



A church planting proposal

Mission: Omaha

Prepared for the leadership of Christ Community Church, May 2005

Abstract:

For over a year now, Christ Community Church's leaders have been praying and dreaming about becoming a multiplying church. The Convergence program was started with this goal in mind. Because of senior pastor transition, we pursued Phase 1 of Convergence (the internship program) and delayed Phase 2 (planting a new church) until an appropriate time. We believe that time is now.

We are proposing the imminent planting of a new missional church in Omaha – a church that would look very different from Christ Community Church. Whereas Christ Community tends to reach those who are inclined toward church, a missional church plant would reach those who are not inclined toward church. Whereas Christ Community Church employs primarily a front-door growth strategy, a missional church plant would adopt a side-door strategy of growth, growing primarily through relational networks formed as the people of God naturally engage the culture around them. We believe such a church could make a dramatic impact for the kingdom of God in Omaha without hindering any of Christ Community's goals and strategies.

What follows is a plan for creating this new church.

Why does the church exist?

For the Glory of God.

The church exists to glorify God by enjoying Him and by calling all peoples on earth to find their joy in Him.

- *Isaiah 48:11: "For my own sake, for my own sake, I will act; for how can my name be profaned? And my glory I will not give to another."*
- *Psalms 67:3-4: "Let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy..."*
- *1 Corinthians 10:31: "So then, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
- *The Westminster Catechism: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."*

For the Kingdom of God.

The church exists to make Christ's invisible kingdom visible – to extend the rule and reign of God into all aspects of life and culture.

- *Mark 1:14-15: "...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'"*
- *Matthew 6:10: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*
- *Richard Lovelace: "...Biblical spirituality is intimately connected with God's kingdom... the kingdom of God is the central theme which ties together everything, both in the Old Testament and in the New."*

For the Mission of God.

The church exists to fully carry out the mission of God on earth.

- *Matthew 16:18: "...Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."*
- *Ephesians 1:22-23: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*
- *Matthew 28:18-20: "...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Why should we plant new churches?

Because Church-Planting is the Essential Task in the Great Commission.

Church planting was the primary New Testament strategy for extending God's kingdom and fulfilling His missionary mandate. The book of Acts depicts the spread of a church-planting movement throughout Asia and Europe. Almost all of Paul's letters were written to new churches either he or someone else he knew had started. William Tinsley writes: "To remove the strategy of church planting from the New Testament would in effect remove all Scripture beyond the Gospels... The Apostles saw the expansion of new churches in the world as the pivotal cog through which the life transforming power of God would be transferred to the world."

If we would follow the biblical model, we must be involved in *establishing indigenous, culturally relevant, healthy, growing and reproducing churches*. The U.S. Center for Church Planting unpacks this statement as follows:

- *indigenous*: a self-supporting, self-governing, local church body within a particular people group, led by members of that people group.
- *culturally relevant*: a church that is able to contextualize the gospel to its culture without compromising biblical truth.
- *healthy*: fulfilling the biblical purposes of the church as given in Acts 2:42-47: worship/prayer, learning/edification, fellowship, outreach, and mercy/social concern.
- *growing/reproducing*: Healthy churches grow and reproduce, naturally. "Life is meant by God to reproduce life. Just as having children is meant by God to be a natural, normal part of marriage, so starting new churches should also be seen as a natural, normal part of a local church's ministry."¹

What is our vision for the current project?

This document proposes a partnership between Christ Community Church (CCC) and the Mid-America District of the Christian & Missionary Alliance (MAD) to plant **a new church in the Omaha, Nebraska metro area**.

The **mission** of this new project is *to turn spiritually lost people into God-centered, gospel-saturated followers of Jesus who live for the glory and mission of God*.

¹ Steven L. Childers, *Gospel-Centered Church Planting* curriculum v. 6.0 (2003), p. 24.

