

A Vision for Sending Workers into the Harvest from Creekside Around the World

January 2010

Vision: Creekside Community Church has a vision to be actively involved in strategic church planting endeavors through both local and foreign missions.

It is our desire that God would use us to:

- Glorify himself through our participation in his mission activity
- See churches planted and established through the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Raise up qualified workers for the harvest and send them out with excitement from the body and affirmation of calling through the church.
- Participate in a significant way with those workers in ongoing spiritual and financial support.
- See Creekside as a church strengthened through our participation in the mission of God as he uses us to impact the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A biblical pattern of missions:

As we seek to consider a biblical pattern for foreign missions, the natural place to begin is in the book of Acts. The book of Acts gives us the account of the ongoing work of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, through his church, to the ends of the world. As we examine it, we will see a consistent pattern emerge that prioritizes the church at the heart of the mission.

The following priorities become clear as you examine the Acts account:

1. Jesus and his gospel is at the heart of the mission endeavor.
2. The church is the ongoing agent and aim of the mission endeavor.

The ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a stewardship for which we continually strive to be faithful to our master in. The witness of Jesus Christ to the nations is the means by which God calls people from “darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God,” and the means by which Jesus fulfills his promise where he declared to Peter that “I will build my church.” (Acts 1:7-8; 26:18; Matt. 16:18)

The Gospel of Jesus is at the heart of the mission endeavor.

The priority of keeping the gospel at the heart of the Christian mission is an important one to consider. In every era it seems that the content of the gospel comes under attack and is in need of defense. We are in essential agreement with the Theological Affirmations and Denials¹ that have been articulated by Together for the Gospel (www.t4g.org) and appreciate their work in defending the gospel in that statement as brothers who differ on other secondary matters. Articles VII through XV are particularly helpful in defining the gospel message.

¹ This statement can be found in Appendix B of this document and online at www.t4g.org/aboutus/t4g-ad

As we seek to live out the great commandment to love God with everything we have and are and love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matt 22:37-39) we realize that it is completely consistent with gospel ministry, and in fact integral to it, to be concerned with demonstrating love tangibly and authentically to others. That being the case, the establishment of hospitals, orphanages and schools, the support of public health, and the compassionate response to those suffering from disease, poverty, or injustice, and other such activities, are all consistent with gospel ministry, but never at the exclusion or the expense of the message of Jesus Christ and his death, burial, resurrection for individual sinners. We believe that such ministries have increasing validity to the degree that they serve to accurately represent the character of God, his saving purposes in Jesus Christ, and further his purposes to establish his church.

The church is the ongoing agent and aim of the mission endeavor.

In addition to the gospel being central in the mission endeavor, we see the centrality of the church as a priority in the plan of God for this age.

We believe that the church is to function as the primary agent of the mission endeavor. What we see unfold in Acts is that the local church served several important functions.

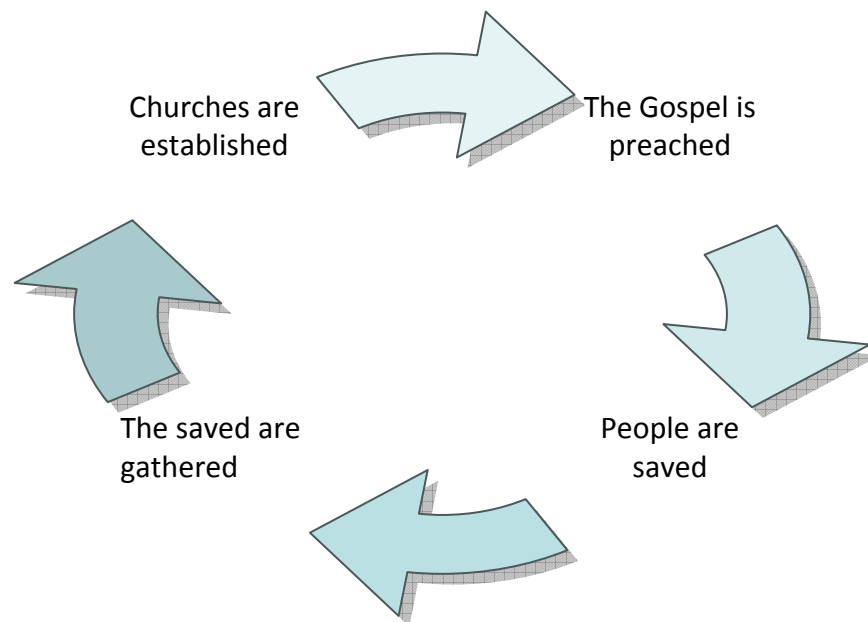
First, they were the entity that God used to affirm workers for the harvest. Whether it is Barnabas (Acts 11:22); Paul (Acts 13:1-3); or Silas (Acts 15:22); we consistently see that the key men in the mission endeavor served in the local church and were sent out by them as the local church was able to affirm their giftedness and calling. Other men, such as John-Mark (Acts 12:12; 13:5) and Timothy (Acts 16:1-2) were involved in the local assemblies and we are told explicitly that Timothy was chosen as an apprentice on the second missionary journey because he was “well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.” As it came to the identification and sending of both key leaders and emerging leaders in the mission endeavor, the church was integrally involved and sent those who had

