
MAY 2019

PLANTING INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES

Antioch was strategically planted in 40214 with a passion for all peoples, and multi-ethnic diversity has looked different in different seasons. In the early days, Antioch was saturated with diversity, requiring the translation of our gatherings into multiple languages (such as English, Swahili, Arabic, and Nepali). It was a beautiful little foretaste of Revelation 7:9-11:

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

We are proud of this part of our story, and maintain the vision that sparked it. This is reflected in our Mission Convictions that declare: “Because God is redeeming a church from every nation, tribe, people, and language, our mission is global in scope,” and “Because God pursues those who are far from him, we value mission among unreached and forgotten people.”

Amazingly, in today’s globalized world, these convictions apply not just overseas, but right here in our city. Therefore we will continue to strive for ethnic diversity in and through our church, keeping in mind the diversity that is reflected in our neighborhood. According to our community survey, that diversity looks something like this:

White - 66.6%
Black - 17.6%
Hispanic - 7.5%
Asian - 3.4%
Other - 4.4%

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However, being passionate about all peoples isn't just a matter of who attends our church. In fact, an untempered pursuit of multi-ethnic church can sometimes force people to assimilate to a foreign language and culture, hindering the advance of the gospel among their people group. It can also leave unsatisfied people's deep longing to sing and receive the Word in their heart language. This is why one of our Mission Convictions reads, "Because God communicates the gospel to us in ways we can clearly understand, we are sensitive to native language and culture."

During those early days of Antioch, a number of Nepali refugees came to faith in Christ. Eventually, in their longing to sing and receive the Word in their heart language, combined with their desire to extend the good news to other Nepalis, they decided to form their own congregation, which they called Asa Church. Antioch helped them to do so, and continued to invest in them, especially through relationship with their pastor, ND Lama. At that time, however, Asa did not take many of the steps needed to realize healthy longevity in their autonomy.



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Later, when Antioch merged with New Heights Baptist Church and moved into our current facility, Asa approached us about “integrating” back into Antioch. They had become aware of the difficulty in effectively discipling their children, especially as those children were growing up more American than Nepali. Antioch welcomed them back as “Asa Fellowship” (instead of Asa Church) and launched a process of integrating over the course of several years. Not long afterward, ND Lama stepped down as pastor and was sent to Nepal as one of our distributed members. That left Asa with no indigenous pastor, and fully under the oversight of Antioch pastors.

Rather than Antioch pastors making all the decisions about Asa’s future, we instead poured our effort into raising up a plurality of indigenous pastors for Asa. That would then allow both Antioch and Asa pastors to make future decisions together. After a long development process, this past October we had the pleasure of installing Chaturman Rai and Maita Biswa as Asa pastors. They have been serving faithfully and effectively since that time.

That meant we were finally ready to discuss the future of integration as a multi-ethnic plurality of pastors. Last month, we met as the full counsel of pastors and to our delight discovered a deep sense of unity and clarity. We believe that the best course of action moving forward is for Antioch to help Asa become a healthy, multiplying, autonomous church. This desire was expressed first by Asa pastors, and then affirmed by Antioch pastors.

What exactly does this mean? Here’s what we know so far:

Asa wants to maintain distinct Southern Baptist identity, as they often feel alone amidst numerous charismatic Nepali denominations. That means we will help them constitute as a Southern Baptist church in partnership with LRBA and KBC.

Asa will continue to meet for their Sunday Gatherings in our facility for the foreseeable future.

We will continue to celebrate Integrated Gatherings quarterly, only now as a mother church and daughter church rather than as one church with two fellowships.

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This is a sacred moment in the life of our church. It is also timely. Consider how in our recent Disciple Training we emphasized that discipleship is not about creating dependents, but teaching people to obey everything Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20)—helping them to grow into “mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that [they] may no longer be children” (Ephesians 4:13-14). Our desire is to see Asa mature to the extent that they may fruitfully pass on that which they have received from us, and flourish making disciples and planting churches of their own.

