



illuminate



Who Plants Churches?

ILLUMINATE GUIDE

illuminate is a
partnership between
The Light College &
Myriad

Myriad inspires and
serves everyday
people to form new
church communities.

Fundamentally, the process of discernment occurs within a context of prayer, however, this guide offers further tools to help discern the calling of a planter.

This guide includes:

- A definition of a planter
- Characteristics of everyday planters
- A guide to recognising planters.
- What it means to oversee a planter
- How to join the Myriad Pathway

What is a planter?

Everyday church planters present in a variety of forms: Many are still in the stages of discerning a call to plant and may not consider themselves 'planters'. They may struggle to articulate clearly what God is saying but they have a firm conviction that something new should be born. Part of the role of discerning is to shape that imagination with them.

Others are people who are already operating: They may be contextualising new forms of meeting or worship - for instance online church. Crucially, all should be seeking to engage new people with the good news of Jesus and nurturing new believers. At illuminate, planters will largely be everyday or lay people often without theological training. However, they probably will come with rich life experience, skills and a knowledge of a context or place which is more developed than others.

If your experience and knowledge of the person planting is limited, it will be important to talk with others who have previously worked with them, in order to gain a fuller perspective. For clarity, we understand that different denominations and dioceses around the country may use different terms to describe everyday or lay planters. In this handbook, we define an everyday planter as someone who is probably not an existing minister but has a calling to develop and establish a new church community.



These churches will vary in size and shape: From micro-churches to mid-size plants, house gatherings to communities formed from particular people groups, such as people with additional learning needs. These new church communities will engage and disciple new believers and their leader will be under the oversight of an existing minister.

Characteristics of Everyday Planters

The following characteristics will not all be fully formed and some aspects may not seem present at all. They are shared as a guide for what to look for and to raise areas for discussion to help the potential planter discern God's call but they are not intended to be a tick list.

A Clear Faith

It is essential that everyday planters have a living faith in Jesus Christ and that the work of planting will be sustained by their own relationship with God.

Prayerful

A potential planter will lead from a place of personal prayer and will recognise that prayer is central to the effectiveness of mission. As a consequence, they can establish patterns of prayer in a planting team and new church community

A Contagious Faith

Potential planters will be people who have a deep desire to see others come to a faith in Jesus – they are missional. They can naturally relate faith to those outside of church context.

A Team Builder

It is essential that the everyday planter is relational and can gather a team. As most planters will be bi-vocational, the need to lead as a team will be more pressing than ever before. Look for evidence that this person can gather a team or is 100% committed to this way of working. By team we mean a small group, typically between 2 and 4 people.

A learner

Does the potential planter demonstrate a willingness to learn from others and work under the oversight of others?

Committed

Planting a new church community will require perseverance as there will be setbacks and hurdles to navigate. Planters should evidence a certain resilience, probably from life experience. Are they able to see failure as a learning opportunity?

In addition they will need to be clear about their capacity: Developing the new church community is a significant commitment of time and the Myriad learning community will be a further commitment. The learning community will involve...

- Time to learn (2-6 hrs per month)
- A mentor meeting every 2 months
- A six-monthly 2 day gathering

All planters will need to commit to the whole process which lasts over 2 ½ years.

A sense of calling to a people and/or place

The potential planter may not have previously considered leading a new church community, however, they are highly motivated by the desire to reach a place, a new group or community that is not connecting with existing models of church.

Trustworthy

A key feature of good oversight for planters is the ability to develop a good working relationship founded in trust. Discerning involves starting to establish this trust, which inevitably takes time. The ability to win the trust of others will also be an essential characteristic when gathering and establishing a planting team.

Character

Both character and competence are essential for the potential planter. However, Godly character is more important at the discernment stage because competence will develop through the supported learning pathway.

Courageous

Planters will need support and encouragement, but also the confidence to attempt new things and walk new paths. They will need a faith to proactively lead others towards that goal, without the full picture of what lies ahead.

Recognising Potential Planters

Initially, it may seem difficult to identify a potential planter; however, there are ways that potential planters may present within church life that may help to discern someone who could lead a new church community. Not all potential planters will fit these profiles but they may aid in recognising planters within existing church communities.

Yearners

They often express a yearning and sadness that a particular group of people do not know Jesus or can't engage with existing forms of the church, for one reason or another. They may already have begun to imagine different forms a new church community might take.

Wise builder

An ability to hear from God and then put it into practice (Matt 7) – a potential planter may be someone who can articulate their commitment to prayer and then action. This may have been demonstrated in a secular context. Evidence of 'getting things done' or setting things up in another context, will distinguish the 'dreamers' from those likely to deliver concrete plans.

Holy Discontent

Someone who frequently and easily interacts with people outside of the church - they may be someone who often brings new people to church and as a result may express a frustration that Sunday Church does not always effectively engage these people. They carry a sense of 'holy discontent' with the current and the need for something new to accomplish God's mission. This is different from being merely frustrated by church for themselves - they are frustrated for others. However, be aware of people who speak badly of their previous experience of church and have a critical character.

Marginals

These are people who may be less involved in church activities but who are actively doing things on the 'edges' or outside of church. They easily build rapport with people on the fringes or outside of church and may demonstrate an 'empathetic spirituality': This means they can often interpret spirituality to unbelievers. Sometimes, it can be more difficult to identify these potential planters, as church leaders may not know them as well as others.

