

# National Ministries



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“Follow me as I follow Christ and walk as Jesus walked” is what governs me as I invite people to learn the way of Jesus and invest in them to live the way of Jesus. Our united purpose is to strengthen existing churches and start new ones that are spiritually alive in Christ, relationally connected to one another, and missionally engaged in the world. This historically-rooted mission of the UBIC is anchored in the biblically-based vision of Jesus to *Make Disciples* within our neighborhoods and among the nations. This is the message we have been communicating and the ministry we have been cultivating over the past four years. It will continue to be the marching orders of Jesus that we will model and mentor over the next four years. Therefore, this report is designed to provide instruction and inspiration on our mentality and motivation, as well as models and metrics, to *Make Disciples* and plant churches.

Jesus commissioned his apprentices to *Make Disciples* as he built his Church. It’s a co-mission. We spend a lot of time and money to build churches that seldom *Make Disciples*. If we used our resources to *Make Disciples* as our part of the great co-mission (Matt. 28:19), while Jesus does his part of the great co-mission (Matt. 16:18), then churches would be started and strengthened.

Let’s *Make Disciples* by inviting people to learn the way of Jesus and investing in them to live the way of Jesus! The first phase of this cyclical-ongoing mandate to *Make Disciples* is the process of evangelizing people to be baptized into Christ (welcome to the kingdom of God). The second phase of this cyclical-ongoing mandate to *Make Disciples* is the process of equipping people to walk with Christ (welcome to the Church of Jesus). This whole process cannot happen without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-8). Bishop Todd Fetters said in 2017, “Let the Wind Blow,” and then followed this up in 2019 with “Let’s Pray.” All this leads to the theme of NC2021, “Let’s Make Disciples.” Therefore, Let’s Make Disciples (Matt 28:16-20) by bringing the healing presence of Jesus through the liberating power of the Gospel and the transforming power of the Spirit into the darkest spaces where we live, work, learn, or play (Acts 1:8). We will see Jesus build his Church in places where people are far from him (Matt 16:18).

Discipleship is apprenticeship. It is a relationship that invites people to learn the way of Jesus and invests in them to live the way of Jesus. Notice the three relational assumptions and implications of this definition:

- Inviting and Investing requires personal involvement.
- Learning and Living requires active participation.
- The way of Jesus requires prayerful obedience.

Our definition of discipleship as apprenticeship is a verb. It’s a relational process more than an educational program. Making disciples has become quite complicated and often requires highly skilled experts with in-depth curriculums. Jesus’ approach to making disciples was very simple yet supernatural. It could be done anywhere, by anyone who has authentic faith and genuine love. His process of making disciples can fit into any program or curriculum which honors the simple yet supernatural process of relational interaction (pursuit) and reflective intercession (prayer). Therefore, “Follow me as I follow Christ, and walk as Jesus walked.”

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## Relating and Leading

Our disciple-making missional vision for strengthening and starting churches, which is primarily about relationship, is focused on a strategy that is primarily about leadership. The operating premise of my ministry strategy is that “Fruitful Local Churches require Healthy Leadership Teams.” The churches we strengthen and start need to have spiritually strong relationships and leadership friends and mentors who love God and others with all of their hearts—or, as Bishop Fetters often says, “siblings and shepherds more than stakeholders and CEOs.” This requires us to shift from a mentality and metric of getting more people into the seats, toward sending more people into the streets—encouraging and equipping our people to “Go and be” more than “Come and see.”

Therefore, we are helping both church members and church leaders to make some incredible shifts in





mentality, mission, motivation, and metrics. We are helping our people see church as “us not it” by being devoted to the people and not merely committed to the programs. Likewise, we are helping our pastors shift from lead elders and board members to a better together team of “me to we.”

The future of the church will not be based on how impressive our worship services are with the best preachers in town or how elaborate our buildings are with the best programs around. Most of all it is our hope that it will be how well we live, love, and lead—how closely we walk with God, how faithfully we love one another, and how courageously we make disciples of others. We are doing cluster training retreats (CLT) and assessment pathway visits (APV) to help communicate this vision and cultivate these values with our pastors and our people. I do 5-10 of these each month.

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## Connecting and Coaching

Since strengthening and starting churches is primarily about leadership training and team development, we are providing our pastors and planters with something more than a lecture or a book. Our relational resourcing is much more personal and prayerful. It's face-to-face and heart-to-heart connecting with coaching. This process means that we work with fewer programs, but with more faithful people. It is less about bigger groups and better events which drive the faster and larger metric of American consumerism. Instead, it is more about relational health. The vision and values of biblical spirituality and community are counter-cultural to the business mindset of efficiency and productivity. Cultivating authentic faith and genuine love takes more patience and sacrifice, along with humility and vulnerability. It's no wonder that people would rather plug into programs than plug into people, and why pastors might prefer developing the organization (the church and its systems) than discipling the organism (the people and relationships).

