FROM WHERE WILL THE WORKERS COME?

Why Future GCC Leaders Are Already Present

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Drawing from biblical examples and historical success, this paper argues for Collective leadership roles populated by men who are leadership-gifted, elder-authorized, kingdom-minded and model-proven. My aim is to persuade GCC pastors and elders to affirm the vision outlined within this paper and then join me in advocating and recruiting future leaders based upon this biblical model. My hope is for the ideas within this paper to shape our understanding of recruitment and training for future regional team leaders and GCC staff, as well as other key roles within our Collective.

By Dave Harvey

Introduction: The Opportunity

People do not follow ideas -- they follow leaders. Gospel mission advances as gifted leaders are selected and empowered to act. When charisma overrules character, gifted leaders can, too often, select and empower themselves. Chaos follows. That's why local church leaders must take seriously their call to select, train and authorize future leaders. After all, leaders come stamped by God with dreams and desires. Fruitful is the ministry that can trace a dream back to the calling which animates it, coax forth the right character, and then point to a good field where a leader's ministry can flourish.

The GCC board governs a group where the ministry calling is satisfied almost exclusively in roles of pastor, elder, or deacon. This creates a culture where dreams for "extra-local service" are viewed with hesitance, perhaps even skepticism.[1] For some, it constitutes a threat to their soul or family. For others, it lands as a betrayal of one's calling to the local church. Meanwhile, men with extra-local aspirations for mission lack clear pathways to satisfy their desire and remain unable to reconcile their sense of call with their ecclesiology. Confusion ensues. Mission progress stalls.

If Paul's ministry remains a pattern and paradigm for missions today, we must stretch our understanding of calling to include roles that catalyze gospel mission.[2] We must invite gifted leaders to think more creatively about staffing, preaching rhythms, kingdom-wins, and how to meaningfully engage in mission without losing one's congregation. We must educate and inspire elders to help identify these vital roles and position them for impact. And we must recover this calling, as this paper will contend, without pulling men out of their pastorate or eldership to satisfy it.

We have a Scriptural warrant to walk this way. We also have the common sense to develop a model that represents one of the most fruitful ways to competently service a growing, global collective without expanding central costs and staff. But to build and support this model, we must identify leaders who display four vital, interlocking qualities. *May God grant us <u>leadership-gifted</u>, <u>church-authorized</u>, <u>elder-based</u>, and <u>model-proven</u> leaders!*

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[1] By "extra-local" I mean "working both within and beyond the pastorate in roles alongside the local church."

[2] "The narrative of Paul's missionary work provides a paradigm, a model for the mission of the church." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul The Missionary* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 377.

Leadership-Gifted

The biblical record is saturated with the impact of godly and gifted leaders. The ministries of the Apostles Paul, Peter, John, and others inspire us to pursue the health and effectiveness good leadership delivers to the church. Although the office of Apostle is not contemporary, and the apostolic teaching is fully captured in the canon of the New Testament, analogous gifts for mission and building are observed in other biblical leaders and should be expected to help carry forward mission today.[3]

Throughout Christian history, mission and church vitality have blended fruitfully through the leadership of gifted, catalytic leaders seeking to mobilize the church. These leaders often carry flaws which are tolerated due to their radiating charisma, the loyalty they engender, or the unquestionable fruit they yield. Because of the human tendency towards endowing charisma with more credibility than character, *we need a model of extra-local service that marries significant leadership gifts to local church authority and accountability.*

<u>Not Apostolic Authority</u>

Jesus chose twelve men to be his Apostles. Over the span of three years, he modeled his message by teaching them while also embodying all he taught. The Gospel was a Person, the Word became Life and Scripture pulsed with authority -- living and active (Heb. 12:4). After Christ's resurrection, the Spirit came upon them and Christ commissioned them (Matt. 28:16-20). They proclaimed the gospel (Acts 5:42), performed great miracles (e.g. Acts 3:1-11; 9:36-41; 16:16-18), led thousands to Christ (Acts 2:41), planted churches throughout the known world (e.g. Acts 6, 14, 16), wrote Scripture[4], and multiplied leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

The Twelve exemplified the type of character and giftedness required to build the Church and reach the nations. As those commissioned directly by Christ, authorized to speak the very words of God, and guarantors of the gospel tradition, the Twelve occupy unrepeatable roles and remain unique in redemptive history. [5]

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[3] "I maintain that modern gifts are analogous to but not identical with the divinely authoritative gifts exercised by the apostles." Vern S. Poythress, "Modern Spiritual Gifts as Analogous to Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works of the Spirit within Cessastionist Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 1 (1996): 71

[4] For example, the four Gospels and NT letters of Paul, Peter, and John.

[5] "The importance of the Twelve as a group is seen in the need to replace Judas prior to Pentecost, but not afterwards (e.g., Acts 12). Their reconstitution was required at the outset of the church age for the initial

Still, the Great Commission was never intended to be fulfilled during the Apostles' lifetime. There were other significant leadership gifts that would, in every era, play a vital role. The New Testament is full of examples of additional leaders who were highly influential, but not numbered among the Apostles. Men such as Barnabas, Silas, and James may be considered Apostles, but did not have the same prominence as Paul or the Twelve. There are also other leadership types in Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and Philip; not categorized as Apostles, yet still instrumental in the life and mission of the early Church.

While we affirm the cessation of capital "A" apostles today, the need for extra-local leadership in gospel work continues. The continued call to fulfill the Great Commission through the cooperative maturing and multiplication of local churches remains. Therefore, God calls some men as extra-local leaders who can deepen the gospel-animated vitality of the church and advance the mission. But we must remain clear-eyed on one central idea: *The point of continuity between New Testament Apostleship and its analogous form today is not in the office nor in the authority of the extra-local leader, but in the gospel and its unstoppable power.*[6] Yes, when God wants to establish the church and expand the impact of the gospel, the means of his method remains God-ordained, Spirit-empowered, leadership gifts. Not apostolic authority, but an analogous gift of leadership.

