



# MAYFAIR

## B I B L E   C H U R C H

### **Vision 2018 and Beyond**

Pastor Michael J. Breznau

November 11, 2018

**Q:** What is the most exciting day for new homeowners after a full remodel project with Chip and Joanna Gaines' reality TV show, *Fixer Upper*? *Welcome Home* day, of course!



## DEMO DAY

But before *Welcome Home* day is Chip's favorite manly project, *Demo Day*. Chip and the crew go crazy removing walls, gutting bathrooms, tearing out kitchens, ripping up floors, rewiring electrical systems. You name it, they've demolished it.

But before those bright, stylish couples across Waco, Texas are willing to go through with *Demo Day*, they want to see the plans for what it will look like afterward. Unless, that is, they really, *really* trust Chip and Joanna...or maybe just Joanna. ☺

Over the past year, we've been in deep-level discussion as church leaders about how God is calling us to more effectively reach our local mission field and develop thriving followers of Jesus.

After 8 months of training and evaluation meetings, we brought in Dr. Howard Bixby of ChristWay Ministries to provide church-wide consultation over the summer months. Following his three weekend visits, he provided our leadership with an 80-page report, which we then summarized into 34 recommendations. We also provided a 20-page summary report to the entire church family.

A number of his observations confirmed our prior studies. Some of his recommendations were startling. A lot of it looked like *Demo Day*. While he has worked with hundreds of churches and witnessed good, Gospel-centered success, the specific vision for Mayfair Bible Church was not yet clear. Questions like, "What recommendations should we tackle first? What suggestions might we scrap?" quickly rose to the surface. Therefore, we launched a

## WHO'S BEEN TEACHING US?

- **Pastor Jerry Lawson** (video modules on programming evaluation and discipleship)
- **Pastor Nick Boring** (trainer and consultant with Woodside Bible Church)
- **Dr. Ron Gannett** (personal consultant for Pastor Michael; works with alumni of Dallas Theological Seminary)
- **Dr. Howard Bixby** (ChristWay Ministries; retired seminary president)
- **Pastor Dan Nichols** (North American Church-Planter; Pastor at Restored Church)
- **Pastor Thad Bergmeier** (Regional Director – USA, Midwest for ABWE, EveryEthne.church)

Consultation Implementation Team (Forming a C.I.T. was suggested by Bixby) to develop what recommendations are already in process, those that are 1-3 years out,

vision-concepts that are in the 4-7-year range, and lastly, what we might not pursue for our ministry context. This team is in the first stage of their work.

**The C.I.T.** → Matt Pearson (elder), Earl Tate (deacon), Deborah Avery (deacon's wife), Kim Smith (elder's wife), Rebecca Hawley (deacon's wife), and Pastor Michael Breznau.

## CLARITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Over the months of September and October, we also launched two sermon series to walk through what God has to say about the mission and vision *He has* for His people. The four messages from *Missio Vita* outlined the essentials of living on mission for Christ. The THRIVE series then began laying the building blocks for how the call of Christ can be specifically applied to the local context of Mayfair's mission. One truth became clear: A healthy church EVALUATES ministries and methods in order to FOCUS on the mission of Jesus (going and making disciples) and EQUIPS every member to serve as missionaries in their community. Arriving at this juncture, we've begun evaluating everything through the filter of this question: "What would a missionary do?"

So, some of you are probably thinking right now:

"Okay, I trust the pastors and other leaders God has given us. I have a general picture of the plans. I'm excited and ready to move forward."

Artists, visionaries, composers, pioneers, and authors may tend to respond like this. But others – usually the processors, planners, engineers, and project managers – are likely saying to themselves:

"Wait a minute. I don't think I've seen all the plans yet. Or maybe I have, but I'm not sure I understand them. I don't fully grasp "the why" and "the how." I'm all for remodeling the structure, but I want a handle on all the details first."

Not to worry. We are all uniquely designed by God for specific purposes in His Church. Therefore, both of these responses are perfectly acceptable. Most of us are probably somewhere in the middle of these two responses. That's okay, too.

If you're on the side of, "I'm ready! Let's do this," then what is to come in this booklet should give you an even greater excitement. If you're on the other end of the spectrum and need more plans and details, then this booklet will provide some guidance for you.

### **3 Main Sections Encompass *Vision 2018 and Beyond*:**

- 1) The Need: "See the People"
- 2) The Heart: "Feel Compassion"
- 3) The Strategy: "Respond"

# NEVER DEMOLISHED.

First, here's what we will *never* demolish. These values are the footings, foundation, beams, and studs of the structure of what it means to be an authentic church:

## OUR CORE DNA: RADICAL LOVE

We sacrifice personal comfort, time, and preferences to joyfully show the irresistible love of Jesus through serving one another.

(John 13:5-20, 34-35; 15:12-17; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 5:22-23, 6:2; Philippians 2:1-8; James 1:27, 2:1-9; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 4:7-21)

## UNSHAKEABLE TRUTH

We follow God's Word as our perfect guide for His design in every circumstance of life.

(Psalm 19:7-9, 119:9-11, 105-107; Isaiah 40:8; John 17:17; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Peter 1:24-25; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 1:2).

## VIBRANT WORSHIP

We pray expectantly, preach Christ boldly, sing passionately, give generously, and celebrate joyfully in baptism and communion.

(Psalm 98:1-6; 100:1-5; Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:37-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 3:11-17; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:23-25; James 5:17)

## AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

We live with our masks off as imperfect people who run to Jesus *together* for transforming grace.

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; John 17:13-26; Romans 12:1-8; Galatians 6:1-3; Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Colossians 2:6-7; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 5:16)

## INNOVATIVE MISSION

We go outside-the-box to reach men, women, and children with the mercy and message of Jesus our Rescuer.

(Matthew 28:19-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8-11; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Acts 17:16-34)

➔ If these are not true about us, then we're either being unfaithful, disobedient, or ignorant. Mark your calendar for May-June 2019, when we'll preach through these 5 CORE DNA elements. From our CORE DNA flow the three simple, clear action steps of our new mission statement...

## MAYFAIR'S 3-Fold MISSION:



### **BELONG to Jesus.**

- Be welcomed into God's family by faith in Christ and gathered to celebrate Him. (Acts 2:37–47; 1 Corinthians 1:23-26; 6:19-20; Colossians 3:11-17; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:23-25)



### **THRIVE in Jesus.**

- Grow in your relationship with Christ and His people in authentic community. (John 17:13–26; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 2:11–22; 4:1–16; Philippians 1:19-27; Colossians 2:6-7)



### **GO with Jesus.**

- Reach others with the gospel of Christ so they, too, may receive new life in Him. (Matthew 28:19–20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)

**JESUS is the root of our belonging, thriving, and going.**

## OUR MISSION STEPS FORWARD...

All these words look good on paper. But where do we go from here? How we respond on mission should be determined by what we see on the field. We must understand the needs of the men, women, and children around us before we can effectively minister to them. As the old adage reminds us, "They won't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

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*"You need to learn everything about us - then you can bring us God's talk so we understand."*

*– A foreign national reached through Ethnos360 (New Tribes Mission)*

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### **1) THE NEED: "See the People"**

We must ask ourselves: Do we fully and clearly see our community? Do we feel our hearts being overwhelmed with compassion for the people? Do we know how to knowledgeably and deeply pray for them? Do we know how our neighbors think?



## **A Missionary Story**

The legendary Irish missionary to South India, Amy Carmichael, was forced into learning how to think like the Tamil people before she could learn to share the Gospel with them in their own language.

After Amy accepted an invitation to learn Tamil from an Anglican missionary by the name

of Thomas Walker, the story took an interesting twist...

"Thomas started her on not only basic grammar and vocabulary but Tamil classics. 'Isn't this a waste of time,' she asked, 'when I could be studying the Gospel and learning how to preach to them?'

'One must learn first to think like them,' Walker replied.

'I'll do it then – against all logic!'"

Amy did learn to think like the poor Tamil-speaking Indian men and women... and her Gospel legacy lives on to this day. Christ-followers must be able to think like the people they are reaching in order to reach them with the message of Christ.

## **Imitate Christ.**

Jesus saw. Jesus felt. Jesus responded.

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*"Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*

*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'*

*(Matthew 9:35-38; see also Mark 6:34; Matt. 4:23)*

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## **Genuine compassion is the foundation for Gospel mission.**

We don't want to merely count noses but number disciples. Our community is filled with all sorts of people and all kinds of needs. Jesus calls His followers to see, feel, and respond as *He did*.

I think most regular, church-going, anthem-singing Christians in North America assume they know how their neighbors and co-workers think about life, God, church, and family simply because they live on the same geographical patchwork.

But what I've found out is that I very, very often do not have a clue. In most cases, your neighbor (and mine) is living in a world so foreign to ours that it's like talking to a Martian over the nicely clipped hedge of boxwoods. We don't have anything more to say other than, "Nice day, huh? I see you got a new car, eh? See ya later."

I don't know about you, but I'd cut my missionary support to any person who could only handle that kind of conversation with the natives on a foreign field.

Dr. Thom Rainer, CEO of LifeWay, drove home this point:

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*"Imagine trying to be a missionary in another country without even attempting to learn the language. Any explanations of the gospel would be useless. Your listeners would have no idea what you are saying."*

*In some ways, many American churches are in the same situation with their surrounding neighborhoods. The church is using one language to speak and sing about Jesus, while the culture either doesn't understand or ignores it completely."<sup>1</sup>*

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From briefcase carriers to bus travelers, the physically disabled to soccer moms, recent retirees to brand new babies, our mission field is filled with people from many walks of life, ethnic groups, religious backgrounds, financial concerns, and family cultures. A broad-stroke paintbrush simply won't work.

