



Footprints

of the missional church



Witness

A Module for Bible Study and Theological Reflection



Witness

Footprints of the Missional Church: *A module for Bible Study and Theological Reflection* is designed to serve as a missional education resource for the congregations of Mennonite Church Canada. The Module on Bible Study and Theological Reflection was developed by Robert J. Suderman, Executive Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, for the Mennonite Church Canada, Missional Leadership Formation Course, January – December, 2003.

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forword



Definition:
Footprint - an impression of the foot on a surface.

“Footprints” can also be understood as the impression we as a human race leave upon the surface of the world. The way we live impacts the world around us, and the way we live in relation to our environment is now commonly called our “environmental footprint.” The way the church and its people live, relate, understand the Bible, and do theology creates what we are calling our “missional footprint.”



Our missional footprint is important. We need to understand the weight and intensity of what makes up this footprint so that it will accurately reflect what we believe and what we would like to see embedded in the impressionable surface of our world. The mark we make as a church is more effective and informed when we take the opportunity to study and work through the theological principles of our Anabaptist Christian beliefs.

In this module on Bible study and theological reflection, we look toward God, discovering how God relates and interacts with human beings, how God is revealed in the Scriptures and how this impacts our world and the footprints we leave on it.

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Part 1

Objectives



Objectives:

- 1) Interpret the Bible from the perspective of faith, with the expectation of discerning God's purpose for our lives
- 2) Refresh our understandings of the biblical teachings about the “people of God”
- 3) Engage the Bible to clarify the purpose of the church
- 4) Provide an overview, from a theological perspective, what a “missional congregation” would look and “feel” like.

Suggested Elements of biblical study:

- 1) Start with God: assume that the text is somehow meant to point to human experience with God and God's experience with humans. How does this particular text shed light on God's activity?
- 2) Start with God's reconciling, restoring, life-giving purpose for the world and all that's in it, i.e., take seriously the canonical “book-end” structure. How does this particular text shed light on God's purpose?
- 3) What are the assumptions in the text in terms of how God's activity and purpose for the world are revealed? Are there other biblical stories/passages that would appear to challenge these assumptions?
- 4) How can this text help us understand God at work in our world and in our context? Are there other biblical stories/passages that would appear to challenge these understandings?
- 5) How does this text help us understand God's purposes for the church?

Part 2

tool kit for Bible reading



Why should we search the scriptures?

II Timothy 3:15-17 states:

... the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, and for training in justice, that the child of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Canon

The materials we are committed to discerning when we wish to seek directions for the life of faith in the church are called “Canon.” The word “Canon” literally means a “norm” or a “standard.” It refers to the set of materials identified by the church through history as its normative sacred literature. Canonical interpretation takes seriously not only what has been selected, but how this selection has been ordered by the church. It is very important to understand that what the church declared authoritative for the faith and life of the church are not isolated passages within scripture, but the canon as a whole. This is important as we seek to interpret the Bible for purposes of faithfulness.

The responsibility to interpret is never ending. “There is no eternal interpretation, no single meaning. There is only timeless literature and timeful readings, and these together comprise canonical interpretation” (Brueggemann, *Interpretation...* p.131).

“The canonical literature is the water in which the ship of interpretation must sail, never dropping anchor” (ibid. p.132).

Two important approaches to having the Bible engage us should be noted:

1) The Bible as a mirror:

This approach encourages us to bring our own questions to the Bible to receive guidance. By identifying similar experiences in the Bible, we can learn how to deal with our own. This reflects the importance of **context** in biblical interpretation.

2) The Bible as a window:

This approach encourages us to allow biblical questions to address us by entering into the depths of the text. By immersing ourselves in the lives and experiences of others in the biblical narrative, we learn, not because of the questions we brought to the text, but because of the questions that were raised for us by the text. This reflects the importance of **canon**.

Assumptions for Bible reading:

- It is important to remember that it was not scripture that created a people of God, but it was the people of God who created scripture. “God certainly uses Scripture to call the Church to faithfulness, but such a call always comes in the form of some in the church reminding others in the church how to live as Christians – no text can be substituted for the people of God” (Hauerwas, *Unleashing...* p.28). Our Mennonite *Confession* states that: “The Bible is the essential book of the church” (Article 4). This statement has a double meaning: the Bible is essential for the life of the church; the life of the Church is essential to the creation and interpretation of the Bible.
- What we bring to the reading of the Bible is important, e.g., our tradition, our context, and our experiences and attitudes, and ourselves.
- The Bible will do little to help us “prove” the existence of God, because this is a previous step of faith based on an encounter with God.
- We will always approach the Bible with a degree of “suspicion.” This is sometimes called a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” and means that:
 - We have a certain sense that somehow, somewhere, we have met the God of the Bible before;

- We sense that the way in which God has been explained to us is not entirely satisfactory for our purposes;
- We recognize that our human wisdom has been woefully inadequate to deal with the issues that life has dealt us.
- The Bible can help to name and nurture our pre-existing faith, clarify our suspicions and doubts, and provide perspective to our experiences.
- The Bible is best read, discerned, and understood in community processes.
- Brueggemann suggests that the three enemies of adequate biblical interpretation are: amnesia, greed (idolatry), and despair. This is because the Bible wants us to: remember, within a covenantal relationship, and from a perspective of hope (Brueggemann: *Texts...* p.55).

What he is saying is that what we get from the Bible is not unrelated to what we bring to our reading of it.

Key elements in biblical interpretation

A. Canonical Reading:

There are five key ingredients to taking seriously our reading of the Bible as Canon:

1) Trinitarian reading:

- **Theological reading:** “In the beginning God...” The desire to seek the mind of God is always a key ingredient in our understanding of scripture.
- **Christological reading:** The Christian conviction that Jesus was the Messiah of God, thus clarifying God’s purposes through the incarnation of Jesus, is an important key to scriptural interpretation.
- **Pneumatological reading:** The faith that the ongoing presence, power, and discernment of God’s Spirit is available to the interpreting community is critical in our engagement with the Bible.

