

Missional Church Learning Experience Guidelines

In Partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Thank you for your interest in the *Missional Church Learning Experience* (MCLE). These Guidelines are to help you determine if this opportunity would benefit your regional efforts in church vitality. Please consider the information and contact: Rev. Glynis LaBarre, Transformation Strategist, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, glynis.labarre@abc-usa.org, 800-ABC-3USA x 2412, to ask questions or discuss details.

Missional Church Learning Experience - Overview

Churches throughout America are looking for ways to bring vitality to their ministry. Currently there is a lot of talk about the missional church movement, but ideas need to be practiced in order to become effective. *The Missional Church Learning Experience is designed to give churches an opportunity to experiment with principles of the missional movement through a practical, “learn by doing” experience.*

A simple definition of a Missional Church is, “*an authentic faith community whose primary ministry focus is outward, on mission with God bringing Christ’s love alive in their neighborhood and beyond.*”

This mission focus is based on the belief that God created the church to deliver the good news for humanity through communities of faith that display Christ’s love among themselves as they work to deliver Christ’s message of God’s love to the world. When a church is “on mission” with God they are demonstrating the gospel as Christ did through word and deed, delivered in loving relationships empowered by God’s Spirit. Christians strengthen one another for this work by forming authentic faith communities (local churches) that inspire through worship, train for effective mission, and support disciples to be God’s life giving agents. This is discipleship; loving Christ and joining Christ in God’s mission.

When churches forget God’s purpose for the church, they can become self-serving entities. Refocusing outward on God’s mission helps Christians regain their purpose, bringing life and vitality to the church. As Christians become engaged with people in their community in caring ways they remember their call and the community sees *Christianity that works – faith that makes a difference*, to everyone’s advantage.

Your region is invited...

If your region would like to form a *Missional Church Learning Experience* in partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, together we will:

- Create a regional Learning Community of mission teams from 6-12 churches
- Introduce basic missional principles in 4 sessions over a 12-14 month period
- Help the church mission teams design and implement a small community project that practices missional principles
- Share what is learned with the regional Learning Community and encourage multiplication of the experience within churches and with other churches in the region

If this sounds like something your region might be interested in, please read on.

Missional Church Learning Experience **In Partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies**

Region's responsibilities:

- Express desire to participate in a *Missional Church Learning Experience*, by completing the included Regional Learning Agreement and Region Request signed by the Regional Executive Minister.
- Provide a Regional Coordinator (may be a volunteer, lay or clergy) to work with ABHMS facilitator to implement the *Missional Church Learning Experience* in the following ways:
 - Complete a Regional Learning Agreement. (Addendum A)
 - Recruit 6-12 churches to participate in a regional Learning Community in keeping with the Guidelines, making every effort to encourage diverse ethnic participation. (Addendum B)
 - Make host arrangements for the 4 MCLE sessions for the regional Learning Community over a 12-14 month period.
 - Provide support for Learning Community participants between training sessions with assistance from ABHMS facilitator.
 - Participate in the Coordinators' Advisory Council through conference calls, and occasional other opportunities.
- Host a MCLE Introduction by ABHMS facilitator – a 2-3 hour workshop designed to introduce the missional movement, explain the MCLE process and invite churches' involvement.
- Share Lessons Learned within the region and with other American Baptist churches.
- Prepare follow-up opportunities for the Learning Community churches that want to continue learning about vital ministry.

Churches' responsibilities:

- Accept region's invitation to participate in a regional Learning Community for the *Missional Church Learning Experience*.
- Gather a Mission Team for the 12-14 month period. (Addendum B)
- Attend the 4 sessions of the regional Learning Community over a 12-14 month period.
- Design and implement a small community project involving some church resources of time, money, energy and community partnerships.
- Share what is learned through the experience with others in the Learning Community, the region and the American Baptist family.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies' responsibilities:

- Invite regional participation in the MCLE
- Offer a MCLE Introduction to help the region assess interest.
- Work with Regional Coordinator to complete the Regional Learning Agreement.
- Work with Regional Coordinator to implement the 4 MCLE sessions over a 12-14 month period.
- Work with Regional Coordinator to support the Learning Community churches between sessions.
- Facilitate a network of Coordinators for exchange of ideas and mutual support,
- Train Regional Coordinator to become a MCLE facilitator for their region, if requested by region.
- Share Lessons Learned with the American Baptist family.
- Administer available grants to churches for support of community projects
- Offer CEUs to pastors who attend all 4 sessions



(Addendum A)

Questions to be Considered in Development of:
Regional Learning Agreement for the *Missional Church Learning Experience*

1) Who will be your Regional Coordinator? What responsibilities are expected? Will your Regional Coordinator be training to become a facilitator for future regional MCLE Learning Communities?

2) How many churches will you recruit for the regional Learning Community?

- 6 minimum – 12 maximum
- Does your region want to create multiple Learning Communities?

3) Do you want to develop a Learning Community Agreement with your participating churches? If so, please attach a sample.

