



Missional Community Strategic Planning Guide

INTRODUCTION

To fight for the togetherness of seeking first the kingdom of God in all of life, we organize our church into what we call missional communities. This document was created to cover the following six topics:

1. [Why Missional Communities](#)
2. [What A Missional Community Is](#)
3. [What A Missional Community Is Not](#)
4. [Why They're Called Missional Communities](#)
5. [Missional Community Essentials](#)
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1. WHY MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

MISSIONAL COMMUNITY DISCLAIMER

We're not passionate about missional communities. We're passionate about the kingdom of God in all of life together. Missional communities are just the way we've chosen to live that out in our church. If missional communities ever get in the way of that, then we'll stop doing them and organize our people in some other way.

Hebrews 13:17 says to "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Every church's leadership must decide how they will live out the "one another" verses and obey the commands of the bible. Missional communities are the way we are shepherding our people to obey the "one another" verses:

- **John 13:34** ...just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
- **Romans 12:10** Love one another with brotherly affection...
- **Romans 12:10** ...Outdo one another in showing honor.
- **Romans 12:16** Live in harmony with one another...
- **Romans 15:7** ...welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you...
- **2 Corinthians 13:11** ...comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace...
- **2 Corinthians 13:11** ... agree with one another...
- **2 Corinthians 13:12** Greet one another with a holy kiss.
- **Galatians 5:13** ...serve one another.
- **Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's burdens...
- **Ephesians 4:2** ...bearing with one another in love
- **Ephesians 4:32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted...
- **Ephesians 4:32** ...forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- **Ephesians 5:21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- **Philippians 2:3** ...count others more significant than yourselves.
- **Colossians 3:16** ...teaching and admonishing one another...
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** ...build one another up...
- **1 Thessalonians 5:15** ...always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
- **Hebrews 3:13** ...exhort one another every day...
- **Hebrews 10:24** ...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,
- **Hebrews 10:25** ...encouraging one another...
- **James 5:16** ...confess your sins to one another...
- **James 5:16** ...pray for one another...
- **1 Peter 4:9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- **1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another...
- **1 Peter 5:5** ...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another...

2. WHAT A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS

A missional community is a small family of believers committed to living out God's mission together in everyday life to particular people and places. Missional communities are committed to Jesus, each other, and the lost.

Our missional communities are where most of the life of our church happens. This is where we do counseling, prayer, deliverance, discipleship, and mission. These are the people who help us move, work on our houses with us, and babysit our kids. These are the people we party with, cry with, eat with, and study the bible with.

A missional community is **PEOPLE-CENTRIC**.

3. WHAT A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS NOT

- A missional community is **NOT MEETING-CENTRIC**. It's *not PRIMARILY a weekly meeting*. You can't go to it. It's not a night of the week. But it does meet regularly.
- A missional community is **NOT STUDY-CENTRIC**. It's *not PRIMARILY a bible or book study*. It's discipleship in all of life, which includes study.
- A missional community is **NOT INWARD-CENTRIC**. It's *not PRIMARILY a small group*. It exists both for those inside the group and for those outside.
- A missional community is **NOT FRIEND-CENTRIC**. It's *not PRIMARILY a friendship group*. It values the necessity of all the parts of the body, regardless of friendship, and seeks to keep people from falling through the cracks who aren't yet friends.
- A missional community is **NOT HOME-CENTRIC**. It's *NOT a house church*. It goes to where the people it's on mission to are. It shares the load with everyone – not just one homeowner. It meets in multiple homes – not just one.

- A missional community is **NOT ATTRACTIVE**. It's ***NOT an invitation-based evangelistic crusade***. It doesn't seek to get unbelievers in front of one gifted person, but rather in front of many Christians. It avoids the laziness of trading personal evangelism for a meeting invite and goes to where the people it's on mission to are.
- A missional community is **NOT LEADER-CENTRIC**. It's ***not EXCLUSIVELY leader led***. It's not a spectator sport. All the partners in a missional community should share leadership responsibilities under the primary leadership of the lead partner. The lead partner is the first among equals.
- A missional community is **NOT ONE PERSON-CENTRIC**. It's ***not PRIMARILY one on one discipleship***. It seeks to do discipleship through multiple gifts, from multiple people, who are in multiple different stages of life.

4. WHY THEY'RE CALLED MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

They are called missional communities because we believe that *both* concepts of mission and community are essential for maximum impact. Community without mission becomes selfish, codependent, and complacent. Mission without community forfeits one of the greatest apologetics for the gospel.

