



LOCAL-CHURCH DRIVEN

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We believe that God's mission is all about his glory to the nations in and through his church. If you have been listening very long to BMA Global Missions you have heard the following two statements:

"The local church is both the source and the goal of New Testament missions."

"Missions offices and agencies do not reproduce, churches do."

If indeed the local church is the recipient and executor of the Great Commission, we must look deeper into what is a church and exactly how does it fulfill the mission.

A church is a group of regenerate, baptized followers of Christ who meet to worship God, obey the commands of Christ, and scatter to make his name known to the nations. Typically we are fairly adept at the gathering part for worship and gaining Bible information. But it is the scattering part - the missionary part - that challenges us many times. This must be overcome since the church is the normal and primary means of accomplishing the mission.

The New Testament prominence of the local church in fulfilling the mission is indisputable. Jesus' love for the church is noteworthy. In John 13 he "loved them to the end." In Matthew 16 and 18 we see clear instructions on authority given to the church that Christ initiated and loved. In Acts 20, Jesus declares that he purchased the church with his own blood. In the letters to the churches of Revelation (2-3), it is evident that Christ loves his churches.

This center stage for the church in the mission is evidenced all through the New Testament; as the gospel advanced, churches were started. In Acts 2, over 3,000 were added to the church as they proclaimed the gospel. Another church was started in Antioch of Syria that became the very epicenter of the missionary movement. Churches were started in Galatia on the first missionary journey then throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and all the way to Rome in the 33-year period that the book of Acts covers.

Churches as the source and goal of New Testament missions continued



as those original churches multiplied more churches. The church at Colossae helped to plant new churches at Hierapolis and Laodicea. Churches were started in "all the cities" on the island of Crete as told in the book of Titus. In all of these situations where churches were the result of fulfilling the mission, they then became the source of new churches. "In the New Testament the Christian life is the church life" (Jonathan Leeman).

We have defined a church, now what is the mission? There are five major commissions in the New Testament. We commonly call Matthew 28:19-20 the Great Commission. We will return to that passage in a moment. Mark 16:15 says to preach the gospel to all creatures. Luke 24 says to announce the message of repentance and forgiveness to the nations. John 20:21 tells us that just as Jesus was sent, so are we. Acts 1:8 says to simultaneously, like concentric circles, reach from our Jerusalem to the ends of the earth as Spirit-empowered witnesses. The Great Commission gives us one imperative - "Go make disciples of all nations" - as carried out through three participles: going, baptizing, and teaching. The three participles also become imperative since they are connected to the one main command. This verse delineates our mission this way: "Go win disciples of Christ in all nations, baptize them in obedience to Christ and as a new identity in Christ, and teach them God's Word to the point where they internalize it in their understanding and externalize it through obedience." In other words, these are people in all nations who are won to Christ, baptized, taught God's Word, and now repeat all the above.

Another saying you have no doubt heard from us many times is, "The church is a disciple factory, not a believer warehouse." If our church is not spending most of its time, money, and energy in fulfilling this mission, we need to remember what a church is and what our mission is!

BMA Global Missions helps your church in the missionary process by providing the following:

- a credible recommendation system for other churches to help your missionary candidate get to the field
- detailed accounting and financial services
- pre-field and on-field training,
- a unified missionary effort under a unifying vision carried out with sound missions principles
- a structure of accountability to our churches
- very specified missionary care
- a security network
- basic requirements such as visas, insurance, and other daily needs

There are many who can support the church in the mission, but there is nothing that can supplant the church in mission. We pray that your church will be evangelizing, baptizing, discipling, and planting other churches. Our mission is local-church driven.

mission:world

NEWS



A HEART FOR YOUR COMMUNITY = A HEART FOR THE NATIONS

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If you went to the streets of any town and asked folks to tell you about Antioch, many would respond, “What’s an Antioch?” Maybe for those who would read a publication about missions we would be aware that the name is found in the Bible. But for many, it would be an unfamiliar name.

I pastor a church called “Antioch.” This Antioch, located in Conway, Arkansas, was organized in 1925. That was before my time, so I can’t say I got this information from the organizing members, but when that small group of folks considered what they would call their new church, I wonder if someone found their way to Acts 11 or Acts 13. Acts 11:26 says, “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Scholars suggest that was not a term of endearment but of ridicule. But what likely began as mockery became an identification of honor. Christian . . . Christ-one . . . one belonging to Christ! There undoubtedly were certain characteristics, behaviors, and beliefs that clearly marked those who belonged to Christ. Shouldn’t it be the same today?

“What does that have to do with church planting?” you might ask. I believe it’s foundational to it. It doesn’t matter if your church is called Antioch Baptist, Timbuktu Baptist, or any other name that might be on the sign and website. If a church is being what a church is called to be, it should show evidence of those belonging to Christ. It should imprint Christ-like fingerprints on the community around it.

