

I. Orientation

At CTK we are trying to create a networked structure of “ministry channels” through which people can easily and organically plug in, do actual ministry that is meaningful to them, and begin to discern their spiritual gifts.

Missional Teams differ from other types of small groups in the church in that they meet mainly for outreach. Each group is centered on an area of ministry (divorce care; medical care; food assistance; chronic debt; music; multi-media; intentional neighboring; etc.). Members of missional teams adhere to minimal disciplines (daily bible study, etc.).

Team members meet with the team leader once per month; the team leader meets with the missional teams pastor once per month; all team leaders meet together with the missional teams pastor once a month as well for prayer, worship, teaching, and encouragement. So, this means that if you (the team leader) have two members on your team, you will have a total of four meetings per month connected with your missional team.

*Broadly speaking, there are four stages of development for the team: study & research → planning → action → assessment. Through every stage, the whole process is undergirded by prevailing prayer. This cycle is meant to repeat itself over and over. In this sense, it is **recursive** (like a spiral, or a winding road up and around a mountain), not linear.*

The team submits to the session of the church, but the team is empowered to make its own decisions, set its own policies, etc. It is not a standing committee: it is allowed to “die with dignity” if it needs to.

This Manuel is not a top-down mechanism, but rather is intensely interactive. In other words, it will require lots of feedback and communication with the Missional Team Coordinator. (This is the very opposite of “Pastor Matt telling me what to do!”)

II. The Purpose of the Missional Team

The purpose of the missional team is actually two-fold. There is the external purpose, and the internal purpose. This distinction reflects the emphasis at CTK on “nurture and mission” or “mission and nurture.”

A. The External Purpose

The specific external purpose of any given missional team will vary from team to team. Each team must have some definite *task* to perform. This task might be to form some kind of group event or ongoing community of new people; it might be to develop some kind of statement of position on an issue; it might be to start a movement of prayer. It might be to begin a new ministry at CTK.

The only requirement of a team’s purpose is that it extend the Kingdom of God, the Reign of Jesus, in some way.¹

B. The Internal Purpose

1. To generate spiritual energy in the church.

Romans 8 is perhaps the most radically encouraging chapter in the entire Bible for people engaged in ministry to others. In verse 11, Paul says, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” Some points:

¹ Note: this will require that we have some understanding of the Kingdom of God, of what that phrase means.

- When we talk about “spiritual energy,” it is crucial to understand that what we are really talking about is “Spiritual energy.” That is, we are referring to the Holy Spirit, and the energy he gives to us.
- We have, at work in our lives, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, that brought indestructible life out of the hopeless void of nothingness and holistic decay. This is the most powerful force that the world has ever known! (See Col 1:29 in this connection.)
- Just as Christ’s resurrection was surprising and unpredictable, so also this force in us is surprising and unpredictable. It is also uncontrollable. We don’t control it / Him: He controls us.
- Just as Christ’s resurrection is seen in the NT to be a New Creation of sorts, so also this Spirit at work in us is radically *creative*. If I find myself stilted and lacking new vigorous ideas, then I must pray for the spiritual ability to tap into the creative power of the *Spiritus Creator*.

Central to this generation of spiritual energy is the practice of *prevailing prayer*. (More on that below.)

Also in view here is the energy that comes from seeing other lives changed by the Gospel, whether they be the lives of our fellow missional team leaders or team members, or those who have newly come to Christ for the first time.

2. To develop² effective leaders for ministry in the church by unleashing peoples’ spiritual gifts.³

- Mobilization.

Three horses were having a conversation in a wagon. The first horse said, “We’re not moving!” The second horse replied, “Yes, that’s true. I wonder why?” The third horse who was obviously the most insightful, asked, “Do you suppose it is because there are no other horses out in front pulling?”⁴

The point here is that we are trying to get people *moving*, going somewhere, in their personal ministry within the larger church community.

- This is the opposite of *spectatorship*.
- Mobilization should be based (in part, at least) on people’s *giftedness*. (This is more of a challenge in a small church like CTK, but we still must develop and mature in this area.)
- It must also take into consideration other factors of *suitability*, such as interest, availability, maturity, etc.
- This approach virtually eliminates *burnout*.
- There are certain *phases* to mobilizing leaders:
 - Teaching.
 - Testing (of both giftedness and learned content).
 - Counseling.
 - Apprenticing.
 - Ongoing Monitoring.⁵
- Mentoring

² Development here means helping to *discover* one’s spiritual giftedness through ministry (largely through hands-on practice), and also *equipping* for service and ministry. See Eph 5:7-16 for this dynamic of *discovering and equipping*.

³ An excellent resource here is Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development*.

⁴ This illustration is from Daniel Reeves, “Preparing Congregations for the 21st Century.”

⁵ There are some similarities between these phases of mobilization and the phases in the lifespan of a missional team.

