**Handout #4-1 – The Missional Church, Part 2**

In order to go into the world to live God’s mission – to establish relationships with people in crisis or hopelessness – congregations must know the needs, ways, language, and lifestyles of the “field of mission” which surrounds it. To be a church in mission to a community, the congregants have to be familiar with the brokenness of that community, so that they can bring appropriate acts and words of wholeness and healing. The church has to understand the oppressive systems at work on its streets so that it may bring justice to people and release from oppression’s grip. The church must understand the stress, fear, and anxiety that plagues the homes of its communities so that it may share forgiveness and love in ways that meet the particular needs of the families who live in those homes.

And yet, increasingly, many congregations are cut off from their communities. In some congregations, the congregants who used to live in the neighborhood no longer do, though they still travel to the church for worship. These same people, who attend worship regularly, no longer have anything in common with, nor do they understand, the needs of the community surrounding the church. In other congregations, long-time members have been unable to adapt church life to meet the needs of younger generations.

It’s very common for aging congregations to perpetuate old models of church life. It’s also common for church activities to become self-focused – meeting only the social needs of congregational members without devoting sufficient energy for helping people live out their Christian calling to serve the larger world. To make matters worse, many congregations have few financial resources to engage in mission in their communities and world because they are spending larger portions of their budget on rising health care costs for their pastors and costly maintenance on their buildings.

Some of these congregations fall into the trap of survivalism, focusing more and more of their energies (and financial resources) on just keeping the church open. Likewise, less and less time, energy, and resources are available to be active in meeting the ministry needs of the larger community and world.

Other congregations realize that simply tweaking worship services and patching up old buildings won’t really help the effort to redevelop ministry. Yet, they don’t have models for church life that go beyond what is called *an attractional model of church life*. Attractional models for congregational life are founded on the premise that a building with good Christian programming and strong worship will “attract” people to it. In this attractional model, there is a ceaseless quest for better programming, more relevant worship, more advertising and larger budgets. In fact, in North American culture, this model has served many churches well until the last decade or so. In a few places, this attractional model can still work. But it is based on the idea that people “should” come to church and that the church’s purpose is to serve its members and participants.

In the “missional” model of church that we explored in the previous session, the church is not a “come to” place, but a “go to” lifestyle. In this model, the people of the church are constantly following God in mission to the world. Yes, the church gathers for worship and discipleship, but it is primarily focused on equipping people to live a Jesus lifestyle amid their daily lives.

Reggie McNeal, in his book **Missional Renaissance**, says, “The missional church is an expression of God’s heart. It serves as an indication of God’s continuing commitment to God’s redemptive mission in the world… the missional church believes that God is on a mission and that we are to join God in that mission… not to ‘do church’ but to ‘be church.’ *Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or an activity*.”

Missional churches are making three major shifts:

1. **The shift from making good church members to making disciples of Jesus**. This places a congregation’s focus on discipleship (living the lifestyle of Jesus) and challenges the often-held assumption that a church is a vendor of religious goods and services. We, as church participants, are not religious consumers, but children of God who need one another to train and coach us in how to live our daily lives.

2. **The shift from church growth to community transformation**. This moves us beyond the “three B’s of traditional church: buildings, budgets, and behinds in the seats!” Instead of having church growth as our goal, our goal is changing our neighborhood or city. Growth may happen, but it is a means to the end… not the end in itself. With this shift, we see other local churches as partners in mission, not our ‘competition.’

3. **The shift from preserving the institution to sending local missionaries**. With this shift, we invest our congregation’s time and resources into equipping and encouraging people to deal with the daily stresses, challenges, relationships, and activities of life. Instead of “guilting” people to serve on another committee or attend more church meetings, we free them to live the Jesus lifestyle in their personal routines. People are *encouraged* to be involved with civic groups, youth sports, schools, politics, workplace activities and to “infect” those areas of community life with the values of the Gospel.

