

Farming Church Initiative

A Transforming Church Initiative
Pinnacle Leadership Associates
Denomination-Based Community Of Practice



Driving Aspiration of Farming Church Initiative = To cultivate congregational ecosystems wherein mission-congruent progress is the norm (thriving)

Anticipated Outcomes

- 1 – Become congregational ecosystems wherein mission-congruent progress is thriving; the norm
- 2 – Embodying the mission and vision in relevant and faithful ways
- 3 – Increased capacity to change and adapt as conditions on the ground require
- 4 – Become a more fertile congregational growing environment
- 5 – Become positioned for living as a healthy, invigorated 21st century church

Biblical Sources

John 15:1-17 – Our purpose is to bear fruit, bringing great joy

Mark 4:26-29 and Luke 13:6-9 – Our role in kingdom of God is to cultivate the growing environment; leading to “figgishness”

Introduction

Leading congregations forward into significant, proactive, mission-congruent change is at the heart of effective pastoral and lay ministry in this Postmodern Era. We long for the day when our churches are

agile and nimble, able to adjust quickly to contextual circumstances, while remaining faithful to the gospel. We want to lead congregations toward relevance in a cultural context of indifference. Our congregations themselves want to adapt to the world in which we find ourselves, extending Christ's love while being authentic and genuine participants in God's movement in our world.

Yet, when it comes to actual change, the church does not go their quickly or easily. Leaders often underestimate the resistance to change in church systems. *"A good rule of thumb in a major change effort: never underestimate the magnitude of the forces that reinforce complacency and that help maintain the status quo."* (John Kotter, *Leading Change*) There are so many clergy and church leaders who scratch their heads, wondering why their change effort was not received with open arms. Clearly the readiness of a church when it comes to change directly influences the success of the change effort. Farming Church adopts the often-used farming metaphor of Jesus in the gospels encouraging cultivation to guide us into intentional, adaptive change. What leaders are doing long before the change is introduced is nearly determinative of how well the change itself will go. Farming Church describes the seven key cultivations for preparing the growing environment (congregation) for increased adaptive change; cultivating the ecosystem for congregational growth.

Farming Church Initiative Flow

Part I – Learning, Exploring, And Discerning

FC Introductory Event - Pastor(s), staff, and lay leaders participate in a FC Introductory Event hosted by your denomination. Typically this is a one day event, 5-6 hours. Participants will gain much which they can use and implement right away in their churches. The denomination typically provides a *Farming Church* book for each participant. Topics covered in this event are:

- Describing the congregational ecosystem
- Learning Adaptive Change theory and practice
- Eliminating the obstacles to change
- Avoiding false starts while leading change
- Increasing readiness: raising the congregational readiness quotient
- Proactively cultivating the seven key practices of Farming Church
- The leadership roles of clergy and lay leaders in cultivating change
- Initiating and leading change cultivation ministry in your context

Readiness Indicator – Participants in the Introductory Event are usually eager to invite their church to do the Online Readiness Indicator. Pinnacle will guide you toward inviting everyone in your church to

participate. After your indicator is completed, we will provide your report along with guidance on debriefing its meaning for your church.

Read *Farming Church: Cultivating Adaptive Change In Congregations* – Often by this time, many leaders have completed reading the book. If not, your pastors, staff, and lay leaders may want to read and discuss the book together.

Part II – Covenanting With A Community Of Practice

Discerning Direction - Churches pray, discuss, and discern - Entering this FC Transforming Church Initiative with a one and a half year covenant. Now your pastor, staff, and lay leaders are equipped with the experience and information needed to discern whether to form a Farming Church Agreement. Those churches who discern they are ready to move ahead are invited to the Orienting and Covenanting Gathering sponsored by their Denomination Community of Practice.

Forming Your FC Coordination Team – Your next step is to select a team of 7-9 persons, along with your pastor, to serve on this team. Some churches decide their lay leadership team will be their FC Coordination Team. Others select a fresh group of people to populate this team. Capacity to handle the work is the primary driver for this decision. Your FC Coordination Team, your pastor, and whoever else would like to participate attends the Orienting and Covenanting Gathering.

Orienting and Covenanting Gathering – This is an exciting event wherein the Denominational Community of Practice comes together, engaging the following activities.

- Covenanting - Establishing Community of Practice
- Orientation to the FC Process
- Meet Your FC Coach
- Planning Initial Steps
- Schedule Monthly Coaching Sessions with your Community of Practice
- Worship

Part III – Cultivating The Congregational Growing Environment

This part of the initiative is where this FC Initiative grows very active. During three 6-month blocks, the FC Coordination Team leads the church toward cultivating each of the seven key cultivations.