Our expectation and desire is that in the future God will allow us the privilege of planting more international churches, and to do so with the help of existing international churches, such as Asa and Iglesia Bautista Senda de Luz (a local Cuban church with whom we have asked for help within our Food Pantry). As we journey alongside Asa to help them establish autonomy in this season, we should be lifting our eyes toward the next opportunity, and lifting our prayers for God to show us among whom he desires to birth a new church.

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Discuss

What is your initial reaction to this news? Take a moment to process together.

Read Revelation 7:9-12 and then answer the three questions we used in Disciple Training:

What does this passage teach us about God?

What does this passage teach us about people?

What does this passage teach us to obey?

We live in an age of the “already-not yet” of God’s salvation. From this glimpse of future glory in Revelation 7, what aspects of it can we experience here already? What aspects can we not yet experience?

What do you enjoy about multi-ethnic diversity in the church? What about it is a struggle for you?

How can you be a participant (and not just an observer) in our church’s aim to display Christ among all peoples, beginning here in 40214?

Pray

Take time to pray together using the model from Disciple Training:

Adoration - Adore God for who he is, especially as reflected in Revelation 7:9-12

Confession - Confess to God your struggles and limitations when it comes to multi-ethnic diversity in the church

Thanksgiving - Give God thanks for what has done, is doing, and will do in Asa

Supplication - Pray for Asa in their journey toward healthy autonomy, and ask God to allow us the privilege of planting another international church

Reflect

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FAMILY GROUPS ON MISSION

Just as we have been learning in our journey through Genesis, God is after the holistic development of our church culture: head, hands, and heart. And the heartbeat of Antioch's culture is our Family Groups. In this season of Antioch, what we need most in our groups isn't just deeper times in the Word and prayer (the head), and not just deeper involvement in mission (the hands). Although both are important, what we must be after is growing, soulful relationships with God, his people, and his world—the heart which tethers the head and hands together.

So as we think about this new season of developing the culture of our Family Groups, we might ask the question, why do things need to change? The simplest answer is, because we're not where we used to be. Of course, we are building on the foundation that's been laid, but we are no longer a church plant in form or function. In the past, the pastors could be intimately involved in every single Family Group. That explains why:

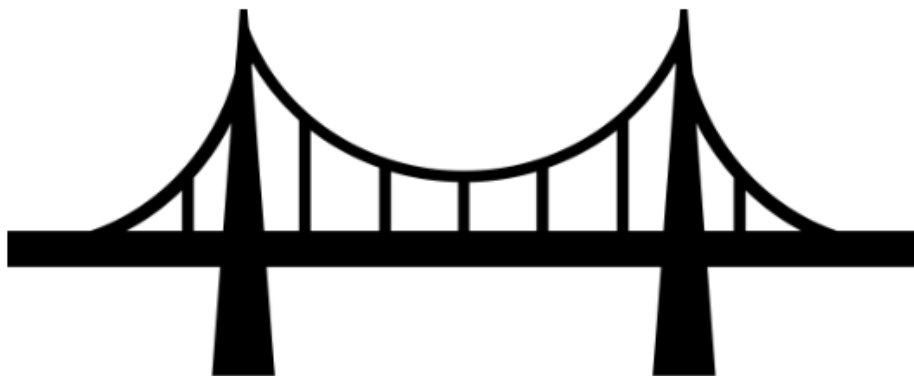
- Almost every group has been facilitated by a pastor.
- Almost every transition in leadership has been pre-determined by the pastors.
- Almost every member's placement in a group has involved the pastors.

And that makes sense in a church plant setting, where it's important to establish and maintain a clear vision for groups, and where you need those initial groups to be healthy in order to survive as a church. But in a growing church that's constantly in need of new groups, and has a growing number of members who need opportunities to lead, pastors can no longer be so intimately involved in every aspect of group life. To do so actually stifles the growth rather than encourages it.



