

# **Campus Ministry in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Tallahassee: A Proposal for Ambassadors for Christ and Meridian Woods**

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Statement of the Problem: The way our campus ministry is currently organized causes it to lack focus and effectiveness.

- The organization is too complicated, which prevents the campus minister from concentrating his energies.
- The other participating churches are not able at this time to contribute to the campus ministry except monetarily.
- None of the churches (including MWCC) is in a position to function as a campus ministry-oriented church.

Proposed Solution: The way to be effective in reaching lost students on the campus mission fields is to plant a campus ministry which:

- Is located on campus
- Is independent from other churches (though in fellowship with them and supported by them)
- Is led by a team of dedicated adults, and not just one person
- Intentionally and explicitly exists to disciple young people who are not necessarily familiar with or comfortable with traditional ways of doing church.

What is Required to Make This Happen?

- A team of about ten adults. These adults can be single or families, and can come from any age group. They must simply commit to attending a weekly Sunday afternoon campus worship service, a weekly planning session (which could precede the worship experience) and an additional weekly small group. The rest of the campus ministry can be run by the student leadership.
- A commitment from Meridian Woods as a “sending church.” The campus ministry needs oversight and a safety net, and MWCC can provide this. MWCC can be ready to step up to meet unexpected financial needs, to help fill vacancies among the adult leadership, to provide guidance from the elders, and to provide the church building and church van when needed. MWCC could oversee the mission effort on campus while not becoming fundamentally distracted from its own program as a family church.
- A dependable source of funding. The campus ministry is currently mostly funded by Bill Wharton’s trust fund (roughly \$8,000-12,000/year), monthly donations of \$200 from Timberlane, a yearly donation of \$3,000 from Springhill Road, and individual donations. The current income is enough to pay for student center rent, utilities, and supplies, as well as funding student mission trips. Currently, Meridian Woods pays the salary of the full-time campus minister. Under our proposal, that large expense could be phased out and a smaller amount (\$5-10,000/year) could be contributed to ensure that all expenses are met.

## What Would the Campus Ministry Then Look Like?

- Every Sunday afternoon, students would meet at the AFC House (or a larger on-campus venue) for an informal worship service with lots of singing, prayer, sharing of personal stories and needs, and the Lord's Supper. A Bible study could also be done, but there would be no need for an elaborate sermon or other presentation. The group may elect to use videos and music as key teaching resources. Money could be collected as specific needs arose. Students and adult leaders could also choose to attend a Sunday service at another local church, but this would not be necessary. This Sunday meeting fulfills the FEEDING aspect of the campus ministry discipleship process.
- At various times and places throughout the week, small groups of students and adult leaders would meet for the two purposes of Bible study and accountability. These groups could be led and/or taught by students, but adult supervision would be advisable. All students would be expected to attend one group. Groups that grow beyond ten people will be expected to divide. These small groups fulfill the FRIENDSHIP aspect of the campus ministry discipleship process.
- Adults at these small groups will also have the responsibility of helping the students to identify how they will serve the ministry and/or serve the needy and/or spread the Gospel. In doing this, the students will engage in the FUNCTIONING aspect of the campus ministry discipleship process.
- Organizationally, the leadership of the campus ministry would be the adult volunteers who make decisions as a team. They would need to meet weekly to discuss their progress in implementing the discipleship process among the students. A student leadership cabinet would still be necessary to run A4X as a registered student organization. These student leaders could oversee some of the service teams, such as those which follow up on new students.

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**Ambassadors for Christ as a Mission Effort of Meridian Woods:** By conceptualizing the campus ministry as a mission effort "over there," MWCC would be freed from the divided focus of trying to be a campus church while looking like a suburban family church. MWCC could focus on its true identity while proudly providing needed support for the work in Tallahassee's mission fields.

**Ambassadors for Christ as a Church Plant:** With the set-up described in this proposal, A4X would double as both a student organization and a church plant, with the future potential of becoming a completely autonomous church plant, like Call Street.

**Becoming Organic and Flexible:** Research is showing that young people (both church and unchurched) are tending to become increasingly hostile to what they perceive as traditional (or "institutional") forms of Christianity. Having large buildings and professional preachers comes across to many of them as phony and obsolete. They search for meaning and spiritual fulfillment in relationships and nontraditional venues such as art, music, and nature. A new campus ministry plant could have the autonomy and flexibility to organize itself in ways that biblical, but yet untraditional (and more inviting to postmodern youths). In short, the campus ministry plant would resemble a first-century house church much more than a modern-traditional institutional church with a church building and paid minister.

