Towards an Understanding of the Roots, Core Concepts and Contextual Application Of 'Missional Church' Within the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

By

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www.newlivingtranslation.com and www.tyndale.com.

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ABSTRACT

At the August 2011 Oasis – the Annual Assembly of the then *Convention of Atlantic Baptists Churches* (CABC), which now is known as the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* (CBAC) – the church-appointed delegates accepted the 'Senior Staff Restructuring Plan' which included a series of proposed goals as they looked towards the year 2025. One of the 2025 goals that was adopted at the 2011 Oasis was that by the year 2025 "eighty percent of CABC churches would demonstrate a missional culture."

Making use of the 'missional' language was admittedly new for this particular denominational family as the term itself had only been coming into common usage since the 1990's and it remained (as it does yet today) a term that can carry shades of different meaning depending on who is using it.

This study traces the rise of the 'missional' conversation and explores the Scriptural and theological basis for its legitimacy. Research was gathered from 140 quantitative surveys completed by CBAC pastors as well as qualitative interviews with four CBAC pastors. Together this body of research demonstrates that CBAC pastors and churches largely affirm the value of the missional paradigm while acknowledging that many congregations are yet struggling to know how to meaningfully live into it. These congregations and their leaders would welcome accessible, practical resources to aid them in knowing how they could more holistically live out their faith in their neighbourhoods and world.

DEFINITIONS

Association – a smaller grouping of CBAC churches, normally defined by geographic boundaries (the exception being the African United Baptist Association whose churches are located across the province of Nova Scotia)

Bi-vocational Ministry – the term used to refer to a Pastor who supplements what is earned through paid ministry by being employed elsewhere (also known as Co-vocational Ministry)

Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) – tracing their roots to missionary work in India in 1874 and then to Bolivia in 1898, CBM is jointly owned by the churches of the Canadian Baptist denominational family, their four sister regional denominations (Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, Union d'Églises baptistes francophones du Canada, Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, and Canadian Baptists of Western Canada).

Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC) – adopted in 2016, it is the current name of the denominational family composed of approximately 450 Atlantic Baptist Churches and which traces its roots back to the 1905/06 Union that became the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces.

Coefficient of Variation – a statistical value calculated by dividing the Standard Deviation by the mean (or numeric average), with higher Coefficient of Variations indicating greater range within the numeric responses in a survey or study

Convention – until its current iteration, the CBAC always had the word 'Convention' in its title, and often its name would be shortened to 'the Convention.' The CBAC still is at times informally referred to as being 'the Convention'

Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) – used from 2001 until 2016, it is the former name of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

Council of CBAC – the group of persons who have been elected or appointed to serve as a member of the 'Board of Directors' of the CBAC

Executive Minister – the title given to the Senior Staff person of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*; in other organizations may be called the Executive Director

Latin American Theological Fellowship, or Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL) – an international Latin American organization collaborating and emphasizing the theological contributions of Latin American evangelicals.

Mean – a statistical value determined by calculating the numeric average of all the responses or values

Net Agreement/Net Disagreement – apart from Part I, all other sections of the Quantitative Research Survey make use of a scale ranging from 1-10, through which respondents could

indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The cumulative total for each statement which were scored an 8, 9 or 10 were considered as the Net Agreement score for that statement, and conversely the cumulative total for each statement which were scored a 1, 2 or 3 where considered as the Net Disagreement score.

Oasis – the name given to the Annual Assembly of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada: approximately 48 hours of worshipping together, being inspired, visioning together, and doing the necessary business of the CBAC

Senior Pastor (or Lead Pastor) – refers to the pastor who is identified by the congregation as the lead or senior pastor of that congregation's pastoral/ministry staff

Solo Pastor – used to refer to a pastor who is the only called pastor of a congregation (the term 'called' means the pastor has been officially called or recognized to be that congregation's pastor through a duly constituted process of congregational affirmation)

Standard Deviation – a statistical value calculated by (i) determining the mean (or mathematical average) of the numbers; (ii) for each number subtracting the mean and squaring the result; (iii) calculating the mean (or average) of those squared differences; and (iv) calculating the square root of those squared differences. It identifies how varied the responses or measurements are from the average, or mean. A low standard deviation means that most of the numbers are close to the average, while a high standard deviation means that the numbers are more spread out.

