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Missional Church Learning Experience Guidelines **American Baptist Home Mission Societies**

Thank you for your interest in the *Missional Church Learning Experience* (MCLE). These guidelines are to help you determine whether this opportunity would benefit your efforts in effective church ministry. To ask questions or discuss details after reading this information, please contact the Rev. Glynis LaBarre, transformation strategist, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), at glynis.labarre@abhms.org or 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2412.

Overview

Churches throughout America are seeking ways to bring vitality to their ministries. While a great deal of talk is heard about the Missional Church Movement, ideas need to be practiced to become effective. The MCLE is designed to introduce churches to the Missional Church Movement through practical, hands-on experience with other church teams that form a Learning Community.

This mission focus for the church is based on the belief that God created the Church to deliver the good news for humanity through communities of faith that display God's love among themselves as they work to deliver Christ's message of God's love to the world. When a church is "on mission" with God, it is demonstrating the gospel as Christ did, through word and deed, delivered in loving relationships empowered by God's Spirit. Christians strengthen each other for this work by forming Christian communities (local churches) that inspire through worship, train for effective mission and support disciples to serve as God's life giving agents.

When a church forgets God's purpose, it can become a self-serving entity. Refocusing outward on God's mission in a community helps Christians regain purpose, bringing life and vitality to the church. As Christians become engaged with people in the community in caring ways, their own discipleship improves and the community sees *Christianity that works—faith that makes a difference—to everyone's advantage.*

You are invited...

If your association of churches would like to form an MCLE with ABHMS, together, we will accomplish the following:

- create a Learning Community of mission teams from 6-12 churches;
- introduce basic missional principles in an 8-month period through 3 sessions in person and 4 technology training sessions (1 hour each);
- help church teams design and implement a small, interactive community involvement that practices missional principles;
- equip church teams with healthy repeatable patterns to multiply missional efforts; and
- share what is learned with the Learning Community and other churches for continued growth in missional effectiveness.

If this sounds like something your association of churches might be interested in, please read on.



Missional Church Learning Experience **American Baptist Home Mission Societies**

Association of churches' responsibilities:

- Express a desire to participate in an MCLE by contacting the Rev. Glynis LaBarre, transformation strategist at ABHMS, and schedule a review of these MCLE Guidelines.
 - 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2412, or glynis.labarre@abhms.org
- Provide a Coordinator (volunteer, lay or clergy) to work with the MCLE Facilitator to implement the MCLE in the following ways:
 - complete the MCLE Request form, signed by a representative of the requesting association of churches;
 - recruit 6-12 churches to participate in a Learning Community, making every effort to encourage diverse ethnic participation (Addendum A);
 - make host and worship arrangements for the 3 MCLE in-person sessions for the Learning Community over an 8-month period;
 - provide support for the Learning Community between training sessions with assistance from the MCLE Facilitator; and
 - help improve the MCLE process by participating in the Coordinators' Advisory Council (CAC)—an advisory group of MCLE coordinators—through conference calls and other occasional opportunities.
- Share lessons learned within the association of churches and ABHMS.

Participating churches' responsibilities:

- accept the invitation to participate in an MCLE Learning Community by signing the MCLE Covenant Agreement (Addendum A) and returning it to the local Coordinator;
- gather a mission team of 5 participants for the 8-month period (Addendum A);
- participate in the 3 in-person sessions and 4 technology training sessions of the MCLE Learning Community;
- complete the 4-Step process to practice healthy repeatable patterns for community ministry;
- design and implement a small community involvement to practice missional principles, investing church resources of time, money and energy in community partnerships; and
- share what is learned through the experience with others in the Learning Community, the association of churches and ABHMS.

MCLE Facilitator's responsibilities:

- review the MCLE Guidelines with representatives of the church association, and work with the designated Coordinator to review the Learning Agreement (Addendum B) and MCLE Request;
- provide the Coordinator with MCLE materials to help establish an MCLE Learning Community;
- implement the MCLE process in cooperation with the Coordinator over the 8-month period, including 3 in-person sessions and 4 technology sessions;
- support the Learning Community between sessions with the Coordinator's assistance;
- share lessons learned by participating churches with other churches for the good of all;
- administer available grants to churches for support of community projects; and
- issue "Certificates of Completion" to churches that finish the MCLE process.



Missional Church Learning Experience **Proposed Time Line**

- Pre-launch
(1-3 months)
- Church association expresses interest in forming an MCLE Learning Community
- Review MCLE Guidelines with MCLE Facilitator
 - Select local Coordinator
 - Return completed MCLE Request
 - Select dates for all MCLE sessions
 - Invite churches to participate (use of MCLE materials)
 - Churches select mission team members
 - Plan Session 1
- Month 1-4
- Session 1 — “Getting Started on the Future”
- Worship
 - Our Current Reality
 - Introduction to the Missional Church Movement
 - Overview of MCLE process
 - Learning Community Covenant
- Technology session #1 — (1 hour)
- Step 1 — “Building Our Mission Team — Discipleship Central”
 - Step 2 — “Learning to Listen to Our Community”
- Technology session #2 — (1 hour)
- Step 3 — “Looking for Potential Mission Partners in Our Community”
 - Step 4 — “Discerning Our Part — Making a Plan”
- Month 5-8
- Session 2 — “Building Healthy Repeatable Patterns”
- Worship
 - Review results of 4-Step Process for community ministry
 - Present community project ideas
 - Apply missional principles to refine community project plans
 - Learning Community’s Commitment to Engagement
- Technology session #3 — “Multiplying Missional Efforts” (1 hour)
- Technology session #4 — “Change Skills” (1 hour)
- Session 3 — “Telling God’s Story”
- Worship
 - Church teams present their experience with community
 - Discuss Lessons Learned
 - Resources for Next Steps
 - Celebration of God’s Mission
- Beyond...
- Collect 1-page stories from churches to be shared with others
 - Issue “Certificates of Completion” to church teams that finish the process
 - Gather church assessments of the experience
 - Alumni group plans



