



Integrating New MC Members

Troubleshooting | Practical Guidance For Leadership Challenges

Introduction

The intent of this document is to provide more clearly defined principles and practical steps for helping new people learn about and join a Missional Community (MC). When we speak of "new people" in this document, we want to recognize two types of new people:

- New regular attendees of our Sunday Gathering who are not necessarily relationally connected to anyone in the church already.
- New people who have been reached through the ministry of an MC.

The first part of this document provides shared clarity on how we can work as a team to integrate those visitors to our Sunday Gatherings. That being said, there are two appendices at the end of this document. The first appendix is called the "Connection Guide". It is found on Page 5 and is a tool that can and should be used for both types of people when they are being integrated into an MC. The second appendix is called "High School Student Integration". It is found on page 10 and it provides guidance for the proper process of recognizing and helping High School Seniors join their own MC that is separate from the MC of their parents

Group #1 - New Regular Attendees Of Our Sunday Gathering

Here are a few of the reasons and motivations behind the establishment of a more defined process of integrating new regular attendees of our Sunday Gathering into an MC.

- MCs have always been our primary ministry form, so it is important that we develop a more well defined and clearly understood pathway for new people to join an MC.
- MC is the context in which we are living out the mission of being and making disciples.
 - Growing in our personal relationship with God.
 - Growing in relationship to other believers.
 - Exposing areas of needed growth.

- Learning the personal meaning and application of truth that is taught corporately in our gatherings.
- Increasing in helpful accountability to truth learned.
- Serving and practically caring for other people.
- The process of becoming a disciple of Jesus takes time, so the sooner new people can begin the process, the better.
- The process of becoming a disciple-maker of Jesus takes time, so the sooner new people can begin the process, the better.

Guiding Principles

Below is a list of the main principles that inform and guide us as we seek to integrate new people into our Missional Communities.

Acts 2:42-47, Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

- New people should be added to the regular function of the church as soon as possible.
- New people should have a relationally comfortable experience in being assimilated into our church family.
- Truth that is taught to the church should be given its full opportunity to be personally learned and applied to the believer's life. This is what faithfulness in holistic discipleship looks like as a *family*.
- Faithful, Spirit-led, and biblically relational ministry should always be led by faithful people more than a form or process. Solid, Biblically informed forms are absolutely necessary, but ultimate effectiveness is more often realized due to effective leaders than through effective policies.
- Effective leaders work within the structure of the family of God that God Himself defined; in humble service and unity together with the Elders, Deacons, and MC Leaders.

Form

Below are listed the key components of this new effort and how they will work together to accomplish our goals.

- MC Connect Lead. The Elders have asked Jonathan and Melissa Jackson to organize and facilitate this effort so that it is as effective as possible.
- MC Leader Communication. The MC Connect Lead will work closely with all MC Leaders to best accommodate the assimilation of new people into their MCs.

Process

Awareness

- MC Connect Lead will plan to **be present** before and after our gathering time.
- MC Connect Lead will make concerted effort to **notice** new people at church, especially those who have attended more than a few times. They will talk with all new new people, even if they're coming with someone from the church. They don't want to assume that they're good because they are with a friend.
- They will **introduce** themselves.
- They will **share contact** information.
- MC Connect Lead will reach for **follow-up**.

Follow-Up With New Person

- Plan discussion questions that will help to form a better understanding of their spiritual situation and practical availability. Some example questions might be:
 - How did you hear about Hope?
 - Are you from this area/where did you grown up?
 - Have you been looking for a church?
 - Are you hoping to get more involved in community/fellowship with believers?
 - What days/times of the week are you available to give time for MC involvement?
- Plan for questions/conversation to allow the new person to ask questions about HCC and our Missional Communities.
- Encourage the new person to begin to pray about their decision to join an MC.

Planning With MC Leaders

- Consider possible MCs for the new person to join.
- Communicate with MC Leaders of potential MCs.
- Once potential MCs are in place, plan to follow-up again to discuss MC opportunities and encourage them to devote some time to pray over their decision.