Analogous Gift of Leadership[7]

> *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity;* **the one who leads, with zeal**; *the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* (emphasis mine)
> — Romans 12:6-8 (ESV)

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proclamation of the gospel to Israel. (i.e., those gathered in Jerusalem for the feast day)." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 221.

[6] "In light of this initial evidence from passages that deal particularly with Paul's missionary apostleship, we believe that it is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ within God's purposes which serves as the bridge between Paul's own missionary activity and that of others. The apostolic kerygma appears to be the critical link between the two, and thus provides the connection between Paul's . . . own mission and that of mission generally." P.T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 55 (emphasis his).

[7] In its use here, "analogous" means operating similarly too, while still existing in a different category. Borrowing from Schnabel in footnote #2, today's leadership gift is analogous to Paul's missionary work because it follows "Paul's missionary work (which) provides a paradigm, a model for the mission of the church."

Few roles in ministry require a more pronounced leadership gift than one who leads pastors and planters. Few passages give us greater clarity on the gift of leadership than Romans 12:6–8. The Greek word for "leadership" ("προιστεμι", proistemi) translates "to lead, to direct, to assist, to arrange, to apply oneself to."[8] John Murray renders it, "he that rules, with diligence,"[9] a translation that lands close to the English Standard Version above.

Paul's argument:
1. We all have different gifts (Rom. 12:6a).
2. Our gifts are the result of a prior work of grace (Rom. 12:6b).
3. The grace given by God defines both the field and fences for our service (Rom. 12:6).
     "Your sphere of action, your ministry in the service of Christ, is marked out by the gifts Christ has given you."[10]

4. Some have been given a distinct grace to lead (Rom. 12: 8).
5. The grace to lead is exhibited by a "zealous and diligent concern"[11] (Rom. 12: 8).

What principles might we draw from this exposition for Collective leadership? A network's effectiveness is proportional to the leadership gifts of those appointed to lead. This means that identifying the scope of grace and diligence—the leadership gift—and positioning these men accordingly, is a key factor in creating and sustaining a flourishing Collective. Indeed, the presence of this gift constitutes a call to extra-local service that must be examined and positioned by local church elders and supported by congregations.

How do we identify God's grace in a leader, specifically, a gifted leader called to serve beyond the local church? Here we leave the passage and offer answers drawn more from experience than exposition.

1. The presence of proven character.

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[8] Kittel, Gerhard, et al. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* p. 938.

[9] Murray, 126.

[10] Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1964), 28.

[11] The Greek word for zeal is "**σπουδε**" (spoude) and is translated as "zealous and diligent concern". Translation drawn from Verlag, 1070; Bauer, 762.

2. Clear evidence of a leadership gift that attracts leaders and future leaders (elders, pastors, and church planters) who seek his counsel and seem inspired to align with what he is doing.[12]
3. A theological orientation that includes missiology where the leader thinks doctrinally about interdependence, kingdom good, multiplication, the role of gifted leaders, and the care of local churches.
4. The NT doctrines of partnership and apostolic function have been effectively transferred by him to the elders and staff and are now embodied in the church culture.
5. The evidence of building (or having built) a solid local model that multiplies leaders, mission, and care.
6. Wisdom sufficient to engage church and mission complexity and move it toward contextualized clarity.
7. Gifts to teach expositionally in a way that exalts the gospel, clarifies direction, and incites followership among church leaders.
8. A leadership instinct and determination that wisely prioritizes where to execute and moves the mission forward despite circumstantial difficulties and/or organizational complexity.[13]
9. Faith toward God in the leader's wife to both support him in this endeavor and to embrace the sacrifices imposed by the mission.
10. The calling is corroborated by both the local elders and the extra-local partnership.
11. The church culture is being cultivated to embrace the importance of his role beyond the local church and gladly send him to serve the mission.

To summarize, we must affirm the ongoing necessity of a distinct leadership gift for extra-local service. This gift is bestowed by God's grace, validated by Scripture, analogous to Paul, and embodied in gifted leaders today. While not an authoritative office, this gift remains essential for pushing the gospel into new places, helping churches multiply, and strengthening leaders to persevere.

Yet the gift alone does not constitute the completed call to extra-local ministry.

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[12] "The gift of leading is found in people who have a clear, significant vision and are able to communicate it in such a way that they influence others to pursue that vision." Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 95.

[13] "The primary role of spiritual leaders is not to merely accomplish tasks, but to take people from where they are to where God wants them to be." Henry Blackaby & Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 220.

Elder-Authorized

Every church and network must be clear on how they articulate their understanding of authority. While some denominations affirm the agency of extra-local authority, many church planting networks serve autonomous churches who are voluntarily affiliated.[14] For these groups, it is particularly important to define the biblical sources of authority from which we can legitimately draw.[15]

Toward that end, it seems wise to divide *elder-authorized* into two overlapping streams that flow from the fountain of ecclesiology: church-grounded and eldership-based.

Elder-Authorized Means Church-Grounded.

Church-grounded recognizes the need for a church planting ministry to find its biblical legitimacy and authorization to act from local church leadership. Towards that end, we affirm the following:

1. **We affirm that the authority of the Church comes from Jesus and through his Word.**

    Christ possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18; Col. 2:10, 1 Pet. 3:22), is the head of the Church (Matt. 28:18-20; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Pet. 3:22), and reigns over all things for the sake of his Church (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:15-18). Church leadership, therefore, serves under Jesus' authority according to his will as revealed in Scripture (1 Cor. 3:5). Church authority is a God-defined sphere with significant earthly and eternal implications.

