

(MISSION)AL
COMMUNITIES



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The Problem

People don't know Jesus. Since we launched the Avenue we've stated that we want to be a church for the city of Louisville and the University of Louisville. To this point we have encouraged, begged, and pleaded with people to engage the world around them. We have seen some results. We've baptized people. But no one would fool themselves into believing that we are seeing extraordinary results. Nor would anyone say that all of the people that call the Avenue home are actively engaged in serving the community and being a blessing to it. This isn't primarily from lack of care or an unwillingness to do so. It is instead from a lack of knowing what to do. People want to live the way God has called them to, but there seems to be a lot of confusion as to what to do and how to do it.

The Solution

What we need is a comprehensive plan for engaging people to reach their communities with the good news of Jesus as well as growing in faith together. Up to this point we have seen these as primarily two separate activities. We have app groups for growing as Christ followers and service projects as ways to engage the community (we've done a really bad job at this.) But when you look at the life of Jesus there seems to be a different way to approach this. He gathered together a group of 12 willing servants and then lived life together engaging the community and growing their faith. When he talked about faith it was in the context of a life being shared together. When they served it was part of a life together. It wasn't a random Saturday event. After the ascension, the disciples grew and served in the rhythm of everyday life, not as a scheduled activity. What if we could do that again? We think we can. The term we're using for this natural rhythm of life that incorporates disciple making, serving, and growing is a missional community.

What is a Missional Community (MC)?

A Missional Community is a gospel community (FAMILY) that lives out the mission of God together (MISSIONARIES) in a specific area or to a particular network of people by demonstrating the gospel in tangible forms (SERVANTS) and sharing the gospel to others – both those who believe it and those who are being exposed to it.

To Clarify...A Missional Community is NOT primarily:

- A Small Group
- A Bible Study
- A Support Group
- A Social Activist Group
- A Weekly Meeting

Why Missional Communities and Not Something Else?

If we believe that the goal of the Church is to make disciples who make disciples, and if we want to be a community living like Jesus changed by him and changing the city for his glory, then missional communities are the simplest structure and most effective way to do this. Because missional communities engage everyone in the church, every person is contributing to the mission not just the most talented or gifted. Because each group is focused on a specific area, the mission field has real definition and isn't fuzzy or unclear. Because the rhythms of life in an MC require regular interaction with non believers, opportunities to show and share the gospel are more abundant. Because the goal is to create reproducing disciples, personal growth is a must and not simply an option.

How Do Missional Communities Work?

Low Control High Accountability

Part of our goal is releasing leaders to pursue the creative dreams that God has put on their hearts for mission. Some of these will be to neighborhoods, others to networks of relationships, and almost none of those ideas will have been thought up by the senior church leadership. In fact, it might be a mission focus that the pastor would never in a thousand years think of, yet they back it and encourage it! This is what is meant by low control those with the most power i.e. those at the center don't hold onto it but release it to those the mission vision (i.e. those who are on the edge of the church where it touches the wider secular world).

Yet in this climate of expecting to say yes, leaders of those new missional expressions of church need to be deeply accountable for their character and the way in which they lead. They cannot simply be given access to some money, the church photocopier and space on the bulletin and left alone to do whatever they like. Even if they are incredibly mature and experienced, they will not be as effective as they could be. And of course, if they have areas of immaturity or inexperience, it could be a recipe for disaster. This is what is meant by high accountability. So the staff of the Avenue will not seek to control, but they will seek to walk with MC leaders with high levels of life on life accountability. This is accomplished through huddles

Huddles:

Each Missional Community leader will not only lead a huddle, they will also participate in a huddle. Huddle groups are not bible studies. They are not accountability groups. They are however discipleship driven. Huddles occur on a regular basis. There are two types of huddles.

The first type of huddle occurs between the members of a specific MC. During this time they share successes and failures and make sure everyone is growing in the faith.

The second type of huddle occurs with the MC leaders and the supervising staff member or elder. This is to once again reinforce the concept of low control but high accountability. This also serves as a time for MC leaders to learn from each other and encourage each other.

Huddle Questions inside an MC:

Movement, response, transformation, multiplication

- 1) – How is God moving in & around your life?
- 2) – How are you responding to Gods movement?
- 3) – How are you changing and what is changing around you?
- 4) -- Who are you missionally connecting to or serving?
- 5) – What are you learning from Gods word and through prayer?

Rhythm of Life

We believe that the call to missional communities is not the call to change everything but the call to reorient your normal rhythm of life so that you can live on mission. Our desire is to see the Holy Spirit rule & reign in every area of our life. We no longer want to see mission as an individual activity that happens at an established time during a serve day. Mission happens in

every crack & crevice of our life. So we don't stop playing basketball weekly, we just start asking the Lord to open opportunities for mission to happen. Our desire is to stop simply doing the things we love with other groups of believers but to join other groups with people who have not yet found Christ.

