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The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month
by Bo Prosser



Myths of the missional church

The missional church is one that sees where God is participating in the world and joins in that work. The missional church empowers its members to use their gifts on purpose to be the presence of Christ. While the outcomes of missional ministries will lead to increases in church membership, community involvement and church member involvement, the primary goal of being missional is to be the presence of Christ by participating in God's redeeming work.

Yet, this approach to Kingdom work is not without critics. Many are quick to point out that since they give to "missions" or go on mission trips, they are missional. Still others think they are doing missional ministries when the nominating committee fills all the open committee slots.

The following responses to some "myths" about the missional church may help to clarify what it means to live out missional ministries within a congregation.

Myth 1: The missional church is semantics for what we are already doing.

The missional church is a call to return to the basics of congregational ministry. Too many congregations, concerned with reaching their budgets or maintaining their buildings, want to return to their "golden years." The missional church calls us to make now the golden years. The missional church is externally focused, seeking ways to involve itself in the community in order to engage the community. Many congregations are too internally focused; missional ministry calls us to give ourselves away.

Myth 2: There is nothing new about being a missional church.

The missional church is a call to be God's church. Empowered church folks share their talents out of a sense of call. They live out their faith within the vision of their congregations and the needs of their communities. Pastors,

staff and congregations are visionaries, and churches are invigorated. Empowered church people energize their congregations. In turn, energized congregations are contagious, drawing new people to their fellowships, engaging in creative ministries within the church and community, sharing Jesus in meaningful ways.

Myth 3: The missional church is not attractional or evangelistic ministry.

As God's people share ministry in their communities, many find themselves more involved in the church than ever before. As they are serving and ministering, they feel the need for more study, worship and prayer. Serving does not preclude attendance, but rather enhances it. Also, as God's people are sharing in their communities, they have entrée into the lives of their neighbors. Sooner or later, those who are receiving ministry will ask, "Why are you doing this? Where can I find this same kind of lifestyle?" The replies are always similar: "I am doing this because God loves me and God loves you. You can find this lifestyle being taught at my church. Why don't you go with me this Sunday?" Suddenly, God's people are ministering, witnessing and doing evangelism!

Myth 4: The missional church is opposed to church policies and procedures.

The missional church is opposed to making organization an end rather than a means to an end. Too many congregations are deeply mired in policies and procedures, hampered by committee structures that no longer work. Policies are certainly needed to guide congregations. Committees point us toward work that needs to be done. Yet, we must not be so bound by "rules" that we forget our purpose is to minister.

Myth 5: We do missions so we must be a missional church.

This is true only as you participate with God's creative activity. Many churches are doing the

same mission projects year after year to fulfill their tradition. Perhaps there are better ways to utilize resources and more needy places for ministry. A mission experience becomes missional when you are participating with God, when you are giving yourself away with no regard to return on investment, when you are empowering your congregation to minister from their passions. God's mission responds to the needs of the world; a missional church does likewise.

God is on a mission to transform the world through Jesus Christ. We are invited to participate in God's mission. As individuals and as congregations, we participate in God's mission when we:

- Depend on the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit
- Engage in spiritual formation and make disciples of others
- Embrace a biblical world view by seeking and serving the Kingdom of God above all else
- Think and act locally and globally with the least evangelized and most neglected
- Embrace and serve those who are poor and who suffer
- Practice authentic community and celebrate God's blessings

The missional church is a call to "go ye therefore and make disciples!" That is not a myth; it is the opportunity for a lifetime of meaningful ministries. **BT**

Resources

- *It's Time! A Journey Towards Missional Faithfulness* (Vestal et. al., CBF Resources)
- *The Church on the Other Side* (Brian McLaren, Zondervan)
- *Glimpses of Missional Faithfulness: Stories from the Pathway* (Prosser and Bennett, CBF Resources)

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