    God exercises his authority over the Church through his living and active word (Deut. 29:29; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Every word he has spoken will accomplish its purpose (Matt. 5:17-19), stands irrevocably true (John 17:17), and remains irreversibly eternal (Isa. 40:8). His word grants us what we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

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[14] The Collective is a voluntary association and assumes no authority apart from the ability to revoke our name. Our mutual commitments, however, are outlined in the GCC Partnership Agreement.

[15] It is essential for every ministry to constitute according to reasonable laws of their land. Most countries require organizing documents, such as by-laws, that define the authority of the organization. While conforming to these practices, ministries should also seek to discover where Scripture may define their understanding and application of authority.

2. **We affirm that church officers exercise the authority granted to them by Christ (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:7-14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).**

   They receive their authority from Christ and must give account to Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-17; Heb. 13:17). It includes the authority of teaching and leading the church in its life and mission (Acts 20:28; Titus 1-3; 1 & 2 Tim.; 1 Pet. 5:1-4),overseeing the ordinances and worship (1 Tim. 2), practicing church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10), and installing church officers (Acts 14:23; Titus 1; 1 Tim. 3).

3. **We affirm that the office of Elder is operative while the office of Apostle is no longer occupied.**

   The office of Apostle was held by those who were directly commissioned by the risen Christ, exhibited miraculous power (Acts 1:20-26; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-9; 1 Tim. 1:12), possessed the authority to speak and write the very words of God (John 14:26; 16:13-14; Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 14:37; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13, 4:8-15; 2 Pet. 3:2, 15-16), and were confirmed through signs and wonders (2 Cor. 12:12). As such, they cease to exist today. Nevertheless, the New Testament specifies two offices that continue today: Elder and Deacon.[16] Only the office of Elder, however, is charged with exercising church authority,[17] therefore, church authority must be exercised through Elders.[18]

4. **We affirm any ministry constituted to start churches and care for pastors must find its theological validity and authorization from the local church and Elders.**

   Church partnerships exist to promote church fidelity and fruitfulness in life and mission, and partnership leadership must advance these goals without exerting

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[16] These offices are cited throughout the epistles. They are clearly instituted for the churches and there is nothing about them to cause them to cease.

[17] Compare the qualifications and duties as explicitly described in 1 Tim. 3. Consult "Deacons How They Serve and Strengthen the Church" by Matt Smethurst (9Marks Building Healthy Churches, 2021). Crossway. Also, "Deacons are not given a ruling or leading position in the church since that is a function that belongs to the elders." Benjamin Merkle, The Organization of the Church

[18] This does not address the key roles that deacons and the whole church have in the full exercise of the life and mission of the local church. While elders ultimately exercise church authority, they do it in close connection to the church. Some churches will vary in how they express this in key decision making. It is clear, however, that elders must exercise the authority they have from Christ to oversee and lead the local church.

authority beyond local church Elders. Therefore, any ministry created to start churches and care for pastors must recognize the priority of local church authority, serve to strengthen church Elders, and program in consideration of local church autonomy.

As a Collective, we can continue to find our legal authorization through our bylaws. This is common practice for non-profit ministries and remains uncontested as the legal ground for a ministry's existence. But as pastors and elders, we want to understand our Scriptural and theological warrant to act. Scripture provides a more biblical legitimacy that flows naturally and consistently from our ecclesiology: *Elders offer the theological grounding for our existence.* This follows from the primacy of the local church and its functions in nurture, care, model development, leadership sharpening, and accountability.

This authorization is illustrated when the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas and Silas to the Gentile church (Acts 15:22). Paul makes a similar point to the Corinthians that, "Titus was appointed by churches to travel" with Paul's entourage to help with the Jerusalem collection (2 Cor. 8:19). In like manner, the work of extra-local leadership must flow from the established authority of elders and remain accountable in life and character to local church Elders.[19]

While extra-local leaders need to have performance reviews by Network boards and staff, they should be first commissioned by, supported by, and accountable to local church Elders. We must also expect that an extra-local leader will remain engaged with a local church eldership in some meaningful manner.[20] Applying this conviction means aligning our practices with the belief that any ministry called to start churches and care for pastors must find its theological validity and authorization from the only source of God-ordained authority available today— the church and her leaders.

Elder-Authorized Means Eldership-Based

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[19] We will cover this more thoroughly in the next section.

[20] "Meaningful manner" could include, but not be limited too, preaching twice a month, strategic staff engagement, participation in a small group, and elder updates on care and progress.

Eldership-based affirms the New Testament pattern where leaders were meaningfully embedded in local churches—--even in elderships—while also serving in extra-local ministry.

Paul remained deeply connected to local churches throughout the course of his ministry and travels. After a period of somewhere between eight to fourteen years after conversion, Paul traveled to Antioch with Barnabas and stayed for one year (Acts 11:25; Gal. 1:21-2:1). During Paul's first missionary journey, he left Athens to spend eighteen months in Corinth (Acts 18:2-11). Paul also stayed in Ephesus for over three years, teaching and preaching (Acts 18:22-23). Even with a clear vision and apostolic call to preach "not where Christ has already been named" (Rom 15:20), Paul remained, nevertheless, embedded in various local churches for long stretches of time.

In 1 Peter 5:1, the Apostle Peter references himself as a "fellow elder." While the Greek word (πρεσβύτερος) can sometimes be age-related (note John's usage in 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1), Peter leaves little doubt on his meaning by identifying himself with the exact audience he is addressing: local church Elders.[21] Peter was both an Apostle *and* an Elder.[22]

Returning to Paul, his helpers dramatically bolstered his gospel ministry.[23] Some remained "local church representatives, putting workers at Paul's disposal so that the churches partnered with him in church planting ministry."[24] It is not difficult to find

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[21] 1 Pet.5:1, "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder." The word here means "a person who is instated into the same office of elder as another."

