that God would speak to us
- Read the text, slowly
- Allow for silence
- Read again
- Allow for silence

Listen to Someone Else

- Find one person you can share your thoughts about the text with, a “reasonably friendly looking stranger,” someone you maybe don’t know well
- Spend 4-5 minutes each sharing about what caught your imagination, or a question you have, or what you think the Spirit might be saying

Share in a Group

- Share in a group of 6-8 people what you heard your conversation partner say

***What might God be saying to us as a group? What are you hearing?***

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, “Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.” I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

### The Questions:

1. What is the Spirit saying to you through this passage?
2. What might the Spirit be saying to your congregation through this passage?
3. What might the Spirit be saying to our Presbytery through this passage?

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# THE TEXT

*Luke 10:1-12*



## Listening Report for Mill Creek Presbyterian Church Fall 2016

The Guiding Team at Mill Creek helped organize the interviewing of five leaders in the community, five neighbors, and fifteen members of the congregation. The team also participated in several walks in the community. This gives a good opportunity to sense what God is doing in the “neighborhood” and the congregation.

### *Community Leader Interviews*

Mill Creek’s Guiding Team interviewed five community leaders. The leaders had a balanced view of the community, noting its challenges and its strengths. The leaders articulated in different ways some the challenges associated with ethnic and socioeconomic changes in the community population. Some talked about the problems related to drug abuse. Others highlighted the high need that existing social service organizations have for more volunteers. According to these leaders, there are a significant number of organizations in the area already focused on serving youth, veterans, retirees, and other under-served populations. All the leaders interviewed agreed on the fact that there is not a shortage of opportunities to serve in the community, but that they are experiencing a huge need for people to fill these volunteer positions.

The community leaders had many positive things to say about this community. There have been significant revitalization efforts and care for parks. Leaders’ noted the presence of many kids with strong character and lots of potential. One key leader said that the schools are not facing as big of a drug problem as might be assumed by many.

One person interviewed said their only suggestion for ways the church could help was for the church to get on its knees and pray. Almost all the leaders interviewed seemed positive about the idea that the church would become more engaged in the life of the community.

### *Church Member Interviews:*

Fifteen participants in the congregation were interviewed. The demographic breakdown of those interviewed is as follows:

- Female: 9, Male: 6
- 15-25 years old: 1, 26-45 years old: 2, 46-60 years old: 3, 61+ years old: 9
- 0-2 years attending: 1, 3-10 years attending: 3, 10+ years attending: 11
- Members: 13, Non-members: 2

Those interviewed were asked to reflect on their time at Mill Creek and describe when they felt most alive, engaged and motivated. Several themes emerged in response to this set of questions. One was that people felt most alive and engaged when they were involved in the life of the congregation through serving. Some served through the youth group, on Session, through search committee, or by singing in the choir. People feel more alive when they are playing a role in the life of the church. Others said they felt most alive when their kids were active and engaged. Some said they felt most engaged when they were involved in deep discussions about the nature and future of the church as part of searching for a new pastor.

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# LISTENING REPORT

When asked to name the most important life-giving characteristics of Mill Creek, three themes emerged. Most people said Mill Creek is at its best as a church when it is worshipping, fellowshiping together, and engaging in intellectually stimulating learning. Those interviewed talked specifically about how welcoming and caring this congregation is.

When asked about how people experienced God's presence at Mill Creek, most people talked about experiencing God's presence on special worship occasions (i.e. Christmas service, outdoor service). Some talked about the support they received in times of need, or the opportunity they had to use their gifts in the ministry of the church. Most people interviewed experienced God through worship and through giving and receiving help.

When asked about their hopes for Mill Creek, a variety of responses were given, many of which focused on growth. Some talked about the hope that the church would continue to grow its efforts to serve in the community. Several people talked about their desire to see the church grow both in numbers and in involvement. Others shared hopes for Sunday morning, including active Sunday school at all ages, engaging messages, and singing in the choir.

#### *Neighbor Interview:*

The five neighbors interviewed described the neighborhood as predominantly middle-income and white, with a growing non-white population. Neighbors noted that some of the housing is in poor condition, although there are repairs and investment being made. Two of the persons interviewed had lived in the neighborhood roughly 50 years. They appreciated the central location of the neighborhood and its proximity to downtown. They see the people who live there as honest, hard working people on the whole.

The key challenges named by these neighbors centered on the prevalence of drugs and the lack of volunteer engagement. The presence of heroine has been a growing problem for years. One person interviewed said complacency among those in the community was the biggest challenge, noting that their experience has been that the police and elected officials are ready to help if they are contacted.

