

Leading a gathered–scattered church

Why you don't need to wait to start

- You do not need to begin a series *on work*; you just need to recognize that your people *do work* through which God is active. You don't need a series *on ministry*; simply acknowledge the ministry your people do every day.
- You don't need to present a new vision for the church that will take years to be adopted; just ask people what is happening in the places where they spend their time, who is there, and what God might be doing in their midst.
- You don't need to explain why you've changed; just invite people to explore how God is at work in all of life.
- You can start today.

How you will know you've changed

LEADERS will have changed when...

- We have concern not only for the general health of our congregation, but find ourselves asking pertinent questions and foster congregational life that enables everyone to live the faith in the world.
- We constantly want to learn more about the situations that people are facing in their everyday lives.
- We recognize that ministry doesn't always happen in or through the gathered church, and we verbalize support and appreciation of how God is at work in the world.
- We recognize and live with the tension of wanting and needing to recruit people for gathered church activities and programs, and supporting people in the demands of their daily lives, recognizing that they are not mutually exclusive.
- Similarly, we consider whether our “competition” for people's time is the best way to accomplish our mission. Perhaps we need to cut back on activities that take people out of the world?
- We intentionally reflect on how our preaching and teaching are relevant to a range of situations in our members' lives.
- We grow into our identity not just as a *disciple-maker*, but as a *disciple*. We will increasingly recognize that our ministry extends beyond what we do in the gathered church to what we do as spouses, parents, friends, and citizens.

CONGREGATIONS will have changed when...

- Conversations begin to change. Small talk will move to significant conversations about the rough and tumble of life. Seemingly small conversations become crucial reminders that we are called to make a difference wherever God places us.
- People see that gathered church activities are designed to help them see God's hand at work in all we do, provide a wider perspective on the world, and provide insight into the ways God is at work through us for the life of the world.

- We regularly hear stories of ordinary lives and how God is at work in us for our neighbors.
- People begin to know one another better and are prepared to be more supportive of one another.
- People who join from another congregation will be able to recognize that they have come into a place with a very different culture.

INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS will have changed when...

- We embrace and are able to talk about our everyday contexts as settings for God’s work.
- Our prayers are less defensive (“Lord, get me through the day”) and more desirous of discerning God’s presence and activity (“Lord, what are you trying to do through me?”)
- We have a new understanding about why our everyday activities and relationships matter to God.

Adapted from Neil Hudson, *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole-Life Disciples*, 158-163.



Debra Meyerson calls change agents *tempered radicals* because they work to effect significant changes in moderate ways.

Tempered radicals bear no banners; they sound no trumpets. Their ends are sweeping, but their means are mundane. They are firm in their commitments, yet flexible in the ways they fulfill them. Their actions may be small but can spread like a virus. They yearn for rapid change but trust in patience. They often work individually yet pull people together. Instead of stridently pressing their agendas, they start conversations. Rather than battling powerful foes, they seek powerful friends. And in the face of setbacks, they keep going. To do all this, tempered radicals understand revolutionary change for what it is—a phenomenon that can occur suddenly but more often than not requires time, commitment, and the patience to endure.

Debra Meyerson, “Radical Change, the Quiet Way,” *Harvard Business Review*, October 2001.



A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.

Lao Tzu