[22] "(An elder's) dignity may be seen from Peter's self-designation as ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος, 5:1. It is true that the apostle is here setting himself alongside the presbyters with emphatic modesty. It is also true, however, that he is setting them alongside himself", Günther Bornkamm, "Πρέσβυς, Πρεσβύτερος, Πρεσβύτης, Συμπρεσβύτερος, Πρεσβυτέριον, Πρεσβεύω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 666.

[23] "The majority of Paul's coworkers came from the new churches that the apostle had established. Some of them came to Paul as "delegates" of their home churches (Col. 1:7; 4:12–13; Philem. 13): they represent their churches as ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιων (apostoloi ekklēsiōn [2 Cor 8:23; cf. Phil 2:25]) and thereby acknowledge as members of the body of Christ their responsibility in building up the kingdom of God. Their participation in Paul's mission "makes up" what their churches owe to Paul (1 Cor. 16:17; Phil. 2:30). The churches participate through their envoys in Paul's mission. Wolfgang Schrage is correct when he observes that the role of the coworkers "cannot be determined only along psychological lines on the basis of the need for fellowship, nor along organizational lines in terms of maximizing the missionary effectiveness, nor along pedagogical lines in terms of training workers for the time after Paul. Rather, Paul emphasizes the co-responsibility and the participation of the churches because he regards missionary work and ministry as a function of the entire church (thus the great fluctuation in his team of coworkers)." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and The Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1441.

[24] Johannes Nissen identifies three categories of fellow-workers with Paul. (1) The most intimate circle included Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy. (2) Aquila, Priscilla, and Titus represented "independent co-workers." (3) The last

places where Paul's companions and co-workers were also local church leaders pulled into extra-local service for a period before returning to their local churches (Phil. 2:19, 25-30; 4:2-3). When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, Prisca and Aquila left with Paul and then remained in Ephesus (Rom. 16:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:32). While there they met and taught Apollos who would then become an extra-local worker (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 21-22; 4:6-9). "One feature of Paul's missionary activity," observes Charles Wanamaker, "was to link his various missionary churches together on a regional basis so that they would provide mutual support."[25]

Is it possible that this New Testament practice explains why some men feel called to pastoral ministry and, simultaneously, to extra-local work? Could this be God's plan for expanding the pool of qualified workers for multiplication and strengthening in GCC? It's hard to overlook the advantages. Let's look at some of the eldership-based benefits:

1. *Eldership-based means care.* If the church is the only source to authorize, then elders must remain primary means of care and accountability for the extra-local leader. The Collective's care is supplemental to local church care.

2. *Eldership-based means practitioner.* "Elder" is not a ceremonial title but a biblical role he fills with integrity. The local church must never become an abstraction, nor a lab for gifted men to become experts on things they are not applying. Remaining a practitioner means the leader is not simply reading about the realities of pastoral life or Elder complications; he is experiencing it. The ideas he exports are made concrete through the hard work of application with other elders. Eldership involvement keeps the tools sharp so the Collective leader can serve local church leaders more effectively.

3. *Eldership-based means accountability.* The Collective leader must be qualified as an Elder and see his first line of accountability within the local church. While not being an elder should never become an instant deal-killer for working in the Collective, it protects the leader and the Collective through his experience of local accountability. Absent the local church grounding, extra-local leaders can drift from their relational network and the many benefits they provide. Leaders

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group, local church representatives, put workers at Paul's disposal so that the churches partnered with him in church planting ministry." Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspective* (3d ed.; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 110.

[25] Charles Wanamaker, The Epistles to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 161.

can drift to a place where there are no faithful brothers willing to risk a wound (Prov. 27:6). It becomes too easy to default to an entourage of hand-picked friends or loyal family who are enamored with their gifts, fruit, or leadership instincts. But an enamored entourage easily becomes an ensemble of enablers who cut the leader slack out of misguided esteem—or other unhelpful motives.

4. *Eldership-based means connection.* Strong leaders need to be surrounded by other strong local church leaders: people who see their life, ministry, and family from an informed vantage point, from a place that can generate meaningful care, timely support, informed prayer, and who can pose astute questions. Because of the leadership gift they possess, extra-local leaders need to be encircled by a cadre of courageous men who are willing (and feel responsible) to risk observations and correction. Every leader must eventually realize that those who naively admire him make great encouragers but poor truth-speakers. Unless there are two or more people in his local life to whom an extra-local leader can point and say, "He will be honest even if it hurts me," he's probably in a risk-zone, regardless of his long catalog of relationships.

5. *Eldership-based means congregationally sent and supported in prayer.* This is the natural outcome of being "church-authorized." The man does not possess a side job conducted outside of the church's interest or purview. The extra-local leader can serve beyond his local church knowing he has been sent by his church and will be eagerly received back upon his return. The church enjoys the thrill of sending him and grows more kingdom-oriented as they hear his reports. The elders keep a rolling item on their meeting agenda to support the extra-local leader in prayer, hear updates from him on what's happened, and regularly evaluate when and where to share reports with the church to celebrate God's grace upon this shared mission.

6. *Eldership-based also means a leader is performance-accountable when serving as a partnership leader.* For Collective leaders employed by GCC, the partnership leader should be held accountable by two connected and collaborating boards: the governing board for the partnership, who will hold the leader accountable for his job performance; and his governing board of elders, who will maintain responsibility for his care and character.

