What's your church’s global DNA? Each local congregation has a unique set of characteristics, passions, experience, gifts, and context. God uses all of these to connect them to global ministry that engages who He has made them to be.

Each of the stories below highlights a different DNA strand that God has planted in a church to prepare them for a particular global ministry. Each of these congregations has other DNA elements, but we have chosen to highlight just one or two. We hope these stories will inspire you to identify and engage your church’s God-given global DNA!

**DNA Strand: Ministry to Families with Special Needs**

**Grace Fellowship Church**

The senior pastor at Grace Fellowship Church (GFC) in Timonium, MD, has a deep compassion for individuals and families touched by disabilities. And over the past eight years of his leadership, this concern for the disabled has been deeply woven into GFC’s “DNA.” Ministry to those touched by disabilities has steadily grown, along with connections to organizations specializing in such ministries—many of which have a global presence.

At the same time, on the other side of the world, God blessed one of GFC’s missionary families with a child who has special needs. While many such workers end up having to leave the field, God has miraculously made it possible for this family to continue to thrive in Southeast Asia. More than that, new doors for ministry have opened because this family now models a biblical attitude toward disability. While local religion teaches that disabilities are a curse from God, these workers daily demonstrate the opposite.

GFC’s missions pastor was not surprised when God recently began to connect these related aspects of GFC’s DNA. The church’s passion and experience in ministry to those with disabilities naturally fits at multiple levels with their missionaries’ unfolding work in SE Asia. Brainstorming has surfaced a number of ways to use GFC expertise and resources to expand their global workers’ impact.

When the workers return soon on home assignment, they will be linked to GFC’s organizational partners who have global resources for specialized ministry to the disabled. Next year, a GFC short-term team will work alongside their missionaries to challenge national church leaders from across the ministry region with the vision for special-needs ministry. GFC’s example and the commitment of their pastor will be highly influential.
Where will their DNA match take this partnership? No one knows, but it is easy to see that God has bigger plans for GFC in this strategic ministry.

DNA Strand: Integrated

**Ends-of-the-Earth Priorities and a Local/Global UPG Connection**

**Gateway Fellowship**

Dave Fischer, Gateway’s missions pastor, says, “Our lead pastor has a heart for Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, and that infuses our church’s DNA. We are committed to introduce that missions DNA into all we do as a church.”

In the “uttermost parts” category, Gateway, located in Poulsbo, WA, has adopted three unreached people groups (UPGs). Because they are committed to seeing their DNA passion infused into, and expressed out of, the entire congregation, they have intentionally involved their children and youth ministries.

For example, projects for a school in Africa have involved all ages. Recently Gateway’s youth pastor issued teens a “one shirt challenge.” They had to wear the same shirt for 30 days as part of a fundraiser to buy shirts for street kids in another of their UPG groups.

A ministry to the Basque people of Spain and France is headquartered near Gateway. Each summer, Basque students come to the area for immersion in English and stay in Christian homes. Gateway saw this local connection as a divinely engineered DNA element, so they adopted the Basques as one of their UPGs. Over the past several years, church families have hosted dozens of Basque students. During Christmas break, Gateway youth visit there, strengthening relationships. God is powerfully working as youth find Christ.

Concern for the unreached is beginning to infect every age group at Gateway!

DNA Strand: Punjabi

**Immigrants Next Door**

**Clearbrook Mennonite Brethren Church**

It’s not difficult to recognize that Punjabis from half a world away have become part of Clearbrook’s DNA. Just look out a church window and you are likely to see one or more of the 10,000 people from northern India/Pakistan who have settled in their town of Abbotsford, British Columbia. Many are first-generation immigrants, and the vast majority are of the Sikh faith.

Clearbrook’s 300-member congregation is older, and it would seem like they have little in common with their new neighbors. But many were once immigrants themselves, arriving in Canada unable to speak English. So while vast cultural differences separate Clearbrook people from the Punjabi newcomers, both groups know what it was like to be immersed in a new language and culture.

Senior Pastor Ron Berg notes, “We realized that we needed to be willing to see past turbans and the pungent smells of unfamiliar foods to reach out to the Punjabis God has brought to our neighborhood. Learning about the newcomers’ culture and religion seemed the place to start, so we invited some missions leaders and other community churches for an introductory session.”

One woman drawn to that first meeting was a Pakistani believer who was already reaching out in the community. It soon became evident to Clearbrook leaders that God had brought them together. The church agreed to house and help fund a new outreach this woman would spearhead.

Since then, numerous ministries have emerged, relationships are growing, and a few Punjabis have declared themselves followers of Jesus. Ministry is even beginning to flow overseas as believers visit their homeland and share their new faith.

Who knows how far one new DNA strand will carry a church’s impact? Clearbrook is on its way to finding out!
DNA Strand: Compassion
Savannah Christian Church

A couple of years ago, leaders at Savannah (Georgia) Christian Church (SCC) sensed the Lord’s leading to identify a focus. They wanted a core priority that would shape the personality of all six of their campuses and define the heart of their fellowship. In essence, SCC decided to reengineer their DNA around one strategic strand: **CHOOSE COMPASSION…see what happens.** They call it their “Big Rock,” the core of all they are and do as a church.