You begin to seek a **“person of peace”** –

As you begin to start relationships, some people will connect to you and relationships will flow naturally. Christ tells us to stay with a person of peace, which means we invest in those relationships praying for gospel fruit. Often times the person of peace is actually the gatekeeper to the community. The amazing part about pursuing mission in this way is that mission stops being yet another thing we cram into our busy lives. Instead it becomes about bringing the hope of the gospel to where we already are. The healthiest missional communities are reaching out in their context in ways that seem natural and life-giving.

Lightweight & low maintenance

We desire to create models that are not all consuming. We are not looking for a complex model that quickly becomes a monster that we cannot feed or tame. We are not looking for models that won't work without large amounts of resources or require large investments from our staff team. We want to find ways to equip all types of people from all types of backgrounds to become kingdom leaders and planters of missional communities. We do not need to create multiple hoops to jump through or multiple challenges for getting involved.

Every Gift Matters

In a typical small group model some gifts are elevated above others. In fact in most models everyone desires a teaching gift even if they have no ability to teach. In MC groups, every gift matters. If you are naturally a great connector of people and you naturally develop relationships with people who are far from God, you are needed just as much as the person in the room with the bible college degree & the ability to teach. In each of our MC's our desire is to see individual gifts unleashed so that the entire community benefits!

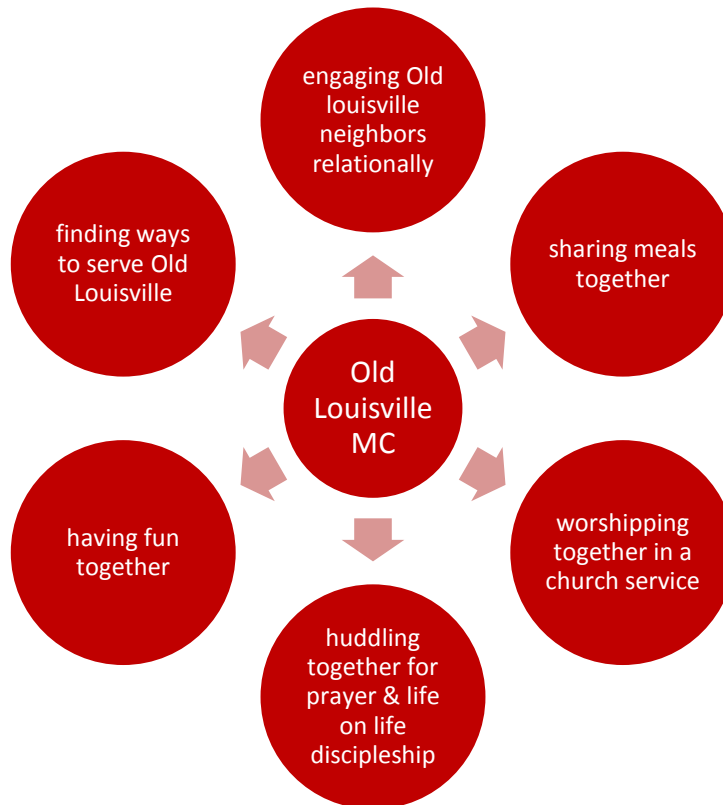
Addition leads to Multiplication

Our goal from day one is for apprentices to become leaders & for existing missional communities to give birth to new Missional Communities. So the mindset from day one is that each group will grow through addition and eventually groups grow through multiplication.

What Does a Missional Community do?

Missional Communities (MC's) are intentional about reorienting their life around the mission of God. What this looks like on a practical level is that the members of an MC begin to pursue relationships and spend time with the people in their target area. Likewise they prune away anything that doesn't match up with this. An MC will spend lots of time together throughout a typical week eating together, growing together, serving together, and worshipping together.

What This Looks Like (using an Old Louisville MC as an example)