Integration

- Communicate with MC Leader Team if the new person is deciding to visit/join their MC.
- With the MC Leader Team, establish a point person that would be the welcoming party/contact for this new person.
- MC Connect Lead will offer to attend an MC with the new person for the first time to help ease anxiety and introduce them to the MC.
- MC point person will getting the contact info of new person and following up with them after initial visit
- MC Connect Lead will follow up with person after visiting an MC, and also touch base with the MC leader.

Group #2 - New People Reached Through The Ministry Of An MC

As has been the case from the early years, any individual who has been reached out to through the ministry of an MC is to be integrated into that MC as soon as possible. There might be cases when, for various reasons, they might need to join a different MC. In those cases, the MC Connect Lead should be contacted to assist in that process. Other than these unique situations, an outreached individual should always integrate into the outreaching MC.

Appendix | Connection Guide

Content For New MC Members

Structure

Authority

We believe in the supremacy and authority of Jesus in all things, namely the local church. To us, this means that our purpose as a local church is to embrace His mission in His way. We see this expressed primarily in two ways:

1. We seek to follow the model of Jesus in how He lived and what He lived for.
2. We desire to model an authentic faith in the revealed Word of God as the authority for all that we think and do.

Direction

We believe that the church is to be led by the Holy Spirit. It is our biblical conviction that the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of God in and among us. From the Bible, we conclude that His presence in and among us is to empower and direct us into the life that God desires for us as His church. Therefore, we do not desire to set our course, but faithfully pursue his course for us.

Form

We have chosen to structure our church as minimally as possible. We desire to avoid a program-driven culture and, in its place, create an organic family culture of mutual growth and pursuit of the mission of God. We believe that this is best accomplished in smaller groups of people that are led by those who can both model and coach others into the missional lifestyle that God desires. We call these small groups “missional communities (MC’s).”

Leadership

We believe that the Bible speaks of only two official positions of influence in the local church, those being the positions of elder and deacon. It is our conviction that these two positions are not equal, but, rather, complementary in that the elders are responsible to God for leading the church into His mission while the deacons are responsible to assist the elders in the promotion of this mission. We have also maintained another practical leadership role for those qualified to lead one of our missional communities (MC), which we call “the missional community leader.”

Doctrine

Bible

We believe that the Bible is the inspired revelation of God to us; and, for this reason, it is our authority. We can be redeemed to a right relationship with God and be restored to our purpose in pursuing His mission only through the power of His life in us. This is both revealed to us and demonstrated through us by knowing and applying the truth of the Bible.

God

We believe in the one true Triune God, expressed through three distinct persons who demonstrate perfect community through unified purpose and diverse functions. The will of the Father is seen through the person of Jesus the Son and empowered through the Holy Spirit. We believe that God is three persons yet one; but we humbly admit that His composition, nature, wisdom, power, and glory are beyond our capacity to fully understand.

People

We believe that people are made in God's image, after his very being. We are not equal with God, yet we are similar to Him in that we carry the fundamental characteristics of his person. In mind, will, emotion, and spirit, we are like God and can experience deep personal relationship with Him and other people. Because of Adam's choice to rebel against God, people are born into a state of sin¹ that naturally positions them as enemies of God. Yet, each person is eternally condemned for their personal choice to sin against God.

Salvation

We believe that all people are lost in their sin, separated from God, and, unless they are spiritually restored to God, they are bound for an eternity of separation from Him in Hell. We also believe that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in the form of a man, lived a perfect life, and died as the substitutionary sacrifice for every person. This sacrifice is applied to every person that believes in the person of Jesus as God Himself and His substitutionary death and resurrection for them. Upon believing in Jesus in this way, the person is declared righteous by God by virtue of Jesus' work for them, and they are restored to God's family as His child forever. A few other key distinctive:

- We do not hold to the Calvinistic belief that God sovereignly chooses some to salvation. We believe that faith is our own, consistent with being image bearers of God, and we must exercise it of our own accord.

¹ This state of sin induces a heightened awareness of sin, a propensity toward sin, and an enticement to sin.

- We also do not hold to the Lordship Salvation theological conviction that good works must follow a salvation experience in order to validate the authenticity of the person's faith. Salvation must be free of any works, either to earn salvation or to validate it afterwards.