4) What are the hosting details for the 4 session of the *Missional Church Learning Experience* for the regional Learning Community? (i.e. – dates, time, location, meal, snacks, equipment, people involved, cost, worship)

5) **Overview of 4 Sessions:** Any ideas or suggestions for changes?

Orientation – introduction to the missional movement, overview of MCLE process, community/team building, explanation of 3 step project planning process, worship

2nd Session – review results of 3 step project planning process, presentation of community project ideas, apply missional principles to refine project plans, worship

3rd Session – churches share their experiences from community projects, discuss Lessons Learned, introduced to multiplying missional efforts, worship

4th Session – celebration of Missional Church Learning Experience, discuss future mission opportunities and available resources, introduce change management, worship

6) How will the Learning Community churches be supported between training sessions? Blog or Chat room? Coach calls? Pastors' conference calls? How often? Who?

7) How will you share your experience and Lessons Learned within your region?

8) What follow-up plans need to be in place to keep the churches learning once the *Missional Church Learning Experience* is over?

9) What else?



(Addendum B)

Missional Church Learning Experience **Guidelines for Participating Churches in Regional Learning Community**

Churches participating in the regional Learning Community will –

Display the following qualities:

- Not satisfied with their church's current effectiveness
- Willing to try new ideas; including involvement with their communities
- Not currently engaged in high levels of conflict

Engage in the following activities:

- Form a Mission Team of 5 members who will give oversight to their church's involvement during the 12-14 month *Missional Church Learning Experience*.
Composed of:
 - the pastor (or appointed leader)
 - 3 lay members
 - a youth (from age 14-29)
- Mission Team will attend the 4 sessions of the *Missional Church Learning Experience* over a 12-14 month period.
- Complete the 3 step project planning process that will help the Mission Team design a small Community Project, that they will use to practice missional principles.
- Implement their Community Project, involving appropriate church resources of time, money, energy and community partnerships.
- Share what they learn from their experience with others in the regional Learning Community, the region, and the American Baptist family.



(Addendum C)
Missional Church Learning Experience
Proposed Time Line

(Can be shortened or extended to meet region's needs)

- Month 1-2 Region expresses interest in the *Missional Church Learning Experience*
- Reviews Guidelines with ABHMS facilitator
 - Selects Regional Coordinator
 - Designs Regional Learning Agreement
 - Hosts *Missional Church Learning Experience* Introduction – to assess interest of regional churches
- Month 3 Plan Orientation (Session 1), with ABHMS facilitator
Select dates for all 4 MCLE sessions
Invite participating churches (use of church agreement optional)
Churches select their Mission Team members
- Month 4 Orientation, Session 1 – regional Learning Community
- Worship
 - Introduction to the missional movement
 - Overview of MCLE process
 - Community/team building
 - Explanation of 3 step project planning process
 - Commitment to Learning Community
- Month 5-7 Church Mission Teams work on 3 step project planning process (1 step - each month) to help them design their community project, with support from Regional Coordinator and ABHMS facilitator.
- Month 7 Session 2 – regional Learning Community
- Worship
 - Review results of 3 step project planning process
 - Presentation of community project ideas
 - Apply missional principles to refine community project plans
- Months 7-14 Churches implement their Community Project – work may continue throughout the MCLE process. Grants to support community projects issued when applicable, upon receipt (by ABHMS facilitator) of Community Project Outline (Step 3).
- Month 10 Session 3 – regional Learning Community
- Worship
 - Churches present their experiences with community projects
 - Discuss Lessons Learned
 - Introduce multiplication of missional efforts
- Month 10-14 Collect 1 page stories from churches to be shared with American Baptist family
- Month 13 Session 4 – regional Learning Communities
- Celebration of the regional Learning Community and what was learned
 - Discuss resources available for future mission opportunities
 - Introduce change management
 - Worship
- Month 14 Final follow-up, CEUs for pastors, regional/churches assessment of experience



Regional Request
for a
Missional Church Learning Experience
In Partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Name of Region _____

Date of request _____

Name of Regional Coordinator _____

Position of Regional Coordinator _____

Contact information of Regional Coordinator:

Office phone _____ Cell phone _____

E-mail _____

Mailing address _____

_____ Yes, we have read the Guidelines for the *Missional Church Learning Experience* and are in agreement to:

- Provide a Regional Coordinator to work with the ABHMS facilitator to implement a *Missional Church Learning Experience* for our region.
- Create a Regional Learning Agreement. (Addendum A)
- Form a regional Learning Community of Mission Teams from 6-12 churches. (Addendum B)
- Host arrangements for the 4 sessions of the regional Learning Community.
- Provide support for Learning Community churches between training sessions with assistance from the ABHMS facilitator.
- Share Lessons Learned with others in the American Baptist family.
- Prepare follow-up opportunities for the Learning Community and other regional churches that want to continue learning about vital ministry

Having read and considered the Guidelines for the *Missional Church Learning Experience* we would like our region to participate.

Please sign and date:

Regional Executive Minister _____ Date _____

Regional Coordinator _____ Date _____

Please return by mail or e-mail to:

Rev. Glynis LaBarre, Transformation Strategist, National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851, or glynis.labarre@abc-usa.org