1. All of our pastors and church planters can find meaningful connection with effective coaching through our regional clusters and specialized cohorts. We are continually training and partnering with our cluster leaders and prayer encouragers to offer this relational resource.

2. All of our pastors and church planters can get concrete coaching and compassionate caring to handle financial stewardship challenges and sexual brokenness struggles through our prayer encouragement resources and strategic partnerships.

3. All of our new pastors and church planters will have access to strategic prayer coaching and discipleship learning communities. We want all of our new pastors and planters to have a lifestyle of prayer and the ministry of disciple-making.

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## Strengthening and Starting

### Roadmap to Renewing (Strengthening)

God is bringing transformation and reconciliation to our pastors who have felt incredibly discouraged and sometimes disconnected. The Covid crisis and ongoing economic/political unrest has taken a toll on our pastors and their people. God is pruning his Church as part of his next reformation. We are learning new spiritual disciplines and new ways to be the Church with less dependence on buildings and budgets.

It's exciting to see how God is giving hope and healing to our aging pastors and smaller churches. Both have more lasting value than they realize. Beside our vocational pastors and their multi-celled churches, we are well positioned to build a network of bi-vocational pastors and multiplying micro-churches. Darrel Bosworth, as one of our strategic partners, will assist our pastors and churches in crisis or transition.

#### 1. Identifying and resourcing our pastors/churches to do self-assessments.

Darrel will call to discuss the real condition of the flock and provide tools to help the leadership team take an honest look spiritually, relationally, and missionally. Mike will also facilitate this process when he does his cluster training retreats (CTR).



### 2. Conducting assessment pathway visit (APV) for evaluation and strategy.

Mike will come with a cluster leader and/or a prayer encourager to meet with every key leader and their spouse individually, discuss a collaborative pathway forward with the leadership team, and communicate to the larger church family (preaching).

### 3. Following up with prayer encouragement team and cluster support system.

We provide four levels of follow up:

- Prayer Encouragement calls to check in on victories or barriers to the renewal strengthening pathway.
- Prayer Encouragement visits to work with the pastor and leadership team.
- Prayer Encouragement coaching sessions for specialized training objectives.
- Prayer Encouragement interim preparation to prepare church for the next pastor.

## Pathway to Planting (Starting)

God continues to move through the UBIC to not only bring renewal and strength to our existing churches, but motivation to multiply new churches. Healthy organisms grow. It's clear that God wants to raise up new leaders, to take new ground, in new ways. The next leaders, planters, and pastors are in our communities and our churches, but they often go unnoticed or simply overlooked. Some are not even saved yet.

Andy Sikora, as a strategic partner, will help us nurture a disciple making/church planting culture, bring in new church planters, and give us practical pathways to start a wide range of disciple-making “missional communities” that penetrate and plant churches in the darkest spaces of America.

1. Cultivate a discipling multiplication movement within our clusters and churches, and find or raise up new church planters within and without the UBIC. There is now more motivation than skepticism as our pastors and our people see that the Holy Spirit is truly moving in our midst!

2. Offer a new generation cohort and a multiplying church cohort for individuals who desire to lead in the future as a church planter, or for lead pastors who desire to raise up our next planters, as well as partner with other churches in sending and supporting. Between Andy and I, we have been able to coach 32 pastors/planters in our cohorts.

3. Develop kingdom partnerships with other organizations who are on the front lines of disciple-making and church planting. Stadia and Exponential are two of several ministries that help us identify, assess, train, and coach our church planters. We have had three planters complete the assessment process and three more that are in the pipeline. We have actually planted three churches and can easily see 10-20 more being planted in the next few years. Keep praying and participating!

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# Sharing the Journey

## *Stories Behind the Stats*

My schedule can be quite unpredictable. My life revolves around initiating conversations that others don't want to have and tackling situations that seem impossible. The Lord reminds me, as I walk in and out of minefields, that it's not by my strength or my wisdom, but by his power—always his timing and his way! The battles we fight are not physical, financial, relational, or political. They are spiritual. Apart from him we can do nothing, but with him we can do all things. I could tell you hundreds of stories where I have seen God deliver hearts and restore relationships. Satan is working to disconnect people through division and discourage them through deception. Therefore, I am always fighting to see us encouraged in heart and united in love.