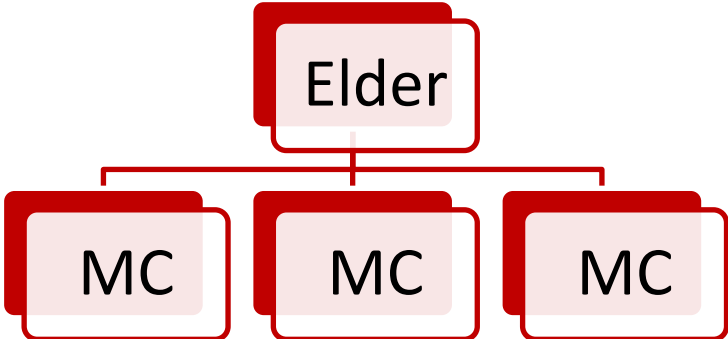
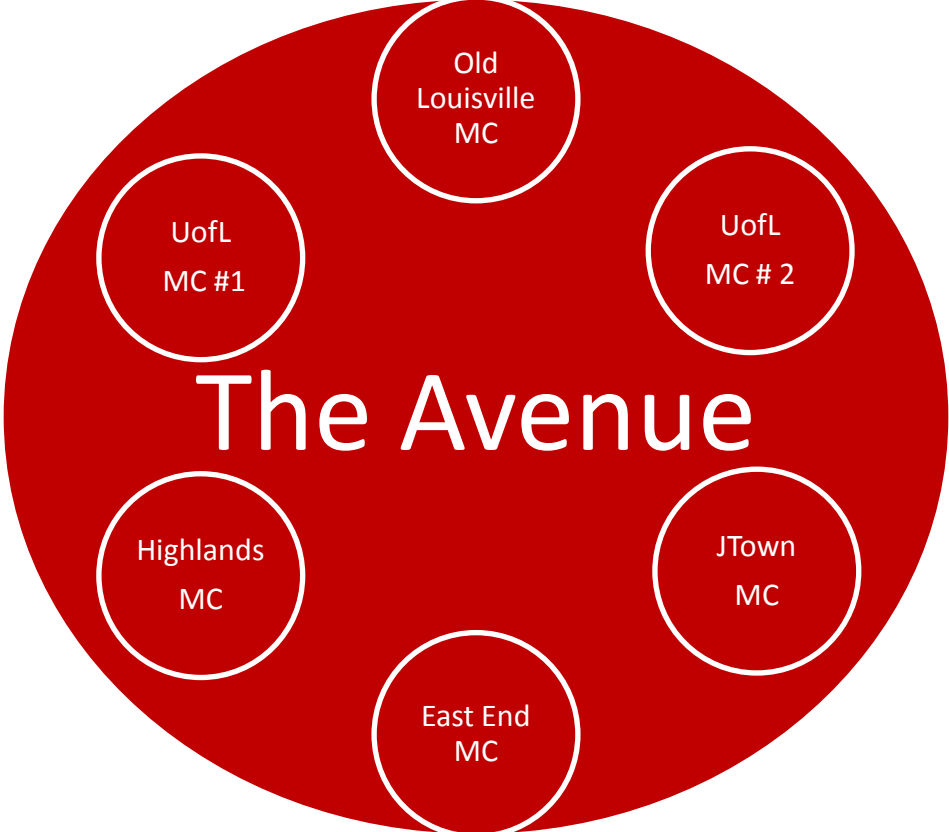


What Does a Typical week look like?

There is no typical week. But here are the rhythms that should be a part of a missional community: Worshipping together, eating at least one meal a week together, eating at least one meal a week with someone outside the faith, coming together for mutual encouragement and accountability biweekly in a huddle, intentionally serving together at least monthly. The goal is to get into a rhythm of life that allows for relationships to be built between the members of an MC and those outside the faith in the target area. By intentionally focusing one's time and efforts in a specific area with specific people we increase the chances of bringing someone from nonbeliever to a reproducing disciple.

How do we structure this as a Church?

MC Structure



Leadership Path



- **MC Participant**- Someone who is actively engaged in a missional community
- **Project Leader**- Someone who leads a specific community engagement. This is not to be confused with the regular relationships all MC participants are to have with non believers. This person leads a specific service or outreach.
- **MC Apprentice**- Someone who has been identified through their faithfulness to God and has had success building relationships with non believers who has also succeeded in leading a project. This person will begin an intentional apprenticeship which lasts six months to a year.
- **MC Leader**- See the following pages for a more detailed description. In short someone who prays for, and leads a group of people committed to a particular place with a particular mission
- **Elder**- Someone who meets the requirements in 1 Timothy and Titus and has demonstrated their ability to lead an MC that has successfully birthed another MC
- **Campus Pastor** -An elder who has successfully overseen several MC's and is ready to serve in vocational ministry overseeing all operations and MC's at a particular campus of the Avenue within the city of Louisville
- **Lead Pastor**- This person is someone who leads this model in a particular city.
- **Network Leader**- This person serves as a lead pastor in their own city while giving encouragement, wise advice, and counsel to other lead pastors who have been sent to new locations.

The goal is not to move up the ladder nor is this an org chart for reporting. The goal is to make reproducing disciples. But for those who have the capacity, faithfulness, and character, this is the way we make sure they are maximizing their potential. No one can skip steps. If you can't serve, you can't lead. Also it is perfectly ok if someone never becomes an MC leader. Someone who is faithfully engaging the lost, serving them, and deepening their faith is a success. We mustn't look at this chart as something which implies greatness as one moves up.

We haven't done this before. How do we get started?

New MC's either start from scratch or are birthed from an existing group. Whether a new MC is formed "out of nothing" or one of our existing groups is ready to multiply, there are three things new groups must have in place before forming: a LEADER, a CORE, and a MISSION.

1. **LEADER/ A called and qualified leader.** This leader must sense a) God's call, b) work through the Missional Leader description, and c) meet the leadership qualifications.
2. **CORE/ A healthy community living out gospel-centered missional community.** Healthy communities are a core of people that a) practice consistent community b) are engaged in mission, c) share leadership and d) keep the gospel central. An initial core size must be at least 6-8. If you can't convince anyone to come with you, you aren't ready to lead them.
3. **MISSION/ A new group starts with a clear missional focus.** The MC could be aligned with a local non-profit to serve monthly, or focus on engaging a particular group of people. This clearly defined mission must be accompanied by a plan for engagement (covenant). Whether you work with a non-profit or not, your ultimate missional focus should be people. Identify a place or network of people and develop a plan to engage them with the gospel. The easiest way to do this is to work through the covenant together.

