

Missions Analysis

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Introduction to Missions Analysis

Explain in this section what you intend to accomplish in this paper.

If you ask ten different people what missions means, you'll get 10 different answers. Taking this class, I've learned that we all have different perspectives on missions. I've also learned that a lot of churches don't necessarily prioritize missions, but I was able to interview a pastor whose church appears to be doing a lot of different things to help the world. We had a conversation about the different areas that he and the church are doing missions in. Having this conversation with him I was able to get a better understanding of how churches can participate in missions, and this conversation also helped me to stir up some ideas within me about my future missions aspirations.

Interview Setting

I had the pleasure of interviewing pastor Samuel Nicholas, who is the senior pastor of Evangelical Crusade Christian Church, which is a church that is located in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn NY. He was ordained as a pastor in 2001 but became the senior pastor of the church in 2014. I interviewed pastor Sam on April the 12th in his office that is located inside of the church. We conversed for about 45 minutes. When I went in for the appointment, he was finishing up a meeting with a real estate agent, in which he informed me that the church has an empty commercial property that they are seeking to occupy with a social service company. In 2011 Pastor Sam began working with a mission's organization VIHAMO (Vision pour Haïti et pour le Monde), which he tells me is an acronym for vision for Haiti and the world in French. Pastor Maxo Joseph is the president of VIHAMO and back in 2011 he asked pastor Sam to be the United States representative of the organization. Pastor Sam mentions several different aspects of missions that he and the church participate in including affordable housing, a food

pantry, as well as a few social justice concerns particularly immigration reform for Haitian refugees. When I asked him why focus on doing missions for Haitians, he told me that's where he and his family are from.

Missions Description

When I asked pastor Sam how he defines missions he told me that at evangelical crusade church their perspective on missions has two aspects to it, local missions, and international missions. He considers the participation of missions that they partake in within the United States as local missions, he says that he calls that local mission because it is the role of them as a church to affect the community locally. He states that other churches might consider it as evangelism, but what they do to impact the community he considers it as missions. He stated for his church, local missions is them reaching out of the four walls of the church, it's not necessarily about them evangelizing and telling people to be saved, but rather they are actually giving people what they need while they are on earth. He mentions giving them food, giving them work, advocating for their needs, immigration resources, as well as holding the government accountable for doing what they are supposed to do.

In having this conversation with Pastor Sam, I came to understand that this church focuses on both the welfare needs of their community as well as the social needs of the community. The church does a food drive twice a month, in which they give away perishable items to their local community. Around the Thanksgiving holiday season, the church also does a Turkey drive in incorporation with their food pantry, hosts a lunch on Thanksgiving Day for the shelters in the area, as well as doing a coat drive in partnership with the local officials. The church has a great emphasis on police reform and immigration, as he told me how the church focused on immigration began even before he was the senior pastor of the church. He said back in 1980 his father, the founding Pastor of the church Bishop Philius Nicholas, decided to use the

church organization to participate in refugee resettlement, he tells the story back when he was in his 20s how patient refugees were being mistreated, and the church stood up to them and began to facilitate resettlement for them to avoid them from being sent back to Haiti. He said that his contribution to this project was as a job developer, he was taking the refugees on interviews, teaching them English, helping them with their citizenship paperwork, basically anything to help them to get acclimated to America. He states that this is their mission “to affect men while they're on earth, on their way to heaven.” (Nicolas,2023) However, he stresses the importance of not trying to force the gospel on people while they are doing this, the goal isn't necessarily to force religion on people but rather they are just loving people as God called us to do.

We also spoke about international missions the church participates in. He talks about the church and how they used to send resources back to Haiti, French Guiana, and Suriname. The main focus of their international mission was sending resources to places that have a significant Haitian diaspora. Pastor Sam shared with me that back in the earlier days of mission with the church organization, they used to collect money from the church members to fund weddings as they would go to Haiti and Dominican Republic and marry people, who had been living together without having the opportunity to get married.

Pastor Sam personally began to participate in international missions in 2011. The missions that they focused on were particular medical missions in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. They have done missions trips in several different cities in both Haiti and Dominican Republic. They found out that a lot of the people in Haiti did not have access to medical doctors, so as a response to finding that information out they decided to provide medical care and screening for the people there. He mentions his encounter with an 80-year-old woman, where he stated, “in her 80 years of life, she had never seen a doctor before”. They provided a lot of basic

preventive medication and care to people who did not have access to these services where they were.

