

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

PURPOSE

This workshop is designed for individual churches and for clusters of churches. It will introduce participants to the concept of “missional church” and to the paradigm shifts necessary for moving toward becoming missional.

TIME FRAME

2 hours and 15 minutes with a 15 minute break.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- I Introduction (*10 minutes*)
- II The Missional Paradigm (*20 minutes*)
- III Eras of the Church (*20 minutes*)
- IV The Times They Are a-Changin’ (*20 minutes*)
- Break (15 minutes)
- V Becoming Missional (*20 minutes*)
- VI Next Steps (*20 minutes*)
- VII Closing (*10 minutes*)

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Read through the entire workshop and modify to fit your situation.
- Make copies of the handouts.
- If you are meeting in an unfamiliar place, check to make sure it is okay to hang newsprint on the wall.
- Prepare or ask volunteers to prepare drinks and light snacks for the break.
- Gather materials:
 - Bibles • handouts • newsprint • markers • wall-safe tape

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

I Introduction *(15 minutes)*

After all the participants have gathered, introduce yourself and welcome the group.

Review the purpose and outline of the workshop from the newsprint, noting that there will be a 15-minute break about halfway through. Point out where the facilities are and give the participants permission to take personal breaks as needed. This practice models the importance of attending to the physical needs of learners.

If the participants do not know one another, allow time for brief introductions. Ask the participants to share an activity they participate in outside the church building because of their faith.

II The Missional Paradigm *(20 minutes)*

Invite each participant to share what comes to her or his mind when hearing the phrase the “missional church.”

Distribute Handout A, *Missional: a Paradigm Shift*, and review the information together.

Divide participants into small groups to discuss the following:

- 1) What is the functional paradigm of their churches?
- 2) Outline your understanding of God’s mission, giving specifics (goals, location, means, and purpose), on newsprint.

Ask the groups to post their newsprint on the wall and give a few minutes for the participants to freely review what each group came up with.

III Eras of the Church *(20 minutes)*

Distribute and review together Handout B, “Historical Eras of the Church.” Give participants a few minutes to check the status of the church in each era and then discuss the question. If your group is large, divide into pairs for discussion

and ask each pair to share their responses. Be sure to go around the group to keep any single pair from dominating the sharing.

IV The Times They are a-Changing (20 minutes)

Distribute Handout C, “Our Changing Context.” Review the definition of Christendom and the comparison of Christendom and post-Christendom. Invite participants to share their experiences with and feelings about these changes.

Review the comparison of the Christendom church and the Missional church. Give the participants time to consider which characteristics are present in their churches—would they say their church is still living in a Christendom paradigm or moving in another direction?

Point out that for years the process of evangelism started with focusing on the conversion of another who would then be expected to become part of the faith community and then participate in service to the world. Further explain that to be missional means starting with ministering to the world, especially the immediate context and with that involvement—*although that is not the primary purpose of the church’s ministry to the community*—some may desire to become part of the faith and after a time in the community (even a year or two), publicly convert.

Break (15 minutes) *Remind participants of where the facilities are and point out the snacks. Give them a specific time to reconvene.*

IV Becoming Missional (20 minutes)

Call the group back together. Invite participants to share what their churches have been doing in mission.

Next ask the participants to brainstorm what missionaries do to prepare for service in another country. List their responses on newsprint.

Distribute Handout D, “Becoming Engaged in Mission” and explain:

Another change that has accompanied the move into a post-Christendom era is in the view of missions. Other factors have affected missions, such as younger

generations wanting a more direct involvement and preferring to move from experience to knowledge, rather than from knowledge to experience.

Review together the comparison of supporting mission and engaging in mission found on Handout D.

Invite the participants to identify the ways we might prepare for mission in our own contexts. If they have trouble doing this, you may want to offer some examples such as:

- In a missional church, studying the Bible precedes going into mission and also continues while in mission so that Bible study can take place outside of the church walls.
- We need to learn the languages of diverse ethnic groups, and also of different generations, as well as learn different contemporary methods of communication.

V Next Steps (25 minutes)

Divide into small groups according to churches or if all participants are from the same church, divide according to age groups or areas of interest and discuss the questions from Handout D. Ask them to summarize their answers as an initial vision of mission for their church. If all participants are from the same church, reconvene and have the groups hear what each other came up with.

Ask the small groups or the entire group if they are from the same church to brainstorm ideas of the ways that they could get more information to answer their questions. From this discussion, ask them to identify next steps for their church, which should include ways to share their ideas with the rest of the congregation.

VI Closing (5 minutes)

Summarize the missional concept as follows:

A missional church is a community sent out to its local context. It is centered on God's mission rather than on itself or its own survival. Becoming a missional

church means switching from the mentality of “come to us” to one of “go to them” and from “come and see” to “go and be.”

