BE THE CHURCH

MICROCHURCH NETWORK

A Different Way Of Seeing And Being The Church

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THE CHURCH IS CHANGING

The Church in the US has used the same basic model for over one hundred years. This was possible because Christianity and the culture shared similar moral values. Many people participated in church as a social function or out of a sense of obligation.



The culture in the U.S. has reached a tipping point and is now more secular than Christian. The Western Church has been declining for decades and the rate of that decline is increasing. The positive is that there is now a more pronounced distinction between the church and culture.



This presents the Church with a responsibility and opportunity to shift how we operate. We must see the church in a new way. Not as a building or club but as a missionary movement. We need to BE THE CHURCH in a new way by having every member participating in the life of the Body; in their homes, at their work, and in their community, every day of the week.

LETTING GO

In the Fall of 2020, Belmont Church became convinced that God was calling us to let go of anything we were holding on to that would keep us from being the church he wanted us to be.

This meant we would have to let go of traditions, methods, and preferences that would keep us from being effective. We would have to let go of inherited ways of seeing and being the church.

In the Fall of 2022, we hit a mile-marker in our letting go process. We stepped out in faith and obedience and sold our traditional 50,000 sq.ft. church building.



MOVING FORWARD

Prayer has been the most important part of this faith journey. We are constantly asking God to show us the way forward and to bring the people that we need as we go through this metamorphosis process.

Moving forward means thinking like missionaries. How can we bring the good news about Jesus to our neighbors and city without expecting them to come and see a traditional church service that they have no context for? How is he calling us to operate in our culture so that we can make disciples and multiply followers of Jesus?

Pressing forward also means not pouring new wine into old wineskins so we are changing how we are structured as a church. We are organizing our church family as a network of micro-churches. This means we will be composed of several, fully functioning, missionary-minded house churches that are connected together through our Believe, Belong, Become Framework.

"But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead; I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus- Apostle Paul

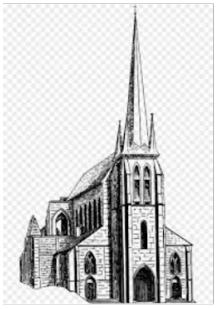
A HEALTHY TRANSFORMATION

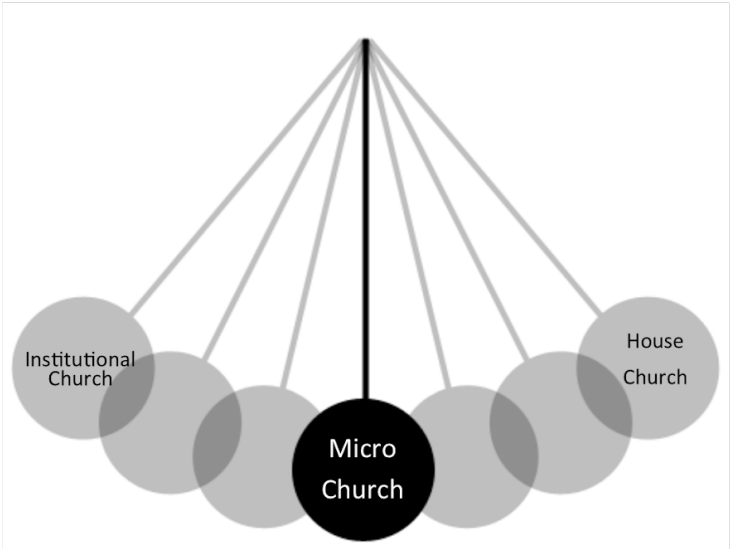
In times of disruption, people and organizations have a tendency to overcorrect and swing the pendulum of change too far in the opposite direction in an attempt to address the problems they are facing. This overreaction usually results in some healthy components getting thrown out with the bad.

This same overcorrection can happen in the church. People who see the shortcomings with the institutional [American] church can sometimes throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater by abandoning all structure or authority in the life of the church. This leads to its own set of problems.

Below are some over-generalizations about Institutional Church and Home Church to provide contrast and frame the conversation. Extremes exist on different ends of the spectrum but health in the middle.

INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH VS HOUSE CHURCH







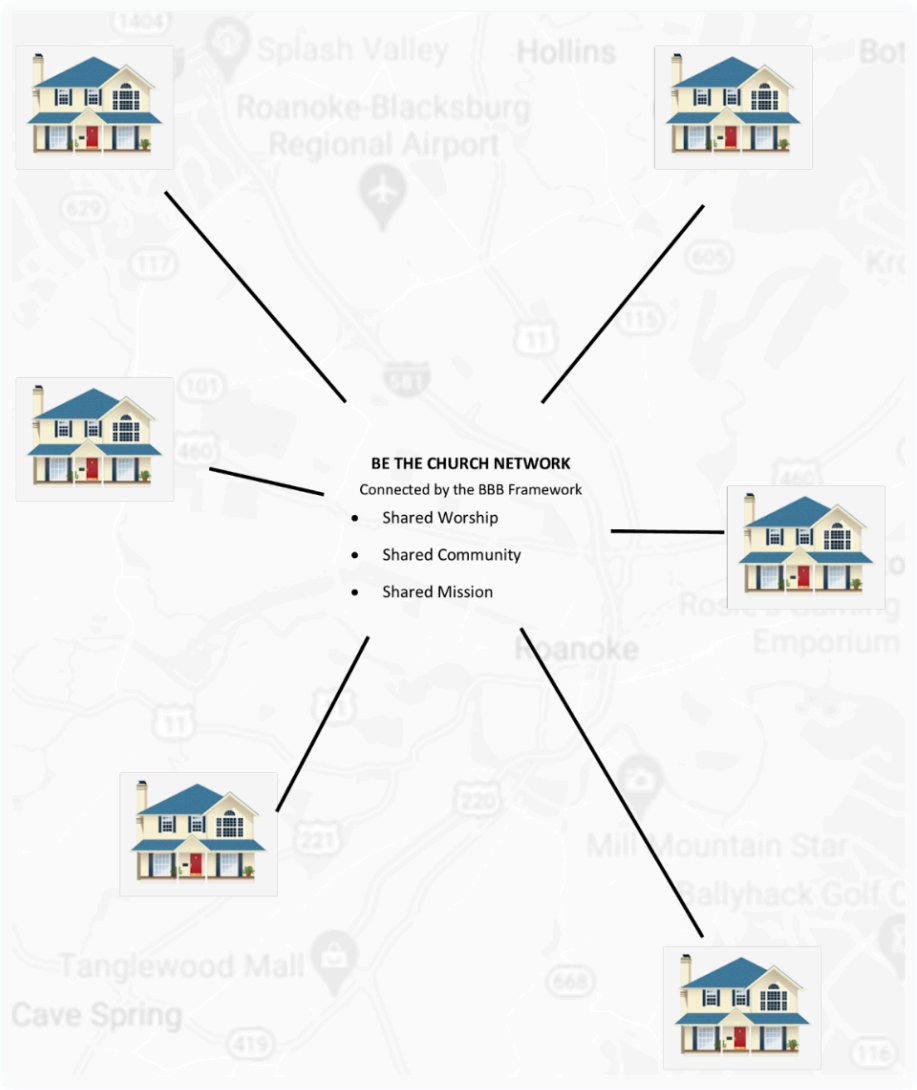
Comparison of Institutional VS. House Church	
INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH - STRENGTH	**HOUSE CHURCH - WEAKNESS**
Doctrine is Established and Guarded	Doctrine No Established. Heresy Creeps In.
Biblical and Recognized Leadership	Self-Appointed Leaders. Lacks Direction.
Has Longevity and Stability	Often Short-lived and Unstable.
Kingdom Cooperation for Mission	Myopic View of Missions
INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH -WEAKNESS	**HOUSE CHURCH - STRENGTH**
Often Has Surface Level Relationships	Known for Authentic Community
Ministry is Left to the Professionals	Every Member of the Body is Engaged
Known for Sunday Only Christians	Known for Missional Lifestyles

*These are intentional stereotypes to provide contrast. Each church is unique and has its own strengths and weaknesses.

KINGDOM BALANCE

Our approach to micro-church is a healthy, biblical balance that embraces the beauty of the Kingdom. Instead of going to the extreme in one direction or the other we desire the freedom and effectiveness of home-church combined with the structure and stability of the local church.

MICROCHURCH DIAGRAM



BE THE CHURCH is a Network of micro-churches tethered together for health, stability, and effectiveness by our Believe Belong Become Framework.

MICROCHURCH DEFINITION

In our Network, Micro-Churches are small, fully functioning, neighborhood churches with similar DNA, that are linked together with our shared Believe Belong Become Framework.