I wonder if anyone else would admit that when thinking about “missions” it’s often easier to think in terms of “out there” rather than “right here.” Maybe it’s easier to toss some money to people and delegate them to go be our missionaries than it is to look at the community around us and strive to reach that field too. I was asked to share about churches planting churches. So why am I talking about reaching our own community? Quite simply because if my heart doesn’t burn with a desire to reach my community, it’s unlikely that it will burn with a fire hot enough to do what it will take to be part of reaching another community. Are we making a difference in our community that would be missed if our church ceased to exist tomorrow? If not, perhaps we should reexamine our mission.

That church at Antioch . . . in Acts 13 we’re told that they sent out a missionary team - couple of guys named Saul (a.k.a. Paul) and Barnabas. (You can read the rest of Acts to see the ripple effect of that decision!) I want to be a part of something like that. A church making an impact on the field where God has placed us and as an overflow of that, seeking to reach others beyond our own geographic bounds.

That was some of the heart behind our planting a church in Georgetown, Texas – “Antioch Georgetown.” Georgetown is an area not

dramatically different from Conway, so we felt this would offer some common ground. It is positioned in an area that is one of the fastest growing in the nation, just outside of Austin, so, strategically, it felt like a sky-is-the-limit field. As we searched it out, God continued to give green lights, and wheels were put in motion toward the planting of a church.

A key piece of the puzzle in our story was the selection of a pastor to lead the plant effort. We determined that a potential pastor would be asked to join our staff for an extended time (up to two years). This would allow the potential pastor to feel the heartbeat of the sending church as well as for us to observe his heart and skills. So the prospective pastor was identified, and Andy Comer joined our staff team. This time served to confirm things such as calling, passion, work ethic, and vision. It also served to deepen the church’s commitment and support of the planting effort.

It was determined from the outset that we would seek to plant with a team of people. We felt that there was merit (and biblical precedent!) to the adage “We is better than me,” so we established a goal of having a core team that would commit to be part of the launch effort. The time Andy spent on our staff provided the perfect opportunity to invite others to consider being part of the launch team, and as that team came into focus, to spend time in training and preparation. When all was said and done, a team of over thirty people (twenty adults plus children) formed the core of what would become Antioch Georgetown.

What a blessing it was to see a sending church standing in the gap with its church plant, doing anything possible to help it launch well. We provided prayer and financial support and sent teams to help canvas neighborhoods and staff launch services, for example.

What a blessing to see a church planting team accept the charge and go into a new community with a holy passion to reach people.

What a blessing to see God take those efforts and do things that give us no choice but to step back and say – Wow! God did (and is doing) that!

“So what now?” some have asked. And the answer is this: Let’s do it again. I hope that I . . . I hope that you . . . I hope that WE will dare to pray, ask, seek, dream, send and see what God will dare to do if we answer the call to be a church on a mission to reach the community where he has placed us and plant churches where he leads us.

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Holding the Rope

The third of five value statements of BMA Missions says, “While multiplication is the process that fulfills the Mission of God in the New Testament, local congregations are both the source (sending) and the goal (planting) of that multiplication. Missions offices do not reproduce, churches do.” This value stands on Jesus’ command to the church to “go ye into all the world . . .” We have been eyewitnesses to the soundness of this value and its absolute necessity in planting churches at home and around the world.

To say that we could not have gotten to the mission field in Ukraine and accomplished the work of church planting without our sending church would be a gross understatement. Farley Street Waxahachie is not only our home church but our sending church. They helped to prepare us and supported us, and continue to do so, in many ways. Their decision to be an integral part of missions and church planting in Ukraine was necessary for the work to be effective.

Why is the church’s role necessary? Because it is God’s plan. God never intended the missionary to go alone. While some go, God intends for the church at home to be an active participant in the spreading of the gospel and church planting. In 1793, the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen held a farewell service for William Carey as he prepared to leave for India as a missionary. Carey had a meeting with the four leaders of the society who promised him “as he went forth in the society’s name and their Master’s, they should never cease till death to stand by him.” One of the men, Andrew Fuller, described the meeting with this analogy. He said that the mission to India seemed like a few men who considered going into a deep, unexplored mine. It was as if Carey said, “Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope.” The meeting, in Fuller’s mind, was as if he and the other brethren gave their word that “whilst we lived, we should never let go of the rope.” This rope analogy expresses a biblical truth: New Testament missions was designed by God to be a team effort. For every missionary that goes on the field there must be churches at home holding the rope.

How do churches “hold the rope?” Financial support is an obvious and essential means, but it is not the only thing missionaries need to be effective church planters. We need the church to remain faithful to the Word of God. We need the church to be a place where those called to missions are discipled and trained. We need the church to be prayer warriors and encouragers. We need the church to take mission trips, to come and see what God is doing. We need the church to hold the rope because without you the work will not be accomplished.