In order to fully understand our community, we'll need to get into the details of all the different stress-points and needs. To do this, we commissioned ABWE/EveryEthne to provide us with a full report on our mission field. The following is a select summary of this eye-opening information.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thomrainer.com/2016/05/5-reasons-church-leaders-should-pay-attention-to-christian-hip-hop/>

<sup>2</sup> Data provided specifically for Mayfair Bible Church by ABWE – North America USA/EveryEthne. If you would like a copy of our full report simply email [office@mayfairbible.org](mailto:office@mayfairbible.org)



# OUR MISSION FIELD FOCUS:

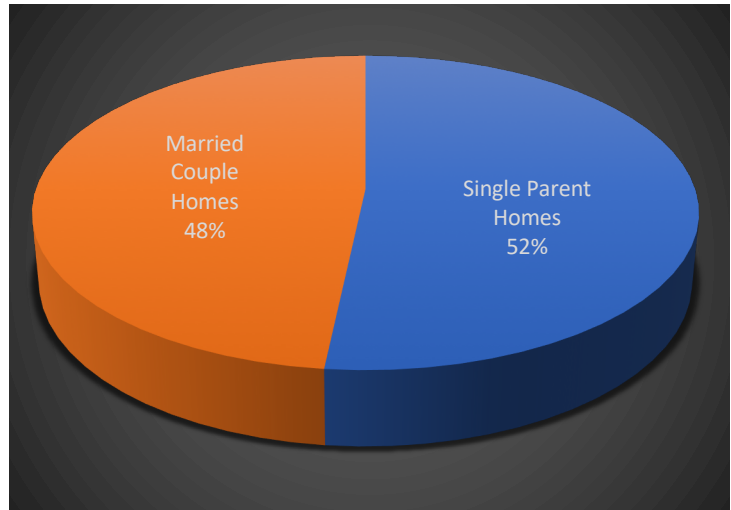
10-Mile radius around Mayfair Bible Church | 251,790 people

Average age of our population: 39.89 years old

## The Family

Among households with children in the home, the area does indicate significantly more single parent homes than the state average. About 48% of the homes with children in them are married couples. The rest are single parent homes. It is important to note that 52% equals over 14,000 single parent households in our search area.

Married couples comprise about 43% of the population of the study area. This is much lower than the state average. In addition, those who are divorced are well above the state average. 22.8% of those in our area have experienced a loss of their partner in some way (divorce, separation, or widowed).



## Life-Perspective Categories (MOSAICS)

The two highest categories of people in our 10-mile radius are called "Urban Survivors" and "Families in Motion."

### How Urban Survivors tend to think about faith:

*"Faith is important, but theology is not. Some of these people are more liberal, and some more conservative, but their approach to faith is more pragmatic than dogmatic. Their faith makes them optimistic about this life, and not just eternal life, they believe that God is active in their personal and community experience. They may see God's hand in little things as well as major achievements, and are thankful for God's personal attention in overcoming their daily struggles and meeting personal challenges."*

### How Families in Motion tend to think about faith:

*"They identify themselves as "Christian" and faith is important, but they are often shopping for the right church to accept them as they are, to provide family-centered opportunities with low expectations, and bring some sanity and direction to their hectic lives. They are not going to work hard to adapt to the church (and some have negative churchy experiences that have made them a bit cynical); so, they think "a good church" should go the second mile to adapt to them. These people may be more involved in on-line communities than real-time communities, and are often apathetic to wider social issues. They're pretty much focused on themselves and their families, and the church might be their only touchstone with the community in which they live."*



## Social and Moral Issue Beliefs

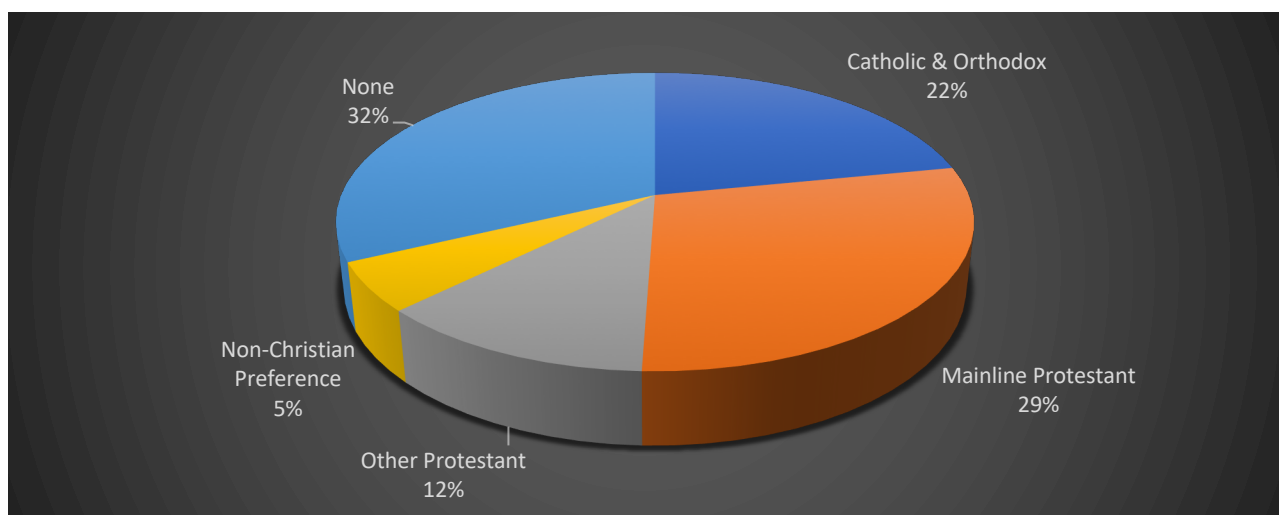
- Just over five years ago, 64.4% of the area would agree in some form with the statement, *"Children should be raised by a mother and father only, if possible."* But in 2017, that number has dropped to 41.8%.
- Just over five years ago, 54.1% of the area would agree in some form with the statement, *"Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman only."* But in 2017, that number has dropped to 44.2%.
- Just over five years ago, 40.1% of the area would disagree in some form with the statement, *"same-sex marriage must remain legal and protected."* But in 2017, those that disagree with that statement has decreased to 30.4%.
- Just over five years ago, 50.7% of the area would agree in some form with the statement, *"abortion should become illegal."* But in 2017, those that agree with that statement has decreased to 30.2%.

## Generations

It is projected that currently the Millennial (30.9%) and Gen X (26.4%) are the majority in this community. While these generations will remain strong in the next five to ten years, the Gen Z generation will grow strong and the Boomers will begin to pass away. Many have not studied the habits and characteristics of those part of Gen Z. [The Barna group](#) has done some helpful research on this new generation that may be helpful as they grow in our church.

## Religious Preferences

The largest percent of religious preferences are the Nones, followed by Mainline Protestants and then Catholic/Orthodox. It is worth noting that in the past ten years, it is projected that Catholic & Orthodox have dropped by 2.9%; Mainline Protestants have dropped by 2.8%; and the None's have increased by 4.6%. The "Other Protestant" category has seen a slight growth of 1.2% in the past ten years.



According to one other religious membership report done in 2010, there are over 258,000 unclaimed people in Genesee County (total population: 407,000).<sup>3</sup>

A modest estimate is that 75% of the population in our 10-Mile radius mission field is spiritual lost, without saving faith in Christ (188,842 people).<sup>4</sup>

## **“I’m not going to church because...”**

For those outside the church, here are the main reasons they do not attend church:

- 21.1% say the demands of raising children (above the national average of 19.9%).
- 32.3% say they have no time/less time available (just below national average of 33%).
- 42.6% say that it wasn't relevant to their life (below national average of 47.7%).
- 61.8% say religious people are too judgmental (just above the national average of 61%).
- 25.6% say it has to do with worship/music style (just below national average of 26.1%).

**It is also important to note that about 15% said they did not attend church because they had never been invited.** This barrier is rather easy to overcome. A church evangelistic thrust that comes from the people, not the leaders of the church may be a helpful way to bring in those who do not attend church.

## **Life Concerns in our Community**

- It is projected that 47.6% of the survey area would say that “*depression*” is a modest or significant concern for them.
- It is projected that 65.3% of the survey area would say that “*losing weight/diet issues*” is a modest or significant concern for them. In addition, 68.4% say that “*personal health problems*” are issues they are dealing with as well.
- It is projected that 49.7% of the survey area would say that “*getting over the past or dealing with guilt*” is a modest or significant concern for them.
- The greatest home related concern is Health crisis/illness (63.9%), followed by stress (63.3%) and time for friends/family (55.9%).
- The greatest concern about the community is violence in my neighborhood (39.4%).
- Just over 76% say they are modestly or significantly concerned about facing their financial future (page 4), while just over 38.7% are concerned about spiritual issues (page 5).

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/26/rcms2010\\_26049\\_county\\_name\\_2010.asp](http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/26/rcms2010_26049_county_name_2010.asp)

<sup>4</sup> This number is likely closer to 80-82%.

One of the largest increases in concerns in the last five years has to do with balancing work and family (2.9% increase) and then domestic violence in the family (1.4% increase). These may be some things to help walk people in our community through on how faith and the gospel comes into play on these issues.

## Social Media?

Facebook is by far the highest priority with 53.9% of the survey area saying they use it daily. YouTube would be the next top social media preference followed by Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

## Mission Focus:

### Our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria: Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Cultural

Many long-established churches assume they are good with “going” because they financially support numerous missionaries across the globe. Yet an increasing number of Bible-believing churches are closing down every single week because they have long-failed to effectively reach their own mission field.

I recently asked various people around our area how they would describe the feeling of their particular city or township. Here are the adjectives they used:

FLINT feels **depressed**.

FLUSHING feels **afraid and ignored**.

MT. MORRIS feels **distressed**.

GRAND BLANC feels **threatened**.

