



**advancethechurch**

ADVANCE VISION BOOK



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WE BELIEVE THE CHURCH IS A MOVEMENT TO ADVANCE,  
NOT JUST AN ORGANIZATION TO MAINTAIN!



## What is the History of Advance?

Alye and Dustin Pearce know that God brought them together for a long-term purpose in the Permian Basin. In January of 2020, a restlessness began to make a home in their heart. Every time Dustin read Scripture, prayed, and sought counsel, he sensed he was being released from his ministry calling at Stonegate after a decade of service. Then, COVID hit in April of 2021 and he and Alye entered into a time of intense prayer and fasting.

During this season, Dustin was slowly and methodically plowing through the Gospels, Ephesians and Proverbs. He was also reading a book called *Heromaker* by Dave Ferguson. This question started rattling around in his brain, **“What would you do if you weren’t afraid?”** The answer was clear: Start a new church. And much to his surprise he was longing to start a new church in Midland that would transform an entire region.

Alye and Dustin talked a lot and she was feeling led to start a new church as well. For the first time in their marriage, they had unity over what their ministry future looked like. After sharing their story with the Stonegate body in September of 2020, God continued to work on and challenge their paradigm for “what a church could be.”

As far back as 2008, The American Church Research Project found that church attendance was not keeping up with population growth in the United States. Research revealed an increase of 303 churches from 2000-2005, yet 3,205 churches were needed to stay on track with population growth. Current research on American church trends shows “36 percent fewer Americans attended church weekly in 2020 than in 1993.” A little over a decade ago evangelical researchers Thom and Sam Rainer found that “Most churches are dwindling. Most denominations are not growing. The population in the United States is exploding ... the church is losing ground. We are in a steep state of decline.” Scott Thumma and Warren Bird conclude from a survey on megachurches that, “three in four of new megachurch attendees left another church to attend the growing megachurch”. The majority of Church growth (in the US) is from transfer growth.

Despite some ups and downs over the years, nearly the same percent of U.S. adults today report reading their Bible weekly as did in 1993 (2020: 35% vs. 1993: 34%). This shows that people are interested in God and growing in their faith but are not seeing attendance in a church building as necessary. While at the same time, there has been an almost 15 percent increase in people who have never read the bible in the last 20 years. Therefore, the amount of people who are not coming to a church building is increasing, all while the number of people who have never opened a Bible is increasing as well.

### **Something has to change.**

Advance Church was born. A church focused on “Go and Make” rather than “Come and Sit.” Ultimately, Midland needs more disciples of Jesus who Go and take the Great Commission seriously in all of life. Disciples who risk everything to reach the unchurched, unbelieving, and uninspired in their communities.



The current population of Midland is 146,000 according to Wiki. Research shows that roughly 10 percent are involved in churches now, which means there are about 131,000 people not in church. To reach these people we need to see a new movement of God where every neighborhood, zip code, and relational network is saturated by ordinary people, transformed by Jesus, who are equipped to employ a reproducible disciple-making strategy and to plant churches. A movement that starts in Midland will not only change this city but the entire Permian Basin.

Both Alys and Dustin have deeply rooted family and friend networks, as well as strategic relationships with city leaders, school administrators, and coaches throughout the region. They love this area and know that some people are legitimately far from God and some think they know God, yet both are headed to a Christless eternity unless Someone intervenes.

### What is our mission?

We are Advance Church and exist to help people experience Jesus personally and advance His Kingdom together for life. (1 Thessalonians 1)

- **Experience** - knowledge gained by going through or living through Someone
- **Advance** - to move or bring forward by gaining new ground
- **Kingdom** - God's rule and reign on Earth

We want people to advance in their love for and personal relationship with Jesus.

We want people to advance in their compassion for the lost.

We want people to advance in their vision of becoming disciple makers - transforming our neighborhoods, cities, and region.

### What are our key Scriptures?

- Matthew 22:37-40, 28:16-20;
- Luke 14:25-35;
- Colossians 3:1-17;
- 1 Thessalonians 1;
- Revelation 7:9-12



## **What is our end vision? (Begin with the end in mind)**

We want to be a part of reaching the 500,000 people in the Permian Basin by helping those far from God experience Jesus personally and helping all followers of Jesus advance His mission of multiplying disciples. This will require us to pursue a movement among the unchurched, unbelieving, and uninspired, with believers trained in Biblical disciple making strategies so that 10,000 Missional Communities and 100 new city churches will be started in the next 20 years.

## **What do we want our people to do (Our Strategy)?**

1. Gather weekly in a Missional Community (MC), once on the first Sunday of the month with all the MCs for Celebration Sunday, as well as the third Thursday of the month for our Elements Service (Baptism/Lord's Supper/Prayer).