United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces – used from 1963 until 2001, it was the second name of what today is called the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*

United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces – used from 1905 until 1963, it was the first name of what today is called the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*

DEDICATION

I believe there are certain words that resonate deeply in each of us. For some it might be words such as power, possessions, or winning. For others it may be words such as beauty, intricacy, complexity, design. If I had to choose three words, mine would be love, grace, and family.

It is to family that I dedicate this thesis, which is itself an exploration of God's constant purpose of calling out a family of people who will then extend the invitation to all others to come and join that family.

When it comes to family of origin, I feel I drew a winning ticket. It wasn't that they were particularly wealthy or powerful or accomplished, for they were not. My parents – Willard and Barbara (Crossman) Jones – and their extended families gave me something better, and that was love and security and a platform from which I could emerge unencumbered. My mum and dad were children of the Depression years, and neither had the privilege of completing high school. I know they wished they had the opportunity for a better education and this drove them to personally sacrifice to see those they loved, especially my brother Bob and me, go as far as we wanted. I am so thankful for my parents, and I dedicate this thesis to them. I wish they were still alive to see its completion.

I also think of the faith family that I am a part of. While broadly this faith family includes all who recognize their need of and have taken hold of the grace God offers through Christ, I am grateful to be connected to a denominational family ... the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*. Early on I was enriched through the nurturing ministries of local CBAC churches (*Sunny Brae Baptist* and *Riverview Baptist*), our Association camp (*Camp Wildwood*),

as well as our university (then named *Atlantic Baptist College* / now *Crandall University*). Having now served in pastoral ministry for 35 years, I have had the great privilege to be enriched by the churches I served (*Middle Sackville Baptist/Midgic Baptist* and *First Moncton Baptist*). These people and their leaders invested in me and blessed me more than I can ever adequately express. Further, for nearly 20 years I have served our denominational family, and know the gift of growing deeper because of the pastors and churches of the CBAC as well as my fellow CBAC colleagues past and present. I therefore dedicate this thesis to my denominational family near and far, who enliven and inspire me and to whom I am deeply indebted.

Finally and most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my wife Wendy and to our daughters Laura, Amy, and Molly, and their loved ones. I am constantly thankful to God for the life partner he gave me in Wendy, and just as 'iron sharpens iron' I have benefited from her insights and encouragements (and the occasional threat to get this done!). She (and they) have sacrificed immeasurably by permitting me the time and resources to finish this. Numerous writers have observed that to be fully loved while being fully known is to know grace. Thank you, Wendy, for your partnership in life, and for helping me know grace as far more than a theoretical construct.

INTRODUCTION

At the August 2011 *Oasis* – the Annual Assembly of the then *Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches* (CABC) [which now is known and will generally be referred to as the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* (CBAC)] – the church-appointed delegates voted to accept the 'Senior Staff Restructuring Plan', having been approved by the Council¹ the previous February. A key component of the Restructuring Plan was an articulated vision of what the CABC could look like by the year 2025 if we would "humble ourselves and seek the Lord."² One of the defined 2025 goals was that by that time "eighty percent of CABC churches would demonstrate a missional culture."³ Some possible markers which would indicate a church having developed such a missional culture were identified as:

 Churches being defined and known by the effectiveness of their ministry in their community and beyond

¹ Council refers to "that group of Persons who have been elected or appointed to serve as a member of the 'Board of Directors' of the corporation, the Convention, as required by the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*," accessed March 22, 2020, https://baptist-atlantic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CABC-General-Operating-Bylaw-ammended-Aug-2013-Final.pdf, 10.

² 2012 CABC Yearbook, 8.

³ Other 2025 goals identified in the report were:

[•] The launching of 65 new congregations;

[•] Actively developing effective, healthy Pastoral leadership;

[•] Identifying effective, strong churches and volunteers called to share resources with others; and,

Creating a Convention structure that adapts to changes but is sufficient to undergird the
ministry of CABC churches with required resources and helps. [Douglas Schofield, Peter
Reid and Robert Knowles, Senior Staff Proposal: Proposed Restructuring of Senior Staff
of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, 8 - 9, accessed April 9, 2013,
http://baptist-atlantic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Proposed-Restructuring-of-Senior-Staff.pdf.]