Our vision:

- We dream of an authentic community of people living as missionaries in their own culture, intentionally engaging their peers, their families, their city, and the culture-at-large in Jesus' name.
- We dream of thousands of spiritually distant Omaha residents coming to love and follow Jesus as Christians naturally express the gospel in their relational circles.
- We dream of a church that exists for the outsider, the skeptic, the questioner – a church that engages culture and converses with the most spiritually distant people in our city.
- We dream of every church member engaged regularly in gospel-saturated, kingdom-advancing, Spirit-directed prayer.
- We dream of a church that spurs denominational renewal and reform within the CMA, inviting other churches to rediscover that “the gospel is for Christians, too.”
- We dream of a church that looks radically different from the accepted paradigm of “what church is” – a church with no front door; a church that is more a movement than a place; a church where discipleship is holistic, not cognitive; a church where engaging the culture is not optional.
- We dream of a whole movement of God-centered churches, organically and relationally connected, taking the realities of Jesus' kingdom to people who are not attracted to churches as they currently exist.
- We dream of sending hundreds of people to plant churches among unreached peoples worldwide, combining the best methods of church and parachurch to write the next chapter in world missions.

How would
this church be
different from
CCC?

Recall the first section of this proposal: the church exists for the **glory** of God, for the **kingdom** of God, for the **mission** of God. As we seek to “be about” these things, we naturally encounter **two basic groups of people**: those who are inclined toward church, and those who are not. These are not just two different “target groups” that can be reached by one church. They are more like two unique people groups, each one requiring a different mission strategy.

- **Those Inclined Toward Church:**
 - Are generally expecting church to look a certain way – usually reflecting their past experience in a mainline or traditional church model

- See Sunday morning as the focal point of their church experience
- Are attracted to church ministries which connect with their felt needs (youth or childrens' programs, counseling ministries, worship services, etc.)
- Can be drawn in by inviting them TO something (a program or outreach)
- Would tend to prefer an **attractional** church model
- **Those NOT Inclined Toward Church:**
 - Have no pre-existing expectations for what church should look like
 - Are skeptical and even hostile toward authority, organizations, and religious institutions
 - Are not attracted to existing churches
 - Must be reached relationally if they are to experience the gospel at all
 - Can only be engaged through a **missional** church model

The issue of **attractional vs. missional church** is THE issue that we must consider as we seek to be good stewards of God's kingdom resources. Though Christ Community Church is moving in a more missional direction, it will always be **primarily an attractional church** (due to the strength of the programs it offers). But there is a whole universe of people in the city of Omaha who we will never "attract" – not because we're not offering the right things, but because they are operating from a completely different paradigm.

According to leading missiologists, North America is now one of the most unchurched countries in the world. Weekly church attendance (in any form) has declined from 48% in 1991 to 40% in 2001. According to a recent CELNet study of our own city, **only 9% of Omaha's population attends an evangelical church** on a typical weekend! It is time for us to **start asking the questions a missionary might ask**: how can I engage this culture with the gospel? What do these people value? How do I translate the truth of Scripture into the heart-language of this people group? When we ask these missionary-type questions, we are thinking **missionally**.

An established church, by its very nature, has to start from where it already is. Its process of cultural engagement might look like this:

Create Structure → Form Community → Engage Culture
(Discovery) → (Life) → (Bridge)

By contrast, a new church, using a missionary paradigm, is free to start from where the culture actually IS and shape itself in a way that is relevant to that culture. This reverses the process:

Engage Culture → Form Community → Create Structure

The result will be a church that looks very different from established church models.

It is our conviction that **Christ Community MUST plant a missional church** in Omaha. We are not talking about a church that offers the same things as Christ Community, on a smaller scale. Nor are we talking about some current CCC attenders moving down the street and opening up a new worship venue. Rather, we are talking about creating an entirely different model of church that will reach a different type of person.

A Fundamental Difference: Front Door vs. Side Door

To further clarify the distinction, think of it this way: an **attractional church** *generally* grows through the **front door**. In other words, people come into the church by being attracted to its programs; the church then seeks to assimilate them into smaller community groups and equip them for mission. The whole structure of Discovery-Life-Bridge is built on this assumption! Our front door creates a pool of potential disciples; our goal is then to draw these people into membership (Discovery), get them into small groups (Life), and equip them to minister (Bridge). Christ Community Church, because of its size, must rely primarily on a front-door growth model.