Spiritual Life

As children of God, this new relationship brings the presence of the Holy Spirit within every believer. He resides within every believer to guide them into an understanding of, and experience in, the truth of the Bible. God's basic design for His people is that they would be increasingly transformed into the image and model of Jesus in a functional way as they pursue personal spiritual growth in a community of believers while serving His mission.

Vision

It is our conviction that we have been redeemed (bought back into a right relationship) by God with a promised eternity with Him. We also believe that this is only a part of what God desires for us. We see that, from the creation of mankind, God has been pursuing His mission of redeeming and restoring all people to His original design for them. We believe that He will pursue this mission until the end of time as we know it. It is our expressed purpose and aim in life to join God in pursuing this mission into which He has graciously invited us.

We believe the context for pursuing this mission is authentic biblical community; this is the environment where we develop a deeper relationship with our God, deeper relationships with others in Christ, and deeper friendships with those who have yet to be reconciled to God. We are guided in this context by the authority and direction of the Spirit of God in us as He builds the truth of the Bible into our minds and lives.

About Missional Community

We believe that the best context for pursuing the mission of God is in smaller groups of people, of various places in life, who are unified in their desire to live for God. Following the model of Jesus with his disciples, we desire to build a church that is comprised of these organic gatherings of people who collectively embrace the struggle of pursuing God in the direction of His mission. We call these small groups "Missional Communities." To best understand the vision and function of these missional communities, we go to the last words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20; notice four simple words/phrases that help us understand this mission more clearly: make disciples, go, baptize, teach.

“Make Disciples”

A disciple is a follower or a student in the school of a Master. Culturally speaking, to the time of Jesus, it communicated the idea of giving one's life to follow, learn from, and ultimately adopt the lifestyle of one's teacher. This is our mission, specifically, in relationship to Jesus Himself. We must embrace this basic mission both for ourselves and for others in the following ways:

- “Be” disciples. One aim of missional living is the fundamental posture of understanding one's own need for becoming like Christ. MC life is about people who want to become more like Christ by following Him in the way He taught and modeled.
- “Make” disciples. The other aim of missional living is embracing the mission of making disciples out of those who are not. This includes believers who aren't truly following Jesus as a disciple as well as those who don't know Jesus yet.

“Go”

When Jesus sent us out to pursue his mission, he made sure to explain it to us in simple ways. One area of importance is the posture necessary in effectively making disciples: We must pursue a posture of “going.” Simply stated, the mission is not to invite people to church; it is to go and build relationships with the people that the Spirit is leading us to, connecting them in the rhythm of normal life, and sharing the gospel with them.

We will not naturally embrace the go posture, and that is why Jesus sends us out with this charge. In missional community, we must challenge each other to personally embrace the posture of going, feeling the personal responsibility of reaching those we interact with regularly. We must also commit to praying for each other as we go individually, and we need to create ways to go with each other on mission.

When we think about this go posture, we have no better example than God Himself. In fact, this go posture that we are to embrace actually demonstrates the character of God to those we are reaching. Consider how God pursued Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and, most powerfully, how Jesus pursued all people when he came to earth to die for our sins!

“Baptize”

Jesus spoke in culturally relevant ways when he called his disciples to “baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The word baptize simply means “immersion,” so we understand that he was commanding them/us to immerse people in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We comprehend this best when we consider how Jesus Himself lived when he was here on earth.

Jesus was in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead him. He regularly repositioned his thinking around the will of the Father. He demonstrated that he needed the power, guidance, and

love that the fellowship of the Trinity alone provides. He did all of this in the context of community with the disciples. Now we, too, have been spiritually positioned into Christ so that we might also live like he did.

This lifestyle of immersion with others in the Trinity will not happen on its own. We must pursue it over all other things. We must be open to consider how our lives have been lived in a way that is inconsistent with this fundamental lifestyle that Jesus lived. We will grow in living this way as our understanding of and relationship with Jesus increases and as we step into the lifestyle of Jesus for ourselves. We desire for missional communities to have a culture of immersing each other, and those with whom they are reaching, into a true relationship with the Trinity.

“Teach”

Jesus also spoke clearly to the need for teaching in discipleship. Learning is essential for people to become followers of Jesus. The idea of being the family of God on mission for him is a concept that is derived from the Bible. It is not a human strategy at all. Because of this, we adopt a conviction that learning from the Bible and living accordingly is the way that we are equipped to live on mission for God. The Bible itself claims that only an accurate interpretation and application of what it says can equip us to pursue this mission.

