

Mission of Christ Network¹ (A “New Kid on the Block”)

It’s All about Intentional Gospel Proclamation!

Kermit W. (Butch) Almstedt

Abstract: The following article provides the reader with a glimpse into an exciting new, laity led, mission society—called Mission of Christ Network (or MCN)—that has but a single, yet critically important, purpose that is about intentional Gospel proclamation, under a long-term strategy of involvement with connection to local Christian worshipping communities. MCN as the reader will discover, will seek to achieve its purpose by **identifying** opportunities for intentional Gospel witness; **matching** those opportunities to individuals and/or organizations who want to become involved; **training** those who will go; **supporting** those involved in the Gospel outreach through funding and other required needs; and providing for on-field and post-field **discipleship**. MCN, through a networking philosophy of bringing together best practices, will seek to multiply the number of individuals and/or groups actively involved in furthering our Lord’s command to bring the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ alone to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world. Read on.

Introduction . . . What underlies this “new kid on the block?”

In his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Michael Green discussed the presence of “what one might loosely call ‘professional Christian propagandists,’” i.e., the apostles and other “roving missionaries sent out by the churches and supported by the gifts of the faithful.” He then goes on to state (referencing another church historian) that “we cannot hesitate to believe that the great mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries.”² The author further posits the fact that “Christianity was from its inception a lay movement . . . as early as Acts 8 we find that it is not the apostles but the ‘amateur’ missionaries, the men evicted from Jerusalem as a result of the persecution which followed Stephen’s martyrdom who took the gospel with them wherever they went.”³

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They were evangelists, just as much as any apostle was. . . It was an unselfconscious effort This (would have occurred) most often not (through) formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls They went everywhere gossiping the gospel; they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing.⁴

In sum, as the same author opined in another of his books, *Thirty Years That Changed the World*, as to how the Gospel spread: It spread

most of all by the enthusiastic witness of nameless people who loved Jesus and could not keep quiet about him. It was a people movement, this early Christianity. That is why it succeeded. It did not depend on big names, but on little people who had a big God and were not afraid to put him to the test as they went out in his name. And if that is not a challenge and a rebuke to the modern church, I do not know what is.⁵

And that is what Mission of Christ is all about. A people movement! A lay-led, people movement that has its origins in the activity of the early Christian church of simply going out “to the end of the earth” engaging in intentional Gospel proclamation.⁶

The Formation of Mission of Christ Network (“MCN”) . . . How did it get started?

Eighteen or more months ago, a group of laity and church workers—all members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod—came together with a desire to establish a network of individuals, congregations, or any other entity or group with the single purpose of boldly, intentionally, and faithfully making known the light, love, and peace of Jesus Christ, by word and deed, to those who live in spiritual disbelief, darkness and despair (the “mission statement” of Mission of Christ Network). In a nutshell, MCN was formed to identify witness opportunities around the world; to encourage (and thereby multiply) participation in such opportunities to share God’s Gospel; and, to support the local Christians in their collective efforts around intentional Gospel proclamation throughout the world!

The Organization . . . What does it look like?

MCN was incorporated in the State of Texas in September of 2013 for the exclusive purpose of conducting charitable and religious activities under the corporate name of Missio Christi Network (doing business as Mission of Christ Network). In June of 2014, MCN received its 501(C)(3) exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

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MCN organized itself around a lay-led Board of Directors of like-minded and mission driven individuals. Its Board of Directors comprises members of congregations within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.⁷ MCN has an Executive Director, John Rodewald,⁸ and six operational/committee working groups chaired by persons with experience in the particular area of that working group. MCN’s Board is directly assisted in its work through a group of advisors, consisting of both laity, pastors, and other church workers with backgrounds and experiences in relevant, mission-related fields. The six operational/committee working groups are: Mission Activities (inclusive of organization of the Cornerstone Congregations),⁹ Strategic Alliances,¹⁰ Development and Advancement,¹¹ Media,¹² Administration and Finance,¹³ and Intercessory Prayer.¹⁴

MCN’s Primary Objectives . . . What are they?

MCN has four primary objectives.

1. To multiply the involvement of individuals, congregations, and organizations to accomplish intentional Gospel proclamation.

MCN will work with and through a network of congregations and other organizations and entities (both formal and informal) that will take a leadership role in advancing Gospel proclamation through mission outreach activities. The experiences of these leadership-network groups will be shared with others. The latter will then be invited to participate in mission outreach activities to learn from experienced and trained individuals, thereby expanding, i.e., multiplying, the number of people and groups involved in Gospel proclamation.