2) Nature of Revelation:

- In canonical literature, God’s will is revealed via a dynamic synergy between promise and fulfillment.
- This means that texts are best read and understood in critical relationship to each other and not in isolation from each other.

3) Eschatology:

- “Eschatology” literally means “a word/dialogue about what will come.” The move in the Bible from Eden to the New Jerusalem, provides a sense of direction, of “what is to come,” and therefore of hope. This possibility of being hopeful is also known as the “eschatological” design of scripture. Biblical (canonical) materials point toward hope, i.e., there is hope because what is, is not what will be.

This sense of hope is built on:

- i. The restoring activity and purpose of God is clear and creates hope.
- ii. God’s purpose to reconcile all of creation to its intended purposes generates hope.
- iii. God’s invitation to form a people of hope generates hope.

The Apostle Peter says that being a hopeful people is one of the essential characteristics of the church. He says: *“Always be prepared to make a defense [literally an ‘apology’] to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you...”* (1 Peter 3:15).

- iv. Is your congregation “hope – full” and can each member defend clearly why it is possible to be hope – full in our troubled times?

4) Relational:

- Canonical literature demonstrates the critical role of human history (narrative) in how God works.
- History is relational. It is not the story of ideas, but the story of how people have lived according to ideas.
- The creation of a “people” of God is foundational strategy of God in history.
- This foundational strategy is incarnational and is evident long before the time of Jesus. This means that God wills a “kingdom presence” in the world, not simply an idea about an alternative kingdom.

5) A Human witness to divine purpose:

- There are many voices in the Bible. They all need to be heard.
- These voices, more often than not, are in “dialogue” with each other.
- This is not a final “dialogue” because they speak at different times in history, and only the later voices can speak to the prior voices, but the prior voices cannot respond.
- Some canonical voices appear to have been given a more central

role, while other voices speak from the margins. Certainly, some voices have also gained a more central role in our modes of interpretation. As our own situations and contexts change, what were previously discerned to be marginal voices may well take over the centre, and what we had assumed to be central voices may need to take a more marginal position. The ebb and flow of the centrality/ marginality of these voices often depend on the situation of the reader, and this is what makes canonical interpretation ever fresh, renewing, and relevant. The power of social position, both in the Bible and in the interpreter, is key to assigning central and marginal roles to the many voices that are heard in the text. This is why a rich person reading the text may well place certain voices in the centre, while a poor person may be more sensitive to hearing other marginal voices. This again demonstrates why the Bible should not be interpreted in isolation.

- “As centre and margin engage each other, we shall discern something of how God’s mercy and God’s majesty together inhabit God’s heart” (Brueggemann, *Interpretation...* p.131).
- There is often surprising resolution to these dialogues. For example, the proper and strategic use of human power for God’s people seems to be resolved in favor of the power of servanthood and vulnerability and not in favor of military might and its accompanying violence. Although these “servanthood” voices are present throughout the text, they are at times more marginal and at times more central. This is, therefore, not a question of “progressive revelation” or supercessionist interpretation (automatically giving precedence to New Testament reading over Old Testament reading), but careful discernment of the direction of canon, i.e., the road to the New Jerusalem and the voices that throughout the canon, have guided God’s people toward that goal with that strategy.
- Other issues, on the other hand, remain unresolved. For example, the Bible does not clearly resolve the question of the eschatological role of Israel, God’s “chosen people.” Even though this topic is hotly debated in the text, there is no clear resolution in defining the eschatological fate of those “chosen” ones who continue to reject the Messiah-ship of Jesus.

B. The Human footprint in biblical interpretation:

- All biblical interpretation is a “political” process, given that the text arises out of and is interpreted by the needs of God’s people. The word “political” here is used in the sense of its social, public, and corporate sense. The *polis* is the Greek word to describe the city, and

especially the coming together of the leaders of the city to discern its welfare.

- The attempts to “de-politicize” biblical interpretation leads to both unchecked dogmatic readings and unchecked situational readings of the text. Fundamentalist interpreters often attempt to disengage the interpretation of the text from both its context and our context in order to focus on its “objective and propositional” truth. Situationist interpreters often get all their interpretive clues from a given situation or context, and thus ignore what the text actually says.
- Both the fundamentalist and the situationist readings, therefore, do violence to the purpose of the text, meant to give life to the community of faith.
- The Bible is always read through the contextual lenses of the reader, and this must be intentionally considered as a strength not a weakness in biblical interpretation.
- The contextual lenses need to be communal lenses, because Scripture was produced via the life of the church and is directed at the life of the church. Therefore Scripture needs to be interpreted by the life of the church.

Part 3

bible STUDIES



Session one

What does God want?

Canonical approach to biblical interpretation: the “Big Picture”

(Note: The word “Canon” literally means a “norm” or a “standard.” It refers to the set of materials identified by the church through history as its normative sacred literature. Canonical interpretation takes seriously not only what has been selected, but how this selection has been ordered by the church. It is very important to understand that what the church declared authoritative for the faith and life of the church are not isolated passages within scripture, but the canon as a whole. This is important as we seek to interpret the Bible for the purposes of faithfulness).

Group Exercise #1:

An inquiry into the canonical (biblical) “Book-ends”:

Genesis 1 + 2 and Revelation 21:1 – 22:5 have been placed as “book-ends” in the Christian canon. This was not done by the “authors” of these passages, but by the church that organized the canonical materials. In our interpretation of the Bible, this order needs to be

taken seriously.

Note: Scholarly investigation suggests that Gen.1 was written after the Jewish exile in Babylon (after 587 BC) and Gen.2 was written before the time of the monarchy in Israel (before 1,100 BC). It is not the first literature written in the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation was likely written during the reign of the emperor Domitian (81-96 AD.). It is not the last literature written in the New Testament. Therefore the decision to use these materials as “book-ends” was made by the editors/compilers of the canon and not by the human authors of this material.

Origin: Genesis 1, 2; (where are we coming from?)

Destiny: Revelation 21,22; (where are we heading toward?)

1)

According to these “book-end” accounts, what does God desire?

2)

According to these “book-end” accounts, what does God not desire?

3)

What evidence is there in these accounts that indicate that God is the originator (creator) of human possibility and the consummator of human potential?