5. MISSIONAL COMMUNITY ESSENTIALS

The following are the essential core elements of a healthy missional community:

ESSENTIAL #1: THE 3 PILLARS OF PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is the foundation of a missional community because there is no community without responsibility and accountability.

Partnership is how we do membership. We chose the word partnership rather than membership because it's a word in the bible that we believe in our current cultural context, creates a clearer picture in the minds of those who hear it, of what we believe church commitment should look like.

A partner is someone who has moved from: attendance to responsibility, from observing to participation, from consuming to creating value for others, from primarily receiving to being an intentional giver, and from helping to taking ownership. Our partners are the ones whom our elders are accountable for leading, and who in return are accountable to their elders for growing and participating in the mission of God. ***Our partners are the ones we count on.***

1 Corinthians 12:26 "If one member suffers, all suffer together..."

To build anything, you must be able to count on the parts that make up the whole to do their part.

- To build a good **sports team** you must be able to count on your **players** to do their part.
- To build a sturdy **house** you must be able to count on all the **materials** to do their part.
- To build a good **business**, you must be able to count on your **employees** to do their part.
- To build a healthy **body** you must be able to count on all your **members** to do their part.
- To build a healthy **church** you must be able to count on **a specific group of people** to do their part.

We have to be able to count on people to do their part.

Ephesians 4:16 NIV From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

“Each part”, or partners (part owners), are the ONES WE COUNT ON to do the work.

The definition of a partner is: a person who takes part in an activity with another, one who shares, one who shares a task with another, or one who shares ownership with another (a part owner).

A partner is someone we can count on to share in the following three pillars:

- 1) **Shared Priorities (THE KINGDOM)**
- 2) **Shared Vision (IN ALL OF LIFE)**
- 3) **Shared Responsibility (TOGETHER)**

To realistically orient our lives around these three pillars, we need to ask 2 questions:

- 1) **What will I stop doing?**
- 2) **What will I start doing?**

If the kingdom of God is not our first priority, and we don't share a vision of the kingdom in all of life, and we don't share the responsibility together, then there is no partnership, no real, deep, meaningful community, and no effective mission.

Responsibility Differences Between Partners And Lead Partners

Leadership is both necessary and important in a missional community. In a missional community the lead partner is responsible for *primary* leadership, but never *exclusive* leadership. All the partners in a missional community should share leadership responsibilities under the primary leadership of the lead partner. Lead partners are the “first among equals” among the partners in a missional community, directing and coordinating the life of a missional community where necessary. Although the bar of entry for lead partnership is low, a lead partner should never seek to remain low. Lead partners should always seek to grow in maturity and leadership.

In a missional community, the *partners* are responsible for:

- continually bearing the fruit of partnership
- holding other partners (including lead partners) accountable to keeping their partnership commitments
- working together with the other partners to determine if someone is a new partner
- assessing how the missional community is doing in the areas of family, mission, serving, and discipleship

- cultivating family, mission, serving, and discipleship
- hosting missional community meetings, gatherings, and events
- providing food for missional community meetings, gatherings, and events
- leading missional community meetings, gatherings, and events
- doing general counseling with people in the missional community (some partners are responsible for doing specialized counseling, including marital and premarital with people in the missional community)
- executing initial stages of church discipline (confronting sin) in the missional community

In a missional community, the *lead partners* are responsible for:

- continually bearing the fruit of partnership
- holding other partners accountable to keeping their partnership commitments
- coordinating the assessment of whether someone is a new partner or not
- directing the missional community's temporary primary emphasis (family, mission, service, or discipleship)
- directing and coordinating the cultivation of family, mission, service, and discipleship in a missional community
- directing the missional community's meeting and gathering schedule
- directing who's going to lead a specific missional community meeting or gathering
- coordinating counseling for people in the missional community
- escalating issues of church discipline in the missional community to the elders
- main (but not exclusive) communication between the elders and the missional community
- making final decisions when consensus can't be reached

ESSENTIAL #2: THE 4 CORE IDENTITIES

Our mission flows out of our gospel identity. If we forget this, we are in danger of finding both positive and negative identity in what we do, falling into a religious performance trap. Christ's work has given us identity that we work **from**, not **for**. We're not saved **by** good works; we're saved **for** good works. Our doing flows out of our being.