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That leads to another important image that's helpful in casting vision for the future of Antioch Family Groups: a bridge.



A bridge is a wonder of engineering because it combines both strength and flexibility. Strong pillars are laid deep into the river's bedrock. Then cables are bound to the pillars and roadway. This allows the bridge to move and flex according to weather and weight.

Here's one of the ways this is helpful to our vision and culture of Family Groups. It wouldn't be wise or faithful to the Scriptures to suddenly pull all the pastors out of group life. So, here are some ways this transition will play out over time:

- The norm no longer being pastors as facilitators (although there will be exceptions at times).
- Providing training and accountability through things like Family Group Leader Celebrations, clearer guidelines (such as job descriptions for each role), and oversight (such as a deacon or pastor who oversees group life).
- Allowing Family Group leaders to have more ownership in selecting new leaders. For example, going forward, if facilitators are to have responsibility in developing their seconds, then the facilitators need to have a voice in determining who will be their seconds.
- Allowing members more freedom in their own placement and transition within Family Groups. Of course, the pastors can't be completely unengaged in directing people, nor do we want to encourage a culture of flippantly jumping from one group another without good reason. But in a growing church, the more we try to be intimately involved in all placement and transitions, the more unmanageable it will be (especially for mostly non-staff pastors), and the more it may feel like micromanagement to people who are new to Antioch.

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In light of such changes, it might be appropriate to ask at this point, “Won’t groups end up looking differently than we might want them to?” The answer is yes. If you give more flexibility and freedom to Family Groups in order to let them grow and multiply, they won’t all turn out looking exactly the same. That might be kind of a scary thing. We don’t want to lose our identity as a church. But more importantly, we don’t want to lose our confidence in Christ, the true Chief Shepherd of Antioch. When we seek to control, we are being led by our fear rather than by our Savior.

So how do we move forward, both trusting Jesus and also desiring to build a healthy culture of groups in this next season of Antioch? It takes us back to the bridge image. We maintain strong, immovable pillars in our groups, and combine them with flexible cables. Here are some of those pillars—you can think of them as three groups of three: 3 leadership roles, 3 legs, and 3 rhythms.

3 Leadership Roles

Keep in mind, when we say Family Group leaders, we aren’t just referring to facilitators—all three roles are critical leadership roles: facilitators, seconds, and hosts. Also keep in mind, each role is filled by a male and a female—either a couple, or two singles, or a single and a couple. So a Family Group’s leaders aren’t just two people, but (in most cases) six people.

Perhaps the most important clarification for all Family Group leadership roles is their ultimate goal: not to be perfect facilitators, seconds, or hosts, but for the group leaders and members to be conformed more and more into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). If the ultimate goal is to be perfect facilitators, seconds, or hosts, then none of us will meet that goal, and we will be continual failures. Furthermore, when we fail to qualify for a given role, or we need to step down from a role, we will also consider ourselves failures. Instead, what we need to see is that sometimes our conformity to the image of Christ demands we step into a leadership role, and sometimes it demands we step out of it.

If our conformity to Christ is the ultimate goal, then here are a few implications:

- Becoming a facilitator does not mean a person is guaranteed or required to remain a facilitator indefinitely.
- Becoming a second does not mean a person is guaranteed or required to become a facilitator, or to remain a second indefinitely.
- Becoming a host does not mean a person is guaranteed or required to remain a host indefinitely.

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That then leads us to the important question of what qualifies someone for a leadership role. It's helpful to think of it in five general categories:

- 1) Character - This is the most important qualification of all: the person is abiding in Christ (John 15:1-17) and embodying the Bible's description of a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- 2) Calling - This is the sense that the person has a desire from the Holy Spirit (discerned and affirmed in community) to take on a particular role.
- 3) Competency - This is the ability to lead to the extent demanded by a given role.
- 4) Chemistry - This is not only healthy interpersonal skills, but also the peace cultivated among the group's leaders and members.
- 5) Capacity - This is the ability to consistently fulfill the requirements of a role in a given season.