- Churches understanding that a significant way of addressing and meeting the spiritual needs of their members would be by mobilizing them and their spiritual gifts outward into the wider community
- Whether on their own or in partnership with other community agencies or both, churches would be actively engaging the community through ministries addressing issues such as poverty, affordable housing, literacy, justice for oppressed people groups, addictions recovery, disaster relief, stewardship of resources, etc.
- Through partnership with Canadian Baptist Ministries and/or other groups, churches would be actively identifying, recruiting, equipping and sending people to do global discipleship on both a full-time and part-time basis.⁴

Although this use of the term 'missional' was somewhat new for the then *Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches*, the word was not completely unfamiliar and had been utilized for a decade or more by *Canadian Baptist Ministries* in calling Canadian Baptist churches to a holistic mission marked by a called-out people crossing "boundaries of comfort, culture, and convenience" and where a "missionary existence in the world is not just something we do, such as education or worship, but is the very essence and character of the church." Such an understanding would be in alignment with the thinking and writing of the 2009 *Oasis* Plenary Speaker Reggie McNeal who called for a missional understanding and pattern requiring three primary shifts in thinking and behaviour: "from internal to external in terms of ministry focus; from core program development to people development in terms of core activity; [and] from church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership agenda." In short, being missional is about living into our calling to be partnering with God by joining Him in His redemptive mission in the world

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gary V. Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregation's Introduction to Missional Living* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2008), 4.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Change the Scorecard for the CHURCH* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xvi.

⁸ The use of the preposition 'into' in this thesis (as in "living *into* our mission") is intentional, employed out of the belief that the missional paradigm sets a direction for our

This call to the churches of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada to become increasingly a part of the missional journey and adventure emerged out of the recognition by the leadership of the CBAC that although the word missional may have been a newer term, its essence traces back to the very beginnings of Christianity. To borrow the words of Rene Padilla, the "approach to mission that it expresses is not new. It's a practice that goes back to Jesus himself and to the first century church." Moreover, it is likely that those who authored the 'Senior Staff Restructuring Report' recognized that over time many of the churches of CBAC had lost something of their missionary impulse and/or effectiveness that arguably had characterized them in past decades and centuries. Although the annual number of baptisms would at best only be an indicator of overall mission efficacy, they are at least one metric that Baptists have typically used to track conversion growth. In the 1990's the Evangelism Commission of the then Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches produced a 'White Paper' sounding the alarm for in the first time in its existence, annual numbers of baptisms were dipping below 1000, having been as high as 2452 in 1960.¹⁰ By 2001 that number had dipped to 831, and by the year 2010, they had further declined to 527.¹¹

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ministry and life which we are to continually move towards even as we realize we can never perfectly live it out; the missional model acts as a 'horizon marker' that provides an orientation to the context in which we find ourselves and helps assess and navigate possible next steps and long-term direction.

⁹ René Padilla, "Making the Crossing: See What's Behind the Call for Integral Mission," *Mosaic*, Summer 2013, 18.

 $^{^{10}}$ Stephen McMullin, "The Priority of Evangelism and the Future of Our Convention: A Discussion Paper for Convention Council," April 15 – 17, 1997.

¹¹ In comparison, the total number of baptisms in 2018 (the last available numbers at the present time) had further declined to 357. Admittedly, the CBAC knows that not all churches submit their reports meaning that not all baptisms would be accounted for, but regardless the overall trajectory remains clear.

Who are/what is the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada?

The Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada is one of four regional bodies (the others are the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, L'Union d'Églises baptistes francophone du Canada, and the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada) who comprise the national ministry partnership known as Canadian Baptist Ministries, and is itself essentially a mission cooperative or partnership of approximately 450 Atlantic Baptist Churches located within the four eastern provinces known as 'the Atlantic Provinces' (New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador).

While there is much that is positive and hopeful within the contemporary story of the CBAC and its member churches, it also is true that like many churches and denominational bodies within the Western world of Europe and North America, there are numerous challenges presenting themselves over these past years and decades.

For example, one such challenge is the age and evidenced diminishing health of many of the CBAC churches within Atlantic Canada. Approximately 70% of existing CBAC churches began prior to the year 1900. While many of these churches remain relatively vibrant and effective, with some being particularly robust, a number of these aged churches have struggled with shrinking and elderly congregations, old and obsolete (if not decrepit) buildings, diminishing revenues and, arguably most significantly, a loss of impact on their neighbourhood, community, and world. Of evangelical denominations across Canada, the CBAC were second only to *L'Union d'Églises baptistes francophones du Canada* in terms of having the lowest median number of attendees at 48 as well as the lowest average number of attendees at 76.¹²

¹² Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson, *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), 76.