Forming a Missional Community

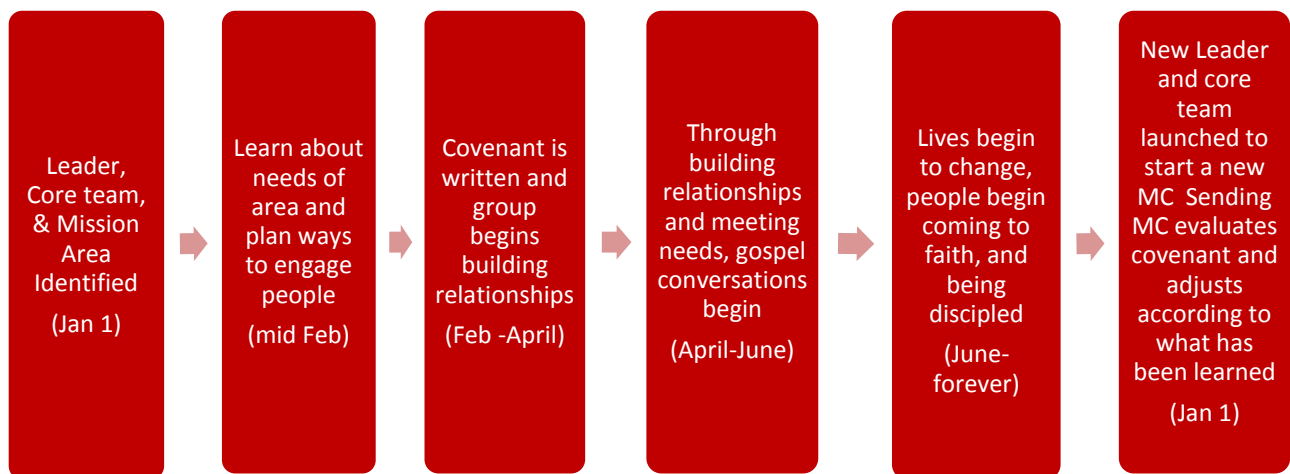
1. **Start with shared leadership** While there is a point leader in each MC, leaders are sharing responsibilities and letting people use their giftedness for the benefit of the group
2. **Build a foundation on the Gospel** The reason for forming an MC is not to earn God's love or to prove our worthiness. Instead it comes from the overflow of the gospel in our lives.
3. **Live with intentionality** Instead of engaging in many activities and relationships scattered across different social circles, limit yourself to making a deeper impact by concentrating your time, talents, relationships, and resources in a specific area or people network.
4. **Have a clearly defined mission** Ask God to clarify the mission. Who you are called to make disciples of? What area of Louisville or what network of relationships are you going to invest in? Begin to pray intentionally for the mission. Leaders clearly state the mission and call others to participate in it.
5. **Begin to reorient the life of the community around the mission** Shape the weekly schedule to flow with the cultural schedule. Pay close attention to "seasons" and patterns in the culture of the mission field. Join in the rhythm of life of the community by being "the good news" to it. People should see that Christians bring real love and life with them.
6. **Display and declare the Good News of the Gospel** Engage the community with acts of service and words of encouragement. Be the people who serve by doing the tasks everyone else avoids. Think of Jesus washing feet. We must be the "feet washers" of the community. As we get to know our neighbors, look for ways to share faith without beating a person over the head.

7. Stay Connected to an Elder Elders oversee our MC's. We believe in a model of low control but high accountability. So while an MC is free to pursue the ideas and activities they decide on, all MC's are accountable for how they choose to use their time and resources. Elders help coach MC's as they encounter difficulties and encourage them to keep trying when it gets tough.

8. Plan for Multiplication from the beginning Plan for multiplication from the beginning. Identify apprentice leaders (2 Timothy 2:2). Intentionally share leadership of the community (Leadership development is best in community)

9. Birth new Missional Communities Talk openly about the future sending of some to start new MC's. As leadership is identified and being equipped, release some to start a new community. Keep in mind the mix of emotions – celebration (newborn baby) and grieving (children leaving home)

Timeline for an MC (to make this easy assume this begins Jan. 1)



What happens when an MC is ready to launch a new Community?

As Missional Communities grow and leaders emerge, multiplication becomes necessary. Missional Communities multiply by following 3 steps for healthy multiplication: VISION, INCUBATION, and CELEBRATION.

1. **VISION/** A leader must **articulate, pray, and cast vision** for multiplication. All Missional Community leaders should be able to clearly *articulate* the 3 Marks of MC Formation {LEADER-CORE-MISSION} and the 3 Steps of MC Multiplication {VISION-INCUBATION-CELEBRATION}. Leaders should cast *vision* for multiplication from day one. Bring up the topic of multiplication regularly at a) the beginning of a huddle and b) during prayer time. Ask God to multiply your MC for the sake of the Gospel!

