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SIGNIFICANCE OF PASTORAL CARE IN CAPTURING LAND FOR MISSION EXPANSION

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Abstract

This article examines the role of pastoral care in capturing land for mission expansion within a contemporary Christian missiological framework. It argues that land acquisition for churches, mission schools, health centres, and other mission activities should not be understood merely as a real estate transaction or institutional expansion, but as a spiritual, relational, ethical, and community-oriented dimension of the *Missio Dei*. The study identifies pastoral care as a significant instrument for integrating physical expansion with the spiritual and social mission of the church. It explores major pastoral functions, including nurturing, educating, sustaining, guiding, healing, reconciling, and empowering, and demonstrates how these functions can contribute to missionary effectiveness, congregational retention, leadership well-being, community engagement, conflict resolution, and sustainable church growth. The article further emphasizes the importance of holistic care for missionaries, contextualized discipleship, public and social pastoral care, and the active participation of local communities in mission expansion. It contends that pastoral care provides an ethical framework for addressing the potential challenges associated with land acquisition, including financial pressure, leadership burnout, community resistance, exploitation, and historical land-related trauma. Consequently, the article proposes that mission expansion should move beyond territorial acquisition toward community transformation, relational integration, and the creation of spaces that promote human dignity, spiritual formation, social well-being, and neighbourhood flourishing. Ultimately, pastoral care enables the church to align its methods of expansion with the message of Christ by transforming physical spaces into contexts where God's restorative love, justice, and grace can be experienced.

Keywords: Pastoral care; Mission expansion; Land acquisition; Missio Dei; Missional ecclesiology; Church growth; Community transformation; Discipleship; Missionary care; Pastoral counselling; Community development; Christian mission.

Introduction

Capturing or securing land for mission expansion involves strategic and proper planning. In the synoptic gospels, the kingdom of God is central to Jesus' mission and fundamental to his principle and mandate. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), reveals his mission and mandate for his disciples. Though the commission has often been interpreted through the lens of proclamation (*kerygma*) and social action (*diakonia*). Yet, the care aspect of it which deals more on the psychological and emotional fractures of the modern era suggest that a third pillar, pastoral care and counselling (poimenics), is significant, pivotal, and noteworthy for expansion of the Kingdom.

The Creation and Dominion Mandate in Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish, in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (NIV), was not primarily and solely for procreation but fundamentally for the spread of the God's mandate and kingdom on earth.

Capturing land for mission expansion requires assessing community needs, raising strategic funds, and navigating legal documentation. Mission expansion is not merely an administrative achievement but a spiritual offshoot of a community that functions as a "therapeutic colony" in a broken world. When pastoral care is moved from the periphery of church activity to its missional center, it becomes a powerful tool for evangelism and retention. This article explores how this pastoral care can be used to secure land for church planting, mission schools, hospitals and other mission activities of present time.

Missional Functions of Pastoral Care in Capturing Land

In Contemporary Missiology and Ecclesiology, physical presence remains a primary mechanism through which Christian communities witness to the Kingdom of God. The phrase "capturing land for mission expansion" carries both metaphorical and literal weight: it denotes the acquisition, repurposing, and dedication of physical space for community worship, social action, educational initiatives, and evangelistic outreach (Guder, 1998; Wright, 2006). Historically, church expansion has at times been critiqued for mirroring secular territorial conquest, economic exploitation, or cultural imposition (Jennings, 2010). When land acquisition is treated strictly as a real estate transaction, churches risk alienating host communities, inducing leadership burnout, over-leveraging congregational finances, and triggering local conflict.

To prevent these pitfalls, missional ecclesiology must integrate the theology and practice of pastoral care. Rather than viewing pastoral care merely as internal counseling or crisis intervention for existing members, a missional framework recognizes care as an outward-facing, community-transforming practice (Lartey, 2003, 24; Purves, 2004, 104). When Christian communities seek to acquire land for churches, schools, health centers, or community development, they occupy physical, emotional, and social space within a neighborhood. Unprepared expansion risks generating host community friction, financial strain, or charges of institutional gentrification (Jennings, 2010, 238). Pastoral care bridges this gap by ensuring that physical expansion is spiritually grounded, relationally healthy, and missiologically integrated. By utilizing spiritual restoration, holistic well-being, community transformation, and discipleship, pastoral care aligns the process of land acquisition with the restorative principles of the *Missio Dei* (God's mission).

