

The church must be both gathered AND scattered.

We didn't want to simply create structures for church growth - adding more and more people - we wanted to multiply, create and sustain a missional culture - bringing more and more life. God had already spoken to us to GO after the lost and we had certainly made some progress, yet we were still in attractational mode. Still primarily inviting the lost to come to us.

Deep down, we didn't want to settle for people coming to faith. We wanted to build compassionate generous outward lives that reached across the divide and journeyed faith with unbelievers. We wanted a generous culture with mission at the heart of it; a culture where our lives naturally leaned towards the lost, a culture where people were intentional about leading people to God in every environment - everyone, everyday, everywhere expressing their life in a way that led others into life.

We had transitioned effectively and begun living with increased passion to help people who were far from God experience and encounter Him. By now many people in our community were coming to faith through our church gatherings. There was rarely a gathering without spiritually lost people present, yet *we didn't know how to transition from hosting attractational services to unleashing missional movement.*

All of that changed the day I attended a Willow Creek conference in Cheltenham, England. It was everything Willow conferences ever are - inspiring, energising, galvanising - hugely insightful and radically intentional about effectively creating churches that reach the lost and grow the found. Erwin McManus from Mosaic was the guest speaker at the conference. I had never heard Erwin before but like everyone else, I was immediately engaged. His philosophy and journey towards outsiders resonated deeply with me.

At one point during his message he made a statement that changed everything for me. He said that his church (Mosaic) had taken the decision to make every ministry missional. What that meant was that the entire church was on mission. *Every environment was infused with a commitment to the outsider.* If it didn't connect with the unchurched community at some level, the leaders of the church had a missional responsibility to close that ministry. As I listened I knew God was speaking.

We had just received a way to lead the entire church beyond the building and among the people.

Creating environments that lead found people out to life

Until then we had no real process for evaluating the effectiveness of our ministry environments. Now we had a clear compelling way to tell if there was alignment with our assignment; we simply measured the health of a ministry by its missional impact. *If a ministry doesn't lead us towards lost people or lost people towards God, we don't do it.* If it doesn't include the spiritually lost, invest in the lost or impact the lost we don't do it.

It doesn't matter if a ministry is growing or appears successful...
if it's not missional, we don't do it.

It doesn't matter if it is marked by the supernatural...
if it's not missional, we don't do it.

It doesn't matter if it's appealing or attractive...
if it's not missional, we don't do it.

It doesn't matter if it's the next big thing in renewal...
if it's not missional, we don't do it.

It doesn't matter if it serves huge pastoral needs...
if it's not missional, we don't do it.

Every one of our ministries must connect with unchurched community at some level.

Multiplying a missional culture meant significant re-structure

As a staff team, we wrestled with this tension continuously - of seeking to give equal value and priority to spiritually lost people; that we had a mission responsibility to close any ministry that fails to involve/invite/include outsiders. This constant wrestling provoked some of our most rigorous debates. Paradoxically it also became the birthing point for some of our most effective engagements with the community.

For example, when we first applied this to our kids' environments, we realised that according to our commitment we would have to close our Sunday school in a year unless we created a similar environment for children who were unreached and unchurched. As we considered this, our children's pastor began to advance the idea of replicating our Sunday School [known as Allstars] in a local school. We loved the idea but weren't entirely sure how to implement it; It is one thing to take a local assembly in the school and quite another to ask the school if you can host a Sunday school there on a Friday afternoon. After much discussion with the school, they agreed. So each week some of the schoolchildren stayed behind after lessons to engage with the kingdom - with the result that in 2007 we had more kids attend our Sunday school for the lost than our environment for church kids.

After a few months, Dave invited some of the kids to say yes to God. Much to his astonishment many of the kids from deprived backgrounds and with no prior church connection surrendered their young lives to Christ. We were totally shocked, but nothing could have prepared us for what happened next. Two weeks later, Dave invited the kids who had given their life to Jesus to tell the others what difference God had made in their lives since they had become a Christian. One 10 year old stood and told the class she had prayed for her grandmother who had been in hospital with cancer. Then she 'matter of factly' declared that her grandmother had been sent home and she doesn't have the cancer anymore.

After her story, a little boy described how he was learning to pray and had prayed to Jesus for his uncle who had kidney problems and was on a (dialysis) machine. Dave sat stunned as the boy said, "this week he doesn't need the machine." Completely healed after kids who had known Christ only a matter of weeks, and who had learned nothing about praying for the sick, prayed their best prayer. (We continue to minister in the school and as I write this chapter, last week 18 kids gave their lives to Christ.) When Dave relayed the story to the rest of our staff at our weekly staff gathering, I sat there open-mouthed thinking, "there it is again, the kingdom breaking out among the people." It seemed like every time we disrupted our church community to show up in our wider community, the favour of the Father intensified.

It was these moments of outpouring that kept us mission critical when others within our church were critical of our mission. It was these moments that fuelled our courage and commitment to *move beyond evangelistic structures towards missional culture*.

Whenever we saw small victory we shared the story.

As we shared the story, people engaged and momentum increased.