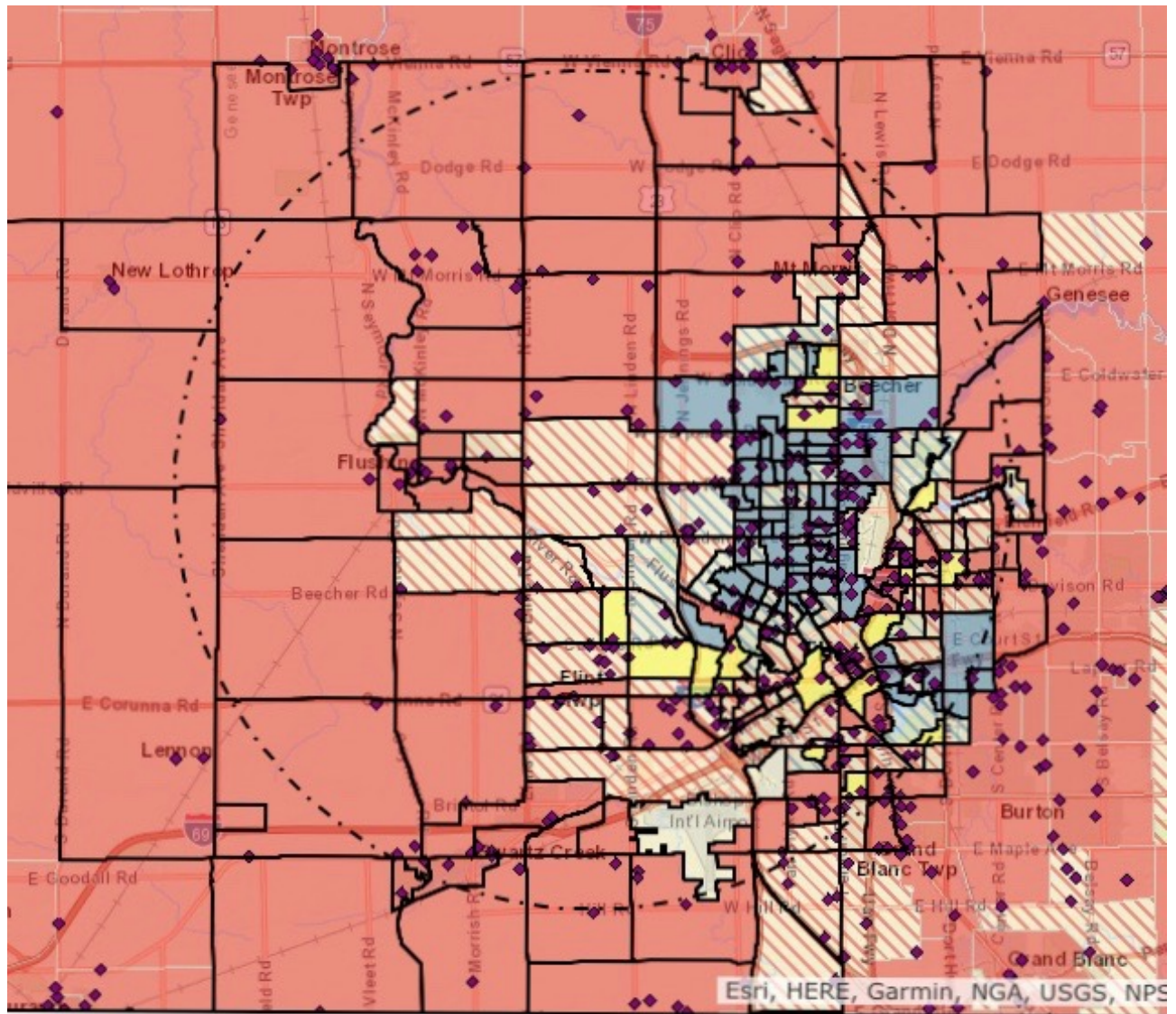
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*“If you don't reach your Jerusalem, eventually you won't be able to reach the remotest part of the world.” – Dr. Thad Bergmeier*

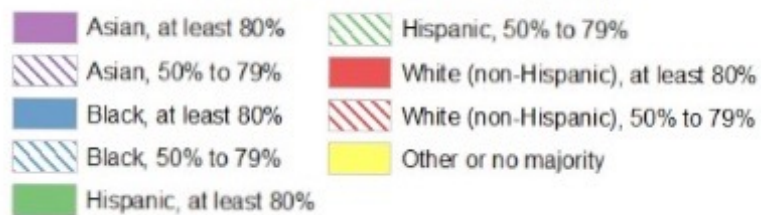
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## Mission to All People Groups

The Mosaic segments, along with the rest of the Executive Insite report (see full report for explanation), help to identify in what ways the church differs from its community. This [Cultural map from ARDA](#) helps explain some of the locations where different cultures may be located in our area. (next page)



### Largest race in the block group



The majority of the population in this area speaks only English in their home (96.1%). Yet, there are some other languages spoken in the homes besides English. Here are a few of the other major languages spoken in the home besides English...<sup>5</sup>

Spanish	3,209	1.5%
Arabic	1,807	0.8%
French, Haitian	405	0.2%

<sup>5</sup> <http://maps.nazarene.org/ARDA/Demographics/culture.html?y=5320923.151018298&x=-9327087.816306746&b=8&denom=>

Russian	384	0.2%
Other	1,873	0.9%

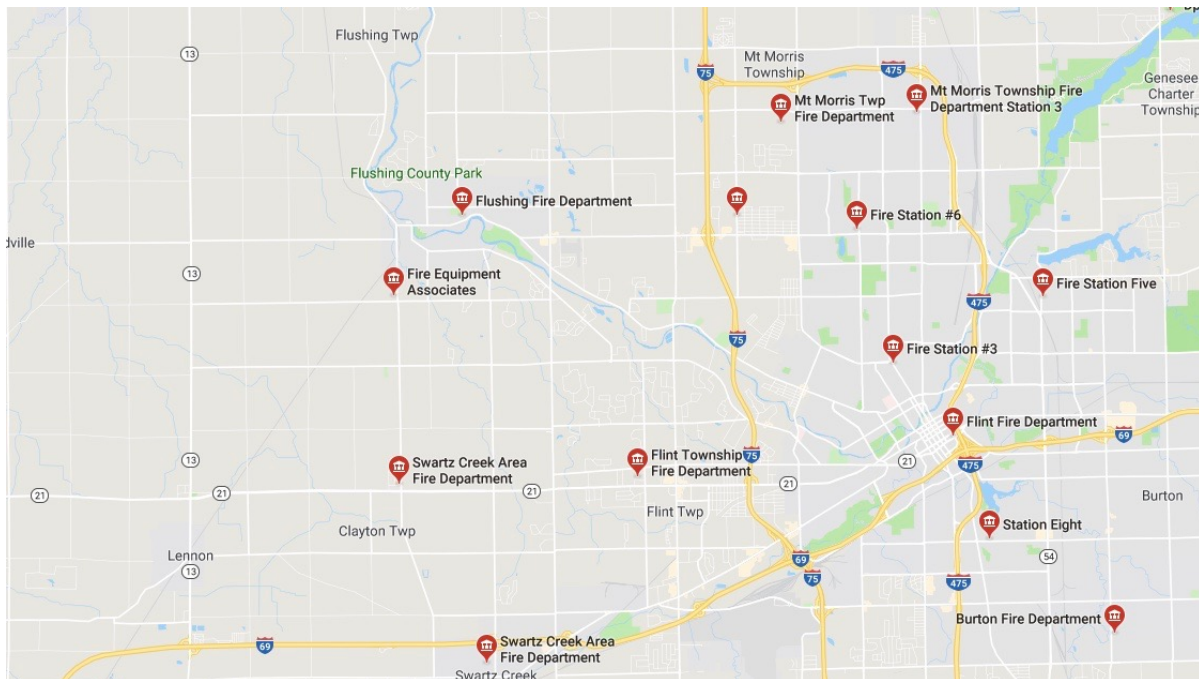
According to ARDA, it is estimated that 2.2% of the population (5,004) in this area are foreign born. They project India to be one of the largest population of foreign born peoples in our area:

India	537	0.2%
Mexico	358	0.2%
Canada	360	0.2%
Germany	241	0.1%)

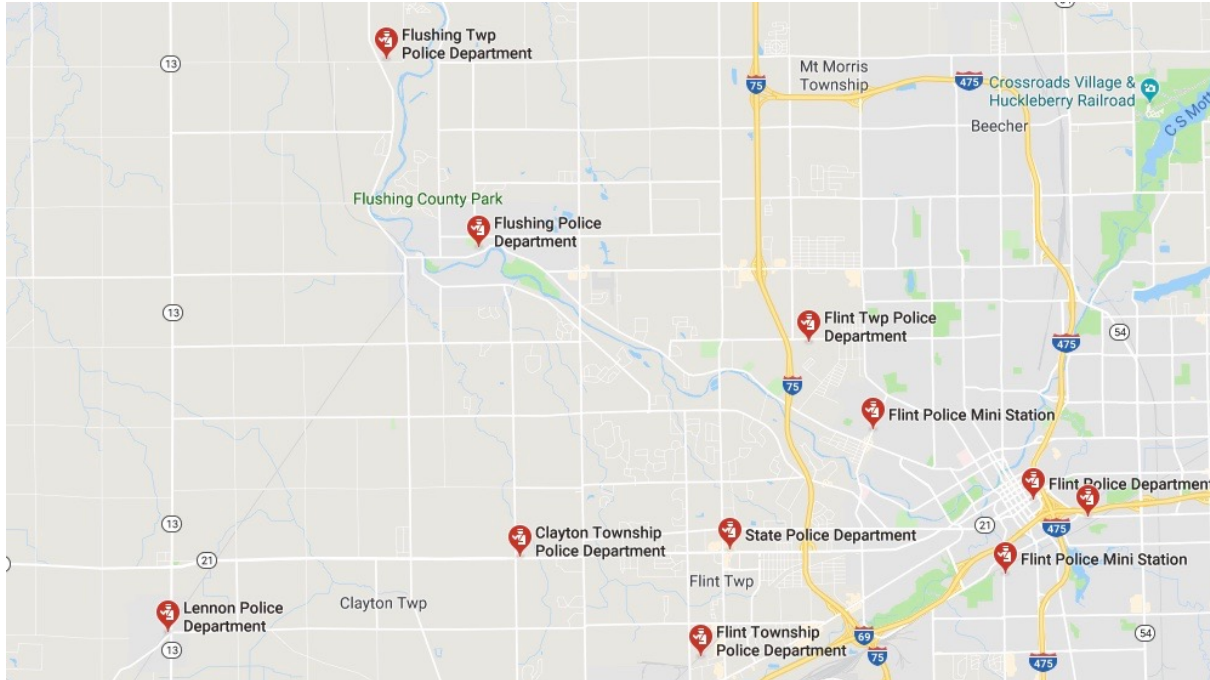
How would our church go through the process of reaching those unlike you? What could that or would that look like?

