

Going Missional

A few months ago Marc and Nancy Roland made a decision to change their ministry approach. After a number of years as pastors in a traditional church they decided to resign, "go small" and start a new missional community. Off The Map caught up with them recently and here's what Marc had to say about their new venture called Solitude and Streets

OTM: Marc, you call your group Solitude and Streets. Why that name?

Why Solitude and Streets? It sounded spiritual, but not churchy. The two words "solitude" and "streets" may seem like a contradiction at first, but in fact they are inextricably linked. "Streets" represents our mission as followers of Jesus and "solitude" is our lifeline to God. The better we get to know our Father in heaven the more we understand His heart for missing persons. Missional communities need new names that reflect what they're about, names that stir a new way of thinking about the church and its mission.

OTM: You and your wife had been staff members in a local church. Why did you quit?

Like John Lennon said, "No longer riding on the merry-go-round, I just had to let it go." Here's my rant! Christians have become dependent on socializing at church meetings as a replacement for being in the game day-in and day-out. I began to see my day job as a teacher in a juvenile detention facility as a hindrance to my preparation for church events. My prayer, my energy, my thoughts revolved around what was happening in church. I woke up one day and said, "I can't live this dualistic life. My Christian life and ministry is about sharing my life with everyone, especially those I work with. My wife and I felt like God was asking us to invite friends and people we work with to our house so we could introduce them to Jesus.

OTM: You meet once a month - Why not every week?

If we are being the church versus going to church we have church all the time. For example, one couple in the community invited some other community members over last Thursday along with some new people. We have more "church" now than we did before, just more inclusive, more fun, more natural, and more meaningful. The truth is Nancy and I can only pull off cleaning the house and making brunch once a month.

OTM: How many people do you want in your church?

Truthfully, We have no desire to outgrow our home. We have about 15 who meet together each month. We gauge our success by how many times we "have church" with each other and how often we attempt to reach out to others. There is a built in expectation that community members will also gather people in their homes.

OTM: What feels hard or challenging for you?

We feel a bit lonely, even though we have our community and family. Lonely in the sense that many of our peers in the church don't understand why we chose to leave the standard way of doing church. We don't get much validation, so it plays on your mind. Mostly, all of the regular affirmations of being a successful leader are gone like, big worship, crowds, sermon well received, and money.

OTM: What kind of help are you looking for?

Although we favor small home type communities, it doesn't mean we are small. We desire to hook up with other missional communities for mutual support and cooperation, especially to join hands in mission. If we could find a way to communicate with each other and share ideas, I would be there.

OTM: What have you enjoyed most about this shift?

Not going to church on Sunday night so I can actually wash my clothes and prepare for the week ahead. Seriously, My wife is happier than she has ever been. She loves the authenticity of living a life that is more connected to reality-the way it really is. Having time to practice our faith, meet in more natural settings; spend time with family and co-workers, and caring for people that you are really starting to get to know in a more intimate way.

The most fun for me is the way this has freed up money for mission. Because we don't have any overhead, we can use our resources to share the love of God with others. For example, one single mom who is a part of the community had car trouble, and we were able to give her \$100. Just last week another member was talking to a friend with a large family who was going through a hard time. She called me asked if we could give him some money and we did. We are also giving monthly support to 3 missionaries. No fundraisers, no grant writing, no begging church boards. I love it!

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http://off-the-map.org/idealab/02-12/Issue15_Dec_02.html#ma