Those interviewed hope that the neighborhood will continue to come together to reduce the presence of drugs and engage in volunteer work. They see God in the work of those who keep investing in the neighborhood to make it a safer and more opportune place. One person interviewed sees God at work through the outreach efforts of the church. One person said they sense God challenging them to take more action to help make the neighborhood a better place and introduce others to the Lord.

#### Questions for Discussion:

- How do the hopes and challenges of neighborhood leaders and neighbors compare to the wishes of our congregation?
- Why is growth so important to us?
- What role do you think God would like Mill Creek to play in the local community?
- What do we think God might be inviting us to focus our energy on next based on this listening work?

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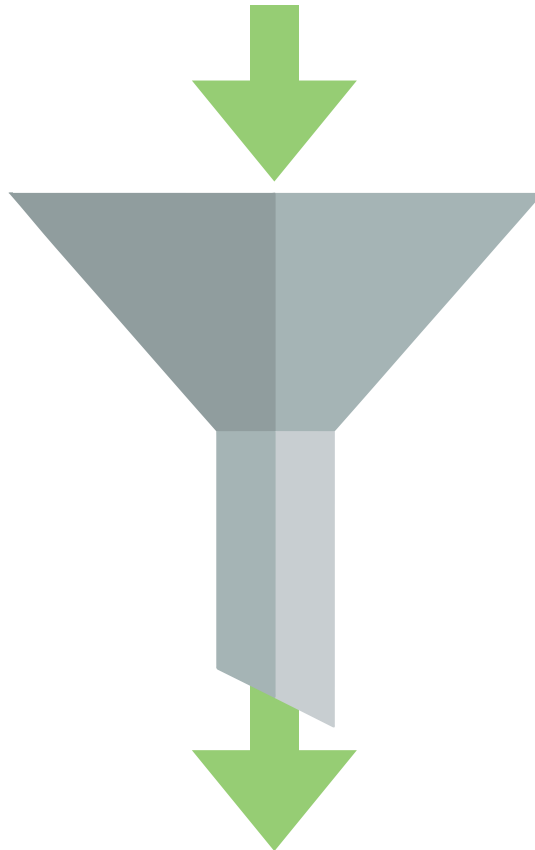


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# LISTENING *REPORT*

How do we discern together what God wants us to focus on?

# LISTENING



# DISCERNMENT

Based on your listening work, where does God want you to focus your attention and effort?

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# DISCERNING

*God's leading*

The word “discernment” can be an intimidating term for many Christians. But discernment is simply a process by which God's people determine how God is leading them. While it is as much an art as a science, we believe that God communicates by God's Spirit to everyone who is willing to listen. We believe God is speaking to us and wants us to understand what God is saying!

There are many ways to practice discernment, but we are going to use a simple approach that involves two key elements:

1. Prayer/Reflection – We want to acknowledge God's presence among us and invite God to speak to us. We want to reflect on what we think we've heard already to see what God might be saying.
2. Dialogue - Dialogue with one another invites the congregation to step back from solutions to take a rare opportunity to talk with one another in how they are hearing the Spirit. The conversations are about learning to hear God's voice through each other's stories and experiences. Through your conversations together, you will be exploring what God might be saying to you about entering your neighborhoods and communities.

**In this next step of our process, we will engage a number of groups of people in a simple discernment process to help us determine where God wants us to focus our attention and effort as a congregation.**

Step 2: Discerning

**1. Finalize Listening Work.**

If you have not completed your interviews or turned in your notes from any of your Step 1 Listening work, please do so ASAP so your coach and consultant can prepare your Listening Report.

**2. Schedule a Conference Call/Video Chat with Michael and your coach**

Michael and your coach will be in touch to set up a time to connect with you to review your listening report and make any corrections necessary.

**3. Share What You've Heard**

Distribute your listening report to your congregation

**4. Dialogue with your Congregation**

Set up 3 times for conversation about the listening report with your congregation. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

**5. Dialogue with your Session**

Set up a time to talk through the listening report at a session meeting. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

**6. Dialogue with your Neighborhood**

Find one leader in your neighborhood who is not part of your congregation who you can discuss the findings in your listening report with. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

Email all of the notes from your discernment work to your coach and Michael Binder (michael@themissionalnetwork.com).

***Key Question:***

***What areas of challenge or opportunity does God want your congregation to focus on?***

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**YOUR**  
*assignment*

## Step 2: Discerning

The conversation groups help a congregation to learn how to listen together to the Spirit. The purpose of engaging in these conversation groups is to start practicing discernment. It's about building the capacity to hear how God is calling us into action as opposed to coming up with our own ideas on what actions we should be taking.

Steps:

1. Schedule 3 opportunities for your congregation to gather and discuss the Listening Report.
2. Place participants in groups of 5-7 people.
3. Assign a Reporter to capture the learning of each group.

The notes from all the groups will be gathered together and used by the Guiding Team to discern the experiments that will be addressed in the next stage.