Missions Analysis

I think that Pastor Sam was very calculated with the missions that he participates in the church. The first trip that they took to Haiti he considered it as a fact-finding mission. They went to Haiti with a group of 12 people, that included several medical doctors, CEO of a medical clinic, as well as a politician, who He did inform is now the current mayor of New York City. In the first trip they sought out to see what it was that they were able to do to help the people of Haiti. They appeared to be very mindful of the success and failures that happened during the first trip in which they adjusted the method of what they did. He mentions during the first trip the resources that they sent to Haiti didn't make it in time of their trip, so as a result of that, each other mission trip that they participated in they made sure to send the resources to Haiti prior to their arrival, to ensure the timely arrival of said resources.

Another way that the organization adjusted the way that they did missions in Haiti, and I would also consider this method as calculated as well, was rather than them sending resources to Haiti from America, they began to find and purchase resources that were already in Haiti. They began to buy medication that was in Haiti and send the other resources that they were unable to locate in Haiti. The church organization and VIHAMO collaborated with the Université Jean Price Mars and the union of private universities that provided about a combination of 100 medical doctors as well as medical students, which allowed them to provide care for over 5000 Haitians in need per day. He explained to me that they provided the doctors with a stipend each day. By using the medical staff already in Haiti, they were able to also contribute to the Haitian economy by providing jobs in Haiti.

My analysis of Pastor Sam is that He is very intentional, calculated, and purposeful with the missions that He and his church organization participate in. He takes the time to actual analyze the needs of the people that He intends to serve prior to actually serving them. He informed that a lot of their missions take time to plan, but to ensure that they are actually able to provide assistance they take their time and do the proper research, and collaborate with people, within the commutes that they serve, whether it be locally or international. I think what he does makes sense because if we're not intentional in doing missions then we're doing it for the wrong reasons. Each aspect of missions that Pastor mentioned to me that He and the organizations participate in seeks to address a problem, and many of the mission trips that they do are not done alone and are in collaboration with other organizations, and community leaders.

Biblical Foundations

Acts 1:8 states that "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." I think this verse is telling us that we must be a witness, near, far, and everywhere. I think it accurately depicts what our posture as Christians should be on missions. First, we shouldn't be doing it on our own, with our own will but we should be going under the lead and power of the holy spirit. Second, it's important that we don't place a proximity as to where missions should be done. The goal should be to seek to impact all of God's people. I don't necessarily think that it is telling us to preach everywhere, but my interpretation of this verse is that we are a witness by loving one another and living a life that is pure, so that others may see and experience God through us and our actions, similar to Michael Frost's ideals of living a "questionable life" as he stated "leading the kinds of lives that evoke questions from their friends, then opportunities for sharing faith abound." (Frost,2016)

Compare and contrast

Pastor Sam stated that there is a correlation between the Great Commission and the work that they do as a church and began to tell me about the different ways that the organization helps people outside of the church. He mentions Matthew 25:40 and having an emphasis and approach for “the least of you”. I think that in this aspect we have a similar perspective on missions and that we should be helping those in need. We both agreed that our duties as Christians are to help all people and not just the ones in our churches. I think our understanding of missions were also similar as Pastor Sam had a focus on untraditional ways that differ from the actual perception of ways that a church affects a community, and I agree with this approach at missions. We should use whatever influence that it is in our power to foster in change. However, the way that our perspective on missions differ I think would be by some of the things that he did consider as missions. He mentioned a young adult drumline band that the church has opened their doors to for them to hold their rehearsals for free, as they were searching for a place. He mentioned that as a form of missions as well, by him including this it made me feel that his perspective on missions is basically anything that the church does that is not preaching the gospel. I understand the thought process behind it, but I wouldn't necessarily consider that missions personally.