Kingdom-Minded

What is the Kingdom of God?[26]

Prior to Christ's coming, the Jewish people anticipated the Day of the Lord as a geographic kingdom within this world, one that would be populated by Jews and under the dominion of an earthly Messiah. But when Christ came as the Messiah-King, his first words were, "the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). An unexpected and bewildering announcement, to be sure. To the Jews, the kingdom meant global dominion and it was the Roman invaders that needed to repent. But the kingdom Christ inaugurated was unassuming, unanticipated, and mysterious. God's kingdom had dropped like a small mustard seed--sown quietly and growing unpredictably (Mark 4:30–34). The kingdom invaded our broken world, like ripe seed sown into a field where weeds grew up alongside the good harvest (Matt. 13:24–30).

A quiet counterinsurgency had begun. "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons," Jesus also said, "then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). Christ announced an occupation. His kingdom was a patient-yet-potent dominion that would surreptitiously work to bear fruit across the globe.

By his life, death, and resurrection, Christ brought forward the powers of the coming age (Heb. 6:5)--including Church unity, global witness, and the fruits of the Spirit-- activating these powers within this present age. Through the Kingdom of God, the future and present ages have overlapped.[27] We live in the "already, but not yet".[28] We are already saved (Eph. 2:8), but we still die and are not yet saved (Rom. 5:9). We already know Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4: 6), but not yet in the way we will know him (1 Cor. 13:12). We are already sanctified in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2), but not yet sanctified (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). We are already adopted (Rom. 8:15), but not yet adopted (Rom. 8:23). We have already been judged in Christ (John 5:24), though we have not yet been judged (2 Cor. 5:10).

How Does the Gospel Connect to God's Kingdom?

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[26] Several portions of this section were revised and incorporated from Chapter 5 of *Stronger Together, Seven Partnership Virtues and the Vices that Subvert Them.*

[27] "The church lives 'between the times; the old age goes on, but the powers of the new age have irrupted [forcibly entered] into the old age." George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, revised edition, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 66–67.

[28] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), 146

First, the gospel—the Good News embodied in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—*already fulfills the Old Testament hope and expectations for the kingdom of God. But the consummation of those expectations has not yet come.* Christ came as the true Adam (Luke 3:23–38; Rom. 5:18–21; 1 Cor. 15:20–22), the seed of Abraham (Ga. 3:16), the true Israel (Matt. 2:15; Luke 4:1–13), and the Son of David (2 Sam. 23:3; Matt. 1:6; 17) to announce the arrival but not the completion of the kingdom of God (Matt. 1:15).

Secondly, the gospel converts us into subjects abiding in God's kingdom and creates the community that connects us. "The gospel thereby creates a 'kingdom community'—a counterculture, the church—in which we are 'royal priests' showing the world what the future kingdom will look like (1 Peter 2:9–10.) We 'model' how all of life—business practices, race relations, family life, art and culture—are healed and re-woven by the King."[29]

Lastly, the gospel makes us global Christians. "The gospel is not simply the 'forgiveness of sins' and 'going to heaven when you die'. The gospel is a restoration of relationships between God, man and the world. (Therefore) The gospel involves us not only with God, but with our fellow men and with the world." [30]

How Does the Kingdom Shape Extra-Local Leaders?

1. *Kingdom-minded leaders know God is at work in powerful ways outside of their church.* The kingdom of God sanctions the priority, not the exclusivity, of the local church. The church is part of the kingdom, but the church is not the whole. The Kingdom existed before the church and shall continue beyond when the great commission is complete and once local churches are gone. The Kingdom lifts our eyes beyond our churches or tribes to the larger work of God in the world. "Jesus…won't be locked into our people groups or denominations. He has work today, and it isn't just here in [insert your church's name here]. To think that God only works among our faithful, is to oppose the kingdom."[31]

   To illustrate the significance of this theme to Jesus, the reader could draw a vertical line down the middle of a sheet of paper. At the top of one side write "Kingdom"; on the opposite side, write "Church". Begin a survey of the four gospels and list the

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[29] The Gospel Coalition Theological Vision for Ministry.

[30] Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel and Kingdom.* (Paternost Publishing, Carlisle, Cumbria, UK), 122

[31] Shaw, David. Already-But-Not-Yet Kingdom – TGC Australia

passages where Christ references "kingdom" and "church" under each heading. The reader will walk away struck by the frequency and priority apportioned to the kingdom when Jesus was speaking. This is not to diminish the essential role of the local church--this paper is, in fact, advocating for a greater church role in multiplication and sending gifted men. But the exercise illustrates how much richer and more robust our ecclesiology becomes when leaders follow the example of Christ by giving appropriate attention to the Kingdom and its claims. Few things expand the leader's soul more than seeing and celebrating God's activity outside of our own church and tribe.

2. *Kingdom-minded leaders don't build empires, they work for God's Kingdom.* We serve not to curry favor nor build a personal domain. God's people are not planks from which a leader builds a platform. Christians are subjects of God's Kingdom; leaders exercise a stewardship over their lives." Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4: 2). The difference between a steward and an entrepreneur is one of kingdom—for whom do they work and why? For the entrepreneur, "there is the dream and the will to found a private kingdom," says economist Joseph Schumpeter, "usually, though not necessarily, also a dynasty."[32] A kingdom-minded leader, though entrepreneurial, is not merely exercising gifts to build his thing. Biblical success is measured by more than what brings value to his brand. Or even to his local church. "What ministry opportunities are you personally involved with," asks J.D. Greear, "that are not enhancing you, your church, or your platform?" [33]

3. *Kingdom-minded leaders collaborate outside of their tribe.* The Kingdom mindset pulls us towards kingdom collaboration—loving, listening, learning, and, at times laboring, with citizens who share our kingdom, but still live outside of our castle. The leader's church, or his network, should not be self-contained--there are important things to be learned that may only come to us from outside of our own group. He believes that a kingdom-focus helps us to be more diligent about looking for where God is at work and then helps us to celebrate what we see. We pray each Sunday for other gospel preaching churches in our community. In doing

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[32] Joseph Schumpeter, The Theory of Economic Development, (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ, 2004), 93

[33] Greear, J.D., Gaining By Losing (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI, 2015), 46.

so, we help cultivate a kingdom culture while also modeling a kingdom-mentality for our people.