Materials needed:

- Copies of the Listening Report
- Copies of "Conversations with Your Congregation" handout
- Copies of "Conversation Group - Reporter Form" handout

Make up of Groups:

Do your best to ensure that each group is comprised of a cross section of the congregation to enable a diversity of dialogue. Here are some ways to think about the formation of groups:

- A mix of male and female
- Across age groups
- No pastoral staff in any group
- Family members in different groups
- Leadership spread out among the groups

Rules for Groups:

We recommend that you read these rules to the group at the start of each time the Conversation Groups meet.

- There are no right or wrong responses.
- Listen – don't jump into the middle of someone's comments.
- Ask explanation questions
- No "I disagree!" responses. For most people this shuts down contributions. People may say something like: "Thanks...that was helpful! I think I understand what you are saying but I have a different perspective."
- Create space for different views – this is where we begin to get under the surface.

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# CONVERSATIONS

*with your congregations*



Step 2: Discerning

The purpose of this is so that the leadership of the congregation can discern the kinds of experiments that might be initiated in the coming months.

What parts of the Listening Report do the group engage with most?

What are the most common questions people ask in the group?

Is there any sense from the group about where God might want the congregation to focus its energy and effort going forward?



**Step 2: Discerning**

Provide the Session with a copy of the Listening Report and give them a chance to read through it before you begin. Remind the Session of the following:

- This report is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the "neighborhood" or our church.
- This report is intended to help us practice listening to God, each other, and our neighborhood - At this point, just practicing listening together is much more important than any result
- The Guiding Team is not asking for any approval from Session nor is it requesting any funds - This is simply an opportunity for Session to be informed of the work of the Guiding Team and give some input on this first phase of work

**Begin your time in Prayer**

Acknowledge God's presence with you  
Pray for God's wisdom to guide you  
Ask God to help you trust the leading of the Spirit

**Discuss the following questions together:**

1. What information is most important to you from the listening report?  
Why?
2. How would you respond to the questions posed at the end of the Listening Report?
3. What do you think God might be asking our congregation to focus on in the next phase of our work?

Step 2: Discerning

The purpose of this is so that the leadership of the congregation can discern the kinds of experiments that might be initiated in the coming months.

What parts of the Listening Report does Session engage with most?

What are the most common questions Session asks in response to the Listening Report?

Is there any sense from the Session about where God might want the congregation to focus its energy and effort going forward?

Step 2: Discerning

**1. Finalize Listening Work.**

How many interviews have we completed?

Which group (neighbors, community leaders, church members) do we need to do more interviews with?

Who is going to do the interviews?

By when?

Who is going to be responsible for emailing our interview notes to Michael and our coach?

**2. Schedule a Conference Call/Video Chat with Michael and your coach**

Michael and your coach will be in touch to set up a time to connect with you to review your listening report and make any corrections necessary.

**3. Share What You've Heard**

Distribute your listening report to your congregation.

What is the best way to distribute the Listening Report to the Congregation?

Can you hand it out on a Sunday morning?

Can you email it to the congregation? Can

you post it on your website?

Who will be responsible for making sure the Listening Report gets distributed? \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Dialogue with your Congregation**

Set up 3 times for conversation about the listening report with your congregation. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

Who do you need to talk to in order to identify three dates for these conversations to take place?

Suggested times: Sunday after worship or Sunday morning during Adult Education. \_\_\_\_\_

Who will take responsibility for getting these dates scheduled? \_\_\_\_\_

By when do they need to be scheduled (suggested deadline - September 30, 2016)? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will make sure the Listening Reports are printed for the conversations? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will lead the conversation times using the suggested process? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will serve as "recorders" (note takers) at the meeting? (Suggest one recorder for every 5-7 people)

Who will print the "Recorder Forms" so notes can be taken? Who will collect and scan in the notes?

Step 2: Discerning - Continued

**5. Dialogue with your Session**

Set up a time to talk through the listening report at a session meeting. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

Who will contact the Session to find a time when the Guiding Team can meet and share the Listening Report?

\_\_\_\_\_

Who will make sure the Listening Report gets emailed/shared with the Session?

\_\_\_\_\_

Who from the Guiding Team will go and meet with the Session and record their feedback?

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Dialogue with your Neighborhood**

Find one leader in your neighborhood who is not part of your congregation who you can discuss the findings in your listening report with. See handout for guidelines on how to host these conversations.

Who will take the lead in sharing the the Listening Report with a neighbor and recording their feedback?

\_\_\_\_\_

Email all of the notes from your discernment work to your coach and Michael Binder (michael@themissionalnetwork.com).

***Key Question:***

***What areas of challenge or opportunity does God want your congregation to focus on?***

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**NEXT**  
*STEPS*