2. To identify existing barriers on mission fields to Gospel proclamation and address these barriers to carry out more effectively intentional Gospel proclamation.

MCN will accomplish this objective through “best practices” and the training of individuals and groups that go into mission fields sponsored by or associated with the network of MCN participants. MCN will rely not only on its own Board members and advisors, but also on its network partners, who bring to MCN significant experiences in Gospel proclamation, knowing the “ins and outs” of effective outreach.

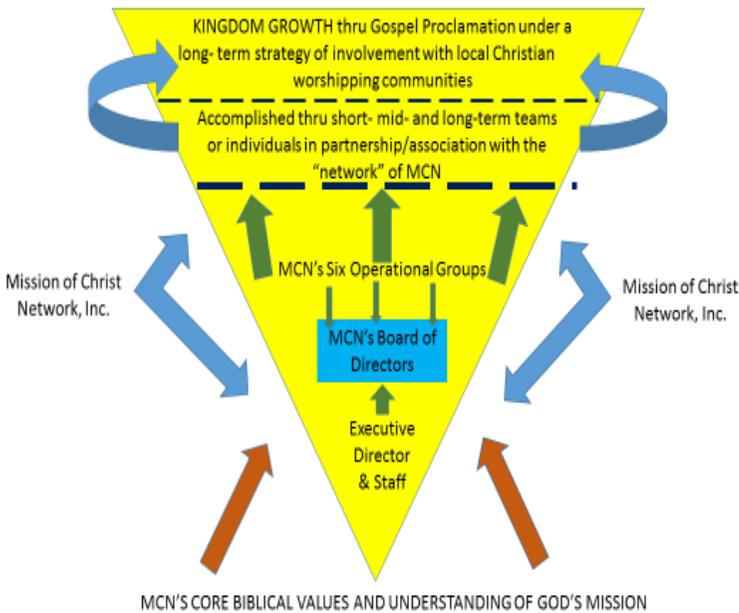
3. To establish strategic relationships and alliances, linking resources—human and financial—to mission needs.

MCN will work with existing organizations, ad-hoc groups, mission societies, and other entities (both inside the organized church and those not directly related to a particular Christian church body) that already are working in or associated with work

in a particular mission field. These organizations bring experience and expertise, i.e., “best practices,” to mission work in fields where MCN will be active in intentional Gospel proclamation. It is not the purpose of MCN to “reinvent the wheel” but to utilize the expertise and experiences of those who “have gone before” and are currently involved in “best practices” in a particular mission field or mission endeavor. MCN’s attitude is simply, “can we join with you?”

4. To pursue long-term strategies of involvement in mission fields throughout the world to accomplish intentional Gospel proclamation.

MCN will adhere to its stated objective that its work in mission fields will be undertaken (1) in conjunction with a long-term commitment of involvement in that field¹⁵ and (2) associated with local/indigenous Christian worshipping communities who share MCN’s core biblical values.



The MCN Concept in Graphic Presentation¹⁶

If one would attempt to “picture” the concept of MCN, here is what MCN would look like an inverted pyramid where all effort, i.e., the mission, is concentrated on “Kingdom growth” through intentional Gospel proclamation under a mission strategy of long-term involvement alongside local Christian worshipping communities

throughout the world. The work is undertaken through the “network” of MCN teams, individuals, partnerships, and associations supported by and through the six operational/committee working groups of the corporate MCN under the overall direction of the Executive Director (and staff when hired) of MCN under the immediate supervision of an Executive Committee of the MCN Board of Directors.

MCN’s Core Biblical Values . . . from which MCN will not deviate!

Individuals, congregations, and organizations that are involved within the network of MCN activities must share MCN’s core biblical values. First, is the understanding and acceptance, without reservation, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice. In particular, the central teachings of Holy Scripture that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, alone is the Savior of the world, and that only out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith in Him is there forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.¹⁷

Second, and in light of the above stated core belief, there are six basic understandings of the mission that underlie MCN’s work. Specifically,

