

How Do I Discern That God is Calling Me to Church Planting?

At least two separate exercises are helpful for a person thinking about becoming a church planter. The first exercise is to open your life to God's leading through a special, specific period of intentional "heart searching." This "heart-search" will enable a person to clearly examine and identify personal motivations, preparations, emotions and many other elements that are at work in the life of every individual. These elements are revealed in our actions and interactions with people, whether we are conscious of them or not. However, when we are conscious of them, we will understand better how and why people react to us as they do. It will also help us identify what elements people "read" about our lives that speak so powerfully in ways that cause our words to become ineffective.

We encourage you to take time to use the *Reflecting on Your Journey* exercise that we have developed. Please read the instructions carefully. Do not attempt to undertake this period of reflection alone. This is not an easy task and you might be tempted to quit before the exercise is complete. So before you begin, find a mentor/ spiritual guide/companion for the journey. In fact, it might be best to take the journey in a group. But whether with one other or many, something "holy" will happen as God will surely be present when two or more are gathered together to pray and seek God's Spirit in this matter.

The second exercise is to complete an assessment process that will identify whether you have the characteristics needed to plant a new church. Most people will have some of the characteristics to some degree. Do you have the essential characteristics? Do you have a level of strength in enough of the characteristics to plant a new church? While many people believe they can, probably fewer than 5 percent strongly have enough of the characteristics for planting a new church successfully. Seminary training is not required and in fact may prepare you for the wrong things. Pastoral experience alone is not proof that a person can plant a new church, because they require two different orientations. Chaplaincy experience or training in pastoral counseling may provide skills for supporting ministry but do not provide skills for creating a new mission.

Every region of American Baptist Churches USA has its own arrangements for assessing potential church planters. If you know the location where you would like to plant a new church and know the region executive, contact that person immediately. You could possibly complete both exercises in the same time frame. If you do not know where you would like to plant a church, perhaps a site will be identified in the heart-search and reflection exercise. If you know where you would like to plant a church but do not know the region executive, please contact us ([click here](#)) to give us your contact information. We will provide the contact information you need.

We look forward to supporting you as you are on the journey.