4. *Kingdom-minded leaders make and keep commitments.* The kingdom requires rightly ordered commitments. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness…" (Matt. 6:33). The true measure of a mature leader or church can be seen in the commitments they make and how diligently those commitments are fulfilled. Extra-local leaders recognize that leaders are sometimes honored and deferred to in ways that insulate or accommodate them. Kingdom-minded leaders will call pastors to make loving commitments. The commitments a network asks for (like connecting to other peers and planting churches) are designed to sustain leaders in ministry. In open and dependent relationships, pastors embody kingdom interdependence and learn just how much we need others.

5. *Kingdom-minded leaders foster generous cultures.* Generous cultures do not traffic in the language of obligations, rights, and expectations. Uniting two masters (God and money) will not create a generous culture (Matthew 6:24). Generous cultures happen when Kingdom-minded leaders help people order their desires towards kingdom gains. When our extra-local leadership aligns with kingdom values, grace "overflows through a wealth of generosity" (2 Cor. 8:2). Kingdom desires expand the key organizational questions beyond "What do I get?" to include "To whom do I belong, and what claim does this make upon my resources?" Cultures portraying the kingdom become, not spaces for consumers but places that makes us better and call us to a manner of life that is worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). Where generosity flourishes, tribalism dies. The kingdom mentality pushes the group away from consumerism and towards communion. And when leaders think about resources, the discussion moves beyond "me" and "mine" (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:6-15). A compelling illustration of kingdom giving was Paul's long-term quest to raise money from local churches for the Jerusalem collection.[34] Kingdom-minded leaders know a "win" for the kingdom is a "win" for the local church.

6. *Kingdom-minded leaders witness to the kingdom.* The church does not build the kingdom nor become the kingdom, but it exists as a witness to testify to the glory

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[34] "Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit" (Phil. 4: 16-17). It's noteworthy that one passage, frequently and rightfully used by preachers to inspire Christians to give to locally is, in reality an example of a local church giving outside of their church. In this case, it was aimed not merely towards the poor in Jerusalem but to support their partnership with extra-local leadership.

and love of the king. We follow the One who "went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction" (Matt. 9:35). While here, we are called to make the invisible kingdom visible through our words and works. We witness to the invisible kingdom in our love of the King, our orientation to other kingdom subjects, our glad response to the King's will and in our humble pursuit of those outside of the realm. In doing this, we validate the reality and potency of God's kingdom in our work, where we live, how we order our priorities, and how we seek to flourish in a broken world until, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

Model-Proven

Jesus, wrapped with a towel around his waist, stooped to wash the disciples' feet. When finished, he stood and said, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 17:15). Our Savior can never be reduced to merely an example. But Christ embedded in ministry the importance of examples. Examples clarify, examples embody, examples inspire. As human beings, we are wired to be influenced—for good or evil—by models.

In partnerships, local church models operate in a similar way. They become fire-tested examples of applied truth. By portraying fruit, they provide three helps:

Models Prove the Man

Though we touched on this above, it bears repeating. The local church model confirms the calling of a man to extra-local ministry. It does this by supplying the clearest window into the leader's true understanding of multiplication, leader care, and movement dynamics. The Elders and congregation reveal whether the kingdom of God—the beautiful activity of God beyond his local congregation—is part of the leader's operating system. His commitment to a specific group of believers' grounds his beliefs in church realities and supplies opportunities to apply the love of Christ through specific actions.

The right questions can help evaluate the model.

- Do the church leaders understand the gospel and show evidence of applying it in the realities of life?
- Is there clear evidence of multiplication, not merely as a value affirmed, but as a value applied resulting in the replication of disciples, leaders, elders and planters?
- Does the eldership think first in biblical and theological categories when diagnosing church health and church progress?
- Does the leader regularly update the elders on progress among their partnership(s)?
- Do the needs of partner churches or leaders ever make the elders' meeting?
- Can the staff clearly articulate the value of being connected with other churches?
- Are church leaders motivated to participate in Collective events?
- Do the elders affirm theological convictions that validates multiplication, gifted leaders, interdependence and can they articulate the value beyond pragmatic benefits?
- Does the leader celebrate the benefits of partnership before the congregation?
- Are there ministry opportunities in which the leader is personally involved that does not enhance his platform or his church platform (Can he service in areas where the fruit will not be immediately associated with his leadership)?

Answers to these questions can reveal whether a leader's local church fruitfulness commends his call to export his local church model (1 Tim. 3:5). While he will never be confined to merely applying what he has learned as a local church leader, the experience and fruit of this model becomes an important toolkit in serving other leaders.

Models Inform and Inspire Other Churches

Models of faithfulness or determined application can be used to encourage strong faith and good works in other congregations. Paul often celebrated the work of God in one church to provoke faith in another group of believers. "For you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:6). Knowing his letter to the Colossians would also be read to the Laodiceans, Paul celebrated the example of faith

and love the Colossians had for one another (Col.1:3–4). He used the Thessalonians, and even the Corinthians, as examples for the Macedonians.

To Paul, model-sharing, where the strengths of one congregation are used to serve or inspire other churches, became an important part of connecting churches. This includes not allowing a misplaced sense of modesty to prevent you from updating the elders and church on how their sacrifice of sending and releasing is bringing glory to Jesus and advancing the Great Commission. Good extra-local leadership will connect the dots on how such sacrifices bear specific fruit in the local church.

God has tucked an amazing breadth of wisdom, talent, and gifts within our churches. One called to build and serve partnerships will learn how to find these treasures and effectively share them with other churches. Through network collaboration, a church's culture, systems, structures, and strategies can be evaluated under the light of more mature church models and leaders who have been schooled longer in the grammar of the gospel.