This may seem overwhelming qualifications for a volunteer role—who is sufficient for these things?! But the point is not to raise an impossible bar, but to show that, once again, in a given season our conformity to the image of Christ sometimes means we are to strive for a leadership role, and sometimes it means we are free to focus elsewhere.

Now let's take a closer look at the three leadership roles themselves:

- 1) Facilitators - Facilitators are responsible for the overall function and health of the Family Group (they don't just facilitate discussion). It might be helpful to compare their role with the role of parents in a family:

They are concerned with nourishing healthy Christians in the context of loving relationships where they can grow and flourish.

They don't do everything for everyone, especially as the members of the group grow in maturity. Parents who do that actually hinder their children's maturity. They are leading, but doing that in large part by delegating, coaching, helping people to resolve their differences, providing a safe place for people to try and fail, etc.

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- Their goal isn't to keep their group the same forever. Parents live in the tension of wanting to keep their children forever and wanting them to grow and launch out on their own and thrive and have their own children. Facilitators embrace the tension of cultivating a sense of family, while also encouraging their leaders and members toward seeding into other groups and branching into new groups.
- They intentionally invest in their seconds and hosts. Parents understand that the oldest children in their family have great leadership potential, but that their development can easily be neglected in light of their younger siblings' needs. So facilitators take advantage of the fleeting opportunity to strengthen their leaders.

2) Seconds - Seconds are responsible for coming alongside the facilitators to learn how to facilitate a group. They are to help the facilitators only to the extent that the facilitators ask them for help. They are not to slowly take over facilitating unless guided by the facilitator. At the same time, the facilitator must be actively apprenticing them. To continue the family analogy, it might be helpful to compare the seconds' role with that of receiving premarital counseling or pre-parenting discipleship from an older couple:

They are being invited into a "home" to learn. But that doesn't mean they're automatically going to take over the family. In order to be good leaders, they must first prove to be good followers. They are eager to learn and expectant of investment from their disciplers (facilitators). However, they realize that their disciplers aren't perfect, and that a healthy learning process includes observing both things they will want to emulate and things they won't want to emulate if given their own "family" someday.

3) Hosts - Hosts are responsible to provide a healthy environment for Christians to grow and for lost people to explore. It's tempting to think of hosts simply as people with nice homes who are willing to open them up to others. But they are so much more than that:

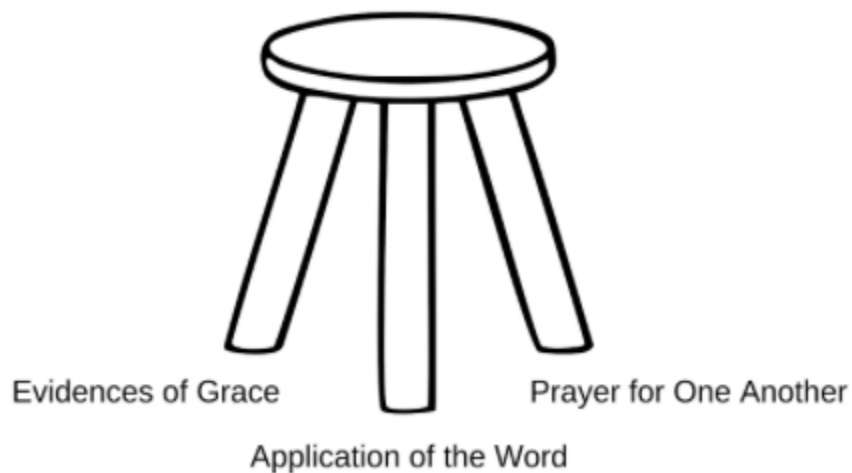
Although having a reasonably-sized space is important (think of the church at Philippi meeting at Lydia's home in Acts 16:11-15), what is even more necessary is a heart full of hospitality, as described in 1 Peter 4:8-10: "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace". A lovely meeting space doesn't matter much if people (and their children!) don't feel loved and welcomed. Thus, hosts seek to provide that kind of environment as much as it depends on them, and also seek to cultivate a spirit of hospitality from the other group members.

