I believe God is calling us to catalyze more effective missional venues and churches. As a church effectively reaching people in pluralistic Los Angeles, I feel we are positioned to help other churches who desire to help those who do not yet know Jesus to choose to follow Him. Throughout this project, I have been working on three specific theological issues: understanding our context, understanding the church, and the involvement of the unbeliever in church.

First, determining our distinguishing characteristics as Mosaic and reading the Mosaic Alliance Survey Forms helped me articulate more clearly our context. We befriend, mobilize, and reach post-Christian people in liberal and urban environments. After a heated email dialogue with a leader at a church in the San Fernando Valley, I realized he misunderstands us because his church has a different context. His church operates more like the church in Berea. In Acts 17:11-12 Luke writes, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.’”¹ We need churches that know how to reach the Bereans. We even need these types of churches in Southern California.

We tend to operate more like the church in Athens, a city “full of idols”² where the good news of Jesus seems like someone is “advocating foreign gods.”³ What the Bereans seemed to

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¹ Acts 17:11-12, New International Version
² Acts 17:16, New International Version
³ Acts 17:18, New International Version
understand readily, the Athenians considered “strange ideas.” We also need churches that know how to reach people like the Athenians.

In response to the question on the Mosaic Alliance Survey Form “What characteristics make Mosaic in Los Angeles unique from other churches?” Tim Drew wrote:

“Hmm, in what way are you guys not unique? The ability to reach people that normally would not be found in Christian churches is the chief attribute that I really look up to you guys. Your leadership is another admirable characteristic. Whenever I am around one of your leaders I can tell they have “social equity” outside of the church rather than inside. Bravo!”

In response to the question: “What characteristics do you think are essential for a church to demonstrate in order to connect with the Mosaic Alliance?” he wrote:

“A passion to reach people in secular liberal culture is maybe the only essential element that is required. I think this is Mosaic’s real angle that I have picked up on. There are so few churches actually being effective in reaching upwardly mobile, educated, secular, liberal people that Mosaic has something significant to say to those out there that are trying to do the same.”

To me, Tim Drew’s comments carry tremendous weight. As a director of church planting for Grace, a church planter, and someone who has been involved with us and seen our growth as church, I feel he has good insights from which we can learn. Tim and his wife were involved with Mosaic for a couple of years while he was studying at Fuller Seminary. They even helped us as we started a Saturday night service in 1999. They moved back to Texas where Tim led the church planting initiatives at Grace in Central Texas before moving back out to Los Angeles to plant a church in the Santa Monica area. During his time in Central Texas he worked directly

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4 Acts 17:20, New International Version
5 Tim Drew is not the actual name of the church planter.
6 Grace in Central Texas is not the actual name of the church.
with a consultant who had been in leadership with The Church on Brady. The Grace church planting efforts followed closely her guidance. After attempting to plant a church in West Los Angeles, he realized that the Church on Brady model was not working in terms of reaching the type of person they targeted. As a result, he connected to the Mosaic Alliance. A year later, his church plant did not have enough money to support him and his family, so they became a new campus of another church in the Mosaic Alliance called Church of the Beach Cities. Tim and his family moved to Indianapolis to lead a non-profit focused on supported indigenous missionaries in third world countries.

Tim, along with others, have emphasized our niche. The Church on Brady, Seeker-driven, Purpose-driven, and community church models still work in the right settings. The core values we have chosen and the implications of these core values help us reach people who have been influenced by a highly spiritual and liberal environment.

A major theological issue throughout this project relates to understanding what the church is and how an unbeliever can and cannot connect. The Church equals the Body of Christ, those men and women who have repented of their sins and chosen to follow Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. In the Scriptures, the term “members” refers to those who are “members of the Body of Christ.” When Paul wrote the letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians, he was writing to the Body of Christ, to those who followed Jesus. They may have met in different homes or all of the believers in that city may have all met together. Either case, the “members” refers to all followers of Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is inclusive. Anyone from any background can become a follower of Jesus. Once you are a follower of Jesus it is then that you are a “member of the Body

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7 See Romans 12:4-5; I Corinthians 6:15, 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:25; and Colossians 3:15
of Christ.” All are invited to become a “member.” No one is excluded, but unfortunately, many choose not to join the Body of Christ and too many do not know how to join the Body of Christ. The word “member” describes those who have chosen to follow Jesus, but it does not mean that others cannot also become “members” through a personal relationship with Jesus.

In many churches, the term “member” has been in a more exclusive way than Paul intended. Many churches use the term “member” to designate the specific people committed to a particular local church thereby excluding believers who have not joined that particular church. In most instances, the “members” also adhere to a specific interpretation of the Scriptures. In other words, you cannot become a “member” of this local church which has a Baptist worldview if you have a Lutheran understanding of the Bible. Paul was referring to “members of the Body of Christ” whereas some churches are referring to “members of this local expression of the Body of Christ.” I would not characterize this as unbiblical or heretical, but it has certainly made the term more confusing and the local church more exclusive.

Further confusing the issue would be the designation of the word “church” to refer to a building or weekly service. Paul referred to both a universal Church (all followers of Jesus) and to local churches (the believers who gathering in a particular city or location), but he never used the term “church” to describe a building or a weekly service.