Missional Community life will constantly press into your personal life as you are challenged to humble yourself under the authority of biblical truth alone. Most of us have viewed bible study/application from an individual/private standpoint, but this is dramatically out of alignment with the picture we see in the Bible. God has ordained that the Body of Christ be instructed about this life on mission through the Bible in community with others. He also outlines two primary means for instruction in the Bible:

- **Being Taught.** We are to be taught the Bible as a means for growth. One context where this takes place is at our Central Teachings where we provide consistent, contextual instruction of the meaning and application of the Bible.
- **Being Equipped.** Not only are we to be taught the Bible, but God desires that we be equipped to study and apply the Bible for ourselves in the context of community. This equipping takes place in missional community as your leaders help guide you in learning how to study and apply the Bible with others. This equipping is ultimately for the purpose of teaching others and helping them grow in their walk with Christ through reading and studying His word. For this reason we want all MC members to be equipped to teach others how to handle the Word properly.

Appendix | High School Student Integration

Guidance For Helping High School Seniors Embrace MC Life

Vision

One of the most challenging transitions in life is into adulthood. This is hard enough for an unbeliever, but a child of God faces even more challenges as they begin to think and walk on their own spiritual feet in this fallen world. Due to these challenges, we desire to provide a context for young adults to begin this process while still living at home and under the primary discipleship of their parents. We want to provide a safe place for them to step out on their own and grow in their own pursuit of discipleship within the family of God.

With this vision in mind, we desire to provide the opportunity for high school seniors to join their own MC apart from their parents. This is not meant to replace the discipleship influence of parents at this crucial time in their lives, but to work in unity with their parents to urge them in taking spiritual steps for their own growth and life moving forward. We view this as the first of many steps that young adults will surely need to take if they are to live eternally fruitful lives.

Process

In order to provide this opportunity to our high school seniors, we will outline a general process that we ask Deacons, MC Leaders, Parents, and the students to follow in order to go through this transition with clarity and care.

2. Parents and the high school students should be discussing and considering this opportunity during the junior year of their student.
 - This is important to be challenging parents to consider this early in the life of their high school student.
 - They might be intimidated by this and need to see the principles behind it from a Biblical perspective if they are to desire to pursue.
 - Remember that the most important thing that we are looking for is the student themselves to be aware of their need and desire to pursue this as an “adult” decision for themselves.
3. Parents and their student should discuss this opportunity with their MC Leaders.

- Parents might need encouraged to consider these discussions with their student.
 - MC Leaders should have conversations with parents to discuss the Biblical principles behind this potential change for their student.
 - MC Leaders should be careful not to discuss this with high school students unless the parents have been asked ahead of time.
4. MC Leaders should prayerfully consider input and guidance that might help the student transition.
 - MC Leaders should ask the student if they know of other MC Leaders already, or at least those who they are interested in getting to know. This might be a helpful starting point.
 - MC Leaders should be aware that oftentimes a student's motivation toward a specific MC might be more for "fun" or for relational opportunities that they think would be easier or "cool". This is to be expected and is in fact an affirmation of the need to guide them into meaningful discipleship relationships and not entrust those decision solely to them. We must work together to guide them into the most beneficial opportunity for their spiritual growth.
 - MC Leaders should seek the input of the Deacon of MC Integration for further insight into possible MCs to be considered.
 5. MC Leaders and parents should help their student be introduced to the leaders of their new potential MC to discuss the new potential MC culture, rhythms, and expectations for joining.
 6. The student should make the transition to their new MC as soon as is appropriate (any time after the completion of their junior year of high school).

Integration

It is important that the MC Leaders of the new MC that the student is joining be prepared for their integration. Here are a few potential ideas and principles that might help MC Leaders integrate a new high school senior.

7. Cast a vision for your MC for the integrating of these new high school seniors.
8. Plan a fun hangout for your MC with the new student (don't put them on the spot, but plan for fun activities that everyone can participate in)

9. Meet personally with the new student before they come to a gathering of the entire MC
10. Prepare to be welcoming and aware of the new student at their first MC gathering.