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- Hospitality, as the word is used in Romans 12:13, carries the sense of affection toward strangers. In our post-Christian context, one of the most compelling aspects of the church is its sense of community and family. Where lost people are no longer naturally drawn to public church services, they are actually open to spiritual exploration in the context of loving relationships. Hosts, therefore, are key leaders in the mission of our Family Groups (and the wider church). They take the lead in literally making room for lost people in our groups. But they also take the lead in figuratively making room by reminding the group to invite new people, helping the group to be aware of the unique needs of visitors, and exemplifying the grace of bearing with any “non-Christian” behavior from visitors.

3 Legs

The second of the three pillars in our Family Groups are the 3 Legs. These are non-negotiable components of a group’s normal gathering. Think of them like the three legs of a stool:



1) Evidences of Grace - This is the group’s expression of specific ways each member has experienced the grace of God in the past week. It is not simply the “best thing” that happened to a person. Because God is relating to us with grace and reminding us of the gospel in all things (think soulfulness), an evidence of grace can come packaged in something really great, something really terrible, or something really normal.

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2) Application of the Word - This is the group's processing and application of the Bible to one another's head, hands, and heart. Each week's particular passage of Scripture usually comes from the passage of the most recent sermon. Although the sermon does inform the processing of the passage, this leg of Family Groups is for processing and applying the Bible, not necessarily for discussing the sermon. That said, this leg is also not meant to be a Bible study simply for gaining knowledge, but instead an application of the Word to one another's head, hands, and heart. This is why facilitators guide discussion rather than lecture, and also why we now provide discussion questions to help facilitators in that process.

3) Prayer for One Another - This is the group's response to what God has done in the Evidences of Grace and the Application of the Word. It is the most easily neglected leg, but perhaps the most important because it leads the group individually and collectively back to the only giver of grace and source of transformation: God. Ideally, prayer for one another is intimate and specific rather than always general. That means group-wide corporate prayer should also be balanced with times of prayer in men-only and women-only groups. This cultivates what was just described above: a space where confession and prayer can be more intimate and specific.

In theory, a group would spend a third of their time on each of the three legs. However, that will rarely be the case, especially as facilitators are sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. That said, just like trying to sit on a stool with uneven legs, weeks of consistently neglecting any of the three legs can lead to an unhealthy, imbalanced group. Facilitators, then, need to give attention to the overarching balance of the legs in the life of their group.

If the three legs are like pillars in Family Groups, then there are other components that are like cables. These things require intentionality, but are negotiable according to the unique expression of the group, and as long as they do not consistently neglect the three legs:

- Time - Groups may choose their meeting time according to what works best for their members.
- Meals - Groups may choose to share and coordinate a meal each week, or not.
- Snacks - Groups who choose not to share a meal each week may coordinate snacks each week, or not.
- Childcare - Groups may choose how they handle childcare, as long as it coincides with Antioch Kids policies and procedures.
- Rest - Groups may choose to take a week off when deemed necessary.

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3 Rhythms

The third of the three pillars in our Family Groups are the 3 Rhythms. They are non-negotiable types of gatherings that groups have on a quarterly basis (at least).

1) Normal - These gatherings are described above as characterized by the three legs.

2) Celebration - These gatherings are breaks from the three legs in order to celebrate together in some way. This can be for a specific occasion or holiday, or it can just be for fun and enjoyment of one another.

