

Surfacing and Nurturing A Sense of Urgency

Observations from a Mentor

So, you are considering embarking on the journey of redevelopment. This may not be your first time. Perhaps you have started the journey before and experienced your efforts getting you nowhere. Such past experience may leave you skeptical about beginning again; and yet, deep within, the desire remains. You long for your church to live into the potential you know it possesses. That desire urges you to try it one more time. You want your church to become what God has in mind for it. That is exactly what it takes to begin.

World-renowned change expert John Kotter is clear that developing a sense of urgency is the first step towards lasting change. The journey of redevelopment leads a church and its leaders through discouraging valleys and over steep and challenging mountains. Turning back or simply stopping along the way constantly tempts you. Only commitment grounded and fueled by a sense of urgency will sustain you for the long haul.

The journey is long. Though the details of the journey differ from church to church, there are eight tasks or steps that are common to all. Desire to reach the destination quickly lures you to ignore or only superficially address those tasks. New programs that offer the promise of quick growth entice you. But your goal is not just an improvement of the present. Resuscitating your church is not enough. It needs to develop the ability to remain flexible and adaptive in a changing, shifting environment. Nothing less is the goal. But without a compelling sense of urgency, perseverance fades. The journey is once again abandoned.

Urgency as a Response to Crisis

Urgency comes in many different forms. Some forms effectively motivate and energize groups to achieve short-term results. Crisis can serve a good purpose, spurring people to action. The shout of “crisis,” much like the cry “fire,” draws an immediate response. Volunteers to teach Sunday school fail to step forward. Declining worship attendance leaves the sanctuary uncomfortably empty. Income falls short of expenses. All these things create a sense of urgency born of crisis.

Any crisis initiates a rush of adrenaline. Urgency in the form of a threatening problem to be solved brings quick action. Once solved though, people relax and the urgency fades. The urgency of crisis draws action that restores stability. The deep systemic change of redevelopment requires a different kind of urgency. The redevelopment journey calls for an urgency that motivates and sustains the long-term commitment needed for deep change.

Urgency Born of Opportunity

Urgency can also come as an opportunity calling for immediate response. A crisis, or a problem, provides an urgent call for restoring the system to a familiar place. A new opportunity invites the church into something new and different. An influx of immigrants in the neighborhood presents an opportunity. An immediate caring, supportive welcome draws them to the church. The opportunity is greatest before they settle into community patterns that do not include the church.

A disruptive or tragic event in the community provides a short-term window of opportunity for the church to engage a segment of the population in new ways. An unexpected call from the school principal offers the opportunity to become a partner in an after-school program for children.

Both urgency of crisis and urgency of opportunity compel a church to react. After responding though, the church easily moves into a satisfied resting place. Successful crisis management rewards the church with a feeling of security. A met opportunity may result in the improvement and enhancement of the church’s ministry. Both are satisfying. However, though they initially bring great energy to the surface, in both cases the urgency disappears after a successful response. Nothing deep or foundational shifts.

The goal of redevelopment is to shift how a church interacts with its emerging environment.¹ The long journey of redevelopment requires a more compelling and sustaining urgency than either opportunity or crisis can provide.

A Holy Urgency

A midsize church had indicated they were ready to add a full-time associate pastor. They wanted to grow 50 percent in worship attendance and knew they would need additional staff to accommodate that kind of growth. As a support person from the denomination, I began to work with the church as they began the process of adding a staff person. We met one Tuesday night. I started the meeting with a simple question, “Why do you want to grow?” People said: “With more people, we can have a better quality youth group.” “All of our programs can be strengthened and expanded.” “Our choir will be bigger.” “The building will feel better on Sunday morning with more people in it.” The focus of their answers was *inward*, on making the church a better place for them. They wanted more of the good things they were already experiencing.

One woman listened and expressed a different view: “I am concerned about those people who live in the very nice houses in our community. They are prosperous people, but their lives are desperate and empty. I am also concerned about the ones living near poverty level, who are losing hope. They all need what we in the name of Christ can offer them.” She voiced an *outward* focus.