Further, in the last 25 years the CBAC has declined by approximately 150 churches, with a relatively small percentage of those having merged with other congregations but the vast majority of them having closed.¹³

Many of these struggling churches have recognized that they are floundering and their future is uncertain, but believe that like Ezekiel's vision of the 'Valley of Dry Bones,'¹⁴ God is yet desiring to breathe new life into their own 'dry bones' and still has a future plan and purpose for them. (This would represent their desire at their best; it also should be acknowledged that for some the desire for church renewal would be as much about preserving and prolonging their institutional heritage and legacy as it would be about being an effective missional presence within their community and world.¹⁵)

It was out of this recognition by the senior leadership (Executive Minister and the Council) of the CBAC that many of their churches are fragile and facing an uncertain future, coupled with the conviction that God purposes for churches to be healthy through effectively bearing fruit for His Kingdom, that they brought the new 2025 goals to the Assembly who in turn voted to accept not only the goals but also the new CBAC structure that accompanied them.

¹³ Admittedly, it has normally been difficult to ascertain the precise number of churches that existed in any given year as some churches would remain on the CBAC list long after they had ceased to be active congregations meeting consistently for public worship; that being said, however, as recent as the 1980's the CBAC was said to have approximately 600 churches where in May of 2013 that number stood at 459.

¹⁴ Ezekiel 37:1-10

¹⁵ Personal conclusions from working with a large number of CABC churches for seventeen-plus years.

An Overview of the Structure and History of the CBAC

As already noted, the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada could in essence be described as a ministry co-operative of 450 Atlantic Baptist Churches who believe that Scripture calls them to live their individual and corporate lives within the wider body of Christ around them for the purpose of mutual encouragement, collaborative partnership and meaningful accountability. While it is difficult for any one person or body to speak on behalf of any other Baptist(s) (due to certain Baptist principles such as soul liberty/competency and congregational autonomy/competency), it would be generally true that Atlantic Baptists do not consider themselves sectarian. In other words, Atlantic Baptists do not presume that they and they alone are the true people of God and thus should only partner with their own denominational kin, but many recognize that partnership begins at this level and there accordingly are certain core elements of their ministries which can be accomplished much more effectively by acting collaboratively as compared to each church attempting to exclusively minister on their own. Atlantic Baptists have historically shared in enterprises such as church planting, congregational revitalization, pastoral training and credentialing, leadership development, missionary enterprises (both in Atlantic Canada and internationally through Canadian Baptist Ministries), youth and family initiatives, social action, etc.

The history of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* dates back to 1763 when the first Baptist church came into existence on what would eventually become Canadian soil. It was in that year that Nathan Mason and twelve fellow Baptists left their previous hometown of Swansea, Massachusetts and migrated to the Tantramar region of what today is the Province of New Brunswick, having first formed themselves as a Baptist church while on the journey to their

new home¹⁶. This small band of Baptists were part of a larger influx of New England settlers who were taking advantage of the lands made available by the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755.¹⁷ Although Mason and his group were to return to New England within a decade, Baptist life and witness continued on in the Maritimes (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) such that by the latter part of the nineteenth century, there were hundreds of Baptist churches belonging to the *Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces*, the *Nova Scotia Free Will Baptist Conference*, and the *Free Baptist General Conference* (N.B.). In the years of 1905/06 these three bodies merged together to become the *United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces* (now known as the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*), having been brought together by their common commitments, objectives and concerns (e.g. Home and foreign missions, education, Sunday Schools, religious journalism, relief and aid).¹⁸

Structurally, in addition to the 450 Atlantic Baptist Churches, the CBAC is also comprised of nineteen Associations, most of which are defined by geographic boundaries (i.e. normally the CBAC churches of one or more counties formed together as an Association); the exception to this being the *African United Baptist Association* which is defined by a common African cultural heritage, tracing their origins back to 1854 when the Association was founded by Rev. Richard Preston, an escaped slave from Virginia. While there are linkages and cooperative initiatives between the Associations and the CBAC (such as the licensing of

¹⁶ Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga, ON: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), 16.

¹⁷ C. J. Dyck, "The Believers' Church in Canada: The Past," in *The Believers' Church in Canada: Addresses and Papers from the Study Conference in Winnipeg May 1978*, eds. Jarold K. Zeman and Walter Klaassen (Canada: The Baptist Federation of Canada and the Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) 1979), 30.