When should we multiply?

Once the qualitative marks are in place, and a quantity of 10-15 people have been reached in the “mother group”, and a qualified leader is called, you may begin the multiplication process.

When a MC member moves to another area of the city, or the group begins to get too large (15-20 Christians), the leader should use it as an opportunity to teach multiplication.

2. **INCUBATION/** A period of time that allows a **new leader-core-mission to form** within the mother group. Incubation begins when a qualified leader is called. The current MC leader and community confirm their calling to lead and help them form a core of 6-8 people. Future leader begins attending MC leader huddles.

How do you incubate?

New MCs incubate when a future leader gathers a “core” people who want to join them. This core gets together for meals, prayer, and development of an identified MISSION. This newly forming community stays committed to their current MC until they are ready to multiply (until LEADER-CORE-MISSION are all in place).

3. **MULTIPLICATION/** A new group starts by **celebrating the Spirit’s work** in growing the church.

Multiplication is not a divorce; it is a birth and must be CELEBRATED! The first week of the new MC gathering, the sending MC attends and throws a party for the new group. If the host home isn’t large enough go to a *local* restaurant

Why celebrate multiplication?

This party is to celebrate the birth of a new community, to rejoice that there will be more Gospel, community, and mission influence in our city. It also serves to encourage the new group and strengthen the mother group.

This does not mean that it isn’t hard. Graduating from high school is a cause for celebration but that doesn’t mean it isn’t hard to leave home and say goodbye as you enter a new stage of life. In the same way it can be hard to say goodbye to people you’ve been living on mission with for a year or two.

LEADING A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

As a leader of a Missional Community you need to think like a Church Planter with a Core Group

- Ask yourself, “If this group were to eventually become a core group of a new church plant, what would I do?”
- Keep in mind that you will need to train and prepare for the ministry of making disciples and the leadership of new Missional Communities
- Prepare them to be a new expression of the Church some day

Key Role of Missional Community Leaders

A Community living like Jesus (Missionaries) changed by Him (family) and changing the city (servants) for His Glory.

1. MISSIONARIES

- Do a historical study of the neighborhood, city, people groups, etc...
- Look for things that already exist that demonstrate the story of the culture
- Identify things that exist that are open doors for the gospel and demonstrations of gospel barriers
- Overall, look for where the Story of God and the Story of the Culture can intersect
- Identify celebrations the culture is engaged in that you can participate with and still display the gospel

Engage: determine the most appropriate forms through which the community you’re called to would feel blessed and it would be “Good News.” Consider one of the Seven Pillars as a starting point: Education, Business, Media/Arts, Health Care, Government, Service Organizations, and Disenfranchised

2. FAMILY

- Become familiar with each other’s stories
- Grow in speaking the truth in love to each other
- Develop Pastoral Care skills within the group
- Make sure everyone is in a discipleship, nurturing and accountability huddle
- Regularly gather at the Avenue for community worship through teaching, singing, sharing, etc.
- Regularly spend time doing life together
- Throw parties and events to demonstrate to the community what abundant life is like (b-days, anniversaries, baby showers, weddings receptions, holidays, etc...)

Engage: love one another through tangible acts such as encouragement, gifts, time spent, acts of kindness, etc...

3. SERVANTS

- Ask questions of neighbors and community leaders, looking for real and felt needs
- Discover the hopes the community has and gaps in resources available
- Pay attention to the stories of your missional community and where the needs in the community intersect with the passions, gifts, talents and experiences of the MC
- Identify the regular celebrations in your community and serve at them
- Connect meeting needs to celebration (i.e. A park clean-up day with a BBQ at the end)
- As you become aware of the community needs and the MC resources identify a specific area or issue that you will lead the MC to regularly serve in (One of the seven pillars)
- Make serving in that area a regular focus of your MC
- As you serve in one area look for bridges into the other areas
- Eat at least one meal a week with someone who doesn't yet believe the gospel

4. DISCIPLES

- Every Christ follower who models the pattern and rhythms of their life to imitate Jesus.
- This implies both knowing and doing.
- This is a lifestyle not a singular activity or belief.
- Be proactive in pursuing Christ.
- Don't live off of someone else's faith.

Missional Community Leader Role Description

The primary focus of your MC is making disciples of Jesus who make disciples. With this focus, the goal is to multiply your MC into two MCs within 12-18 months.

Personal Discipleship

- Daily prayer and reflection on the gospel in your own life. (What is God saying and teaching you today?)
- Regular time in the Word (What are you studying? What are you learning?)
- Participation in and lead huddles
- Participation in a finance and budget class (to engage the community costs money, therefore; your financial house needs to be in order or on its way.)
- Consistent (at least monthly) and substantial communication with your elder
- Personal Quarterly Evaluation with your elder.