In our past dialogues about church planting, we have talked about planting more front-door churches. But **in recent days, God has moved to change our paradigm.**

We are asking to plant a **missional church** – one that would grow primarily through the side door. **Side-door growth** means people coming into the church through relationships. We are not trying to attract people to our front door; in fact, we want to do our best not to have a front door! Rather, we're looking to create missional community: a group of disciples living life together, allowing Christ to shape their souls, engaging culture together, and allowing the gospel to permeate their relational networks.

Why us – and why now?

Many of you reading this document will never be drawn to a side-door, missional church – it doesn't fit you. But that's okay. It's not about us; it's about the kingdom. The question we must ask is: **are we committed to engaging the culture?** Do we care about those who won't be reached by churches as they currently exist? Are we committed to planting churches that can make the gospel relevant for the next generation?

Christ Community Church has a proud **heritage of missions**. We have always been about extending God's kingdom to the ends of the earth. Our challenge now is to apply that compelling sense of mission to our own backyard. Are we as committed to reaching our own culture as we are to reaching the nations? Do we see God moving among the thousands in our city who will never be attracted to what we're offering?

Consider the facts, based on a 2004 research study conducted by CELNET:

- Only 9% of Omaha's population attends an evangelical church on a given weekend
- Between 2000 and 2004, while Omaha's population grew 12%, evangelical churches grew only 7%
- To achieve the status of a "reached" city (one church per 500-1000 residents), Omaha needs at least 200 more churches
- The highest attendance increase over the past four years has come in medium-sized churches (500-1000 attenders)
- Successful new church plants were relatively scarce
- The fastest-growing churches were those that effectively reached people under the age of 40

Within the walls of Christ Community, there is rising up **a young generation with a passion for something different**. They are not content with church as it currently exists. They are not content with spiritual formation as it currently exists. They yearn to be part of a mission-oriented community that engages culture together and creates church on the margins of society – among the unchurched, the unreached, the skeptical. We believe their discontentment with traditional church arises not from a heart of criticism or judgment, but from a God-given desire to reach those who are not inclined toward church as we know it.

And **I am one of those people**. God has blessed me with the spiritual gifts that fit well in an attractional church: preaching, teaching, leadership, prophecy. But he hasn't given me the freedom to enjoy those gifts in their current expression. My heart burns for the skeptical, the left-out, those who have been burned by the church or who are angry with the church. I find myself yearning for interaction with those people. I'm pretty sure I could collect a paycheck for the rest of my life in a front-door church model. But it's not what I'm made to do.

Instead, **I'm made to create church where it doesn't exist**. My past experience with Campus Crusade taught me to build missional communities. The campus strategy was a missionary strategy to the

core: show up on a campus, engage the culture, build relationships in fraternities, in dorms, in athletic teams, in ethnic sub-communities – all with the goal of creating a network of Christian communities, living for the kingdom of Jesus together. This is my heritage. This is my calling. This is what I was made to do.

Consider the factors that God is allowing to “converge:”

- A body of people who have a passion to live missionally together...
- A leader who is called to missional kingdom leadership...
- A district that is committed to church planting...
- A mother church that is blessed with a mission heritage and strategic kingdom resources...
- An internship program that needs a church plant to accomplish its goals...

Is there any question that God has brought these factors together **‘for such a time as this?’** It’s time to plant a missional church in Omaha.

What core values would drive this new church?

“Core values are the **underlying motivations/convictions** that drive behavior and ministry activity. They provide the foundation for formulating church goals... they reveal those things for which [the leadership] would ‘go to the mat.’”² We are driven to create a church that is:

God Centered. God is jealous for His own glory (Isaiah 48:11). And the deepest longings of the human soul can only be satisfied when we delight in God’s supremacy and rest in His sovereign grace (Romans 8:28-39). We will purposefully, intentionally make God primary in all things, joyfully savoring His greatness in all we do. The supremacy of God will be our ‘north star’ – the thing by which all else is measured.

Gospel Saturated. The gospel is the “power of God” (Rom 1:16) not only for unbelievers, but for believers as well. It transforms not only individuals, but also churches, societies, and culture at large. We will proclaim the gospel not just as a gate we pass through one time, but as a path of ongoing renewal and repentance that we are to walk each day of our lives. The theme of gospel-centered renewal will permeate everything we do.