- **The mission belongs to God and begins in the heart of God.** From God’s first promise that He would “take action” to save His people (Gn 3:15), to His command to Abraham “to go” (Gn 12:1–3), to His prophets who were sent throughout the Old Testament to give witness, to Christ’s command to the seventy “to go,” (Lk 10:1–3) and Christ’s command of Matthew 28:19, God is active in mission.
- **God’s mission is to and for everyone.** God’s desire is that all of mankind are to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). As such His Gospel is to be proclaimed throughout the world, with no exceptions (Lk 24:46–48; Acts 1:8).
- **God’s mission involves all Christians.** All Christians are missionaries (1 Pt 2:9). Christians are not only to live lives that glorify God (1 Pt 2:12) but are to seize every opportunity presented to share His Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ to all (1 Pt 3:15). While some may be called into the specific ministry of Word and Sacrament (the ordained), and some may be sent to accomplish specific tasks in missionary service (Acts 8:28–31)—whether witness proclamation or acts of service, all are called to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8–10).
- **God’s mission is empowered by the Holy Spirit.** Not only was the Holy Spirit active with the Father and the Son in His creation (Gn 1:2), but the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 16:7) so that mankind may receive the benefits of Jesus’ redemptive work (1 Cor 3:5–6). And, as the Holy Spirit empowered the church on the day of Pentecost to proclaim

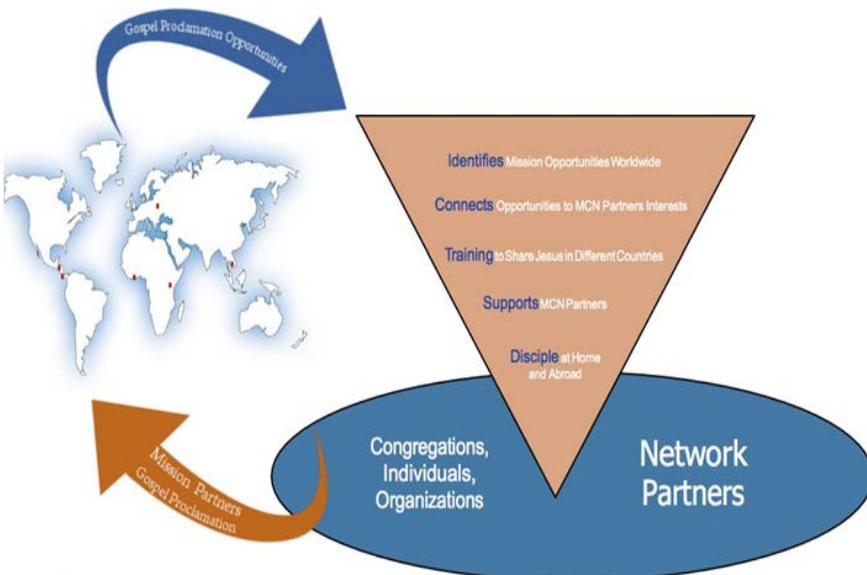
God's message (Acts 2:33), so the Holy Spirit continues to empower all believers in Christ (1 Jn 4:13).

- **God's mission is urgent.** Every second of every day, people, not knowing through faith Jesus Christ as their Savior, die an eternal death (Jn 9:4). Yet, God's desire is that all are to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).
- **God's mission must be my mission.** As Christians we must be prepared at all times to give witness (1 Pt 3:15) to the core of God's mission proclamation, i.e., John 3:16. We cannot, therefore, leave the work of God's mission to "the church" in general or to "others," for each of us is a personal ambassador for Christ to the world (2 Cor 3:2–3).

MCN's Operational Focus . . . Five active words that define MCN's activities!

Five active words encompass what MCN is about in order to accomplish its stated goal of intentional Gospel proclamation through long-term commitments of activities associated with and around local Christian worshipping communities. These words are to:

- Identify
- Connect
- Train
- Support
- Disciple



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MCN will not only search for opportunities for intentional Gospel proclamation but will be ready to listen to individuals, organizations, or any group or institution that has ideas for the involvement of the MCN network to accomplish intentional Gospel proclamation. As such, MCN will be involved in **identifying** opportunities where intentional Gospel proclamation is at the core of the mission effort.

MCN will then, once an opportunity is identified, search for and **connect** individuals, organizations, or any group that shares the core biblical values of MCN with the opportunity for intentional Gospel proclamation.

Having identified opportunities and connected individuals and/or organizations to that opportunity, MCN will offer “best practices” for its **training** of short-term teams and mid- or long-term individuals (Mission Partners) going into the mission field. Such training will be conducted by experienced missionaries who bring decades of on-the-field, practical experiences to the training session. Training around such topics as the meaning of “the mission of God”; “barriers to Gospel proclamation” and how to address them; a “cross-cultural worldview”; “engaging one’s faith”; handling of “culture shock”; and understanding “spiritual warfare” on the field, among other topics.