Wherever I go or whatever I do, I'm always modeling and mentoring a disciple-making process that is simple and yet supernatural. It's transferable and transformational for everyone everywhere, anyone who is devoted to pursuing and praying as we listen to God and others. I will present and process this in my national conference message (teaching), and demonstrate and discuss this in my national conference workshop (training). Over the next four years, I will continue to teach and train this disciple-making process to our clusters, in my Cluster Training Retreats (CTR), and to our churches in my Assessment Pathway Visits (APV). I have chosen a few snapshots that give you a taste for what we are building into our clusters and churches, as well as how we are encouraging and equipping our pastors and planters.



### **1. Huntington cluster (pastors and churches)**

I did three cluster training retreats to help pastors connect at a deeper level spiritually and relationally, as well as to help them collaborate on building disciple-making communities (strengthening their churches and starting new ones). Two of the churches are in the process of laying the groundwork to plant churches. I met with each pastor by phone and in person on several occasions to process personal and pastoral challenges. I had several coaching conversations with two of the churches (doing what I call Assessment Pathway Visits and leadership team training). Please pray for Lissa Litka as she pioneers a micro-church multiplying movement in Kokomo, Ind.

### **2. Cleveland & Columbus to Lancaster & Logan**

It was encouraging to see four of our cluster leaders work together to strengthen their existing churches and start new ones. We started one traditional church in New Philadelphia and one simple church in the city of Columbus. In the midst of that, we have seen several of our struggling churches find significant renewal as they transform their mindset and strategy from merely attracting and keeping, to equipping and sending. Please pray for a church planter to partner with Rick Tawney in Columbus.

### **3. Grand Rapids Cluster and Churches**

We are in the process of stationing three new pastors and three others are leading their churches toward becoming church planting hubs. We have done several Cluster Training Retreats, as well as Assessment Pathway Visits to various churches. Matt and Kristi McConnell have been an incredible help in their personal encouragement and mentoring of pastors and spouses. Please pray for the McConnells and for the Grand Rapids cluster.

### **4. Northwest Cluster**

This cluster has four churches that are 4-6 hours apart from each other. Until we went to do a Cluster Training Retreat, they had never been together in person. Their cluster meetings were done over the phone. Pam and I, along with our Prayer Encouragement Team, continue to stay in contact with them. We have amazing potential with a lot of challenges. In particular, we would like to help revitalize our Log Cabin church in Boise as well as partner with a church planting organization in that region. It's one of the most unchurched places in America and one of the fastest growing places as well. Please pray!

### **5. The Jeremiah Journey**

Jeremiah Ketchum, a cluster leader and senior pastor of Brown Corners UB church in Clare, Mich. (and also part of my ThD cohort), has been working diligently and prayerfully to bring his church board into a disciple-making leadership team. Transforming a traditional mindset, while preparing to plant simple churches, has been quite a journey for him and his wife Elisa. Pray for them!

### **6. Local Church Renewal Journey**

Like so many of our churches that are in crisis, there is quite a history to overcome. The spiritual warfare and relational conflict take quite a toll on pastors, their spouses, and their families. The bishop, national director, cluster leader, and prayer encouragers worked together as a team to help with a pastoral couple in one of our churches. The story is not done and it never is, but we have seen some incredible breakthroughs. Pam and I met with this couple on several occasions, and they found prayer encouragement from Jerry and Margie Drummonds. We met for three months as a team to provide encouragement, training, and coaching. The final step that I have not completed, because of Covid, is to preach to the church and have a relational reconciliation event. Pray for them.

### **7. Three Pastors in Process of Launching**

Dan Reed and his wife, after attending Andy Sikora's workshop two years ago, asked the question, "Can we plant a church?" They are now in the final stages of preparations for planting a church where they grew up in western Pennsylvania. After attending the first round of the Multipliers Learning Community, Mike Elkins went back and established a church planting residency at New Hope Community Church (Bryan, Ohio) as they prepare to be a sending hub. Kelly Ball, co-pastor of Colwood UB church (Caro, Mich.), was part of the second Multipliers Learning Community, and with her co-pastor Randy Carpenter, they have decided to start



a campus extension.

#### **8. Haven for the Heart Retreats**

Please pray for Pam and I as we provide Haven for the Heart retreats with leadership team mentoring and continue to pastor our disciple-making “Journey Communities.” Tony Blair and I continue to provide individualized doctoral-level training to those studying missional theology at Kairos. Several leaders from the UBIC are in our cohort. Pray for Tomi Cardin, Michelle Harris, Jeremiah Ketchum, and Josh Mckeown! Pam and I plan on doing a disciple-making cohort for those planting or pastoring simple-micro churches. Pray for us!