



Integrating New MC Members

Missional Community Leader Guidance

Introduction

The intent of this document is to provide more clearly defined principles and practical steps for helping new people learn about and join a Missional Community (MC). When we speak of "new people" in this document, we want to recognize two types of new people:

1. New regular attendees of our Sunday Gathering who are not necessarily relationally connected to anyone in the church already.
2. New people who have been reached through the ministry of an MC.

The first part of this document provides shared clarity on how we can work as a team to integrate those visitors to our Sunday Gatherings. That being said, the second section of this document is a practical guide - beginning on page 4 titled "MC Connect" - and it is a tool that can and should be used for both types of people who are needed integrated into an MC.

Group #1 - New Regular Attendees Of Our Sunday Gathering

Here are a few of the reasons and motivations behind the establishment of a more defined process of integrating new regular attendees of our Sunday Gathering into an MC.

- MCs have always been our primary ministry form, so it is important that we develop a more well defined and clearly understood pathway for new people to join an MC.
- MC is the context in which we are living out the mission of being and making disciples.
 - Growing in our personal relationship with God.
 - Growing in relationship to other believers.
 - Exposing areas of needed growth.
 - Learning the personal meaning and application of truth that is taught corporately in our gatherings.
 - Increasing in helpful accountability to truth learned.
 - Serving and practically caring for other people.
- The process of becoming a disciple of Jesus takes time, so the sooner new people can begin the process, the better.

- The process of becoming a disciple-maker of Jesus takes time, so the sooner new people can begin the process, the better.

Guiding Principles

Below is a list of the main principles that inform and guide us as we seek to integrate new people into our Missional Communities.

Acts 2:42-47, Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

- New people should be added to the regular function of the church as soon as possible.
- New people should have a relationally comfortable experience in being assimilated into our church family.
- Truth that is taught to the church should be given its full opportunity to be personally learned and applied to the believer's life. This is what faithfulness in holistic discipleship looks like as a *family*.
- Faithful, Spirit-led, and biblically relational ministry should always be led by faithful people more than a form or process. Solid, Biblically informed forms are absolutely necessary, but ultimate effectiveness is more often realized due to effective leaders than through effective policies.
- Effective leaders work within the structure of the family of God that God Himself defined; in humble service and unity together with the Elders, Deacons, and MC Leaders.

Form

Below are listed the key components of this new effort and how they will work together to accomplish our goals.

- MC Connect Lead. The Elders have asked Jonathan and Melissa Jackson to organize and facilitate this effort so that it is as effective as possible.
- MC Leader Communication. The MC Connect Lead will work closely with all MC Leaders to best accommodate the assimilation of new people into their MCs.

Process

Awareness

- MC Connect Lead will plan to **be present** before and after our gathering time.
- MC Connect Lead will make concerted effort to **notice** new people at church, especially those who have attended more than a few times. They will talk with all new new people, even if they're coming with someone from the church. They don't want to assume that they're good because they are with a friend.
- They will **introduce** themselves.
- They will **share contact** information.
- MC Connect Lead will reach for **follow-up**.

Follow-Up With New Person

- Plan discussion questions that will help to form a better understanding of their spiritual situation and practical availability. Some example questions might be:
 - How did you hear about Hope?
 - Are you from this area/where did you grown up?
 - Have you been looking for a church?
 - Are you hoping to get more involved in community/fellowship with believers?
 - What days/times of the week are you available to give time for MC involvement?
- Plan for questions/conversation to allow the new person to ask questions about HCC and our Missional Communities.
- Encourage the new person to begin to pray about their decision to join an MC.

Planning With MC Leaders

- Consider possible MCs for the new person to join.
- Communicate with MC Leaders of potential MCs.
- Once potential MCs are in place, plan to follow-up again to discuss MC opportunities and encourage them to devote some time to pray over their decision.

Integration

- Communicate with MC Leader Team if the new person is deciding to visit/join their MC.
- With the MC Leader Team, establish a point person that would be the welcoming party/contact for this new person.
- MC Connect Lead will offer to attend an MC with the new person for the first time to help ease anxiety and introduce them to the MC.
- MC point person will getting the contact info of new person and following up with them after initial visit
- MC Connect Lead will follow up with person after visiting an MC, and also touch base with the MC leader.



