

**Columbia Metro: Mission Local**

***The Concept***

CMBA desires to raise awareness of the need for missional deployment within our local context by our family of congregations in the Midlands of South Carolina. This does not suggest missional deployment beyond the Midlands is unimportant. It is very important. It is essential to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment.

It is simply means we cannot go to other places in our state, country, and world in missional deployment, and ignore our primary responsibility for our own setting. The need for Christ-like, compassionate ministry in the Midlands is great. We have people groups and communities without effective Christian witness.

If we cannot love, serve, and minister with the character and nature of Jesus in the Midlands, what makes us think we can do it effectively elsewhere? When we go to other places to minister, and they ask us about our local missional deployment beyond growing our own congregation, we must have a great answer. We must have missional integrity locally, and not just see our missions as *over there* somewhere.

Let’s call our focus ***glocal***. This word suggests we are simultaneously focused globally and locally with faithful, effective, and innovative missional deployment.

**Organizing for Glocal Missional Deployment**

One of the greatest challenges to ***glocal*** missional deployment can be that congregations are not organized for it. Our heritage as Baptists includes several types of missions organizations, fellowships, societies, auxiliaries, and emphases. The program of missions was at the heart of our identity.

Women, men, youth, and children organizations within congregations focused on our ***glocal*** missional tasks. In recent decades, various denominational and network shifts moved away from this approach. Yes, it may have been time for rethinking how we organize for missional deployment. But what has replaced it that is better?

**Consider These Questions**

1. Who is the leader in your church of missional deployment beyond your congregation and directs its missional programs, ministries, and activities? The pastor? A staff person? A lay leader?

If it is only the pastor, a staff person, and one lay leader, that is not good.

1. Is there an ongoing movement in your church of people who pray, think, support, plan, and take actions of missional deployment locally in addition to any global initiatives? How many people are in this movement? Is their work seen as a top priority emphasis of your congregation?

Even in the smallest of congregations, this must be at least three to seven people. In larger congregations, it should be three to seven percent of the average number of people engaged weekly with the congregation.

1. How does your church distinguish between actions of missional support such as praying, giving money, collecting, and sending commodities (gift boxes, health kits, prisoner packets, hunger ministry items), and those of missional action of reaching out and directly engaging with people who need a Christ-like, *high-touch* ministry from a caring Christian?

What percentage of what you do is missional support and what percentage of what you do is missional action? How can you increase the percentage of action so that persons in need of the Good News are personally and compassionately encountered?

At least 50 percent of local missional deployment should directly encounter the people who are the object of your missional actions. Only doing missional support satisfies, for some people, their obligation for missional engagement. The reality is that this is not enough to change our world. Many more people than we currently reach need to experience the love of Jesus.

Consider these missional categories.

**Missional Categories**

To remind us, ***missional*** is about the mission of God and how we are acting in a ***glocal*** manner to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. We would suggest – beyond the traditional and innovative terminology of missions in congregation – you consider three categories of missional engagement.

* **Missional Foundation:** Congregations engage in learning about ***glocal*** missional deployment and pray for people groups and target areas, but especially for individual people by name who need spiritual transformation in their lives. *Everyone can do this.*
* **Missional Resourcing:** Congregations provide money, commodities, and time to resource ***glocal*** missional efforts focused on people groups, target areas, and individual people. Yet they do not encounter at any depth the actual people who are the object of missional resourcing. *Many people will do this.*
* **Missional Deployment:** Through ***glocal*** efforts, congregations encounter people groups, target areas, and individuals personally, serve people, and authentically disciple people towards of relationship with Jesus. *Those who understand and accept their calling as a Christian disciple can do this.*

The reality of missional life in congregations is that the largest number of people are involved in missional foundation efforts. A reasonable number of people may be involved in missional resourcing. People that may be known as the *remnant* actively give time and effort to in-depth mission deployment.

How do we get beyond tokenism in missional deployment?

**The Challenge is Great**

Unless a congregation is struck by God’s “Triple D” – the *Direct, Dramatic, Divine Intervention of God* – which in our tradition is known as a revival breaking out or a spiritual awakening – it is demanding work to get an existing congregation deeply and broadly involved in missional deployment. Many are the pastors, staff persons, and spiritually passionate lay leaders who mourn the lack of excitement about ongoing missional deployment.

In the area of missional foundation, if people learn and pray, it is too often in the most general of terms. They hear sound bites about people groups and target areas. They pray a general prayer of concern for people and those who work with them. Praying by name for people who need Jesus often is foreign to their prayer life.

Missional resourcing is often done with a distance approach. Food, clothing, prisoner packets, health kits, and Christmas boxes are important commodities to support missional deployment. As are other efforts. At the same time, people can feel satisfied they did something of compassion without ever doing anything personal and direct.

