

A farewell from Shannon Kiser 1001 Coaching Associate



I sometimes preach from a manuscript — it gives me comfort that every word is meticulously thought out, and the details are well-crafted. But to be honest, it can also serve as my safety blanket. I can trust in my own intellect and communication skills, I can prove my value as a worship leader, and I can depend on a script rather than paying attention to the Holy Spirit.

My participation in the Church Growth office and the 1001 New Worshiping Communities movement has been an exercise in letting go of the script. Because the reality is, we can't script God. God is the writer of the story. God is the catalyst of dreams and visions. God is the transformer of hearts. God is the giver of growth.

And this is good news. Because I couldn't have scripted many of the new worshiping communities that have bubbled up. I couldn't have scripted the people God would raise up to lead these new communities. And I couldn't have scripted denominational openness to new ways of being church.

It has been a privilege to have a front-row seat to the new things that God is doing in, around and through the PC(USA). I have been inspired by faithful leaders who are connecting with people our traditional congregations just aren't able to engage. I have been awestruck at the courage that some of these leaders have shown in the face of the sacrifices they have had to make, and the criticism they have faced by an institution that doesn't always understand what they are doing. I have been frustrated by the questions that get asked of new ministries that are never asked of existing ones. I have been challenged to not only teach about a life on mission but to live one. And I have seen lives change, deep community form, disciples re-prioritize their daily rhythms, and neighborhoods transform as the kingdom of God comes near.

I have had the distinct privilege of leading a coaching network that seeks to serve these courageous leaders. This network exists to support new worshiping community leaders through the ups and downs of this risk-taking journey. Countless times, these coaches have asked the kinds of questions that help a leader find courage, clarify the mission, hone strategy, get honest about fears, get real with God, and get going when the going is tough. I am grateful when I see leaders and projects taking advantage of this resource. I am frustrated when leaders either try to go it alone, or get a coach merely to check off the box for grant purposes, because invariably we get calls from these same project leaders down the road when the mission is struggling and the future precarious. If I can leave you with one piece of advice as I leave this role with 1001: ***take full advantage of the coaching resource.*** Even if every coaching conversation doesn't feel good. Even if you have other things you want or need to do. Even if you think you know what you're doing. Because trust me: The script will take an unexpected turn and you will need that coach to help you get in touch with the story God is writing.

I leave this official role with the 1001 initiative, but I continue to encourage this mission through my work across denominations through Fresh Expressions U.S., through my continued commitment to coaching new worshiping community leaders, and through my continued prayers for the PC(USA) to become an ever-more courageous church for the sake of the gospel.