## SUB-CULTURE FOCUS: POLICE and FIRE

There are many opportunities to minister not only to many different cultural groups in our surrounding area, but also sub-culture groups. One such category are the Police and Fire in our area. Many fail to realize that those in these professions have special needs when it comes to pain and trauma. Serving and caring for them is a special opportunity.





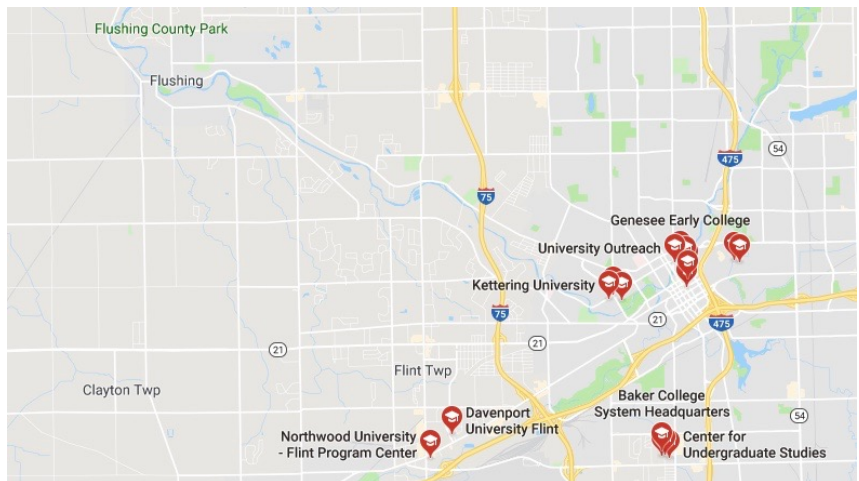


## COLLEGE CULTURE

In addition to these sub-culture groups, we have the opportunity to reach many college students in our area. Here is some basic information for four places of higher education in our area.

### Kettering University:<sup>6</sup>

Kettering University is under 6 miles from Mayfair Bible Church. It is a small private, non-profit university. A few helpful statistics that may be interesting:



- There is a little ethnic diversity at Kettering with 74% of the student population being white. The rest is a scattering between Hispanic, Black, Asian, and unknown.
- There are 127 international students at Kettering, making up just 5.5% of the student population.
- The university is dominated by male students at an 82% to 18% ratio.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/kettering-university/student-life/diversity/>

## **Baker College of Flint:<sup>7</sup>**

Baker College of Flint is just under 10-miles from Mayfair Bible Church. It is a larger private college. In 2017, there were over 20,000 students enrolled in their undergraduate program, of which, only 41% were full time students. A few other helpful statistics that may be interesting:

- There is a little ethnic diversity at Baker College of Flint with 75% of the population being white. There is almost 13% who are African American and the rest Hispanic, Asian, or unknown.
- The undergraduate student body is primarily female at a 33% (male) to 67% (female) ratio.

## **Mott Community College:**

Mott CC is within our 10-mile radius of our church (while it takes longer than that to get there). It is a medium sized community college with over 7,500 students. There is a little diversity at MCC with 68% of the student body being white and 16% being African American.

## **University of Michigan – Flint:<sup>8</sup>**

This branch of the University of Michigan is just over 6 miles from our church. It has between 6,000 and 7,000 students, with 58% being full-time students. The diversity seems to be like the rest of the colleges nearby with 67% white and 13% African American. However, it does seem to have the largest number of International Students, with 467 in 2017, which is about 6% of the student population. There are 29 countries represented on campus with India, Saudi Arabia, and China leading the way. With a desire to reach different cultures and ethnicity, this does provide a great opportunity for Mayfair Bible Church. According to one study...<sup>9</sup>

- 75% of international students will never enter an American home while in the US.
- 80% of international students will never enter an American church while in the US.

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## **Pause for a moment.**

Do you now see the incredibly expansive needs across our community? Take a moment to think through each category and pray for all of us to fully see the tens-of-thousands of lost people as *Jesus sees them*.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/baker-college-of-flint/student-life/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-michigan-flint/student-life/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.isionline.org/GetInvolved.aspx>



## 2) THE HEART: “Feel Compassion”

When Jesus looked out over the multitudes of people, he was moved deeply with compassion (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34). The moving of the Spirit of Christ upon our emotions when we see the needs all around us should draw us, first, to pray.

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*“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”*

*(Matthew 9:37-38)*

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Jesus called his disciples to pray, to ask the Lord to send out workers. In order to be a missional church, we must be a prayerful church. Praying demonstrates our total dependence on God for the expansion of His mission – it is “*His harvest*.” Second, praying expresses our faith in the God who will provide and guide as we go on His mission. Finally, praying shows our submission to His Lordship – His righteous and just rule – over our lives. The life of Christ shows us the mission of God and the mission of God is now *our life* as we follow Christ.

For this reason, we’ve begun many prayer initiatives within Mayfair Bible Church:

### **Individual Prayer:**

- Mayfair Gospel Vision Prayer Cards
- Mayfair @ Prayer Facebook Group: [LINK](#)

### **Group Prayer:**

- THRIVE GROUPS: Prayer is an essential component of every group meeting
- All-Staff Prayer: Every Tuesday morning all Mayfair staff pray together
- Elder Team Prayer: Thursdays at 6am the elders/pastors pray at Mayfair

### **Church-Wide Prayer:**

- REFOCUS: Wednesday night prayer meeting (in the Library: 7-8pm)
- Periodic Church-Wide Prayer and Praise Meetings (Sunday Nights)
- One Hour of Prayer before church business meetings
- Upcoming Concert of Prayer in January

### **One Gap:**

We are seeking to establish a Pastor's Prayer Team for Sunday Mornings. We have several interested. But we're looking for a leader to officially gather the team and arrange a schedule rotation. If you're interested in this role, please contact Pastor Michael: [mbreznau@mayfairbible.org](mailto:mbreznau@mayfairbible.org).

### 3) THE STRATEGY: “Respond...”

Now get ready. Just as Jesus trademarked His ministry by *going*, so all Jesus-followers *go*.

Jesus called His disciples to “beseech the Lord of the harvest,” and then He immediately says, in effect, “Okay guys! Your prayers have been answered. You’re going now, too!” In the beginning of Matthew chapter ten, we find him sending them out under His authority to demonstrate and declare the gospel of the kingdom.

But digging a little deeper, we find that Matthew 4:23 ties together with 9:35-38, which forms a sort of *inclusio*, a “bookend” to the earlier description of Jesus’ mission: “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

These two passages then serve as two sides of an archway with Christ’s final, central command at the close of Matthew’s Gospel being the keystone:

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*“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him but some were doubtful, and Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

*(Matthew 28:16-20)*

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**Communion with Christ leads us to Co-Mission with Christ.** His life is our pattern for life. Our intimacy with Christ is the spring from which our mission activity flows. It’s not one without the other. Both communion and commission are integral to being Christian – a Christ-follower.

So, if Christ is our pattern, how again did He respond? From the passages we’ve looked at in Matthew, we see three actions rise to the surface: He acted on the need by *teaching, preaching, and healing*. In context, there is a slight but important difference between teaching and preaching (“proclaiming”).

**Christ taught** the massive gatherings of people in a way that was radically different than the teaching of the self-interested leaders of the day. He taught them not to follow what those people might say, but to instead follow God's way. He taught them how to love, forgive, work, serve, and pray. He spoke peace to the distressed, hope to the depressed, joy to the saddened, truth to the deceived, and freedom to the oppressed. In the deepest sense, Jesus' teaching was heart-level counseling. The result? People were both drawn to Christ and dramatically transformed.

**Counsel. Soul-Care. Relational Evangelism. Small-Scale.** Today, we – through the power of the Spirit and the Word – can see depression, doubt, distress, addiction and many other deep hurts healed. Marriage counseling, financial coaching, abuse recovery, addiction rehabilitation, are just some of the open avenues in our community. This kind of teaching also encompasses the path of discipleship that should be functioning in every local church.

**Christ preached** the clear, bold good news of God, which in His sacrificial, atoning death and victorious resurrection He would inaugurate as the offer of redemption to the entire world (John 3:16-17; Titus 3:4-7). All throughout the gospels, He is inviting people to turn from the fruitless efforts of man-made religion and believe in Him as their Savior-Redeemer-King. He didn't pull any punches when confronting the religious leaders who finagled their way into dishonest wealth and control over the people. Calling your opponents "white-washed tombs" and a "brood of vipers" might not be good PR. But the proclamation of the gospel to save lost sinners doesn't leave room for the fear of man or watering down the message into a blanded lemonade.

**Outreach. Proclamational Evangelism. Large-Scale.** Today, we are to articulate the hope of Christ with clarity and power. We are not to be ashamed of standing up and preaching, "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Peter in Acts 2:40), and we do so in faith, believing that thousands of souls may be added into God's family. Across history, God has worked in extraordinary ways through large gatherings of people. From the book of Acts to the days of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield, and on to our time we've seen various wide-scale initiatives be an effective tool for broadcasting the seed of the gospel message.