Definition Unpacked:

- **In Our Network** - means that this is how we describe it here. This may not be how other churches or networks define micro-church.

- **Micro-Churches are small** - means that these are generally groups of 8-20 adults plus children. Instead of getting too big, they are intentional about multiplying by training and sending people out of their MC to start a new MC.

- **Fully functioning** - means that they encapsulate, in miniature, the characteristic qualities and features of a church. They worship together, take communion, care for each other's needs, do missions work, baptize, marry, bury, exercise church discipline and more.

- **Neighborhood** - means that our MC's generally meet in homes or community spaces dispersed around the city and not in traditional church buildings.

- **Churches with similar DNA** - means that although each MC has their own unique flavor, they also share a lot of the same family values, language, and vibe.

- **That are linked together -** means that although our MC's are fully functioning, they are not completely independent but are committed to staying connected to the greater body of MC's that help make up the Network. This provides health and stability.

- **With our shared Believe Belong Become Framework -** means that we have shared relationships, values and methods around our Worship, Community, and Mission. This Framework holds the Network together and makes multiplication more efficient.

BELIEVE BELONG BECOME FRAMEWORK

Believe means shared worship, shared beliefs, and shared teachings.

Shared Worship. This is where all MC's gather to celebrate what God is doing. These times involve prayer, music, testimonies, fellowship, and encouragement.



Shared Beliefs. The Bible is our source of truth and we have agreement around a shared doctrinal statement that clarifies our beliefs on the essentials of the faith.



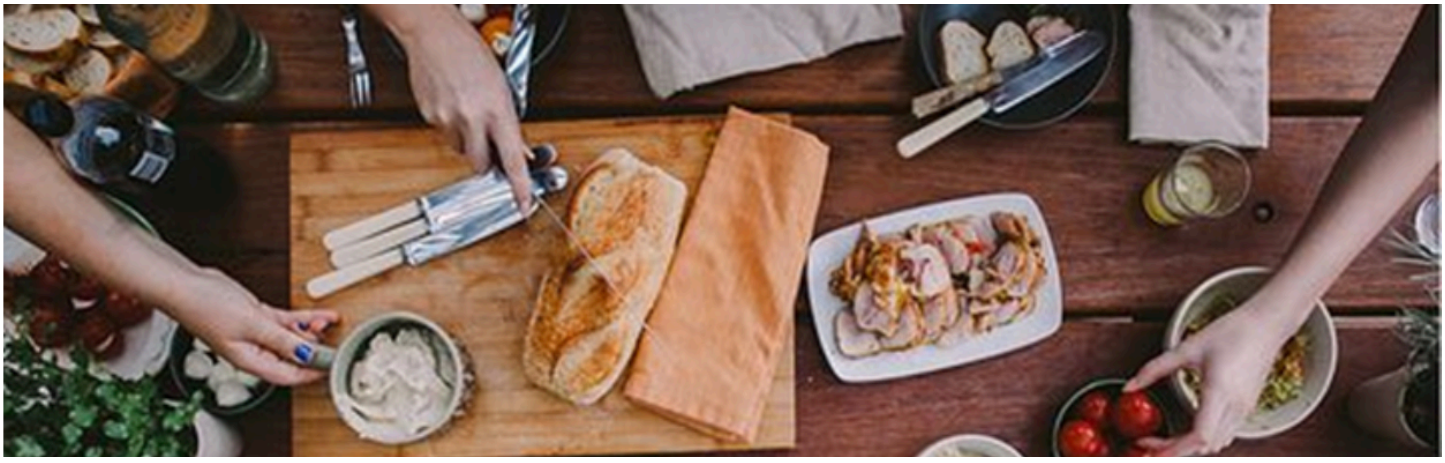
Shared Teaching. Our Elders and MC pastors guide the biblical instruction for the Network. They schedule the teaching for our shared celebration services. Sometimes the teaching in all MC's will be synced up by the Elders. MC leaders will also have times where they decide what teaching is most appropriate for their particular group in that season.



BELIEVE BELONG BECOME FRAMEWORK

Belong is shared rhythms, shared leadership, and shared communications.

Shared Rhythms. Each MC is unique but we also share some common rhythms for our weekly gatherings in homes and intentional rhythms for when we are scattered. These include breaking bread, taking communion, sharing testimonies, and more.