**Handout #4-2 – The Missional Continuum**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Aspect of Congregational Life** | **The Missional Continuum****1 2** |
| **Participation** | Church members care deeply for one another and almost everyone would say their closest friends are fellow church members. Meetings are spent planning activities for the church’s members (meals, worship, programs). Personality conflicts may easily erupt over issues. | Church participants care for one another and are friendly to new people who visit the church. The church adds at least a few new people each year. The church intentionally plans one or two activities each year geared for people outside the church. |
| **Leadership** | People expect the pastor to be accessible to church members most of the time, exhibited through daily office hours and regular home/hospital visitation. The pastor is mostly responsible for executing church tasks (such as leading worship, preparing for meetings and overseeing use of the facilities). | Some leadership tasks (in worship, meetings and programs) are shared between the laity and the pastor. The pastor is viewed as the one primarily responsible for following up with visitors and making calls to homebound persons. The church has job descriptions for leadership roles, both lay and clergy. |
| **Church Budget** | 95% or more of the church’s budget is dedicated to administration, staff, facility and programs for the church. The church must supplement income with transfers from savings accounts and/or investments. | Between 90-95% of the church budget goes to internal expenses (building, staff, administration and programs). Less than 5% is given away beyond the church. Building rental income helps underwrite church expenses. |
| **Relationship to Community** | People in the church regard the people of the neighborhood as a threat to their security. There may be physical barriers between the church building and the surrounding area (fences, parking lot gates, “No Trespassing” signs, etc. | Security is a minor concern for church participants, and it doesn’t get in the way of church activities. Most church people do not know the people who live within walking distance of the church, and they may regard the neighbors with suspicion. |
| **Use of the Building** | The church building is used exclusively by the church’s members, either for church activities or for family gatherings (parties, weddings, reunions, etc.). There is little to no facility use by any groups beyond the church. | Community groups may use 1-2 rooms for meetings (Scouts, etc.). Groups may not be connected to the church’s mission or governance and they pay a rental fee for their time in the facility. The church may also house a daycare, leading to conflict over scheduling and cleanliness. |

|  |
| --- |
| **The Missional Continuum****3 4 5** |
| The church is growing by 10% each year and new people are frequently assuming leadership roles. There are at least a few opportunities for people to learn about discipleship as a way of daily life. People often speak about God’s activity in their life. Personality conflict is mostly absent. | Most church activities are organized around training people to follow Christ in daily life (discipleship). There are many opportunities for people to deepen their discipleship and lead ministries, whether or not they are regular attendees. Over 50% of the church has joined in the last 5 years. | The church expects its regular participants to be involved in ministry to the community. To this end, the church supports them with training, prayer, and coaching. People spend very little time on institutional maintenance at the church. People take responsibility for their spiritual growth. Change is expected in the church. |
| Leadership responsibilities are shared between the pastor and lay leaders, determined by spiritual giftedness. Responsibility for program and worship leadership is evenly shared among many people, including the pastor. Church participants are intentionally trained for leadership roles in the church. | The pastor is viewed as a “coach” for church participants, training and encouraging people in their areas of giftedness in the church and in the community. About half of the pastor’s time is spent giving leadership and support to efforts in the wider community, and this is encouraged by the church. | Job descriptions for both lay and pastoral leaders are fluid and determined by missional priorities from year to year. The church provides (or sponsors) leadership training to people in and outside of the church, for the sake of community transformation. Less than 25% of the pastor’s time is spent on strictly “church” activities. |
| The church gives away at least 10% in outreach. Likewise, 5-10% is spent to launch new ministries or programs. Any money received from building use is dedicated for expenses related to the upkeep of the facility (and not used for church staff, programs, etc.). | At least 10% is given away in outreach. At least 10% is used for starting new discipleship programs. Each year’s budget is based on the previous year’s budget, but with slight changes. | Each year’s budget is based not on the prior year’s budget, but on the mission priorities for the coming year. There is flexibility in budgeting, which allows for quick changes and frequent adaptation. Donors are regularly thanked and shown the fruits of their gifts. |
| People from the surrounding community frequently visit worship, dinners and/or other events sponsored by the church. These visitors are familiar faces to the people in the church, but most visitors do not become active in the church. | There is regular interaction between church participants and the church’s neighbors. Many people around the church attend activities (worship, meals, and programs) and are warmly received by people in the church. The “faces in the pews” match those of the surrounding community. | The interaction between people in the church and the community is high. Neighbors around the church consider this to be their “church home” even though they are not members. People from the church intentionally go into the neighborhood to build relationships and begin new ministries. |
| The church facility is used by many community groups. The church frequently chooses to waive the rental fee for groups with purposes similar to that of the church’s (for example, free rent is provided to another congregation, AA groups, etc.). | The church facility is a bustle of activity most days of the week and church participants see the need for the church building to function as a “community center.” The church actively recruits community groups with whom they can share their facility and their mission in the city. | If the church owns/rents a building, the church views its facility users as partners in ministry, going “over and above” with hospitality (hanging signage, cleaning rooms, offering food). The church gets to know the people who use the facility and regularly prays for the many people who use the building. |