**Christ healed** the sick, lame, diseased, blind, deaf, mute, and demon-possessed. He also fed the hungry thousands who streamed out to Galilee to hear His teaching. By demonstrating both His authority as the God-Man and mercy as the Servant-Messiah, people were drawn to hear His message. Christ healed, fed, and taught the multitudes. Evangelism and compassionate care were never intended to be mutually exclusive.

**Compassion. Mission Center. Medical Missions. Food. Clothing. Large-Scale and Small-Scale.** Together, the *mercy and message* of Jesus is the means of innovative mission. His *mercy* entails meeting tangible, physical needs. His *message* involves inviting them to the Way of healing for their ultimate spiritual need, salvation in Christ. Good works are the bridge to people receiving God's good news. Today, we have numerous opportunities to engage in mercy ministry in our community.

## Don't forget the clear, unforgettable words of Jesus:

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*For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'*

*Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*

(Matthew 25:35-40)

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## Attracted to Jesus

Pastor Bill Rudd recently shared an eye-opening story about the power of Christ-like compassion:

"World renowned Australian atheist, Bill Hayden, at age 85, has renounced his atheism and been baptized [as a believer in Jesus Christ] . . . What brought this octogenarian to faith in Jesus after not believing in God throughout many decades of his adult life? The former Labor Leader and Governor-General said that his decision was prompted by 'witnessing so many selfless acts of compassion by Christians, and deep contemplation while recovering from a stroke.'

For all of us who profess to follow Jesus, this is a reminder that in times of trouble, people are attracted to Jesus not so much by preaching or fancy buildings or well-presented programs, but by the quiet witness of people who actually live like Jesus!"

**Bottomline:** The three ways Jesus responded to the needs of the people can serve as a helpful pattern as we think about our ministry. We are prompted to again ask: What would a missionary do? Or in this case, Sheldon got it right when he asked, "What would Jesus do?" Everything must be on the table to effectively make disciples and to love our community toward the saving message of our Savior.

**Missional vs. Attractional?** Across pastoral conferences, books, and blogs, there has been much discussion about whether churches should be "missional" or "attractional." What is a missional church? A gathering of Christ-followers who intentionally equips the

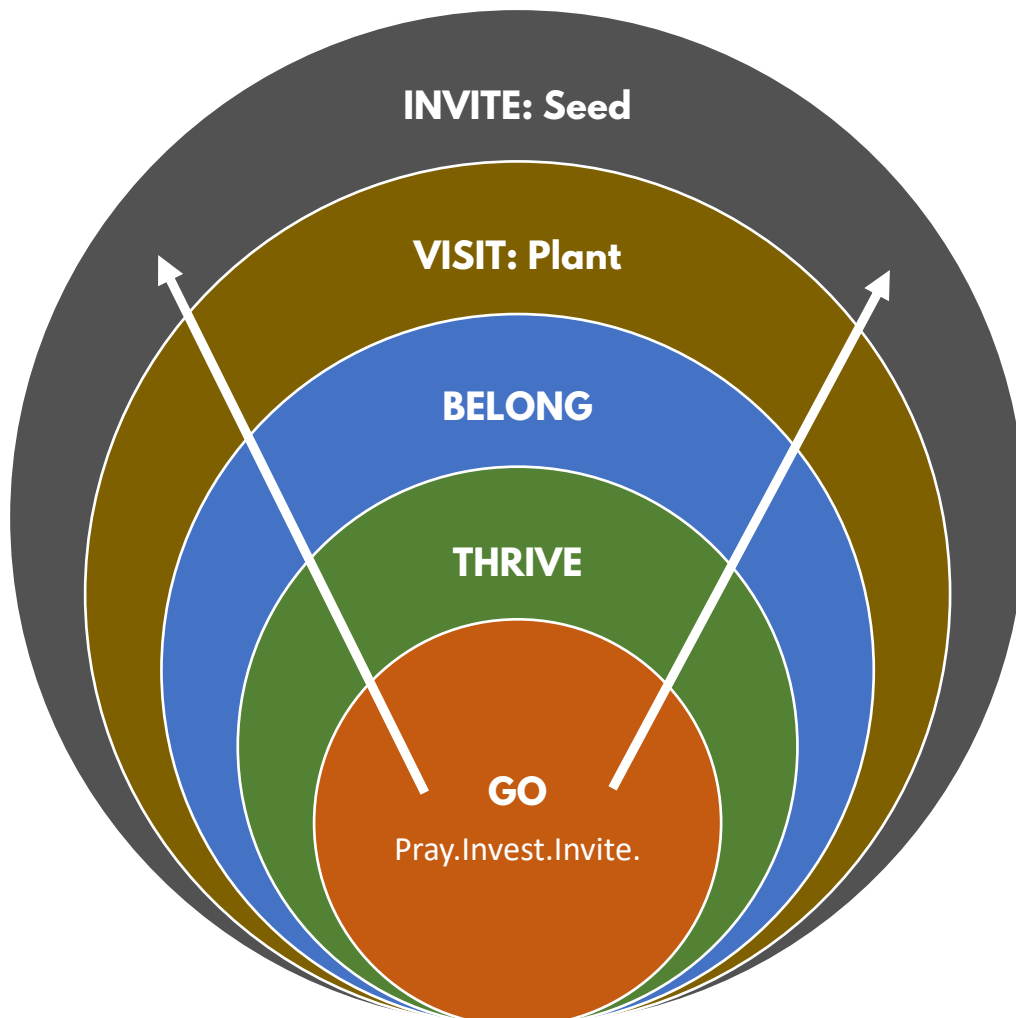
members to be sent out as missionaries in their local community. The missional church does away with extraneous programs that won't accomplish this goal.

## **Missional = “Go and Tell”**

What is an attractional church? A gathering of Christ-followers who focus their energy on drawing people into the life of the church, in which both evangelism and discipleship occur. Members go into the community with the goal of inviting people to a church event or service. The attractional church does away with outdated practices or programs that are not successful in welcoming guests and discipling new believers.

## **Attractional = “Come and See”**

Upon surveying the ethos of our mission field, I believe the best approach is to wisely and courageously combine “Come and see” with “Go and tell.” Biblically faithful, growing churches in North America employ both missional and attractional strategies to reach the lost and develop thriving followers of Jesus. We cast the seed of the Gospel through good works and good news. Here's how this can work at Mayfair Bible Church:



## The flow of this chart can have a missional and an attractional function.

**Missional:** As thriving followers of Jesus pray for specific lost persons, invest in those relationships, and **invite** people to Jesus, they are sowing gospel seeds in the soil of hearts. In loving the lost, we invite them to **visit** our homes or the home of a THRIVE Group gathering.

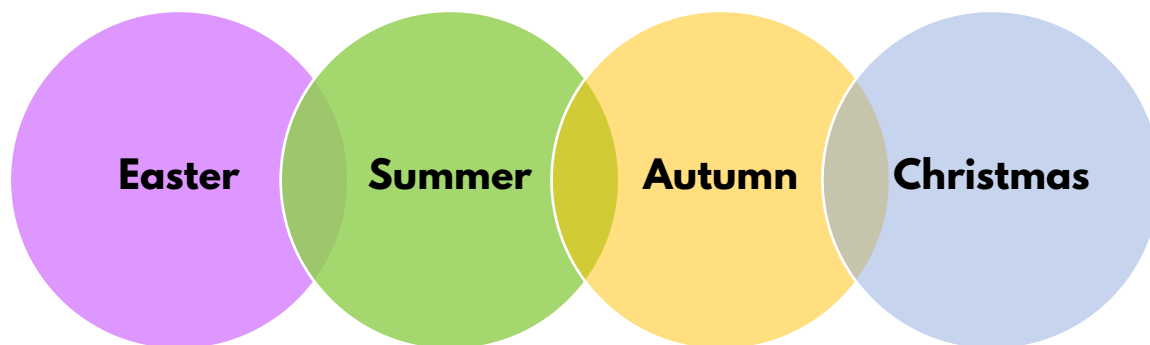
→ The epicenter of missional action is in our THRIVE Groups, which intentionally plan creative ways to build relationships in their neighborhoods by doing good works... which lead to good news opportunities. Training in relational evangelism will be essential for the success of this work.

**Action Step:** If you're not in a THRIVE Group or would like to be a leader or host, contact Pastor Dale: [demery@mayfairbible.org](mailto:demery@mayfairbible.org).

**Attractional:** In the same way, as thriving followers of Jesus pray for and invest in the lives of lost people, they also recognize there are certain seasons on the calendar during which a spiritual seeker or friend in the community may be far more likely to attend a worship service or special event. Through friend-to-friend invitations, social media advertising, community promotion, and canvassing, we collectively **invite** men, women, and children to **visit** Mayfair Bible Church, so they, too, may belong to Jesus, thrive in Jesus, and go with Jesus, i.e. join the path of discipleship. Second, in times of crisis (financial, marital, familial, medical, national, etc.), many people are likely to seek help from a church or counseling organization.

→ The epicenter of our attractional work is two-fold: (1) specific seasonal outreach events designed to plant gospel seeds in the soil of hearts, and (2) the physical plant of the THRIVE Center, which will be multi-use to meet the multivalent needs of our community. The goal? Persistently pray, love, invest, and invite people to Jesus.

**We'll focus our gospel-attractional work around 4 events that can be linked together for follow up:**



**We will typically have one attractional all-hands-on-deck event per season.**

3 Must-Do's: invite people into a relationship with Christ, invite them to visit Mayfair on Sunday, and invite them to the next seasonal event. (All in verbal and/or written form)

## The 4 Upcoming Gospel-Attractional Events:

1. Christmas: NATIVITY LIVE → Inviting to Christmas Season Services
2. Easter: EASTER EGG Drop → Inviting to Good Friday/Easter Services
3. Summer: VBS | ELEVATE Outreach → Inviting to Trunk r' Treat + Sunday Services
4. Autumn: TRUNK R' TREAT (or similar) → Inviting to Christmas Services + Sundays

## Our Front Porch

As people are invited through a relationship or an attractional event to visit Mayfair, we recognize that we must update many aspects of our overall “front porch” to the community for each and every Sunday. This is why we’ve recently formed a Welcome Team to provide a single point of direction and vision for all our ushers, welcome desk hosts, door greeters, and parking lot attendants.