Second, the church not only functioned in the identification and sending of leaders, but it also provided regular accountability to the missionary teams. At the end of both the first and second missionary journey the missionary journey returned to the church and reported what God had done (Acts 14:27-28; Acts 18:22). After the first missionary journey the text is very explicit that God used the report of the mission activity to encourage and strengthen the church in both Antioch and Jerusalem.

Third, we see in the pages of the New Testament that the church also functioned as a key support to the mission endeavor. At times missionary activity was supported by individuals (e.g. Acts 16:15), it was supported through “tent-making” (Acts 18:3), and was supported through local churches (Phil 4:16; Acts 18:5). When help arrived from Macedonia Paul was able to fully devote himself to the word and didn’t need to support himself through working (Acts 18:5). The Macedonian churches were key supporters in many ways, including finances, to the apostle Paul (Phil 4:16).

Considering that pattern, it is our desire as a church to be involved in Jesus' missionary enterprise through the identification, equipping, affirmation, and support of workers for the harvest. If an individual believes that they are being called into ministry, whether it is foreign or domestic, we believe that the best pattern to affirm that call is through ministry in the local church where that calling as well as their character and giftedness can be demonstrated.

We believe that the church is the aim of the missionary endeavor. There is a recurring missions pattern in the New Testament. Where in a particular region the gospel is proclaimed, individuals repent and are saved, they are gathered together, mature churches are developed, and those churches in turn, begin the process again through the proclaiming the gospel.



Two elements are clear in the establishment of churches. First, there was the initial gathering of people into assemblies, or churches. An example of this is in Philippi where shortly after people coming to faith, they would already gather together in homes or other places (Acts 16:40). In addition to the gathering of people into churches was a long-term commitment to those churches to see them established with sound doctrine and qualified leadership. At the end of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas back-tracked their steps to encourage the churches and establish leadership (Acts 14:21-23). At the beginning of the second missionary journey they first went to the churches planted during the first journey to “see how they are.” (Acts 15:36). As Paul was returning to Jerusalem, knowing he would be captured, he spent time investing in the leaders of the church at Antioch, encouraging them in the ministry (Acts 20:17-35). This priority was also communicated to Titus, who was left on the island of Crete so that he could bring order to the churches by establishing qualified leadership in all of the cities that had believers gathered in them (Titus 1:5). The quality of established churches was a critical matter because as churches were established they impacted the regions around

them (Acts 19:10; Romans 15:22-25)². The ongoing ministry of the gospel in any area is dependent upon the establishment of healthy reproducing churches.

Through the above mentioned texts and the weight of the New Testament, we believe the following principles to be important in directing the missions ministry here at Creekside.

Principle #1: The gospel should be at the center of all mission activity

Principle #2: Missions activity that isn't directly gospel proclamation (i.e. schools, hospitals, sanitation, etc.) has significance to the degree that it reflects and proclaims the gospel of Jesus and serves to establish his church.

Principle #3: The appropriate result for Gospel ministry is the establishment of healthy, reproducing churches.

Principle #4: Those called into ministry leadership (in this case on the mission field) should be empowered, equipped, affirmed, and unleashed from local churches.

Principle #5: In regular reporting back to sending churches missionaries benefit from accountability while sending churches are strengthened by witnessing the work of God around the world.