4)

Given the message of these “book-ends” what do you think might be in-between those ends? Give reasons for your response.

5)

What does this teach us about the role of human history and our place in it?

Note: The Judeo/Christian faith is often described as a “historic” faith in the sense that it assumes the importance of human history in the unfolding of God’s purposes. This is in opposition to some other faiths that are described as “propositional” faiths, that emphasize not the human discernment of obedience in history, but human obedience to precepts eternally defined in God’s law.



Session Two

Engaging what’s in-between the “Book-ends”:

We can anticipate two things in the materials in-between the canonical “book-ends.”

- There will be stories, data, evidence, and reflection about how human history has moved away from its origins in Eden. We can anticipate many voices and opinions about why this has happened. We can even anticipate that not all of these voices will agree with each other.
- There will be stories, data, evidence, and reflection about the human potential of moving toward its destiny, the New Jerusalem. We can anticipate many voices and opinions about how this can be done. We can even anticipate that not all of these voices will agree with each other.

As astute readers of this material, we must always keep in mind that the Bible contains both the efforts and ideas that move human history away from Eden, and the canonically preferred efforts and ideas that move us toward the New Jerusalem.

Not all the material in the canon, by itself, reflects the hoped for

outcomes of the canonical purposes. A dramatic way of saying this is that not all the material in the Bible, by itself, is “biblical” (if we understand “biblical” to mean providing authoritative guidance for human faithfulness), in the sense that it reflects God’s New Jerusalem intentions for the world.

Group Exercise #2:

A look at some of the voices in the canon:

Let’s look at two canonical voices, both experiencing and reflecting on the Babylonian exile, its causes and its effects.

- 1) Psalm 137 is the voice of a Jewish exile on the banks of a Babylonian river. What is the interpretation of the event and the desired outcome of this voice?
- 2) Isaiah 42:1-9 is another voice interpreting the exile. What is the interpretation and the desired outcome of this voice?
- 3) What are the issues raised by these voices? Are they moving away from Eden or toward the New Jerusalem?
- 4) Identify any well-known biblical story or textual reference (could be your most or least favorite)
- 5) Analyze whether this passage moves away from Eden or towards the New Jerusalem
- 6) What does this passage tell us about God?
- 7) Do all the passages give the same impressions about God?
- 8) What does this tell us about the Bible in general?
- 9) What guidance does this give to issues we face today?



Session Three

Let’s take a closer look at:

- God’s “in-between” purposes
- God’s “in-between” strategies
- God’s invitation to God’s people to participate in the “in-between” process.

God’s purpose is to move human history from Eden to the New Jerusalem. This process is commonly referred to in the Bible as “the coming of God’s Kingdom.” One of the primary agents of this movement is the promised “Messiah” (the Greek word is the “Christ”). Another important agent of this transformation process are the “Messiah’s people,” what we would call the “church.”

Group Exercise #3:

1)

Read Mark 1:14-15 carefully.

These are the first words of the “Messiah” in the Gospel of Mark, and therefore are meant to carry a lot of weight in understanding the purposes of God in Jesus.

- What is Jesus announcing?
- How is the word “gospel” defined in this passage?
- How does this definition compare to your own ideas about what the “gospel” is, or explanations you hear in your church, the radio, or TV?

2)

It can be said that the rest of the Gospel of Mark is an effort to amplify and explain what it means when “God’s Kingdom comes close.” Choose any passage from Mark’s Gospel, and test whether this passage does this.

3)

Read Mark 1:16-20, the passage that follows Jesus’ initial announcement. What does this passage tell us re: the “Kingdom strategy” of the Messiah?

4)

How does the election of the disciples inform our discussions about what it means to be a “missional church?” What does following Jesus’ strategy look like in your congregation?



Session Four

The central role of “people-hood” in God’s “gospel strategy”

In this session we want to explore further the strategy of God and the role of the church in moving the world toward the New Jerusalem.

God’s primary strategy appears to be the formation of a “People of the Kingdom” who will function as signs of where we’ve been and where we’re going. They are God’s Kingdom people, present and visible, to guide others from Eden to the New Jerusalem. This means that the discernment about what God’s Kingdom is and how we become a People of the Kingdom is the primary content of the “in-between” Canon.

God provides grace and the Holy Spirit to us to discern this vocation, understand it, respond positively to it, call others to it, equip ourselves and others for it, and to organize around it. That God has granted this invitation to us is very “good news.”

Not just any kind of people:

Group Exercise #4:

Review as many of the following passages you can with these questions in mind:

Genesis 12:1-3;
Exodus 19:1-6;
Isaiah 11; 62:10-12;
Mark 1:14-20;
Matthew 28:16-20;
John 17; 20:21;
Acts 4:32-37;
II Corinthians 5:16-21;
I Peter 2:9-10;
Revelation 5

1)

How do you see the communal strategy of God in each passage?

2)

What is to be the vocation or calling (task, purpose, and nature) of the People of God identified in this passage?

3)

Summarize each text in a concise way that shows God's desire for the People of God.

4)

Summarize the common themes that you discover in these passages.

Part 4

learning about the church: an historic view



Marks of the true Church

It is good to review again how the historical church has grappled with the meaning of being the church. This effort has often been framed as an effort to define the “marks” of the true church.

The Nicene Creed, developed by the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. has the following statement about the church:

“I believe [in] one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”

Let's review this definition with the following questions in mind:

- How is each “mark” still relevant for us as we try to be the church in Canada?
- Would you wish to add or subtract any “mark” that is not mentioned here? If so, what would they be and why?
- How does your congregation attempt to live up to these “marks”?

The church is “One”:

*...eager to **maintain the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There **is** one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:3-6).*

The “oneness” [unity] of the church is an expression of its origin in God. And God in this sense is best understood as “trinity.” In the trinity, God represents this origin, Jesus provides the clarity of the purpose of God, and the Holy Spirit is the ongoing presence and power to sustain the church in its life and discernment. While the Nicene Fathers did not anticipate the organizational complexity of the contemporary church, the characteristic of “oneness” is still true and relevant for the entire church in all its diversity.

