

AWAKENING CHURCH

MISSIONS: THEOLOGY & STRATEGY

At Awakening Church, our understanding of Christian mission comes from our understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the story of new creation - that in Jesus, God conquered death and will one day make all of creation new and whole. We feel all too deeply that the world is not as it should be; we see the pain caused by the poverty of resources and relationships in our neighborhoods, our cities, our countries, and our world. But we also know that one day the world will be made right and we see a glimpse of this beginning to happen through the resurrection of Jesus. As the theologian N. T. Wright says “Once we get the resurrection straight, we can and must get mission straight. [...] People who believe in the resurrection, in God making a whole new world in which everything will be set right at last, are unstoppably motivated to work for that new world in the present” (*Surprised by Hope* 193, 214).

[...] And if we believe it and pray, as he taught us, for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, there is no way we can rest with major injustice in the world. [...] The final putting to rights of everything does indeed wait for the last day. We must therefore avoid the arrogance or triumphalism of... imagining that we can build the kingdom by our own efforts without the need for a further divine act of new creation. But we must agree... that doing justice in the world is part of the Christian task” (*Surprised by Hope* 213, 215, 216). Indeed, the prophet Micah reminds us: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, NIV).

For these reasons, we are called to acts of justice, beauty, and evangelism as we participate in the kingdom of God here and now. We are all impoverished in some way – socio-economically, spiritually, emotionally, etc. With this understanding, we place primary focus on partnership & empowerment. We do not do things for people that they can do for themselves. Rather, we employ an assets based approach, which incorporates four key elements (adapted from *When Helping Hurts*):

- Identifying and mobilizing the capabilities, skills and resources of the individual or community.
- Looking for resources and solutions to come from *within* the individual or community, not from the outside.
- Seeking to build and re-build relationships among local individuals, associations, churches, businesses, schools, governments, etc.
- Bringing in outside resources *only* when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs, always being careful to not bring in resources that are too much or too early and never undermining local capacity or initiative.

We recognize that our missional partnerships with others will take on different forms depending on our discernment of specific needs and contexts. These approaches (adapted from *When Helping Hurts*) are:

- **Relief:** providing urgent and temporary emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made disaster.
- **Rehabilitation:** restoring people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis condition, working with them as they participate in their own recovery.
- **Development:** moving all people involved—“helpers” and “helped”—forward together closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.

Ultimately, as we engage in poverty alleviation, we believe that “Poverty alleviation is about reconciling people’s relationships, not about putting bandages over particular manifestations of the underlying brokenness. [...] The good news of the gospel of the Kingdom is that Christ is not just sustaining all things, but He is also reconciling all things” (*When Helping Hurts* 128, 129). As a result, the major force of our missional energy is spent doing long-term development work through sustainable projects and responsible commitments which ultimately seek to restore right relationships with God, self, others, and creation.

This commitment to long-term development also influences our approach to short-term missions. We believe that short-term mission trips should be “done as a part of a long-term, asset-based, development approach being implemented by local ministries” (*When Helping Hurts* 170). Rather than one-off trips consisting of large groups to various parts of the world, our goal is to send multiple, smaller groups of individuals to one part of the world consistently, year after year. These groups will focus on learning and responsibly supporting the efforts of our partner ministry in that part of the world.

Quoted and paraphrased from: *Surprised by Hope*, N. T. Wright and *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Micah 6:8 (NIV): He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Isaiah 61 (NIV)

¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

² to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks; will work your fields and vineyards.

⁶ And you will be called priests of the Lord, will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, in their riches you will boast.

⁷ Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

⁸“For I, the Lord, love justice; hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”

¹⁰I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Philippians 2:3-11 (NIV)

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father