Leading Others in Discipleship

- Identify an apprentice in your MC and prepare them to lead their own MC when you multiply.
- You have several (2-3+) relationships with not-yet-believers that you are intentionally discipling to Christ. (You have a plan on what your next steps with that person are)
- You are aware of and helping to facilitate everyone in your MC having at least 1 person they are intentionally discipling to Christ. (You are helping them with an intentional plan)
- Biweekly check-in with your people on how they are proceeding in their personal discipleship and discipling of others (huddles)
- Facilitate regular, weekly contact among the people in your MC (not including your weekly dinner) so that you live increasing like a family on mission
- Prayer for each individual in MC – weekly at minimum
- Regularly ask how your people are doing at being servants? Who have they personally engaged this week? The rhythm of engagement is an important indicator for seeing if a person is prayerfully, intentionally listening to God on behalf of others and being obedient to his call. Lead your people to seek to engage at least 3 people each week and make time to listen to and celebrate those encounters!

Leading a Community of Disciples

- Creation and adoption of MC covenant with detailed mission included (your elder can give you templates and sample covenants that will assist you in this process)
- Regular review (quarterly) of MC covenant and assessment of effectiveness. Celebrate the “wins” and evidences of grace in each of the Identity & Rhythms. (How are we doing at living out our identity in gospel rhythms and keeping our covenant?) [Family, Missionary, Servant]
- Regularly leading your people in:
 1. Prayer for not-yet-believers
 2. Serving not-yet-believers
 3. Speaking/sharing the gospel verbally
- Facilitate the community getting to know and be with those that each of the others is discipling. Weekly or bi-weekly interaction. (Intentionally creating opportunities for the MC to get to know the people that each other is discipling, thus growing and incorporating them into the MC life)
- Lead MC through finance and budgeting plan once a year

Missional Community Leader Personal Evaluation

Please discuss any of these areas that you need help in with your coach/elder. This is not a checklist for the elder/MC Leader to work through. Instead this is for an MC leader to use in evaluating their own heart.

1. Prayerfully read through 1Timothy 3. How am I doing at growing in these areas?
2. Is my love for the Word growing? Do I increasingly desire to spend time in the Word and do I find myself drawing wisdom and strength from the Word daily?
3. Am I growing in the awareness of my own sinfulness and need for grace?
4. Am I growing in my ability to clearly articulate the gospel in any setting?
5. Am I protecting the "eye gate"? Particularly in not participating in the viewing of pornography?
6. Am I trusting the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen me in leading my MC? Or am I doing it in the flesh and feeling burned out?
7. Do I feel joy, excitement, confidence, awe and gratitude when I talk/think about Jesus?
8. Do I live with a confidence that: God is great –So I do not have to be in control
 - Indicators that I may not believe this:
 - I am over-bearing
 - I am inflexible or risk averse
 - I am impatient with people
 - I avoid responsibility?
9. Do I live with a confidence that: God is glorious –So I do not have to fear others
 - Indicators that I may not believe this:
 - I avoid confrontation
 - I often crave approval
 - I behave differently around certain people
 - I pretend or hide my true self
10. Do I live with a confidence that: God is good –So I do not have to look elsewhere
 - Indicators that I may not believe this:
 - I sometimes feel ministry is a burden
 - I often complain
 - I make people feel a burden of duty
 - I don't stick at things and complete projects or tasks
11. Do I live with a confidence that: God is gracious –So I do not have to prove myself
 - Indicators that I may not believe this:
 - I take criticism and failure badly
 - I find it hard to relax
 - I am proud or envy the success of others
 - I make people feel guilty

If married:

- Have you been having regular date nights with your wife?
- How are you doing at leading your wife (and kids) spiritually?
- Are you closer and more intimate with your wife now than you were 6 months ago?

Elder & MC Leader Quarterly Conversation Guide

When an Elder meets with an MC leader the elder is looking at two primary things. How is the MC Leader doing as a person and as a leader? Both are important. An elder should also be looking to see if any of the MC leaders under their care could be apprenticed as future elders.

Below is a guide to think through when meeting with an MC Leader. Not all questions must be asked instead this is a guide to help frame the conversation. Obviously there are too many to ask in one sitting.

Questions to ask when you meet with an MC Leader

Good Questions about Relationships

- How are things at home?
- What about your family life is going well? What would you like to change?
- What are your relationships like at work?
- What is the most challenging relationship in your life? The most rewarding?

Good Questions about Physical Balance

- How is your work schedule?
- What does a good night's rest look like for you?
- Where is your energy level on a scale of 1-10?
- What about your physical health do you want to change? What parts of that are in your control? What parts are out of your control?

Good Questions about Mental Learning

- What have you been learning lately, from the Biblical teaching you've been exposed to, in your own times of Bible study?
- What does God want you to learn through the particular circumstances in which you find yourself?
- What books are you reading to sharpen your skills, to challenge your growth as a Christ-follower, or to stretch your understanding of your culture?
- How have you applied what you are learning through your huddle or MC?
- What thoughts have been dominating your mind lately? Are these thoughts having a positive or negative effect on your life?
- Are they thoughts that are pleasing to God? Is there something that needs to be corrected in your thought life?

