



## Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

*A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams*

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

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## Goals, Roles, & Choices for Missional Connections in Your Community *(or seeing Ezekiel's wheels)*

### Have you seen Ezekiel's visions lately?

Get ready for a visual feast. Open your bible to Ezekiel, Chapter 1, the account of the visions of God which came to him "in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar." As you read, focus on verses 15-21. Maybe you'll start singing the spiritual, *Ezekiel Saw the Wheel*.<sup>1</sup> The chorus gives us a vivid picture: "The big wheel run by Faith, my Lord; And the little wheel run by the Grace of God; A wheel in a wheel, a-rolling; Way in the middle of the air."

Keep tapping your foot and clapping your hands. This newsletter gives you 3 big wheels and 17 little wheels to explore, and then apply to your social mission.

The big wheels help us think about "Why" we do social mission, "Who" is making it happen, and "How" we are going about it. Wonderful big questions. The little wheels give us options, which help us make decisions. We think Ezekiel would say, "Amen."



Johnson, William H. (ca. 1943-44). *Ezekiel Saw the Wheel*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian African Art Museum.

Covington United Presbyterian Church, *Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church, *Batavia*

First Presbyterian Church, *Pittsford*

First Presbyterian Church, *Chili*

Central Presbyterian Church, *Genesee*

## Introduction to Goals, Roles, & Choices for Missional Connections in Your Community<sup>2</sup>

In the *Activating Our Missional Congregation* series of workshops, particularly Workshop # 7 on toxic charity and development, we introduced this continuum:

### 5-Step Missional Continuum to Development

|                |                                 |                                |                                 |                                  |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Charity</b> | <b>Relationship<br/>Charity</b> | <b>Bonding<br/>Development</b> | <b>Bridging<br/>Development</b> | <b>Community<br/>Development</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|

*This continuum applies to: individuals, families, groups, communities or advocacy on social issues.*

Most congregations cannot jump from **Charity to Development** without going through the intermediate steps of Relationship Charity, Bonding Development, and Bridging Development before they get to personal and community development. (If they try, they lack a foundation of relationships and experiences, and run the risk of making some serious, and preventable, mistakes.)

Similarly, there is an unhelpful dichotomy which implies that congregations wanting to be missional must choose between either charitable types of service or advocacy. We know intuitively that our congregations and communities are a lot more complex than this simplistic either/or choice.

Congregations need to be free from the either/or mentality about their social mission in their communities. Instead of offering just two alternatives, i.e.,

charitable service or advocacy, this article offers multiple missional options for congregations which are called to be involved in their communities.<sup>3</sup> Seventeen options are organized in three clusters: “Why?”, “Who?”, and “How?”. We present them in this order, one cluster at a time.

We emphasize, however, that these 17 are not available in sequential fashion, but all are available simultaneously. A congregational planning team needs to pick and choose from each of the three clusters. It is highly unrealistic for a congregation to fulfill all 17 options at once. These three clusters are to help congregations get unstuck and make decisions as they plan to engage their communities in social mission. There are so many ways to be so engaged. And all can serve God’s people who are in need.

*Ezekiels, get ready to see wheels!*

Figure 1. Why will we do this social mission project?



### **Our goals or desired outcomes for our project.**

When your mission planning team sits down to think about serving your community, it's essential to ask this question first: "Why are we doing this?" Figure 1 illustrates 6 goals or desired outcomes for a social mission project. (Congregations need not be motivated by all six as reasons to conduct a project.) What are the missional goals of your congregation. While a project benefits from a few highly committed individuals who are its champions, the missional task here is to answer the "Why" question from the congregation's point of view and its call from God.<sup>4</sup> Note how these goals are strikingly aligned with the historic Presbyterian "Great Ends of the Church."<sup>5</sup>