Spiritual Restoration: Consecrating Space and Reclaiming Land: Land often carries spiritual, historical, and emotional weight. Places may have been sites of social decay, economic exploitation, or spiritual neglect (Linthicum, 1991, 45). Pastoral care uses spiritual restoration to prepare and consecrate land for mission through Redeeming Desolate and Neglected Spaces. Pastoral care engages in intercessory prayer, spiritual mapping, and formal acts of dedication to redeem land that previously housed criminal activity, environmental degradation, or community grief (Dawson, 1989, 102). It also addresses historical and spatial trauma. In contexts where land carries memories of forced displacement or injustice, pastoral care facilitates spiritual acts of repentance, reconciliation, and blessing, inviting God's restorative peace over the soil (Jennings, 2010, 245).

Holistic Well-Being: Protecting Human Dignity in Expansion: The pressure to raise funds and secure property can lead church leaders and congregations to prioritize financial metrics over human health (Nouwen, 2010, 18). Pastoral care acts as an ethical guardrail centered on holistic well-being (physical, emotional, relational, and financial). It provides guardianship against leadership burnout: Building projects and land negotiations subject pastors and building committees to severe stress. Pastoral care provides emotional debriefing, sabbaths, and structural support to guard against exhaustion (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1964, 67). It promotes healthy financial stewardship. Pastoral care ensures that capital fundraising campaigns avoid manipulative or coercive tactics, preserving the emotional and financial well-being of congregants (Nouwen, 2010, 24). Pastoral ethics demand that property sellers, especially vulnerable or elderly owners, are treated with dignity, honesty, and fair compensation, ensuring no one is exploited for institutional gain (Wright, 2006, 422).

Community Transformation: From Land Capture to Neighborhood Flourishing: A missional understanding of land capture recognizes that the church does not acquire property from the community, but for the community (Roxburgh, 2011,73). Pastoral care drives community transformation by turning physical sites into civic assets. Pastoral care initiates town halls, listening sessions, and open dialogues with local residents, traditional leaders, and neighborhood associations to understand local needs before laying a foundation (Roxburgh, 2011,85). Facilities built on captured land are designed for holistic social utility, housing vocational centers, clean water points, food banks, clinics, and youth programming (Linthicum, 1991, 112). When zoning laws, traffic concerns, or property boundaries create friction with neighbors, pastoral care uses restorative mediation to build trust and shared vision rather than resorting to aggressive legal battles (Augsburger, 1992, p. 144).

Discipleship and Formation: Building People While Building Structures: Physical expansion can easily distract a church from its core mandate of spiritual formation. Pastoral care integrates discipleship and formation directly into the land acquisition journey, treating the building process as a spiritual formation crucible (Guder, 1998, 182). Raising resources for land becomes a practical exercise in faith, generosity, and trust, guiding members to detach from materialism and invest in eternal kingdom priorities (Nouwen, 2010, 31). Through active involvement in land acquisition, congregants are discipled in public theology, learning how to engage municipal authorities, advocate for community development, and love their geographic neighbors practically (Roxburgh, 2011, 104). Lay leaders serving on land committees are mentored spiritually, ensuring their administrative and technical skills are anchored in humility, prayer, and servant leadership

Dimensions of Pastoral Care for Missions Expansion

Pastoral care is the heartbeat of missions' expansion, ensuring that both the missionaries on the field and the new believers in the community are spiritually, emotionally, and physically nurtured and sustained. Without it, evangelistic efforts risk high erosion rates plus shallow and ineffective discipleship. Effective pastoral care in missions' expansion operates across four primary dimensions:

Care of the Missionary (The Senders' Duty): The care of the missionaries are essential requirement for missions' expansion in any field. For missions to thrive, the "senders" are to take the missionary family care as an important aspect of the mission itself. A well nurtured missionary keeps focus, directs his or her attention or energy onto a specific objective, and tasks (Williams, 2010, *https://missionexus.org*). Proper and adequate care of the missionaries helps them to concentrating on one specific goal, mandate, and tuning out all distractions. Missionaries must be cared for just as much as the new converts. Specifically, care of the missionaries should focus, but not limited to the following area:

a. **Holistic Care and Support**

Addressing the physical needs of missionaries for missions' expansion particularly in the rural areas is mandatory (Williams, 2010, *https://missionexus.org*). Physical care for missionaries in isolated, rural environments requires proactive strategies to mitigate health risks, prevent burnout, and manage emergencies. It encompasses daily safety practices, medical preparation, and structured emotional and physical maintenance. Providing a robust medical kits and training for emergency health issues, and logistical needs to prevent burnout and attrition (O'Donnell, 2002, 196).