A Missional Community is a group of 20-40 people who meet regularly in a home, office building, park, restaurant/bar, etc. These groups of people operate like a spiritual family. They immerse themselves in the Word of God, practice the "one-another's" of Scripture, share meals, and live out a life of love for God and people. Our desire is that MCs will multiply across our city and then to surrounding regions, so that new city churches can be started.

2. Go live out their faith in all of life, whether it be in their neighborhood, workplaces or hobbies, and begin making disciples.

3. Grow weekly through ongoing coaching and accountability inside the Missional Community, quarterly through optional specialized equipping workshops.



## What values do we want our people to embody?

- **Heart over Behavior** (Proverbs 4:20-27, Colossians 3:1-17)

Jesus cares about and radically transforms the heart, because it is the well-spring of life. Therefore, our hearts must be guarded so that love for and obedience to Jesus drives our decisions, rather than behavior modification and performance.

- **People over Pigs** (Matthew 8:28-34)

People are the mission, and their souls are eternal, which makes them inherently more important than temporary worldly things we often mistake as our livelihood.

- **Multiplication over Addition** (Colossians 1:28, 2 Timothy 2:2)

Multiplication sends people away from you and allows Christianity to keep up with the rapidly growing population, while addition draws people to you and eventually stagnates future growth.

- **Advance over Maintain** (Acts 19:10, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-11, Revelation 7:9-12)

The Church is a movement to advance, not just an organization to maintain.

## What are the marks of the disciples of Jesus in this movement?

People who:

- **Surrender their life to the Father, every day** (Matthew 6:33, Luke 14:26-27, John 5:19).
- **Read and obey the Word** (John 8:47, 10:27; James 1:22).
- **Depend on the Holy Spirit** (John 14:15-17, 16:13-14).
- **Make generational disciples of Jesus** (Matthew 4:19, 22:37-40, 28:18-20).

## What is our DNA?

**Pioneering Leaders** - Leaders who begin with the *end* in mind and connect with people by crossing boundaries to establish contact with people who are far from God.

**Contagious Relationships** - Relationships motivated by love that start within pre-existing social networks and through responsive people who will lead you into their relational networks.

**Mobilized Missionaries** - Every disciple is a missionary and charged with making disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching those who respond to obey Jesus. The Church will not advance if paid professionals are solely responsible for the mission.

**Reproducible Tools** - Simple, adaptive, sustainable, and scalable methods to reach people and expand into new fields through ordinary people.

- **Gospel** - Every believer should know how to share their story and Jesus' story. (3 Circles)
- **Prayer** - Every believer should know how to pray and teach others to pray. (A.C.T.I.V.E.)
- **Scripture** - Every believer should know how to read the Bible and teach others to read it. (DBS)



## What are our methods?

**Focus on God's Word** (Matthew 7:24-27) – God's revealed Word must be treasured, read, obeyed, memorized and shared. Every week, MCs will seek to do that by using a tool called Discovery Bible Study.

**Multiply Extraordinary Prayer** (Acts 4:23-31) – In the West, our prayer lives are often ordinary. A movement requires bold, expectant, persistent Spirit-led, Scripture-fed prayer. Every week, MCs will pray together as a community. This can happen in person or virtually.

**Cast Movement Vision** (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10) – Jesus' plan isn't a business or marketing plan. It's a plan to transform the world through everyday ordinary people. Every week, MCs will remind each other the vision that God has given them to advance His Kingdom and prepare themselves to share it with others.

**Train Believers** (Matthew 28:18-20) – Every MC will be able to train believers on disciple making strategies from the Bible that can be easily replicated. Trainings will be implemented by any of the MC members when necessary.

**Go Live Out Your Faith** (Matthew 10, Luke 10:1-37) – Every week, MCs will share stories about living and working among the unchurched, uninspired, and unbelieving throughout the course of their previous week, as well as the spiritual conversations they had and intentional relationships they formed. The MC will also pursue a common mission together in the community to be determined by the group schedule. This may include reaching people in area parks, adopting a local apartment community and meeting their needs, partnering with a like-minded local non-profit, or serving a neighborhood school.

**Start New Groups** (Mark 4:26-29) – Every week, MCs will talk about discovery groups that have started consisting primarily of non-believers reading the Bible with a disciple maker and others in their social network. The hope is for them to receive Jesus, join MCs, or start new ones.

**Grow through Ongoing Coaching** (2 Timothy 2:2) – Every week, MCs will have a coaching element where one of the partners will share a tool for advancing personally and together. The hinge factor in a movement advancing is consistent and reproducible leadership development for all that never ends. There will also be optional equipping workshops that emerge on a wide range of topics.

