

## INTRODUCTION

Churches have changed substantially in how they operate compared to twenty-five years ago. Larger churches were run primarily by committees of laypeople. The pastor was subservient to a church board. People came to church two or three times a week. Sunday Schools often had larger attendance than worship services. In a strong missions church, the pastor preached a few times a year on missions. Reaching the world for Christ was considered the overarching mission of the Church. Missions was primarily international or “foreign” missions and was carried out by missionaries who were sent by the denomination or by mission sending agencies—often for four-year periods—and supported by many churches. Sunday School classes adopted missionaries, prayed for them, and occasionally communicated with them. Many churches held an eight-day missions conference every year. People were fascinated (or sometimes bored) by missionary stories and pictures from around the world.

The primary responsibilities of most missions committees were to organize and conduct the missions conference and to develop, recommend, and manage the missions budget. It wasn't uncommon for a church to designate twenty to thirty percent of the church budget for missions. Raising large amounts of money for missions was a major annual goal for the pastor and the church board, who worked very hard to promote missions giving. Missions education was conducted from the pulpit through sermons and missionary presentations. The moral and economic decline of our communities and the growth of ethnic minorities had not yet hit the radar screen of most churches.

Today, church life is much different. A great number of churches are staff led. The church board often serves more in an advisory

capacity. The church meets once a week. Small groups have replaced Sunday schools. Committees still operate in many churches but are often considered more as hindrances than guiding lights. Many committees have been replaced by “teams” or volunteers who assist staff in carrying out church initiatives. Church leaders still seek to advance the Great Commission but they are much more oriented toward the pervasive moral and social needs of our communities. The scope of the church’s agenda has substantially broadened. The need for first-class facilities and multiple staff has greatly increased church overhead and reduced the proportion of funds available to reach beyond home base.

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Missions has changed as well. We can no longer hold to the dichotomy of our nation as Christian and other nations as pagan. Because of the loss of a biblical moral base in our society and the influx of immigrants, our communities have been recognized as part of the “mission field.” Church leaders have found it more practical to cast a vision for “mission”—meaning all ministry beyond the congregation—than try to explain same-culture evangelism, local ministry, and cross-cultural missions to congregations that have little “missions” background. Many churches are looking at mission from an Acts 1:8, concentric circle perspective: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Further, missional churches are not satisfied to exclusively send long-term, church-supported representatives to other nations and cultures. Every member should participate in mission. This often

means going on mission trips and getting involved in the community or city. It might mean participating in a church-sponsored project or partnership or volunteering with an evangelistic Christian ministry, a Christian compassion ministry, a community social ministry, or a government-sponsored program.

All of this—and much more—has changed and complicated the job of the mission leadership team. But the first responsibility of any leadership team is to clarify its charter. What is the team's purpose and what is its biblical mandate? What is the scope of the team's responsibility, and what authority do church leaders delegate to them?

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## FOUNDATIONS

### What is our charter?

#### **Purpose**

What is the purpose of the mission leadership team? Why does it exist? What is its overall aim? While many things have changed, the purpose the mission leadership team has remained constant: to help church leaders fulfill the purpose of the church. The purpose of every leader, every department and every member of an organization is to contribute to the fulfillment of the purpose of that organization. The team is not an independent group establishing its own purpose separate from or different from that of the church. It is an integral, contributing part of church leadership, pulling together with top church leaders.

This clearly implies that the team is under the authority of church leaders. While the team rightfully suggests, recommends, influences, and urges church leaders to move in the direction they believe fulfills scriptural commands and best meets the spiritual and material needs in the world, in the end, the God-appointed leaders have the final word. The mission team is not authorized to start a rebellion, lead a coup, or take an end run around church leaders.

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*The mission leadership team exists to help church leaders fulfill the purpose of the church.*

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The church purpose statement shows what the church is committed to accomplish. The team will have responsibility for the

mission portion of that purpose. Examine your church purpose statement to see what portion of it is fulfilled by doing mission. The team will have to identify and perhaps negotiate with church leaders the exact scope or territory of mission, but your team can propose a purpose statement for the mission ministry or the mission team.

It is desirable for this purpose statement to clearly connect with the church purpose statement. When people read both statements, they should see at a glance how the mission ministry fits into, or contributes to, the church purpose. Therefore, the purpose statement for mission might take a form similar to the church purpose statement, zeroing in on the mission portion of it.