Mission Driven. The kingdom of God is always advancing, never static (Acts 1:8). God’s people are not called to seek comfort, but to align their purposes radically with His. We will not soften the

² Steven L. Childers, *Gospel-Centered Church Planting* curriculum v. 6.0 (2003), p. 1-42.

demands of discipleship. Rather, the criteria for 'membership' in our community will be: are you willing to lay down your life for the mission of God? Mission is why the church exists.

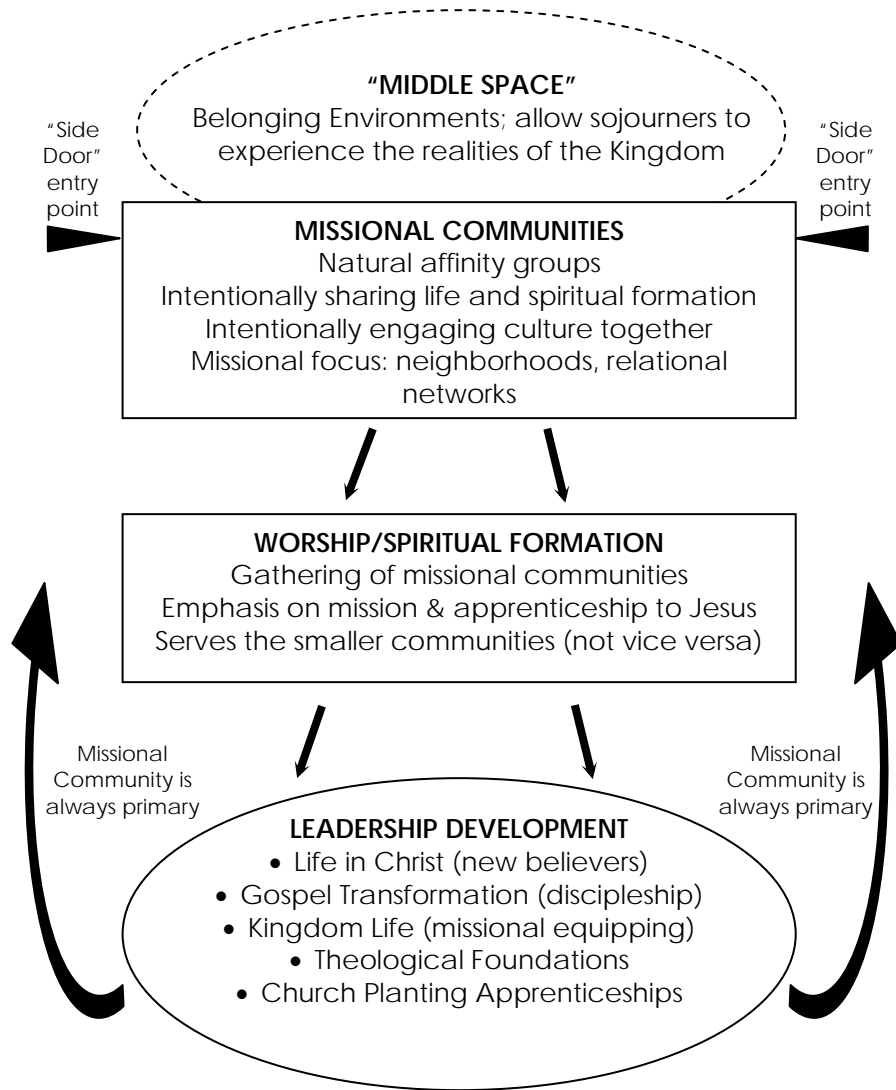
Culturally Engaged. When the church was the center of culture, we could ask people to 'come to us.' But since the church is now on the margins of culture, we must become missionaries, going to people where they actually are and loving them relentlessly. We will naturally and deliberately engage people 'on their turf,' contextualizing the gospel so they can experience Christ. We envision a movement of like-minded disciples, at different stages of transformation, engaging the culture and advancing God's Kingdom together.

Organically Led. Bureaucracy easily crowds out spiritual vitality. As Erwin McManus says, "Structure must always submit to Spirit." Our leadership will be communal rather than controlling, and we will relentlessly pursue the health and life of the church as an organism. Healthy churches will grow naturally; unhealthy ones never will.