Good Questions about Spiritual Health

- Does your relationship with God feel close and intimate right now? If not, can you think of something in your life that is standing in the way (i.e. busyness, sin, apathy, etc.)?
- What combinations of spiritual disciplines do you need in your daily life to keep your heart intimate with God?
- How could I help hold you accountable to the practice of those disciplines?
- How has God been speaking to you lately? What has He been saying?

Good Questions about MC Leadership

Work through MC Leader Role description and evaluate how this is going.

Engaging the Community Questions to Ask

1. Do you know the story of the particular community or culture that you are called to?
2. If you know the story, what are the barriers to the gospel? List them.
3. What is the message and medium of the gospel for your community? Through what tangible forms would you demonstrate the gospel to your community? List 3 tangible ways to demonstrate the Gospel in “rhythm”.
4. In your community, do you know the personal life stories of any unbelievers? What are some ways you can get to know the personal stories of unbelievers around you?
5. What are the forms of celebration that unbelievers in your culture engage in?
6. How are you leading (or how could you lead) the believers in your community to either create celebrations that un-believers can engage in or join un-believers in their celebrations?
7. Does your faith community have a clearly identifiable “people group” and mission to whom they are focusing their prayers, activities and resources? If so, who is it? If not, how can you find one?
8. If the answer to #7 is yes, is there a group of believers working together toward that mission on a regular basis? And if so, how?
9. Do the believers that are working on mission together know each other’s life stories? Do you know the stories of the believers you are ministering with? How can you get to know each other’s stories?
10. How often do the believers gather together to eat meals, celebrate and focus on a mission in their community together? What does this look like?
11. What form of serving do you think would best communicate the gospel to the community you live in?
12. Are you able to clearly articulate the Story of God (the gospel narrative)? How can you begin to tell The Story of God in a form that makes sense to your culture? List some ways to start.
13. Are the believers in your community equipped to know the Gospel Narrative (The Story of God) and demonstrate and declare it in culturally appropriate ways in their community? What are some ways you can start NOW to equip them to tell the Story?
14. Would you say that the unbelievers in your community would grieve the loss of your church if you were to “close the doors” and the believers left the community? What would it look like to be the Church in such a way that the city would grieve if you all left?

8 Ways to Get Started

Missional is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life. Mission should be the way we live, not something we add onto life: “As you go, make disciples...”; “Walk wisely towards outsiders”; “Let your speech always be seasoned with salt”; “be prepared to give a defense for your hope”. We can be missional in everyday ways without overloading our schedules. Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Eat with Non-Christians.** We all eat three meals a day. Why not make a habit of sharing one of those meals with a non-Christian or with a family of non-Christians? Go to lunch with a co-worker, not by yourself. Invite the neighbors over for family dinner. If it's too much work to cook a big dinner, just order pizza and put the focus on conversation. When you go out for a meal invite others. Or take your family to family-style restaurants where you can sit at the table with strangers and strike up conversation. Cookout and invite Christians and non-Christians. *Flee the Christian subculture.*

2. **Walk, Don't Drive.** If you live in a walkable area, make a practice of getting out and walking around your neighborhood, apartment complex, or campus. Instead of driving to the mailbox, convenience store, or apartment office, walk to get mail, groceries, and stuff. Be deliberate in your walk. Say hello to people you don't know. Strike up conversations. Attract attention by walking the dog, taking a 6-pack (and share), bringing the kids. Make friends. Get out of your house! Take interest in your neighbors. Ask questions. Pray as you go. *Save some gas, the planet, and some people.*

3. **Be a Regular.** Instead of hopping all over the city for gas, groceries, haircuts, eating out, and coffee, go to the same places. Get to know the staff. Go to the same places at the same times. Smile. Ask questions. Build relationships. *Be a Regular.*

4. **Hobby with Non-Christians.** Pick a hobby that you can share. Get out and do something you enjoy with others. Try City League sports. Local rowing and cycling teams. Share your hobby by teaching lessons. Teach sewing lessons, piano lessons, violin, guitar, knitting, tennis lessons. Be prayerful. Be intentional. Be winsome. Have fun. *Be yourself.*

5. **Talk to Your Co-workers.** How hard is that? Take your breaks with intentionality. Go out with your team or task force after work. Show interest in your co-workers. Pick four and pray for them. Form mom groups in your neighborhood and don't make them exclusively Christian. Schedule play dates with the neighbors' kids. *Work on mission.*

6. **Volunteer with Non-Profits.** Find a non-profit in your part of the city and take Saturday a month to serve your city. Bring your neighbors, your friends, or your small group. Spend time with your church serving your city. *You can do it!*

7. **Participate in City Events.** Instead of playing X-Box, watching TV, or surfing the net, participate in city events. Go to fundraisers, festivals, clean-ups, summer shows, and concerts. Participate missionally. Strike up conversation. Study the culture. Reflect on what you see and hear. Pray for the city. Love the city. *Participate with the city.*

8. **Serve your Neighbors.** Help a neighbor by weeding, mowing, building a cabinet, fixing a car. Stop by the neighborhood association or apartment office and ask if there is anything you can

do to help improve things. Ask your local Police and Fire Stations if there is anything you can do to help them. Get creative. *Just serve!*

Don't make the mistake of making "missional" another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional.