 $^{^{18}}$ J. D. Davison et. al., *Handbook Supplement of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces* (Canada: Convention Executive of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, 1956), 10-11.

candidates for ordained pastoral ministry, grants for churches which are provided through the CBAC's *Atlantic Baptist Mission Board*, Ordination Examining Council, annual monetary grants to the Associations from the CBAC, etc.), it is generally understood that churches associate through different structures at different levels: at their more local level (typically county or intercounty) through their respective Association; at the regional level (meaning the four Atlantic Provinces) through the CBAC; and nationally (along with their three sister Baptist denominational families) through the national body named *Canadian Baptist Ministries* (and through CBM the CBAC and her sister Canadian Baptist denominations are also members of the *Baptist World Alliance*).

The norm is that, through an established nominating process at each level, church-appointed delegates elect those who will represent them on boards and committees at both the Association as well as the CBAC level. In other words, it is <u>not</u> that churches elect their Association representatives and Associations then elect those who would serve at the CBAC level, but it is the CBAC-body of delegates who elect the Atlantic region's board members for the national *Canadian Baptist Ministries*.

At present there are numerous boards and committees (e.g. Council, *Atlantic Baptist Mission Board*, *Canadian Baptist Ministries* [Atlantic representatives], *Board of Ministerial Standards and Education*, *Crandall University*, *Acadia University*, *Acadia Divinity College*, *Atlantic Baptist Foundation*, *Atlantic Baptist Senior Citizens Housing Inc.*, the *Pension and Benefits Board*, etc.) at the CBAC level for individuals from CBAC churches to occupy, all of which are in the final analysis accountable to the delegates of CBAC churches meeting in Assembly. It is, however, the CBAC Council which "serves as the agent of [The CBAC] between Assemblies, [and] the Council is entrusted with the responsibility to: administer,

manage, and give oversight to the spiritual, temporal, and administrative affairs, activities, business and property of the Convention between Member Meetings."¹⁹

This defined responsibility of the Council explains why the aforementioned "2025 Goals" were put forward for consideration to the delegates at the Annual Assembly by the Council (in consultation with the Executive Minister), and why it was necessary for the delegates of the 2011 *Oasis* Assembly (the Annual Assembly of the CBAC) to formally approve of them for them to be officially accepted.

A Snapshot of the Contemporary Church in Atlantic Canada and Beyond

The numerous challenges that confront CBAC churches are not unique to them alone. While all is not doom and gloom, and while there are great opportunities for the church, it also is true to say the institutional church in North America is facing unprecedented challenges. Studies in North America consistently demonstrate an overall decline in the number of individuals self-identifying as Christian in faith and/or practice. For example, according to a Pew Research Centre 2015 report which was based on the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4 – September 30, 2014:

- the percentage of adults in the United States who identify as Christian dropped from 78%
 in 2007 to 71% in 2014
 - Evangelicals declined from 26.3% to 25.4% ... a decline of .9% (this reflects the percentage of Americans who identify as evangelicals ... that is, adults in churches belonging to evangelical denominations in the

¹⁹ The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, accessed May 16, 2013, http://baptist-atlantic.ca/our-convention/our-governance/convention-council/.

United States [such as the *Southern Baptist Convention*, the *Assemblies of God*, *Churches of Christ*, the *Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, and the *Presbyterian Church in America*] as well adults in nondenominational churches with evangelical leanings)

- Catholics declined from 23.9% (54 million) to 20.8% (51 million) ... a
 loss of 3.1 percent (3 million)
- Mainline protestants declined from 18.1% (41 million) to 14.7% (36 million), a loss of 3.4 percent (5 million)

During this same period, however:

- Those who identified as religious unaffiliated increased by 6.7% (from 16.1% in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014), and
- Those who identified with non-Christian faiths increased by 1.2% (from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014).²⁰

The Canadian landscape, although quite different in some respects, shows similar patterns of overall decline. The 2011 "Hemorrhaging Faith" study states in their preface: "For every five Catholic and Mainline Protestant kids who attended church at least weekly in the 1980's and 90's only one still attends at least weekly now as an adult; for those raised in Evangelical traditions it is one in two. And that's not all. Most who have quit attending altogether have dropped their Christian affiliation."²¹

²⁰ Pew Research Center, *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, May 12, 2015 http://www.pewforum.org/2015.05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/, cited in Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books), 15.

²¹ James Penner et al., *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying & Returning to the Church (Foundational Research Document)* (Ontario, Canada: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2011), 5.

