



Diocese of Western Anglicans

A Missional Model of Church Development: What is a Congregation?

April 27, 2024

Developing a Missional Local Church

Rationale:

Anglicans in the United States often use ‘parish’ and ‘congregation’ interchangeably to identify a local church that is organized and functions as a center of worship, teaching, learning and mission. This understanding has been increasingly codified over time with reinforcement given by the ongoing training of its clergy in Anglican seminary environments and generalized lay experience with a model of local church. There are distinctives associated with ‘parish’ and ‘congregation’ in theological and functional terms, but for this reflection, not essential to review. This parish or congregation model was often driven by:

1. **Space**—the physical property where people gathered for worship, fellowship, teaching, training and outreach events and projects. This property often served as the center of a local community’s activities while also serving as a place of encounter with the divine.
2. **Worship**—the defining function and identifying characteristic was often the kind and quality of the weekly worship service, primarily taking place on Sunday morning. Anglican worship is so distinctive and central to our experience of this model, that the service is life-shaping for many—*lex orandi, lex credendi*.
3. **Organization**—a pastor, (an Anglican Rector or Vicar) ministers from the center of the local church community to lead worship services, offer courses on Scripture and other subjects of importance, manages programs for various needs of people of varying ages and provides pastoral care to all. The focus on worship, pastoral care and various learning activities reinforced the ‘Come and join us’ orientation to our common life.
4. **Culture Compatibility**—agrarian life oriented people to a pace of life that required a paid pastor to provide worship, teaching and care to a local region, gathering and caring for those who lived nearby and who were otherwise unavailable in summer due to the rigors of farm and factory and in winter due to harsh weather. Since pastors tended to stay for long periods of time in a church community, trust grew as the pastor did the ‘church work’. The model carried with it the with hope that people in that region (small town, small city, zip code, etc.) would see the local church as ‘their’ church and come to be a part of it—often for marriages, baptisms, confirmations and burials—but sometimes not much more. Following the



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Reformation and more intentionally in recent decades, people often selected from the array of local churches by denomination or reputation of the pastor. The church in the 20th Century relies more heavily on transfer growth and developing its means of gathering like-minded people than it does on conversion growth.

What is a congregation in this model?

A congregation is a gathering of people that worships, pays a priest and supports itself financially and organizationally, with a minimum threshold of about 40 people in average Sunday attendance (ASA). While some details are generally negotiable, including ASA and full time stipend for the priest, congregation members generally worked to establish these minimum expectations and proceed to meet the minimums. The American church regardless of denomination averages about 55 people on Sunday for worship.

What was or is the outcome?

Congregations tended to remain small and under-resourced to fulfill the mission to which God called them, often measuring health by Sunday worship attendance instead of growth and development of disciples who are capable of making new disciples of Jesus. These congregations were usually oriented around the maintenance of the organization (worship services, pastoral care and classes) and hoped for new members through attraction and/or transfer from other congregations of the same kind. By God's grace, however, many have thrived and moved well beyond the minimum, but one thing remained—the word 'congregation' or 'parish'. As a congregation grew in number of members, what increased were the number of worship services, programs and new members. Rarely, if ever, did it start a new congregation, as this was left up to the regional or diocesan network to initiate and sustain.

Cultural Divergence

While the local church as 'parish' or 'congregation' served the church when there was high alignment between the church and the wider culture, the church and the wider culture have diverged sufficiently, enough to require the church to re-orient its life and work to and through the lens of mission. The practical reality is that the sheer number of people living near a local church that do not seek God on that campus or in relationship with the members of the local church represents a challenge, and that challenge is, if people no longer seek God on the campus of the local church, then the local church must go and seek them to make a case for Jesus Christ as Lord. This goes to the purpose of the church as



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communicated by Matthew as he recounted Jesus' words: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (ethne)..." (Matthew 28:19)

The statistics given by such researchers as the Barna Group and Pew Research Group point to further decline in the church's ability to respond to this increasingly secularized culture, as the church itself declines in its capacity and commitment to carry the gospel through its members. The emerging paradigm of the church that responds to the call to bridge the chasm created by divergence between the church and the society surrounding it, is described as 'missional'. While there are an abundance of books on what it means to be 'missional', for our purposes, it may be summarized in the following manner:

