

PROPOSAL: UM Missional-Evangelists (draft 7)

The Methodist movement began as a youth movement with two university graduates, John and Charles Wesley. It quickly gathered the support of adults who wanted to grow in their understanding and experience of God, living in intentional relationships defined by the three general rules and engaging in the Methodist mission to do good to the bodies and souls of their neighbors, friends and families. Below you will find a brief proposal for recovering the essence of Methodism through a new emphasis on Missional-Evangelists in the UMC

Participants: High School Graduates, College Graduates, newly retired adults. The United Methodist Church will boldly ask youth, young adults and senior adults to invest nine months or one year of their lives in ministry and mission as Missional--Evangelists.

- One year after high school
- One year after college
- One year after retirement

The Process: The core process is the Wesleyan way of mission and evangelism developed by John and Charles Wesley in England. This movement guided sincere youth and adults to join together in small groups for worship, prayer, mutual accountability and missional activities that offered Christ to the people of their local community.

The Method: Youth and adults learn best when they know that the information being learned will be needed and put into practice soon; e.g., a senior high youth is never more teachable than the two days of training as a camp counselor before the Junior High camp begins the next day. The apprenticeship model will be used to give the team members the knowledge, skill and experience need to be effective in the field.

The Schedule for Training and Service: The first three weeks engage participants in a simple formational process to provide participants with a common core understanding and experience of the basic elements of worship, prayer, bible study, journaling, visitation, asset mapping, witness and missional-evangelism.

- *Week one*—learn and practice the spiritual disciplines and the core processes of visitation, prayer, evangelism and asset mapping.
- *Week two*—begin missional-evangelism visits with instructors; participate in theological reflection group to learn process for continual adult learning.
- *Week three*—participants will become the team leader for the field work in the morning and lead the afternoon reflection groups. The staff will observe and coach as needed.

Week Four through the remaining months (nine through twelve or more): Move to the mission site, be assigned a mission companion, move into the living accommodations in the community or in homes. The team will function in a community that will visit house to house in the mission neighborhood. The mission companions, plus a local youth or adult will go door---to---door in the neighborhood, meet the people, and map the neighborhood in order for the church to know their neighbors (those who are churchd, unchuched, employed and unemployed, members of other world religions, those who are spiritually seeking but not religious, etc.). The size of the mission area will be defined in

such a way as to allow the visitation team to return and repeat visits every two to four weeks; thus creating the opportunity to build relationships, trust and meaningful communication.

After training, a typical week for the missional-evangelists would be:

- Sunday—active participation in the ministries of the host congregation where the mission is located, sharing what they have learned through their visits.
- Monday—time off for rest, laundry, shopping for food, etc.
- Tuesday through Saturday the Missional-Evangelists would follow a daily pattern similar to this:

Mornings group time for prayer, communication and receive visit assignments

Morning visits with assigned companion and local guide

Lunch at “home church” or in the field

After lunch the entire group of missional-evangelists will meet for prayer, debriefing the morning, recording the information learned about neighbors, reflect on the needs they encountered and the prayers they prayed, the questions they were asked and how they answered, learn new skills in prayer and apologetics.

Break time mid-afternoon

Late afternoon each companion team would participate in after school literacy programs. (We know that children who read at a 5th grade level or above are 70% more likely to stay in school and not go to jail.

Evening meal

After the evening meal, the companion team will lead Bible studies for small groups in the neighborhood or in the local church. In the neighborhood, the goal is basic Bible knowledge and evangelism. In the local church the goal is to teach the scriptures in context and help the church members know their neighbors and their needs.

Final Month for Teaching Others and Debriefing

The team members in their final month of service would serve as mentors and guides for the new team members coming in; introducing the new team members to the people in the neighborhood where the visit, pray, witness, teach and lead.

Funding

Each Missional--Evangelist and their family (and local congregation an option) is expected to bring \$400 per month with them to the time of service. The host church will provide housing, guidance, and insurance for the volunteers. Those who cannot raise the \$400 per month will not be turned away.

Appendix 1: Love, Attentive Listening, Prayer and Asset Mapping

Love, attentive listening, prayer and asset mapping are at the heart of missional evangelism. The goal is to know the people, love them with the love of Christ, and build relationships.

Asset mapping is an authentic way to connect with the neighborhood and connect the neighbors with one another. To do this efficiently, the evangelists will employ a missional companion to go with them in the neighborhood. This companion will be a local adult who can tell them the history of the neighborhood; the families that live there; and, help the missional evangelism team make contact with people. As the three travel together, knocking on doors, they go with two simple questions:

- 1) How can we pray for you? And,
- 2), What skill or talent do you have that you would be willing to share with others in the neighborhood?

For example, an elderly person might say, “I was a music teacher or school teacher, if children in the neighborhood need help learning to play the piano or learning to read or do math, I would be willing to help.”

The vision of the church behind this model was described many years ago by William Stringfellow in a little book on Hebrews entitled *Free in Obedience: The Radical Christian Life*. The following quotes speak to the spirit of this proposal.

“...[I]f I were a bishop in one of the great cities, I would not show my compassion for the trauma and violence of city life by building, financing, and consecrating any more church buildings or parish houses. Maybe some of those are needed, but first there has to be a depth and passion of involvement that, for the most part, there has not yet been. Only then can there be intelligent deployment of financial resources and shrewd location of physical facilities. If I were a bishop, I would first of all devote myself to walking the streets, trying to see the inner city for myself. I would, so to speak, make myself available to the actual inner life of the city; I would visit and try to listen to the voices that can be heard in the taverns and the tenements, on the street corners, and in the shops. First, I would try to hear the city, if, indeed, the city would tolerate my presence long enough to permit me to listen.”

“Then, I think, I would go out to scour the land to find perhaps five hundred Christians—men and women, clergy and laity—to commission and send into the city. When I had found and called these missionaries I would tell them that they were to go, probably in pairs, into the city and just live on whatever means of survival prevailed in the block or neighborhood to which they were sent; they would have to live, in so far as possible, as those to whom they were sent. I would instruct them that upon their arrival they should do only one thing: knock on every door. Most doors would not be opened, at least not readily. But when a door was opened, the missionaries would say: ‘We have come to be with you because God cares for your life, and, because God cares for your life, we also care for you.’ Period. There would be nothing more—no invitations to join the Church, no programs to offer for the people or their kids, no rummage to give away, no groups to join or meetings to attend, no gimmicks, no concealed motives, and no hidden agendas. There would just be the bare announcement of God’s love and the freedom which that love gives people to love each other.”