

A Proposal for Starting “Missional Model” Churches

Core Values

In this section five values are articulated that would help guide the activities of a Missional Church. These basal commitments have been drawn from research, personal exposure to new churches and participation in postmodern ministries. Little attempt has been made to defend the values with Biblical references in this paper; though each has substantial scriptural support.

1. Incarnational Ministry

A Missional Church is committed to “ministry on the streets.” Leaders will draw inspiration for ministry by the knowing people in the neighborhoods they live in and by knowing Jesus whom they follow. Activities associated with this value take a church into the lives of people who need to know Jesus and communicates grace and truth with words and deeds that are meaningful to them.

A Missional Church will be focused on identifying leaders and equipping them with knowledge, skills and character to send them out as credible representatives. They will preferably be sent out as a community so that they will more fully represent the body of Christ in their neighborhoods. Raising and sending a diversity of leaders with appropriate levels of support will be a primary activity of a Missional Church as it seeks to incarnate the person of Christ for their neighbors.

2. Authentic Community

Missional Churches own the importance of being the Body of Christ. Substitutes for real interaction will not be acceptable. One key activity will be creating space for people to meet with one another and meet with God. Gatherings will include time for learning, worship, prayer, ministry to one another and neighbors, all done in an climate of “being together”.

The hectic schedule of contemporary society often works against “being together” and for this reason demands that new types of gatherings be developed that accomplishes multiple objectives. People will need to be trained to prepare themselves to make the most of meetings they attend. This preparation will be as attractive to seekers as well as members. Part of developing an authentic community will involve teaching people to practice spiritual disciplines that “ready” them to rest and receive from God as well as to come to share and serve from the overflow of what God has given them.

3. Mobilizing around Gifts

Missional Churches will own the responsibility of developing people, not programs. There will be a genuine concern for life transformation, not just plugging names into organizational charts. The Clergy vs. Layperson divide will begin to fade as the church is organized around necessary roles and gifts rather than titles and positions.

The value for gifts mobilization extends opportunities for significant involvement to all the people involved in the community. Even, Pre-Christian disciples will serve at appropriate levels of involvement. As individuals grow in Christ, their gifts and passions will become more obvious to those around them. Affirming strengths in people will be a recognizable pattern in a Missional Church. The value for mobilization will strengthen

the church's ability to remain adaptable in the midst of great change. Expressing gifts will happen as a regular part of meetings together and will not be the domain of a privileged few.

4. Social Justice

Missional Churches are not satisfied to be good for Christians, but bad for the rest of society. As globalization causes people to interact with other cultures and economies it will not be satisfying to participate in churches that hide from the reality experienced in other parts of world. Christian leaders will find ways to invite people to participate in making right that which is broken and unjust. Simple and even complex acts of justice will be pursued as a way to intentionally fulfill the commands of Christ to "Love our Neighbor". Missional Churches will find expressions for social justice and become a transformational force in their cities.

One way to become more active is for Churches to develop and send "laborers in the harvest." Jesus taught us that the fields are ripe. Souls are ready to respond. Where injustice, greed, hunger and despair exist there are people receptive to the power of the gospel to transform lives.

5. Passionate Spirituality

Authentic, passionate worship will be one of the hallmarks of a Missional Church plant. Proclamation of the gospel message will be consistent with the genuine expressions of a renewed heart. Worship as performance will not be palatable. Instead a Missional Church will take time to train members to disengage from the world and meet with God. A Missional Church will be a House of Prayer for all people and draw them

into relationship with God (Isaiah 56). In this way, the authentic worshipping community will maintain a prophetic posture in their city, calling people to consider the worth of the eternal God of creation and welcoming them to join His Kingdom work.

Ministry Milestones

In this section I seek to articulate a pathway to starting a Missional Church that continues through to reproduction. While some of these Milestones require a preceding step, it is also true that many of the steps maybe taken simultaneously with others on the path. Unlike taking a hike, starting a new church doesn't necessarily start at the "beginning". Similar activities have been grouped in color coded phases. Launching a Missional Church may look more like a changing kaleidoscope rather than a steady blend of one color into the next, like stripes in a rainbow.

Reproduction may happen in every phase. New leaders, groups, teams and churches may be spun out at varying phases of development. The issue will not be "completion" of a course, but readiness for growth. Leaders will be evaluated on the integrity of their character and their readiness to engage culture in meaningful way. Prayer will not be overlooked because readiness can not be separated from a spiritually empowered leader or from testing a new mission objective for spiritual receptivity.

Again, these Milestones are not an inflexible schedule of events, but rather an attempt to articulate a pathway for a new church to engage their culture, raise servant leaders and send them out as communities. The general five phases might look like:

1. Blue Phase: Considering possibilities, surveying from above.

- **Checking Reality...** testing data gathered through prayer, circumstance and relationships and matching it with objective sources such as experts, established residents or historical research.
- **Discovering Strengths...** New church leaders should have an adequate assessment of their personal and team capabilities.. An assessment of the team's strengths, gifts, passions, vision, assets and liabilities will be essential for mobilizing an authentic community that will represent Christ in their context. In some cases a Missional Church will start initially as a Ministry Team (or "junior varsity" plant) with the objective of gathering and strengthening the team while developing relationships in their neighborhood. Some of the assessment will happen as the team works together and affirms each other's gifts.
- **Gathering Partners...** The new church will look for partners from their network of churches and around their city. Partners will champion the cause of the new church and help with prayer, wise strategy, tangible needs, finances, personnel, meeting places, etc. Not to be overlooked is the need for people who will help the new church with short-term projects or become lasting members of the faith community. Partners help catalyze church planting efforts as it moves into new stages of effectiveness. Partnership also helps more established churches stay connected to ministry in the harvest fields.