III. Preliminaries: The Five Invitational Questions⁶

From a human standpoint, the most important factor in the effectiveness of organizations or corporate bodies of people is leadership. (This, by the way, is why the church, for the last 2000 years has been the most effective organization on the face of the earth: her leader is Jesus Christ himself.)

For this reason, we will need to focus on the leader of any potential missional team before we form, or decide to form, the actual team.

The primary tool used at this point is “The Five Invitational Questions.”

They are:

1. Is there a particular human need that you “vibrate” to?
2. What personal, emotional, & spiritual resources do you have to meet the need?
3. Are there at least 2 or 3 others in the congregation who share your burden or to whom you can readily communicate your vision?
4. Is there really an opening for your ministry?
5. Before you begin, have you really counted the cost?

These questions, and the potential leader’s answers to them, are the most important part of this whole process of forming missional teams, for if the leader is shaky, then the team will not be strong. Let’s take these five questions one by one.

First, “*Is there a particular human need that you ‘vibrate’ to?*” The main thing to be stressed here is that your involvement in this missional team ministry has nothing to do with any sense of obligation on your part. If you are wanting to do this out of a sense of vague obligation or guilt, stop right now!

⁶ Like so much else in this manual, the questions come from Tim Keller, *Ministries of Mercy* 2nd ed. 160ff.

These teams must be driven, first and foremost, by a deep passion that is welling up inside of you. Usually, this area of passion is connected to some kind of tangible experience in your life: a painful experience that you (or a loved one) has lived through, a deep need (perhaps in your own life) that has gone unmet, some aspect of your secular career, etc. Often times this passion is accompanied by a sense of outrage or anger, a kind of righteous indignation. You feel almost unable just to sit back and not “do something.”

This motivation is even more important than the external need, out there in the community, for the missional team’s ministry. Thus, if there is a need in the church’s “parish,” but no one in the church is passionate or equipped to meet that need, then that need goes unmet for the time being, and the most that the church does is to pray (that God would bring in or raise up someone who is passionate and gifted in that area).

Pray for the Holy Spirit to search your heart and allow you to discern what is truly motivating you to pursue being a missional team leader in the church.

Second, “*What personal, emotional, & spiritual resources do you have to meet the need?*” Typically, the kind of passion articulated above is accompanied by the inner resources to take action. However, it is important to ask questions such as the following:

- Do I have the emotional “bandwidth” right now for this task?⁷
- Is my walk with Jesus strong enough that I can withstand attacks from the enemy, not to mention discouragement and disappointment?
- Do I like being around other people, or am I so introverted that I will fail at interacting with others?
- Am I capable of putting in the required study to grow in my understanding of this area?

⁷ For example, if you are grieving the death of a loved one, then perhaps now is not the best time for you to embark on this new journey.

Third, “*Are there at least 2 or 3 others in the congregation who share your burden or to whom you can readily communicate your vision?*” Let’s face it. Christ the King is a pretty small church. On a typical Sunday morning, there are usually no more than 80 or so adults in worship, and some of those may be visitors to the church. Thus, resourcing your team with human capital might be a real problem. This is why it is crucial to ask this question.

This might require some informal “field work” and networking within the church to try to ascertain the level of interest. If you cannot find at least two people in the congregation who are themselves prepared and have counted the cost, then the timing for your missional team might not be now.

Fourth, “*Is there really an opening, an opportunity or need, for this ministry?*” This is where external need comes into play. Not only must it be objectively verifiable and agreed that there is a relevant need in the CTK circle of influence / parish, but this need must not be too esoteric. It must be fairly basic, and also consistent with the vision and values of Christ the King.

Fifth, “*Have you really counted the cost?*” Here are some reasons why this is so important:

- Others will be counting on you in this effort, and if you let them down it could be harmful to them.
- Spiritual warfare is real, and Satan will notice your work in God’s Kingdom. Soberly relying on Christ, his Spirit, and each other is a necessity. Flippancy, half-heartedness, and impulsiveness must be avoided.
- The sacrifice involved in leading this team will not be yours alone. Rather, those close to you will be involved: spouse, children, friends.

If “green lights” (Keller 168) are appearing, then there are 6 steps to perform to form or begin an MT:

1. Write a careful problem/need statement
2. Establish a goal or vision statement
3. Brainstorm
4. Develop the program
5. Design the organization
6. Design evaluation

IV. The Four Stages

Stage 1: Studying & Research

“Great deeds are not done by strength or speed or physique. They are products of thought and character and judgment.” – Cicero

The studying and research involved in developing a missional team ought to take place early on in the life of the team. The “data” to be collected ought to be both systematic, statistical, and anecdotal.

Stage 2: Planning your Action(s)

In *Ministries of Mercy* (198ff) Keller proposes the following “model:”

1. Evaluate present ministries (both in our congregation and without)
2. Assess community needs
3. Build a vision statement for your missional team.
 - a. Make a list of future conditions which you believe are important to bring to pass.
 - i. What untapped potential do you have (access to)?
 - ii. What situations need improvement?
 - iii. What will these improvements look like? Who will be doing the work? When? How?
 - b. Make a list of obstacles and opportunities.
 - c. Create an action plan (a list of goals or action steps).