*This big **Why** wheel is one which our Ezekiels need to see!*

## Figure 1. The 6 “Why” circles

1. When we act to **heal individuals and communities**, we are fixing something that is broken. The reality of sin is that people and institutions are broken. The church is called to a healing ministry with those who are broken. Indeed, victims of social injustice are often personally broken. (See following – Figure 3, Circle # 16) For example, recent studies show that homeless families experience the effects of trauma in a similar way as do soldiers in battle.<sup>6</sup> So why get involved in our community? Because both people and institutions need support, counseling, forgiveness, and empowerment. New Orleans was broken by Hurricane Katrina. Intervention by church volunteers across the nation to “muck out” houses brought healing to families and neighborhoods.
2. The why of **making peace or shalom / שלום is a worthwhile goal in itself**. The original word in the Hebrew Scriptures is *shalom*, and the New Testament word in Greek is *eirene*. The root meaning of the Hebrew word is “completeness” or “wholeness,” and with it comes the connotation of health, prosperity, and political and spiritual good. The New Testament word, *eirene*, implies the fullness of the Hebrew word *shalom*, plus the additional meaning of the absence of strife among humans, as well as peace between humans and God. It can also mean peace of mind or serenity.<sup>7</sup> When we understand poverty as chaos for an individual or for a community, then establishing peace and order for individuals, as well as a neighborhood, is a worthwhile social mission goal.
3. Human beings and communities are a corporate whole. We often speak of the church as a body. The community is also organic. Its people cause it to live and breathe. Therefore, a congregation’s social mission goal is wise when it keeps in mind that it **ministers to body and soul**, flesh and spirit, in its community outreach. Sometimes, social mission can be as significant as just accompanying a person who is hurt, standing by them. A community torn by divisions needs reconciliation. Churches should be good at promoting reconciliation, repentance, and forgiveness among individuals and communities. Can you imagine a suburban church repenting to an inner-city community because 40 years earlier it fled that inner-city neighborhood? Can you imagine a bank engaging in reconciliation with a neighborhood which it has “redlined” for years by refusing to make home repair loans in that neighborhood?
4. Being involved in social justice in the community is usually not associated with discipleship or faith development. Sadly, many congregations do not connect adult faith formation with what it does in the community. **Developing our discipleship** is a worthy goal for a congregation as it engages in social mission. Individuals as well as

congregations can experience faith development as they imitate Christ in their community. (The vision of First Presbyterian Church, Batavia, is “to be the hands and feet of Christ.”) Discipleship requires us to stop, look, and listen, and ask, “Where is God already involved in our community?”

5. Making a **witness to powers and principalities** is often stereotyped as a fearful endeavor. The term conjures up stopping an ammunition train during the Vietnam War as a witness of faith to the “powers and principalities.” Civil disobedience is a valid, yet extreme witness, and not the norm for most church members. But **witnessing to power** can also take the form of a letter to the editor, or a visit to a social service office, seeking to change a policy which punishes homeless people. Our elected officials, and our public service agency employees, are charged by our democratic tradition to build the common good with the consent of the governed. When a congregation makes its **witness to power**, it simply reminds our public servants of what they are called to do. In the face of wrong, a congregation gives consent by its silence.
  
6. **Achieving social justice** seems like such a high and lofty goal, but it can be broken down into very specific steps. When the minimum wage is raised, a basic form of social justice is achieved: poor people can better support themselves. When all people have uniform access to housing in any community, white privilege is reduced. When the government gives low interest loans to poor students, assets are redistributed and hope is established. This goal is deeply biblical. The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are rich with calls for justice.

### An exercise in “Why”

Name of one of our our social mission projects \_\_\_\_\_

Using the 6 circles in Figure 1 as the choices, what would our congregation identify as its 3 primary **goals**, or **desired outcomes**, for this project?

1. The congregation’s highest primary **goal** is:
2. The congegation’s second highest primary **goal** is:
3. The congregation’s third highest primary **goal** is:

Figure 2. Who will do this social mission project?



### The participants identified by their roles.

The purpose of identifying who participates in your social mission project is for congregations to understand the multiple ways their social mission projects can interact with, and involve, their communities. The tendency of congregations is to limit their project's participants to people in just a couple of the circles. Analyzing participants by role is typically an overlooked step. This results in overlooking potential partners and losing possibilities to make more of a difference.