Principle #6: It is appropriate for churches, united around the gospel, to partner in the support and care of missionaries³.

It is our desire and prayer that God would give Creekside the privilege of being a part of the sending of many workers for the gospel locally and around the world. In order to strategically and efficiently use our resources and be guided by the above principles we desire to spend our resources according to the following framework.

As we consider the diverse opportunities that Creekside has to support missions activities we view differing levels of support as follows:

For those that believe they are called into foreign missions long-term: We praise God for those that believe that God is calling them into foreign missions as a vocation. It is our desire to send and support, both spiritually and financially, those that God raises up and sends into his harvest. For individuals who have been through a process of service, affirmation, and commissioning to be sent out from Creekside, we desire to support them financially, as much as possible and in partnership with other churches, in order to minimize the amount of time needed to be spent fund-raising. For those that want us to be involved as their sending church we ask that:

² The statement in Acts 19:10 where it states that "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord..." speaks of the time, when most likely, the churches throughout Asia minor were established. These would include the 7 churches of Revelation, the church of Colossae, etc. As people were impacted by the gospel in Ephesus, they went out to the regions of Asia establishing churches. Paul's statement in Romans 15:22-23 that "there is no room for him in these regions" didn't mean that everyone in Asia had been saved, but rather that the gospel was well established in those regions through the establishment of churches in strategic cities, so he was moving into "uncharted" territory in Spain.

³ While the sending church of Antioch was Paul's sending church, much of his financial support came from other churches (i.e. the churches of Macedonia are a prime example).

- You demonstrate your commitment to Creekside through prioritizing service and participation in our services and ministries.
- You serve in the context of the church, and in your areas of giftedness, so that others can be blessed and excited as they see God working through you here in your own culture and anticipate God's blessing in another one.
- You submit your desire to the Elders so that they can be actively involved in the process of evaluating your character, calling, giftedness, and unity with our doctrine and missions philosophy.
- You partner with the Elders and others in the church family as you consider different possibilities and mission organizations, knowing that the organization and the sending church need to have a high level of doctrinal and philosophical agreement.
- You consider ways to serve in areas that Creekside is already involved in the task of foreign missions.

For Short Term Ministries (Less than one year): We believe that short-term ministries are highly valuable not only to the countries that benefit from the ministry, but also in the lives of those that are sent. God has used short-term missions to expand the minds of people about the mission field, to confirm their call, to motivate giving, and to provide many other benefits. Knowing their importance, Creekside sets aside a portion of its mission budget each year for short-term ministries. We desire to support (both in prayer and financially) those going on short-term ministries who are part of our church family and:

- Have a clear testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ as demonstrated through baptism and by the affirmation others in our church family.
- Choose short-term ministries that are consistent with a gospel focus as outlined in this paper above.
- Communicate with the Elders, involving them in the decision making process if possible, providing them information about the trip, the sending organization, and what you hope to accomplish.
- Communicate to the elders as soon as possible so that the money set aside for short-term missions can be budgeted.
- Are prepared to share with the church family both before and after the trip so that we can be praying for them and also see what God has done through the time.

Spending Guidelines (established January 2010):

Creekside allocates 10% of its general fund giving for "missions" and another 5% for domestic church planting. Of the 10% of the amount that is given for "missions" we have allocated percentage breakdowns as follows:

- 15% - Local missions (local gospel partnerships that are apart from church planting.)
- 60% - Long term commitments to foreign missions
- 15% - Short term foreign missions
- 10% - Undesignated mission expenses.



TOGETHER *for the* GOSPEL

We are brothers in Christ united in one great cause – to stand together for the Gospel. We are convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been misrepresented, misunderstood, and marginalized in many churches and among many who claim the name of Christ. Compromise of the Gospel has led to the preaching of false gospels, the seduction of many minds and movements, and the weakening of the church's Gospel witness.

As in previous moments of theological and spiritual crisis in the church, we believe that the answer to this confusion and compromise lies in a comprehensive recovery and reaffirmation of the Gospel – and in Christians banding together in Gospel churches that display God's glory in this fallen world.

We are also brothers united in deep concern for the church and the Gospel. This concern is specifically addressed to certain trends within the church today. We are concerned about the tendency of so many churches to substitute technique for truth, therapy for theology, and management for ministry.