(Addendum A)
Your Church is Invited to Participate in a
Missional Church Learning Experience
Church Covenant and Application

Your church is invited to participate in an 8-month experience designed to introduce churches to the Missional Church Movement to help them become more effective in demonstrating Christ's love with their communities. Your church will be a part of a Learning Community of churches that receives 3 in-person training sessions, supplemented by 4 technology sessions. You will practice the missional principles using a 4-Step Process to help you design and implement a small community engagement to practice healthy repeatable patterns for further community ministry. You will share your experience with other church teams in the Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) Learning Community.

This covenant represents mutual commitments by your local church, your local association of churches (name) and American Baptist Home Mission Societies toward the pursuit of a missional church ministry emphasis. Together, with God's leading, we can attain the goal of increasingly effective ministry.

The association of churches (name) agrees to:

1. Provide a local Coordinator to work with the MCLE Facilitator toward an effective Learning Community.
2. Convene an MCLE Learning Community of 6-12 church teams for an 8-month period.
2. Support your church's participation in the MCLE with regular communication.
3. Provide host arrangements and worship, during the session dates:

Session 1 — "Getting Started on the Future" _____ DATE _____

- Technology session #1 (1 hour) _____ DATE _____
- Technology session #2 (1 hour) _____ DATE _____

Session 2 — "Healthy Repeatable Patterns" _____ DATE _____

- Technology session #3 (1 hour) _____ DATE _____
- Technology session #4 (1 hour) _____ DATE _____

Session 3 — "Telling God's Story" _____ DATE _____

American Baptist Home Mission Societies agrees to:

1. Provide a trained MCLE Facilitator for all sessions.
2. Work with the local Coordinator and the **association of churches (name)** to support participating churches between the training events.
3. Share your church's learning experience with other churches for the good of all.



Covenanting congregation agrees to:

1. Form a Mission Team to learn on behalf of the congregation, consisting of the following:
 - the pastor (or appointed leader),
 - three lay leaders and
 - a young adult (aged 14-29).
2. Provide this agreement, signed by the Mission Team members, designating their willingness to make an 8-month commitment to the MCLE process.
3. Attend all 3 in-person sessions and 4 technology sessions.
4. Complete the 4-Step Process to practice healthy repeatable patterns for community ministry.
5. Using the results of the 4-Step Process, design and implement a small, interactive community involvement to practice missional principles, investing appropriate church resources.
6. Share what your team learns from this experience with the MCLE Learning Community, your association of churches and American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

NAME OF CHURCH _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

1. Pastor or appointed leader name (please print) _____

Signed _____ email _____

2. Team member name (please print) _____

Signed _____ email _____

3. Team member name (please print) _____

Signed _____ email _____

4. Team member name (please print) _____

Signed _____ email _____

5. Young adult team member name (please print) _____

Signed _____ email _____

Received by MCLE Coordinator _____

Date _____



(Addendum B)
**Missional Church Learning Experience
Learning Agreement**

1) Who will be your Coordinator? What is his or her understanding of the responsibilities expected?

2) How many churches will you recruit for the regional Learning Community?

- 6 minimum – 12 maximum
- Does your association of churches want to create multiple Learning Communities?

3) Select ALL dates for sessions: 4 months between in-person sessions

Session 1 _____

Technology #1 _____

Technology #2 _____

Session 2 _____

Technology #3 _____

Technology #4 _____

Session 3 _____

4) What are the hosting details for the 3 in-person sessions of the MCLE for the Learning Community? (i.e.: dates, time, location, meal, snacks, equipment, people involved, cost, worship)

5) How will the Learning Community churches be supported between sessions? Blog or chat room? Coach calls? Pastors' conference calls? How often? Who?

6) How will you share your MCLE Learning Community's experiences and lessons learned within your association of churches?

7) What follow-up plans need to be in place to keep the churches learning when the MCLE is over?

8) What else?



Missional Church Learning Experience Request American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Name of association of churches _____

Date of request _____

Name of Coordinator _____

Coordinator ministry position _____

Contact information for Coordinator:

Office (or home) phone _____ Mobile phone _____

Email _____

Mailing address _____

Having reviewed the MCLE Guidelines for the *Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE)*, we would like to participate by forming an MCLE Learning Community.

We are in agreement to do the following:

- provide a Coordinator to work with the MCLE Facilitator to implement an MCLE for our association of churches;
- form a Learning Community of mission teams from 6-12 churches, with signed agreements 30 days before Session 1 (Addendum A);
- host arrangements for the 3 in-person sessions of the Learning Community;
- provide support for Learning Community church teams between training sessions with assistance from the MCLE Facilitator;
- share lessons learned with other churches and ABHMS for the good of all; and
- prepare follow-up opportunities for the Learning Community.

Please sign and date:

Person requesting _____

Position _____ Date _____

Coordinator _____

Position _____ Date _____

Please return by postal mail or email to:

Rev. Glynis LaBarre, Transformation Strategist, American Baptist Home Mission Societies,
P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851, or glynis.labarre@abhms.org.