*This big **Who** wheel is another one which our Ezekiels need to see!*

## Figure 2. The 6 “Who” circles

7. By role, the most common participant in your congregation’s social mission are your **individual members who volunteer**. As we discovered in the *Activating Our Missional Congregation* workshop on *Motivation*, individuals volunteer for a variety of reasons. For your project to be effective, participants from this circle is essential. (Recall that in the workshop on *Vitality*, we explored how regular feedback communication loops to the congregation about social mission activity is highly reinforcing for volunteers, as well as a recruitment strategy for new people.)
8. Another role is your **Church officer, staff, or clergy** who volunteer in and initiate mission programs. (The food cupboard at Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, was started by two secretaries from their office. They were the first faces hungry people saw when they came to the door asking for groceries. It was the secretaries who bought groceries with their own money and placed them in the Church kitchen!) Church officers may volunteer out of a personal call to serve. Especially because of their leadership position, they should regularly report on their first-hand experiences to the governing board. This increases awareness of the project among decision-makers. Conventional wisdom is that clergy should not be **key** participants in the project because they bear other responsibilities, but they will uniquely contribute in their role when they actively encourage, nurture, and validate your volunteers’ efforts. However, selective volunteering by clergy (e.g., serving homeless families a meal) can inspire laity.
9. Official endorsement by the **Session or its designated units acting to support** the project is a form of participation often underutilized. With potential way beyond simply giving permission, this is another *Vitality* best practice because it builds the congregation and the community’s ownership of the project. This also builds accountability to the congregation. Further, in Presbyterian polity, it is the Session’s **right** to oversee mission involvement in the community. Many congregations function in a *laissez-faire* fashion and let two or three people run a project without accountability to the Session. In the beginning, this *hands-off* administrative style may be driven by a Session’s hesitancy to quench the Spirit. But over time, this distance will hurt the project and Session in two ways. A.) The volunteer will wonder whether she or he is supported or noticed, and, B.) The project may go off in a direction that is counterproductive for the community, duplicative of an existing service, or become a possessive *hobbyhorse* of a particular volunteer, thus stifling development. The project is always better when the Session both affirms and verifies the fidelity of the congregation’s involvement in the community.

10. This Circle points to participants beyond the congregation. A local **faith-based service agency (FBSA)**, like Habitat for Humanity or Salvation Army, can increase the impact of a congregation’s social mission project. Creating a seat for a **FBSA** at your team’s planning table can bring experience, skills, resources, and perspective which the team lacks. A faith-based college with a strong *service learning* program can also contribute. When collaborating with **FBSAs**, we highly recommend a partnership document, e.g., a *memorandum of understanding* (MOU). This holds true whether the partnership is local, national, or international.<sup>8</sup>
  
11. This Circle, and # 12, is a useful resource when your project’s purpose is to advocate for social change. A **coalition or partnership of faith-based organizations (FBO)** is a way to improve the impact of your social justice project. An **FBO coalition** can be denominational, ecumenical (i.e., Christian), or multi-faith. While a Circle # 10 partner is a social service agency, # 11 is a faith-based, citizen action organization, like Bread for the World.<sup>9</sup> The MOU guideline for # 10 applies here, too. Even if your congregation joins a denominational **FBO**, like the Presbyterian Church’s Office of Public Witness<sup>10</sup>, be clear about the expectations.<sup>11</sup>
  
12. Some congregations have strengthened their social mission efforts by **joining a local secular citizens’ coalition**. One example is the Alinsky-model of organizing: it builds issue-oriented, broad-based networks for citizen-led action.<sup>12</sup> Another example is the Gamaliel model: it uses local affiliates to train community and faith leaders to participate in political, social, and economic policy decisions which affect their lives.<sup>13</sup> Circle # 12 partnerships will significantly change how congregations typically conduct their social mission projects. Once again, be very clear about what is expected. Congregations also need to be strategically wise as to which members or staff join. Participation in a such a coalition needs to be constantly monitored so that it builds the missional capacity of a local congregation and does not drain it.

An exercise in “Who”

Name of one of our social mission projects \_\_\_\_\_

Using the 6 circles of participants in Figure 2 as our choices...

1. Which circle, currently participating, needs attention to improve its contribution?
  
2. Which circle, not currently involved, could improve our project’s impact?



Figure 3. How will we do this social mission project?



### The ways participants function in our project.

The issue of **how** the congregation is to involve itself in social mission can be the cause of vigorous debate. This need not be so, because there are multiple actions which your volunteers, your congregation, and your partners can take so that the goal or desired outcome is achieved. The ways of functioning need not conflict with each other. And performing one function does not mean the others are excluded. Your project planning question thus becomes a welcome one, “To achieve our goal, where shall we begin?”