Then, having trained, through a “best practices” approach, MCN will provide the necessary **support** to the individuals (Mission Partners) and short-term teams sent under and through the MCN network. This will include all aspects of on-the-field support from transportation to and off the field, housing, health, and evacuation insurance and the myriad of all the necessary details that must be in place so that the Mission Partner or team can concentrate on their mission, i.e., intentional Gospel proclamation.

Finally, having identified opportunities, connected opportunities to individuals and/or organizations, trained the latter, and provided the necessary on-field support, MCN will undertake programs to **disciple** those participating in the network of MCN outreach activities both on the field and after returning from field work.

Identify, connect, train, support, and disciple are the five active words that define the ongoing activities of Mission of Christ Network.

Come join us or let MCN join you. Visit www.missionofchrist.org to learn how to connect with this lay-led mission outreach of intentional Gospel proclamation and keep current with all the activities, people, and projects associated with MCN.

Endnotes

¹ More information about MCN, with particulars about its Board, leadership teams and advisors, alliance partners, current activities, and mission endeavors may be found by going to www.missionofchrist.org.

² Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 236, 242, 243.

³ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Michael Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 194.

⁶ Acts 1:8

⁷ For information on each of the Board members, visit www.missionofchrist.org.

⁸ John A. Rodewald brings not only a commitment to intentional Gospel proclamation to his work for MCN but has a strong financial background and experience in international operations. In particular, John was a partner in a CPA and consulting firm; was a partner, CFO, COO, and CEO in a company that focused on helping non-profits raise money through direct mail and direct marketing efforts; and, most recently served as the business manager for LCMS Office of International Mission, Eurasia.

⁹ The Mission Activities Operational/Committee Working Group will identify, connect, train, support and disciple individuals for engagement with short-term mission teams and/or for mid-term and long-term mission work (referred to as Mission Partners) throughout the world. Inclusive within this operational/committee is a separate group charged with the responsibility of establishing a network of what will be called “Cornerstone Congregations” (congregations that will be encouraged to be leaders and assist in the identification and development of other congregations for participation in the MCN network). MCN, through its advisors and others associated with MCN, is blessed by a group of individuals with over 150 years of collective experience working in foreign countries. Many of the trainers for MCN are career missionaries who have been in the field themselves overseeing missionaries, and others have been in leadership roles placing and coordinating those for field work. MCN also has a team of people, who have years of experience leading short-term teams throughout the world including in the United States, to intentionally proclaim the Gospel through mercy-related and direct witness experiences.

¹⁰ The Strategic Alliance Operational/Committee Working Group will identify organizations and individuals who have expertise and experience that MCN could utilize in its tasks of identifying mission opportunities; connect mission opportunities to individuals, congregations and other groups; and train MCN-placed short-term teams and mid- and long-term individuals (called Mission Partners), thereby providing the necessary pre- and in-field support and logistics along with discipleship while on the field and post-field work.

¹¹ The Development and Advancement Operational/Committee Working Group will be responsible for the funding streams to support the primary focus of MCN, which is to place and support short-term mission teams and mid- and long-term Mission Partners of MCN, as well as the underlying organization of MCN. Along with donor identification, the Development and Advancement Operating Group will be charged with donor communication (along with the Media Operational/Committee Working Group) for the varied projects, teams, and individuals being supported by MCN.

¹² The Media Operational/Committee Working Group will facilitate communication in and around the organization. Through websites, social media, email marketing, crowd funding and online video, MCN will spread the Gospel. In addition, the Media Operating Group will assist in the training of new mission teams and Mission Partners.

¹³ The Administration and Finance Operational/Committee Working Group is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the legal status of MCN, proper state and federal filings and maintaining the minutes of all Board meetings and the financial record-keeping required as a Texas incorporated, 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation.

¹⁴ The Intercessory Prayer Team will be praying, and seeking the prayers, for all aspects of MCN. This will include MCN board members, partners, advisors, organizations within the “network” of MCN, Mission Partners on the field, short term teams, and any situation or person brought to the attention of this MCN.

¹⁵ While MCN has as one of its stated objectives long-term commitment to involvement in mission fields, such involvement may be accomplished through the sending and support of short-term mission teams under a strategy that encompasses a long-term commitment to that mission field.

¹⁶ Sharper images are available in the issue posted on the LSFM Web site (www.lsfmissiology.org). Occurrences of images in this issue that do not project the sharpest quality on the printed page are on 206, 208, 213, 327–328, 345, and 346.

¹⁷ John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; and, Acts 4:12.