The lone voice also communicated an urgency. She talked about what would make the difference between life and death for people. She expressed her sense of God’s call to the church. The call was grounded in God’s own urgency, God’s deep concern for the well being of all of God’s children. Her voice expressed a holy urgency.

The meeting that evening lasted two hours. They looked at worship attendance records of 20 other churches of similar size and of the same denomination in that part of the country, attendance records spanning 30 years. They saw how attendance for most of the churches had not changed more than an incremental amount up or down, even ones where staff had been added. At the end of the evening the committee was clear that adding staff was perhaps something for the future, but not the present. The committee began to sense that without a widespread ownership of a holy

urgency, nothing would change in the church. They decided to dedicate the next meeting to exploring together the passions that were within themselves, the urgency they felt as they reflected on more effectively presenting the gospel to seeking, hurting people in their community.

God authors the only urgency adequate for church redevelopment. The urgency from God focuses on God's mission for the church. The focus is outward on people in need of the life-giving gospel. Only an urgency born of God provides the energy and sustenance for redevelopment.

An Urgency of Life and Death

For deep and foundational change to happen in the church, only an urgency of life and death suffices. Unlike urgency born of crisis, the focus is not on the life or death of the institution. This urgency is about the lives of people. Urgency permeates the life of a church as it understands the life-giving nature of the gospel entrusted to it. An outward focus on the needs and hurts of people, flowing from an inner awareness of the power of the gospel, sustains the church for the redevelopment journey.

One person put it succinctly as she told why she gave herself in ministry through the church. She reflected on her life and her home situation during her teenage years. Raised in an abusive family environment, she told how the church and the gospel had made the difference between life and death for her. Persons in the church were a real, living, present Christ for her. Their caring sustained her and developed her self-esteem. The church and the gospel released her from a hell of self-judgment and hopelessness and opened the door to life. In response, she did everything she could to be the life-giving presence of Christ for others. A driving urgency to be Christ for others guided her life long after any crisis was solved or opportunity embraced.

Only the awareness that your church can and will make the difference between life and death for people provides the urgency for redevelopment. Without that outward focus on the well being of others, a sufficiently compelling sense of urgency will not be present. You may start the journey with good intentions, but the costs outweigh personal gain. Only shifting from desiring benefits for yourself to being compelled by the benefits for others provides the motivation.

Developing an Outward-Focused Holy Urgency

Churches regularly pray for others in general ways. One leadership team regularly, in a disciplined way, lifts individuals for prayer each time they meet. Their prayer though is different. They pray for persons whose lives are not presently touched by the church and the gospel. They mention specifically what they sense to be the desperation, hurt, pain, and hopelessness of these persons. Trusting God to work in God's own way and time, they envision specific ways they sense the church could connect with these people. Their regular, vivid prayers help keep alive the outward-focused, holy urgency in their church.

Discomfort and fear often stop people from reaching out and connecting with those they do not know. Reluctance increases when people differ ethnically, economically, and physically. A person in a wheelchair unable to talk may provide a social challenge for some, as might a recent immigrant with limited English. For many of our churches, the persons in the neighborhoods do differ from persons in the church. Setting aside concern for personal comfort and focusing on the well being of others can be a strange and scary place. Holy urgency is urgency about the well being of others: it motivates people to face and move beyond their fears in order to walk beside and with others who differ.

People face doors every day that block their way into living a life of joy and fulfillment, doors that hold them back from becoming fully what God created them to be. The awareness and conviction that the church really does hold those keys to unlock doors will provide the motivation, the staying power for the journey. Only the powerful sense that the church can make the difference between life and death provides the urgency that sustains people on the journey.