## What are our core principles?

- The Great Commandment fuels the Great Commission.
- Every disciple is a multiplier.
- Every disciple has gifts to exercise.
- Simple things grow, simple things multiply.
- The Kingdom is always relational before it's organizational.



## What metrics will we track and ultimately measure?

Success can be summed up in two words: generational discipleship. We measure whether disciples are making disciples who make more disciples who make more disciples. Our goal isn't to plant churches hoping to get disciples, rather we will make disciples and from those disciple-making efforts see new groups and churches start. We will measure how many groups we start, how many people become followers of Jesus, and how many MCs and healthy churches are formed throughout the region. This will give us a picture of generational growth that leads to movement.

## We always thank God for all of you,

making mention of you constantly in our prayers. We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit, and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out. Therefore, we don't need to say anything, for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead —  
Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 1





## APPENDIX I

### **Seven-Question Discovery Bible Study Process**

1. What are you thankful for in the past week?
2. What has challenged or stressed you or others around you in the past week?
3. Is there anything this group can do to help with those challenges or stresses, or is there any other need we can meet together?

At this point, read a passage of Scripture several times out loud together; then have everyone in the group retell it in their own words.

Ask the next four questions of the group.

4. What does this passage teach you about God?
5. What does the passage teach you about people?
6. What should you do this week in response to the passage?
7. Who should you share with this week?

In addition to these questions, before you read the new passage for the week, you'll review last week's passage and ask if everyone did what they said they were going to do and shared with whom they said they would. Doing this keeps everyone accountable for obeying and sharing.



## APPENDIX 2

### What is a Missional Community?

A Missional Community is a group of 20-40 people who meet regularly in a home, office building, park, restaurant/bar, etc. These groups of people operate like a spiritual family. They immerse themselves in the Word of God, practice the “one-another’s” of Scripture, share meals, and live out a life of love for God and people. Our desire is that MCs will be spread out across our city and then to surrounding regions, so that new city churches can be started.

The MC gathering can last up to 1-2 hours and normally ends or begins with a meal. The community will assign couples to focus on a key element of movement for a pre-determined length of time. A different couple or persons will lead each section below on a weekly basis. Each community will also submit a 6 month and 1 year plan for how they will answer the strategic planning questions below.

**Worship** – This can include singing, responsive reading of Scripture, prayer, etc.

**Cast Movement Vision** – This is a great opportunity for the person(s) in charge of this area to lead an open time of stories about what God is doing in and through the Church. It’s also crucial to take this time to remind the MC of its why, the Advance Church common language and to cast vision for multiplication. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- How will your group encourage each group member to cast vision to other believers to fulfill the Great Commission?
- How will your group record, track, and share the stories of how God is at work through your people?

**Focus on God’s Word** – The person(s) in charge of this will facilitate the Discovery Bible Study. Missional Communities will go through books of the Bible as determined by the Advance Church elders. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What is your communities plan for focusing on God’s Word in this season?

**Multiply Extraordinary Prayer** – The person(s) determines when the group is going to pray together outside of the gathering and what needs added to make it extraordinary. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What will your community do to multiply extraordinary prayer?
- When will you pray?
- How will it become extraordinary in this season?

**Train believers** – The person(s) in charge of training will give an update of how many being trained and how many people need to be trained. Question to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What is your plan for training an existing believer and a new believer who catches the vision?

**Go live out your faith** – This person(s) will keep the group motivated and accountable to pray for and have intentional spiritual conversations in their neighborhood, workplace, and among the



**Go live out your faith** – This person(s) will keep the group motivated and accountable to pray for and have intentional spiritual conversations in their neighborhood, workplace, and among the group the MC chooses to adopt as their “mission” in the city or region. They will also coordinate the MCs outreach efforts. The primary target is the unchurched, unbelieving, uninspired people that God is already preparing, who can reach their household or social network. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What is your group’s plan for going out and serving the community?
- Have you put dates for prayer walking, serving, and going out on a timeline/calendar?
- What is your strategy for including each group member in the process?

**Start new groups** – This person(s) provides an update on how many discovery groups are active and how many invitations to start new discovery groups have been made and are being made. There is also an opportunity for disciple making accountability with existing Persons of Peace. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What is your strategy for starting discovery groups or helping discovery groups transition into missional communities?
- What is your group’s strategy for empowering a person of peace (POP) to start a new Discovery Bible Study?
- Does your group understand the importance of not trying to bring people to “your” Missional Community?
- Is your group aware of all of the Bible sequences available to meet felt needs and empower a person of peace (POP) to DISCOVER God’s Word with their circle of influence?