Missional Community Connect

Structure

Authority

We believe in the supremacy and authority of Jesus in all things, namely the local church. To us, this means that our purpose as a local church is to embrace His mission in His way. We see this expressed primarily in two ways:

1. We seek to follow the model of Jesus in how He lived and what He lived for.
2. We desire to model an authentic faith in the revealed Word of God as the authority for all that we think and do.

Direction

We believe that the church is to be led by the Holy Spirit. It is our biblical conviction that the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of God in and among us. From the Bible, we conclude that His presence in and among us is to empower and direct us into the life that God desires for us as His church. Therefore, we do not desire to set our course, but faithfully pursue his course for us.

Form

We have chosen to structure our church as minimally as possible. We desire to avoid a program-driven culture and, in its place, create an organic family culture of mutual growth and pursuit of the mission of God. We believe that this is best accomplished in smaller groups of people that are led by those who can both model and coach others into the missional lifestyle that God desires. We call these small groups “missional communities (MC’s).”

Leadership

We believe that the Bible speaks of only two official positions of influence in the local church, those being the positions of elder and deacon. It is our conviction that these two positions are not equal, but, rather, complementary in that the elders are responsible to God for leading the church into His mission while the deacons are responsible to assist the elders in the promotion of this mission. We have also maintained another practical leadership role for those qualified to lead one of our missional communities (MC), which we call “the missional community leader.”

Doctrine

Bible

We believe that the Bible is the inspired revelation of God to us; and, for this reason, it is our authority. We can be redeemed to a right relationship with God and be restored to our purpose in pursuing His mission only through the power of His life in us. This is both revealed to us and demonstrated through us by knowing and applying the truth of the Bible.

God

We believe in the one true Triune God, expressed through three distinct persons who demonstrate perfect community through unified purpose and diverse functions. The will of the Father is seen through the person of Jesus the Son and empowered through the Holy Spirit. We believe that God is three persons yet one; but we humbly admit that His composition, nature, wisdom, power, and glory are beyond our capacity to fully understand.

People

We believe that people are made in God's image, after his very being. We are not equal with God, yet we are similar to Him in that we carry the fundamental characteristics of his person. In mind, will, emotion, and spirit, we are like God and can experience deep personal relationship with Him and other people. Because of Adam's choice to rebel against God, people are born into a state of sin¹ that naturally positions them as enemies of God. Yet, each person is eternally condemned for their personal choice to sin against God.

Salvation

We believe that all people are lost in their sin, separated from God, and, unless they are spiritually restored to God, they are bound for an eternity of separation from Him in Hell. We also believe that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in the form of a man, lived a perfect life, and died as the substitutionary sacrifice for every person. This sacrifice is applied to every person that believes in the person of Jesus as God Himself and His substitutionary death and resurrection for them. Upon believing in Jesus in this way, the person is declared righteous by God by virtue of Jesus' work for them, and they are restored to God's family as His child forever. A few other key distinctives:

- We do not hold to the Calvinistic belief that God sovereignly chooses some to salvation. We believe that faith is our own, consistent with being image bearers of God, and we must exercise it of our own accord.
- We also do not hold to the Lordship Salvation theological conviction that good works must follow a salvation experience in order to validate the authenticity of the person's faith. Salvation must be free of any works, either to earn salvation or to validate it afterwards.

¹ This state of sin induces a heightened awareness of sin, a propensity toward sin, and an enticement to sin.

Spiritual Life

As children of God, this new relationship brings the presence of the Holy Spirit within every believer. He resides within every believer to guide them into an understanding of, and experience in, the truth of the Bible. God's basic design for His people is that they would be increasingly transformed into the image and model of Jesus in a functional way as they pursue personal spiritual growth in a community of believers while serving His mission.

Vision

It is our conviction that we have been redeemed (bought back into a right relationship) by God with a promised eternity with Him. We also believe that this is only a part of what God desires for us. We see that, from the creation of mankind, God has been pursuing His mission of redeeming and restoring all people to His original design for them. We believe that He will pursue this mission until the end of time as we know it. It is our expressed purpose and aim in life to join God in pursuing this mission into which He has graciously invited us.

We believe the context for pursuing this mission is authentic biblical community; this is the environment where we develop a deeper relationship with our God, deeper relationships with others in Christ, and deeper friendships with those who have yet to be reconciled to God. We are guided in this context by the authority and direction of the Spirit of God in us as He builds the truth of the Bible into our minds and lives.

