

February 13, 2017

Soma Family, friends, and potential planters—

We're posting this to let you know that the Soma Board and Servant Leadership Team (North American staff team) has decided not to hold a 2017-'19 Round of our church planting training, Soma Sending. While we acknowledge that this may disappoint some leaders and prospective planters in the short term, we see this "pause" as a positive, Spirit-led decision with a long-term view, which will make Soma Sending stronger once we pick it up again, God willing and very likely in Fall 2018.

The prayerful, united decision is primarily based on three factors: 1) protecting and improving the health of our small but growing number of local Soma churches and leaders (which in turn protects and improves the health of Soma Sending immersions/externships), 2) realizing that "truly familial" church planting keeps church leaders and planters together in coaching relationships for at least a year after a planter completes Soma Sending (thus, we need to solidify expectations and capacity, and develop better coaching post-plant), and 3) committing to a season to evaluate, develop, reform, and improve the process, after completing 2.5 rounds of the new training (we knew we'd take a such a season within the first five years of Soma Sending's existence, and it seems from all perspectives that this is the right season to do so).

Currently, 66% of the leaders in the small but quickly-growing Soma family are either *residents* (those who, in general, are looking to plant through a Soma Sending immersion or externship) or *planters* (those who have planted and whose churches are still on their way to becoming a healthy, established Soma church). As we experience these natural and good "growing pains" as a family of churches, we acknowledge that this ratio needs a better balance if we're going to sustain with spiritual and other types of health.

In this yearlong pause, we'll suggest varied steps for potential planters to prayerfully consider:

- *If you're already part of a Soma Church and were looking to step into a more overt immersion*, please talk with whichever leader in your church works most closely with planting/leader development. Many elements of the "immersion/externship" side of Soma Sending can be initiated without the formalized process of planter training, so you and your local leaders can begin your development toward planting.
- *If you were hoping to move to become part of a Soma Church for an immersion*, we've found it beneficial for potential residents to make such a move several months before you'd start Soma Sending anyway. It's incredibly helpful to give several months to adjusting to your new city, and to *experiencing* the gospel-fluent life, mission, and ministry of a Soma Church, and starting to *lead within* such a church, before you commit to *starting a church* in this vein. Ben Connelly is happy to help connect you with local Soma leaders, or you're welcome to contact individual church leaders on your own.
- *If you're already in the process of forming a core team/plant and were hoping to participate in Soma Sending as an extern*, we hope to supply you with Saturate and former Soma Sending resources, relationships with Soma leaders near you as possible, and some context for coaching/conversation as it relates to planting. We're in process of working out exactly what this looks like, but want to love you well as a potential Soma Plant & Soma family member, even as we pause our official planter training.

For any of these situations, a pause in the training does not inherently slow your planting process (though we acknowledge that it may). While Soma Sending officially runs for two school years, each planter is unique: in other rounds of Soma Sending, some planters have completed the training but are sent out mid-process, as their Immersion/Externship Coach deems them ready. Others have planted before ever starting Soma Sending, and have been served by the process. Still others end up needing more time before planting, and end up remaining as residents after the two-school-year process wraps up. So a “pause” from the set training does not automatically mean a 365-day delay in your planting process.

Finally, whether you’re in any of the categories above, or if you fit a category we haven’t mentioned and would like to know your options, or if you have any other questions about Soma Sending, please email [ben.connelly@wearesoma.com](mailto:ben.connelly@wearesoma.com) so we can make sure and get back in touch with you by early 2018 and let keep you on our radar as Soma Sending gears back up.

We’re truly grateful for your interest in Soma Sending, apologize if this pause causes any inconvenience, and ask for your prayers: especially that this season of intentional slowing would be disproportionately fruitful as we consider how to better serve God’s kingdom and potential church planters going forward.

On behalf of the Soma Board and SLT, thank you for your prayers and understanding,



Ben Connelly  
Director of Church Planting, Soma  
[ben.connelly@wearesoma.com](mailto:ben.connelly@wearesoma.com)