Ways an MC Fails

1) The Missional Community leader doesn't know how to disciple the other leaders in the MC. This can result in a few different outcomes:

- The Missional Community becomes the warped version of the culture they are trying to bring the Kingdom into. The leader doesn't know how to disciple people to be missionaries to a culture, therefore they never truly learn how to be "in the world but not of it." Because of that, they are more influenced by the culture than redeeming the culture they find themselves in. In this case, there is a lot more cultural relevance than there is Jesus.
- The Missional Community becomes a very religious space and is all about who is in and who is out. Doctrine is used as a weapon of defense and not something that helps to describe the reality of God's Kingdom. People who don't know Jesus find the MC the equivalent of running into a brick wall. In this case, there is a lot more law than there is Jesus.
- When people become Christians, there is no one to disciple them as neither the Missional Community leader nor the other leaders in the group know how to disciple people. New believers become stagnant, and the life they were told about in the Gospel never comes to fruition and they become disenfranchised and divisions within the MC start to occur.

2) Lack of a clear mission vision.

Every single Missional Community could say, "We exist to love God, love people and serve the world." The point of a Missional Community is to find a crack or crevice of society where there is a lack of Gospel presence and form a Jesus community in that particular crack/crevice. It's not generic, it's specific. But if you never truly identify the place God has called you to (either a neighborhood or network), or if you don't do the things necessary to incarnate the Gospel in those places, it'll be very difficult to sustain, grow or multiply the MC.

3) The Missional Community isn't part of a larger, worshipping body.

The reality is that life on the missional frontier isn't easy. It's incredibly exciting, an amazing adventure and it's worth every ounce of prayer and effort you put into it...but it really is hard. Because of that, it's really important that Missional Communities regularly cycle into a worship service with a larger group to be reminded they are part of a bigger story, to hear how God is working in places other than just theirs, to hear teaching/preaching for the wider community, to take the sacraments together and to worship with one, unified voice. Another way of putting it: The scattered church gathers in order to scatter. Even another way of putting it: We gather together so mission is sustainable. Missional Communities that operate alone will eventually wither and fall off the vine because it's generally too hard to sustain apart from a wider community.

Missional Community Covenant Template

(THE LOCATION OF YOUR MISSIONAL COMMUNITY)

C O V E N A N T

WHO WE ARE

A Community living like Jesus (Missionaries) changed by Him (family) and changing the city (servants) for His Glory.

Missionaries – We live actively as missionaries sent by Jesus to make disciples.

We believe we are sent to:

- Which PEOPLE group or groups are you focusing in your obedience to Jesus' commission to MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

Family – We see it as our obligation to personally care for one another and those we are sent to.

We will:

- What actions should you engage in so that you are expressing your Gospel identity as Sons of God and brothers and sisters together?
- How will you insure that each of you is involved in regular accountability?
- How will you commit to the "ONE ANOTHERS" that are key to be God's Family together?
- How will you extend the family to those who are still "lost" to the Father?

Servants – We eagerly serve our Missional Community and those we are sent to as a demonstration of the Gospel.

We are committed to serve by:

- How are you specifically going to serve your "who and where"?
- How might you also demonstrate the gospel to each other?
- What specific projects or events do you need to accomplish or get involved in to demonstrate the gospel to your community?
- What does GOOD NEWS look like to the people group you are sent to?
- What specifically will you do to insure that the people you are sent to hear the gospel this year?

HOW WE LIVE

Christ Centered – We set aside regular times to listen to God both backward through scripture and forward through prayer.

We will:

- How will you commit to prayer together?
- In what ways does the community need to grow spiritually this year?
- What would it look like for the group and the individuals to see listening to God as a weekly rhythm?
- What needs to be in place to help you with this?

Party – We regularly gather together to celebrate God’s extravagant blessing.

We will:

- In what ways will you intentionalize celebration together and around what?
- How will you engage in celebrating with the people group God is sending you to?

Engage – We intentionally engage others through words, gifts or actions.

We will:

- How will you intentionally share what you have with each other and those in need?
- How will this get worked out in the context of your mission?
- How will this affect your giving – financially, physically, emotionally, etc...?
- What are some tangible ways you believe God has called your MC to bless others?

Eat – We regularly eat meals with others to invite them into the community of God.

We will:

- What meals will you share with each other?
- How will you invite others to the table with you?
- Where should you go to engage in “Gospel Eating” regularly?

As a follower of Jesus and a child of God I covenant with (THE NAME OF YOUR MISSIONAL COMMUNITY) to live these Gospel Identities and Rhythms in the above manner.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____