Ephesians 2:8–10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

All the partners in a missional community will intentionally work together to plan out the specific ways they will cultivate the four core identities of a missional community: **family, mission, serving, and discipleship**. In other words, how can we be “firing on all four cylinders”?

1. FAMILY - *In Christ we are children of God, which makes us family.*

(John 1:12) “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”

(1 Timothy 5:1-2) “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

(1 Timothy 3:4-5, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8,11-12, Philippians 2:22)

2. SERVANTS - *In Christ we belong to God, which makes us servants.*

(1 Corinthians 6:19–20) “...You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

(Galatians 5:24) “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

(Mark 10:43-45, Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 4:10-11)

3. DISCIPLES - *In Christ we abide in his word and bear much fruit, which makes us disciples.*

(John 8:31) “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples”

(John 15:8) “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

(Luke 14:26-27,33, Acts 11:26, 2 Timothy 2:2)

4. MISSIONARIES - *In Christ we are sent by God, which makes us missionaries (people on mission).*

(John 20:21) “...As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

(Matthew 28:19) “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

(Acts 20:24, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Philippians 1:3-5)

ESSENTIAL #3: THE 5 CORE ACTIONS OF MISSION

1) We pray for the gospel to be proclaimed and believed.

We pray for boldness to speak and ears to hear what is spoken.

2) We build new and existing relationships.

We target unbelievers and unchurched professing believers.

3) We preach the gospel to strangers and those we are building relationship with.

We preach the gospel with words and back them up with our conduct. How can they believe unless they hear?

4) We expose the people we’re on mission to, to the family of believers.

We show people what Jesus is like by exposing them to how we love one another in the church.

5) We make people into disciples who make disciples.

We make disciples through both informal small group teaching in familial relationships, and formal teaching in large group settings.

6. HOW TO START A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Starting a missional community happens in three stages:

STAGE 1: GATHER A GROUP OF BELIEVERS

The goal of this stage is to gather the minimum amount of people to get a missional community off the ground.

A. Find Your Partners

- There should be a minimum of four total partners (including the lead partners) to start a missional community. Starting with at least six total partners is ideal, but four is sufficient.

B. Gather Around One Or More Of The Following:

- A particular mission
- Existing common relationships with certain unbelieving and/or unchurched people
- A specific place
- Locational proximity to one another
- A common activity or activities
- Jesus and his mission (this reason is the lowest common denominator and therefore requires a higher degree of intentionality to pull off)

C. Locational Proximity

It's important to consider how far people live from one other when forming a missional community. Locational proximity makes a big difference practically, when aiming for regular, healthy connection. Generally, living more than twenty minutes away from each other becomes more and more impractical the farther you are.

D. Size

The ideal size of a missional community depends on multiple factors and will differ depending on the variance of these factors, but usually, it's around 12 adults. The ideal minimum size is 6 adults, and the ideal maximum size is 15 adults. The 16-19 size is not ideal but can certainly work. 20 is in most circumstances too big. Size is important because if the missional community is too small, it will lack momentum and the proper ability to be a family on mission. If it's too big, it will lack depth and connectedness, rendering it impotent.

E. Who Can Be A Part Of A Missional Community

Any believer who wants to join our church and is not currently a part of another church can join or share in the life of a missional community. We encourage anyone who is interested in joining a missional community to talk or meet with one or more of the partners in a missional community to determine the best fit.

F. Time Length Commitment

The length of time a person is in a missional community should ideally be no less than one year, and no more than three years. Exceptions can and should be made when appropriate. The minimum ideal exists so there is sufficient time to connect and engage well with the people and mission of a missional community. The maximum ideal exists so that people don't get stagnant or complacent in their growth and discipleship.

STAGE 2: BUILD THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY, SERVICE, AND DISCIPLESHIP

The goal of this stage is to build the first 3 out of 4 foundational elements of a healthy missional community's identity: family, service, and discipleship.