b. Sending Church & Organizational Support

There should be a regular healthcare funding, supplying adequate health insurance and specific emergency medical funds so missionaries can seek care without financial burden. Routine check-in is equally important. Churches, can facilitate annual comprehensive physical, eye, and dental check-ups during visit assignment, while care packages of non-perishable comfort foods, necessary hygiene items, and seasonal clothing materials that may be difficult to find or expensive are to be regularly supplied (Williams, 2010, *https://missionexus.org*).

Contextualized Pastoral Care Discipleship (The Cure of Souls): Effective discipleship for missions' expansion is a contextualized and relational discipleship that touches, and cure human souls. Discipleship should not be limited to a programme or booklet but a lifestyle that build trust for lasting relationship, hope in hopeless situations and love of God exemplified by the missionaries and the mission agencies. Effective pastoral care requires sensitivity to the local culture (cultural intelligence), language, and worldview. Contextualized pastoral care discipleship protects cultural affirmation, validates the dignity and identity of the local population by adapting spiritual care to address their everyday, existential struggles (O'Donnell, 2002, 201-202). It also trauma healing by providing specialized, culturally-aware pastoral guidance for marginalized communities or those recovering from systemic oppression and disasters as a result of conversion.

Community Building (Capturing Land for Christ): Expanding a mission involves moving from initial evangelism to building stable, enduring Christian communities. To achieve this,

practical pastoral care of indigenous land owners should be implemented in missions' expansion strategies (Hay, Kim, Blöcher, Ketelaar, and Hay, 2007, 67). Since Christian mission does not capture land by war, Christ's approach of care and love should be the ultimate strategy for capturing souls and land for missions' expansion.

There should be regular equipping of the laity. Shifting from a single-pastor model to empowering local believers to care for one another, which is essential for rapid, sustainable church growth and missions' expansion (Williams, 2010, *https://missionexus.org*). In pastoral care, "Small Group Ministry" is an effective approach for greater exploit. Utilizing small group networks to foster deep fellowship, mutual accountability, and holistic support within the target population for missions' expansion will be a great tool.

Public and Social Pastoral Care: Missional pastoral care extends beyond the four walls of the church building to impact society at large. Pastoral care strategy for missions' expansion includes extension of care to the public. Ministry based poverty alleviation programs where active participation in the socio-economic development of the community that reflects God's love, justice and restoration of human dignity will pave ways for smooth missions' expansion. Similarly, standing with the vulnerable, migrants, and the oppressed groups (advocacy), further established the nature of the church as a refuge (Hay, Kim, Blöcher, Ketelaar, and Hay, 2007, 67). This should be done in a peaceful and Christ-like manner to make the church a center of refuge and agent of transformation in the public sphere. This increase level of acceptance for the church to expand her missions' mandate.

Application of Pastoral Care Functions for Capturing Land for Mission Expansion

In contemporary practical theology, a tension often exists between church growth strategies and the ministry of pastoral care. The physical expansion of a church or ministry through land acquisition, often referred to in missiological terms as "capturing land for mission expansion", is rarely just a real estate transaction. It involves spiritual, social, relational, and emotional dimensions. Applying traditional pastoral care functions ensures that securing land is done ethically, relationally, and sustainably, aligning organizational growth with Christ-lie ministry.

Church growth models, heavily influenced by corporate management and sociology, sometimes prioritize numerical metrics, seeker-sensitive programming, and high-visibility marketing (McGavran 1990, 122). Conversely, pastoral care is frequently viewed as a private, intensive, and time-consuming ministry that focuses inward, occasionally treated as an administrative bottleneck to rapid expansion. Church growth is not merely numerical expansion but the deepening of faith, discipleship, and communal transformation. Pastoral care functions provide the framework through which leaders shepherd believers, ensuring spiritual maturity and missional relevance (Bible Hub, 2025). To understand how pastoral care drives church growth, one must examine its core functions not as isolated counseling techniques, but as interconnected communal dynamics.

