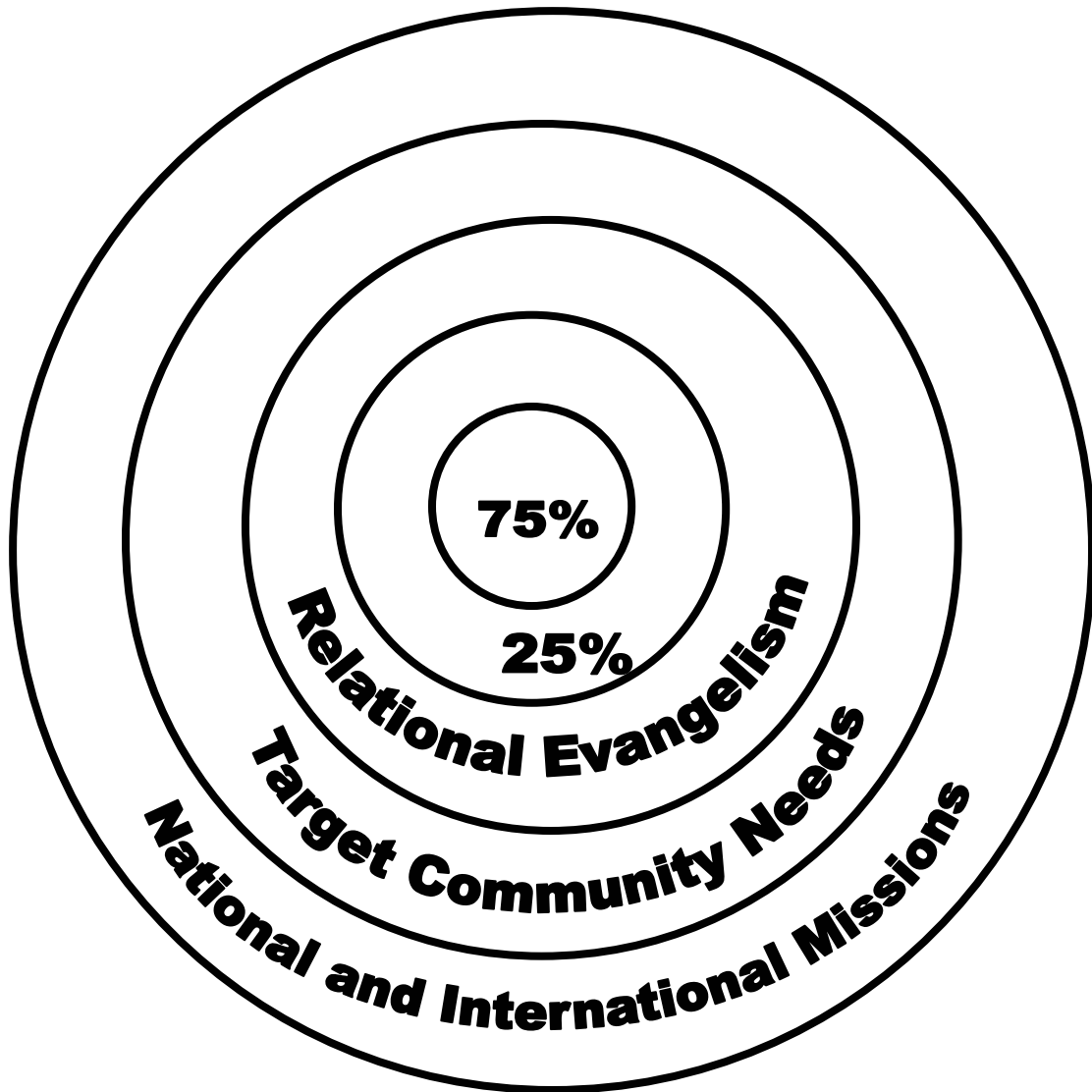


Reaching Our Four Mission Fields as a Congregation



REACHING OUR FOUR MISSION FIELDS AS A CONGREGATION

Definitions

First Mission Field: The first mission field is 25% of the people who identify and worship with your congregation on any given Sunday. These people are geographically close (they come to your campus), relationally connected (they know people or want to get to know people in the congregation), and they are culturally close (they have similar backgrounds) to most of the people in the congregation.