A. Planning Specific Ways To Live Out Our Identity As Family, Servants, and Disciples

Ways To Live Out Our Identity As FAMILY

- Spend time together: Time = Relationship
- Getting on mission together builds family in a way that other ways fall short in
- Brothering, sistering, mothering, or fathering
- Meet regularly as a missional community.
- Eat meals together regularly with your entire missional community and with specific people in your missional community.
- Get to know each other and become familiar with each other's stories/testimonies.
- Party and celebrate together (birthdays, anniversaries, baby showers, wedding receptions, holidays, etc.).
- Be good, reliable communicators (calls, texts, voxes, emails, etc.) who communicate often and respond to each other in an appropriately timely manner.
- Be voluntarily open with each other, whether you are asked or not.
- Help each other, share your stuff with one another, intentionally and tangibly bless each other regularly.
- Share hobbies or recreational interests together (cooking, gardening, sports, dancing, pipe smoking, BBQ, etc.).
- Have fun and relax together (including a vacation or focused getaway together).
- Build trust with one another. Trust is the relational currency necessary for depth, partnership, and substantial impact. Never underestimate the importance of trust building
- The speed of family should be at the pace of relationship

Ways To Live Out Our Identity As SERVANTS

- Use service as a way to be on mission to people.
- Use service as a way to build family with each other.
- Help each other when in need or so that people don't have to do things alone.
- Do home repair and yard work together on each other's homes.
- Babysit each other's kids.
- Make and/or pay for meals for each other.
- Pray for each other.
- Help each other move.
- Help each other budget.
- Listen to each other.
- Show hospitality without grumbling by opening your homes to one another for gatherings, meals, parties, and meetings.
- Borrow your stuff to each other (vehicles, tools, clothes, etc.).

Ways To Live Out Our Identity As DISCIPLES

- Seasonal corporate discipleship: particularly in the hot and cold months of winter and summer
- Always looking for opportunities to do life on life discipleship
- Study and be prepared to teach others the gospel, practice preaching the gospel to each other (sometimes through the taking of the Lord's table together), and be fluent in the gospel.
- Confess sins that you are being saved from and share how the power of the gospel is saving you from the power of sin.
- Study *and* obey the bible together.
- Speak the truth in love to one another.
- Determine the discipleship needs of the missional community and teach on those

needs (sometimes it may be best to ask an elder to teach).

- Grow in understanding what gifts you have been given by God and work toward using them effectively to build others up.
- Pray and prophesy over each other and target a specific person, family, or couple regularly.
- Teach on being filled with the Holy Spirit and pray for each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for deliverance from demonic footholds in the lives of specific people in your missional community.

B. Regular Gatherings

- Decide when, where, and how often to gather to facilitate family, service, and discipleship.
- Weekly meeting vs no weekly meeting, pros and cons:
 - Having a weekly meeting with the entire missional community is great for establishing consistent regular connection with the people in a missional community. It becomes a negative when it becomes the sum total of what the missional community is and people are not connecting in all of life.
 - No weekly meeting is great for flexibility and connecting in all of life, but it requires way more intentionality so that people don't end up not connecting at all or connecting very little.
- Examples of different meeting types and schedules:
 - Meeting with everyone
 - Weekly on a specific night of the week (Wednesdays seem to work best for most)
 - Possibly also meeting once a month on a specific night for prayer and worship (maybe the third Thursday)
 - Meeting with the partners only
 - Meeting monthly on a specific night or
 - Meeting monthly on one of the nights that everyone meets (maybe the second Wednesday)
 - Meeting with the men only
 - Meeting weekly on a specific morning or
 - Meeting monthly on a specific night of the week (maybe the second Thursday) or
 - Meeting monthly on a specific Saturday morning
 - Meeting with the women only
 - Meeting weekly on a specific morning or
 - Meeting monthly on a specific night of the week (maybe the second Thursday) or
 - Meeting monthly on a specific Saturday morning
- Meal or no meal?
 - Although meal sharing is not mandatory, it is hard to live like a healthy family without eating meals together. Meal sharing is a great way to connect with one another in a natural, normal way, and when the load is shared it is often cheaper than eating alone.

C. Timeframe

This stage shouldn't be rushed, but it shouldn't be any longer than necessary either. For some missional communities this stage will take weeks and for some it will take months. ***It should not take any longer than three months.*** If this stage takes longer it can very quickly lead to a missional community becoming unhealthy and developing bad habits

STAGE 3: DEVELOP AND EXECUTE THE MISSION

The goal of this stage is to develop a specific, clear mission and to execute it well.

The initial focus and direction should come first from the lead partners who will then get input from the rest of the missional community.