About Missional Community

We believe that the best context for pursuing the mission of God is in smaller groups of people, of various places in life, who are unified in their desire to live for God. Following the model of Jesus with his disciples, we desire to build a church that is comprised of these organic gatherings of people who collectively embrace the struggle of pursuing God in the direction of His mission. We call these small groups "Missional Communities." To best understand the vision and function of these missional communities, we go to the last words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20; notice four simple words/phrases that help us understand this mission more clearly: make disciples, go, baptize, teach.

"Make Disciples"

A disciple is a follower or a student in the school of a Master. Culturally speaking, to the time of Jesus, it communicated the idea of giving one's life to follow, learn from, and ultimately adopt the

lifestyle of one's teacher. This is our mission, specifically, in relationship to Jesus Himself. We must embrace this basic mission both for ourselves and for others in the following ways:

- “Be” disciples. One aim of missional living is the fundamental posture of understanding one's own need for becoming like Christ. MC life is about people who want to become more like Christ by following Him in the way He taught and modeled.
- “Make” disciples. The other aim of missional living is embracing the mission of making disciples out of those who are not. This includes believers who aren't truly following Jesus as a disciple as well as those who don't know Jesus yet.

“Go”

When Jesus sent us out to pursue his mission, he made sure to explain it to us in simple ways. One area of importance is the posture necessary in effectively making disciples: We must pursue a posture of “going.” Simply stated, the mission is not to invite people to church; it is to go and build relationships with the people that the Spirit is leading us to, connecting them in the rhythm of normal life, and sharing the gospel with them.

We will not naturally embrace the go posture, and that is why Jesus sends us out with this charge. In missional community, we must challenge each other to personally embrace the posture of going, feeling the personal responsibility of reaching those we interact with regularly. We must also commit to praying for each other as we go individually, and we need to create ways to go with each other on mission.

When we think about this go posture, we have no better example than God Himself. In fact, this go posture that we are to embrace actually demonstrates the character of God to those we are reaching. Consider how God pursued Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and, most powerfully, how Jesus pursued all people when he came to earth to die for our sins!

“Baptize”

Jesus spoke in culturally relevant ways when he called his disciples to “baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The word baptize simply means “immersion,” so we understand that he was commanding them/us to immerse people in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We comprehend this best when we consider how Jesus Himself lived when he was here on earth.

Jesus was in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead him. He regularly repositioned his thinking around the will of the Father. He demonstrated that he needed the power, guidance, and love that the fellowship of the Trinity alone provides. He did all of this in the context of community with the disciples. Now we, too, have been spiritually positioned into Christ so that we might also live like he did.

This lifestyle of immersion with others in the Trinity will not happen on its own. We must pursue it over all other things. We must be open to consider how our lives have been lived in a way that is inconsistent with this fundamental lifestyle that Jesus lived. We will grow in living this way as our understanding of and relationship with Jesus increases and as we step into the lifestyle of Jesus for ourselves. We desire for missional communities to have a culture of immersing each other, and those with whom they are reaching, into a true relationship with the Trinity.

“Teach”

Jesus also spoke clearly to the need for teaching in discipleship. Learning is essential for people to become followers of Jesus. The idea of being the family of God on mission for him is a concept that is derived from the Bible. It is not a human strategy at all. Because of this, we adopt a conviction that learning from the Bible and living accordingly is the way that we are equipped to live on mission for God. The Bible itself claims that only an accurate interpretation and application of what it says can equip us to pursue this mission.

Missional Community life will constantly press into your personal life as you are challenged to humble yourself under the authority of biblical truth alone. Most of us have viewed bible study/application from an individual/private standpoint, but this is dramatically out of alignment with the picture we see in the Bible. God has ordained that the Body of Christ be instructed about this life on mission through the Bible in community with others. He also outlines two primary means for instruction in the Bible:

- **Being Taught.** We are to be taught the Bible as a means for growth. One context where this takes place is at our Central Teachings where we provide consistent, contextual instruction of the meaning and application of the Bible.
- **Being Equipped.** Not only are we to be taught the Bible, but God desires that we be equipped to study and apply the Bible for ourselves in the context of community. This equipping takes place in missional community as your leaders help guide you in learning how to study and apply the Bible with others. This equipping is ultimately for the purpose of teaching others and helping them grow in their walk with Christ through reading and studying His word. For this reason we want all MC members to be equipped to teach others how to handle the Word properly.