



# START YOUR **JOURNEY**

EVERY CHURCH HAS NEXT-LEVEL POTENTIAL

# WELCOME

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The Acts 2 Journey helps pastors and teams create a strategic plan for the future that is tailored to each church's specific cultural context.

ALTON GARRISON, D.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACTS 2 JOURNEY

# WHY DO WE EXIST?

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IF YOU ASKED YOUR CONGREGATION THIS QUESTION  
THE NEXT TIME YOU MEET, HOW MANY DIFFERENT  
ANSWERS DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD GET?

When I became pastor of First Assembly of God, North Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1986, I had been an evangelist for 18 years. I had the Pentecostal experience, and I had the message. When I shared my experience and began to preach a Spirit-empowered message, revival came.

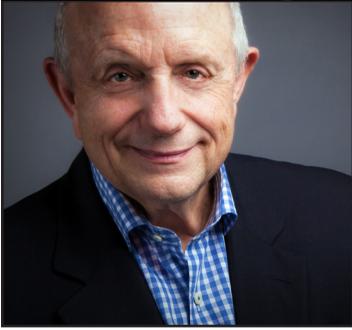
I knew how to preach a sermon, how to bring people to the altar, and how to help my congregation be blessed, but I didn't know how to take a church from where we were to where we needed to be.

**I DIDN'T HAVE A PROCESS.**



“I AM CONVINCED THAT  
WITHIN ACTS 2 IS THE  
TEMPLATE, THE PLAN, AND  
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CHURCH ON THE EARTH.”

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I did not need a trendy, new, unique process for building a healthy church. I needed to look at what God had already done in establishing the very first church. I needed a complete **ACTS 2 CHURCH**—not just the experience and message but also a process and a plan. In my ministry and in our church, I needed a process that would show us how a first-century church could effectively be reproduced in what was soon to be a twenty-first century world. This realization and process changed many lives, including mine and many in the church I pastored and in the denomination I now serve.

You may be reading this and be in the same place I was. You are sincere, dedicated, committed, spiritual, and faithful, but you feel you are lacking something.

I believe many of us have been missing an understanding of what the Holy Spirit did in the first-century church. The early church impacted the then-known world,

walking out God's plan and doing the work of the ministry as a chosen generation and royal priesthood. Certainly it had some problems, but the first-century church turned the world upside down.

I am convinced that within **ACTS 2** is the template, the plan, and the process that Jesus envisioned for the Church on the earth.

The best part is that anyone can do it. It is not dependent on the size of your congregation, your building, your town, or your bank account. It is dependent on our limitless God with whom all things are possible.

As I began to blend an understanding of Spirit-empowerment and planning, the church grew and became healthy. We've developed those principles over the years into a process we'd like to introduce you to called the **ACTS 2 JOURNEY**.

THE **ACTS 2 JOURNEY** DOES NOT BIAS A STYLE OR REQUIRE A CERTAIN MODEL. SMALL CHURCHES, LARGE CHURCHES, TRADITIONAL, SMALL GROUP, G-12, CHARISMATIC—ALL CAN ADOPT THE SYSTEMS OUTLINED IN THE **ACTS 2 JOURNEY** TEMPLATE.

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THE **ACTS 2 JOURNEY** IS NOT JUST FOR REVITALIZATION OF DECLINING OR PLATEAUED CHURCHES. 32.7% OF THE CHURCHES THAT IMPLEMENTED THE A2J TEMPLATE IN THE USA WERE ALREADY GROWING NUMERICALLY. THEY BELIEVED EVERY CHURCH CAN GROW MORE AND HAS A “NEXT LEVEL POTENTIAL”.

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THE **ACTS 2 JOURNEY** IS NOT JUST FOR EXISTING CHURCHES. IF THE FIRST CHURCH WAS FORMED ON THE A2J TEMPLATE, PLANTING NEW CHURCHES ON THAT TEMPLATE CREATES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHURCHES TO BE PLANTED THAT ARE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED, HEALTHY AND PASSIONATE ABOUT MISSIONS.