Stage 3: Action

Now implement the plan, refusing (with God’s help) to get discouraged at the difficulties you are sure to encounter!

Stage 4: Evaluation & Assessment

Set times for routine checking and communication through phone calls, personal contacts, and reports.

At certain times, a more formal process may be followed:

1. What are your actual current duties, and do they match your original job description?
2. What do you need from me or the church to do your job?
3. What have been your achievements?
4. Where are your greatest needs for improvements?
5. What are your goals for the next time period?
6. What resources will you need to meet these goals?

V. Excursus: The Absolute Necessity of Prevailing Prayer

The following excerpt is taken from "Preparing Congregations for the 21st Century" by R. Daniel Reeves.

Prayer has always been an essential component of the Christian's life, and much valuable training and teaching exists on developing personal prayer strategies. There are also effective prayer movements that mobilize and gather large numbers together for specific prayer. However, although corporate prayer is an essential part of all churches, very few churches in this country have their own specific strategy for corporate prayer. When they put together their ministry plans, they pray for and about the plans, but prayer is not in the plan.

What is missing is an intentional strategy for corporate and individual prayer where substantial emphasis is placed on building up spiritual energy through an intentional focus on prayer. Less than a score of churches in the entire country would be able to point to a significant prayer strategy that has been verbalized and put into action. This critical life system, although always acknowledged as overwhelmingly important, is in all too many churches underwhelmingly practiced and planned for.

To be effective, a prayer strategy must be intentional and focused. It involves identifying intercessors and having a person or persons whose responsibility and focus it is to develop and monitor the system working.

Churches arrange for people to take charge of many areas of church life missions, Christian education, music, etc., but rarely is there someone whose primary task it is to ensure that the prayer life of the church is in order. Many times prayer is seen as an auxiliary, behind the scenes activity, and is not among the visible, articulated tasks and goals of the congregation. Those who take leadership in this area should have the gift of intercession and can become the catalyst for significantly increasing effective prayer, working with the pastor to complete and implement a plan of action.

To be effective, a church's prayer strategy must focus on the particular blockages that the church is experiencing and on untapped potential that may well be just beneath the surface. The power that is ignited through corporate prayer is similar to the discovery by young summer campers who experiment for the first time with a magnifying glass. With practice, these campers can take a piece of magnifying glass and concentrate the sun's rays on a piece of bark until smoke emerges. Then by focusing the sun's energy, they burn their initials into the wood.

Similarly, blockages can be removed by concentrating the power of prayer on the top "sticking points" of the church until each one is removed. For example, in one church, the blockage may be the lack of an effective game plan for reaching unchurched persons. In every congregation there are one or two key individuals who have the proper gifts and may even have the training, but who have not been adequately challenged to get involved. Focused prayer is often the key to identifying the problem, finding the gifted individuals, releasing their potential, and reaching the unchurched. Before long, several effective bridges to the community may well become established. Untapped potential can be released by prayers if we are faithful to ask Him to answer our specific requests.

Another way to describe an effective corporate prayer strategy is to think of the relationship in football between a quarterback and a tight end. Sometimes this becomes almost mystical. During the 1980's, when the San Francisco 49ers were dominating the National Football League, Joe Montana would often lean back and throw the football with all his might. To many of us it didn't seem as though he was looking where he was throwing the ball. However, seconds later, we would watch Jerry Rice extend his hands, only to see the ball drop, almost miraculously, right between them!

Churches with experienced intercessors continually recount similar experiences, where their behind-the-scenes work resulted in the solution to a problem dropping into the lap of those who have struggled with that problem for weeks. As a consultant on assignment, I frequently experience the exhilaration of Jerry Rice. God will miraculously provide a piece to a puzzle, perhaps in the midst of a church conflict, that has blocked the ministry for years. Invariably, I find that there were individuals, both internally and externally, praying for me and that particular situation. In fact, in my ministry, I always have one or more intercessors who pray intensely and specifically for me and for the cases I am involved in. To me this is more essential than any other type of support services I use. As the commercial goes, "I don't leave home without it."

So it should not be surprising that I stress that one essential ingredient in an effective prayer strategy is that every leader be adequately covered by prayer support from experienced and properly gifted intercessors. The warfare described in II Corinthians 10 and Ephesians 6 is very real in churches today, especially among those who seek to break out of the status quo and their comfort zones. Whenever a congregation, for instance, decides to shift the corporate focus away from themselves in order to reach the unchurched, spiritual warfare will occur. Add to this the current shrinking of volunteerism and financial resources among all denominations, and the stage is set for a range of disruptive power encounters.

At stake in these spiritual battles are the hearts and minds of members. The results, largely depending upon the amount of corporate prayer, will be either powerful victories or discouraging defeats. Indeed, training in and activating corporate prayer is an essential survival component that will increasingly determine the viability of struggling congregations.