Models Portray Mission Sacrifice for Extra-Local Service

When Elders catch a vision to become a model for mission, they must make sacrifices. In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were embedded in the leadership team. The Spirit spoke to the team and claimed Paul and Barnabas for the mission. Two of the most gifted leaders were set apart to serve the mission of God. To influence the broader Church and respond to God's call, the Antiochian leaders had to reimagine roles and make sacrifices. They had to see the kingdom win beyond their local interests.[35]

If we're going to grow as a network and have a truly collaborative ecosystem, we've got to make sacrifices. The kind that hurt. Consider the risk Paul and the Philippians took with Epaphroditus. This guy was deeply loved by the Philippians. But despite his remarkable qualities, the Philippians gave up Epaphroditus. They sent him to minister to Paul's needs. This was not a Disney World visit; Epaphroditus put his life at risk (Phil. 2:27, 30). But Paul, a man running his ministry from a prison cell, eventually surrenders Epaphroditus and sends him back to the Philippians because he's convinced this will better serve the church (Phil. 2:25). This picture displays a beautiful reciprocity. A flourishing partnership where all parties sacrifice; a collaborative ecosystem where

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[35] "A commitment to the growth of the gospel will mean that we train people towards maturity not for the benefit of our own churches or fellowships but for the benefit of Christ's kingdom." Marshall, Colin and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 83.

everyone takes risks for the mission. But mission is always achieved at the cost of sacrifice.

To field an extra-local leader, the sacrifices must be clarified for the local church. To release the leader, while keeping him meaningfully connected to the church, requires defining the best use of his time. Essential questions include:

- The Scope Question: Is the extra-local role to which the leader is being commissioned, clear in its scope, expectation, and if applicable, the length of his term? Does it represent a utilization of his gifts that makes sense to the Elders, congregation, and network leadership?

- The Teaching Question: If the leader is the main preacher, are the Elders and church prepared to dial back their teaching expectations for him (perhaps to 50–60% of Sundays) and involve more preachers in the Sunday service? Do they see the inherent value of the team-teaching model?

- The Meeting Question: Which meetings remain essential for the leader's involvement and which ones might continue to make progress without him?

- The Care Question: Where does the leader presently engage in pastoral care activities that could be delegated to others? Which practices are "meaningful and essential" for him to retain, and which ones may be "incidental, non-strategic, or delegable"? Can the leader keep healthy rhythms to pace his productivity (marathon, not sprint) including vacations, study time, prayer retreats, and other proactive forms of soul-care?

- The Opportunity Question: Where might the leader stepping back create fresh opportunities for emerging leaders to step forward? Have we multiplied leaders to prepare for this moment?

A Personal Note

To serve GCC, I elected to resign my pastoral role. It was the first time in 33 years that I engaged in extra-local ministry without the benefit or grounding of local church Eldership. My age, not to mention the benefits of narrowing the field of my responsibilities, made it appear prudent. As a result, I have now worked as a non-elder in an extra-local role for over five years. I mention this to illustrate that my thoughts are not merely theoretical or academic. On the contrary, they are drawn from an analysis of

my own experience as well as others I have advised who have confronted the same question.

Some of my richest memories in ministry are drawn from leading a large church where an eldership and congregation were also sending and supporting my second, and secondary, (extra-local) role. Having a team to care for my soul, inspire my faith, collaborate around the complexity, and celebrate the good, quite literally halved the pain and doubled the joy. My wife was cared for and my kids considered. My travel was examined by others to ensure strategic metrics were met and my penchant for overextending was cross-checked. Ministry was shared.

By building a model with a healthy plurality that planted churches, we had tools to help other leaders collaborate and contextualize for their church. Many churches were planted by leaders who prioritized their local church, but also treasured their friendships, connection, and the inevitable sharpening that comes from uniting peers who share the same burdens and responsibilities. Most of these churches still exist and continue to flourish.

The local church, our elder team, and the model we built became far more important than the exceptional gifts of any one genius. As time allowed, experienced Elders traveled to other churches to multiply their specialized skill. For our eldership, the multiplication of churches and the care of pastors nurtured sweet fruit and further concretized our shared convictions on the Kingdom good that flows when churches unite. Each Elder lived with a sense of the significance of what we were doing together. They cherished it. The grace upon our local church came in helping to supply grace and resources to other local churches.

The church, too, caught the vision. They loved the reports of our travel and the ways the gospel and the model they were building, and in which they were invested, was impacting other church leaders. Church members gave freely to the church, but also willingly to the broader mission to which we were all vitally connected. Sweet are the memories of congregational members inquiring about specific churches and leaders because they were oriented towards understanding that Christ's kingdom was larger than our church.

Our congregation sampled wonderful fruit as the preaching diet was seasoned by other leaders and pastors within the network (and outside) who could—by the stories they shared and the thanks they conveyed—illustrate the joy of interdependent churches. As a senior pastor, I taught twice a month, which opened two slots for Elders,

emerging leaders, planter-residents, and outside speakers. It is my belief that the model helped to produce global-minded Christians who loved their local church, but also valued and celebrated the kingdom work beyond our congregation and around the world because they saw it embodied in the men preaching. A local church teaching team that included guest speakers from around the network deepened the gene pool within the church.

Now that I have labored as an extra-local worker unattached to an eldership, I see more clearly the risks and rewards of each model. Greater clarity on the weaknesses of my present place, quite honestly, triggered my search for a GCC church planter to plant a church in our area. I longed to enjoy, once again, the good fruit that springs from locally embedded, model-working, Elder-based, extra-local ministry. If eldership does not materialize for me in the GCC church plant, I will continue my search with the hope for such a home.