Pastor of Outreach Dave Stewart comments: “This Big Rock has energized our church and brought more people to a heart of serving others. Our people have permeated their communities and made a lasting difference in the lives of so many. Now the impact is being felt around the world in SCC’s global partnerships.”

Seeing every relationship through the filter of compassion has led them to care for their cross-cultural workers at new levels, to understand the value of affirming their sacrificial work in new ways, and to love them as a priority. Their Refresh Retreat was an example. SCC gathered 28 of their global workers at a retreat center in Poland. They wanted to see each one refreshed with a re-energized spirit in service to God. It was an amazing week and greatly strengthened the church’s relationship with each ministry represented.

Dave sees a broader impact: “The church family is learning that when they choose compassion for those around the world, they begin to identify with those who suffer. It’s no longer ‘those poor people in Africa or Asia or the Middle East.’ As people care because God has changed their heart, ‘those poor people’ have become…family.”

**Choose Compassion…See What Happens** has redefined SCC’s DNA over the last couple of years. The “See What Happens” part has been amazing!

DNA Strand: Deaf Ministry
Bethany Community Church

Their proximity to Gallaudet University, a leading university for the Deaf, creates a unique DNA element for Bethany Community Church of Laurel, MD. Highly skilled Deaf leaders lead a thriving ministry at the church. God has used this unique DNA in a special way.

Several years ago, Bethany was introduced to an Anglican bishop who led a large diocese in Tanzania. A group of the church’s leaders sat down with their guest to learn more about ministry in East Africa. As they talked, one of the Deaf-ministry leaders asked how the Diocese was serving the Deaf. Senior Pastor Kevin McGhee vividly remembers that moment: “The Bishop hesitated, and then began to weep. ‘There is nothing for the Deaf among our 200 parishes,’ he shared. ‘Will you come help us?’”

Working together has energized ministry in both places.

A survey trip confirmed that the majority of Deaf individuals in this district of half-a-million believers had never been taught sign language or had any formal schooling. Bethany was moved to help. Over the past seven years, they have developed a partnership which has involved sending multiple teams of Deaf and hearing participants to support Diocesan staff. The partnership provides Tanzanian sign language training in the villages, interpreted worship services for the Deaf in seven regional parishes, and has come alongside a struggling NGO-sponsored elementary school for the Deaf.

Today, thanks in part to Bethany’s investment of their unique DNA, more Deaf believers gather each Sunday for worship in this Diocese of Central Tanganyika than meet at Bethany. Working together has energized ministry in both places.
DNA Strand: Generosity
Grace Evangelical Church

In 2003, Grace Evan (as they refer to themselves) led by Senior Pastor Jimmy Young adopted what they dubbed the **Grace Venture**: *Live more simply. Give more sacrificially. Accomplish the Great Commission.*

This was no mere byline for this Germantown, TN, church; it marked a wholehearted commitment on the part of the staff and elders to create deep cultural change. They believed God wanted a powerful thread of generosity to be a major characteristic of their DNA. This value would be demonstrated not only through sacrificial financial giving to missions but also generous investment of time and other resources.

A decade later, Grace Venture DNA is being lived out on a daily basis. Missions Pastor Johnathan Todd has guided the church to develop a way to describe, structure, and empower its expression. Dubbed Ministry Initiative Teams (MITs), groups have been formed to channel passion into action for an array of particular ministries.

Today 27 Ministry Initiative Teams spearhead Grace Evan’s Grace Venture implementation. As newcomers learn about the challenge, they are encouraged to join an MIT. Leadership of all global and local ministry has been consolidated within a Grace Venture Strategy Committee that invests the millions of dollars of additional giving into strategic ministries that are served and championed by MITs. It’s working!

DNA Strand: Concern for Victims of Sex Trafficking
Westbrook Church

The DNA of Westbrook, a congregation in suburban Milwaukee, WI, includes commitment to global workers doing evangelism, discipleship, and church-planting. They also have a passion for holistic ministry to the poor and oppressed, locally and globally. Several years ago, God began to develop in two newer members of the GO Team a growing desire to help stop sex trafficking. Amy Thompson, Pastor of Deployment, explains, “As these GO team members started to share information and their passion for justice, the church leadership couldn’t shake a mounting urgency to demonstrate love for trafficking’s victims.”

A Justice Team was born at Westbrook and began engaging with ministries focused on trafficking issues worldwide. When it was uncovered that Milwaukee is a hub for Midwest trafficking, this DNA element also found a local expression. Churches came together to seek a solution, and **Exploit No More** was launched to open an aftercare safe house for girls rescued out of prostitution in the Milwaukee Metro area.

This issue has gone deep in Westbrook’s DNA for both leaders and the congregation. Their women’s ministry prays for Exploit No More and has held fundraisers. Individuals have sponsored events or participated in church-wide concerts, art auctions, 5K runs, and golf outings. About a dozen people with no previous involvement in missions at Westbrook meet monthly to pray for local and global aspects of this issue.

Amy summarizes: “Because this is in our DNA, there is heart resonance to God’s Spirit on this issue. Westbrook people are jumping in to do something about what once seemed like just a ‘faraway evil.’”

Our blog post, “**Every Church Has Unique DNA,**” describes a small church that had more than they knew.