Proposal for Dinner Church

1. Visioning and Discernment
    - Create a Discernment team: Gather 4–6 people who are interested in exploring options for reaching those not engaged in traditional church.
        - Prayer and listening: Spend time in prayer, and listen to the Spirit, the community, and one another.
        - Clarify purpose: Frame the dinner church not just as a meal, but as a way of being church around the table, echoing Jesus' practice of eating with outsiders and disciples alike.

2. Listening to the Community
    - Engage in Neighborhood mapping: Identify where unchurched or spiritually curious people gather (cafés, food deserts, shelters, community centers).
        - Conversations: Ask people what kind of meal space would feel safe, healing, or welcoming.
        - Partnerships: Explore collaboration with local nonprofits, restaurants, or farmers' markets.

3. Explore and Establish Core Practices
    - Hospitality: Radical welcome at the table, with food that reflects the local community's culture.
    - Worship in community: Instead of pews and pulpits, create a liturgy woven into the meal (e.g., blessings, scripture storytelling, shared reflections, prayers around the table).
    - Participation: Everyone has a role—cooking, serving, storytelling, music, cleanup—so it feels communal.
    - Discipleship: Encourage small spiritual conversations, mentoring, and prayer that can emerge naturally around the table.

4. Practical Structure
    - Frequency: Start monthly, move toward biweekly or weekly as sustainable.
        - Goal to initiate by Lent?
    - Location: Community hall, neighborhood café after hours, park pavilion, or a large home.
    - Meal format: Potluck (if trust and resources allow), catered, or prepared by a rotating cooking team.
    - Budget: Estimate costs for food, space, materials, and hospitality ($5–8 per person). Seek donations, grants, or church support.

5. Launching
    - Soft launch: a mix of the core team and community guests.
    - Flow of gathering:
        1. Welcome and introductions.
        2. Blessing and opening prayer.
        3. Shared meal.
        4. Scripture story / short teaching (5 minutes).
        5. Table discussion: guided questions.
        6. Communal prayers (people can share aloud or silently).

7. Closing blessing / song.
- Tone: Simple, conversational, participatory, not performance-driven.

6. Growth and Sustainability
- Leadership development: Train lay leaders from within the dinner church to share scripture, lead prayers, or coordinate meals.
- Missional imagination: Encourage participants to host additional small table gatherings in their homes or workplaces.
- Connection to wider church: Maintain supportive ties with the sponsoring congregation or denomination, but allow the dinner church its own identity.
- Ongoing evaluation: Regularly reflect on what is working, what feels authentic, and how the Spirit is leading.

7. Theological Grounding
- Biblical model: Jesus' table fellowship (Luke 5, Luke 14, Emmaus in Luke 24).
- Sacramental imagination: The table becomes a site of Eucharistic presence, even if not always formal Communion.
- Kingdom vision: Enacting a community where all are welcome, and where eating together becomes a foretaste of God's reign.