4 Systems of Missional Local Churches

1. **Lay mobilization**—instead of beginning with space, the missional church begins with people, formed as a Christ-centered community, that is increasingly clear that one lives out his/her calling in Christ in the world where the gospel is carried everyday. A missional church produces everyday missionaries.
2. **Clergy Equippers**—instead of organizing themselves around managing an array of church programs (worship services, Sunday school classes, bible studies, social events and service projects, etc.) that draw people into their sphere of influence, they train their church members to bridge the chasm with the wider community so that the gospel is carried by everyday missionaries into their neighborhoods, schools and work-sites to make disciples of people who live, play and work there.
3. **Lay Leaders**—instead of occupying those with leadership gifts, skills and aptitude with tasks that cause the organization to function at optimal level, the missional church orients its leaders to the work of modeling, mentoring, managing and coaching people in the disciple-making processes that increase the capacity of the church to impact the wider community with Christ-centered people.
4. **Christian community**—instead of drawing people to one central campus where the 'identifiably important' activities are shared, Christian community provides the medium whereby everything we do and wherever it is done, is undergirded with meaningful relationships that are increasingly transformative of people—homes, coffee shops, schools, work conference rooms, community centers and many more places all become environments where Jesus meets with people through His people.

As a result of this re-orientation of the church from 'maintenance' to 'mission', we need to allow a greater variety of models for the local church that are given encouragement and affirmation by the Anglican Church.



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What is a congregation in this model?

A congregation, is biblically rooted and culturally engaged and, as first defined by Henry Venn, is a self-governing, self-funding and a self-reproducing (self-propagating) group of Christ-centered people who are living as disciples of Jesus and reaching for others in the wider community so that they may also live as disciples of Jesus. In this model, leadership may be lay or ordained and the focus is not on how many people gather for worship together weekly, but on how many disciples are made so that more disciples may be made through them.

What is the outcome?

Congregations may be started with a few people sharing in the right core values and commitments, some of which include: incarnational and missional discipleship, biblical hospitality, meaningful and transparent relationships and orientation to unchurched and unsaved people nearby and far away. Congregations may grow from a few to a few hundred in this model, as well, but imitation and reproduction is practiced and modeled for others. A local church may contain one or more of these congregations that network together in order to minimize the costs and organizational demands of the former model.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Jesus Used the Local Church

The world has changed, but the needs of people have not changed. The church exalts the One who is the same '*yesterday, today and forever*'. (Hebrews 13:8) The church has been equipped over the course of Christian history with the knowledge and experience to respond to those needs if we will. The Holy Spirit works actively in and through the church to present Jesus to the world.

Local Churches Cultivate Missional Values:

Biblically defined and Spirit-formed values in people are expressed in a community of disciples of Jesus.

Who are:

1. Teachable—life-long learners; allowing God to shape others; mentoring others well
2. Trustworthy—following through in action what is promised; faithful: obedient
3. Team Player—collaborative in style and temperament; eager to partner with one another



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4. Transparent—practicing personal integrity and authenticity; genuine in seeking God
5. not Territorial—not driven by controlling others; not defenders of turf

A Developmental View of Congregational Growth

Each of the expressions of the local church that follow may be led by an ordained leader, either a presbyter or a deacon, and our current and future fruitfulness will be impacted greatly by how we mobilize and train lay leaders. So, we are being intentional in encouraging missional lay leaders (Lay Missioners) to take their place in the leadership of those small groups, communities, congregations and local churches where they may effectively influence people for God's Kingdom.

A New Definition of Terms

Mission Startup

A new Christ-centered community likely led by a lay leader or Lay Missioner with a vision for growth that leads them to corporate worship, disciple-making and mission. A mission startup is usually organically a part of a larger congregation or local church, but may be birthed through Kingdom-driven efforts by the Deanery or the Diocese. The trajectory for planning and development is toward a self-funding, self governing and self-reproducing Christian community.

Church Plant

A Christ-centered community, likely led by a Presbyter called by God to plant a new church. A church plant is committed to growth in the Spirit and membership growth through conversion, progressing steadily through developmental stages of reproductive community life. Due to resource levels, a church plant is likely initiated by the deanery or a resource church. A Church Plant generally will have a minimum Average Sunday Attendance of 25 members.

Congregation

A congregation, likely led by a Presbyter, is understood to have developed a system of worship, disciple-making and mission that fosters an environment for and momentum toward growth and reproduction. It may be networked with other congregations or it may stand on its own. Healthy development of a **Congregation** is usually dependent upon a minimum ASA of 75 and will be self-funding, self-governing and self-propagating. As



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growth is experienced, a congregation will sponsor new missional communities and congregations that may be released as a new church plant.

Resource Church

A resource church, led by a Presbyter, operates with multiple congregations and worship services (onsite and/or off-site) and/or missional communities to impact the wider culture with the gospel. A resource church is self-funding, self-governing and self-propagating with a minimum ASA of 200+ and accepts the responsibility to contribute generously in time, people and funding to the development of new church plants in the deanery and the diocese.