**Ongoing coaching** – This person will provide an extension of the coaching during the week. Questions to answer and submit every 6 months and 12 months:

- What is the plan to make sure that every member in your community is being coached and has access to coaching resources?

Every MC will be a participative experience where everyone in the community uses their spiritual gifts. Additionally, in order to reach a whole city and region, MCs must multiply regularly. Multiplication is near to the heart of God. Only through multiplication did the early church advance into a movement that “turned the world upside down”. Every year, MCs will evaluate if it’s time to multiply. Size is always a good indication that it’s time, as well as maturing people who are ready to step out and advance the Kingdom. The sent out leaders will start the new MC with a group of at least 6 people. We will have target dates, but they are goals, ultimately our hope is for a multiplying culture to be embedded and welcomed into our DNA from the onset.



## APPENDIX 3

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What do we do with Children and Youth?

We believe that the best way for children to be disciplined is by being in environments where people are disciplining each other and engaging in Christlike relationships. Parents are the primary disciple makers in their home; however, children need other believers to be aunts and uncles in the Lord and model being a disciple of Jesus. They need to see people read the Bible and discuss how they're going to apply it, they need to see and join in times of prayer, and they need to feel like they're a part of a bigger spiritual family.

Sometimes parents can take an "institutionalized" approach to their children's spiritual formation and leave it solely to the Church. Or they take an "isolated" approach and believe only they can speak into their child's spiritual formation. We endorse an "integrated" approach. Children need to be spiritually formed in their homes and in the homes of others. Our approach allows children to spend more time with their families while being involved in spiritual activities. Children need spiritual families who are modeling complete surrender and an integrated faith. At Advance Church, children are immersed in a smaller community of adults and kids, as well as a larger environment once a month that is more traditional in nature.

Within the MC, children will be integrated into the worship and prayer time. Once every 6-8 weeks, a couple or a couple and a single adult will take the kids into a separate area and be in charge of leading them. They will: provide a snack, use the same Bible passage and make it kid friendly (games, crafts, skits). Advance will have a Servant-Leader(s) Team that will compile monthly ideas that any MC can make their own. Teenagers may choose to help serve kids on Sundays or be a part of the adult discussion.

As for the youth (Junior High and High School), there will be specific youth Missional Communities that will start based on affinity groups and where students go to school. These communities will have background checked and trained Servant-Leaders assisting the youth as they lead. There will also be special events and activities planned for the purpose of having fun that will be coordinated by Servant-Leaders.

#### What does church member-partnership look like?

A member-partner is one who has completed the Training Pathway, aligns with our statement of faith, belongs to a Missional Community and agrees to faithfully:

- Surrender their life to the Father, every day
- Read and obey the Word
- Depend on the Holy Spirit
- Make generational disciples of Jesus



In more detail:

- I will worship the one true God with other church partners for as long as I am physically able (Hebrews 10:24-25; Romans 12:1). The goal of my regular weekly worship is to give God glory (Romans 11:36; Hebrews 13:15).
- I am commanded by God to make disciples of every nation, tribe, people, and language through the local church (Matthew 28:16-20; Revelation 7:9). I will pursue intentional disciple making relationships in my relational network. I will pray for and support the church's mission to go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel (Acts 1:8).
- I will give to God abundantly and joyfully, recognizing God as the owner of all things (Proverbs 3:9; Psalm 24:1). Giving my tithe and time to God brings me closer to Him (Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:19-24).
- I will seek unity with other church partners. I recognize God's design for the church is unity in diversity, and I will put the interests of others above my personal preferences (Ephesians 4:1-6; 1 Peter 3:8-9). I will guard the reputation of the church and submit to discipline for any sin problems in my life (Matthew 18:15-20).
- I will sacrifice by serving first, following the servant model of Jesus Christ (Mark 10:45). I will make my attitude that of Christ and through humility make the gospel my priority (Philippians 2:5-11).

## What is your statement of faith?

Our statement of faith includes only the most important non-negotiables.