3) Mission - These gatherings are intentional times for the group to focus outward. This might include serving together at an Antioch event (such as Food Pantry or a soccer tournament), hosting a neighborhood block party, going prayer-walking together, attending a neighborhood event with missional intentionality (such as Beechmont's Festival of Flowers or Americana's World Festival at Iroquois Park), ministering to the needs of a group member who cannot attend, etc. However, rather than simply being event-driven, the mission rhythm of a group should also be woven into its normal and celebration gatherings. Consider the following ways:

Making room for lost people in our groups

Being mindful of lost people already in our groups (often this means children)

Pursuing lost people as a group (especially through consistent, intentional prayer)

Sending group members on mission into everyday life with a sense of obedience and accountability (similar to the spirit of the benediction at Sunday gatherings)

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Discuss

- What initial thoughts and questions do you have from this chapter?
- Read Romans 8:29-30. How does it change things if the ultimate goal of serving as a Family Group leader is a person's conformity to the image of Christ?
- How do more and healthier Family Groups improve Antioch's effectiveness on mission in our neighborhood?
- These changes mean we need to actively identify more Family Group leaders, and also that people need to make known their desire to potentially lead. Are any of you considering the idea of one day serving as a facilitator, second, or host?

Pray

- Pray for God to use all these things to conform us individually and collectively into the image of Christ
- Pray for the pastors as we are equipping others to lead
- Pray for God to raise up more groups and leaders
- Pray that God would help us make room for more people in our groups, especially people who don't yet know Christ

Reflect

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REACHING OUT THROUGH SOCCER

Toward the end of the Sabbath Year we narrowed down to a handful of potential pathways for Antioch to “increase its commitment to Beechmont/Iroquois”. Each of them were exciting ways “for Antioch to meet real needs as a means of advancing the Great Commission and making disciples of Jesus Christ”. Yet we also considered these with our limitations in mind, remembering that we simply cannot (and aren’t supposed to) do everything as a small church. That led us to the climactic question,

If we could give ourselves to only one pathway of outreach to our neighborhood, what would it be? What two? What three?

The top response, by far, was using the soccer field. And this makes sense in light of the facility and grounds that God has given us to steward, especially since soccer was the sport our neighbors mentioned most when we conducted the community survey.

With this in mind, we as pastors have spent time considering what seemed like the biggest questions in order to take next steps: who will lead this outreach, with whom should we partner, and what needs to be done to prepare the field? Over the past several months, we have gained clarity in those answers, but not necessarily in the ways we expected. We found ourselves thinking about soccer on a large scale: things like major renovations to the field and ways we can partner to pull off tournaments and leagues. The reality is, we’re at a place as a church where we’re just trying to keep up with our growth and maintain our facilities and grounds. That doesn’t mean soccer has to wait, only that we are wise to scale it down.



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Rather than being disappointed by this, we should remember Jesus' teaching about his kingdom. In Matthew 13:31-32 we read,

31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

One of the mysterious characteristics of God's kingdom is that it often comes in small, subtle ways. This way, we can't take credit for it and the glory belongs to God. However, when we use the language of "reaching," whether reaching our neighborhood or reaching the nations, we are usually thinking on a large scale. Indeed, God's aim is to reach the neighborhoods and the nations through us, but he most often does that according to his kingdom principle of small seeds faithfully sown. In his time and his way, he then brings the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7).

This applies not only in our approach to soccer, but to all the ministries of Antioch Church and all the spaces of our individual lives. We have a high value for "intentional gospel relationships," but we can only establish and maintain so many of them. This means we have to be constantly in step with the Spirit, attuned to the people in whom he is working so that we can join him there. What does it profit us to have a soccer outreach to hundreds of people if we're too overwhelmed to relate to the "persons of peace" among them?

So, on Saturday, September 28th from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM we are going to kick off soccer outreach by offering a morning of training and play for kids ages 4-9. This will be a practical and easy way to serve our immediate neighborhood and the wider South End, capitalizing on a soccer movement that is already happening here. The sport is growing in Louisville and we want to engage people in areas they already have an interest in, but may not have an outlet for. We'll keep it small to begin with, and focused on engaging families and supporting needs.