*This big **How** wheel is another one which our Ezekiels need to see!*

### Figure 3. The 5 “How” circles

13. **Hosting and operating projects** on congregational property is a frequent way to conduct social mission. A number of very practical issues arise when using church property, most of which are solvable. The one caution we offer is to do excellent research in advance to discover if the program already exists. Learning from neighbors about how to, or how not to, operate a food cupboard, e.g., would benefit everyone. American congregations have hosted social mission projects in their buildings since the Civil War. Somebody has already done what you are considering, and can spare you a lot of grief by telling you about their mistakes.
14. **Training our participants** is a big step beyond merely recruiting and scheduling your volunteers. **Training** involves structured reflection on your practice of mission. It leads to making adaptations based on that reflection. If churches train Sunday School teachers, why don't we train our food cupboard volunteers or our tutors or our social justice advocates? At first glance, a social mission manual or curriculum may not be readily known. But when we look around our congregation and our community, we will discover many resources. Psychologists or social workers can train our volunteers who work with hungry **people who also have** mental health issues. Teachers can help our tutors gain skills to better serve. The Presbyterian Church's Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C., offers regular training on how to visit legislators.<sup>14</sup> **Trained participants** improve the project's outcomes!
15. **Educating and informing** is a strategy which invites your community to join in dialogue about an issue that affects their well-being, e.g., health, safety, access to affordable housing, decent education, etc. **This Circle focuses on data** – an evidence-based approach. *E.g., if your congregation is involved in a food pantry, and care about hunger, especially as it affects children, you have the opportunity to collect data and construct a profile of the clients served: How many households served contain children? Of the children served, how many are 5-years-old or younger?* With this profile in hand, you're ready to create grass-roots opportunities for learning about **food insecurity**.<sup>15</sup> The possibilities are limited only by your imagination: Bible studies, hosting guest speakers, conducting workshops aimed at the general public, using social media and websites, giving interviews with Public Radio media, submitting op-ed essays in local newspapers...
16. **Conducting social justice ministries** differs from Circle # 17 – campaigning for social justice. An example of Circle # 17 is advocating to raise the minimum wage; the campaign is issue- or policy-oriented, and focuses on decision-makers. Circle # 16, **social justice ministry**, however, serves by engaging the persons who are broken by injustice, e.g., people for whom the current minimum wage is not a living

wage. The heart of **social justice ministry** is the relationships between your volunteers and the people served. Examples include: regularly visiting people in jails and prisons; regularly conducting worship with people who live in a nursing home; ongoing mentoring of a recently incarcerated woman trying to find her way in a society from which she has been absent 10 years; ongoing mentoring of a homeless family so they can manage their budget. **Social justice ministry** often focuses on individuals and small groups. Be very confident that sustained, personal ministry with people broken by injustice is a significant contribution to the community, and is just as important as the other four Circles listed here. Further, this ministry may lead you to Circle # 17, advocating for the those you're serving.

17. **Advocating for social justice**, as noted above, is issue-oriented and concentrates on people in positions of authority. Etymologically, the "advocate" is one who gives voice or speaks or intervenes on behalf of others.<sup>16</sup> Like Circle # 16, this means of pursuing just outcomes is most effective when there is a sustained commitment. Circle # 17 as a means connects directly to the goals of Circles # 5 and # 6 in Figure 1, and the coalitions or partnerships of Circles # 11 and # 12 in Figure 2.

### An exercise in "How"

Name of one of our social mission projects \_\_\_\_\_

Using the 5 circles in Figure 3 as our choices...

1. Which circle that we are not using has the greatest potential to improve our project's impact?

### Conclusion

Keep this newsletter article on **Goals (Why)**, **Roles (Who)**, and **Choices (How)** with your mission or outreach committee's notebook. It's another handy tool when constructing or trimming your social mission project.



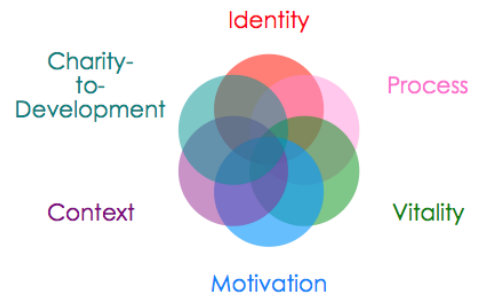
Gather your Team to discuss this topic!

You can connect **Why, Who, & How** to...

***Activating Our Missional Congregation***

- **Workshop 8 – Building the Future of Our Social Mission**

**Ecology of Missional Culture**



Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?

Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?

Let us know! [cityrevRochester@gmail.com](mailto:cityrevRochester@gmail.com) 585-727-2676 (cell)

**Save this Date!**

Saturday, March 24, 2018, 10:00 to Noon

Pilot Congregations Case Study Workshop # 2

at the First Presbyterian Church of LeRoy

Childcare & 9:30 a.m. continental breakfast are provided.