- We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament are the inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of God. God's Word is the final authority for faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- We believe there is only one God, and He has chosen to reveal Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19, John 14:16-17, Acts 2:32-33)
- We believe man was created in the image of God and the sin of Adam (the first man) marred that image, creating an eternal divide between God and man. Every person is born in sin. (Genesis 1:27, Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23)
- We believe the only way a person can have a true, forgiven relationship with God is through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 10:9)
- Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus became man without ceasing to be God. Our right standing with God is made sure because of His literal, physical resurrection. (Matthew 1:23, Philippians 2:5-11)
- We believe in the literal, physical return of Jesus to judge the living and the dead. (Matthew 1:18-25, 1 Corinthians 15)
- We believe God offers eternal life as a free gift and that it must be received by faith alone through God's grace alone. The life that comes from this gift is a permanent possession of the one receiving it. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
- We believe the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of believers on mission to advance God's kingdom. The local church is autonomous, free of any external authority of control. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- We believe believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the church. (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 5: 25-26)



### **How do you keep Missional Communities from teaching heresy?**

Remember, all churches in all environments deal with heresy. Often times, heresy can be more hidden in a large church. Paul's churches had problems with heresy also. That's why he wrote books like 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians. Heresy is unavoidable and must be confronted. As our Churches gather together at the city church level, we will have elder(s) with a teaching gift address any problems with heresy. At the Missional Community level, there will be teachers in every group that can help speak into challenging issues and topics. We believe biblical preaching should be both a dialogue and monologue. Bad doctrine will be more exposed in a smaller environment. Ultimately, it's important to understand that believers don't know everything they need to know at once. It should straighten out over time by using the methods they are learning.

### **What about all the other traditional church ministries (men's, women's, singles)?**

Missional Communities will form based on leaders who want to reach a certain area, people group, or specific target. There may be communities that are birthed out of the purpose of divorce care, or with singles, or for those in recovery. The purpose is not to be a social club, but a group of people on mission together where community becomes the natural byproduct of mission. Every MC will provide opportunities for men and women to have special opportunities with their same gender to have accountability and build long lasting relationships together.

### **What's your strategy to start new churches?**

We will pray for and raise up leaders in other cities. When new leaders emerge, we will work to plant the gospel and start new churches with movement DNA and a disciple making strategy that belong to the Advance Church network but can function autonomously.

### **What is the leadership structure at Advance Church?**

Advance Church believes that Jesus is the Senior Pastor, because He is the head of the church. We want to humbly submit to His leadership so that he receives glory and His Kingdom advances. Scripture (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-9) shows us that the highest level of authority and leadership in the church rest with a plurality of elders and while there may be a "first among equals" within that group, there is no elder that has more authority than the others. The elders will meet together as a group once a week. Each elder will oversee their Missional Community as well as one to three other MCs. Advance Church will also utilize the biblical office of deacon. They are to assist the elders with the leadership of the church and serve the body.



## APPENDIX 4

### Celebration Sunday Service Template

Once we start multiple Missional Communities, we will bring them together for a monthly gathering, called Celebration Sunday. We will meet once per month, but could change to once per quarter, or only for special events, if the monthly gathering ever became more important than the weekly MCs and the mission to make disciples.

During this celebration service, the missional communities will be able to interact with the larger body of Christ and be encouraged at the movement that is taking place as new disciple makers are formed and the movement grows larger.

Below is a format we will follow for our celebration service:

**LOOK BACK** - Testimonies. We will spend time having people share testimonies of how they have been able to start groups, lead people to faith in Christ, or other testimonies of how God is working in their lives or how they have encouraged others to experience God personally and advance His Kingdom together. This time can also be used to share what is happening on the national and international level by sharing testimonies or stories of disciples from around the world.

**WORSHIP** - We will spend time worshipping the Lord through prayer, singing, communion, and by using our spiritual gifts to encourage the Body of Christ that has gathered together. We will praise God for what he is doing in people's lives and in the region from the testimonies that have been shared.

**LOOK UP** - Teaching/Training. This time will be deeply rooted in God's Word and geared toward equipping the body.

**LOOK FORWARD** - Obey. Take time to have people pray about their need to obey the teaching lesson if there needs to be any obedience to it. Have leaders of the movement share with the people upcoming events or service opportunities that MCs can partake in, such as outreach events. If there are any needs within the body of Christ, those can be shared, and you can pray for them or collect money or resources to help resolve those needs. Encourage those attending to be praying about who they can share their story and God's story with. Share about opportunities for any upcoming trainings.

#### Notes and References used

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- <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>
- Thom and Sam Rainer, *Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2008), 8.
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- Conversely, 75% do come from other churches.
- <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>
- <https://www.experiencelifenow.com/>
- Adapted from: Steve Addison, *The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders*, (100 Movements Publishing), 2019
- Excerpt from the Pastoral Training manual for We Are Church in San Francisco, CA.
- The evangelism strategy of Advance Church is to share the Gospel and immediately get people grouped together to read the Bible or get people reading the Bible together and allow the Gospel to emerge from the text.



# advancethechurch

EXPERIENCE

JESUS PERSONALLY.

ADVANCE HIS

KINGDOM TOGETHER.