# OUR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN...

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The percentage of plateaued and declining churches in the AG USA has been on the rise since the early 1990s and is currently at a record level. In a local church, the primary cause of plateau is lost vision. The primary cause of decline is inward focus. To prioritize health and growth in the midst of changes in leadership and culture, the Acts 2 Journey

team recommends that pastors and teams should re-engage in the Acts 2 Journey cohort process every 3-5 years. While numerical growth might not be possible for every church, we believe that every church can become healthy. A healthy church is a Spirit-empowered community of disciples following Jesus, fulfilling His mission. A healthy church is one that...

- PURSUES AND OBEYS GOD PASSIONATELY (**WORSHIP**)
- ENGAGES AND MAINTAINS LOVING RELATIONSHIPS (**CONNECT**)
- DEVELOPS AND MOBILIZES ITS PEOPLE (**GROW**)
- ACTS WITH CLEAR DIRECTION AND OUTWARD FOCUS (**SERVE**)
- REPRODUCES AND MULTIPLIES HIS MISSION IN OTHER PEOPLE AND PLACES (**GO**)

THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY HAS SEEN CHURCHES OF ALL  
SIZES AND STYLES MOVE TOWARD GROWTH  
AND HEALTH.

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RECENTLY, WE'VE DISCOVERED THAT THE  
CHURCHES THAT HAVE BEGUN TO IMPLEMENT THE  
STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES DELIVERED IN THE  
COHORT DEMONSTRATED THESE RESULTS:

# THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY IMPACT...

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**A2J congregations show a marked improvement in the health metric** that indicates a more effective strategy for discipleship, demonstrating nearly 15% improvement by year two; 25% improvement by year four.

A2J congregations show a marked improvement (more than 20% improvement by year two) in the metric that indicates **a more effective strategy for assimilation.**

**A2J congregations show an increase in average Sunday AM attendance of 2.3% the first year after engaging the Acts 2 Journey**, moving close to 5% by the third year (“Growing” churches show 10% growth over a five-year period).

**41.2% of A2J churches report increased attendance in year 1** after they start the Acts 2 Journey (an increase of 22% when compared to the year prior to the Acts 2 Journey).

Of the 349 declining churches to engage the Acts 2 Journey (2010-2017), **nearly 44% were at a higher level of attendance within two years** (43.8%).

**Only 34 of the 1,204 churches to engage the Acts 2 Journey (2010-2019) have closed, roughly 2.8% of the total participants over the ten years (2010-2019).** This is compared to the overall closure rate of 15.9% for all AG USA churches during that same time period.

# THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT

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THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT IS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY, DISCERNMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT THAT BUILDS ON THE STRENGTHS OF THE CONGREGATION TO LEARN FROM THE PAST AND ENVISION THE FUTURE. CHURCH LEADERS ENGAGED IN THE COHORT WILL SEEK GOD IN PRAYER TOGETHER AS THEY DREAM AND STRATEGIZE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR CHURCHES.

## THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT CONSISTS OF FOUR WEEKEND RETREATS.

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Each Retreat includes a 3-4-hour session for lead pastors and spouses. These sessions include leadership topics such as leading change, conflict resolution, time management, recruiting team members, casting vision, and communication.