The “oneness” of the church is not optional, nor is it something we seek. It is a given, a gift that comes from beyond our efforts, and as such is ours to nurture and maintain.

The unity [oneness] of the church is a gift that comes from God. Our vocation is to “maintain” what is already there, not to create what should be there.

The church is “Holy”:

Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

The affirmation that the church is “holy” also communicates its “divine roots in the eternal purposes of God” (Van Gelder: *Essence...* p. 117). Just as with its “oneness,” the “holiness” of the church also does not originate from the lives and efforts of its members. The church is holy because it is a creation of the Spirit. While the church is clearly human, frail, and struggling in human history with its efforts to be faithful, yet it is this same church that is described as “holy.”

The lives of its members and the decisions of its organizations would often point to the “un-holiness” of the church. “Holiness,” we must remember, is not so much a comment about the purity of God than it is about the “otherness” of God. The same must be said about the church. The church lives its un-holiness with its God-given mandate to be “other,” to present a divine alternative for life to the world.

“The church is to accept this gift of God’s holiness and bring its life into obedient conformity with it” (Van Gelder, *Essence...* p.117).

The church is “Catholic”:

...to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph.1:10).

...to make all see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him (Eph. 3:9-12). (cf. also Eph. 1:15-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 8:18-25).

This characteristic of the church was not meant as a denominational descriptor. The word “catholic” literally means “universal.” This mark refers to the scope of the church’s possibilities. It communicates the confident conviction that the purpose and existence of the church is relevant and can be contextualized in every age and in all cultures and places in the world. Like the other marks, this is an attribute that reflects the origins of the church. If the Creator, eternal God, creator of the entire universe, is also the originator of the church, then there is no time or place in all creation where the purposes of the church would be out of place or where the church’s presence would clash with the purposes of the time or culture. Or, we could say, the presence of the church would clash with all contexts of the world that do not recognize their origin in and responsibility before God.

“Like the Bible, the church through the Spirit is inherently translatable into every specific, cultural context” (Van Gelder, *Essence...* p.119). The church’s capacity to be contextualized, to be made relevant to any and every cultural setting, is a logical extension of the confession that the church is catholic” (Van Gelder, *Essence...* p.119).

Exercise:

Examine the passages referred to carefully and summarize the evidence that suggests the “catholic” nature and role of the church.

The church is “Apostolic”:

...Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth (John 17:17-19).

...Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:21-23).

This characteristic or mark of the church has two important meanings. The root of the words “apostolic/apostle” comes from the Greek New Testament words *apostoleo/apostolos* which mean “to send/the one sent.” In describing the church as “apostolic,” the intent of the Nicene Fathers was twofold:

- To ensure that the church would continue its missionary encounter with all cultures, and
- To ensure that the life and message the church would take to all cultures would be congruent with the life and teachings of the “apostles.”

This characteristic, then, affirms the need to continue the good work of the original apostles, and to make the encounter between the gospel and culture the core of the church's nature and activity

The church is formed to be sent and is sent to form. The ‘DNA’ of the church is its sentness, and the ‘DNA’ of its sentness is its calling to inform, educate, and to shape other similar communities. These attributes of purpose and sentness are inseparable. The church is sent into the world to engage its purposes, and its purposes cannot be met without engaging the world with them. This double purpose of the church is most clearly stated by Jesus in the high-priestly prayer and in his post-resurrection appearance, quoted above. According to these passages, Jesus is the model apostle, the one sent into the world as “truth.” Now the disciples, the church, are sent by Jesus into the world for the same purpose and in the same way.

The apostolic task of the apostolic church is to do what the apostolic Christ came to do, i.e., to deal redemptively and contextually with the sin of the world.

“The church is missionary by nature because God through the Spirit calls, creates, and commissions the church to communicate to the world that the redemptive reign of God has broken into human history” (Van Gelder, *Essence...* p.125).

The question is often asked: “What do we need to change in order to embrace a “missional identity” in our congregation?” What follows is an attempt to respond to that question and identify what the Missional Church framework would hope to achieve.

Part 5

a missional church footprint



As you study the points that follow, do so with your congregation in mind. To what extent are the suggested changes and/or emphases already present in your congregation? Is what is suggested here a “routine adjustment” or a “paradigm shift” for your congregation? You may wish to use the checklists provided to help discern your congregation's “missional culture.”

At a minimum, by embracing a missional church identity, we would wish to respond clearly and faithfully to Goheen's three-part question:

What does it mean for a church increasingly on the margins of North American culture to encounter its post-modern culture in a missionary way?

Cultural analysis: What are the religious foundations and societal practices of post-modern, North American culture?

Theological reflection: What is the gospel to which the church is called to bear witness?

Ecclesiological Discussion: What kind of a church is needed to present a faithful and relevant witness of the gospel to post-modern, North American culture? (Goheen, p. 479).

As we engage this question, a missional church footprint would emerge with the following characteristics:

A. Understand the implications of its Christendom/Constantinian legacy, and our need to adjust to a new situation.

Note: Christendom, also known as Constantinianism, the Constantinian synthesis, and corpus Christianum, refers to the marriage (synthesis) between church and state, based on the assumptions that the church and state are close allies because both are moving in the same strategic direction. In Christendom, the task of the church is to bless the state in its actions and the task of the state is to protect the church in its dogma and its ministries of faith. These terms are used to describe the shifts that took place in the church upon its legalization by the Roman emperor Constantine [321 ad.] and the Christian faith being made the compulsory religion of the Roman empire by the emperor Theodosius [392 ad.].

A more positive definition of this shift is given by Leslie Newbigin: "...the first great attempt to translate the universal claim of Christ into political terms."

Post-modernism, on the other hand, refers to the systematic deconstruction [dismantling] of every and all syntheses. In this form of understanding, local reality and experience take precedence over synthesis. All truth is defined experientially and therefore also locally. Local diversities dismantle all attempts to synthesize common experience and truth.

Post-modernism is often considered to be the primary cultural characteristic of our time.

1)

We would broaden the understanding of the term "mission" to include not only an action but also a purpose that is inherent in the essence of being the church. That is, we would move from "I/we are involved in "mission" or "missions" to "I/we are an integral part of the "mission" (purpose, intention) of God through the church."

