The Pondering Pub Roadmap Worksheet

A Guided Tool for Founders and Leaders. Updated May 2025

Part 1: Gang of One

Figure out why each leader wants to start a Pub. What is the specific reason *you* are doing this, as opposed to joining something already existing? One can meet friends at a bar or Meetup.com; or talk about books at a library or book club. However, if our mission of creating beauty through community appeals to you, why does it appeal to you personally? This difference is what makes it worth doing. This is going to be your personal rally point, your banner. Each person has their own, and you may need to change your pitch depending on what's important to you or the other person. Check out our testimonials if you need inspiration as to why people join the Pondering.

1. **Determine your #1 and #2 reasons for why you're starting a Pondering Pub. (As opposed to joining something already existing.)**

#1 Reason: _____

_____

#2 Reason: _____

_____

2. **Determine how you'd like your meetings. Frequency, day of the week, time, location, and level of casualness.**

Frequency: _____

Day of the Week: _____

Time of Day: _____

Location: _____

3. **Determine who would be your partner in helping you form this.**

Leadership Team: _____

4. **Attend at least one Pondering in person, or online, if possible.**

Part 2: Form the Holy Huddle. This is the person or persons who will lead the Pub, either directly or through informal support. Go through this exercise together so you set clear expectations of what you want your Pub to look like. Determine your shared goal, vision, and culture. NOTE: If you would like assistance in putting a leadership team together, please reach out to your Guild Representative.

1. **Meet with your Partner and explain the concept of the Pondering Pub to them. Make sure each leader has gone through Step 1's checklist.**

Date Completed: _____

2. **Look through the requirements of Host and Pub Rep. Delegate who'll do which functions. (Attached)**

Date Completed: _____

3. **Determine the Goals, Vision, and Culture.**

Goals – What is each leader's personal goal by being involved in The Pondering Pub?

Pub Rep: _____

_____

Host: _____

_____

Vision – What does your "fulfilled Pondering" look like?

_____

_____

Culture – What do you want your Pub to be known for and feel like?

_____

_____

Part 3: First Meeting. Once you have 1 official, good Pondering where the goals, vision, and culture of The Pondering Pub are explained, people can better decide how they are going to participate, and inviting more becomes easier. Find a time that works for your core. If you cast a net that includes 6-12 people, and half show up, you have a good start. The first meeting is very hard. Don't confuse incompatible logistics with disinterest. A lot of times, people are busy, or things happen, or stuff pops up. Don't lose heart! Just keep trying. We've had 2 Founders whose first meeting was 6 months past the desired start date. And that's ok. Eventually, they succeeded. Their invitees were interested, it was solely a matter of "logistics." Just keep at it.

Remember at the first meeting to go over why you're starting a Pondering, what The Pondering Pub's purpose is, and how members at your Pub can contribute to its direction. (Some Founders just walk through the First Meeting Agenda.) Beauty is rare in our society. By explaining to people why creating beauty through community is important and how you're planning on doing it, they are better able to contribute.

1. **Leaders: Read John Thompson's "Ideas for Hospitality." (Linked.)**

Date Completed: _____

2. **Each leader: Come up with 6-10 people who might be interested in attending your Pondering Pub.**

Pub Rep Invite List: _____

_____

_____

Host Invite List: _____

_____

_____

3. **Come up with a plan of action for when and how you'll invite people to the first Pub.**

Planned Date of First Meeting: _____

Planned Location of First Meeting: _____

Other Key Details: _____

4. **Look over and prepare for the First Meeting Agenda (Linked.)**

Date Completed: _____

Part 4: Decent Structure. Once you've had your first official Pondering, before the end of the night, gauge interest and set the next meeting. Make sure you schedule the next one to maintain interest. Consistency is crucial. Make sure you lay out expectations so people can budget time and know what to expect. Communicate frequently. Sending out a personal reminder text the Monday before and day of your next Pondering helps a lot of people. Create structure. Use the same prayer. Have a similar order of events. The Spirit of The Pondering Pub is in informal connections; thus your structure should be guardrails, not monorails. After 3-5 months of this, the training wheels can come off, and the structure can meld or change.

Remember to stay in contact with Guild Leadership. They will provide the encouragement you need, as well as solutions to any problems you may be facing.
But however it changes, keep things consistent, and communicate frequently.