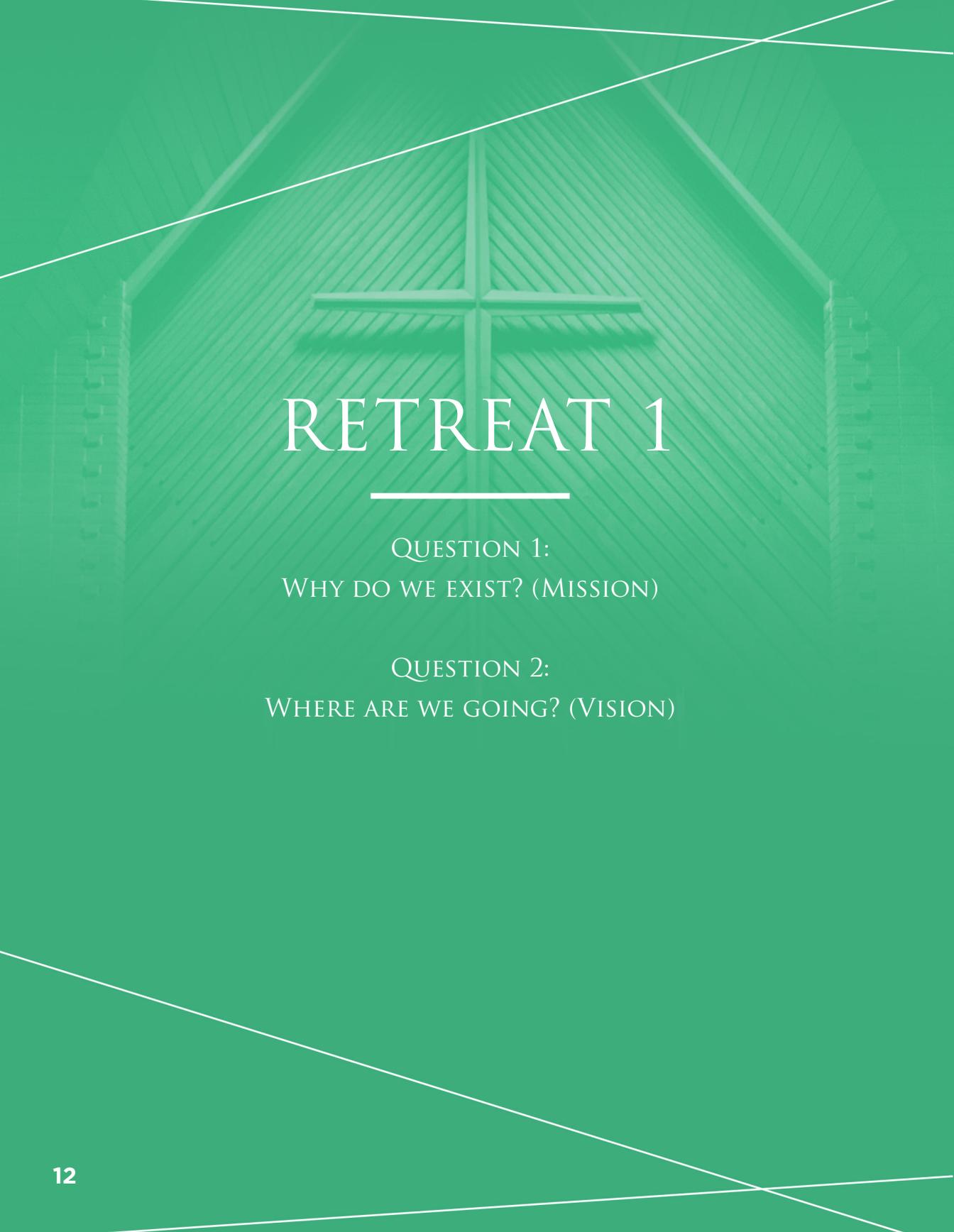
Each retreat also includes a full-day session for pastors, spouses, and the vision team that pastors select. In these interactive sessions, pastors and teams assess their current reality, calibrate their mission,

discern God's preferred future (vision), commit to biblical values, and create an operating plan tailored to their context involving the five functions described in Acts 2:42-47. Pastors are asked to bring 8-15 people from their church—people who will help them plan the future of their congregation.

Pastors and their teams answer ten questions over the course of the four-retreat cohort.

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- 1. Why do we exist?**
  - 2. Where are we going?**
  - 3. How should we behave?**
  - 4. What plan will we implement to become the church of our vision?**
  - 5. How will we engage new people? (Evangelism-GO)**
  - 6. How will we treat them when they arrive? (Fellowship-CONNECT)**

- 7. How will we disciple them? (Discipleship-GROW)**
- 8. How will we train them to serve? (Ministry-SERVE)**
- 9. How will we involve them in local and global missions? (Evangelism-GO)**
- 10. How will we help them encounter God? (Worship)**



# RETREAT 1

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QUESTION 1:  
WHY DO WE EXIST? (MISSION)

QUESTION 2:  
WHERE ARE WE GOING? (VISION)

THE PASTORS' SESSION ENHANCES THEIR LEADERSHIP,  
FAMILIARIZES THEM WITH THE PROCESS AND  
PREPARES THEM TO LEAD THEIR TEAM THROUGH THE  
FOLLOWING DAY'S EXERCISES.