**Action Step:** If you would like to serve in this simple yet fun role, simply email the church: [office@mayfairbible.org](mailto:office@mayfairbible.org).

We are also making specific strides forward in the appearance of our Children’s Ministry wing and Child Check-In Zone. Just as Mayfair began 90 years ago as the *Gospel Lighthouse* to reach neighborhood children, so we are again throwing our weight to the wheel of reaching kids for Christ, and thereby reaching their parents, too!

**Action Step:** If you are interested in serving with THRIVE Kids, email or call our Children’s Ministry Director, Paula: [pdaughenbaugh@mayfairbible.org](mailto:pdaughenbaugh@mayfairbible.org).

## The Thrive Center

As outlined above, there are numerous needs in our mission field. For this reason, we are absolutely thrilled by God’s provision of the Thrive Center building, as well as our growing relationship with FCOC (Flushing Christian Outreach Center). We are a member church (along with 7 other churches) of FCOC, which has been a permanent location for food and clothing distribution in Flushing for the past 15 years.

Their board and ours have voted to move their operations to the middle suite of the Thrive Center. This will give them nearly double the square footage of their current location and allow all of us to expand services to men, women, and children in the community. Terry Bigelow, FCOC’s executive director, is discussing with our leaders the possibility of ministry to those in need of “wrap-around services,” such as counseling, medical attention, hearing-aids, eye-glasses, job-coaching, housing, etc. We look forward to a greater level of involvement church-wide as we seek to display the mercy of Jesus to those in need.

## What about the rest of the building?

The front suite (approx. 2,000 sq. ft.) will likely serve as a multi-use community center room; creating welcoming environments that foster gospel-centered relationship: Organically-formed discipleship groups, Respite days for special-needs families, TESOL classes (Teaching English as Second Language), a Missional Coffee Shop for students and young adults, Live Music Nights, Thrive Group meet-ups, etc.



The back suite (approx. 1500 sq. ft.) appears to be the ideal location for space dedicated to a Christian counseling office. Our prayer is that God will provide licensed and lay-pastoral counselors to serve people full-time in this facility. Currently, our board voted to offer a 1-year lease to The Drum Shop, which would end September 2019. Our plan is to then proceed with the counseling center details above.



### **THRIVE CENTER → Excursus on Purpose:**

**Goal:** To love unreached, unengaged men, women, and children in our community by giving them the mercy and message of Jesus Christ.

**Objectives:** LOVE. INVEST. INVITE.

- **LOVE:** To love every person in our community through showing the unconditional love of Christ in tangible ways.
  - **Vision:** food, water, clothing, counseling, coaching, medicine, games, needs-based resources, teen/college-age activities, and safe, enjoyable family events.
- **INVEST:** To invest in long-term relationships with those we love through giving our time, talents, and treasures.
  - **Vision:** enjoying extended conversations in an unhurried, friendly, and comfortable environment; teaching and mentoring from what has been built into us; and giving financially to continue the ministry forward until Jesus returns.
- **INVITE:** To invite the lost to come home to God through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - **Vision:** well-trained disciples active in the process of multiplying through clear and compelling gospel conversations; offer personal invitations to

attend a weekend worship services at Mayfair Bible Church and join the path of discipleship.

## **Q: What would a missionary do?**

**Guiding Truth #1:** We all are *on mission*, empowered by the Holy Spirit to boldly and creatively bear witness of the risen Rescuer, Jesus Christ.

“...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

**Guiding Truth #2:** Good works are often the bridge to people receiving God's good news.

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:12)

“Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.” (Titus 3:14)

**Action Step:** If you sense God directing you to serve in any possible capacity with the THRIVE CENTER simply contact Pastor Michael: [mbreznau@mayfairbible.org](mailto:mbreznau@mayfairbible.org).

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## **PLANTING & REPLANTING CHURCHES**

The needs across our mission field span different generations, various ethnicities, and many unique cultures. The sheer number of lost people in Genesee County can be daunting. The challenges might even seem scary. Yet the Word of God compels us to go across cultural, ethnic, and generational divides with the Gospel of Christ.

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*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

*(Acts 1:8)*

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Mission strategists such as David Platt, J.D. Greear, Francis Chan, and Ed Stetzer point to church-planting as the most effective way of reaching lost people in a new location. Unchurched, de-churched, and unreached people groups are far more likely to visit a

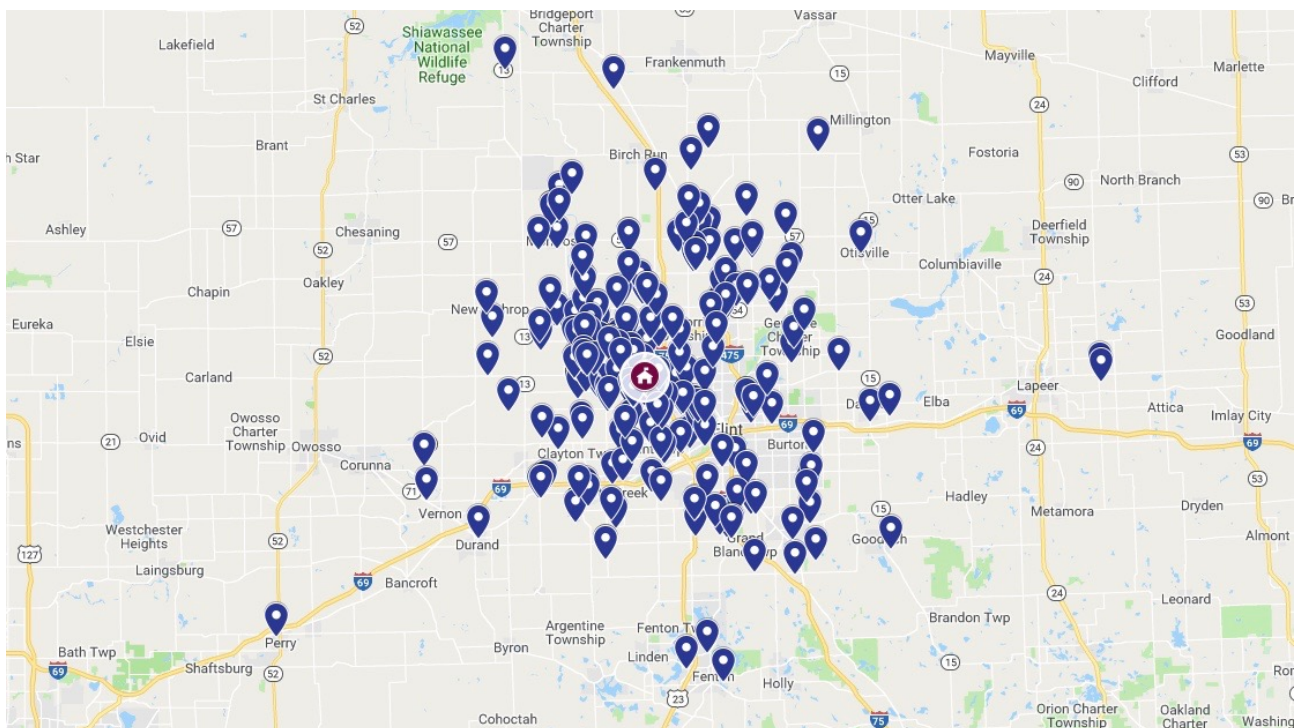
church plant or church “re-plant” than they are a long-established one. Reasons for this vary. But one thing is certain: we aim to spread God's good news until every man, woman, and child in Genesee County is thriving in Jesus. Our mission won't be done until Jesus returns. So, we follow His call to discipleship. Healthy disciples make disciples and healthy churches are reproducing, church-planting churches.

**Vision Goal:** To plant or revitalize a gospel-centered, Bible-teaching, missional church in every zip code in Genesee County. Why? Because church plants and church re-launches are the most effective way to reach the lost in a local community. There are currently 23 general zip codes in Genesee County, about 410,000 people, of which 80-85% are not born-again Christians.

**Side-note:** Regarding the concept of “replanting,” per Dr. Bixby's church-wide report in September, there's been scattered discussion about the recommendation to rename Mayfair Bible Church. However, I want you to know that this is rather low priority and not something we're looking to do in the immediate future. If, at some point, we decide to move forward with the recommendation to change our name, it would be for these three specific reasons:

