

MEET PTS



Timing is a tricky thing, and it doesn't always work out. But every so often things work out just when they should. For recent graduate Chris Romine, the Church Planting cohort was right on time.

Chris had a place (New York City) and a theological education, but what he couldn't find was a ministry context that was both contemporary and progressive. He wasn't even sure this kind of faith existed anywhere until he found post-evangelical authors like Rachel Held Evans and thought, "This is my tribe." So he helped launch a new faith community in the city called Common Ground. It was in the fall of 2019, just as they were making the leap to become a church—a process Chris describes as trying to bail water from a leaky rowboat while inviting other people to jump in with you—that his PTS **Graduate Certificate in Church Planting and Revitalization** cohort began.

"The program has been perfect for me in the early stages of church planting," he explains. "Plus, it has helped me process the huge changes and transitions brought on by the pandemic."

Since Chris already had his master of divinity degree, he wasn't craving more reading, writing, and academic learning. What he needed was a group of like-minded people engaged in the same type of ministry experimentation and challenges. Thankfully, the certificate program and cohort delivered all of the above.

"The real gift of this program is the other students. My conversations and relationships with them have taught me first-hand how to be a better pastor to the people in my church," Chris says. "There are unique and particular challenges to church planting, and working with other planters allows us to learn from each other about these opportunities and crises."

These gifts haven't stopped since his graduation in September. He keeps in touch regularly with his cohort members, especially a few friends who offer mutual encouragement. The continued support is helping Chris's Common Ground community achieve its vision. This church is made up of people from many different religious backgrounds but who all share pain and trauma from their church experiences. "We're a place for people who have been told their whole lives where God *isn't*. We want to help them see that God is already with them and that they reflect the image of God."

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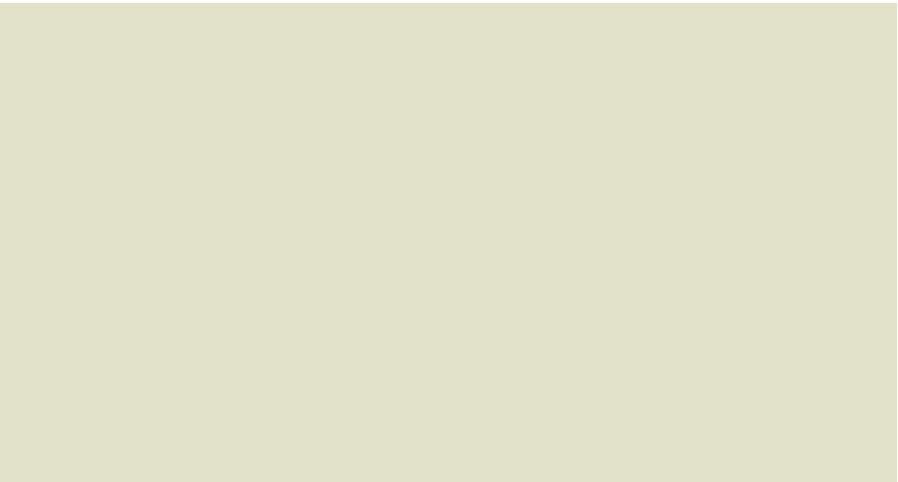
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