Personal Experience Is the Basis

Personal experiences provide the source of holy urgency in the church. The strength and depth of the individual experiences of the life-giving power of the gospel provide the foundation. Remembering what God has done in their lives, people become aware of what God can do in the lives of others. People need to develop their own "ebenezers"²: those markers, symbols, and rituals that remind them of the past and present life-giving presence

and action of God. Only that awareness keeps alive the urgency and provides the motivation and staying power for the journey. Churches do not have a sense of holy urgency without the people in them having a sense of holy urgency.

At first, perhaps only one person in a group may be able to articulate an urgency to reach out to people in need of a life-giving faith. How does a group move from that one person to all the people feeling a holy urgency? Start with the simple awareness that most of the people in a group and most of the people in the church have personally experienced the life-giving power of the gospel. In one way or another, the gospel and the church have made the difference between life and death for them. Their stories may be deeply buried under layers of social norms that work against telling those stories. For some people the doors unlocked so gradually that they have no key conversion moment to point to. Factors work against both an awareness of and an atmosphere for telling the stories. But those stories of the difference that the church and the gospel have made exist deep within people.

One church prided itself on being liberal and middle class. Theology was debated but stories of faith experiences were shunned. A workshop helped leaders identify their spiritual journeys and the peak life experiences that had shifted and shaped their lives. People began to talk about those peak experiences as transformational moments and they began to see the transformational moments as times when God had been quietly present in their lives. With encouragement, before long these formerly reticent people were sharing their stories of the life-giving acts of God in worship settings.

Nothing needs to be done to create a sense of urgency. First, simply invite people once again to get in touch with what is already deep within them. Nurture a culture that not only permits, but invites telling the stories. The sustaining, empowering holy urgency essential for the redevelopment journey emerges only as the circle of awareness widens. In time, the remembering and telling moves from a small leadership group to increasing numbers in the church.

Create a place of comfort for reflecting on personal values, for remembering personal life stories. Provide safety for people to begin to talk with others about those stories. Create places of comfort and safety through careful listening, honoring the uniqueness of each story. People are ready to talk about what the church and their faith mean to them. They just need the permission to talk, someone to model how to talk, and someone to listen.

An Emerging Sense of Urgency for the Church

How does a sense of urgency emerge in the church? With permission and modeling, some people begin to talk in gentle and low-key ways about their faith journeys. As committees go about their work, they begin to raise questions about what really is important in life and in the church. Others begin to wonder out loud what is important to God and where God might be attempting to lead their church. Something new begins to be formed: a new sense of values, a new sense of the mission of the church. People remember their own movement from death to life. With the awareness and encouragement of others, they become aware also that God entrusted the life-giving gospel message to the church. The purpose of church grows clearer, and passion about its mission blossoms.

Remember that this is only the beginning of a process. A clear vision of the redeveloped church of the future will emerge later. A clear vision developed and presented too early shuts out the creativity of others and limits ownership. Avoid the temptation to talk about a clear vision, a specific picture of the future for the church. Trust God to give the vision when the time is right.

Developing awareness of the deep longings within hearts forms the solid base for moving on into transforming the church. Without the conviction that what the church offers makes the difference between life and death for a person, redevelopment is not for a church. The church that now exists may be improved. Growth may happen. But people will not have the will or the staying power to move into something significantly new.

To allow that solid base of urgency to emerge takes time. How long? Certainly months and maybe a couple of years. It begins by individuals reflecting on their own lives, how God has been present and active for them. Begin that reflecting. Become aware of the difference the gospel makes for you. Your companion will let you know what that journey was like for her and your coach will help guide you for this part of your journey.

Reflections of a Companion

If you are facing redevelopment, I have stood in a place similar to where you now stand. I wonder what you are feeling at this moment. Excitement? Fear? Trepidation? Skepticism that it is even possible? Eagerness? Take a moment to name the word that best describes your feeling.