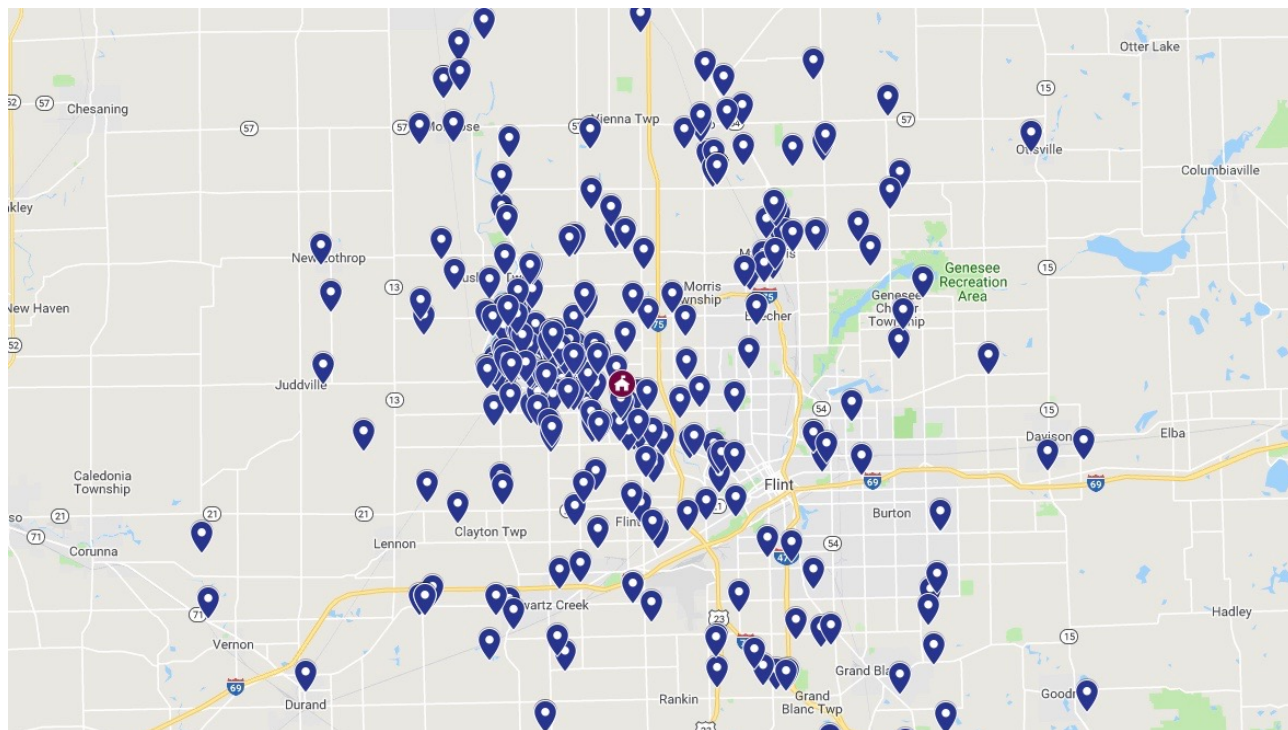
- 1) A name based on mission and vision not a specific geographical location.
- 2) The ability to campus and/or plant churches with the same name across Genesee County.
- 3) All the benefits intrinsic to a grand re-opening - high level of renewed interest and exposure in our community.

**Where Are We?** The following map pins the 354 household locations of Mayfair's members and regular attenders:





**Here's another map, slightly zoomed in:**



## **Planting Timeline**

Our prayer-goal is to plant or replant our first daughter church in 2024 (5 years from now). From that point forward, our vision is to plant one more additional church every year after that until a gospel-centered, missional church is located in all 23 general zip codes of Genesee County.

## **Training and Launching**

However, a goal like this requires developing servant-leaders for the task. To this end, please join with me in prayer that God will raise up pastor-planters to be trained and sent out into God's harvest. Our church-planting vision will only begin as we cultivate a full-orbed strategy and training program for those God raises up from within or outside of Mayfair Bible Church for the deeply challenging yet rewarding call of church-planting.

## **CONCLUSION**

**We exist to multiply thriving followers of Jesus.** I envision a day when hundreds of new believers are flourishing in their walk with Christ and reduplicating the same process of discipleship in another person's life. Yet for this to occur, we must be obedient to Christ's call to discipleship. We must SEE, FEEL, and RESPOND like Jesus to the people of our mission field. Let's pray for faith, wisdom, and courage to pursue God's mission to the praise of His glorious grace!

# APPENDIX Doc #1

**Note:** This is provided because of Bernstein's rich insight on Christian history and how we, as Jesus-followers, were the driving force behind caring for the physical needs of all people, regardless of ethnic or class distinction. Political comments embedded therein are not necessarily the opinions or beliefs of Mayfair Bible Church or our pastors.

## The Oldest New Deal

*April 1, 2000*

**Michael Bernstein**

Everybody thinks we should feed the poor, and everybody always has. At least, one would be excused for thinking so in modern America. Despite vast disagreements on family life, economic structure, and other fundamental goals, virtually all Americans believe that the poor should be fed, clothed, and housed. The Left and Right disagree on methods but not on the goal. In spite of moral relativism, we seem to have stumbled upon a universal moral maxim. How did we find it?

Some insight may be found in a most unusual episode in Roman imperial history: the establishment of the Roman welfare system. In 361 AD the Christian emperor Constantius died and Julian became sole ruler. In his youth he had studied under a Neo-Platonist and privately converted from Christianity to paganism. When he ascended to the throne Julian publicly revealed his conversion and earned his epithet, 'the Apostate.' He organized public sacrifices of oxen to the Roman gods, frequently performing them himself, and set about reviving the polytheistic religion that Christianity had replaced. Much to his surprise, Julian found that he could not initiate a Pagan Great Awakening by stripping Christianity of its imperial support.

Julian hated Christianity, but he understood that it flourished under martyrdom, so he took non-violent measures to stamp it out. The emperor barred Christians from all imperial offices and positions of prestige. He closed several major cathedrals. He also forbade Christians to teach grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, since the classic works in these subjects were produced by a pagan culture. Yet even these measures proved insufficient to revive paganism.

Julian blamed the failure of his project on the Christians and their charity. They were making the pagans look bad: 'The impious Galileans support not only their own poor, but ours as well,' Julian observed in a letter to his high priests. He believed that much of Christianity's appeal grew out of its humanitarianism. Julian had nothing but contempt for the Christians; he insisted on referring to them as 'Galileans' to emphasize their provincial roots. But paganism was just not competitive without charity.

The essential problem for Julian was that pagan hospitality extended only to one's own kind. The Roman Empire was a multicultural society whose provinces shared little in the way of culture. The constituent groups of the swiftly united Empire were of different races, spoke different languages, and practiced different religions. Their imperial government exacted nothing other than taxes and obedience. It was, in many ways, an example of the multicultural vision of America.

Unlike Americans, however, the people of the Roman Empire only took care of their own. Charity began and ended with one's own group in society, whether it was national or religious. A citizen of Sicily considered other Sicilians to be his neighbors; the problems of Gaul were of no concern to him. Pagans would never have fed the Christian poor either.

Against this backdrop, the Christian practice of universal charity was surprising and attractive. So Julian wanted it demolished. Instead of resorting to the harsh methods of his persecuting predecessors, Julian channeled imperial resources into an emulation of Christian charity. He ordered his pagan hierarchy to establish hospices for anyone in need, 'not only those of our own number,' and to provide wine and wheat to the poor for free. He further instructed his priests to 'accustom Hellenes to acts of good will of this kind.' The fractured multicultural world of the Roman Empire, in which everyone cared only for his own, was to be reconfigured into an imperial welfare system for the purpose of imitating the hated enemy.

It was an act contrary to pagan tradition and to the diverse Empire Julian governed. Julian did not claim it was an inherently good idea: He reassured his priests in the text of his letters that his purpose was only to take from the Christians the credit they had earned from their good works. He wanted to wipe them out, and he assumed that once an imperial system for feeding and housing the poor had been established, the Christian charitable societies would die out. It was a very clever idea: to beat the Christians by appropriating one of their most appealing practices.

That this idea was ever Christian has been lost on our society. We are daily casting off the restraints of Christian morality, and regular church attendance is limited to a small fraction of our population. Yet we hold on to the idea that the poor should be clothed and fed, having largely rejected the religion that produced it.

Indeed, if the Left succeeds in turning America into a multicultural society, there is every reason to believe that Americans will, just like their Roman predecessors, begin to care only for members of their self-proclaimed identity. If you think of yourself as a homosexual or a WASP or a Pakistani before an American, you will naturally wonder what the plight of other Americans has to do with you. Universal charity was never obvious before the Christian era, as Julian well understood. And multiculturalism, by itself, will never produce universal charity.

Julian died in battle nine months after he sent out the orders for the welfare system. Since his predecessors did not continue the scheme, we do not know how it would have worked out. But the American experience with welfare seems to validate Julian's plan. President Roosevelt believed that the New Deal would not discourage the charitable and mutual-aid societies that had been serving the American poor previously, but Julian knew better. Christianity itself did not die out, as Julian had hoped, but much of its charitable work did. Likewise, private welfare organizations and societies shrank to a small fraction of their former size once the New Deal went into effect. They have remained so to this day.

The flip side is that Christian societies were quite able to take care of the poor in the Roman Empire and in America. For Julian, this was the entire problem: the 'Galileans' had raised expectations in the Empire that a revived paganism would have to meet. Christians were feeding both their own poor and the pagan poor as well.

Just as Julian only established the welfare programs for the temporary purpose of defeating Christianity, so too were Roosevelt's welfare programs originally intended to vanish as soon as the Depression did. Unfortunately, the program was not retired but advanced, with disastrous consequences.

Can the genie be put back in the bottle? That is, could the welfare system be rolled back entirely and the burden shifted to private charitable institutions? That depends on how seriously we take the maxim of universal charity. From these historical examples, it appears that a nation of Christians would have no trouble. Even a nation of people who consider all Americans to be their fellow citizens might pull it off. Julian would be the first to say, however, that a bunch of disparate cultures will not incline to this practice any more than the Roman Empire did. He would consign universal charity to the same rubbish bin as Christianity, and there appears to be very little standing in the way of America doing the same thing.