The term “church” comes from the Greek word “ecclesia” which literally means “gathering.” In recent history, we have confused this to mean that the “church” equals the Sunday morning service, but like the word “member,” the term “church” refers to the people who follow Jesus. We gather together on Sunday mornings, and we should be gathering together for “teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer…” along with acts of

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Matthew 16:18; Eph. 1:22, 5:23
Acts 14:23, I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; Rev. 2:1
service (“selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need”) and reaching out to others (“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”)\textsuperscript{10}

By redefining “member” as a more exclusive term and by redefining “church” as a building or a weekly service, we have misunderstood the relationship of the “Body of Christ” to those who are not following Jesus. Following the examples of Jesus and the early church, the “Body of Christ” can and should befriend, love, and even reach out to those who do not yet follow Him. We can allow people without faith in Jesus to belong within our sphere of influence, to enter into our buildings, participate as part of our weekly gatherings, and even belong to our broader community. In the process, allowing people to belong before they have to believe creates the opportunity for non-believers to investigate the teachings of Jesus, experience the presence of Jesus, and even surrender their lives to Him.

Jesus interacted often with people who had not yet followed Him. Even among those closest to Him, Thomas and Judas belonged to the group known as Jesus’ twelve disciples, yet Thomas doubted for a time before believing and Judas never believed and eventually betrayed Jesus. Two of the greatest messages in history include Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” and Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. On both occasions the gatherings included hundreds if not thousands of people who did not have faith in Jesus.

Taking the proximity that Jesus and the early church shared with the unbelieving world into account, I wrote the following which was included in an article called “The Suicidal Missionary:\textsuperscript{11}

“As followers of Jesus, we have been “set apart”\textsuperscript{12} and “sent out.”\textsuperscript{13} We are “set apart” in our behavior, and “sent out” in our relationships. The more religious we become the more these

\textsuperscript{10} Acts 2:41-47, New International Version
\textsuperscript{11} See article “THE SUICIDAL MISSIONARY”
ideas become reversed. We end up being “set apart” in our relationships, and “sent out” from those we are to love and serve. We are “set apart” in how we relate to others, not to whom we relate.”

At Mosaic, we emphasize the reasons behind our methods rather than our methods, but in this particular instance I feel that the process we have created for commissioning new volunteer staff has enabled us to maximize our efforts in raising up leaders (discipleship) and reaching others (evangelism).

Anyone can get connected to our community. No matter where a person is in his or her spiritual journey, he or she can attend a Sunday gathering, participate in a small group, or serve in a ministry team. Even if the person believes differently or makes choices under a different set of moral values, he or she can belong. In order to oversee the lives of other people, a person needs to be mentored through the Staff Process.

During this process, the mentor invests into the life of the mentee. In many ways, the “Mosaic Life in Christ” material gives the mentor permission to interview, build a meaningful relationship, and mobilize the mentee. If the mentor feels that the mentee understands and embraces our core convictions, core values, and staff commitments, then she participates along with other mentees who have completed the mentoring process in “Mosaic Life in Church,” a seminar which includes a meal with some of Mosaic’s leaders including a campus pastor. At the seminar, we emphasize the uniqueness of our local church reminding all in attendance that there are lots of great churches doing great things, but we have been called to live out these core convictions, core values, and staff commitments. In many ways, we are attempting to convince

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12 Hebrew 7:26
13 Luke 9:10
14 See [www.mosaic.org/faq](http://www.mosaic.org/faq)
those in attendance that they do not need to join our staff for us to love, serve, and bless. The only reason to join our staff is if a person feels called to be a part of loving, serving, and bless others as mentors, pastors, and servant leaders.

If the mentee chooses to make these commitments to the Lord and desires to serve as part of our volunteer staff, then she is commissioned at one of our “Elements” gatherings. In the same night we commission men and women as overseas workers, we commission our new staff. Anointing them with oil, those in their small group or ministry team along with some of our key leaders at Mosaic lay hands on them for prayer. We give them a Bible to give to a friend who does not follow Jesus and a copy of Erwin’s book “An Unstoppable Force: Becoming the Church God Had In Mind” which includes more about our unique calling.

In many ways we are more inclusive than most churches, and we are more exclusive than most churches. Anyone can connect to our community. All of our small groups, ministry teams, events, and weekend gatherings communicate in a way that both followers of Jesus and non-believers would understand. Since Paul mentioned to the Corinthians they should be mindful of the “unbeliever” who comes to a gathering, we have chosen to do the same. Not only does this allow the message of the Gospel to be communicated in a way for everyone to understand, this also helps followers of Christ understand how to communicate the Gospel more clearly to those they know without a relationship with Jesus, especially those who came from a church which designed its Sunday gatherings with only Christians in mind.

In terms of being exclusive, there are three areas in which we delineate that a non-believer is not ready to participate: the Lord’ Supper, giving, and volunteer staff. Only those who are followers of Jesus are invited to participate in the Lord’s Supper. We mention every Sunday that the offering is an opportunity for those of us who have a relationship with Jesus to
give with gratitude for all He has done. We let those in attendance know that if they are a guest, they should not feel at all obligated to give. To oversee the lives of others requires being mentored through the Staff Process – even for those who have served as pastors in other churches, professors in seminaries, or missionaries overseas.

Working through the issues of context, the biblical understanding of the church, and the involvement of non-believers within our sphere of influence has been extremely helpful in the completion of this project and the delineation of our unique calling as a local church.