Do not ignore the feeling. Be with it. Place your hand on the part of your body where you feel that emotion most strongly. Take a few slow, deep breaths and simply feel it. Strong emotions are part and parcel of the redevelopment process. Right at the start, learn to notice them. They will bring you invaluable clues about what is going on in and around you. I find my own emotional and physical responses to be an invaluable barometer. My hand starts rubbing the back of my stiffening neck long before my mind realizes I am feeling uncomfortable. At a thousand points during the redevelopment process, knowing that I was angry or fearful allowed me to deal with the anger and the fear as something resident in me. No one made me feel those things. The arduous journey of redevelopment brought me face to face with my own demons.

I cannot predict what the redevelopment journey will be like for you, but I will share what the journey was like for me—perhaps that will be helpful. I have never been more challenged, more energized, or more despairing. I have never felt more supported and more alone.

To educate and prepare myself, I read books, attended workshops, and talked to clergy and laity. All helped. But when things got rough, and they did, only my inner sense of God's call, my own personal sense of holy urgency, kept me going. When seemingly insurmountable blocks to the process arose, I found myself turning to my own faith story. Remembering past experiences of God's activity and faithfulness in my life anchored and calmed me in a way that nothing else did.

A Personal Experience of God

I had gone to church as a young child and then drifted away. It was not until my mid-twenties that I started attending again. I deeply appreciated the fellowship I found there. But oddly, I found an anger within me that I had not known existed. It bloomed when I saw power being misused and people being oppressed by the very institution that claimed to be about freeing

them. I would be sitting in worship, fuming about the latest occurrence, when the anger would transform into hope. I would find myself dreaming about a church where each person was honored, where each gift was valued—a church that truly lived as the body of Christ.

A cross-country move led my family to a new church that embodied the very way of being I had imagined. It was a community of committed Christians who were internally motivated and externally focused. Grounded in God and extended in love, their doing flowed from their being.

There, I experienced what it was like to be viewed as a beloved child of God who had been given unique gifts for a unique purpose. The church was like a playground or a laboratory. We could explore our gifts and test them out in the safety of a loving and supportive community before venturing further afield with them. I had been a shy child with stuttering speech, but they helped me discover and claim a gift for speaking and for leadership. The church provided me with places “in-house” to take risks and develop new skills. They supported me when it was time to try out those skills in arenas beyond the local church. I felt like a butterfly emerging from my cocoon. As I started to fly, I loved nothing better than watching and helping others do the same.

God’s Call

With my two children soon to be in school full time, I started thinking about what was next for me. I had loved staying home with the boys, but now other things beckoned. One summer Sunday morning after worship I poured myself a mug of coffee and wandered into Sunday school. I sat down next to Lori who had just graduated from college. “So what’s next?” I asked. She told me. What came out of her mouth astounded me. It was exactly what had been running through my mind of late.

She explained that she was most likely going to apply for a master’s degree program in English, and teach. “You don’t sound real excited,” I commented with a sideways glance. After a long pause, she added, “I guess I’m not. What I really want to do is go to seminary. That’s where my heart is; my passion. But I don’t know. It’s not right to just choose to be a pastor because it’s what I love and where I feel alive unless God calls me.”

“Lori,” I heard myself saying, “Have you ever considered that your love for it, your passion, *is* God’s call to you?” With those words I knew

that I was talking to myself as well as Lori. I began seminary studies that fall . . . on the 35-year plan. But as often happens, once the goal was identified events conspired to remove the barriers. I finished in four years.

Eight years following that day back in Sunday school, I sat at the closing worship service for an annual conference, the yearly denominational meeting of pastors and laity. I was an ordained minister being considered for appointment to Valley View Church, a troubled congregation in a troubled community. From the moment I had heard about the opening three months before, something within me said I would be the one to go there. There was no doubt in my mind though, that with my lack of experience I was the least likely to be chosen.

The bishop was preaching that morning from the Gospel of John. “Peter do you love me? Feed my sheep.” Tears streamed down my face as a glimpse of the future filled my head. I suddenly knew three things: I was going to Valley View; it was going to grow to be a place of hope and healing, a powerful conduit of God’s Spirit; and both the church and I would pay an enormous price for it. It would take everything we had.