Outcome: Operating from a basis of reality with people, places and resources.

Reproduction in this phase might look like two leaders working side by side to consider separate projects but in cooperation with one another. Multiplication happens as they begin gathering separate faith communities to share their mission.

2. Red Phase: Getting connected, becoming grounded

- **Starting Close...** A Missional Church is likely to emerge out of personal relationships within a neighborhood. The initial faith community will help each other build new friendships and expand their circle of relationships. This does not exclude the possibility of becoming intentional about broadening relational connections through events, participation in city organizations, etc
- **Going Deep...** the emerging faith community will practice “Life Together”. An authentic way of living, supporting, encouraging and empowering one another. This Milestone will involve practicing spiritual disciplines as well as the basic commands of Christ such as proclaiming Christ and baptizing new believers.
- **Mobilizing Teams...** at the same time that authentic community is formed, task teams are likely to develop. They will share a common life with communities, but have either short term assignments or enduring missions that help the church develop and carry out their objective to establish a church “on a hill” and faith communities in new locations.

Outcome: An authentic faith community established for a defined neighborhood.

Reproduction in this phase could involve developing apprentice leaders who share in the growth of the community and deployment of teams. Establishing habits and using tools that will aid in the reproductive process.

3. White Phase: Bringing clarity through distinctives

- **Reinforcing Vision...** Missional Churches will find ways to harness the imagination of a people who share a common purpose. The church will articulate a message that not only draws out profoundly significant activities, but also significant ways of being the body of Christ.
- **Living Values...** A Missional Church will be characterized by a particular life together. Those entering the community will be trained in the values and learn to experience the blessing of a shared life. Values might be lived out in the following ways:
 - **Daily Practices** – Bible reading, prayer, conversations, devotions...
 - **Weekly Rhythms** – Service Project, Gatherings, Worship Assembly, Sabbath Rest...
 - **Monthly Reflections** – Retreats, Goal Setting, Projects, Team Meetings...
 - **Annual Seasons** - Themes could be observed like: Advent, Renewal and Harvest.
- **Strengthening Relationships...** A new church will provide venues for people to grow in their relationship with God, be challenged with new information and become connected with others through shared experience. In so doing a community will share a common mission. One aspect of strengthening relationships would be through both private and public worship assemblies characterized by:
 - ✓ Simple, reproducible forms of worship
 - ✓ Interactive and participatory forms of liturgy
 - ✓ Opportunities to Connect with Resources and Training Events
 - ✓ Modeling of values for ministry on the street through reporting, etc.
 - ✓ Storytelling, Creative Expression, Music, Multi-media, etc.

Outcome: Relationships are strengthened through common purpose and shared Experience.

Reproduction involves training leaders and church staff who articulate Vision, Values and Mission so that others can join in. Readied leaders will be sent to guide others in the development of a similar expression of their shared life.

4. Green Phase: Springing to life and expanding beyond the original core.

- **Multiplying Groups/Sending Servants...** In a Missional Church these are often the same step. Groups don't multiply without leaders; and groups take care to develop servants who will shepherd the lives of the faith community.
- **Connecting Members...** The Missional Church will take care to communicate well with emerging groups and leaders as they are sent. Group members will desire and benefit from relationships with others in their church. Interdependence will be seen as a strength and will facilitate care and mission beyond the scope of group leaders or church staff.
- **Broadening Support...** Missional churches will benefit from organizing legally as a non-profit entity with the capacity to receive funds. Some churches will have paid staff especially to facilitate the development of leaders and communications. The Church Staff will function as equippers, coaches, and support personnel to empower the body for ministry.

Outcome: Groups and leaders empowered to develop new pools of relationships.

Reproduction is most obvious in this phase. Leaders are actually sent. New apprentices are welcomed and developed. Churches have systems to sustain growth and reproduction.

5. Yellow Phase: Shining the light and increasing influence.

- **Building Bridges ...** Missional churches are characterized by their prophetic role in their neighborhoods and cities. For this reason they network with other churches and ministries as well as entities in the civic and business world.
- **Going Public...** While the Missional Churches activities are not hidden from public view many of them will involve known participants and the people they invite. At some point a Missional Church will Launch a public forum, worship assembly, or ongoing event as a way to accelerate the pace and reach of their public profile. This will not be at the expense of living and working as an authentic community.
- **Reproducing Rapidly...** In the phase of increasing influence a Missional Church will take additional steps to expand their mission through reproduction by launching new Mission Teams, empowering mission strategists and mobilizing Prayer Initiatives for new locations. In some cases the Missional Church would even send a “Junior Varsity” church while supporting basic administrative as a “home” operation. Such a sent church would be readied to engage their culture with the gospel, but not have the resources to be self-sustaining.

Outcome: Public ministries launched effectively.

Reproduction of the Missional Church will be seen as normal, healthy and a response of obedience to God.

Review of the Five Phases

1. Blue Phase: Considering possibilities, surveying from above.

Checking Reality... Discovering Strengths... Gathering Partners...

Outcome: Operating from a basis of reality with people, places and resources.

2. Red Phase: Getting connected, becoming grounded

Starting Close... Going Deep... Mobilizing Teams...

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Reinforcing Vision... Living Values... Strengthening Relationships...

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