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AT RETREAT 1

During the vision team session, pastors and their teams work together to assess their current reality by establishing their position on a life cycle. Then, they answer the first two of the ten questions.

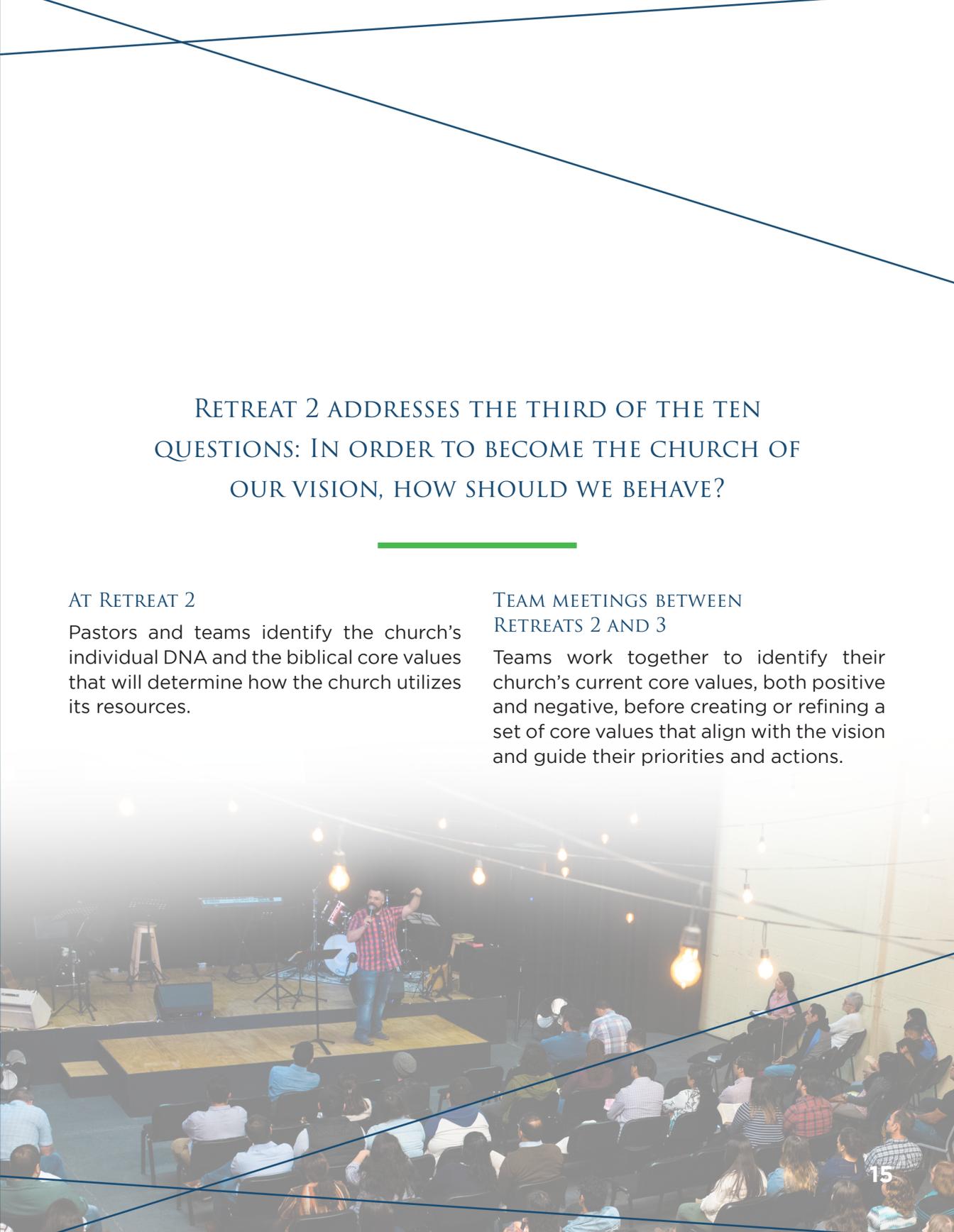
TEAM MEETINGS BETWEEN  
RETREATS 1 AND 2

Teams seek God together and participate in exercises that help them fine-tune their vision statement and identify the point of intersection among the leaders' passion, the congregation's abilities, and the community's needs.