On a deeper level, I grow weary of the loneliness and disorientation of ministry dislocated from local teams who strive side-by-side to build models of what they believe. If my prayer is answered, I will one day return to the only kind of ministry that makes sense for those called to multiply, train, care, and connect local church leaders: *Leadership-gifted, Elder-authorized, Kingdom-minded, and Model-proven.*

Leading in a model where I was sent by the church and covered by the Elders helped me to flourish in ministry for more years than I can count. I want that for our regional leaders. I want it for the future of all those God calls to serve GCC. This is why I am urging us to affirm this pathway into our future. It represents a biblical and time-tested model to answer the pressing question, *"From where will the workers come?"*

Addendum # 1 – Elder Audits

Interdependence and Gifted Leader Audit

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

____1. Our attitude toward network partnership is driven more by the calculation of the benefits we receive than the theological convictions we hold.

____2. Our leaders believe care, teaching, protection, or our core values would automatically suffer if we moved a gifted pastor or elder towards serving extra-locally.

____3. We use ROI metrics for measuring our giving outside of the church that we would not want used by our members in evaluating their giving to the church.

____4. Our team is more likely to self-affirm our own practices rather than be challenged by new leaders, new ideas, or new methods. It's harder for us to find common ground with other churches and leaders.

____5. Most of us believe our lead pastor should do most of the preaching (80% or higher) and that it is unhelpful to our model to build a team-teaching approach.

____ Total

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you likely have a healthy understanding of the doctrine of interdependence and gifted extra-local leadership. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your leadership team and talk through the importance of these doctrines and where you need to grow. If you scored between 19–25, your leaders may lack the fundamental convictions to flourish well in partnership. Read and discuss Virtues 1 & 2 in "Stronger Together" by Dave Harvey. Begin praying that God would help you to develop a church culture that values interdependence, multiplication and the gifts of extra-local leaders.

Kingdom Audit

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

_____1. Our church's leaders are predisposed towards seeing other churches in our region or network as competitors more than seeing opportunities for the greater good.

. _____2. Sacrifices for multiplication are often seen as a threat to protecting the integrity of what is needed at home.

_____3. We would have difficulty affirming and celebrating other gospel-preaching leaders, churches and ministries in our city.

_____4. Our church membership gets exclusive priority in public ministry, over our kingdom citizenship or extra-local partnership(s).

_____5. Our excitement and experience of new gospel movement in our church and network tempts our leaders to see ourselves as better than those around us or who went before us.

_____ Total

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you likely have the kind of culture that embodies a kingdom mindset. If you scored between 9–18, take some time to sit with your eldership and talk through Virtue #5 in "Stronger Together" by Dave Harvey. If you scored between 19–25, your church may be in danger of succumbing to tribalism. Invite your elders to consult with GCC over the specific ways your church can partner and pray God would help you to develop a love for his larger kingdom work.

Multiplication Audit

Rank the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1–5 (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). Write your ranking in the blank to the left of each statement.

_____1. Our team craves clarity in a way that consistently discourages our willingness to take risks for the mission.

_____2. Our team spends more time on maintaining ministry agendas and programs than we do pursing a culture of creative multiplication.

_____3. We do not use a pipeline for developing leaders or planters.

_____4. Under 5% of our church's budget goes to missions.

_____5. Our church leadership team struggles to make commitments to partnerships, particularly if that commitment involves some level of sacrifice.

_____ Total

If your church and leadership scored between 0–8, you have the kind of culture that more easily multiplies. If you scored between 9–18, invite your elders to consult with GCC over the specific ways your church can integrate the material from the Multiplication Kit. If you scored between 19–25, include the consultation, but also read and discuss "Gaining by Losing" by J.D. Greear. Begin praying that God would help you to develop a church culture that embodies multiplication.

Addendum #2
For Elders: Things to Consider in Extra-Local Calling

1. The Elders will know that a leader among them is called to a role serving beyond the local church when they see the following evidence:
   a. The presence of proven character.
   b. The clear evidence of a gift that draws and deploys leaders, pastors, and church planters.
   c. The presence of a compelling need that requires allocated time from the leader.
   d. The leader can serve others and contribute in places where success does not immediately connect back to him or his church.
   e. The evidence that his local church model commends his call to help others build models. (Note: The local model is important because the man is being called to export what the plurality has, by the grace of God, created.)
   f. The church understands the unique role that mission-risk and mission-sacrifice play in building a flourishing local church and in multiplication.
   g. A leadership determination in the man that moves the mission forward regardless of circumstantial difficulties and/or organizational complexity.
   h. Faith towards God in the leader's wife to both support him in this endeavor and to embrace the sacrifices imposed by the mission.
   i. The call is confirmed by the Collective.
   j. Completed the M-Kit training

2. When a leader is called to serve beyond the local church, the elders must:
   a. Feel the responsibility to steward his gifts, not only in the church, but beyond the church.
   b. Display faith to affirm the call upon him to serve locally and extra-locally.
   c. The elders and the church must be taught on the role of interdependence, gifted leaders, and the importance of multiplication in planting and building local churches.
   d. Be willing to provide care and accountability in a manner that serves his soul, family, and ministry.
   e. Be willing to intentionally integrate the leader's extra-local ministry into the church's mission.
   f. Embrace the leader's dual roles and reshuffle responsibilities to fill the gaps that the mission role may create.

g. When possible, be willing to assist him with strategic mission thinking, or even be deployed to serve in the field to help others experience the blessing of your labors and model.

h. Be willing to set a church/mission work ratio that is neither too low nor too high, but reduces the leader down to strategic essentials, but retains meaningful involvement in the local church.

i. Endeavor to advocate for the beauty of these kingdom sacrifices for church planting and eagerly celebrate the gospel fruit that comes from it.