We are also concerned that God's glorious purpose for Christ's church is often eclipsed in concern by so many other issues, programs, technologies, and priorities. Furthermore, confusion over crucial questions concerning the authority of the Bible, the meaning of the Gospel, and the nature of truth itself have gravely weakened the church in terms of its witness, its work, and its identity.

We stand together for the Gospel – and for a full and gladdening recovery of the Gospel in the church. We are convinced that such a recovery will be evident in the form of faithful Gospel churches, each bearing faithful witness to the glory of God and the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Article I

We affirm that the sole authority for the Church is the Bible, verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, and totally sufficient and trustworthy.

We deny that the Bible is a mere witness to the divine revelation, or that any portion of Scripture is marked by error or the effects of human sinfulness.

Article II

We affirm that the authority and sufficiency of Scripture extends to the entire Bible, and therefore that the Bible is our final authority for all doctrine and practice.

We deny that any portion of the Bible is to be used in an effort to deny the truthfulness or trustworthiness of any other portion. We further deny any effort to identify a canon within the canon or, for example, to set the words of Jesus against the writings of Paul.

Article III

We affirm that truth ever remains a central issue for the Church, and that the church must resist the allure of pragmatism and postmodern conceptions of truth as substitutes for obedience to the comprehensive truth claims of Scripture.

We deny that truth is merely a product of social construction or that the truth of the Gospel can be expressed or grounded in anything less than total confidence in the veracity of the Bible, the historicity of biblical events, and the ability of language to convey understandable truth in sentence form. We further deny that the church can establish its ministry on a foundation of pragmatism, current marketing techniques, or contemporary cultural fashions.

Article IV

We affirm the centrality of expository preaching in the church and the urgent need for a recovery of biblical exposition and the public reading of Scripture in worship.

We deny that God-honoring worship can marginalize or neglect the ministry of the Word as manifested through exposition and public reading. We further deny that a church devoid of true biblical preaching can survive as a Gospel church.

Article V

We affirm that the Bible reveals God to be infinite in all his perfections, and thus truly omniscient, omnipotent, timeless, and self-existent. We further affirm that God possesses perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future, including all human thoughts, acts, and decisions.

We deny that the God of the Bible is in any way limited in terms of knowledge or power or any other perfection or attribute, or that God has in any way limited his own perfections.

Article VI

We affirm that the doctrine of the Trinity is a Christian essential, bearing witness to the ontological reality of the one true God in three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of the same substance and perfections.

We deny the claim that the Trinity is not an essential doctrine, or that the Trinity can be understood in merely economic or functional categories.

Article VII

We affirm that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, in perfect, undiluted, and unconfused union throughout his incarnation and now eternally. We also affirm that Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners, as a sacrifice for sin, and as a propitiation of the wrath of God toward sinners. We affirm the death,

burial, and bodily resurrection of Christ as essential to the Gospel. We further affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord over His church, and that Christ will reign over the entire cosmos in fulfillment of the Father's gracious purpose.

We deny that the substitutionary character of Christ's atonement for sin can be compromised without serious injury to the Gospel or denied without repudiating the Gospel. We further deny that Jesus Christ is visible only in weakness, rather than in power, Lordship, or royal reign, or, conversely, that Christ is visible only in power, and never in weakness.

Article VIII

We affirm that salvation is all of grace, and that the Gospel is revealed to us in doctrines that most faithfully exalt God's sovereign purpose to save sinners and in His determination to save his redeemed people by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to His glory alone.

We deny that any teaching, theological system, or means of presenting the Gospel that denies the centrality of God's grace as His gift of unmerited favor to sinners in Christ can be considered true doctrine.

Article IX

We affirm that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's means of bringing salvation to His people, that sinners are commanded to believe the Gospel, and that the church is commissioned to preach and teach the Gospel to all nations.

We deny that evangelism can be reduced to any program, technique, or marketing approach. We further deny that salvation can be separated from repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Article X

We affirm that salvation comes to those who truly believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We deny that there is salvation in any other name, or that saving faith can take any form other than conscious belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving acts.

Article XI

We affirm the continuity of God's saving purpose and the Christological unity of the covenants. We further affirm a basic distinction between law and grace, and that the true Gospel exalts Christ's atoning work as the consummate and perfect fulfillment of the law.