Missional deployment involves a personal vulnerability for Christians. People they meet may reject their loving actions, have a different lifestyle with which it is hard to connect, or by their resistance expose the cultural rather than spiritual nature of the witnesser’s lifestyle. The perceived threat is too great for many people. They do not remember that God’s Holy Spirit goes before them to prepare the people for their discipling encounter, service, and efforts.

**Adopting a Mission Field**

An exceptional way to engage in ***Mission Local*** is to adopt a mission field. Yes, you can adopt a mission field in another part of the world or another part of our country. Doing so may allow your congregation to engage in all three **Missional Benchmarks**.

However, how about adopting a mission field that may be within a few miles of your church or home, and deeply involve your congregation in all three **Missional Benchmarks** with exponentially more people directly involved – especially in person-to-person **Missional Deployment**?

Or you might want to do both. Do something ***glocal***. The story of a pastor in another state illuminates this possibility.

The pastor was in his eleventh year at his church. During his first ten years, his church had doubled in attendance. It was not because they were in a fast-growing area. It was because they engaged in an intentional strategy suggested by the pastor.

Here was the simple strategy. He sought to get every able-bodied adult to go on an international missions trip. Each trip included a dozen or so people.

When they returned, they engaged in debriefing gatherings for six sessions over the next three months. Throughout the gatherings. he kept asking the question – “What are the implications of what you experienced and learned for the ministry of our congregation in our context?”

During the last few sessions, each group planned a ministry and disciplemaking project in which they would engage. They made a commitment to engage in this project for a year. They also invited other people in the congregation to join with them.

The missions trips were at least annual events. Usually, more than half of the people who went on the trips had not been on one before – perhaps not even had experienced international travel. During the previous decade, more than half the active, attending adults in the congregation went on a missions trip outside the United States. Participation in the debriefing gatherings – as well as the orientation before they went – was part of their trip covenant.

**What Did This Pastor Know That You Need to Know?**

**First**, for people to learn something that changes their knowledge and behaviors it is necessary to get them out of their culture of comfort for a couple of weeks. They need to experience a culture sufficiently different that they become intellectually and emotionally disoriented, unlearn the way they thought ministry should work, and start learning new ways.

**Second**, people must have their new knowledge reinforced through debriefing with a trusted group of people and practicing new behaviors of ministry. The debriefing sessions and commitment to new action cannot be optional.

**Third**, the pattern repeats annually to change the long-term spiritual and missional culture of a congregation. Capacities must be built. Sustainability must be experienced.

**Mission Field Alpha – Woodfield Park Community**

***Is God calling your congregation to adopt Mission Field Alpha – the Woodfield Park Community?***

Mission Field Alpha is a community of more than 7,000 people in approximately 2,800 households. It is a truly racially and ethnically diverse community with an above average number of households below the poverty line. Fifty-five percent of the population is Black/African-American. Approximately 20 percent are White, and 18 percent are Hispanic/Latino. The rest are Asian and other designations.

Here are other selected demographics:

* The median household income is around $40,000. White and Asian households have an income of around $50,000 or better, and Black/African-American households are below $35,000.
* Just over 50 percent of the head of households are single parents. Two-thirds of these have never been married.
* More than one in five households are below the poverty line.
* Half the adult population are high school graduates and half are not.
* Two-thirds of households are not currently involved in any organized religious activities. If they were involved, the two groups most appealing are Baptist and Catholic.
* Three issues with which they want help: finances, success in life, losing weight.
* Concerns are life stresses, health crises, and caring for aging parents.
* They wish for warm, friendly, and engaging encounters with people.

Here are tough, real-life illustrations of households in this community (facts changed):

* Single mom with two teenage children. Teenage girl was object of sexual abuse by family adult who now has a restraining order against him, but he is still around the neighborhood. Mom temporarily lost custody years ago because of her drug use.
* Married couple with three children. Two of the three have special needs. Mother works outside home, but the father does not. Father has PTSD and is abusive.
* Single dad living with his parents. Divorced with shared custody of teenage son who spends at least half his time with mother in another city.
* Grandmother raising two special needs grandchildren. A third grandchild is in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice due to violent act in community. All three children were crack babies. Adult family member in home suspected to be a drug dealer.

Woodfield Park may go out of existence before the end of 2022 despite more than six decades of faithful and positive Christian ministry in this community. A lack of leadership and finances makes it improbable for them to continue. Their facility needs significant investment for repair, replacement, and upkeep for which they do not have resources.

**Goal:** ***Adoption of Mission Field Alpha – Woodfield Park Community*** where as many as 5,000 people need to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord and have a Christian community to nurture them.

Given the economics and lack of leadership within Mission Field Alpha, it is doubtful that a sustainable, traditional congregation would even result from missional deployment in this area without ongoing finances and leadership from outside this mission field.

This is not the revitalization of an existing congregation. This is not the replanting of an existing church. This is adopting a mission field that needs to be approached like it was an unentered mission field. It is not the same mission field in which Woodfield Park Baptist Church was launched more than 60 years ago. It is an unentered mission field.

It may take a group of several congregations to effectively provide ministry in this setting.

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