1. **At the first meeting, set the next meeting date before leaving. (This is a great opportunity to find a date and time that works for most people on a consistent basis.)**

   Proposed Date of Second Meeting: _____

2. **At Ponderings, develop and keep a routine for arrival, beginning, and departure. Encourage repeat attendees to welcome newcomers.**

Have you created your Pub's prayer? (Yes / No)

Are you planning on having an official close? If so, what will it look like? _____

_____

3. **Touch base with Guild Leadership monthly for the 3 months following launch.**

Month 1 Meeting: _____

Month 2 Meeting: _____

Month 3 Meeting: _____

Congrats! If you do all the things above, you will have a solid Pondering! Guild Leadership is poised to help, and we have tons of experience and testimonials to assist you as you begin your journey of Pub Formation. Life changes, and organizations are organic. We wish you the best and **Glory to God for all things.**

Attachment 1:

Leadership Roles + Responsibilities
The Pondering Pub

A primary function of The Pondering Pub is “Ponderings,” gatherings of members called “Ponderers,” to discuss works of truth, beauty, and goodness. For a Pondering to be considered valid, it must meet 3 requirements: It must open in a Christian prayer, it must have the leadership roles assigned, and 2 discussion topics must be had with one of them revolving around a cultural work.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.” - Ecclesiastes

Host	Pub Rep
• Provide Meeting Location • Decide Opening Prayer • Enforce House Rules • Welcome People as they come in • Help Facilitate presentation set up • Call Presentations to Order	• Set + communicate next Pondering • Set agenda for evening • Relay announcements • Introduce presentations • Guide conversation • Set meeting dates with Guild Leadership

Host

The host arranges the meeting place and decides on opening prayer. The meeting place can be the host’s house, a church, a community center, or anywhere the host has permission to use. The host ultimately takes responsibility for actions occurring at the meeting place. Thus, the host lays down any house rules that is binding for all Ponderings occurring at the meeting place. For example, the host may say, “Everyone must leave at 11 PM” or “Shoes off when you enter.” These are called “house rules” and this rule helps the host maintain order and proper rules that visitors may otherwise not know.

Additionally, the host decides on opening prayer. Typically, the host leads in prayer and can use any prayer service, such as the one sponsored by the Pondering Pub, or create their own.

Host is permitted to delegate the duties of hosting and prayer to others, though they are still responsible for what may occur. If a situation arises where the usual host can not be present, but a Pondering still is desired to be held, the Host may delegate the duties of Host to another Pondering Member, with their consent and confirmation of Pub Rep. That Member is temporarily granted all the rights and privileges of Host for that Pondering. Additionally, as mentioned above, the Host may also delegate Prayer Duties to someone else if they won’t be present.

Pub Rep

The Pub Rep is in charge of organizing the Pondering, laying out the agenda of the evening, guiding conversation, and introducing presentations. The Pub Rep tends to be the face of that Pondering, so it is important he/she works closely with the Host.

The Pub Rep is in charge of representing the broader Pondering Pub at each Pondering and ensuring the Pondering Pub policies are being followed. The Pub Rep will be expected to communicate frequently with Chapter Leadership. The Pub Rep also should ensure conversation stays generally on topic, and does not become hostile. Debate is good and encouraged. Hostile conversation should be snubbed.

Attachment 2:

Ideas on Hospitality for Pondering Pubs

One of the key factors in the growth of a Pondering Pub is the cultivation of a warm and inviting atmosphere. For many good ideas about this, I recommend that you look at *Building the Benedict Option: A Guide to Gathering Two or Three Together in His Name* by Leah Libresco (now Leah Libresco Sargent) (Ignatius Press, 2018). This is not a matter of being a perfectionist, but it does mean that you should pay attention to details.

You may want to use a checklist to make sure that you can make your guests as comfortable as possible. The better prepared you are, the more relaxed you'll be, and the easier it will be to deal with situations as they arise.

Clean bathrooms, hand towels, backup supply of toilet paper

Make sure that you can maintain a comfortable temperature for your guests

Convenient seating and comfortable lighting

If your guests will make presentations using a computer, make sure that you have a decent sized monitor available for them to use.

Convenient place for guests to put coats and/or shoes

Convenient place to put out beverages, condiments, and food. (This is especially important if your guests will be bringing food or condiments.) Disposable plates and glasses? Coffee and/or tea? Napkins?

What sort of refreshments will you serve? Homemade or store-bought?

Easy-to-find trash receptacle

Make sure that your artwork will be acceptable to your visitors

If your guests will be bringing children (which may not happen often), you should have some space available for them. (Better yet, consult with the parents ahead of time.)

It can be challenging if the Pondering is meeting at your house or apartment *and* you are also responsible for organizing the evening's activities. In that case, it will be helpful to be as prepared as possible. Don't be surprised if it takes the better part of an evening to assemble your supplies, clean the floor and bathroom, and put last week's debris away. You might want to actually invite a friend (ahead of time, of course) to help you to prepare your place, to take charge of refreshments, to watch the door and welcome guests as they come in, or to help you with cleanup.

In time, you can develop a routine that makes hosting go more smoothly. You may also learn which of your friends is more reliable and willing to help.

Some people struggle with meeting new people, and you will need to be especially sensitive to them. It's a good idea to keep an eye on newcomers to make sure that they are comfortable and get a chance to meet people. It's been my experience that I've had to step away from conversations with my "favorite" people so that I can give some extra attention to people who may need it.

The New Testament views hospitality as an important virtue. You, as the host, will set the tone for the evening. You are providing a setting where people can meet each other, share something of who they are, and hopefully come closer to God as well. This can be a source of great blessing for you and hopefully for everyone who comes.

John Thompson

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