A New Beginning

The phone call came the next day along with the question if I would consider coming. The church’s staffing committee, our denominational support person, and I all met together for the very first time on a warm and breezy July evening. We chatted, each trying to determine if this would be a good match. The people were pleasant and friendly and yet there seemed a certain guardedness about them. I could not put my finger on it, but I had a hunch something was not being said.

Near the end of the evening I asked, “If I were a stranger who moved in next door to you, what would you tell me about your church?” There was a long silence. All I could hear was the wind against the house. Finally one of the women shifted uncomfortably in her seat and said slowly, “I wouldn’t tell you anything. I wouldn’t want to inflict our pain on you.” The others nodded.

Their hurt and shame was palpable. I could feel it. And in the months that followed, that encounter was played out over and over again. Late one afternoon a middle-aged man stopped by my office. He stepped inside and closed the door. “I want you to level with me,” he said. “Are we dying? Have they sent you here to close us down?”

Valley View had been doing vital ministry for over 100 years. But 10 years of watching attendance, giving, and energy decline had them believing they had little left to offer anyone in the way of good news. The most they hoped for was an easing of their own pain and the church's survival.

And even their survival was now in question. Financial constraints were felt in every area. Even more troubling to them, this church that had once been known in the community for its children's and youth ministries, now had only a tiny handful of each. It was clear to them they could not continue on this path and survive. A sense of quiet desperation pervaded the church. They no longer saw themselves as a church with problems, but as a problem church.

It's All in Your Perspective

Although the challenges were evident, I felt confident. The indicators for redevelopment were all there. They still had critical mass in terms of worship numbers. Their location and facility were excellent. More important than any of those factors, I was totally convinced that God had plans for this place. I did not know how it would happen, or when, or even what the church would look like when it was all said and done. I simply knew that the time had come for God to transform and work through this church in powerful ways.

While the people's perspective about themselves was fairly negative, I chose a more positive one. The people were gifted, compassionate, insightful, and had a heart for God. In their daily work and volunteering in the community, these people made a real difference in the life of real people every day. They helped the children of migrant farmworkers learn to read, taught school, provided services that allowed the elderly to stay in their homes, worked at food banks, and supported cultural diversity. The more I came to know them, the more I appreciated them and found myself thinking, "I cannot wait to see this unfold!" My sense of urgency built: "These are people who have been gifted with exactly what this valley needs—compassion for the marginalized and a desire to make a difference"

They had lost the ability to see themselves in that light. Although people might want to come hear me preach, they did not see that they as a church had much to offer anyone. They did not see how by linking their gifts and their placements in the community, God could work to heal a city that was

torn by racism, classism, and poverty. In the midst of their pain and fear, they had lost touch with their past experiences of God working in and through them. No longer living and experiencing the truth of God's promises of hope and wholeness, their evangelistic urgency had congealed.

An Urgency of Crisis

They did, however, feel an urgency to fix their problems. Participation, finances, and energy neared a critical point. If that were not enough, a winter of heavy snow had left us dependent on more than a dozen buckets to catch the water dripping through the ceiling. There were concrete problems that could no longer be ignored and people felt an urgency to address them. And I was the one, they believed, who could fix their problems.

Because of family considerations, six months separated the sealing and announcement of my coming and my arrival. It was not unusual in those months to receive phone calls and even visits from people at the church wanting direction. What were my recommendations about changing the worship services? How should they run confirmation? And what about . . . ?

We decided that it would be best if we waited until I arrived in January. What I heard in them was a sense of urgency. Things needed to be addressed and they needed to be addressed *now*. Life had become uncomfortable enough that they were ready to make changes and were open to trying things; things they might have rejected if everything had been going smoothly.

That was exactly what I was looking for: an urgency that would help them start moving. It was not the kind of urgency that would serve us well long term, but it would at least get us going. A former pastor of mine once told me that you cannot steer a sailboat that is standing still; you get it moving first and then work on the direction. The simple truth of that had stuck with me for years. The church did not feel the kind of urgency I would have chosen for them and it would not sustain them for long, but perhaps their sense of impending doom would at least start them moving.