Reginald W. Bibby reports similar overall declines in terms of weekly church attendance in Canada over the past 50 years. For Canada as a whole, weekly attendance dropped from 53% in 1957 to 25% in 2005; for Mainline Protestants the decline was from 35% in 1957 to 20% in 2005; and for Roman Catholics outside of Quebec it declined from 75% in 1957 to 42% while for Roman Catholics inside of Quebec it declined from 88% in 1957 to 14% in 2005. The one exception in terms of weekly attendance was that for Conservative Protestants weekly attendance increased from 51% in 1957 to 64% by 2005.²²

Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald write in 2017:

Today Canada's churches are experiencing an entirely new situation since they were first planted in this country as part of settler societies from Europe and the United Kingdom. The number of Canadians who have had little or no contact with churches is growing. Many more have no idea what these churches are about and, **what is more, have no inclination to find out**. Surveys indicate that many Canadians are seeking spiritual development and fulfillment. Yet many of them would not think to look for that among mainstream Protestant churches, perhaps not realizing that these denominations do in fact have rich spiritual traditions.²³ (emphasis mine)

Although Clarke and Macdonald, like Bibby above, show that those classified as "Other Protestant Denominations" (i.e. primarily more conservative/evangelical) bucked the trend of decline between 1931 to 1991, growing from being 2.4% of Canadian population in 1931 to 6.1% of by 1991, they have since experienced similar decline in the next 20 years, slipping to 4.5% of Canadian population by 2011.²⁴

While they do not separate Evangelical from mainline, the Pew Research Center does report a similar decline, based on the 1971 – 2001 Canada census and the 2011 National

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²² Reginald W. Bibby, *Resilient Gods: Being Pro-Religious, Low Religious, or No Religious in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 33.

 ²³ Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald, *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada Since 1945* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017), 236.
 ²⁴ Ibid., 80.

Household Survey: "The percentage of Canadians who identify as Catholic has dropped from 47% to 39% over the past four decades, while the share that identifies as Protestant has fallen even more steeply, from 41% to 27%. Concurrently, the number of Canadians who belong to other religions – including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity – is growing. Collectively, these smaller religious groups account for more than one-in-ten Canadians (11%) as of 2011, up from not quite one-in-twenty (4%) in 1981." Further, the growth of those who identify as religiously unaffiliated has shown the most significant increase: from 4% in 1970 to 24% in 2010.²⁵

The overall picture of religious/congregational decline becomes even more acute when considering the erosion of religious identification by generation. "Both in Canada and in the United States, an important factor behind the growth of the religiously unaffiliated is generational replacement, the gradual supplanting of older generations by newer ones. Recent generations of Canadians are significantly less affiliated than earlier generations. For example, 29% of Canadians born between 1967 and 1986 have no religious affiliation as of 2011, 17 percentage points higher than Canada's oldest living generation (born 1946 or earlier) and nine points higher than Canadians born between 1947 and 1966."²⁶

A similar pattern is demonstrated by Bibby, Thiessen and Bailey. In comparing the outlook on religion by millennials and other generations, only 38% of Millennials (those born after 1985) agree with the statement "I think the decline in religious involvement has been a bad thing for Canada" whereas 69% of Pre-Boomers, or those born before 1946, express agreement

²⁵ Pew Research Center, *Canada's Changing Religious Landscape*, June 27, 2013, accessed August 6, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/.

²⁶ Ibid.

with that statement. Further, 47% of Millennials affirm that they would "prefer to live life without God or congregation" as compared to only 16% of Pre-Boomers.²⁷

The research of Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson leads them to conclude that evangelicalism in Canada is starting to face its own challenges. "Even though evangelicalism is doing well in gloomy times for the institutional religion in Canada, these demographics suggest that its long history of growth – which has been at least equal to population growth in Canada – has come, or will soon come, to an end."²⁸

Atlantic Canada has not been exempted from such trends. Based on data from the General Social Survey of Statistics Canada, the Pew Research Center asserts that between 1988 and 2012 Atlantic Canada sustained the largest decline in terms of percentage of individuals ages 15 and older who attend religious services at least once a month: from 57 percent in 1988 to 31 percent in 2012 – a decline of 26 percentage points.²⁹

This changing religious landscape has also impacted the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*, no doubt as evidenced in part by the aforementioned closure of an estimated 150 CBAC churches in the past twenty-five years. While such a statistic in and of itself does not necessarily convey the whole reality of what is happening within that one denominational family within Atlantic Canada, it is consistent with expressed concerns of many CBAC leaders that many of the churches are in a general pattern of decline.

