

NALC House Church Movement

A Practical Guide to Discernment and Call



Step 1: Prayer and Discernment

1. Spending time in prayer and Scripture is imperative. Nothing can be done apart from God’s Word. It is important to spend time in personal devotion, reading Scripture and seeking after God’s heart in prayer. (Please note that listening or simply being quiet is also important; you shouldn’t be the one doing all of the talking.)

2. After spending time in personal prayer and discernment, it is important to seek wisdom from others — your family, mentor, spiritual director, close friends and/or people who know you quite well. Ask them first to join you in prayer. Please list at least five names here:

3. Spend time in deep self-examination. In what areas of leadership do you excel? In what areas will you need support? What things about you personally could negatively impact ministry?

4. Spend time in discussion with some of the people listed in question 2. Ask them similar questions—where do you personally excel in leadership? Where are areas that you will need support? What things about you could negatively impact ministry?

5. Seek other people’s opinions about starting a house church in your area (other local leaders in your denomination). Are they supportive of you? If not, why not? Is their truth found in the reasons/objections?

6. Take the initial steps through prayer, meditation on Scripture, discernment, and conversation with others to identify who God is calling you to serve. Are you being called to a city, a specific neighborhood, a specific group/type of people? (Do you want to start a church to just start a church? Who is God calling you specifically to work with?)

Step 2: Schedule a Conference Call

After completing Step 1, please contact the Missions Office to set up a conference call. There are many factors in starting up a House Church in the NALC. (If you are ordained or not, connecting you with more education/training/resources if needed, the ability to connect you with your Mission District Dean for further conversation, connecting House Churches to larger congregations for the purposes of Word and Sacrament, etc.) Because of so many variables, it is easier to work some of these out through a conference call. Please contact Jenny at 614.777.5709 or jbrockman@thenalc.org.

Step 3: Discernment of Call

After taking your initial ideas of whom God is calling you to serve and your conference call with the Missions Office, spend time researching and discerning if your call is needed in the geographic area you believe God is calling you to serve.

1. Put aside the needs you perceive in the local community. Spend time researching the area where you would start the House Church. Contact local government offices to solicit socioeconomic, general, and other information.
2. Identify needs within the local community. (Solicit information from local nonprofits, government offices, police, and social services regarding the needs of the community.)
3. Develop a brief survey and spend time knocking on doors and asking the needs of the community.
4. Research local churches. Identify all of the existing churches within a five-mile radius of where you are located, regardless of denomination. Spend time researching their websites, asking the following questions: Who are they? What are their core theological beliefs? What emphasis do they place on community (in-reach)? How do they serve the community at large? For the churches located closest to you, schedule a visit with a member of their leadership, asking these questions. (They might give you a different answer than you have gleaned from their website.) Also ask the question: What is the dream project/way to serve/idea you have that you haven't had the time for or been able to get off the ground?
5. Collate all of this information and see how it matches up. Does your perceived call match the needs of the community? Have a discussion with your inner circle of people as you prayerfully consider this.

Step 4: Rubber Hits the Road

1. If you haven't attended a Regional Conference on House Church Ministry, visit the NALC's website to find out information about the closest one to you and register today!
2. If you haven't attended a Regional Conference or seen Dr. Buba's teaching on House Churches, visit www.thenalc.org. Under the "Missions" tab, click on "Mission Festival 2013." Scroll to Dr. Buba's two-part video on this. (The PowerPoint document is also available, click on the link next to the video.)
3. Spend time prayerfully working through the NALC's document "Formational Mission Questions." While this document is also used to help mission congregations, it is a great resource for House Church Ministry in the NALC.
4. After you have specifically spent intentional time working with the questions listed under "1. Prayer and Discernment," contact Jenny in the Missions Office to schedule a follow-up conference call. At the time of scheduling the conference call, please be prepared to send an email with your background work to the Missions Office (including the research you have done through local government offices, other churches within a five-mile radius, and the Formational Mission Questions). The reason for scheduling the conference call is that, at this stage in House Church Ministry, there are too many variables to provide a written guide. The reason for requesting all of this data is not to see if you've completed busy work as in the days of grade school, but that you know your community better than we do. Sending this material in advance will allow us to prepare for the conference call so we can ask better informed questions to help equip you in what God has called you to do!