We deny that the Bible presents any other means of salvation than God's gracious acceptance of sinners in Christ.

Article XII

We affirm that sinners are justified only through faith in Christ, and that justification by faith alone is both essential and central to the Gospel.

We deny that any teaching that minimizes, denies, or confuses justification by faith alone can be considered true to the Gospel. We further deny that any teaching that separates regeneration and faith is a true rendering of the Gospel.

Article XIII

We affirm that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers by God's decree alone, and that this righteousness, imputed to the believer through faith alone, is the only righteousness that justifies.

We deny that such righteousness is earned or deserved in any manner, is infused within the believer to any degree, or is realized in the believer through anything other than faith alone.

Article XIV

We affirm that the shape of Christian discipleship is congregational, and that God's purpose is evident in

faithful Gospel congregations, each displaying God's glory in the marks of authentic ecclesiology.

We deny that any Christian can truly be a faithful disciple apart from the teaching, discipline, fellowship, and accountability of a congregation of fellow disciples, organized as a Gospel church. We further deny that the Lord's Supper can faithfully be administered apart from the right practice of church discipline.

Article XV

We affirm that evangelical congregations are to work together in humble and voluntary cooperation and that the spiritual fellowship of Gospel congregations bears witness to the unity of the Church and the glory of God.

We deny that loyalty to any denomination or fellowship of churches can take precedence over the claims of truth and faithfulness to the Gospel.

Article XVI

We affirm that the Scripture reveals a pattern of complementary order between men and women, and that this order is itself a testimony to the Gospel, even as it is the gift of our Creator and Redeemer. We also affirm that all Christians are called to service within the body of Christ, and that God has given to both men and women important and strategic roles within the home, the church, and the society. We further affirm that the teaching office of the church is assigned only to those men who are called of God in fulfillment of the biblical teachings and that men are to lead in their homes as husbands and fathers who fear and love God.

We deny that the distinction of roles between men and women revealed in the Bible is evidence of mere cultural conditioning or a manifestation of male oppression or prejudice against women. We also deny that this biblical distinction of roles excludes women from meaningful ministry in Christ's kingdom. We further deny that any church can confuse these issues without damaging its witness to the Gospel.

Article XVII

We affirm that God calls his people to display his glory in the reconciliation of the nations within the Church, and that God's pleasure in this reconciliation is evident in the gathering of believers from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. We acknowledge that the staggering magnitude of injustice against African-Americans in the name of the Gospel presents a special opportunity for displaying the repentance, forgiveness, and restoration promised in the Gospel. We further affirm that evangelical Christianity in America bears a unique responsibility to demonstrate this reconciliation with our African-American brothers and sisters.

We deny that any church can accept racial prejudice, discrimination, or division without betraying the Gospel.

Article XVIII

We affirm that our only sure and confident hope is in the sure and certain promises of God. Thus, our hope is an eschatological hope, grounded in our confidence that God will bring all things to consummation in a manner that will bring greatest glory to his own name, greatest preeminence to his Son, and greatest joy for his redeemed people.

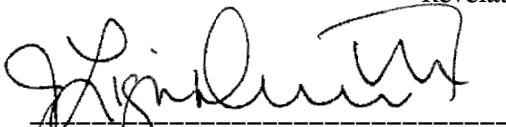
We deny that we are to find ultimate fulfillment or happiness in this world, or that God's ultimate purpose is for us to find merely a more meaningful and fulfilling life in this fallen world. We further deny that any teaching that offers health and wealth as God's assured promises in this life can be considered a true gospel.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

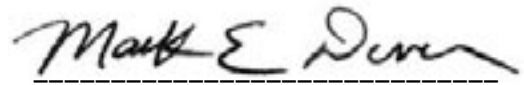
I Corinthians 15:1-4

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

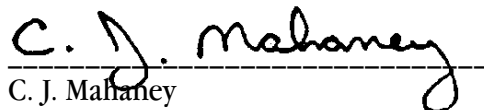
Revelation 14:6-7



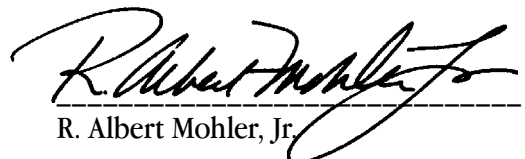
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