# RETREAT 2

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QUESTION 3:  
HOW SHOULD WE BEHAVE?



RETREAT 2 ADDRESSES THE THIRD OF THE TEN  
QUESTIONS: IN ORDER TO BECOME THE CHURCH OF  
OUR VISION, HOW SHOULD WE BEHAVE?

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#### AT RETREAT 2

Pastors and teams identify the church's individual DNA and the biblical core values that will determine how the church utilizes its resources.

#### TEAM MEETINGS BETWEEN RETREATS 2 AND 3

Teams work together to identify their church's current core values, both positive and negative, before creating or refining a set of core values that align with the vision and guide their priorities and actions.

# RETREAT 3

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QUESTIONS 4-10:  
HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

## DURING RETREAT 3, SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS TAKE SHAPE.

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Having established their mission, vision, and values, teams are ready to explore the overarching strategy question:

**QUESTION 4:** What plan will we implement to become the church of our vision?

The team then constructs an operating plan tailored to their context based on the Acts 2 template (Connect, Grow, Serve, Go, Worship) by answering the remaining questions.

**QUESTION 5:** How will we engage new people? (Evangelism-GO)

**QUESTION 6:** How will we treat them when they arrive? (Fellowship-CONNECT)

**QUESTION 7:** How will we disciple them? (Discipleship-GROW)

**QUESTION 8:** How will we train them to serve? (Ministry-SERVE)

**QUESTION 9:** How will we involve them in local and global missions? (Evangelism-GO)

**QUESTION 10:** How will we help them encounter God? (Worship)

### TEAM MEETINGS BETWEEN RETREATS 3 AND 4

Teams compile their vision statement, core values list, and strategy steps to prepare a brief presentation to share with other vision teams participating in the cohort. The presentation serves as a working draft of how the team will launch the plan to the congregation at a strategically chosen time after the cohort concludes.

# RETREAT 4

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LAUNCHING THE VISION

IN RETREAT 4, EACH CHURCH RECEIVES PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH WHAT THEY HAVE COLLECTIVELY DISCERNED AS GOD'S VISION. THEN, IN AN INSPIRING AND CELEBRATORY ATMOSPHERE, CHURCHES PRESENT DRAFTS OF THEIR PLANS TO OTHERS IN THE COHORT.

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# HOW TO ENGAGE

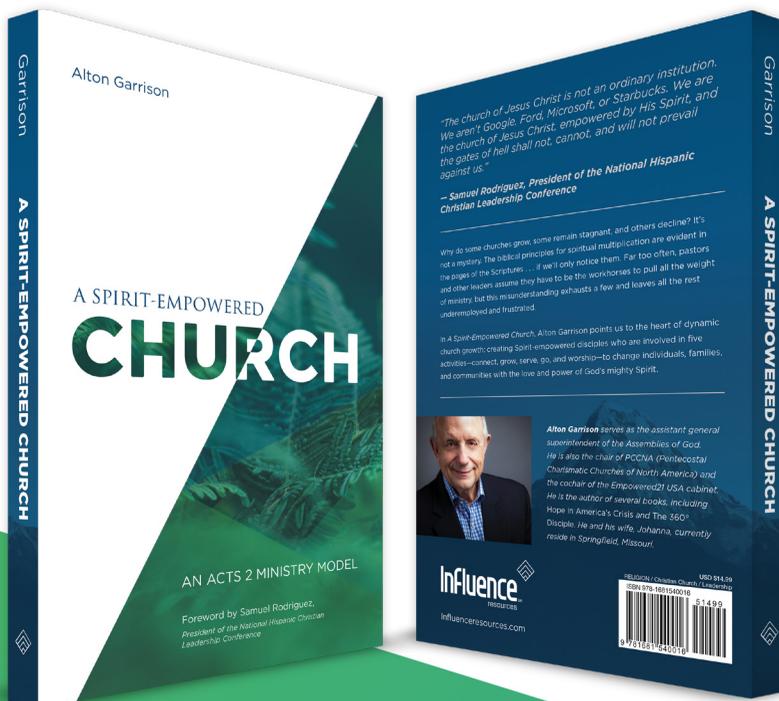
## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT.

