

From Encounter to Empower

A Discovery and Discernment
Toolkit for Congregations



REV. MICHAEL ANTHONY HOWARD

MINISTER OF FAITH IN ACTION



From Encounter to Empower

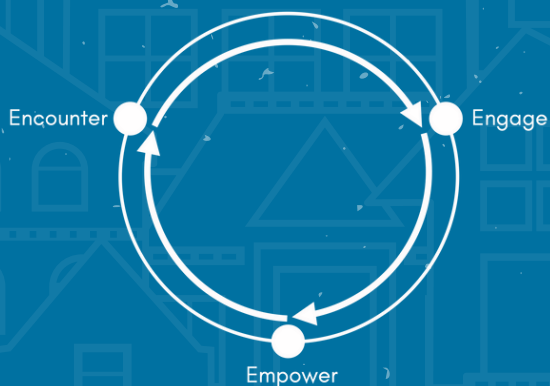
THE FRAMEWORK

If your congregation is in discernment about how best to engage the community around you, this toolkit is for you. This exercise invites your congregation (in whole or in part) to participate in mapping out its relationship with its neighborhood in order to discover places where God is already active and present in the world around you. When the exercise is complete, your congregation will be left with a map to discern how you might live as a faithful partner with the wider world.

THE DISCOVERY CYCLE

The Discovery Cycle conceptualizes a constant movement of members through the course of their relationship with a congregation. The cycle consists of three key conversations: Encounter, Engage, and Empower. We can use this cycle to map out our movement from one conversation to another.

Figure 1: The Discernment Cycle



THE FACILITATORS

A congregation comes together with three stations set up with pages of notes prepared to help facilitate each discovery conversation. In a world café style discussion, the teams will rotate from one station to another. Each station and each team will have dedicated facilitators who understand the cycle and can help guide the participants through the three conversations.

The facilitators help the teams make the most of the discovery exercise without getting lost in the transitioning from station to station throughout their time together.

THE TEAMS

Each discovery team will be named with a color: Red Team, Yellow Team, and Blue Team. Throughout the exercise, each team will be in a different conversation. For instance, during the Introductory Conversation, the Red Team can be at the Encounter Station, the Yellow Team at the Engage Station, and the Blue Team at the Empower Station. After the first hour, when the teams finish the Introductory and Encounter Conversations, everyone will then rotate to the next conversation (e.g. clockwise around the room, with the Red Team moving to the Engage Station). After all teams have completed the three key conversations and visited all three stations, the Discovery Conversation can begin. It will be the responsibility of the station facilitators to gather the three sets of responses, one from each of the three teams.

THE TIMING

To make the most of this exercise, it is suggested that each of the three phases have 30 minutes, with an extra 30 minutes for the Introduction Conversation and 30 minutes for the Discovery Conversation. The total time that should be allotted for this exercise is 2 1/2 hours.

- Introductory Conversation (30 min)
- Encounter Conversation (30 min)
- Engage Conversation (30 min)
- Empower Conversation (30 min)
- Discovery Conversation (30 min)

THE INTRODUCTORY CONVERSATION

At the beginning of the exercise, the facilitators are at their stations, and the participants have been divided into three teams. Each member will be invited to share why they are present and what they hope to get out of this exercise. Once introductions have been made, participants are invited to pair up and tell each other a story about one important moment in their own relationship with the congregation.

THE ENCOUNTER CONVERSATION

The Encounter Conversation asks a set of three "where and when" questions: (1) Where and when in the world do people encounter God? (2) Where and when in the world do people encounter the Church? and (3) Where and when in the world around us do people encounter the life of our congregation? These questions offer a way to discover how a congregation encounters the world around it.

THE ENGAGE CONVERSATION

The Engage Conversation asks another set of three "where and when" questions: (1) Where and when in the life of our congregation do people engage in their relationships with God? (2) Where and when in the life of our congregation do people engage in their relationships with each other? and (3) Where and when in the life of our congregation do people engage the world around them? These questions offer us a way to discover and understand our congregation as an engaged community.

THE EMPOWER CONVERSATION

The Empower Conversation asks the last set of three "where and when" questions: (1) Where and when in the life of our congregation are people empowered by God? (2) Where and when in the life of our congregation do people empower each other? and (3) Where and when in the life of our congregation do people empower the world around them? These questions offer us a way to discover and understand our congregation as an empowered and empowering community.