2)

We would understand the implications and seek direction for what it means to be the church in a context of crumbling Christendom.

(Note: There are many signs that the Christendom is crumbling. The church no longer expects that the directions and laws of the state are inspired by Christian perspectives, and the state no longer assumes that the church should have a privileged social or legal position within the state).

3)

As congregations, we would understand both the impact and the potential that this crumbling dynamic presents to the church. In Anabaptist style, we will need to learn how we can celebrate this dynamic, embrace it, and understand our renewed purpose within it.

4)

As congregations, we would understand that a primary effect of Christendom was that the church lost its sense of being a distinct community, embodying an alternative but concurrent story. That is, the identity of the church was absorbed into the geo-political identity of the empire with which it was yoked, rather than the geo-political-social identity of God's "empire/reign." The recovery of this concurrent but alternative identity then becomes a key ingredient for the missional task and identity of the church.

5)

As congregations, we would understand that in this Christendom yoking process, the "acceptable" agenda for the church was reduced to engage only certain areas of personal/social/political responsibility. This reduced the spectrum of acceptable involvement for the church. For instance, the church was:

- assigned to chaplaincy roles in a suffering society,
- designated as the "conscience" of the society,
- encouraged in its role in favor of benevolence ministries to heal the wounds created by societal priorities.
- In a sense, Luther's formulation of the "priesthood of all believers" was a re-statement of the role of the church in a Christendom world, given that the sagely, prophetic, or "royal" functions of the church were not recognized as legitimate. These were either eliminated altogether or thought to be the duties of the state.

This means, then, that a missional church will challenge the legitimacy of this role reduction and again embrace the broader agenda as important and legitimate as it understands its purpose.

B. Renew our understanding of “mission:”

6)

As congregations, we would change the impression that “Mission” is that unique enterprise carried on by/from the western church to other parts of the world.

7)

As congregations, we would change the impression that mission is what the church does elsewhere.

8)

As congregations, we would change the impression that the “West” is not in need of mission, but that only the non-West is the “mission field.”

9)

As congregations, we would change the impression that the primary home for mission initiative is the western/northern church.

10)

As congregations, we would change the impression that mission is what others do elsewhere on behalf of the church.

C. Renew our understanding of “Church:”

11)

We would understand that the “mission” (purpose) of the church refers to its very nature, and that all parts of the church are parts in the same mission.

12)

We would understand that the mission/purpose of the church is of God. The church does not invent its own mission beyond what God’s mission invites us into.

13)

We would understand that each congregation is a fulcrum for engaging in God’s mission in its context and beyond.

14)

We would change the impression that mission is best done by para-church agencies on behalf of the church.

15)

We would help the whole denomination understand its double responsibility:

- for congregations to assume their responsibilities in mission, and
- for mission organizations/agencies to assume their accountability back to the church, as specialized organizations of service on its behalf.

16)

We would change the impression that “mission” is just one segment of the life of the church, to an understanding that the church exists to fulfill its God-given mission and that this redeeming purpose of motivates everything we do in the church and is our reason to exist.

17)

We would change the impression that when the church responds to its God-given purpose, it is somehow inappropriately “imposing” itself on those who prefer other perspectives and activities. It is legitimate for the church to respectfully live and speak its alternative life and message.

18)

We would change the perception that mission, formation, worship, and community in the church can be separated, and encourage all to understand the common dimensions of all these ministries for missional purposes.

(Note: The unwarranted and artificial separation of things that belong together is referred to as a ‘dichotomy’).

19)

We would change the unwarranted ways in which we separate spiritual giftedness and expressions of ministry. Some of the common separations are those between: evangelism and peace; service and mission; education and evangelism; material and spiritual activity; physical and spiritual activity; etc. Such separations between the legitimate exercise of diverse spiritual gifts are signs that we still see the agenda of the church as being reduced in unwarranted ways. A missional church will affirm all spiritual gifts and consider them all legitimate expressions of holistic ministry.

20)

We would change the impression that the church is primarily a sending body, sending others to do mission on its behalf, to understanding itself as a sent body that, as a community, has a sent purpose for its being and its doing. The *sent* nature of the church is also referred to as its *apostolic* purpose, given that this is the Greek word for the “one sent.”

21)

We would change the impression that mission is the responsibility of the older, established churches, and that newer churches are the mission fields of the older churches. The fact is that all churches, regardless of age, have the same mission and purpose.

22)

We would understand more fully how the organization and structure of our congregations can encourage or block the congregations' effort to engage their contexts with the gospel of Christ.

23)

As congregations, we would understand that the missional vision is a vision for the communal witness of the church to the world. It is not simply more individuals or persons doing more good things, as important as that may be. The church is not simply the sum of its parts, but greater than the sum of its parts, and this adds value to the parts.

24)

As congregations we would understand that our societal convictions about the centrality of the individual and personal freedom are products of Christendom and the modernization of the church. The church as a body lost its distinctive identity as it became a Christendom church, and the Enlightenment replaced its communal nature with an emphasis on the primacy of the individual. Both of these directions run counter to God's missional intent for the church.

25)

As congregations, we would shift our understanding of the "individual" from the common perception as being a socially, politically, economically, religiously independent person to a recognition of the communal/corporate imprint of all individual life.

- This is not a devaluation of the "individual" or the "personal" but recognizes that we are all communal. We have all been shaped by a heritage and a context, both of which are corporate realities. The question is not whether the person will have an identity shaped and molded by a communal story or not, but rather which communal story will shape the person.

26)

As congregations, we would understand, affirm, and embrace our identity as alternative communities, representing an alternative life-system, built on an alternative faith, but existing concurrently with other communities that have other starting points. In other words, the

primary referent/reality for the church is what God is doing in the world, and not what the world is doing by ignoring God's activity in the world. This is the lens of the church in determining its identity, its purpose, and its activity. By guiding all of its activities through this lens, the church aligns itself with God's purposes and by so doing, becomes the alternative but concurrent story that it is called to be, i.e., it becomes missional.

