

Model: Missional Church

Churches desire to attract people, and worship services are usually designed with members and guests in mind. Some church services are tailored specifically for those who are not yet believers in Jesus. Pastors often encourage their members to bring unsaved guests with them to church to expose them to the Gospel in the preaching of the Word. These ministry designs are in no way improper.

The newest SBCV church plant in Virginia Beach, however, conducts its weekly gatherings very differently. A typical Sunday service at Virginia Beach Missional Church is anything but typical—from the location where its members gather to the design and purpose of their worship. At present, the new church meets at a Mary Kay

training studio, complete with pink walls accented with black and white tablecloths. But more important than the décor is the clear objective for their gathering. In the Equip Worship Service, believers celebrate what God has done through them and are equipped and empowered for missionary living through prayer and the study of God’s Word. Church planter Rick Leineweber describes their service in the following way, “Instead of our members preparing all week to serve in their volunteer positions on Sunday, our members come to be equipped for the next six days of the week. Equipping is centralized on Sunday, but everything else is done through decentralized missional communities.”

The goal is for church members to give birth to missional communities by utilizing a combination of their relationships and the

locations in which God has placed them. Missional communities are decentralized gatherings that begin with believers who share the same target audience/cause and who desire to partner together to reach their mission field. The groups are inclusive, seeking unbelievers to join them, thus exposing the lost to a demonstration of genuine, godly love for people and their God-given community. Pastor Rick has extensive experience as a church planter and small-groups pastor. In these roles, he has refined the skill set necessary to develop leaders to start and lead small groups of believers that grow and multiple disciples.

In an effort to provide church members with practical handles to engage in missional living, Pastor Rick has adapted a set of missional practices from pastor and author Dave Ferguson (the B.L.E.S.S. acronym):



Begin with prayer

(DEPENDENCE)

How does God want me to bless the people to whom He has sent me?



Listen

(ATTENTIVENESS)

What challenges, struggles, and pain are the people to whom God has sent me experiencing?



Eat

(HOSPITALITY)

Who will I have a cup of coffee or a meal with among the people to whom God has sent me?



Serve

(GENEROSITY)

How can I demonstrate the love of Christ in a practical way with those to whom God has sent me?



Story

(BOLDNESS)

Is the timing right for me to share my story (testimony—how Jesus changed my life) and His story (the Gospel) with those to whom God has sent me?

This approach to Gospel ministry may seem novel, but a study of the early days of the Church reveals a biblical precedent.

In the months since Virginia Beach Missional Church began meeting, its members have fully embraced missional living. Consider these testimonies:

ONE MEMBER SHARED, *For years, I invited my neighbors to outreach events at my previous church with no success. We recently did one block party in our neighborhood, and every neighbor on our street came except one shut-in couple. We dropped food by for them. Most people stayed several hours, and we made tremendous progress building redemptive relationships.*

ONE FAMILY USED *Financial Peace* to explore the potential of starting a missional community among college students in Norfolk close to their home. They hope to reengage those students during the fall semester.

ONE FAMILY OPENED their home for a “meet your neighbor” supper. Each family brought their favorite soup/chowder/chili/stew and a loaf of bread. Eighteen neighbors had a wonderful time talking with one another. The host family explained, *Each of us explored the potential of common interests that could lead to ongoing contact with one another.* A group of these neighbors planned a block party, which provided an opportunity to learn one another’s stories.

ONE MOM FOUND God’s answer to her prayer in another mom who shared her passion for ministering to moms and is now partnering with her to reach even more moms. *The teaching and equipping at our church have continually motivated me to be intentional and creative in personally reaching my community. My ‘heart love’ for ministry is with moms—helping them to know Christ, love their husbands, train their children, and manage their homes. I wanted to reach a neighborhood near my home and prayed for an open door.*

In every case, these missional believers are experiencing God’s favor in the midst of their obedience to go and make disciples. For more information about Virginia Beach Missional Church and missional communities, check out the links in the resource box.

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” (John 20:21, HCSB).

Since the writing of this article, Pastor Rick has received a medical diagnosis that will require prolonged treatment. Please pray for his health and for the church leaders as they continue the mission and vision to plant Virginia Beach Missional Church.

RESOURCES

Videos about mission community and missional living:

We Are Missionaries : Our Transformed Identity– Caesar Kalinowski
tinyurl.com/CaesarK

The Missional Church...Simple
tinyurl.com/missional-simple

The Missional Community...Simple (Bob)
tinyurl.com/missionalbob

What Does Missional Community Life Look Like? – Jeff Vanderstelt
tinyurl.com/missionaljeff

How Has the Great Commission Lost Its Meaning in Our Culture? – Paul Tripp
tinyurl.com/GC-lostmeaning

Every Christian a Missionary – David Platt
tinyurl.com/everychristian

5 Ways to Bless Your Neighbors – Dave Ferguson
tinyurl.com/blessyourneighbors

Websites:

missionalchurchvb.org

facebook.com/missionalchurchvb

wearesoma.com

Downloadable Prayer Card:

sbcv.org/rickleineweber