#### **Hypothetical Church Purpose Statements and Mission Purpose Statements**

Church Purpose Statement 1: *Community Church exists to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Jesus.*

Mission Purpose Statement 1a. *The mission team at Community Church exists to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Jesus beyond our local community.*

Mission Purpose Statement 1b: *Mission at Community Church exists to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Jesus in other cultures and nations.*

Mission Purpose Statement 1c. *The mission team at Community Church exists to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Jesus throughout our city and around the world.*

Church Purpose Statement 2. *Community Church exists to glorify God by making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Jesus in our city and the world.*

Mission Purpose Statement 2a. *The mission team at Community Church exists to help our church make disciples throughout the world beyond our city.*

Mission Purpose Statement 2b. *Mission at Community Church exists to stimulate, disciple, mobilize, equip, partner, and deploy people and resources to make and multiply disciples in other cultures and languages throughout the world.*

Church Purpose Statement 3. *Community Church exists to love God, grow together, and reach the world.*

Mission Purpose Statement 3a. *The mission team at Community Church exists to help our church reach the world.*

Mission Purpose Statement 3b. *Mission at Community Church exists to stimulate, disciple, mobilize, equip, partner, and deploy people and resources to reach the world.*

### **Biblical Mandate**

Whatever the form and content of your purpose statement, it will specifically or implicitly require the mission leadership team to help your church carry out the biblical imperative for touching the nations. What Scriptures guide your mission efforts? What do they call you to do?

The process of working through the Scripture to identify and personalize the biblical mission mandate for your church may have been done in your past and become institutionalized in your

**WORK SPACE:**

Our church purpose statement:

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The purpose of the Mission Leadership Team at our church (my draft):

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The purpose of the Mission Leadership Team at our church (approved):

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church and in your mission team philosophy and operation. You may have very well understood and accepted biblical principles that guide your efforts. If these are not written out, it would be a good clarifying exercise to write, discuss, and affirm them.

On the other hand, your church may not have carefully thought through this process. You may be doing mission without benefit of a stake in the ground, guiding principles, or strong biblical assumptions. Or your church has changed, and you may need to undertake this process afresh. Who should do it?

In most churches today the senior pastor has enormous influence in the direction and priorities of the church. The input and full support of the senior pastor is critical to any conclusions that will have weight. Perhaps ideally, the senior pastor, church board, and mission team could work through this process together. If it is delegated to the mission team, realize that you must offer your proposals to church leaders and get their thoughtful feedback. The results will have authority and provide concrete guidance only if top church leaders own it.

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You may find considerable help in examining the biblical foundations from other churches, but do not short-cut doing your own Bible study. The foundational study of Scripture will provide you a bedrock commitment to God's heart and desire for the nations.

What Scriptures guide your mission efforts? Here are some Scriptures that other churches commonly build upon.

**Great Commission Scriptures:**

Matthew 28:18-20    Mark 16:15    Luke 24:44-48  
John 20:21    Acts 1:8

**Additional Scriptures that Support Mission:**

Genesis 12:2-3    1 Chronicles 16:23-24    Isaiah 49:6b  
Matthew 24:14    Luke 4:18    John 3:16-17  
John 10:10    Romans 10:14-15



Having answered these questions for each verse (note that not every verse answers all the questions), write a biblical mandate statement that says, basically, “We are commanded to *do what*, so that *who*, can *benefit how*.”

Here are some illustrations of what a team might write:

- The Scriptures require us to preach the gospel (Command) in all the world (Scope) so that everyone (Scope) has an opportunity to know Christ (Benefit).
- We are commanded to go to every nation, evangelizing and discipling people so that God may be glorified.
- The Bible tells us to reach all people groups, proclaiming the gospel, discipling believers and meeting human need so that people everywhere may be reconciled to God and to each other.

**MORE  
HELP**

For an excellent study of the Great Commission passages, see *Commissioned* by Marvin Newell. (See **Resources**.)

**WORK SPACE:**

A Biblical Mandate Statement for our Mission Leadership Team (my draft):

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Biblical Mandate Statement for our Mission Leadership Team (team draft):

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### Scope

The scope or extent of ministry responsibility can be considered geographically, linguistically, or culturally. What groups are within our team's responsibility for ministry?

