

Mark's Call FAQ

DETAILS AND QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Quick Specifics

Christ The King Lutheran Church in Kingwood, Texas is extending a “**call**” (which is an external action performed by a congregation that confirms my internal sense of calling) for me to be a **deployed church planting pastor** in the harvest north of **Austin, Texas**. The initial area of activity will be based out of the Round Rock and Hutto neighborhoods with an eye facing east toward Taylor, Texas.

Christ the King is just one of several churches in the **Harvest Partnership**, a Spirit-led movement of Jesus’ disciples investing **spiritual, relational, intellectual, physical, and financial** capital to multiply disciples and expand God’s kingdom. The Harvest Partnership is sharing all of these capitals to make this call happen.

An “**inquiry**” related to the potential of this call began in April 2023. Discussions were ongoing through May. On Monday, June 12, the leaders of Christ the King voted unanimously to extend the call. Since Debbie and I were already sensing the Lord’s leading for some time, deliberation for us was swift. We concluded with certainty on Sunday, June 18, that we WILL accept this call.

At Christ The King, this matter will go before their voting community on July 16 for final approval. At Praise & Worship, my request is that my final Sunday would be a “**Sending Sunday**” to take place on **Sunday, July 30, 2023**.

The Purpose

WHY? Why would I accept this call?!? The extremely short answer: Because I’m convinced with full certainty that **the Lord is SENDING Debbie and I to Northeast Austin** to participate with Him in expanding His Kingdom there.

But there are some very important notes that Praise & Worship needs to know:

- I’m not running away from Praise & Worship. It is the opposite: Praise & Worship is my family, and it is only with grief that the Lord has convinced me to go. None of my personal family members will be going with Debbie and I either, so the grief runs deep!
- I’m not looking for a career advancement. Such notions are absurd from the outset. But to demonstrate clearly, note that I will not be paid a full salary in my new call. Instead, I will be transitioning to a “co-vocational” arrangement where the Harvest Partnership will pool resources to pay me a stipend of \$25,000 per year to help provide health insurance, requiring me to supplement my own income and retirement.
- I’m convinced that the Lord is bringing a new pastor for a new chapter! This is also key: While I do not know who it will be, the Lord has provided me with tangible peace and full confidence that He has a plan for this new chapter in the history of Praise & Worship (who turns 10 years old on December 13, 2023!!!). I would never leave if I wasn’t certain that the Lord would be providing this new pastor!

Key reasons why I am being sent:

- I have been uniquely prepared to do mission work in this area. The mission field between Hutto and Taylor, Texas is exponentially growing. But it is growing in a very particular way. With the construction of a new Samsung Chip Fabrication facility and the dozens of adjacent companies and organizations that will accompany it, combined with Tesla, Apple, Dell and many similar companies, this environment is heavily saturated with technology-based workers. *I am also such a worker.*

- Most LCMS pastors would be unable to be productive in a co-vocational dynamic. My technical skillset and existing relationships allow me to supplement my income at a higher hourly rate rapidly, meaning that I can devote more time to ministry than other co-vocational workers would.
- This environment will require extreme flexibility and agility for “CHURCH”. Among the neighborhoods I'll be working in, the population of “churched” people is significantly lower than here in Missouri. A heavy emphasis on “house church” and innovative online ministry efforts will be needed.
- Mentoring new church planters will be a major focus. Being able to instill a strong Confessional Lutheran baseline combined with a strong ability for contextualization and missional thinking so that we might multiply like-minded church workers is essential.

The Plan

The forming vision will be expressed in these terms: **a three-lane Gospel Experiment.**

The Three Lanes

1. New Church
2. New Partnership
3. New Table

NEW CHURCH: REACH NEW PEOPLE

These three lanes will feature the *center lane* of **a new church plant** by way of relational capital developed initially at Narrative Church in Round Rock, TX, and centering on the persons of peace including highly motivated lay persons at Narrative Church already taking steps toward a vocation within the pastoral ministry or otherwise seeking to participate in church planting.

NEW PARTNERSHIP: MENTOR NEW LEADERS

The *right lane* will seek the building of **a new partnership** with persons of peace at **Concordia University Texas** for the specific purpose of meeting and mentoring future leaders (perhaps some new church-planting candidates!) by inviting them into our Gospel Experiment and supporting and serving their academic community.

NEW TABLE: STRENGTHEN AND GROW THE HARVEST PARTNERSHIP

A new table in the *left lane!* To be sure, it is not all new, but will take on new initiatives by way of new partners as we multiply harvest tables into the surrounding area. This includes strengthening local congregations, especially Narrative Church, but also reinforcing, and forging relationships throughout the area to multiply Austin's Harvest Table(s). The purpose of multiplying tables is to spread the vision of the Harvest Partnership to more and more partners so that through the multiplication of harvest workers, harvest tables, new disciples, and new Gospel outposts, God's Kingdom advances especially into even more neighborhoods...so that this is not merely the planting of a new church, but added fuel to this new movement.

It would be my dream that Praise & Worship would continue in efforts like these to expand the Harvest Partnership in here in Missouri, as has already begun through the planting of resTore. Learn more about this possibility at harvestpartnership.church.

Concrete Action Items

Continuing with the picture of the three lanes in this vision, what concrete steps will be taken to get the vehicle moving amidst these lanes?

Early Steps

Invite people for dinner! These meals will serve as catalysts for mission and discipleship. They are marked by the following (based upon Acts 2:46):

- WEEKLY
 - While Acts 2:46 uses the phrase “day by day,” this does not *prescribe* a daily gathering. Instead, it *describes* a frequent and regular gathering. In our context, a weekly gathering in homes reflects the weekly gathering for corporate worship.
- MEALS
 - They shared meals and did so with a particular set of thoughts and feelings in their hearts.
- IN A HOUSE
 - As distinct from their corporate worship site.
- WITH A SINGLE PURPOSE
 - Acts 2:42-47 demonstrates their purpose is Christ Himself. This frequent gathering in a home, where they shared meals with something going on in their hearts, something HE was doing in their hearts demonstrates a pattern of SIMPLE, RELATIONAL, GOSPEL CENTERED living of life together.

To help distinguish what these meals **are** and what they **are not**, compare invitations! An invitation to:

-Sunday Morning: *"Would you like to attend worship with me? Here's what to expect..."*

-Some sort of group or micro-church: *"Would you like to join us at our group? Here's what to expect..."*

-Meals: *"We are having some friends over for dinner. Would you like to join us?"*

Further Up and Further In

Fostering relationships around the table and beyond thereby fueling one another for mission, seeking out high accountability and low control within those relationships will function as our core values for organizational arrangements. This accountability will be achieved through the Austin Table, initially consisting of the team at Narrative Church but expanding from there. Throughout the life cycle of this Gospel Outpost, especially as opportunities expand and relationships are built, further strategy and guidance will be sought through the greater Harvest Partnership.