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Mission Startup Average Sunday Attendance 0-25

This is a *seedling* of a church that begins with some of the people, leaders and funding it will need as it grows. A Mission Startup is often birthed in a key leader who will either (a) seek to develop a Missional Community networked with a Local Church, or (b) plant a Congregation that will grow, we hope, into a Local Church. A Mission Startup usually represents a 'Church Planting' trajectory. A Missional Community is an extension of the Local Church that intends to initiate a Christ-centered community some distance away from its campus.

A Mission Startup will be recognized and given diocesan affirmation and support when it has exhibited and/or gathered:

1. A leader as the primary mobilizing, catalyzing or planting lay person
2. A core team of support for the this leader
3. Sufficient funding to demonstrate the capacity to gather people
4. Teachable people who collaborate easily
5. Sufficient Anglican ethos that is understood and applied
6. People in submission to the authority of the Diocese—the Bishop and those who assist him—if the group is sponsored by the Deanery or the Diocese, and to the Local Church—the Rector and the Vestry—if the Mission Startup is sponsored by a Local Church
7. A robust Intercessory Support System
8. Collaborate with and receive support from 'local' churches nearby who share the vision of a new Christ-centered community (a partner church, missions team support, etc.)
9. Defined 'fishing pools' and focused engagement with a targeted group, subculture, ethnicity, etc.)
10. At the core, there is anticipated churning/sifting for commitment in the core as people make decisions to invest
11. Mission, vision, values are defined or being re-defined
12. Ministry plan is in place – what you will do – (action), including:
 - a. Marketing
 - b. 'Fishing pool' events (service activities, Taste and see, needs-based)
 - c. Programs (Alpha, Evangelism Explored)



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13. Annual assessment will be engaged to facilitate growth and development; at the 5-year mark, a thorough evaluation will take place to determine trajectory and the next steps
14. Receiving training in best practices, planter coaching for contextualization and planter assessment for effective team building
15. A budget for the church planter that is reasonable, given one's circumstances
16. A budget for the ministry (3-year) which is reviewed annually
17. An online presence is being implemented (website, social media)
18. Active 'networking' and personal gathering of people through 1 on 1 relationship building and hospitality





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Church Plant Average Sunday Attendance 25-75

This is a *sapling* of a church with all of the elements of a seedling of a church. A church plant may be established under the initiative of the deanery or form under the supervision of a Local Church and its Rector. A Church Plant may develop from:

- a. a missional community that has matured into a Church Plant,
- b. a missional start-up that has matured in the same way,
- c. the initiating work of a lay or clergy leader who has gathered a group of people to plant a congregation.

To the basic requirements of a Mission Startup, the church plant will have added:

1. A clear strategic plan of development for the first 5 years with a focus on mission and development through worship, disciple-making and mission
2. A growing disciple-making culture among the members by implementing apprenticing practices generally
3. The commitment of a Core Team that is defined as:
 - Active in presence to Christ and His church members
 - Active in ministry by serving Christ daily wherever one goes
 - Active in tithing to God through the Church Plant
4. Sufficient funding for the next phase of development (12-18 mos)
5. A minimum of 12-15 core tithing members
6. Coordinated engagement with the Deanery church planting team
7. A commitment at the Core Group level to tithe to God through the Diocese of Western Anglicans
8. A growing web presence through an active website and social media
9. Maintaining an active attitude and activity toward growing the work, overcoming the setbacks that come with discipling people and growing missional works
10. A Lay Leadership model that is annually re-examined to equip everyday missionaries and deploy them to serve God's purposes in the world
11. Evaluate the model employed so that the planter may delegate and equip and so that the lay members may act in obedience to God and reach for others
12. In team-building activities, the temperament and personality of the members of the leadership team will be reviewed



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Congregation Average Sunday Attendance 75-150

—this is a young, but *solid tree* of a church with all of the development of a seedling and of a sapling of a church. A congregation may operate under the supervision of the Deanery and its 501c3 corporation, it may grow toward self-sufficiency as it operates under its own 501c3 corporation or it may remain integral to the local church. To the requirements of a Church Plant, the Congregation will have added:

1. A minimum of 75 core, tithing members (35 giving units as a goal); if operating under the supervision of the deanery, the Congregation is tithing to God through the diocese
2. An active and established disciple-making culture that reproduces through evangelism and discipleship actions and activities
3. A priest, the likely leader of a Congregation, equips and leads the congregation; sufficient funding is available for his services
4. A networking relationship with other congregations under the governance of a Local Church Vestry or it is organized as a 501c3 corporation with its own Rector, Vestry and bylaws, as guided by the diocese

Should the Congregation have sufficient resources to become self-funding, it is likely to exceed \$200,000 to address the needs of Congregation growth.