### READ *A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH: AN ACTS 2 MINISTRY MODEL*

This book serves as a written template for the Acts 2 Journey process.

### ATTEND AN ACTS 2 JOURNEY INTENSIVE

The Intensive is designed to familiarize attendees with the content and delivery of the four-retreat cohort. The Intensive also serves as the first step toward certification as a facilitator or mentor.



## FORM A GROUP OF CHURCHES AND SCHEDULE A DISCOVERY SESSION

Typically 10 or more churches from a district, network, or geographic area constitute a cohort. Cohorts often form when district or network leadership contacts the Acts 2 Journey office and invites a member of the national team to speak to a gathering of pastors and leaders.

## FIND A TRAINED FACILITATOR NEAR YOU

Trained facilitators are equipped to work with smaller cohorts, or even one-on-one with a pastor and vision team. Contact the Acts 2 Journey office to find out what's available in your area.

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### CONTACT US

Email us at [acts2@ag.org](mailto:acts2@ag.org) or call our office at **417-862-2781 ext. 3480**.

# DISCOVERY SESSION

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TYPICALLY HELD AS AN INTEREST EVENT PRIOR TO RETREAT 1, THE DISCOVERY SESSION EQUIPS YOU FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD. FROM VISION TEAM SELECTION THROUGH WHAT TO EXPECT AT EACH RETREAT, THE DISCOVERY SESSION PROVIDES A ROADMAP FOR LEADERS PREPARING TO ENGAGE IN AN ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT.

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# TEAM SELECTION

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## THE INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVE INPUT OF A VISION TEAM IS VITAL TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ACTS 2 JOURNEY COHORT.

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Prior to Retreat 1, each participating lead pastor is asked to select 8-15 leaders to serve on the Vision Team. These leaders attend all four Saturday retreats and work together between retreats throughout the cohort process to develop vision, clarify core values, and prioritize strategy steps in the areas of fellowship, discipleship, gift-oriented ministry, evangelism, and worship.

Pastors are encouraged to consider the following when selecting a Vision Team:

- Select a team that mirrors the diversity of the surrounding community in age, gender, and ethnicity.
- Expand the team to beyond staff or board members. Include volunteers and influential congregants.
- Select a team that cares about the church's future and believes a new day is possible.

# START YOUR ACTS 2 JOURNEY WITH A MENTOR

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## MENTORING FROM BEGINNING TO END

1. Mentor meets with you to explore the value of mentoring.
2. Mentor collaborates with you as you select your team.
3. Mentor supports you as you progress through the A2J retreats.
4. Mentor partners with you as you launch and implement your strategy.

## OUTCOMES FOR MENTORED PASTORS

### **Increase your leadership competencies**

- Develop greater spiritual discernment
- Clarify and communicate vision
- Build a stronger ministry team
- Contextualize ministry to the culture of the surrounding community
- Empower others to do ministry

### **Partner with your mentor for these outcomes:**

- Clarify God's vision for your church
- Develop your ministry leaders
- Implement your strategic plan
- Enlarge your circle of influencers and friends



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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- **What resources will I be given?**

You will have access to the following resources online:

- 15-minute videos to prepare for each upcoming session
- The A2J Mentoring Guide session notes
- Assessments and additional materials to support your journey

- **Is this group mentoring or one-on-one?**

Typically, it will be one on one mentoring, but meeting with a group of 2 or 3 mentees could also be advantageous to you.

- **How do I get connected with a mentor?**

Each pastor going through the Acts 2 Journey will be offered a certified mentor in their area where available.

- **How many times will I meet with my mentor?**

You will meet monthly for a total of 14 formal mentoring sessions.

- **When does mentoring begin and when does it end?**

Mentoring begins with three sessions before Retreat 1 and four sessions after Retreat 4.

- **Can mentoring be added if I am already part way through the Acts 2 Journey?**

Yes. Explore your mentoring options by contacting our office at [acts2@ag.org](mailto:acts2@ag.org).



# AVAILABLE ASSESSMENTS

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- **A.C.T.S. ASSESSMENT**

This simple pen-and-paper assessment can be used to help the lead pastor and vision team get a clearer picture of each individual's passion and ministry strengths. The assessment, which individuals can complete in a few minutes, is divided into four parts:

**A – ABILITIES**

**C – CALLING**

**T – TEMPERAMENT**

**S – SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**TIMEFRAME:** Prior to Retreat 1 for the vision team; following the vision launch for the entire congregation.