Nurturing: Cultivating Spiritual Attachment and Retention

Nurturing is the ongoing care directed toward supporting the development of individuals throughout their life journey. In the context of land capturing for mission, nurturing ensures shared community ownership instead of imposing a structure from above, pastoral care empowers local community

members by inviting them into the development process. Beyond property acquisition, pastoral care ensures that once the land is captured, the programs, ministries, and facilities built upon it directly serve, nurture, and empower the surrounding neighborhood.

Nurturing directly impacts member retention. Many churches successfully attract visitors but fail to assimilate them because the environment lacks relational warmth and spiritual nourishment. When a church implements robust small groups, mentorship pipelines, and intentional hospitality, it operationalizes the nurturing function. According to Warren (1995), people do not look for a perfect church; they look for a church that meets their deep need for belonging and growth. Nurturing creates a high-retention environment where new converts transition from peripheral consumers to deeply rooted disciples.

Educating: Building Theological Foundations for Maturity

Educating involves the cognitive and experiential formation of the believer. A church cannot grow numerically beyond its capacity to disciple its members without risking theological compromise or shallow commitment (Hull 2014, 184). Pastoral care educating function clarifies the gospel, teaches spiritual disciplines, and imparts a biblical worldview. When pastors and ministry leaders deliberately teach the congregation, they protect the church from the doctrinal drift that frequently destabilizes rapidly growing ministries. Furthermore, a well taught laity is an articulate laity; members who understand their faith are far more likely to engage in confident, organic evangelism in their workplaces and neighborhoods.

Sustaining: Preventing the Backdoor Drain through Crisis Care

Sustaining is the ministry of holding individuals together during times of acute distress, grief, or irreversible loss, where circumstances cannot be immediately altered. Life crises, such as financial ruin, chronic illness, or the death of a loved one, often serve as critical junctures where individuals either draw closer to the faith community or drift away in disillusionment. Securing land involves heavy financial fundraising, legal stress, and administrative burdens. Pastoral sustaining helps prevent burnout among pastors, building committees, and key leaders. This function also supports congregational sacrifices**.** Members often make financial sacrifices to buy property. Sustaining care ensures the congregation feels valued, spiritually nourished, and supported, rather than financially exploited or overburdened.

A church equipped with a functioning pastoral care team (including step-care frameworks, lay counselors, and support groups) ensures that hurting members are sustained (Benner 2003, 5). When a community walks with a family through trauma, it builds profound relational capital. Sustaining prevents the "backdoor drain" of church growth, ensuring that members remain anchored to the body of Christ during their darkest seasons.

Guiding: Navigating Complex Transitions and Choices

Guiding assists individuals in making difficult ethical, vocational, or relational decisions when they face ambiguous choices. For missional land capture, Guiding provides for Community-Centered Visioning. Pastoral guidance ensures that land acquisition is driven by genuine community needs (e.g., building schools, clinics, or worship spaces) rather than corporate vanity or institutional greed. Leaders guided by pastoral ethics commit to transparent, fair market transactions, avoiding

exploitation of vulnerable property owners or contentious land grabbing. Guiding church leadership in listening to local concerns, municipal zoning laws, and environmental considerations to maintain integrity.

Modern culture is characterized by choice overload and existential anxiety. People are actively searching for moral clarity and divine wisdom. Through pastoral guidance (utilizing biblical wisdom, spiritual direction, and prophetic insight), the church becomes an essential anchor for individuals navigating career shifts, marital decisions, and ethical dilemmas (Patton 2025, 23). As seekers observe a community making wise, counter-cultural life choices guided by pastoral wisdom, the church's communal lifestyle becomes highly attractive, drawing in those who are weary of societal confusion.

Healing: Restoring Wholeness as a Kingdom Apologetic

Healing is the restoration of wholeness, spiritually, psychologically, and relationally, moving beyond the mere management of symptoms to the root causes of brokenness. For the capturing of land for mission expansion, healing helps in dealing with historical wounds. In many regions, land carries historical trauma (displacement, political disputes, or economic disenfranchisement). Pastoral care acknowledges these sensitivities and ensures the new mission does not reopen old wounds. It also helps in transforming neglected spaces: Applying pastoral healing means repurposing neglected, unsafe, or contested sites into spaces that foster life, safety, and holistic flourishing for the wider community.