As we moved to Ukraine and settled in the city of Lutsk, a local Ukrainian church partnered with us for the purpose of planting churches. Fimiam Baptist Church extended an invitation to us to come to Lutsk and

help them plant churches in their city and region. While Fimiam did not have the ability to provide financial support for a church plant, they did have a staff member who would become the Ukrainian pastor, and they sent some of their members to start the new church. The church, Fimiam, desired to start a new church plant because they realized this new church would reach people they would never reach. Fimiam realized a strong, evangelical church in another part of town would result in more people hearing the gospel and becoming followers of Christ. A church that would minister to local people, share the gospel, and disciple those people who would then reach more people for Christ.

Because churches in the United States and a church in Lutsk, Ukraine, were obedient to Jesus’ command, a new church was born. Water of Life Baptist Church had her launch service in November 2019 with over one hundred people in attendance, many of those members of Fimiam, who came to support the new congregation on her first day. Water of Life averaged fifty to sixty people each week in the beginning. God has continued to bless the church under the leadership of Pastor Sasha Grebenyuk and now has over two hundred people in worship every Sunday. One result of planting Water of Life has been the reestablishment of a sister church in Volodymyr. This church was ready to close her doors but is now a thriving congregation because other churches came alongside her. Now there are other church plants beginning throughout Ukraine, all because churches followed the command of Jesus to “go ye into all the world . . .”

This is only one example of churches and missionaries working together as a team. There are many churches around the world that have been planted because churches sent and missionaries went. Missions doesn’t work without the church being involved. The church is a vital part of God’s plan. Is your church “holding the rope?” If so, does it have a good grip?





MAKING MEDIA DISCIPLES AROUND THE WORLD

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Lifeworld's global partners are also pastors, ministry leaders, and church planters, so the media they produce is an important part of their ministries. Planting churches is their primary mission no matter where they are throughout the world. Each of these men and women has a burden for their people group and unique challenges to sharing the gospel with non-believers and planting churches. Whether they meet in homes on a rotating basis or sponsor events for hundreds of children at a time, their purpose is to establish churches that further God's kingdom.

With five new churches being planted in the area, Brother Joseph Eniowo in Nigeria is now conducting discipleship with the help of smart phones that share the gospel with children and families. Nigerian parents want their children to learn about the Bible and Jesus even though they may never attend church. Hundreds of children come to kids events, which is the first step to meeting parents and eventually reaching them. Three new missions are also in the planning stages, and Brother Joseph and his leaders are praying about a BMA church in the future. He says God's Word is bearing fruit in the lives of their church members and disciples.

Eudo Rodrigues, who serves in Cape Verde, plants churches on other islands with the help of Lifeworld programs he produces for both believers and non-believers. People on his small island often recognize him from his videos, which allow him to help people find the churches he has planted or point people to those on other islands. European beliefs like "gnosticism" create cultural and spiritual challenges. But "spiritism", which eighty percent of Cape Verdeans claim as their belief system, makes it difficult to begin an evangelical work. However, Brother Eudo has recently baptized fourteen people and is planting a church on another island, which gives him the strength to continue.

With the help of Lifeworld, Oscar and Tamy Gaitan have planted eight churches in eight years in Nicaragua and Cuba. In an effort to strengthen

families within those churches, they have partnered with Lifeworld to produce Spanish-speaking videos that teach biblical principles of marriage to Hispanic couples who may never have seen them modeled. It's rare that couples living together are actually married, and men often leave the mothers of their children and start new families, only to leave them and father more children. So the Gaitans teach couples how to repair broken relationships, parent their children, and faithfully love each other. New churches are important in their efforts to serve families.

Valmori Zelaya has been serving in ministry for twelve years and now leads the Central American Online Radio Station, which feeds online radio stations and other Lifeworld Community Radio stations in El

Salvador. Although he lives in the larger city of Chinameca, he was born in the countryside of San Miguel, where there is no mission or church . . . until now. He has a burden for both areas, but San Miguel has around fifty families who have not heard the gospel. Valmori has answered the call to plant a church there, beginning with a small group of fourteen people who are thirsty for God's Word and have been meeting despite the many government restrictions in El Salvador.

Making media disciples is Pete Etabag's main work, so he conducts seminars with

Filipino broadcasters and technicians, many of whom are pastors and church planters. He teaches them to make short cell phone videos to reach people online with the gospel. Pastor Pete continues to add languages to Lifeworld's list so more tribes can know who Jesus is in their heart languages. Mindanao is the largest island in the Philippines and where many Filipinos remain unreached, so he installs transmitters that reach both the mountain and low land tribes where there is little to no WiFi. Churches have been planted in both areas, and Pastor Pete says radio ministry is still the most effective way to evangelize remote tribes.

Lifeworld Director of Operations Luis Ortega says, "The Great Commission of making disciples of all nations was given to the local church, and what an honor it is for the local church to invite Lifeworld to come alongside and partner with resources and tools as she obeys her Lord and Master."