- **LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT**

Acts 2 Journey facilitators guide pastors and teams through a simple life cycle assessment to help them get a collective sense of their church's current reality.

**TIMEFRAME:** At Retreat 1.

- **FIVE FUNCTIONS ASSESSMENT**

The five functions assessment helps teams to determine their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of Fellowship, Discipleship, Gift-oriented ministry, Evangelism, and Worship.

- **ACTS 2 CHURCH SURVEY**

The Acts 2 Church Survey is a statistically validated online survey instrument available to be distributed either among the Acts 2 Journey vision team or congregation-wide. The survey instrument is designed to help Spirit-empowered churches identify their church health strengths and challenges in order to pursue the best paths to greater ministry effectiveness. The survey analyzes twelve health factors that center on the missional effectiveness of the local congregation. Launching the survey prior to the implementation of the vision and strategic plan provides a baseline picture of health for churches. Re-taking the survey after strategy implementation yields helpful measurables of the church's progress in each area of health.

**RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAME:** Prior to Retreat 4; three years following vision launch.

## • VISION INVENTORY

This brief, easy-to-use inventory was designed for Acts 2 Journey vision teams to use as they revisit their strategic plan objectives one year after their vision launch. The inventory invites a team to evaluate their progress toward their strategic goals for each of the five functions using measurable outcomes that are tied to the definition of a healthy church. A healthy church is one that...

- Pursues and obeys God passionately
- Engages and maintains loving relationships
- Develops and mobilizes its people
- Acts with clear direction and outward focus
- Reproduces and multiplies His mission in other people and places

## • CHURCH HEALTH METRICS

While we know how to measure church growth by looking at metrics like attendance and giving, what does it look

like for a church to be healthy? In response to this question, the Acts 2 Journey team has developed a series of five easy-to-calculate metrics for measuring Spirit-empowered church health:

- Missional effectiveness
- Assimilation effectiveness
- Kingdom growth
- Discipleship and mobilization
- Reproduction effectiveness

**RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAME:** Annually

# TRAINING

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## AVAILABLE CERTIFICATIONS

### MENTOR CERTIFICATION

This one-day certification is designed for district and network officials, presbyters, and other leaders who are familiar with the Acts 2 Journey process and have a passion for mentoring others. Attendance at an Acts 2 Journey cohort or an Acts 2 Journey Intensive is a prerequisite for Mentor certification.

### FACILITATOR CERTIFICATION

Those who wish to become a certified facilitator with the Acts 2 Journey engage in a multi-step process that includes the following steps:

- Attendance at a 3-day Acts 2 Journey Intensive
- Written approval from the District or Network office to participate in the certification process
- Completion of the online Facilitator Training course and A Spirit-Empowered Church book exam
- Shadowing of a trained facilitator at an approved Acts 2 Journey retreat
- Interview and approval from the Acts 2 Journey Executive Director

# RESOURCES

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A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH:  
AN ACTS 2 MINISTRY MODEL  
BY: ALTON GARRISON



A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LIFE  
BY: MIKE CLARENSAU



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## ACTS GROW TRACK

The Acts Grow Track is a customizable resource designed to help you lead new believers and guests on three distinct spiritual tracks—Connect, Grow, and Serve—toward assimilation into your church. It is divided into three primary sessions but can be adapted for a longer timeframe. Created with the Acts 2 Journey template in mind, all three sessions complement the strategic plans that take shape during the Acts 2 Journey Cohort.





“I wish I would’ve gone through this process before we planted our church. It will help you cut through so many of the mistakes that are often made. It will get you to the foundational points that you need to launch a healthy and faithful ministry.”

AL TOLEDO  
CHICAGO TABERNACLE, CHICAGO, IL

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I believe that if we could have invested the Acts 2 Journey processes in the local church, the result which we experience right now might be tripled or quadrupled. The Acts 2 Journey is a tool to empower and enable the local churches of our nation to maximize their potential for reaching their localities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BARNABAS MTOKAMBALI  
GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT,  
TANZANIA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD