

## Inspired by the Word: A phenomenal vocation

Part I of V

Mennonite Church Canada is a body of many parts. This series of five articles will explore how the Word of God inspires us to become the people of God and how, as a body empowered by the Holy Spirit, we strive to transform the world around us through various ministries. It begins with God's invitation to us to become the church.

—Robert J. Suderman

That the vocation of the church is a “phenomenal vocation” is evident in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

The very first thing you encounter wherever you look is this deep and profound vocation of being a people of God that will demonstrate to the world what it means that God rules, God is King, God reigns, that God's Kingdom and authority are here... It is a phenomenal vocation because it is all-embracing — from the environment to justice, equality, honesty, and compassion.

To be relevant our society assumes that you have to leave the church behind and go to where the action ‘really’ is, like the military, the United Nations, governments, businesses, and even cultural super-heroes manufactured by the sport and entertainment industries.

There is a trend, even by churches, to reduce the church's agenda to areas of activity that are within their immediate grasp — such as prayer, worship, and caring for the needy within their congregational landscape. Essential as these areas of service are, the church's God-given agenda is much broader, and its potential impact is very wide.

The action really is wherever God's people truly become God's people. According to the Biblical record, all the rest is subsidiary — even governments — to the overriding vocation of the church.

As a youth, I heard about how difficult it was for biblical teaching to take root in countries like China and India, while, apparently, it was much easier here in Canada. But the tables have turned. Missiologists have said that today Canada and parts of Europe are the most difficult mission fields, where social and cultural contexts make it difficult for people to really believe in what the gospel offers. Now we are living on the hardest ground.



But this should not discourage us. We need to imagine, be creative and really trust that the strategy and plan of God has not changed — and that is for God's people to be a faithful church.

A loss of confidence in our biblical vocation is the biggest challenge facing the church. Nobody else is raising this agenda or has it as a priority. We're looking at how we form leaders and shape resources. We're trying to ensure that our liturgy and hymns have a strong ecclesiology so that if these are the only theological exposure people have, they will absorb some of the important sense of being the church.

The potential for churches ignited by the Word of God to transform the world is mind-boggling. What happens to a church is the same as what happens to an individual Christian who becomes passionate about the potential of God in his or her life. Everything is impacted.