27)

As congregations, we would understand that the primary calling or vocation of the church is to be an alternative community inspired by an alternative faith. We encourage the establishment of other such communities. These communities, guided by God's purposes through Jesus Christ embody the alternative story. Their presence and impact is apparent to the world. Because these communities are local, deeply-rooted, permanent, contextual, and indigenous, their presence allows others to observe and be invited into this alternative community. When all the activities, ministries, priorities, energies of the church are aligned with this purpose, it is a missional church.

28)

As congregations, we would understand that the essence of the missional church is to be a demonstration plot for God's reign in every diverse culture and context in the world. It already witnesses to God's dreams for the world by existing as a frail and imperfect embodiment of that dream. It also witnesses by intentional engagement with its context from the perspective of God's dream.

Both of these activities insert divine imagination into the interaction between church and world. It is this alternative imagination that is most lacking in the way in which our society's directions and actions are determined.

A missional church will embrace and embody this imagination and this vocation.

indicators of a missional church



Indicators of a Missional Church: A Working Document
of the “Developing Congregational Models” Team
The *Transforming Congregations Toward Mission* Project
of the Gospel and Our Culture Network

Preface

The missional church represents God in the encounter between God and human culture. It exists not because of human goals or desires, but as a result of God’s creating and saving work in the world. It is a visible manifestation of how the good news of Jesus Christ is present in human life and transforms human culture to reflect more faithfully God’s intentions for creation. It is a community that visibly and effectively participates in God’s activity, just as Jesus indicated when he referred to it in metaphorical language as salt, yeast, and light in the world.

The following indicators are an effort to identify what might be some of the key aspects that contribute to the church’s unique saltiness and yeasty nature in the varied and diverse worlds within our North American culture today. Twelve indicators are summarized below with a brief definition followed by a statement of “what each indicator looks like” when it is present in a congregation. Each of the indicators is then explained more fully in the subsequent pages.

1)

The missional church proclaims the gospel.

What it looks like: *The story of God’s salvation is faithfully repeated in a multitude of different ways.*

2)

The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.

What it looks like: *The disciple identity is held by all; growth in discipleship is expected of all.*

3)

The Bible is normative in this church’s life.

What it looks like: *The church is reading the Bible together to learn what it can learn no where else—God’s good and gracious intent for all creation, the salvation mystery, and the identity and purpose of life together.*

4)

The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.

What it looks like: *In its corporate life and public witness, the church is consciously seeking to conform to its Lord instead of the multitude of cultures in which it finds itself.*

5)

The church seeks to discern God’s specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.

What it looks like: *The church has made its “mission” its priority, and in overt and communal ways is seeking to be and do “what God is calling us to know, be, and do.”*

6)

A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.

What it looks like: *Acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another both in the church and in the locale characterize the generosity of the community.*

7)

It is a community that practices reconciliation.

What it looks like: *The church community is moving beyond homogeneity, toward a more heterogeneous community in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socioeconomic make-up.*

8)

People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.

What it looks like: *Substantial time is spent with one another for the purpose of watching over one another in love.*

9)

The church practices hospitality.

What it looks like: *Welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community plays a central role.*

10)

Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.

What it looks like: *There is significant and meaningful engagement in communal worship of God, reflecting appropriately and addressing the culture of those who worship together.*

11)

This community has a vital public witness.

What it looks like: *The church makes an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life, society, and human relationships.*

12)

There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.

What it looks like: *There is a widely held perception that this church is going somewhere—and that somewhere is more faithfully lived life in the reign of God.*

The Indicators in Detail

1)

The missional church proclaims the gospel.

What it looks like: *The story of God's salvation is faithfully repeated in a multitude of different ways.*

The community's thought, words, and deeds are being formed into a pattern that proclaims the gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. As a result, the good news of God's reign is publicly announced. The proclamation is a "word and deed" proclamation; it is not only audible but visible as well. It is audible in a proclamation that focuses not solely upon the salvation of persons, or the transformation of individual human lives, but also the transformation of the church, human communities, and the whole human community, history, and creation in the coming and already present reign of God. It is visible in, with, and through the quality of a common life that manifests the unique culture-contrasting good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Church members indicate that they understand that "proclaiming the gospel" is the responsibility of all Christians; it is more than the vocational option for a selected minority.
- Persons are able to point to and articulate the source from which the good words and deeds of the church emanate, that is, in their own words, they are able to indicate, "it is because of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ that you see all these things."
- Persons, in their words and actions, express to others what God has done in the world and in their lives through Jesus Christ.
- There is evidence that this is a community that can be entered into as a concrete expression of the gospel's own living story. That is, persons can see a community of people who believe, struggle, doubt, sin, forgive, and praise—together.
- The body of people admittedly seeks to believe and behave in ways that conform to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2)

The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.

What it looks like: *The disciple identity is held by all; growth in discipleship is expected of all.*

Persons are not expected automatically to know the “way of doing things in the reign of God.” Citizenship in the reign of God is learned. The learned protocol involves primarily those behaviors and processes that witness to the way of Jesus, who is forming his people for life in the reign of God. The community does not simply rely on “how we’ve always done things here,” or “that’s how we Baptists/Lutherans/Presbyterians/Methodists/etc. do it,” or even “that’s how we do it in the company where I work.” Rather, the community seeks critically to integrate already learned practices with skills and habits of Christian discipleship. This community shows evidence of growing, changing, and deepening the skills and habits of discipleship. Nurturing citizenship in the reign of God is an overall priority of the church for all members of the community of faith.

- New participants in the community indicate that they are being helped to integrate their life with the practices and habits of life in the reign of God.
- Existing participants in the community indicate that they are engaged in a lifelong process of integrating their life with the practices and habits of life in the reign of God.
- Illustrations can be given of how people are learning how to pray and are discovering prayer as a powerful resource for living in the reign of God.
- The community demonstrates a variety of ways in which participants train, mentor, or nurture one another as the community seeks to develop, across the entire spectrum of participants, the capabilities (ways of thinking, perceiving, and behaving) required of disciples who are attempting to follow Jesus Christ.
- Members can identify several different ways of thinking, perceiving, and behaving that are characteristic of life in Christ that differ significantly from the ways of the culture in which persons find themselves on a daily basis. They can give at least two or three

examples of how those differences are being practiced in the life of the congregation. (Examples might include rejection of competitive and coercive ways of interaction, use of language that expresses a Christian world view, attitude toward money and possessions that reflect God’s generosity and abundance, exercise of power through service rather than domination.)