Shared Leadership. Each MC is led by a trained and empowered lay pastor that meets the qualifications of an Elder listed in the New Testament. They have co-leaders that they are raising up and together they share the responsibility of shepherding their people. They oversee the community, discipleship, benevolence, and discipline within the MC. MC members pitch in and use their giftings to make this community work as a Body that shares the load.

The Network has another level of leadership in the Council of Elders, who plot the course for the direction of the Network and give encouragement, coaching, and accountability to MC pastors.

Shared Communication. Each MC uses the church app as their communication platform to keep us all connected and informed regarding what is happening across the Network. MC's can use this to communicate among themselves but it is also used network-wide to schedule volunteers, do children's check-in, manage giving, calendaring events, and more.



BELIEVE BELONG BECOME FRAMEWORK

Become is shared mission, shared disciple-making and shared multiplication.

Shared Mission. We embrace our identity as people sent on mission by God. Our love for God moves us into action to love our neighbors and our city in tangible and intentional ways. We cross relational bridges and invite people to know Jesus.

Shared Disciple-making. A disciple is a follower of Jesus. Those who trust in Jesus enter into a lifelong journey of following him daily and helping others follow and grow up in him as well. Our MC's are ground zero for the spiritual formation of disciples which happens in both planned and unplanned moments. In the MC they are truly known and nurtured and they can put their spiritual gifts into practice.

Shared Multiplication. Our goal is for each MC to multiply a new healthy MC every 18 months. We have a shared three-phase process in a MC life cycle to keep them moving forward while at the same time staying sensitive to the timing of the Holy Spirit. These phases are Formation, Discipleship, and Missional. Each MC takes time in each gathering to assess where they are and to take steps to work 'on' the Group.

TIMELINE TO MULTIPLY A MICRO CHURCH



We have a rigorous 12-month apprenticeship that our MC pastors go through before they are commissioned to lead their own MC. This training involves spiritual formation, theological education and practical, hands-on ministry in the life of the Group they are helping to co-lead. After approval by the Elders they are commissioned to lead their own microchurch.

APPRENTICE PROCESS FOR AN MC PASTOR



MISSION 2023

START UP PHILOSOPHY FOR YEAR 1

This New Wineskin moment and our understanding of MC life will be more caught than taught so we will go ahead and plunge headlong into this journey of faith in January! We do this, while being comfortable with the fact that we don't know exactly what this will look like two or three years from now. Launching will force us to narrow our scope of thinking to what is critical for the current season. We will learn a lot in Year 1 and some of our long term ideas will change. With that in mind, we will set our focus on the short-term goals that will eventually help get us to the overarching goals that we envision for down the road. These goals are categorized within our Believe Belong Become Framework.

STEPS FOR FIRST QUARTER

BELIEVE

- Pray - we will do 21 Days of Prayer and provide other regular prayer opportunities
- Worship - we will secure space for our weekend worship services and start meeting there
- Schedule - We will make and share a First Quarter Guide to provide awareness to the church

BELONG

- Leadership - we will clarify the leadership team and install new Elders and Deacons.
- Commission - we will identify and commission our 1st Generation MC's.
- Commitment - we will encourage members to join the MC that the Spirit leads them to.

BECOME

- Mission - each MC will clarify in writing what their cooperative mission focus is for 2023
- Platform - each MC will use the church app for attendance, communication, giving, etc…
- Learn - co-leaders will receive their apprentice process and get started on the journey.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the leadership structure of the Network?

The Council of Elders are responsible for the primary shepherding, leadership, oversight, and care of this church network. The Council of Elders is composed of qualified men who, in most cases, will be leading or co-leading their own MC in the Network. They will give spiritual direction and protection for the Network as a whole. Not every MC leader or co-leader will automatically be on the Council of Elders but they will serve as lay pastors to their own MC. They will be on the track to join the Council of Elders by leading their own MC well.

The BTC Network Leadership Team (also known as the New Wine Team) is a second and larger layer of leadership that consists of MC leaders and some MC co-leaders. Each MC has at least one representative on the BTC Team. This group helps shape the Network, and individual MC's, by bringing to the table their individual spiritual gifting, experiences, burdens, and progress in their MC's. This Team provides encouragement and counsel for each other and help inform the Elders on the direction of the Network and individual MC life.

What will Pastor Jon's role look like as we transition to the Micro Church Network?