Egypt had once been a land of milk and honey for the starving Israelites. Only when it became a place of unbearable captivity and oppression did they find the motivation to leave. That seemed to describe us well. The people did not seem to care where I led them, as long as we moved away from the place of death and despair.

Their dependence on my leadership gave me great freedom to try new things, but it felt terribly uncomfortable. I am most comfortable with a style of leadership that coaches others. I had to continually remind myself that my goal was to provide effective leadership in this setting, which required me to give people the kind of leadership they needed, rather than the kind I most liked to give. Sometimes that meant being more directive than I am naturally comfortable with. The key learning for me was the importance of staying focused on what they needed rather than what I needed.

Struggling with the Role of Leader

In that first year, I struggled with my role as leader. People looked at times to me as they would to a firefighter during a fire, imploring with their panicked eyes, “Just tell us what to do.” Much of the time I did not know what to do and the dependency I saw in their eyes frightened me. They trusted me to lead them from captivity to the promised land. Not only did I not have the map, but I remembered all too well from the Exodus story how quickly people could turn on the leader once the initial crisis was over.

The experts who I read and consulted with and who I trusted the most, advised me to rely on God and my intuition: to trust that if I loved the people and made myself available to the wisdom of God on their behalf, all would be well. The words of Julian of Norwich, 12-century Christian and mystic, became my mantra, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” The people thought I was reassuring them; really, I was reassuring myself.

On the other hand, I felt a tremendous freedom to experiment. Not only did I believe in God and in the people, my denomination believed in me. They provided strong and encouraging support. They partnered with me and with the church. All three of us—people, pastor, denomination—were clear from the start that the plan was redevelopment. What a tremendous difference it makes when someone believes in you. With that kind of support behind me and the vision God had planted in my heart before me, I was filled with a holy urgency about my task.

A New Kind of Urgency

The urgency that Valley View needed to feel was not the stressful kind that results from a crisis; nor was it the excited urgency triggered by a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We needed to feel an urgency that was strong, deep, and unstoppable, like a mighty river of life flowing through us into the community. This was an urgency that would bring the real hope of a higher standard of living to the migrant families and working poor of the community; an urgency that would build bridges of understanding between groups experiencing serious disconnection: Anglos, Hispanics, and Native Americans; growers and farm workers; young and old; gay and straight. Ultimately, this was an urgency that could create a community marked by justice, compassion, and love.

Our focus would be outward, but our motivation and direction needed to come from within, from a deep and personal sense of God's call to us. So even while we tended to the urgent "fix-it" things, we began to cultivate the deeper urgency. Under the leadership of the previous pastor, the church had begun to get more comfortable with talking about the spiritual life. If they were to continue to grow in that ability, I would have to support it. It was a stretch to learn to talk openly about my faith story, my God experiences, and my call. But when I was able to share my story even in simple ways, others seemed freed to share theirs too. What a gift it was to hear other people's God experiences. It reminded us all just how real and faithful God is.

So whether you be clergy or laity, what has been your experience of God? When have you felt God nudging or calling you? What is your sense of God's will for you as an individual and for the church you are a part of? The answers to those questions are the best resources you have as you prepare to lead redevelopment. Blessings as you explore them with the coach.

Guidance from a Coach

Welcome to the first coaching section on the journey of redevelopment in your local church. As your coach, I am excited to join you on this journey, even though our relationship is through this one-way medium of printed word. Whether you are a pastor or a layperson initiating this process of redevelopment, you will find the following steps helpful. Additionally, it will be beneficial to begin keeping a journal of your reflections throughout this redevelopment process. At a number of points along the way, I will urge you to record specific items in your journal.