**Ambassadors for Christ Campus Ministries, Inc.:** There is no need for the nonprofit corporation to continue to exist. A4X's funding stream (and separate bank account) could be diverted back through the Meridian Woods budget, or could continue to exist as a separate account overseen by the adult leadership team.

**FSU's Campus Ministry Association:** This group (the official organization which forms a bridge between campus ministries and FSU's department of student services) has limited usefulness. Its monthly meetings are not a good use of time, but the \$50 yearly fee does ensure that A4X is represented on FSU's campus ministry website and in the official materials which are given to incoming students. CMA organizations also receive a report every semester which identifies incoming students who declare their religious preference. I recommend retaining our membership in CMA, but not worrying about attending the monthly meetings.

**Ambassadors for Christ as a Registered Student Organization:** This remains very valuable, as it allows the group to recruit on campus and reserve classroom and meeting spaces. Maintaining A4X as a registered organization would be the primary responsibility of the student leaders. FSU makes money available for RSOs, but the process of applying for funding does not seem to be worth the effort, and there are significant strings attached to the funds.

**Student Center:** The student center is in a good location and can accommodate a group of about 30. Thus, using the student center as the only meeting place would place an automatic cap on growth. The ministry would need to develop a plan to deal with that growth. Also the owner has plans for tearing down the student house and building a high-rise structure (though he has promised a place for A4X in the new building). A4X could continue to function just as well without the building, provided that a regular place to meet on campus was secured. Currently, the rent is \$575/month

**Campus Minister:** Our proposal phases out the role of full-time campus minister. The main reason is because we doubt that the funding commitment can be maintained long-term. Secondly, having a full-time campus minister has the effect of discouraging volunteerism. A minister may be useful for helping the transition, but he should be ready to work his way out of the job.

**FAMU:** We have many great young Christians at FAMU, but the ingredients for a successful student organization are not currently in place there. The regulations for organizational recognition are much more stringent, and we do not have much student momentum in that direction. The students have preferred to do things off-campus. The A4X campus missions plant should actively seek FAMU students, and a chapter of A4X at FAMU could be re-established if the Lord provides enough student and adult leaders to make it a success.

**TCC:** Campus ministries have not been successful at TCC. Even the weekly Baptist event is poorly attended. Students are too transient, and are not immersed in college culture or tied geographically to campus. TCC students have an easier time commuting to one of the established churches (or to the FSU campus plant).

**Student Leader Perspectives:** At our student leaders' lock-in in March, I asked past and upcoming student leaders to brainstorm about how they would like to re-shape A4X. Those in attendance included Keith Hadley, Adam Wimpee, Mallory McCartney, Lynn Papapetrou, Paige Blume, Chelsea Baab, Aimee Willis, and Alaina Cribbs (others were invited, but couldn't make it). Their ideal campus ministry was a church plant located between FSU and FAMU (perhaps on Gaines Street, where there are several large abandoned buildings). They also named several people and families whom they both respected and thought would be interested in being adult leaders of a campus mission plant. Those include:

The Chris Williams family	The Tony Bidwell family
The Harry Dennard family	Randey Burnette
Reggie Minor	The Bill Mincy family
The Mac McCorvey family	The Jeremy Elliott family
The Keith Griffin family	The Eddie Oliver family
The Rich Fillmon family	The Monty Stark family
The David Ward family	

Notice that this includes people from Springhill Road, Paul Russell, Timberlane, and those who left Meridian Woods in recent years for community churches. If volunteers did come from these other churches, that would lessen the strain of lost membership (and contributions) from Meridian Woods.

**Review:** Here at the end I wanted to clarify a few common misunderstandings of this proposal.

- First, my proposal does not involve any paid staff whatsoever. Adult volunteers are used to facilitate worship services and small groups, while volunteer student leaders are used to operate the campus organization, track and recruit new members, and lead service projects.
- Second, my proposal would not place a greater financial burden on Meridian Woods. On one hand, MWCC would obviously make a financial gain by no longer paying a campus minister's salary and benefits. On the other hand, MWCC would lose the contribution money from any volunteers who decided to leave MWCC in favor of the campus church plant. The often overlooked factor is that the campus church plant could very well involve adult volunteers from other churches, so MWCC might only lose as many as three tithing families.
- Third, my proposal does not necessitate the purchase of any property. The current A4X house is a blessing which costs \$575/month in rent, plus utilities, supplies, and maintenance. The campus ministry's current income is more than enough to cover these expenses for the foreseeable future. As a registered student organization (RSO), A4X can also reserve spaces on campus. The ministry may choose in the future to attempt to lease a different location, but I see no reason why they would need to purchase property. Using the RSO, a campus church could meet and worship on campus without any building of its own whatsoever.