Historically Rooted. In seeking to engage culture, we will emphasize the *oldness* of the church, not its newness. Our teaching will be rooted in historic Protestant theology. Our worship will gladly incorporate creeds, confessions, hymns, and liturgies into the process of spiritual formation. Our discipleship endeavors will teach people to hear the voice of God through Scripture, communal life, and contemplative prayer. We will unashamedly stand in the rich stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy and allow it to soak into everything we do.

What will our ministry look like?

Flow Chart Diagram:



Discipleship Strategies

Engaging Culture (Living Out): Bringing Christ to the Culture

- Leaving: replacing Christian/church activities and programs with time spent engaging relationally together with sojourners
- Living: Participating in culture together (being "on their turf")
- Listening: Prayerfully responding to conversations in a way that makes the most of every opportunity
- Loving: Blessing with no strings attached

- Relationally-driven evangelism (process rather than crisis; people naturally reaching out to those in their sphere of influence)
- Underlying these values is a gospel-driven, missionary ethos which equips people to engage the culture and pushes them toward following Christ wholeheartedly

Creating Community (Inviting In): Drawing Sojourners into Missional Community

- Being in missional community is not optional for followers of Jesus who align with our church. We will be together in life, spiritual formation, and mission.
 - Together in Life: members of our community will be expected to share life together – no Lone Rangers (this creates natural, life-on-life discipleship and accountability)
 - Together in Soul: spiritual formation in the context of missional community
 - Together in Mission: no one engages culture alone. We pursue the mission in the context of community
- Inviting In: Sojourners are welcomed into community where they can see the Kingdom life lived out ('belong before believing'); Christian community is the most important apologetic!
- Immediate involvement of young believers in mission/service to develop gifts and create ownership (Erwin McManus: "mobilization equals assimilation")
- Creation of "Middle Space" environments – neutral places where sojourners can question, converse, and dialogue about what it means to follow Jesus

Structuring a Congregation: A Network of Missional Communities

- Weekly covenant-renewal worship: focus on spiritual formation and renewing our vision and calling together (the church gathered exists to equip and support the church scattered)
- Organic leadership development (growing our own leaders through intentional shepherding and training)
- Multiplication of missional communities throughout the city, organically united and relationally connected
- Leadership Guild (a community of leaders and emerging leaders learning from each other)

Multiplying a Movement: A Network of Missional Churches

- Constant prayer, vision-casting, challenge to create ownership of missions (core value of movement will be important here)
- Leadership development process will identify and raise up laborers for church-planting
- Organic and relationally-driven church-planting approach in the U.S. and overseas (trusting God to raise up the right people; maximizing relationship so people always feel personally connected with missionaries/planters)

The Church Planting Action Plan

This plan suggests a Fall 2005 launch

NOTE: Dates are suggested as target dates, but the focus is on the completion of elements in each phase. We cannot move to a subsequent phase until the previous phase is fully implemented.

Phase 1 – DNA Formation (April – June 2005)

- Secure CCC leadership and elder board approval for this church planting proposal (May 05)
- Change college Assistant Director search to search for a replacement College Pastor
- Scale back Bob's current preaching responsibilities (goal: no more than two sermons a month after May 05; on a "very infrequent" basis by Aug 05)
- Propose budget for approval by CCC (by May 05)
- Set up church plant designated giving account in CCC financial system (by June 05)
- Design an internal communication and publicity plan to create ownership within the mother church (video, preaching, print, etc. - by June 05)

Phase 2 – Preparation (Summer 2005)

- Recruit Prayer Team of 100 people who will pray daily for the church planting effort (by 1 July 05)
- Bob officially cut loose from all CCC roles and commissioned as a church planting missionary (by 1 Sep 05)
- Bob begins to raise financial support within CCC (goal: all support committed for Bob's needs by Sep 1 05)
- Begin personal recruiting of core team from CCC

- Begin weekly prayer and vision meetings with preliminary core team and leadership team (by Sep 05)
- Ask for core team commitment to core values
- Bob and selected Convergence interns give full-time leadership to creating missional momentum and ensuring commitment to core values (by Sep 05)
- Communication process (newsletter, website, blog, etc) with donors and intercessors is in place and functional (by Sep 05)
- Preliminary financial/legal matters addressed - nonprofit status, bank accounts, etc (goal: clear timeline for all necessary admin matters by Sep 05)
- Core team decides on name and logo (by Sep 05)