If the Congregation becomes self-funding at this phase of development, then it may be encouraged to become self-governing, as well, electing its own Rector, forming a Vestry and establishing itself as a 501c3 corporation.

Worship is regularized for a congregation, when it may be more sporadic and driven by the development of a Mission Startup or a Church Plant



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Resource Church Average Sunday Attendance 150+

This is a *towering tree* of a maturing church with one or more congregations that are being nurtured into health and growth. A congregation is likely to be led by strong maturing lay leaders or a trained and licensed Lay Missioner working alongside the clergy and Vestry leaders and often both. To the requirements of a Congregation, a Resource Church will have matured to:

1. Become fully self-funding, self-governing and self-reproducing
2. Be organized as a 501c3 corporation with a Vestry, Rector and bylaws
3. Have a Clergy Equipper as the Rector and is funded full-time
4. Effectively develop and train Lay Leaders who create missional culture in the local church
5. Be practicing disciple-making reproductively and organically
6. Likely have more than one congregation with active missional communities and small groups of varying sizes
7. Be effectively and joyfully worshiping God on a personal and corporate level
8. Have sufficient membership to be self-funding, recognizing that Local Church costs often require a **minimum** \$200,000 annually. The research suggests that a church with 100 ASA has reached a point where the priest needs to spend more time training, leading and mobilizing others to do many of the tasks he/she has done at earlier phases of development.
9. A church with 150+ ASA has reached a point where additional support staff has been hired to support a growing membership and it begun congregation reproduction.
10. A church with 200+ ASA has reached a point whereby they are really ready to serve as a resource for Congregation reproduction both onsite and offsite in the Deanery



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11. Resource churches generally operate on more than twice or three times this minimum amount of \$200,000, but for those whose goal is to grow and mature into a Resource Church, the following may apply as general minimum estimates:

a. Church tithe	\$20000
b. Church rent	\$24000
c. Priest (full-time) stipend and medical	\$80000
d. Organization costs	\$15000
e. Administrative staff	\$30000
f. Ministry costs	\$12000
g. Miscellaneous, locally variable	<u>\$17000</u>
	\$198000

The Missional Heart of the Local Church

Disciplemaking is the core of the Local Church whereby worshipping disciples are made from unsaved seekers. This process can be implemented in every phase of development.

1. What is a disciple of Jesus? Must be answered and practiced in every Local Church.
2. A leader and member culture that employs processes that moves people from unsaved seeker to Jesus follower to community member, to enthusiastic worshipper to befriender and discipler of unsaved seekers.
3. Careful hospitality, befriending and integration of seekers, new believers and those in need of the Lord and His healing.
4. Intentional training of lay leaders through a servant leader community to serve people as their purpose and priority and thereby participate in God's unfolding plan of salvation.



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Addendum

Missional Community—this is a developing Mission Startup that may not develop into a church plant or become a Local Church. At this early stage, the variables contributing to its development may not even be known. For the purposes of development, though, to the basic requirements of a Mission Start-up, the Missional Community will have added:

1. From 10-12 up to about 50 people who gather for worship, disciple-making and mission, most likely as an extension of the Local Church, unless it has been sponsored by the deanery
2. A clearly defined mission focus on a local neighborhood or community subculture
3. A leader who is a Lay Missioner or trained lay leader
4. Supported by a small team of leaders who train and oversee the work of the missional community
5. Most likely sponsored by a Local Church initiating work in a community that is distant enough from the campus to make this new work a better option for evangelism and discipleship

At this stage, the markers for a Missional Start-up and a Missional Community may overlap or be interchangeable; the key factor being the vision and plan of the key leader and the leadership team so that the trajectory is set into the culture of the emerging community.

Lay Missioner

Usually a bi-vocational lay leader with gifts of gathering and catalyzing, pastoring and teaching, and leading and managing other lay members who are called to start a new missional community, and under certain conditions, a church plant or congregation. A Lay Missioner begins by gathering people into a process of missional discipleship formation so that disciples and Christ-centered missional communities are birthed, formed and multiplied to the glory of God. Lay Missioners are licensed by the bishop to serve as ‘pastor-teachers’ according to their gifting, to gather the members of the body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus.” (Ref Document: **Lay Missioner Ministry Manual**)