Don't like soccer? That's ok! There will be opportunities to engage with our neighbors and serve in other areas as the kids are playing. While they're visiting with us, we hope to build bridges to new families and serve them while they're with us (such as setting up the field, running a first aid booth, providing water, etc.). Following the event, we want to invite the families to an end of year banquet that will celebrate soccer and share a vision of what soccer might look like for 2020 at Antioch.

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Discuss

What is your initial reaction to this news? Take a moment to process together.

Has sports or a camp ever had an impact in your life? Do you remember any relationships that made a difference during those times?

During World War 1 on Christmas Day soldiers from England and Germany laid down arms to engage each other in a soccer game during a brief truce to celebrate the holiday. Mahatma Gandhi used soccer in South Africa to begin breaking down race relations. Didier Drogba, an Ivory Coast soccer player, along with his teammates helped end a 5-year civil war in 2017. Why do sports have such a big impact on culture? What are some examples of athletes impacting culture in the US? In Louisville?

Read Matthew 13:31-32. What does this teach us about God's kingdom? How does it inform our approach to "reaching" the neighborhood and the nations?

What are some ways you (individually and as a family group) could have an impact on September 28th?

Pray

Pray for the community and our neighborhoods, that we could open doors and build bridges through soccer, leading to relationships with people among whom God is already working. Pray for the preparations that are taking place leading up to September 28th and the conversations that will take place on that day. Pray that a foundation will be laid that can be built upon going into more effort in 2020.

Reflect

AUGUST 2019

SENDING GLOBALLY

From our earliest days, Antioch has been a sending church. Over much of the past ten years, up to 20% of our covenant members have been intentionally distributed on mission around the world. Currently, we have 16 members serving in places “where Christ has not been named” (Romans 15:20). That’s 15% of our church! This is an incredible privilege that should be celebrated.

At the same time, it is an incredible responsibility to send them, care for them, and receive them back “in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 6). It is tempting to send anyone who wants to go anywhere to do anything, trusting a missions organization to fully prepare them, care for them, and receive them back. However, God calls the local church to take the lead in shepherding those who are sent. Therefore, we must steward this privilege and responsibility well.

In the beginning of Acts 13, while the church at Antioch was fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit revealed to them that Barnabas and Paul were to be sent out. After more fasting and prayer, the church did so. Note that even the zealous Apostle, Paul, didn’t demand to be sent, claiming an individually-discerned sense of calling. No, the calling was revealed in the context of the church community, and therefore the commissioning and sending were done in the context of the church community.

Then, at the end of Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their journey and gave an account of all that God had done, and “remained no little time with the disciples.” They intentionally re-entered the life and ministry of the church. Throughout the book of Acts and Paul’s letters, the role of the church in Paul’s missionary journeys cannot be understated.

With the Antioch of the Bible as the example to the Antioch of Southside Drive, we should strive to distribute our members in the same manner. That means stewarding our people well in the three major phases of sending: pre-field, on-field, and post-field.



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To that end, the pastors have put strategic guidelines in place for sending members globally. These were designed to bring clarity and accountability to both the sending church and the distributed members. Most of the guidelines are summed up in documents titled “Antioch Sending Process” and “Antioch Sending Covenant”. The Sending Process gives the specific steps for being sent globally by Antioch. There are three primary stages in this process: identification, exploration, and development.

Antioch Sending Process

Identification

- The candidate is a covenant member and active participant in a Family Group;
- makes known to the Sending Deacon his or her desire to be sent;
- affirmed by Family Group facilitators and Sending Deacon as ready for Exploration stage

Exploration

- The candidate completes the Antioch Sending Process Contract;
- recruits an Advocate;
- completes an assessment interview with a pastor, the Sending Deacon, and their Advocate

Development

- The candidate receives his or her Personal Development Plan;
- completes his or her Personal Development Plan with the assistance of the Sending Deacon and Advocate;
- is unanimously affirmed by the pastors to be sent