Such a perception certainly informed the recommendations of the previously discussed "Senior Staff Proposal: Proposed Restructuring of Senior Staff of the Convention of Atlantic

²⁷ Reginald W. Bibby, Joel Thiessen and Monetta Bailey, *The Millennial Mosaic: How Pluralism and Choice are Shaping Canadian Youth and the Future of Canada* (Toronto: Dudern, 2019), 192.

²⁸ Reimer and Wilkinson, 69,70.

²⁹ Pew Research Center, "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape."

Baptist Churches". While acknowledging that there was "much to celebrate in terms of what we do together as a family of churches," they stated it also was clear that there was "need for a paradigm shift in thinking if we are going to follow the Spirit's leading into the future." These were the 'warning signs of decline' they described:

Along with many other Christian organizations we are experiencing great challenges in these days. We are an older "mainline" denomination of aging churches many of which are serving Christ in shrinking communities. Just like the rest of the world, Atlantic Canada is affected by increasing number of people emigrating to Atlantic Canada, many settling in urban centers as well. A number of people in our churches are discouraged, tired and quite confounded because it seems that all of our efforts are not making the impact of the Kingdom of God we desire. Quite a few of our churches are in decline, attendance is shrinking, buildings are getting older and are in need of repair, heating costs are rising and there is a prevailing apathy in a number of our congregations. In the past it seemed if we prayed more and worked harder we could attract many people to our churches. But, as Dorothy said in *The Wizard of Oz*, "We aren't in Kansas anymore!"³²

Dr. John Bowen, Professor Emeritus of Evangelism at Wycliffe College Toronto, gives expression to the feelings of loss that many in the Christian church in Canada are experiencing in light of the changing attitudes and engagement with Christian faith.

In many ways, Canada feels like "dry ground" for the church. During times of drought, plants and animals tend to wither and die. They lack the water, and the nutrients the water carries, that they need in order to thrive. They no longer burgeon with new life. Growth is difficult, and reproduction happens less and less. ... The parallel is obvious. The picture of overall numerical decline in the church across Canada, particularly in mainline denominations, is clear and disturbing.³³

³⁰ Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, *Senior Staff Proposal: Proposed Restructuring of Senior Staff of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist* Churches, 2, accessed July 15, 2015, http://baptist-atlantic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Proposed-Restructuring-of-Senior-Staff.pdf.

³¹ Ibid., 3.

³² Ibid., 4.

³³ John P. Bowen, ed. *Green Shoots Out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013), xv.

This picture of decline and decay, Bowen asserts, seems incongruous with a Christian understanding of God's work in bringing new life:

The God of Christian tradition is the God of new things: a new covenant, a new birth, a new commandment, new wine in new wineskins, and ultimately a new creation. Of course, this is not newness for the sake of novelty: this is newness in the supreme cause of God's mission in Jesus Christ to renew 'all things.' Undoing the effects of sin and evil inevitably means change and newness. The mission of God is never static, always moving forward.³⁴

This can be the conundrum that local churches often experience as they seek to make sense of their mission within their contemporary context. While congregational health and mission-effectiveness is always about far more than 'bums in the pews,' and while it is equally true that this well may be something of a transitional time to the birthing of a whole new paradigm of what it is to be the Body of Christ in contemporary society, those who are a part of the contemporary church can at times struggle with the apparent incongruity that Bowen identifies. The decline experienced by many congregations can seem incompatible to a faith that asserts that God is Lord and Master over all, and promises that His Kingdom will endure.³⁵

The apparent dichotomy between the reality being experienced compared to what might be otherwise anticipated has encouraged many within the North American church to re-examine its assumptions of itself and its role within the wider society in which it finds itself. Robert Fennell states:

The changes in the rapidly evolving Canadian culture landscape ... present both problems and opportunities for churches committed to mission and to sharing the Gospel. The pluralism that now characterizes Canada is, perhaps surprisingly, a new gateway for Christian witness, because Christian voices (while no longer holding a place of privilege) can claim an equally legitimate place in the mosaic of a plural

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ For example, two verses that could be looked at for such a conviction is Isaiah 55:11 (*It is the same with my word. I will send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish what I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it)* and Matthew 16:18 (Jesus says to Peter *all the powers of Hell will not conquer* his Church.)

society. The challenge is to find a way to be heard in the midst of the competing voices that also strive for public attention, and to find the clear, compelling word of hope that is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁶

Is the Missional Model a New Direction for the CABC?

