



Frequently Asked Questions About Micro-Churches

What is BALM's mission, and how does it relate to micro-churches?

BALM's **mission** is to multiply Christ-centered, cross-cultural leaders for community-transforming churches. Our vision is to see gospel saturation* in Baltimore and beyond through Christ-centered, reproducing disciple-making leaders who build communities that display the hope and healing of Jesus. BALM is committed to encouraging and equipping leaders of all forms of churches (micro, small, medium, and large) who want to grow in multiplying disciples. (**Gospel saturation occurs when every person has multiple opportunities to see, hear, and experience the Good News of Jesus Christ.*)

Where does the idea of micro-churches come from?

For the first 300 years of church history, believers mainly met in homes as gatherings of extended spiritual families. These micro, cell, or house churches were the key means where Christian community was experienced, disciples developed and multiplied (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 12:12,17; 16:14; 17:5; 20:20). This simple, highly reproducible church form resulted in the rapid expansion of the gospel in the world and still does.

God uses many forms of church (small, medium, large, mega, multi) in His disciple-making movement. God is also making disciples exponentially through micro-church expressions in the Two-Thirds world. It is an underutilized model in the US, but holds many strengths for healthy disciple-making, particularly for the growing “nones and dones” and those who won't step into our prevailing churches.

Is a micro-church a “real” church?

Micro-churches that the Baltimore Underground Church Network (BUCN) are nurturing embrace the essential definition of the church: “The church is the people of God, the disciples of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit called to minister to God in worship, to the saints in nurture, and to the peoples of the world in witness.” (Adopted from Dr. Edmund Clowney, *Living in Christ's Church*) Where these three elements exist, worship-discipleship-witness, the essence of the church is found.

What's the difference between a Bible study and a micro-church?

Many churches encourage small groups or community groups for bible study, fellowship and possibly outreach, which are critical for healthy discipleship. However, most churches would not consider such groups particular churches but would say they are an important part of the church. A micro-church of a dozen, twenty, or thirty believers united in worship, discipleship, and witness can be a particular church.

Who leads the micro-churches in the Baltimore Underground Church Network (BUCN)?

Leaders who affiliate with BUCN have been equipped in disciple-making pathways, in the BU leader/elder training, and have entered into a covenant that affirms the mission, vision, values,

core theological foundations, and ethical standards of leadership. Such leaders become part of the **BUCN Leadership Council** united in a missional community of disciple-making leaders and elders to provide counsel and leadership implementation for the disciple-making vision that leads to multiplying micro-churches. In addition, the **BUCN Governing Elders** team provides spiritual oversight for the leaders and mission of the BUCN.

What is BALM's Role for the Baltimore Underground Church Network?

BALM serves as the non-profit mission agency for the **BUCN** to facilitate the leadership framework and infrastructural support to steward the vision for the micro-church network movement.

What are the Values for BUCN?

- Simple/essential church
- Equipping ordinary believers to be everyday missionaries
- Knowing and loving our neighbors where we live, work, learn, and play
- Outreach to Nones & Dones (60% of the population who won't go to prevailing church)
- Saturated, Kingdom-centered prayer & fasting
- Bi/Co-vocational leaders
- Generosity - 50% or more of tithes and offerings devoted to outreach and gospel witness
- Discovery Bible Study evangelism
- Obedience to the Scriptures
- Team ministry- shared leadership
- Gospel unity across ethnic, racial, class, and cultures
- Gospel witness in Word and deeds, justice and mercy
- Multiplying disciple-makers
- Guarding the unity of the church

What are the Core Commitments of BUCN?

As a community of disciples and disciple-makers we...

Dream: We will dream after Jesus' disciple-making/church-planting movement.

Humility: We confess we don't know it all, will make mistakes, and must guard against pride.

Unity: We will keep and promote the unity of the Body.

Word: We will always reform ourselves to and pursue obedience to the scriptures.

Essentials: We will protect disciple-making as our central calling by containing secondaries.

Learners: We will keep learning from others in the Body of Christ, past and present.

Prayerful: We will keep in step with the Spirit through prevailing, Kingdom-seeking prayer.

Warfare: We will expect Satan's attacks, put on the full armor of God, and support the persecuted.

Repentance: We will practice repentance and faith daily.

Gospel: We will seek strength in the grace of Christ Jesus as the power for life and mission.

Love: We will devote ourselves to loving one another as foundational to missional witness.

Cross-Cultural: We will equip ourselves in cross-cultural wisdom for disciple-making.

Does BALM still work with the traditional church?

Yes. BALM is committed to working with all forms of churches that want to grow and advance

Christ's disciple-making mission in the world. **At least 50%** of BALM's leadership investment is in equipping and coaching leaders and emerging leaders in prevailing churches for church renewal and planting. In addition, BALM leads the **Church Planting & Renewal** and the **Urban Ministry** tracks at **Metro Baltimore Seminary**.

What other services does BALM provide for more traditional or prevailing churches?

BALM's disciple-making services for church renewal and equipping leaders include:

- Church Health Assessment
 - Prayer Saturation Development & Movements
 - Church & Community Asset Assessment for Strategic Missional Engagement
 - Contextual Outreach Options Clarification
 - Disciple-Making Small Groups Equipping Framework for members/participants with GPS (Gifts-Passion-Story) assessment and gifts incorporation in the life of the church
 - Unity Theology Integration with Cross-Cultural Training
 - Cross-Cultural Worship Training
 - Women in Ministry Partnership Framework & Equipping
- (Note: BALM's executive and pastoral leadership have over 100 years of multiethnic, cross-cultural and urban ministry experience and have been serving churches in renewal movements since its inception in 2019.)

"Why not just train our future leaders in church planting in the normal, Sunday-focused ministry paradigm? The Great Commission was always about making disciples, not making churches. Of course, disciples need to gather for teaching, encouragement, and support. But the goal is making disciples. Secondly, ever since the days of Emperor Constantine, the Christian church has focused too much on buildings rather than relationships, pastors rather than the every-member-priesthood concept, and Sunday morning events rather than daily ministry in homes, schools, and marketplaces. In other words, the responsibility to pass on the faith does not rest solely upon the professional clergy."

Rev. Stan Long



Photo from our recent equipping gathering for micro-church leaders.