Missional Partnership: Reframing the Concept of “Placing Membership”

Steve Cloer

Abstract
This essay reframes the process of “placing membership” in a local church with the theological concept of missional partnership. A critical review is offered of the organizational procedure of “placing membership,” its underlying theoretical assumptions, and its deficient theological vision. Then, the practice of joining a local Christian community is reimagined in a missional ecclesiology focusing on the key theological strands of spiritual accountability and equipping for mission. The biblical metaphor of “partner in the gospel” is explored as an alternative to “membership” as a way to adequately communicate what joining, entering, and participating within a church on mission entails. Reflections are offered on the success and struggles of this paradigm shift within the local context of Southside Church of Christ.

Author Bio
Steve Cloer has been the preaching minister at Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, TX since 2006. Before that, he worked in youth and campus ministry. He and his wife, Lindsay, currently have three children, Joshua, Bethany, and Lydia. Steve graduated from Harding University with two B.A. degrees in Bible and Math. He received his MDiv in New Testament from Harding School of Theology and graduated with his DMin in Congregational Mission and Leadership from Luther Seminary.

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