- The church organization is characterized by the participants as one that is ever open to change, to new and expansive ways of organizational thinking and behaving that enable rather than block the cultivating of faithful discipleship.

3)

The Bible is normative in this church’s life.

What it looks like: *The church is reading the Bible together to learn what it can learn no where else—God’s good and gracious intent for all creation, the salvation mystery, and the identity and purpose of life together.*

There are two commonly held expectations: that we will seek to know the Scriptures, and that we will seek to become obedient to the Word which is revealed in the Scriptures. Listening, reading, studying, and obeying the Bible is integral to all of church life, including its worship, spirituality, service, education, stewardship, and witness. The Bible is engaged communally. The overarching approach to Scripture study in the body is not solely “personal devotion” or merely “moral guidance,” but is characterized by the question, “What is the text saying to the church which is attempting to be faithful today?” “How does the biblical word prepare God’s people for their mission in this particular place?”

- The community gives visible evidence that its life, work, witness, and worship are influenced and shaped by what the community is learning together from Scripture’s revelation of God’s claim upon its life.
- The community has established processes through which it reflects critically on its hearing of the gospel, and its obedience to the gospel’s imperatives, in order to become a more faithful disciple community.
- The community is becoming “bilingual” as it learns how to translate the biblical message into the language and experience of its immediate context.

4)

The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.

What it looks like: *In its corporate life and public witness, the church is consciously seeking to conform to its Lord instead of the multitude of cultures in which it finds itself.*

Discipleship requires a willingness to follow the way of the cross and share in the sufferings of Christ. The church is not getting its bearings by the world's standard of success—institutional status, power, or influence. Rather, it witnesses to the truth of the gospel that the one on the cross is the way, the truth, and the life for the church. Jesus models what the church is called to be. Thus the church is called to show hard evidence that as a body of people it provides a collective witness to its crucified savior. The church's distinctive conduct, then, is frequently different from and often in opposition to the world's patterns of behavior. This is particularly evident when the power of love, service, and sacrifice for one another in the community is contrasted with the powers of hate, violence, and domination in the world.

- Members can readily give at least two or three instances when the church was willing to take risks, suffer, be looked down on, or be treated unjustly for the sake of the gospel.
- The church practices love, sacrifice, and service in such a way that people from both within the church and in the wider community can point to their positive results.
- The church is becoming aware of, confessing, and turning away from its patterns of conformity to the world while it learns to follow Jesus Christ.

5)

The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.

What it looks like: *The church has made its "mission" its priority, and in overt and communal ways is seeking to be and do "what God is calling us to know, be, and do."*

The goal of decision making is not simply to discover the will of the community, but to discern together the will of God. Because all participants in the body participate in decisions that affect their life and mission together, shared power and influence (rather than status, position, or "majority opinion") are the keys of authority.

The need for the gifts and insights of all members to shape and guide a faithful and effective ministry is recognized and emphasized. Mentors, teachers, and partners provide intentional support, challenge, and advice to enable one another to extend these skills and habits and deepen their participation in the life of Christ. Members make efforts to set aside the necessary time to listen, study, share, struggle, pray, and plan together as they search for God's will and seek to participate in God's mission. Members pledge to live out together the conclusions they have reached together. Church leadership encourages, guides, teaches, and serves the process of communal discernment through consistently holding the following key questions before the community as they seek together to answer them:

- What is God calling us as this church to be and do?
 - How can we enter more faithfully into the reign of God?
 - How will we learn from the Bible what it means to be the church?
 - How will we more faithfully and effectively practice Christian community in our life with one another?
- Believing that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to all, the entire community participates in programs and processes for identifying, commissioning, and utilizing the gifts of both new and continuing participants for service in the mission of the church.
 - The church intentionally develops the skills and habits of listening, praying, studying, thinking, sharing, disagreeing, confronting, planning, working together in ways that build up one another, discovering and supporting the rich diversity of giftedness within the community.
 - Leadership teams and groups demonstrate, model, and cultivate in their words and behaviors with one another what the whole community is called to be and to do. They indicate that they recognize that they too are an expression of the church when they gather, and thus are also intentionally learning the practices of the reign of God in their life together.

6)

A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.

What it looks like: *Acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another both in the church and in the locale characterize the generosity of the community.*

The church exhibits the fruits of the Spirit which include (but are not limited to) not thinking more highly of oneself than one ought; valuing the gifts of others; loving one another with mutual affection; eagerness to show the workings of the Spirit; patience in suffering; hospitality to strangers; blessing those who do not understand, or who persecute; associating with the lowly; not repaying evil for evil, but overcoming evil with good; and living peaceably. Acts of generosity are commonplace and self-giving is a behavioral characteristic of this community.

- Congregational life demonstrates a variety of ways for cultivating the attitude and habit of expressing self-sacrificing compassion and concern for one another.
- The church exhibits patterns of individual and corporate prayer which seek to promote the welfare of the community as well as the transformation of lives and changed conditions within their locale.
- There is indication that the church is changing its expectations about what participation in the Christian community looks like (for example, spending more time with one another, taking their relationships with one another more seriously, providing tangible support for one another).

7)

It is a community that practices reconciliation.

What it looks like: *The church community is moving beyond homogeneity, toward a more heterogeneous community in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socioeconomic make-up.*

The barriers that separate people are identified, addressed, and overcome. Differences and dissension among people are dealt with constructively. Conflict is used to enrich discussion. Evil done within or to the body is overcome by doing good. Healing involves

confession to and the forgiveness of one another wherever and whenever wrong exists. This process of healing and reconciliation takes place between individuals and within the body, both of which serve to shape and reform the community as a whole. Society's boundaries are crossed—class, economic status, race, gender, age, occupation, education. Amazingly diverse people allow themselves to be formed by one Lord into one body. Violence is rejected as a method of resolving difference.