A. Cultivating Faith, Trust, And Leadership – 6 Months

- a. Three Webinars
- b. Monthly Coaching
- c. One Cluster Gathering by Video Conference

- d. Outcome – Initiatives to pursue in each of these 3 key cultivations

B. Cultivating Vision – 6 Months

- a. One Webinar
- b. Monthly Coaching
- c. One Cluster Gathering by Video Conference
- d. Outcome – Vision identification and clarification

C. Cultivating Urgency, Discovery, And Alignment – 6 Months

- a. Three Webinars
- b. Monthly Coaching
- c. One Cluster Gathering by Video Conference
- d. Outcome - Initiatives to pursue in each of these 3 key cultivations

D. Celebration Gathering – Event: Your denomination hosts this event wherein we gather to conclude the FC Initiative with the following activities.

- a. Gather to celebrate progress
- b. Gather to learn from progress, mistakes, blocks, joys
- c. Gather to identify process and pathways for ongoing congregational cultivation
- d. Gather to complete the covenant relationship
- e. Gather to worship

Definitions

Community Of Practice – We change best when engaged with a supportive community. Your denomination is partnering with Pinnacle Leadership Associates in this Farming Church Initiative. Those churches within your denomination who discern they will participate in this process form a community for collective learning, encouragement, support, and accountability. These churches, your denominational leaders, Pinnacle Leadership Associates, and Farming Church Coaches all covenant together for one year and a half years of focused ministry. This Community Of Practice forms the supportive network within which churches can adapt and grow.

Farming Church Coach – One FC Coach will partner with you in your FC Process, walking with you the entire time. You will begin your relationship with your FC Coach at the Orientation and Covenanting Gathering. You are encouraged to schedule monthly sessions with your coach, as well as spontaneous coaching calls/meetings as needed. Your coach wants to help you gain as much as possible from this FC process, living into God’s calling more fully.

Farming Church Webinars – Ongoing learning is important when it comes to change. Your Farming Church Coordination Team will continue to learn, receiving guidance for each key cultivation through these webinars. They are pre-recorded by the author of *Farming Church*, Mark Tidsworth, so that you can watch each one at your convenience.

Community of Practice Cluster Gatherings – In addition to meeting with your Community of Practice in person, you will have three opportunities to gather in a web-based video conference. The purpose of these gatherings are to share best practices, celebrate progress, and identify mistakes to avoid.

Budget

Denominations decide what resources to provide for churches versus those each church will purchase for themselves.

Resources

\$10 Each - *Farming Church: Cultivating Adaptive Change in Congregations* – One copy for each pastor, staff persons, and lay leader participating in the Introductory Event.

Online Readiness Indicator Per Church

\$100 – up to 25 participants

\$200 – up to 50 participants

\$250 – up to 75 participants

\$300 – up to 100 participants

\$350 – up to 150 participants

\$400 – up to 200 participants

\$450 – up to 300 participants

(Contact us for greater number of participants costs)

Activities

\$995, plus travel expenses – Farming Church Initiative Introductory Event, 1 Day

\$995 plus \$500 for each Coach present (1 Coach per 4 or 8 churches), plus travel expenses – Orienting And Covenanting Gathering, 1 Day

\$2500 per church – Coaching and Cluster Gatherings During FC Initiative

\$100 per church – Webinar participation

\$995 plus \$500 for each Coach present, plus travel expenses – Celebration Gathering

Suggested Cost Sharing

When a denominational group enters into this agreement, along with its churches, then costs can be shared and minimized for each participating group. We are able to advise you on your approach, opening the door to participation through funding while also increasing participation through financial investment by churches. Some denominations access grants and special line items in their budget for

this funding. Obviously, the cost sharing can be structured in any way you prefer, yet here is an example for consideration:

Denomination's Expenses:

\$995, plus travel expenses – Farming Church Introductory Event, 1 Day

Resource: \$10 each, *Farming Church* Book, 1 per participant

\$995, plus \$500 for each coach present, plus travel expenses – Orienting And Covenant Gathering, 1 Day

\$995, plus \$500 for each coach present, plus travel expenses – Celebration Day, 1 Day

\$100-\$450 per congregation for Online Inventory

Each Church's Costs:

\$2500 per church – Coaching and Cluster Gatherings During FC Initiative

\$100 per church – Webinar participation

\$10 – One copy of *Farming Church* for each Coordination Team Member and Lay Leadership Team

Churches and Denominations Farming Church

This Farming Church Initiative is rising out of the book, published in the Fall of 2017. Since this material is fairly new, it is just now rising up and becoming used in various places. Here's the Farming Church track record so far:

Farming Church Initiative – South Carolina Synod, ELCA, beginning April 2018, 2 years

Training Event, Hawaii District, United Methodist Church, February 2018

Numerous Webinars, Pinnacle Leadership Associates

Multi-Day Training Event For Clergy, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC, July 2017

Leadership Development Days, Moravian Church In America, February 2018

Training Event, Providence Presbytery (USA), Rock Hill, SC, March 2018

Curriculum, Innovation Innovator Cohort, Columbia District, UMC, September 2017-May 2018