Ask the participants to each share one impression or response to the workshop.

Distribute Handout E.

Close with prayer asking that the participants and their churches will have the courage to become God’s sent people or share together the “Missional Litany” on Handout E.

Missional: a Paradigm Shift

We all use internal images and definitions to make sense of our world. Our construct of “church” helps us examine and identify what is church and what is not church (for an individual). Once we accept a paradigm of what it is to *be a church*, that model controls how we *do church*—how we think about something and controls our actions.

Older models often defined a church as active in “mission” if it provided “mission support” or was “mission minded.” Consequently, mission activities were limited to the selection, training and support of a few professional missionaries who were active in missionary endeavors overseas or at home.

“Missional church,” a term originally coined by missiologist David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*, is intended to describe a new mental model of both church and mission, one that allows the church to be responsive to the rapidly changing world we find ourselves in today. This new paradigm reflects a church that:

- exists for and focuses its energy and resources outward toward others;
- directs its ministry focus toward the context in which it is located;
- focuses all aspects—its ministry with its member, its outreach, and its common life—around God’s mission; and
- is sent to demonstrate and announce the vision and direction of God in its own context.

Historical Eras of the Church

Mark for each era if the church was a part of or on the margins of mainstream culture.

Mainstream Margins

30 CE Primitive (Apostolic and Subapostolic) Communities

- Culture hostile to the church
- Radical community defined and made possible by Jesus
- Faith was worth risking their lives
- Mission was to demonstrate a different way if life

312 CE Imperial Church Era

- Church equals the state
- Duty was to citizenship in the Empire
- No distinction between being Christian and a good citizen
- Mission was to force others into “faith”

1790 CE Establishment Church Era

- Informal church/state relationship
- Culture accommodated the church
- Time of denominations
- Mission was to teach moral values and raise Christian families

1960 CE Postmodern Era/Missional Church

- Church’s standing in society is changing
- Multicultural, multi-religious society
- Mission is to respond to God’s call in new ways

Discussion Questions:

- 1) In what era or eras was the church privileged in society?
- 2) Did that privileged position benefit or hurt the mission?
- 3) Is the church today in the mainstream or on the margins?
- 4) What advantages and disadvantages are there in being on the margins versus in the mainstream?
- 5) Does the church need to be protected by the culture to be faithful to God’s mission?

Our Changing Context

Christendom refers to cohesion between the church and culture and began in the 4th century when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Even with the separation of church and state, until the 60's and 70's in the U. S., there was a church–state partnership. Christianity functioned as the protected and privileged religion of society, forming and being formed by the broader culture. We are currently in a post–Christendom era.

<u>Christendom</u>	<u>compared with</u>	<u>Post–Christendom</u>
Unified culture		Diverse cultures
Culture is stable		Cultures are rapidly changing
Nation is considered “Christian“		More inclined toward “spirituality”
Church is significant in society		Church’s influence has declined

Christendom Church compared with Missional Church

Personal: Conversion of the other	Discipleship of self—paying attention to own spiritual growth & faithfulness
Church: Getting members into the church	Discipleship of existing members—identifying and using gifts for service beyond the church
Success: Number of church members	Service to and influence in the community
Global ministry: Dollars for mission	Engagement in mission
Evangelism: Conversion⇒ Faith community ⇒ Minister to broken world	Minister to broken world⇒ Faith community⇒ Conversion

Becoming Engaged in Mission*

<u>Supporting</u>	<u>compared with</u>	<u>Engaging In</u>
Mission is over there		Mission is right here (and over there)
Supported through finances		Participation and financial support
Depends on the denomination		Depends on local congregation
Focus on programs about mission		Mission teams

Questions to ask in preparation to engage in mission:

Who is out there?

Where do they gather?

Who are the unreached and unchurched people groups?

What are the needs of these communities?

Where is God already at work?

What organizations would welcome our partnership?

What are the interests, gifts and resources of the people in our church?

What kind of adjustments would need to be made in our church to develop a missional heart?

To whom do you think God is sending you and your church?

*Adapted from *Move Your Church from Maintenance to Missional* by the Missional Church Institute.

Resources

The Once and Future Church by Loren Mead (Allban Institute)

Missional Church by name Darrel L. Guder (Eerdmans)

The Center for Parish Development at missionalchurch.org

National Ministries' web site has Web pages dedicated to the topic of missional church transformation. God the Web site at nationalministries.org and click on "Missional Church Transformation" in the left hand margin or go directly to nationalministries.org/missional_church/.

A Missional Litany

Turn our eyes from ourselves
And onto Your world

Focus our thoughts away from our needs
And toward your mission

Teach us to trust You
Knowing that You are our Source and Sustenance

Help us to find life
By giving ourselves away

Amen.