

Presentation to Shenango Presbytery Gathering ----Tues. Nov. 13
Bell Memorial Presbyterian Church
“ An Experience “
Becoming a Missional Church

“ Our Situation “

Most of our mission work at Bell Memorial Church has been low risk and traditional .
However , through the encouragement of Pastor Derek and our participation in the
Missional Church program , we hope to change that .

“ Our Challenge “

Recently we were confronted with a complex mission opportunity. A young single
mother with three children , surviving day by day , living in one basement room of a
relative , out of suitcases and were soon to be homeless. There were complicating
problems involving finances ,health ,emotional issues and parenting . Furthermore we
had practically no experience in dealing with Social Services areas of government.

“ Our Leap “

Our leadership from the Mission Team and Session felt we must respond in some way.
The decision was to open our vacant manse to this struggling family , including
expenses , such as utilities etc. This decision , I believe , was not only pleasing to God
but a little sign of missional thinking. Our operating budget is very tight and we had
contracted with a realtor to manage the rental of the manse , producing several hundred
dollars per month. Our leaders saw the manse through the eyes of Jesus Christ ,as a gift
from God to be used for His kingdom and in His time. Folks in and outside of Bell
Memorial quickly provided the necessary furniture and all of the other basic needs .

A volunteer partnering group was quickly formed , and began laying out the needs and the actions we would take on behalf of this mother and family.

“ The Results “

Great ?? Not really, success seemed to end with the provision of a home , Almost all of the other actions ran into dead ends . Frustrated , Pastor Derek and our volunteers stepped back and reviewed the situation . Praying for guidance , having open and honest discussion and truly listening to each other , we concluded we were not partners , with the family , seeking God’s will and power ! We were people acting on our own assumptions , that we could fix this families problems .God showed us that we needed to join together, with this young mother , in prayer , both with and for each other in seeking mutual understanding of each others needs and goals and agreeing to join together in seeking God’s will and guidance . We are only now beginning to develop a relationship with this family , based on God’s wisdom and direction instead of attempting to fix things through our own strengyh and wisdom.

“ The Lessions Learned “

We have learned Becoming a Missional Church is NOT an instant happening , as todays culture desires .

We have learned from this HIGH RISK outreach that we must expect to deal with failures as well as successes , as we exceed our comfort zones , and we need God for both conditions.

We have learned we must devote more prayer time to build our relationship with God and to teach others to seek God in good and bad times .

We learned we must be patient seeking God's wisdom and will through His word , through the example of the life of Jesus Christ and listening to Him through meditation and the voice of His Holy Spirit.

We learned we must act out of compassion and love , which are conditions of the heart. Whether by coincidence or not , a statement from a recent Daily Bread stuck with me and seems appropriate . It said “ our proper walk with Jesus Christ does not depend on our legs but on our hearts. “ Isn't that part of the difference between a congregation doing mission and one seeking God's will for their actions ?

Our journey at Bell Memorial has begun . Has yours ?? Hopefully sharing our experience may be helpful and encouraging to others of you to seek lives of missionality , both individually and for your congregation .

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Speaking for :

Pastor Derek and the volunteer partners of

Bell Memorial Church I thank you for

this opportunity for sharing . . .