Michael Bernstein, PhD

Yale University | Yale Free Press | <https://yalefreepress.sites.yale.edu/news/oldest-new-deal>

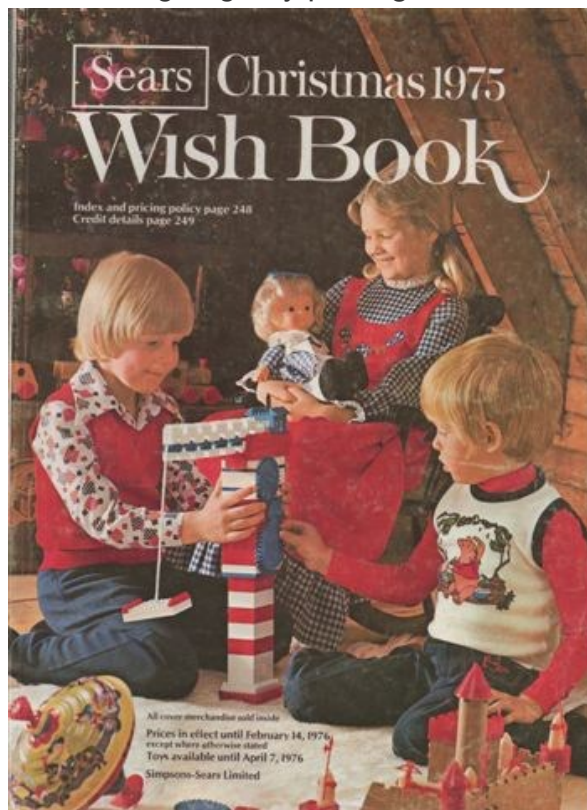
## APPENDIX Doc #2

### Sears' Bankruptcy: An Analogy of Church Stagnancy

By Michael Breznau on Oct 15, 2018 | [www.GraceExposed.org](http://www.GraceExposed.org)

Early this morning, Sears, that age-old department store of yesteryear, declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy, hammering several “16-penny” nails into their quickly closing coffin.[1]

100 years ago, Sears-Roebuck and Co. was second to none. They defined the term *cutting edge* by placing their colorful mail-order catalogs in nearly every home



across America. Little children giggled over the huge toy section. Moms coveted the latest Kenmore kitchen appliances. Dads stashed away their pennies to buy lifetime-guaranteed Craftsman tools. But now the former industry leader, once perched on the lofty heights of Chicago's Sears Tower, is seeing all those warm, fuzzy feelings vanish like a bullfrog atop quicksand.

Change is essential to survival.

Making wrong, maladaptive changes = death.

Making right, adaptive changes = health.

Sears didn't need to change their product line. Craftsman, Kenmore, Lands End, et al., were rock solid brands. But failure to courageously and creatively present their products to a rapidly changing culture led to total collapse.

Now the privilege of presenting a product has been slowly scraped from their hands. They battened down the hatches, squeezed employees, chopped marketing, and ignored *the* opportunity of the Internet (they could have been Amazon on their own, as Elizabeth Olson of [Fortune magazine wisely opined six years ago](#)). Sears let their



buildings grow both dated and dilapidated. Two months ago, my wife and I wandered through the Sears store in a nearby mall. We were greeted by vacant shelves, dirty floors, and disinterested employees, who had been hired only to shutter the location. A slow, painful demise rolled out in front of our eyes.

CNN's Chris Isidore reports:

“...many of Sears’ problems were self-inflicted. Its management tried to compete by closing stores and cutting costs. It slashed spending on advertising and it failed to invest in the upkeep and modernization of its outlets. Sears and Kmart stores grew barren and rundown. . . Sears was once the nation’s largest retailer and its largest employer. In its heyday, it was both the Walmart and Amazon of its time.” [2]

So today, Sears, “the store that changed America,” declares bankruptcy. Into the dusty archives she goes, along with former giants like Toys R’ Us, Kodak, and KMart.

## **A Tale of Church Stagnancy**

Understand this: the global Church of the living God will continue marching forward by the power of the Spirit through the faithful witness of the Gospel. We, as the people of God, are on the offensive. We do not doubt the words of Jesus, who said, “...I will build My church; and the gates of hell will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:19b)

However, at a local level, thousands of once thriving churches stand in real danger of losing the opportunity to present the gospel of Christ in their communities.

I recently read detailed reports of a Bible-believing church in the Chicago area that used to be over 1,100 worshipers strong. Over the course of 35 years, their Saturday morning evangelism team passed out 17 million gospel tracts, engaged 540,000 people in gospel conversation, led 140,000 people to faith in Christ, sent out 250 men and women into full-time Christian service, and planted 18 churches.

Yet today, their regal building appears cavernous on Sunday mornings with just a handful of parishioners scattered across the hundreds of empty chairs. One look inside the sanctuary shows not much has changed in over 50 years. Their community dramatically shifted over the past several decades and somewhere along the way their

evangelistic fervor and creativity disappeared. I'm praying God grants this struggling congregation the courage and faith to reach their community in a fresh way. But their story is repeated from coast-to-coast across North America. 100-200 churches are closing their doors every single week in the USA. Yes, you got that right: Every. Single. Week. [3]

***We don't need to change our product.*** The saving message of Jesus Christ is timeless, unchanging, and rock solid. The Word of God is an unshakeable guide in an era of uncertainty, fear, and doubt. We have tasted and seen the truth that the Gospel brings radical life-transformation.

But we, as individual believers and local churches, *must* make the right, adaptive changes to effectively present God's good news in a rapidly changing culture.

***Change is essential to survival.***

A few generations ago, mainline-liberal churches chose to make a devastatingly maladaptive change: remove or ignore essential teachings of Christian faith and practice. The result? A slow, painful death. Today, many evangelical churches are shifting their sails and listing sideways toward this same hollow theological-liberalism, desperately hoping they don't lose the opportunity to offer *something* to their communities. Sidenote: I wrote my master's thesis on this subject. [Click HERE](#) to access the PDF.

***Making wrong, maladaptive changes = death.***

Yet for tens-of-thousands of gospel-preaching, Jesus-loving churches, the struggle to change methodology, communication, and aesthetics is slow and often rife with infighting. Even as men, women, and children veer away from our parking lots in search of authentic hope and love, many congregations embroil themselves in debates over interior decor, declining budgets, and pet-programs. While many churches have moved beyond the "worship wars" of the 1990s, still thousands of others remain in the fight, unaware that the very scent of it repels young adults faster than Deet on Michigan mosquitoes.

### ***Making right, adaptive changes = health.***

So what kind of changes lead toward health? As was the case for the various corporations mentioned above, the answer to this question is different for every local context. Each church must ask: “What would a missionary do *because*, in fact, we all are missionaries in \_\_\_\_\_?” How your church answers this question will probably look significantly different than how we answer it here at [Mayfair Bible Church](#). But here are four simple points to consider with your team:

### **Flexible.**

Take risks. Act on your faith by trying new approaches to reach your mission field (see 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 17:16-34). Some ideas will sound great but fail miserably. That’s okay. In fact, the process of ideation, implementation, and execution will result in healthy evaluation and long-term ministry effectiveness. Own up to your mistakes and be ready to give grace to others. Free people to use their various God-given gifts and skills in different ways. Don’t force artists to paint with only your ideas on your preferred canvas. Allow missional thinkers to contextualize and form initiatives to reach their spheres of influence. Let go of the top-down approach to leadership that causes organizations to squash and splat like an over-filled ketchup bottle. Don’t take rejection or ambivalence from others personally. Realize you won’t reach everyone. Your church won’t be the perfect place for every family. Get ready for hate-mail (Jesus received lots of it; cf. Jn. 15:18-21; 2 Tim. 3:12). Roll with it and pray through it (Phil. 4:4-7). Be one in mind and heart as a church (Phil. 1:27), because as Chuck Swindoll often reminded us in chapel at [Dallas Seminary](#), “The things that unite us are far more important than the things that divide us.”

### **Fun.**

Jesus laughed and sang. He told stories and enjoyed weddings, which most certainly included happy-hearted dancing (cf. Jn. 2:1-11; Lk. 15). Jesus had fun. I’m convinced of it! We should be having fun if we’re loving each other and our community in the same way Jesus loves us. Being the church *gathered* should cause all of us – the young and old alike – to genuinely smile. We’ll laugh out loud when we remember the goofy idiosyncrasies of our younger years and respond with fun-loving patience toward each other – especially the littlest ones in the church (Matt. 18:2-6; 19:13-15). We won’t make a fuss over things of small consequence, knowing life is too short to not have fun

working together for the cause of greatest consequence: the Gospel. (see Phil. 4:2-2; 2 Tim. 2:14)

## **Fast-Paced.**

Hold on for the ride of your life. Based on my ministry experience in Texas, Montana, India, Mexico, North Carolina, and various Michigan locations, along with current research data, I believe we must recognize how rapidly our mission fields are changing. The breakneck speed of technological advancement, the popularity of neo-Atheism, along with burgeoning movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #BlueLivesMatter, #AntiFa, #WhiteSupremacy, and heightened political tensions are forming how people respond to church institutions, preaching, and simple neighborly interaction. Many urban and suburban settings in North America are quickly becoming holistically multi-ethnic. God is bringing the nations to cities all around us. Don't look at this change as an obstacle but as an opportunity. Are you effectively reaching across ethnic and economic divides? The first-century church *did* (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; Philemon 1:10-16)! Does your programming and interior design look like something left over from the 1960s... how about the 1990s? I'll go out on a limb and state that none of us would frequent a dentist that hadn't updated the office decor in 20 years and used methods based on research just as old. Yes, he or she is accomplishing the same task: cleaning your teeth and filling cavities. But using current aesthetics and techniques to accomplish those tasks matters to everyone. Are you living in the past – even idolizing the past – at the expense of effective gospel mission?

The late Lesslie Newbigin, a renowned missiologist reminded us:

“Nostalgia for the past and fear for the future are equally out of place for the Christian.” Are you seeking to communicate the timeless and powerful Gospel of Christ in a way your neighbors will comprehend? Do you know what they value most? Could you articulate their worldview? As I heard a teacher from New Tribes Mission (now Ethnos 360) put it simply, “We must first to understand them before we can reach them.”

## **Focused.**

Hone everything around the mission. Jesus gave a simple, clear mission to His first-followers and His instructions carry across time to all of us today:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”  
(Matt. 28:19-20)

Take the ruthlessly bold action of gearing your programs and ministries – what you do and how you allocate your resources – around making disciples who make disciples. Suspend what is extraneous or ineffective. Pray deeply for God to send laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38; Lk. 10:2). Be prepared to serve as His answer to your prayers. Lean into change for the gospel’s sake. Lose your life for Christ...and in losing your life, find life as it was meant to be lived (Mark 8:34-38). As my teacher, Howard Hendricks, proclaimed, “Change is the call of every Christ-follower.” So may we, by the grace of God, not lose the opportunity to present the timeless, saving message of our Savior in a rapidly changing world.

In Christ Alone,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael J. Bremer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.