A. Determine What People and/or Places To Target

a. Existing People & Places

- Take inventory by answering these three questions:
 - 1) **Who** (unbelievers, unchurched, non-member Sunday morning attenders) are we already in contact, locational proximity, or relationship with (especially men and women of peace)?
 - 2) **What** are we already doing?
 - 3) **Where** are we already spending our time?
- Look for the who, what, and where intersections within the missional community. These are the places where common relationships and frequented places already exist together.

b. New People & Places

- Take inventory of any new people and/or places that individuals within the missional community believe God is specifically calling them to.
- Determine what new people and/or places that God is calling specific people to, are shared.

c. Examples of Specific People & Places

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|--|------------------------------------|
| ▪ friends and family | ▪ public school / college campuses |
| ▪ neighbors and/or neighborhoods | ▪ community garden |
| ▪ co-workers and/or workplaces | ▪ nursing homes |
| ▪ businesses | ▪ international refugee community |
| ▪ sports team (playing, coaching, or watching) | ▪ special needs community |
| | ▪ child welfare community |

d. Knowing The Difference Between Individual Mission and Shared Mission

- Every Christian has a responsibility to be on mission to unbelievers, but it's not realistic or practical for a missional community to be on mission together to *all* the people each person in the missional community is individually on mission to.
- It's also not realistic or practical to have every person in a missional community engaged with everyone the missional community is on mission to all the time. There are times when it makes sense for a smaller segment of the missional community to be engaged directly with specific people the missional community is on mission to while the others pray for them.

B. Develop Specific Strategies For Mission

- Determine how to steward **the who, what, and where** intersections with more gospel intentionality.
- Explore ways to engage, interact, and connect to the new people and/or places this group of believers has a shared calling to.
- Use the following three questions to help form strategies:
 - 1) **Is it natural?**
 - 2) **Is it normal?**
 - 3) **Is it neutral?**

- Figure out **the how and the when**. Here are five examples:

1) Eat

- BBQ/parties/meals
- Sunday after church weekly meals with new people
- giving meals away
- weekly open meal night at your home
- coffee & dessert nights
- food contests (best dessert, best dip, best bbq, best pizza, etc.)

2) Events

- sports (playing, coaching, & watching)
- block parties
- bonfires
- game nights (poker, board games, yard games, etc.)
- holiday celebrations
- movie nights
- dancing (swing, ballroom, country, etc.)
- cigar/pipe nights (holy smokes)
- bible study
- one-time events, weekly events, or monthly events (ManCamp, Marriage Seminar, etc.)

3) Serve/Bless

- house/yard work projects
- financial assistance
- neighborhood cleanups
- identify at least one way/area to tangibly express the gospel on a regular basis through serving and stick with it long enough to move beyond tasks to relationships

4) Being A Regular

- regularly going to the same restaurant, store, grocery store, coffee shop, barber, hairdresser, mechanic, chiropractor, park, etc.

5) Cold-Call Evangelism

- evangelizing strangers wherever they are: parks, streets, college campuses, coffee shops, etc.

- **Overlap/partnership with other missional communities:**

Many times, what a missional community is doing for mission will involve other people from other missional communities or entire missional communities all together. This is good, and in some cases best. Especially when a missional community is small, it may make sense to partner with another missional community for missional and serving purposes while still retaining its smallness for discipleship and family purposes. Overlap and partnership with other missional communities should never detract from or hinder the missional community you are a part of. If this ever happens, then you know that the overlap/partnership is unhealthy and should not continue.

C. Make Sure The Mission Is Clearly Defined And Understood By All

- Every partner in the MC should be able to answer the simple question: Who and/or where are you on mission to?

D. Orient Lives Around The Mission

- Consider geographical relocation to be in closer proximity to each other and the place you are targeting.
- Be conscience of missional community commitments when making scheduling decisions.
- To realistically orient our lives, we need to ask 2 questions:
 - 1) What will I stop doing?
 - 2) What will I start doing?

E. Maximize Missional Effectiveness

- Pray and fast for the mission, both corporately and individually.
- Regularly report on victories and struggles.
- Consider how some seasons are commonly more conducive to mission, such as spring and fall
- Determine how you will continue to cultivate family and nurture healthy discipleship while on mission.

F. Execute The Mission

- 1) Pray for the gospel to be proclaimed and believed.
- 2) Build new and existing relationships.
- 3) Preach the gospel to strangers and those we are building relationship with.
- 4) Expose the people we're on mission to, to the family of believers.
- 5) Make people into disciples who make disciples.

G. Reevalue The Mission And Strategy Regularly

H. Multiply: Start New Missional Communities