- People outside the U.S. only?
- People whose primary language is not English, whether in other countries or in our own?
- People who speak English but are culturally different from our church body, such as ethnic neighborhoods or inner city communities?
- People who are pretty much like us such as our unchurched neighbors?

It may be useful to think of people in three categories:

- People unlike us far away
- People unlike us nearby
- People like us nearby

**WORK SPACE:**

Biblical Mandate Statement (with comments, suggestions, corrections from church leaders):

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Biblical Mandate Statement for our Mission Leadership Team (approved):

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Which of these categories belong to the mission team? Not infrequently, church leaders want the scope to be broader than the team would like. Church leaders may want to include all efforts outside the local body to be considered “mission.” In one church, the mission team was asked to manage the church support for the denomination district office because this was money that “went out” from the church. The mission team often wants to limit their scope to people unlike us, people from other cultures, languages, and nations. The team may well argue that people like us are the responsibility of the local church leaders and congregation. They reason that the church body, as part of their Christian responsibility, should be reaching people where they live and work. Mission is going beyond this natural sphere of influence.

The scope issue must be acknowledged and worked out between church leaders and the team. Sometimes the issue is resolved by appointing two, or even three, separate teams, each with its own budget and area of responsibility. For example, a church might have one team for international ministries and another team for U.S. ministries. One church has a team for local same-culture ministries, a second for ministries to local internationals, and a third for global ministries. Another church has a global ministries team (that handles ministry among internationals whether outside or inside the U.S.), a local ministries team (that works with local community ministries such as Habitat for Humanity, Teen Challenge, a local foster parenting group, and a city literacy program) and a regional mission team (that works with the denomination district office and nearby church plants).

**MORE  
HELP**

*Stuff you need to know about Doing Missions in Your Church* by David Mays (herein referred to as *Stuff*). Five volumes on one CD. Volume I, the Contents of all five volumes, and the Cumulative Index are available on the web for free. Purchase the CD from David Mays at [www.davidmays.org](http://www.davidmays.org).

“Missions Scope and Boundaries,” *Stuff* vol. II, 11

“The Image and Substance of Missions,” *Stuff* vol. V, 9

## **Authority**

What is the team authorized to do without requesting permission? This is primarily a financial question. In general, church boards have full financial authority. A few churches have a mission board, separate from the church board, which has full authority to establish a budget and disburse funds. Committees and teams usually have an authorized spending limit. They are authorized to disburse funds according to an approved budget and may have authority to spend additional funds within a limit as long as the overall expenses are within budget. Beyond that, they operate in a “recommend” mode with approval being required from the church board. Committees and teams usually propose an annual budget and recommend additional or different expenditures as appropriate during the year.

Not infrequently the vision arising from the mission team may challenge the perspective of the church staff, elder board or finance committee, who may not have been focused on how much to trust the Lord for investment in mission. In such situations the mission team will prayerfully consider how to best present an expanded or ambitious new financial proposal. Vision can arise anywhere in the body. If God gives vision to the mission team, don't be surprised if the rest of the church leaders are not initially on the same wave length. Part of your responsibility as leaders is to encourage a God-sized vision for mission and the budget needed to support it.

**WORK SPACE:**

**Scope**

The scope of the Mission Leadership Team at our church includes:

Geographically: \_\_\_\_\_

Linguistically: \_\_\_\_\_

Culturally: \_\_\_\_\_

**Authority**

The Mission Leadership Team at our church has financial authority to

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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### **FUNCTIONS** **What are we supposed to do?**

#### **Communicate**

With the current emphasis on mission trips, many people think trips are the primary team responsibility. One new mission team member said, “I thought that being on the mission team meant deciding where to take mission trips.” Another man told his wife he was going to join the mission team. “Oh, where are you going?” she asked. It is true that mission trips take a great deal of planning and effort by mission teams, but trips are only one of several important responsibilities.

One of these is communication. An aim for any mission team is to make mission a normal, regular part of congregation life and ministry, not a once a year emphasis. Something that happens only once a year rarely changes someone’s life pathway. The mission team wants to see every member regularly and routinely participating in mission in some way as a normal, organic part of the Christian life.

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To this end, the team wants to make mission both intensive and extensive. Intensive means a periodic intensive mission experience. Two generations ago, a week-long vacation Bible school or a summer youth camp often focused heavily on foreign mission. Life-