“...to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry,  
for **building up** the body of Christ...”

*Ephesians 4:12*

## Goals, Roles, & Choices Newsletter – References

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- <sup>1</sup> Listen to a classic version of the spiritual by The Charioteers, a gospel and pop focal performing group, 1930-1957. Accessed 12/15/17: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPr601erni8>
- <sup>2</sup> This text is adapted from the work of Katherine Beaty Chiste. (2007). Faith-based organizations and the pursuit of restorative justice. *Manitoba Law Journal Online*, 32(1):27-59. Accessed 11/26/17: <http://mlj.robsonhall.com/mlj/content/faith-based-organizations-and-pursuit-restorative-justice>
- <sup>3</sup> We are well aware of the 13 steps developed by our late mentor and friend, Carl S. Dudley, in his classic 1991 book, *Basic Steps Towards Community Ministry*, published by The Alban Institute. This is an excellent project-implementation resource for congregations and should be considered a supplementary source for our own, ***Activating Our Missional Congregation***. In Dudley's final pages, 101-106, he uses the classic dichotomy of service or advocacy. His focus is the development of organizations outside of the local congregation. This may be an appropriate thing for congregations to do, but is only one of 17 options we present in this newsletter.
- <sup>4</sup> Op cit., endnote 2, p. 47. Chiste calls this the "organizational mission" of the "faith-based organization," in contrast to "the emotional needs of individuals" which "might stir an individual to action." Recall that in the ***Activating Our Missional Congregation*** series, the workshop on ***Missional Identity*** was about the congregation and its calling from God.
- <sup>5</sup> *Book of Order (2017-2019)*, "The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity," F-1.0304. "The great ends of the Church are: the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world."
- <sup>6</sup> For a description by a highly respected federal agency of the SHIFT Study (Service and Housing Interventions for Families in Transition) which was conducted in four New York cities, including Rochester, see the following link. Accessed 12/15/17: <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/traumas-impact-homelessness> SHIFT found that 93% of the mothers experiencing residential instability had a history of trauma. For a copy of the SHIFT report, see the following link. Accessed 12/15/17: [http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/SHIFT\\_Service\\_and\\_Housing\\_Interventions\\_for\\_Families\\_in\\_Transition\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/SHIFT_Service_and_Housing_Interventions_for_Families_in_Transition_final_report.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Good, Edwin M. "Peace in the OT.", & Mitton, C . Leslie. "Peace in the NT." in Buttrick, George Arthur. (Ed.). (1962). *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 3*. New York, NY: Abingdon Press, pp. 705-706.
- <sup>8</sup> Family Promise, a national, interfaith coalition working with homeless families and congregations, strongly urges each of their 200+ networks to use **congregational covenants** in which the leadership of a congregation signs a renewable agreement of specific promises of participation. For an example of a covenant, see the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, affiliate's post. Accessed 12/18/17: <http://www.familypromisehcr.org/take-action/ihn/hosting-covenant-revision-2016-2> Family Promise. Accessed 12/18/17: <https://familypromise.org/>
- <sup>9</sup> Bread for the World. Accessed 12/16/17: <http://www.bread.org/>

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- <sup>10</sup> Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office for Public Witness. Accessed 12/16/17: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/washington/>
- <sup>11</sup> A good example of what to expect is described in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Peacemaking Program. Accessed 12/16/17: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/making-commitment/>
- <sup>12</sup> Industrial Areas Foundation. Accessed 12/16/17: <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/> In the 19760s, one of us, Rod Frohman, was the Lead Organizer of an Alinsky organization in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, The Action Alliance of Senior Citizens of Greater Philadelphia. It was a coalition of 230 senior citizen clubs largely based in churches and synagogues.
- <sup>13</sup> Gamaliel. Accessed 12/16/17: <http://www.gamaliel.org/Default.aspx> In our area, the local affiliate is Rochester Alliance of Communities Transforming Society, Inc. (Roc/ACTS). Accessed 12/16/17: <https://sites.google.com/site/rochesteracts/home>
- <sup>14</sup> Op cit., endnote 10.
- <sup>15</sup> An excellent and reliable source of information about **food insecurity** is Feeding America, a nationwide network of good banks. Accessed 12/18/17: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/what-is-hunger-and-food-insecurity.html>
- <sup>16</sup> (2017). *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.