- Members can give anecdotal evidence from the church community life showing where forgiveness and the healing of relationships occurred—consistent with the life of Jesus and in contrast to the society's standards of behavior.
- There is evidence that leaders and members expect positive results from expressing differences.
- There are norms by which the community abides for the constructive use of conflict. These include informal or formal procedures of which both leaders and members are aware and can make reference to.
- There are examples of reconciliation that indicate the community is learning to transcend racial, ethnic, age, gender, socioeconomic barriers. The community values and accepts both similarity and difference out of its unity in Christ.

8)

People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.

What it looks like: *Substantial time is spent with one another for the purpose of watching over one another in love.*

They covenant together to uphold and watch over one another in love, praying for one another. They are committed to one another, and that commitment is expressed through collaboration, interdependence of work efforts, and being dependable. People place a high value on sharing a common life and supporting one another.

- Participants indicate that a fundamental purpose of the community is the expression of Christ's love—mutual love and accountability to one another.

- Participants indicate that they are accountable to a grouping of people with whom they are learning to live the Christian life more faithfully. (In such a grouping, they are learning to acknowledge their status as forgiven sinners, receiving from and giving both encouragement and admonition to one another, helping one another to live in God's grace, seeking consistently to be restored to right relationships with one another.)
- Participants indicate that the community is characterized (i.e., it is the norm rather than the exception) by a life together carried out in a unity of spirit. Consistently, words and actions toward one another indicate mutual respect for one another.
- Participants take time to pray for one another. They pray for one another in their varied circumstances, circumstances that are not limited to sickness or death. They pray for those with whom they differ and whom they dislike as they do for those with whom they agree and whom they like. They recognize that prayer is a key aspect of being accountable to one another in this community.
- The community reflects on how its structures (meetings, frequency, length, and use of time together, organizational structures, physical arrangements) either hinder or enable the demonstration of mutual love, respect, and accountability to one another.

9)

The church practices hospitality.

What it looks like: *Welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community plays a central role.*

People are reached and invited into new relationships with God and with one another as the community's intent is to welcome as God welcomes. As a result, people are becoming citizens of God's reign. Having heard and received this invitation themselves, they extend the invitation to others to know and experience God's love.

- The church demonstrates a sense of urgency about inviting people to enter the reign of God.
- Visitors experience welcome, aid, and comfort, thus making wider the circle of the church community to include those who are different from us.

10)

Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.

What it looks like: *There is significant and meaningful engagement in communal worship of God, reflecting appropriately and addressing the culture of those who worship together.*

Worship is the community's action of publicly giving allegiance to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is an act of the whole people of God who remain faithful to tradition while integrating variety which reflects and gives new meaning to the unique cultural context of the congregation. Worship actively engages the community in ways that nurture the dynamic, growing and changing aspects of discipleship in the world. As such, it provides for the incorporation of people into the community of faith, their formation into a new humanity, and their reception of God's gift of sustenance for daily life.

Its focus is on celebrating God's presence and promises without seeking or expecting worship to be the occasion for God to meet human needs. The congregation departs from worship, knowing that it is a sent and sending community, and each Christian is conscious of his or her apostolic sentness as light, leaven, and salt in the world.

- The organization, structure, content, language, rituals and practices of worship demonstrably focus upon God and give opportunity for human responses to God.
- There are aspects of communal worship that reflect the local culture, but also give new meaning to those elements of local culture.
- Participants can give anecdotal evidence of how corporate worship enables persons to become incorporated into the life of Christ, and thus the Christian community.
- Participants can describe ways in which worship gives expression to and provides the experience of God's sustaining presence in the life of the congregation.

11)

This community has a vital public witness.

What it looks like: *The church makes an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life, society, and human relationships.*

What the community intends to be and do actually does occur, and is confirmed both by those who participate in the community (e.g., “I have learned here that I can disagree and I don’t have to leave”) as well as by those who do not, (e.g., “Oh, you’re the church that always helps clean up after floods and tornadoes”). Like political ambassadors, persons know and can articulate where their allegiance lies. They know and can articulate the nature and expectations of the mission that has been given to them. Its public deeds do not consist of imposing its moral will on others, but of giving hard evidence of the reign of God that intrudes as an alternative vision and practice.

- The community defines itself as “sent”—representative of the reign of God and offering alternative ways of life to the world, where participants know themselves to be accountable to one another and to God for the faithfulness of their witness in daily life.
- Members of the local neighborhood and/or larger church can give examples which illustrate a variety of actions through which the church, over time, has communicated God’s love in the immediate locale and elsewhere.
- Members can identify examples of actions and activities that have resulted in the transformation of lives, changed conditions, promoted justice and combated evil (e.g., economic injustices, violence, discrimination, addiction, oppression).

12)

There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.

What it looks like: *There is a widely held perception that this church is going somewhere—and that somewhere is more faithfully lived life in the reign of God.*

The church has been given the gift of citizenship in the reign of God which it has received less than perfectly. Knowing that the church is as yet a flawed witness to the reign of God, it is open to its own reformation as it continually seeks to provide a more faithful and more effective witness in its changing context. Therefore, the church is constantly critiquing and intentionally reshaping its vision, common life, teaching, organization, obedience, witness, and ministry on the basis of its hearing of the Word of God.

- When people talk about their church, there is evidence of honest review of its ministry and mission, measuring itself against biblical standards of the reign of God, and not culturally established standards of success.
- The measure of success used in this church is the quality of Christian love experienced in its common life and ministry.
- People who participate indicate that this church is on a journey to the future, that it has not yet arrived.
- Participants are able to pray with meaning Jesus’ prayer “Thy kingdom come.” This prayer creates for them a sense of expectancy and anticipation of God’s fulfillment of all God’s promises.
- This church demonstrates faithfulness, while recognizing that it has not yet fulfilled its calling.
- Recognizing itself to be a human institution, the church intentionally seeks evaluation, redirection, and renewal through the Holy Spirit.

SOURCES AND RECOMMENDED READING



Witness

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