



Three Expressions of a Missional Church

Missional churches embrace their communities as mission fields and themselves as “the sent”. They choose to focus outward and not only inward. Missional churches find expression in a variety of forms and structures. This paper seeks to illustrate the differences between three expressions of missional church environments. While not every church will seek to grow into each expression, each is a valid and affirmed missional ministry. The following missional perspectives and chart provides both a vision for the future and a means of evaluation for missional churches.

What is a Missional Church?

A missional church is a community of authentic disciples who passionately worship and obey God, love one another, and live and disciple like Jesus among the lost.

1. Expression #1

Church leaders and members are learning to focus outward. Building the corporate visible church structure is a primary goal. Personal outreach is emphasized and efforts are being made to establish effective outreach patterns.

Leadership – Leadership is centralized in paid staff and a board. Leadership is primarily defined by a position with subsequent authority.

Culture – The emphasis is on creating a counterculture, encouraging people to be different from their surrounding culture in an effort to be like Christ (Romans 12:1,2).

Vision – The focus is on growing the visible structure and purposeful nature of the church. There is an emphasis on “the church gathered.”

Advancing the gospel – Evangelism is often expressed as a come-to approach, where an attractive worship service, as well as other programs and environments, are developed to which unsaved friends are invited. Evangelism training is provided for use in personal contacts and the expression is primarily “telling,” explaining the gospel to others.

Discipleship – Discipleship is a transformative process rather than a knowledge of content or a mastery of skills. Small group ministry is growing and life-to life ministry is gaining momentum though the use of Triad groups.

Growth – Growth is often marked by attraction -- attracting the displaced (new to the community), disaffiliated (without a church home), or dissatisfied (left other churches).



Small groups – Varied small groups are present, growing and structured so as to facilitate spiritual growth and to meet needs. Outreach is expressed in the form of prayer for the lost and personal evangelism accountability.

Service – Benevolence is expressed within the church by caring for members of the Body. Service projects are undertaken outside the church to assist the needy in the community.

The Navigators – Navigator assistance is welcomed and appreciated.

2. Expression #2

The church is taking the gospel to those outside the faith through natural personal relationships, through the “net-fishing” of groups and through corporate outreach strategies. The church is both gathered and “scattered.”

Leadership – Leadership is centralized to a group of staff or a board with an emphasis on building leaders. Leadership is striving to be Kingdom-oriented, focusing on developing and releasing people to advance the gospel and make disciples where they live, work, or play.

Culture – The emphasis is on engaging the culture, seeking to design ministries and worship services that are relevant and inviting to unchurched friends and community.

Vision – Vision is expressed in a visible, growing community of believers. The church both gathers and is “scattered” in a variety of small group expressions.

Advancing the gospel - There is a commitment to a “go-to” strategy, coaching and releasing people to their relational and community networks in which they are insiders. Living and telling the gospel is emphasized. There is an equal value, support and resources for personal relationships, small groups, and large group events in advancing the Gospel.

Discipleship – Discipleship is a transformative process rather than a knowledge of content or a mastery of skills. Making disciples is primarily done in small groups and through relationships (alongsiders) with an intention to multiply.

Growth – Growth is both by attraction and inclusion. Relevant and helpful activities and services are created to attract seekers. Growth is also inclusive, assimilating people into the body where they can come to faith.

Small groups – There is a structured strategy for small groups with an intentional and focused direction for each group.



Service – Servant evangelism is emphasized, showing the love of Christ in tangible ways. There is a deliberate effort to extend a concern for the poor in the community.

Navigators – Church leaders are proactive and intentional in recruiting and receiving Navigator alumni into the church vision and mission.

3. Expression #3

The church aims to grow naturally through the relationships people develop as they live and minister among the lost, where they live, work, or play. The church is often more “scattered” in small communities, rather than gathered.

Leadership – Leadership is shared among many. A Kingdom lifestyle is embraced, coaching and releasing people to advance the gospel.

Culture – The organic expression is immersed in the culture, fully participating in community events and partnering with community leaders to add value, influence and ultimately transform the community.

Vision – The focus is on multiplying communities where spiritual transformation occurs and the gospel is “planted” or advanced where people live, work, or play rather than growing visible church structures.

Advancing the gospel – The gospel is advanced as people live authentic lives as insiders and alongsiders with their not-yet-Christian friends. There is an inclusive approach where groups do not differentiate between “saved” and “unsaved” but invite and include everyone who is journeying towards God.

Discipleship – Discipleship takes place in small communities and among the those distant from Christ, with mature along-siders investing in people through life-to-life relationships. This approach focuses on multiplying generations rather than adding people.

Growth – Growth is measured by process -- the process of moving towards Christ and His Kingdom. Growth happens as people partner with one another to live and labor among lost people. Generations, both through relational networks and within families, fuel the growth of the church.

Small groups – Community, living and sharing lives together, most often finds expression in house churches, rather than small groups.

Service – Organic churches invest their time, talents and treasures in their communities in corporate and personal ways to add value. Partnering with others in social justice issues takes precedent over service projects.

Navigators – Leaders welcome and recruit Nav alumni to partner with them in growing in organic ministries.