Potential weaknesses in the missions approach

One potential weakness I believe could be in their mission approach, could be the churches particular emphasis on the Haitian community. This conversation came up when I asked him about some of the issues that they had trying to address other cultures. The pastor did share with me that He and his family come from Haiti, but the argument can be made that the church and the mission does neglect other people that are also in need in which the Pastor does touch upon. He states that their mindset a lot of times tends to be “Haitian first” but he explains that this mindset needs to change, as it will give them a greater ability to be able to affect more

people. Another potential weakness is the consistency of their international missions, as he told me it's been a few years since they have planned and participated in another international mission trip.

Perceived strengths in the missions approach

I think some of the strengths in the way that they approach missions are the multifaceted aspects of the ways that they do missions, and the willingness to collaborate with others. In interviewing Pastor Sam, he mentioned to me so many different ways that He and his church organization are “giving people what they need while they are on earth”(Nicolas,2023). The different aspects that were mentioned throughout this interview were, social justice and services, with a particular focus on immigration rights, affordable housing as the church built an affordable senior residence, welfare as the church does a food pantry, and health as the work that they do internationally the pastor describes as a medical mission. The pastor and his organization don't only focus on just preaching the word inside the church, but they are also taking into consideration a few ways that they can address the needs of the people outside of the walls of the church. The Pastor shared his heart and how fulfilling it is to be able to help out others, and I think doing the right thing for the right reasons is crucial.

What insights did you gain from this exercise?

This exercise helped me to understand that the role of a pastor is not just preach to a church. It helped me to understand that as leaders we need to use whatever resources that we have to our disposal to seek to create a better world for everyone. The focus should not only be spreading the gospel to people within the church, but I've also learned that we can spread the gospel just by being good people, and that's what I gained from this exercise. This pastor has helped me to understand that our job as a Christian is not just to go to church, but another way that we could spread the gospel it's just by being good people and helping others. They should be

able to see God through us without us trying to force the gospel on them. It has helped me to understand that there are other ways to bring people to the Lord, and that is by the way we live our lives on the daily and care for others.

Summary

Personal Impact

This course has impacted me by changing my perspective on missions and our job as leaders. It helped me to understand that it is our job to help people everywhere, and not just the congregants of our church. We are to look outside of the four walls of the church and seek to foster transformation both within our communities and to the ends of the earth. One thing that really resonated with me was the question that was asked in the book “The Art of Neighboring” which was “How can we as churches best work together to serve our city?” (Pathak; Runyon, 2012) This book as well as this course has helped me to understand that we must be intentional in building relationships with both our local communities, and in general with people who share the same goal of wanting to advance God’s kingdom.

The way that I will see missions differently is by understanding that missions are not about us doing good for people but rather missions should prioritize God and what He is doing on earth. “Before we can speak of the church doing missions, we must first see God as the God of mission. Everything must be founded on the prior nature, character, and initiative of God.” (Tennent,2010). When we understand that God is in control of any and everything, we do then we are properly engaging in missions. This course has also helped me to realize that there is a lacking focus on missions in most churches. I remember reading this quote earlier in the semester that stated that “The Mission of discipling the nation has been demoted from the primary task of the church to one of its many ministries called “missions.” It has been reduced from a purpose (a

primary reason for existence) to a program (one of the things we do).”I also remember the conversation that most churches don’t really have an emphasis on mission and that is clear by the way that churches allocate money. I’ve learned from this class that if I’m going to be a Christian leader then I cannot neglect the rest of God’s people outside of whatever context of “a church” that I intend to lead.

Missions Possibilities?

If I could choose a mission field to get involved with, I would love to be able to provide housing, education, and mental wellness to those who need those particular resources, particularly in the urban communities. I would love to be able to open up an affordable housing complex to help those that are in need. Provide to them a resource that provides them with something as basic as a roof over their head, shelter. I would also like to provide educational resources to those who are in need of it as well, and some of those educational resources would consist of financial literacy. The goal of the educational mission would be to teach people who depend on resources how to no longer have to depend on resources. The goal would be to encourage them and help them in ways that they can become self-sufficient. Lastly, I don't think that there is enough focus on mental health within the Christian community. A lot of times Christians rather just pray away whatever it is that someone is facing rather than try to actually address the problem by using resources that God has provided, like mental health professionals. Mental health is important, and I feel that we as Christians should be able to have the conversation about it and provide resources, rather than neglecting it.

References:

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