

MISSION VENTURA CHURCH

Systems and Strategy for a
Fast-Growing Church Plant



Mike and Jodi Hickerson, T.D. and Jen Oakes, and Jim and Dynell Sheldon moved to Ventura, CA in 2011 from Rockford, IL and Heartland Community Church to launch Mission Ventura, a church committed to offering “Hope for Everyone.” Although none of the leadership team had much experience in church planting, Mission has grown from a relatively small core group on launch day to almost 1,000 in average weekend attendance.

In a post-Christian city just north of Los Angeles, the church is reaching skeptics and developing believers with practical teaching, authentic worship experiences, partnerships with local organizations, and some of the best parties in the community. Big celebrations and great parties are a core value at Mission!

Hope for Everyone.

Meeting the Challenge of Growth

Although Mission's rapid growth was a blessing, it meant the leadership team was often "building the plane while in the air." Events like "Free Family Flicks," with popcorn, inflatables, games, and outdoor movies, or "A Night to Remember," a free prom for special needs students, encouraged hundreds of people to check out the church – but also left Mission's leaders scrambling to maintain a consistent message across ministries.

As lead pastor Mike Hickerson says, "There is so much time and energy and fundraising and prayer that goes into

starting a church. We found ourselves two years in realizing we needed just as much time, energy, and effort devoted to what comes next, and we'd never done this before. A pastor friend told me your Easter attendance is where you'll be in September attendance three years later, but for us that timeline was cut in half, and we were growing to those numbers in 18 months. We needed to step back and evaluate what we were doing and how. I feel like God gave us a gift in Intentional Churches."

SMALL GROUPS



Church family
in small groups

100% Growth!



In small groups
(and on pace!!)

BAPTISM

44%
Increase from
2014 to 2016



150

Average weekly
attendance in
AA & NA



FUN FACTS

16 out of the past 268
weekends it has rained
(really!!)



2,520 Donut Holes
currently served each
week



New Insights, New Impact



By thinking through their pathway of engagement, the team realized they needed a defined “funnel” for connection, a map of how people new to Mission Ventura could take next steps. They also devoted time to developing a profile of their “primary newcomer” and adjusting ministry strategy around these insights. This process helped Mission identify “Johnny Cash” – a guy in his late 30s, probably not married but in a relationship, probably bringing some kids, and quite often dealing with addiction issues – as the target that would inform key strategies for evangelism and discipleship.

“This person also probably has some baggage with church but he’s out of options,” Mike Hickerson says, “and he’s decided if there’s hope at our church he’ll give it a shot but it needs to be real.”

As a result of this insight, the church began hosting AA and NA meetings, developed a pastoral care and recovery team, and also rethought their approach to children’s ministry in light of what “Johnny Cash’s” kids might need.

“ This person also probably has some baggage with church but he’s out of options. ”

Winning as a Team

These breakthroughs happened during our Intentional GrowthPlan two-day installation. This experience included both large group discussion and smaller, cross ministry “WIN” (What’s Important Now) teams to gain perspective about today and clarify the most important steps for the future.

As a rapidly-growing church, Mission faced no shortage of things they could do to move their ministry forward, but cross-ministry WIN teams helped them identify several initiatives they must do to have the greatest Kingdom impact. In addition to developing goals for reaching their primary newcomer more effectively, the teams also decided to create a “volunteer culture of values” to govern behaviors and shape culture. Many of the church’s key leaders are unpaid volunteers, and developing a standard of what is expected of all ministry leaders as well as a perspective on the big-picture goals for the church was key in providing quality and consistency in every ministry.

The team also worked with the Intentional Churches team to develop a Vision Dashboard, a key feature of every Intentional GrowthPlan. This dashboard provides clear goals for every ministry area, and the Mission leaders were so enthusiastic about the tool that they went on to create “sub-dashboards” for each ministry. In addition to volunteers, Mission has a number of younger leaders who want to “win” but don’t always know how to keep score, and these aspects of the Intentional GrowthPlan helped them determine what matters most – and how to do it as a team.

AVERAGE WEEKEND ATTENDANCE GROWTH

584
2014

965
2016

65%
Growth

*and on track to double
in less than five years!*

Continued Growth, Greater Alignment

“We were trying to figure out what to do next, but we got more than that – they gave us a system for how to think.”

Although the church had to deal with several staff transitions in the middle of implementing their plan, the common focus generated by the experience made it easier to take action, and the accountability of a coach kept them on track. The operating system was also helpful since it gave common language for the Mission team to discuss challenges and make decisions after the initial experience.

Intentional Churches works with leadership teams to clarify vision and a plan to double their Kingdom impact in five years or less, and Mission is once again ahead of schedule. They began working with Intentional Churches with an average attendance of 600 and a goal to double in three years; just two years later, they are on target with their goals with an average attendance of 940.

Currently, Mission is planning to move into a new facility and as these new opportunities bring new challenges, they continue to rely on their initial work with Intentional Churches. We will be renewing their Intentional GrowthPlan as they continue the journey of learning the tools and operating system.

“This has been training in leadership and operational planning,” says executive pastor Jim Sheldon. “We were trying to figure out what to do next, but we got more than that – they gave us a system for how to think. It was worth every penny.”

Whether you’re a new church plant or a congregation with decades of ministry behind you, Intentional Churches can help you unify around a new vision, identify the key priorities, and develop an action plan to get there so you can multiply your impact again and again.



www.intentionalchurches.com
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