THE BASICS

- 3 Teams (Red, Yellow, Blue)
- 3 Team Facilitators
- 3 Stations
- 5 Conversations
- 3 Conversation Facilitators

THE DISCERNMENT CONVERSATION

The final station of the conversation brings the whole group back together again. A map is presented before everyone with the three stations: Encounter, Engage, Empower. The group then shares from each team what they interpret from their conversation that can be part of our larger conversation. The facilitator for each station then reports back to the main room what they heard from each team. These reports are then used to fill in the final map created by the congregation as a whole. The teams then are asked to look for common themes repeated across all of the teams. The teams are then asked the final question: What is missing? Are there parts of your congregation's story that have been left out? The final output of this process now is a map offered for your congregation to (1) identify areas of strength that they can build up and (2) a clear sense of purpose about who they understand God is calling them to become together.

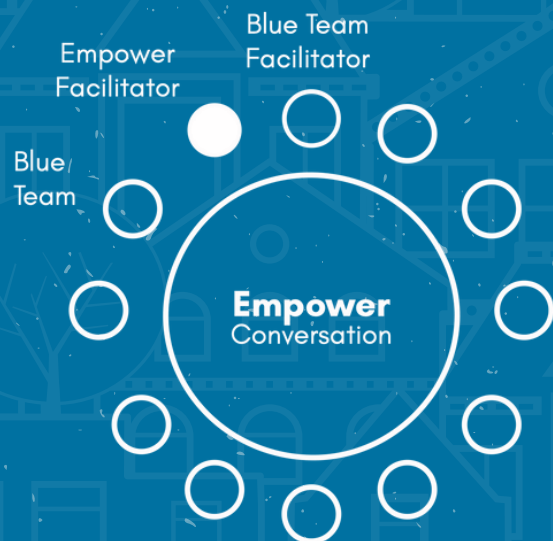
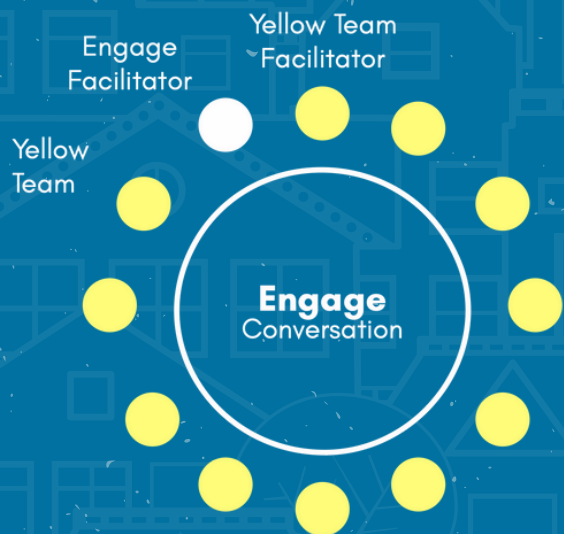
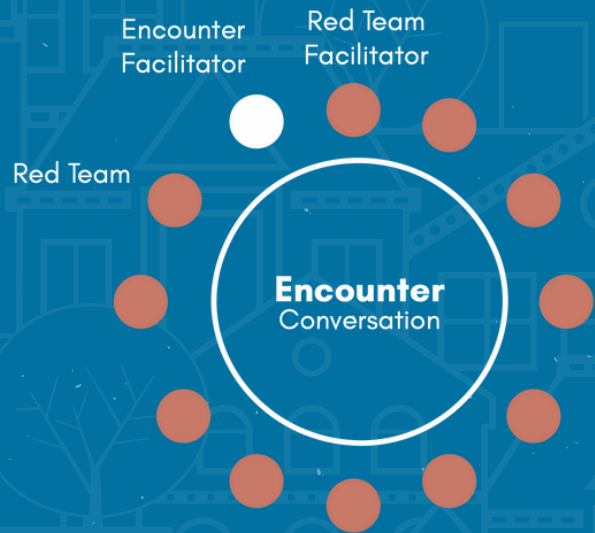
Figure 2: The Map For Discernment



Figure 3: The Order of Conversations



Figure 4: Conversation 1





Your Guide to Building
Strong, Resilient, Beloved
Communities

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