Surfacing a sense of holy urgency is the first consideration in the process of transformation and redevelopment. To do so, one must first begin by focusing on individuals. The deep inner longings that God has planted in each person will become the foundation for discovering the collective sense of holy urgency in your particular faith community. As individuals share about their faith experiences, their places of deep passion, their encounters with God, their agonizing sorrows, their glimpses of the “kin-dom” of God, their places of willing sacrifice—their reflections will point to the collective sense of urgency God has for your congregation.

Reflect and Journal

Let us begin by clarifying what you will accomplish in this coaching section. The goal for this session is for you to identify and explore your own sense of holy urgency, and to develop a plan for surfacing the sense of holy urgency in individuals in your church. Be aware that this section, like the other coaching sections that follow, will take many months or even years for you to complete. Be patient; let this section take as long as it takes.

As you begin to explore your own personal sense of holy urgency, consider the following questions:

- When did you first have an awareness of God’s presence in your life?

- Who were the early witnesses of God's love for you? In what ways?
- Describe your call from God. Include those moments when you knew you were claimed as a child of God, and that God has a vision for your life.
- Is there a particular biblical story or passage that you especially identify with? In what way?
- What do you find yourself being very passionate about?
- What do you find yourself being willing to sacrifice for?

- Is there a particular setting or situation in which you frequently encounter God? How do you listen for God's leading?

- What has God been saying to you most recently?

- Are there other questions or areas that you would like to be asked about?

Find the time and space to reflect on these questions. Record your response to each one as clearly and completely as possible in your journal. This will help you to surface your own sense of God's holy urgency within you. As you reflect on your responses, which ones did you expect to hear from yourself? Which ones surprise you? Why? How might God be speaking to you through these surprises? How does this help to inform you about your own personal sense of holy urgency?

Develop a Plan

Review the following plan for surfacing the sense of holy urgency among individuals in your church.

- Prepare to have individual conversations with persons that mirror the reflections above that you just responded to.

- What are the settings in which you might have these individual conversations with persons? Do some of these settings already exist? Do they need to be created?

- During the next month identify three or four persons with whom you will schedule these intentional individual conversations, make the contact, extend the invitation to talk together, and get each conversation scheduled.

- At the end of the first month, evaluate the process you used, refine the questions you ask, and then repeat this process on a monthly basis for up to a year, talking with three or four individuals every month.

- Remember to always keep the questions individually focused and not on the corporate church. At this point you want to learn about their personal journeys of transformation, not their vision for the church.

- Consider the spontaneous moments in other settings that present themselves, when God is nudging you that now is the moment to ask a question or two about one's faith journey. Challenge yourself to watch for these moments. Be listening for when things are revealed about someone's sense of holy urgency at meetings, informal gatherings, coffee hour, and so forth.

- Record in your journal what you are sensing from people. Rather than attempting to record exactly what people have said at the time, record your impressions immediately after your conversations, allowing you to truly focus on the persons sharing during the conversations.

- Note additional options to learn about the inner sense of holy urgency in various individuals.

Chart a Course

Now it is time for you to commit to a plan of action. Review the suggested plan listed above. What steps will you take to move forward in surfacing the various expressions of the sense of holy urgency that God is stirring up within your church? Write down as clearly as you can the steps you will take and the time frame for each. For example, who is the first person you will have a conversation with, when, and in what setting? By when will you extend the invitation? What questions will you ask this person? (See the initial reflection questions you journaled on for ideas.) Remember that this is an unfolding process that may take a year or more to discern.

Is God nudging you that this is the time to get started? If so, begin now. If not, take the time to reflect on what God is calling you to do at this time.

Looking Ahead

As you discover more and more about the sense of holy urgency that God has planted in the people of your church, you may also begin to sense a need to involve others in this process. That sense will lead you to the next step you need to consider in a redevelopment process: forming a core team.

NOTES

1. Interaction with an emerging environment is a recurring theme for a church in redevelopment. Robert Quinn, *Change the World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000) 78–79, presents the concept of the importance of this interaction. This theme is found throughout Quinn’s book.

2. See note 2 in the preface to this book.