Ideally, prior to commissioning at a Sunday Gathering, the distributed member would have been a covenant member for 2.5 years, participated in the 5 identity trainings, and heartily agreed to the Antioch Sending Covenant. That covenant includes the following:

Antioch Sending Covenant

Antioch’s Responsibilities

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- Praying for distributed members and the people they serve in Sunday Gatherings, Family Groups, Missionary Care Team, and our households.
- Overseeing and cultivating the effectiveness of Advocates.
- Providing on-field care visits with the goal of one per term. Stateside visits and urgent needs will be taken into consideration as visits are planned.
- Being available as Pastors and Advocates to provide care and counsel. Advocates will communicate any such requests to the pastors.
- Maintaining sensitivity to secure communication.
- Providing logistical support and opportunities to report during stateside visits.
- Providing the ongoing financial support agreed upon prior to commissioning.

Distributed Member's Responsibilities

Recognizing and relating to Antioch pastors as having a significant, ongoing place at the table in your life.

Continuing to participate in the life of Antioch through relationships, prayer, and giving of resources.

Responding in a timely manner to communication from Advocates, the Deacon of Sending, and pastors.

Sending monthly updates for the sake of ongoing relationship and prayer.

Maintaining open and honest communication with Advocates.

Spending $\frac{1}{3}$ of their stateside visit in Louisville in order to participate at Antioch.

Advocates

While reading through the above documents, you probably noticed the word “Advocate” mentioned several times. The role of Advocate is the key to maintaining a reciprocal relationship between the sending church and distributed member. The Advocate is responsible for:

- walking through the Sending Process with the missionary candidate
- being commissioned with the distributed member
- regularly communicating with their distributed member
- organizing care packages when possible
- providing updates and prayer at Missionary Care Team each month
- joining on-field care visits when possible
- helping with logistical support and debriefing during stateside visits

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The goal is to leverage the Sending Process to form a deep relationship between the Advocate and candidate, one that will then withstand the challenges of a long-distance, overseas relationship. Because of how significant the role of Advocate is to healthy sending, we now commission the Advocate alongside the distributed member. If you have a desire to impact the nations through sending, then serving as an Advocate is one of the most valuable ways to do that.

Sent and Released

We acknowledge that there will be some Antioch members who desire to go globally, but may not be able to commit to all that the Sending Process or Sending Covenant requires. They may be in Louisville for seminary and have a stronger connection to a church in their hometown. They may be headed to a place with an established church where they could be a member. They may want to join a ministry or partner with an organization that does not align with Antioch's vision of sending. Being sent by Antioch is not for everyone.

In light of this, we want to clarify two basic pathways for becoming a member who has been "distributed" to the nations: sent and released.

DISTRIBUTED MEMBERS



Sent



Released

Being "sent" from Antioch means all that has been described thus far in this chapter, especially in the Sending Process and Sending Covenant. The distributed member who is sent has committed to an ongoing, reciprocal relationship with Antioch.

Being "released" from Antioch may sound negative, but it simply means that the obligations of the Sending Covenant don't apply. There is no expectation for an ongoing, reciprocal relationship. Instead of being commissioned, the released member is prayed for at their final Sunday Gathering and free to pursue opportunities with Antioch's blessing.

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Discuss

Read Acts 13:1-3 and 14:24-28. How do you think these two experiences impacted the church at Antioch? Paul and Barnabas?

What questions do you have about Antioch's Sending Process, Sending Covenant, Advocate role, or two pathways (Sent and Released)?

How does this chapter challenge your idea of the relationship between church and missionary?

Are you interested in being sent globally?

Are you interested in serving as an Advocate?

Pray

Pray for our Advocates and their relationships with our distributed members

Pray for discernment and clarity for those wrestling with a desire to go globally

Pray for God to call more people at Antioch to be sent, and for Advocates to walk alongside them (see Luke 10:2)

Pray for our church's growth in sending well (pre-field, on-field, and post-field)

Reflect