

4 STEPS TO FINDING A NEW CHURCH HOME

RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO JOIN
A COMMUNITY OF FAITH



It's time to find a new church home. A local Christian church is a group of people who are called to follow Jesus together so that the wider community looks more like God's dream for it. Churches can be as small as a few people meeting in a living room, and they can be as large as thousands of people meeting in a stadium. They might have only older people, only younger people, or a mix. They might focus on bible study or they might focus on civil rights. Some churches are lead by men, and some churches are lead by women. Some orient around a Sunday morning worship service, and others look more like meetups throughout the week. Some churches have been around for 150 years, and some are just ideas in the imaginations of their future leaders.

With so many different expressions of church, it can be difficult to discover how God is calling you to join a church. Additionally, no church is perfect. In fact, some churches have unchecked leaders and members who are actively doing damage to people's lives. You might have had experiences in previous churches that make it feel impossible to trust a new church or a new pastor. It's understandable, in light of some of these complications, that finding a church can be a challenging endeavor.

Our goal is to help you find a church nearby. We want to help match you with a church through which you can experience the presence of God in community as you join others in serving the world. While we can't shield you from every bad experience, our goal is to remove as many of the obstacles as possible and create transparency for you so that you can feel confident and clear about making this important decision.

Finding a church can feel like a messy process. We've framed it out into four simple steps that give you a level of self-awareness and clarity about how to engage this decision. Read about the four steps below, be patient with yourself in the process, and let's touch base along the way to make sure you're on the right track.

If you have any questions about the process, please don't hesitate to reach out at cyclicalinc.com.

Peace,

Brendan McClenahan
Cyclical INC

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Discern

The first step to finding a church near you is to enter into a season of discernment, during which you'll be listening and learning about the churches in your area. Your primary question will be, **What church am I called to join?**

Too often, our discernment is too shallow. If you want to find a church that "just preaches the bible" it's important to remember that almost all churches preach from the bible and that there are different ways of interpreting the bible, most of which are different from the way you grew up.

That's why we need a season of discernment to strengthen the questions we're asking about new churches, and to really pay attention to ourselves. What are we looking for, and what is important to us?

We believe God is active in your life, and that these are not just questions about your own personal preferences but about God's call to join a community of faith. Indeed, God is calling. Will you pause and listen to God's call for you in regards to a new church? Here are some important calling questions to consider.

Is God calling me to...

- **An existing church or a new church?**
- **A large church or a small church?**
- **A homogenous church or a diverse church?**
- **A particular denomination?**
- **A church in which women lead?**
- **A church that includes LGBTQ?**
- **To simply attend or to be highly involved?**

As you process these questions, they may bring up new questions. For example, you may need to know more about denominations, or about the diversity of your town or city. You may need to ask new questions about to interpret the bible, or about what church is in the first place. Give yourself space to follow these questions, but don't let them stop you long from moving to the next step, joining others.



Join Others

If you know others in the area that already go to churches, start there. The most likely way that you will find and remain at a local church is for you to join a community of people who you already know. You might be surprised how many of your acquaintances already belong to a local church. Consider which of these people belongs to a church that you might feel called to join. Being familiar with one or two people at a new church will make it easier to get to know more.

Perhaps you truly don't know anyone that belongs to any church in the area. In this case, the question might shift to, Who will join me in discerning which church to explore? Perhaps there are family members, close friends, neighbors, mentors, or others that upon invitation would be willing to at least be a sounding board for your discernment. At most, they might be willing to join you in finding a church you all feel called to.



Experiment

Once you have discerned and connected with other people during your discernment, it may be time to experiment. Most people in this season of experimentation will find several churches and visit a different one every Sunday. While this does allow you to sample many churches in a short period of time, it can be not only frustrating but also misleading. It could be that the Sunday you chose to visit happened to feature a guest preacher, for example. Additionally, not every church puts all of their eggs in the basket of Sunday morning. The real life of some churches happens in bible studies during the week or during the church picnic on Saturday.

Instead of visiting a new church every Sunday, we suggest choosing one church to attend for several weeks or months. You can always stop early if you see a major red flag. Then, after that experimental season has finished, start another experimental season at a different church. By spending multiple weeks in a row at one particular church, you give yourself time to meet some of the people, hear different preachers, check out a bible study, join a community oriented event, and learn about their vision and mission in the community.



Adapt

Churches are complex organisms, and they rarely are what they seem at first. As you experiment, spending a season at one church at a time, your perspective will change. Now is the time to adapt, which starts with asking new questions, such as:

- Having spent time at several churches, what have you learned about yourself?
- What have you learned about Jesus?
- What have you discovered about church?
- What have you discovered about your community?
- How have you been surprised?
- Where have you sensed the presence of God in community?

Allow yourself the space to adjust your expectations and desires based on your experiences. Maybe at this point it's time to go back to the beginning and develop a new list of churches that reflect the ways your desires have changed.

Or maybe at this point it's time to dive in a bit deeper at one church for an extended season. As you do, what new questions do you bring with you?

- Do you want to know more about their membership process, their theology, or their church budget?
- Do you want to begin finding ways you can lead or serve?
- Are there certain people you'd like to meet?
- Do you want to sit down with the pastor to ask them any of these questions or simply share your story?

Schedule a 15 Minute Coaching Call

We created this eBook to make it easy to discern and find a church near you. But we understand that it's not always as easy as any of us would like it to be. Maybe you ran into questions about church that are too big to handle on your own. Or maybe you're not connecting with any of the churches in your area.

We're here to help. In fact, we love helping people discern and connect to churches nearby.

If you're feeling a bit stuck after reading this eBook, I encourage you to schedule a free 15 minute coaching call with us. We'll ask you questions about your context, identify some of the things that are most challenging for you right now, and co-create a plan to address the most urgent concerns so that you can find a church home that you feel called to.

Scheduling a coaching call is easy. Send me an email at brendan@cyclicalinc.com, I'll send you a scheduling link, and we'll talk soon.

Peace,

Brendan McClenahan
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