Phase 3 – Reproduction (Fall 2005)

- Core team begins to form missional communities (small groups) and engage culture together (organically through Fall 05)
- Measurable **missional criteria** set (focus: individuals); leaders begin to take core team through these criteria for personal assessment (by Sep 05)
- Ongoing internal vision-casting strategy implemented at CCC to ensure relational connection and vision within mother church
- Pool of unbelievers/sojourners is growing; evidence of God's work in our relational networks as we intentionally engage culture
- Continue meeting weekly for vision/prayer until there is an organic sense of growing mission and unity around core values
- **Launch criteria** (focus: entire community) are set and agreed upon
- Potential core group members are asked for formal commitment to the church plant (this would be our break-away date for official separation from CCC and beginning to worship as our own church community)
- Church plant secures its own meeting space and begins to worship together (sometime in Fall 05)

Phase 4 – Development (October – December 2005)

- Begin selection and training of potential elders
- Focus heavily on leadership development to ensure missional community is happening

- Continue engaging culture together
- Hammer on core values and pay close attention to the developing ethos – keep the DNA healthy!
- Pay attention to gaps; decide which ministry structures need to be strengthened in order to take the next step of church health and growth
- Begin to dream and plan for our first church plant

Budget and Personnel Details

This church plant will be led by Bob Thune and by the Convergence interns. Since this is an organic, missional model, the financial and personnel needs are drastically different from previous proposals which have assumed a front-door model.

Details:

- We propose that Bob's salary be cut in half and that he be allowed to raise support from CCC members to make up the difference
- Continue to fund the Convergence program as currently budgeted, keeping Convergence interns on the CCC payroll and assigning them to this church plant as "phase 2" of their internship
- This frees up salary funds to hire a full-time replacement college pastor
- In addition, we are requesting \$60,000 in seed money from CCC to provide for front-end costs (mainly rental space costs and fixed asset needs)
- Result: this church plant would add **no ongoing financial obligations** to CCC!
- Compare to Lincoln Project proposal, which asked for \$211,000 from CCC... a missional model greatly reduces the financial cost and greatly increases the kingdom impact!

Non-Negotiable Traits for Core Team Members

- Passionate love for Jesus
- Visionary, compelling leaders who don't just talk leadership, but actually model a God-centered life and can inspire others to follow
- Saturated in and transformed by the gospel of grace; leaders who don't just know the words of the gospel, but hear its music and live its realities

- Flexible and adaptable; can live with the ambiguity and messiness of a new venture
- Risk-taking personality; not afraid to try new things for the sake of expanding God's kingdom
- Committed to gospel-centered relationships with others; willing to live in transparent community (not "lone rangers")

How Convergence Fits In

We approved Convergence in October 2004 as a church planting internship strategy "to develop effective, godly leaders and plant thriving, multiplying local churches." The goal of Convergence was to raise up church planters, not church interns. So the current proposal is in line with the goals and aims of the Convergence program as approved. In fact, the Convergence plan included the goal of planting a daughter church in Omaha by 2006.

The current Convergence interns, then, would continue to be employed and supported through CCC, but would work in this new church plant as their primary ministry. The idea or concept of the Convergence program could be carried on in the future by other CCC staff, and the new church plant could continue to provide a training ground for missional ministry as we partner together to develop leaders.

The Question of Results

If we are going to create a missional church, we must be committed to measuring success like we would in a cross-cultural missions setting. The size of the 'Sunday gathering' is no longer the arbiter of how the people of God are really responding to His initiative in their lives. In a missional paradigm we will have to measure the conversations and relationships we are cultivating with those not yet connected with Jesus instead of continuing to count how many people we are successfully attracting from other churches. Just as a missionary may spend a long time 'engaging culture' before seeing long-term fruit, so we must think long-term and allow for an organic pattern of growth. 'What gets measured gets done' – but we must make sure we are measuring things that really relate to mission and not just the 'default measurements' we've grown used to in attractional churches.