Second Mission Field: These are people who are geographically distant (they do not attend any events on your campus), but could be relationally connected (they would be happy making friends with those in the congregation), and are culturally close to the majority who attend.

Third Mission Field: These people are geographically distant (usually), relationally unconnected to the congregation, and culturally unrelated to the majority of people in the congregation.

Fourth Mission Field: These groups are generally quite distant, relationally unconnected, and usually quite unrelated culturally.

Two Dimensional Church:

Dimension One: The mobilization of staff and laity to reach the first, second, and fourth mission fields. Usually this dimension is led by individuals who are designated as staff members whether paid or unpaid.

(It is assumed that in healthy growing congregations the ministries related to these three mission fields will only require thirty-five to forty percent of you congregation's involvement in order to be effective).

Dimension Two: The mobilization of laity to reach the third mission field. This dimension is usually led and implemented by lay leaders.

(This dimension and its related mission field has unlimited potential and will best be reached when laity are unleashed to target it, resource it, and recruit others to reach it. It may be the best place for those who are uncomfortable about using their gifts and talents in the normal church setting to develop and blossom, while creating exciting ministries that are unique to your local congregation).

DIMENSION ONE: THE FIRST MISSION FIELD

1. Every assimilation program needs to have a place where there is first an intentional presentation of the Gospel message. Then secondly, each program needs to have a place where people in a comfortable and non-threatening setting can be asked where they are in relation to their own spiritual pilgrimage. Their responses then need to be followed up on, if the leaders responsible for the program feel that they have yet to become disciples of Jesus Christ. These people should also be intense but anonymous subjects for prayer by prayer teams in the congregation.
2. Developing ministries that require disciples to involve unchurched or non-Christian friends is an excellent way to expose these people to both the Gospel and other disciples of Jesus Christ. E.g. Church plays, sports teams, Habitat projects, etc.
3. Doing large events to attract people to your congregation and to get them across the stain-glass barrier is also an excellent way to reach these people. Asking them to volunteer in helping put on such events, again exposes them to more disciples of Jesus Christ, who they can observe as they serve together, and may expose them to the Gospel message depending on the event.

DIMENSION ONE: THE SECOND MISSION FIELD

1. Each congregation should develop intentional ministries that enable members of the congregations to bring friends, co-workers, or neighbors to them, in order that these people might be exposed to the Gospel message in culturally relevant ways. One tool that God is using in such a way in our congregations is ALPHA.
2. A very effective tool is the use of an Evangelistic Dinner. The dinner team plan for and prepare Christians for this event. Christians are brought together to begin to name and then pray for non-Christian people with whom they have significant relationships. They are trained in basic friendship evangelism techniques, including how to both present the Gospel message and respond to often asked questions. They then invite their friends, as their guests, to a nice dinner with a well known speaker. This speaker, who is a Christian then presents their testimony in their speech showing people how God is relevant to their everyday life. Guests are then asked if they want to pursue further discussion about spiritual matters at a later time. Those that do so are then contacted by those who brought them, sometimes with a Christian friend who may be even better equipped to share the Gospel.
3. Every pastor who wants to help people conduct friendship evangelism should be familiar with SEARCH ministries, which is designed to help Christians do just that, share the Good News with their friends. (info@SearchNational.org 1-800-61-SEARCH)