Pastor Jon will continue to lead the Elders, Staff, and the Network in a full-time capacity. The changes that we will be going through as a church don't mean that we will need less pastoral leadership; we will actually need more as we navigate uncharted waters. Pastor Jon will shift his schedule to do less of the things needed for a traditional church and spend more of his time on coaching and equipping leaders and making sure that the Network is staying healthy, united, and moving forward.

What is our approach to giving and finances in the Network?

The beauty of a God-glorifying, disciple-making, missions-minded, home church movement is a vision worth giving toward! As God's people, we will continue to invest the finances he has blessed us with into His Kingdom work. He will continue to grow us in our faith as we trust him and release our grip on our goods. Practically speaking, most giving will continue to happen digitally and will be given centrally to the Network for the expansion of the mission that God has called us to. As a Network, we will continue to support not only the growth of our own MC's but we want to be able to be a blessing to the different missionaries, church planters, gospel centered charities and organizations (foster care and adoption, Blue Ridge Women's Center, caring for the homeless and widows, etc…) that God has led us to support and will lead us to

support in the future. As a Network of generous givers we can make a Kingdom impact beyond just what our own individual MC's can do. Our Finance Team, led by our Treasurer, Rick St. Pierre, will continue to oversee and responsibly manage the finances of the Network.

How often will all of the MC's gather for Worship Services and what will that look like?

The regular gathering of the entire local body is biblical and spiritually healthy. This gathering will be a celebration service that will consist of a variety of singing, testimonies, Bible teaching, communion, training, and prayer. In the early days of the Network, we will continue meeting every Sunday for worship and fellowship with other believers. As the Network grows in size and in health of individual MC's, the Elders and the Leadership Team will consider changing the rhythm of the network-wide Sunday gathering by meeting less frequently so that more time and energy can be focused on the individual MC's. This does not mean that the church will be meeting less frequently, it just means that we will be meeting in a different format. These decisions on the regularity of meeting times will be made systematically, one quarter of the year at a time.

Since we sold our building, what is our approach to owning or renting another facility?

Given the values and direction of our Micro Church Network, we currently have no plans to purchase a building. We want to be a network of home churches that are embedded in neighborhoods around the city. Owning and maintaining a building is not where we want to invest our time and energy. Instead, we plan to lease space for our network-wide Sunday gatherings and be good stewards by just paying for the time that we use. Our lease with Crystal Spring Baptist Church gives us the stability of having a meeting space that we can count on and that is a good fit for our needs.

We sold our building in Southeast. How does that affect outreach toward SE Roanoke?

The Lord seems to be expanding our vision to be a church network that is reaching into all corners of Roanoke. Each MC will have a specific mission or neighborhood that they are focused on. MC's in or near SE will still be a witness there and we still have a special place in our heart for the SE section of our city; but now we want to release people as missionaries into all portions of the city.

How will children and youth be integrated into our Micro-Church Network?

Children are a gift from God and a beautiful part of micro-church life. We think micro-church is a vital expression of how church will be done in the next generation and it is significant for them to experience it while they are young. They need to see faith in Christ interwoven throughout the life of their family and friends. The leadership of each MC has the freedom to decide their own practical approach to the level of involvement of children in their weekly gathering times. Each MC will be unique in the number of children, the age and temperament of the children, etc… There is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Some MC's may have kids playing in a separate room while they gather, some may keep them with adults, some may decide to opt for off-site childcare. Each MC needs to do what is best for them in that particular season. The Network will provide each MC with funding to offset the cost of paid childcare. MC's that take advantage of this will need to have a designated point person who is coordinating the childcare, recruiting qualified help, and implementing safety protocols. When all of our MC's gather on the weekend for worship services we still envision providing children's ministry for kids in the 0 - 5 year old range. Teens in our various MC's will get together occasionally for fellowship and missions but we don't have any plans for a traditional looking youth group.

Is our MC Network just for Roanoke or will it expand beyond that?

This is starting out as a network focused on reaching Roanoke with home churches in every neighborhood. We want to launch, train leaders, establish our rhythms, and get to a healthy place. After that, we would love to share our resources and coaching and would be open to extending the network beyond the Roanoke region.

How closely will we be working with other Micro Churches or Networks?

As we start out, we are looking to other MC organizations and leaders for coaching and encouragement while retaining our autonomy as a Network. We are open to working more closely with other individual home churches or MC networks that share similar values and vision. Right now we don't know of any other MC Networks in Roanoke but we think that there is a need and desire for this and so there will be others popping up before too long.