In a traumatized world, a church known for its healing ministry possesses an immense, magnetic pull. When pastoral counsellor intentionally integrates psychological insights with spiritual intervention, it facilitates deep emotional healing from past trauma, abuse, and dysfunction (Crabb 1977, 144). A healed person becomes a walking advertisement for the gospel. The healing function transforms broken individuals into vibrant witnesses, converting personal testimonies into powerful instruments of evangelistic attraction and church expansion.

Reconciling: Resolving Conflict to Preserve Communal Unity

Reconciling focuses on restoring fractured relationships between individuals, families, or cultural groups, as well as reconciling humanity to God. Jesus explicitly tied communal unity to missional efficacy: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"* (John 13:35, NIV). Reconciling helps in overcoming local resistance. Moving into new territory can trigger suspicion or hostility from existing residents, traditional leaders, or competing institutions. Reconciling care uses active listening and dialogue to address anxieties and build mutual understanding. It leads to conflict resolution over boundaries: If land transactions spark boundary disputes or municipal disagreements, a reconciling approach seeks Win-Win resolutions through peacebuilding and restorative dialogue rather than aggressive litigation.

Internal conflict is one of the primary killers of church growth. Unresolved offenses lead to church splits, gossip, and a toxic atmosphere that repels visitors. Implementing pastoral reconciliation—through mediation, restorative justice frameworks, and teaching a culture of forgiveness—preserves ecclesial unity (Sande 2004, 201). A unified church retains its peace and power, creating an emotionally safe ecosystem where newcomers feel secure.

Empowering: Mobilizing the Laity for Missional Deployment

Empowering is the ultimate trajectory of pastoral care. It shifts the believer from a recipient of care to an active agent of care and mission. Securing physical land must ultimately empower the local neighborhood rather than establish an isolated religious enclave. Pastoral care ensures that facilities constructed on captured land serve dual missional and civic purposes (e.g., food banks, youth centers, public parks). By engaging local residents in the planning and execution phases, pastoral care fosters local ownership, transforming community members from passive recipients into active co-creators of the missional vision (Roxburgh, 2011).

A major bottleneck in church growth occurs when the senior pastor attempts to be the sole care provider and minister (Ogden 2019, 76). This model limits the church's growth to the physical capacity of that single leader. Pastoral care functions missionally when it identifies spiritual gifts, equips the laity, and empowers them to lead ministries, counsel peers, and plant new communities. By decentralizing ministry and validating the priesthood of all believers, empowering multiplies the workers available for the harvest, resulting in exponential numerical and structural growth (Stevens1999, 92). Missional church growth relies on the mobilization of the whole people of God. Pastoral care is not just the work of the clergy; it is a communal responsibility. By training the laity in basic counselling and empathetic listening, the church multiplies its points of contact with the world. A healthy, cared for congregation is an empowered congregation, ready to engage in the missio Dei.

Conclusion

The pursuit of land for mission expansion must never be reduced to a mere real estate transaction or an exercise in institutional territory-marking. As demonstrated throughout this paper, capturing land is an intensely spiritual, relational, and social endeavor. When stripped of pastoral care, physical expansion risks fostering community resentment, leadership burnout, financial exploitation, and relational friction, undermining the very Gospel the expansion seeks to advance.

Integrating the core functions of pastoral care: guiding, reconciling, sustaining, healing, and empowering, transforms land acquisition from an act of conquest into a ministry of presence. Pastoral guidance ensures ethical integrity and strategic discernment in negotiations; reconciling care bridges gaps between the church and host communities; sustaining support shields leaders and members from the weight of financial and administrative fatigue; healing transforms spaces marred by neglect or conflict; and empowering leadership builds lasting, community-centered partnerships. Ultimately, the true significance of pastoral care in capturing land lies in its power to align the method of expansion with the message of Christ. A church does not truly possess land merely because it holds a legal deed or raises a physical structure. It captures land when the surrounding community experiences the love, justice, and restorative grace of God through its presence. Pastoral care shifts the focus from simple acquisition to relational integration. By applying guidance, reconciliation, sustaining support, healing, and community empowerment, the church ensures that its physical footprint expands in harmony with its spiritual calling. By grounding mission expansion in robust pastoral care, the church ensures that every new boundary claimed becomes a sacred space where both the soil and its people are reclaimed for the glory of God.

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