Entrepreneurs

People who have an established record of starting new things, either in ministry or in other secular contexts.

A 'Sticky' Person

People who enjoy being with and loving people. They easily draw new people around them and create a growing community.

Place Connectors

These are people who may have been in the local community for a while and seem to know everyone, and most people know them or of them. They have a deep connection with the place and may be involved in many community focused activities as a result.

A Sending Community

Sometimes the impetus for people discovering their calling to establish a new community can come from the established church that they are part of. As the leadership begin to notice who is not present within their church community, it can cause them to begin to ask and pray - what can we do to address this? and / or who might God be calling to lead our response.

Inheritors

Sometimes an activity has begun which is developing or evolving into a new church community. This may originally have been a type of ministry within the church. Some planters find themselves in a place where they are inheriting the leadership of these, often as they move into a new season and the original founder has moved on.

What will overseeing a planter mean?

Each planter should have a champion: this will often be their oversight minister or someone appointed in oversight who will support and encourage them through the process. The champion may not have experience of overseeing an everyday planter and illuminate will provide resources and support to help those in oversight ministry. Myriad offer a separate short course for people in oversight developed in partnership with CPAS called the [Oversight Pathway](#).

Overseeing of everyday planters need not be an onerous task but will require a regular time commitment to meet with the planter, maybe a fortnightly meeting.

Three key principles of oversight are:

Relationship

Evidence would suggest that time invested in building a good relationship with the planter is time well spent. It will develop trust and an ability to communicate better. Such things enable new plants to weather challenges better and they develop sustainability and accountability in a healthy way.

Shaping imagination

The oversight minister has a significant opportunity to help the planter shape the plant. While the planting team will be most familiar with their context, the champion will be able to help them reflect, be a sounding board and a source of wisdom and theological reflection as they grow in their leadership. Finding appropriate on-the-job training for the planter is part of this task and the Myriad Pathway is designed to meet this need. Part of shaping the imagination is about enabling and releasing the planter. If this is done well together, then both can have confidence in what they do.

Stakeholder Management

The oversight minister will often have a better perspective of the people and processes to whom the planter needs to relate well – stakeholders. This may be in practical terms such as safeguarding or insurance. It may also be relational such as the PCC, church leadership, the diocese or other churches. Often planters will be unaware of such stakeholders. The oversight minister is often the person who helps the planter relate, or connects them. This helps clear the way so the planting team can concentrate on the task of planting without having to manage a bigger picture. Once again, this need not be an onerous task, it is often just connecting them with the right person.



Joining illuminate

Potential planters will present on a spectrum ranging from an initial sense of calling, to a strong sense of calling and already operating as a planter in some capacity. Consequently, it is essential to establish some minimum requirements for any planters wishing to join a illuminate. Do they have:

Conviction

A clear conviction to plant a new church community, even if they cannot articulate what it looks like? This is a conviction to establish a new church community, not a ministry to a group of people or an outreach. The planter should be able to communicate a sense of calling to a place, community, culture or people group. In doing this they should be seeking to make new disciples of Jesus rather than addressing the needs of those already in church.

Commitment to team

A firm commitment to gathering a small team to plant with (typically 2-4 people). Planters will be required to have at least one other member of their team when they start the Myriad Pathway. (Jesus sent his apprentices out as a team, or at least one other person – Luke 10.1). The planter themselves will be leading this team

A Champion

The support of a champion: Someone in oversight who will support them through the process. Each planter will be expected to set out an initial working agreement with their oversight minister.

All planting teams will be required to:

- Establish an agreement with a champion or oversight minister
 - Undergo appropriate safeguarding before their plant starts
 - Take part in the following elements of the Myriad Pathway:
 - Attend all of the 5, six-monthly in person gatherings.
 - Meet with their mentor once every two months
 - Engage with the relevant learning materials at each stage.
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Some examples



Wole Agbaje

Wole planted IMPRINT Church in Leicester after finishing a New Wine Discipleship Year. His focus was on black, Asian and minority ethnic young adults in the city. He has since gone on to plant in London.



Bernice Hardie

Bernice planted WAVE church in north London in 2010 for people of all ages with additional needs having been determined to offer an accessible worshipping community for her adult daughter who was born with Downs Syndrome.



Andy Wilson

Andy is a licensed lay minister in the Church Army who started Share Matson to serve the needs of the local community who weren't on the doorstep of the parish church.



Abi Lycett

Abi planted The Net in Chester, an online church, while she was a student and intern.



What Next?

If you have identified a potential planter or have been approached by one, we suggest that you provide them with the following resources so that they can discern for themselves what God might be calling them to:

Am I Called? A short guide for potential planters available from illuminate@lightcollege.ac.uk

[Send Me: Stories of ordinary people planting new churches](#)



If you are using this guide as a local church leader and would like to enrol a planter, contact Sally Dowell at illuminate@lightcollege.ac.uk

What Next?

If you are using this guide as a hub leader, to discern the calling of an individual who has approached the hub, you will need to start a conversation with their champion or oversight minister who should also use this document as a guide.

When interviewing, use the section entitled 'Characteristics of Everyday Planters' as a guide to discern whether the person is ready to start. Then refer to the section 'Joining illuminate'.

Contact Illuminate



www.lightcollege.ac.uk/illuminate



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