

Matthew Brough of Trinity Church in Winnipeg reflects on 5 Reasons to Have a Coach for New Church Development

Everyone starting a new Church needs a coach. Actually, every minister would benefit from one. If you think you don't need one, then you really need one, so please read on.

1) You think you know what you are doing, but actually you don't. You might have all kinds of theological training. You might have ministry experience. You might have all the best ideas. You might have read all the books. But you will hit the wall. You will have anxiety that you haven't faced before. You will feel alone. You will want to give up. You won't know whether to do this or do that and there will be no one to tell you. A Coach doesn't tell you exactly what to do, but they listen and help you figure it out. They've been there too.

2) Providing focus for leadership. As leaders begin to emerge in the new Church, the Church planter has to make decisions about what they should work on: evangelism, finances, pastoral care, worship, etc. If the answer is "everything" you'll never tackle anything, you'll get overwhelmed, you'll have lots of ideas but you'll never quite get there. You'll try things, but nothing will stick. Believe me, I've been there. A coach helps direct the discussions that the leadership in the new Church needs to have.

3) Accountability for the Spiritual. My coach pretty quickly zeroed in on the spiritual dimensions of leadership, ministry and mission. I am way more oriented to processes and tasks - to working on a project and getting things done. My coach helped get me re-focused on what the Holy Spirit was doing in me and through me. Without my coach, I would not have been open to God's powerful presence in directing our congregation toward a building project. Nor would I have gone on my first real spiritual retreat. I wouldn't have built spiritual practices into my monthly routine. 5 years at seminary (part time), 10 years of ministry, reading a bunch of Eugene Peterson books didn't get that for me. 18 months with the right coach and I finally understood that spirituality isn't just important, but is at the core of leadership and ministry. If you, like I would have done 2 years ago, just wrote off the previous paragraph and said, "I've got it covered", then get a coach now - you don't have it covered.

4) Trust in the Spirit. Coaching isn't always an intuitive process. There were a number of times when my coach and I would be talking about what I thought were the "wrong things." Nothing bad, just not the pressing matters of that month. At one stage, I was about to tell my coach that maybe it wasn't working out. But then something happened. Things we had talked about 6 months earlier that seemed irrelevant were now major things in the life of the Church. The conversations in coaching tended to predict where we would go as a Church. This was less about directing anything than it was simply anticipating the work of the Holy Spirit. There was a sense that God was preparing me for situations and decisions that would be coming. No longer was I doing the planning. Rather it was like getting a glimpse into what God was planning.

5) The opportunity to help other pastors. Having a coach has helped fuel my own desire

to help other pastors and church leaders. I was able to receive training to be a New Church Development Coach back in January 2013. It was a great experience, and I look forward to having the opportunity to be a coach for someone in the future.

My coach is Rev. Tim Archibald, minister of Kings Presbyterian Church in New Minas, Nova Scotia. Anyone would benefit from his wisdom, kindness, generosity, and patience. I know I have.

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