DIMENSION ONE: THE FOURTH MISSION FIELD

1. Normally the best people to reach this field are those trained to do so. However, those trained to work in this field are usually dependent upon the rest of the Church and its local congregations to support them. The best support, as in most endeavors, comes from those committed to what is being accomplished by others. Therefore, local congregations need to be filled with individuals who are committed in terms of dollars, prayer, and other resources to allow missionaries to minister effectively.
2. The best way to generate support is to get people on the field in order for them to see both the need and effective ways the need is being addressed. Therefore, every year from every congregation there needs to be two mission trips (one for adults and one for teens), preferably to third world countries in order to expose people to what is happening. For congregations with multiple staffs, one staff member a year, plus the youth leader, should be responsible for recruiting a team for such projects. The size of the team reflects on the leader's ability to lead. Those who go should be allowed to recruit expenses from others in the congregation, if they can not afford the costs. The congregation should also provide partial scholarships (and other support) for people to go who would find such a trip almost impossible; e.g. single parents, those on limited incomes, seniors, etc.
3. This is also a time to include those in the congregation who are not yet disciples (the first mission field) or non-Christians who have relationships with disciples (the second mission field).
4. One other strategy is to connect such a trip with a vacation at the end, for those who are more affluent.

DIMENSION TWO: THE THIRD MISSION FIELD

The Issues

1. This mission field has often been the most difficult one for congregations to reach for a multiplicity of reasons:

Many congregations have become service agencies that primarily benefit those who run them. (Consumerism)

Many Christians cannot conceive of how ministry might be done if it is not accomplished in the context of the congregation. (Limited ideas about ministry)

Local congregations fill up people's already busy schedules with church activities making outside ministry impossible. (Constrict time for service)

The Church has become a refuge from society and does not see itself having any major impact on changing the world around it. (A lack of hope)

We have limited the concept of “call” to the professionals. (A theological disaster)

We have taught about a variety of gifts, but not a variety of ministries, or a variety of effects in ministry. (An exegetical anomaly)

The Church feels no mandate to minister to those without resources or power, it is the job for others. (A denial of Jesus Christ’s teaching)

2. Often congregations that have taken on such a mission field have found that in the long term it hinders their basic ministry for a number of reasons:

The needs are too vast.

It dilutes resources.

They eventually move the congregation from a focus on the Great Commission.

3. Yet to ignore this mission field (as the majority of congregations in the United States do) leads to very negative consequences:

The congregation grows primarily by reaching people like itself.

The congregation keeps using more and more resources for itself.

A large and growing segment of the population is not reached with the Great Commission.

Multitudes of Christians never get a chance to employ their gifts in the context of congregational ministry.

Many Christians never know the fulfillment that comes with the freedom of directing ministry for which they have ownership.

Congregations lose the joy of taking responsibility for changing their communities in socially redemptive ways.

The Strategy

Dimension One

Staff Led
Limited (Culturally expected ministries, evangelism, and missions)
Must occur (Expected)

Dimension Two

Lay led
Unlimited (Varieties of Ministries)
People want to (Phil 2:12-13)

1. The pastor continually casts the vision for a changed community with people from the congregation the ones making a difference.
2. There are no public announcements or recruitment of volunteers by anyone for congregational ministries so people do not feel guilt by ministering outside normal congregational paradigms.
3. The leaders develop a birthing system for the development of community ministries.
4. The leaders develop a support system for those involved in community ministries.

Developing a birthing system (Relaxed Concern)

1. No permission needed but there is a contact person to weed out extremists.
2. Establish a basic procedure for initiating a ministry:

Announce a meeting with the initiator leading it.
See who and how many show up and express interest.
No staff allowed at this or other meetings.

3. Provide freedom:

In methodology
In commitment
To fail

4. Establish guidelines for all new ministries:

No congregational finances invested initially.
Those running the ministry are responsible for its success.
Staff will intervene over moral, doctrinal, and distinctive issues.

5. Benefits of this kind of a birthing system:

Takes pressure off the staff
Commitment to the ministries comes with ownership
All ministries become owned by the congregation
Allows hurt and burned out Christians time to heal

Develop a Support System

1. No money initially but some may come later.
2. Provide a brochure.
3. Identify each ministry as the ministry of the congregation.
4. Provide times of training and encouragement for the ministry leaders.
5. Celebrate their ministries with the rest of the ministries of the congregation.
6. Provide some reward for their ministry e.g. retreat, seminars, recognition etc.

CONCLUSION

Healthy growing congregations are intentional about reaching the four mission fields God has put in front of us in which to harvest souls. One way to do this is to become a two-dimensional congregation.

Dr. Paul D. Borden
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September 2004