As earlier stated, René Padilla has acknowledged that the missional model of ministry is not in itself new and in reality traces its roots back not just to the early church but to Jesus himself. Therefore, its emphases are discernible in the life of the CABC and its forbearers, even if the word itself may not be.

In the nineteenth century it was understood that to bring someone to new life in Christ couldn't help but impact the social conditions for the individual, family and community.

Feltmate writes: "The Great Awakening of 1800 to 1830 was the foundation for the Prayer Meeting Revivals of the 1850's. These movements became strong contributors to an evangelical thrust which was strongly accompanied by social reform." He quotes Levy who contends that such spiritual revival resulted in "untold good."

Multitudes were brought into the churches; a new concern for the souls of men was engendered; an interest in good causes was stimulated; philanthropy on behalf of the friendliness [sic friendless?] and homeless was given a new impetus; and the call for new workers led scores of young men into the Christian ministry.³⁸

Feltmate further cites Levy who attests that the nineteenth century also saw Baptists become increasingly socially engaged on numerous fronts: with the temperance movement,

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³⁶ Robert Fennell, "Canada's Ever-Changing Contexts: Mission in a Radically Pluralistic Society," in Bowen, ed., 29.

³⁷ Daryl Feltmate, "The Help Should be Greatest Where the Need Is Most: The Social Gospel Platform of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, 1921" (Thesis for Masters of Divinity with Honours, Acadia Divinity College, 1993), 12.

³⁸ George Edward Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces: 1753 – 1946* (Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins Limited, 1946), 317, in Feltmate, 12.

joining "forces with other denominations for the enactment of prohibitory legislation" as well as protesting "the desecration of the Sabbath" and demanding "a curb on gambling practices." 41

By the early twentieth century Maritime Baptists' social interest had broadened to the point where they were eager to address a wide number of issues, evidenced by the fact that in 1921 they adopted the following nineteen-point platform that demonstrated their heartfelt concern to seek justice and mercy within their communities and world. Feltmate reiterates these nineteen points, which had been printed in full in the *Maritime Baptist* in both November and December of 1921. They were:

- 1. Every child has the right to be well born, well nourished, and well protected.
- 2. Every child has the right to play and be a child.
- 3. Every child is entitled to such an education as shall fit it for life and usefulness.
- 4. Every life is entitled to a sanitary home, pure air, and pure water.
- 5. Every life is entitled to such conditions as shall enable it to grow up tall and straight and pure.
- 6. Every life is entitled to a place in society, a good opportunity in life and a fair equity in the common heritage.
- 7. The resources of the earth being the heritage of the people, should not be monopolized by the few to the disadvantage of the many.
- 8. The stewardship of property requires that all property held be supervised, moralized and spiritualized.
- 9. Work should be done under proper conditions with respect to hours, wages, health, management and morals.
- 10. Every worker should have one day's rest in seven and reasonable time for recreation and family life.
- 11. Women who toil should have equal pay with men for equal work.
- 12. Widowed mothers with dependent children should be relieved from the necessity of exhausting toil.
- 13. Employers and employees are partners in industry and should be partners in the enterprise.
- 14. Suitable provision should be made for old age workers and for those incapacitated by injury and sickness.
- 15. Income received and benefits enjoyed should hold a direct relation to the service rendered.
- 16. The State which punishes vice should remove the cause which make more vicious.

³⁹ Ibid., 22 in Feltmate, 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 228 – 229 in Feltmate, 13.

- 17. The bond of brotherhood is the final and fundamental fact and men are called to organize all life, ecclesiastical, civic, social, industrial, on the basis of brotherhood.
- 18. The help should be greatest where the need is most.
- 19. What the few now are, many may become.⁴²

Feltmate's assessment of this platform is that

While it may be true that the abiding evangelical tradition within the Convention was responsible for the underlying theology and representative concerns which generated the platform, it is the intention of this paper to demonstrate that the document reflects the opinions and theology of the Maritime Baptist Convention in the early nineteen twenties, particularly those expressed in the *Maritime Baptist* from 1916 – 1921.⁴³

This was not the end of Maritime Baptists' (who, with the move to begin planting churches in Newfoundland, became Atlantic Baptists in the 1960s) concern for social engagement. Through the twentieth century numerous issues of social concern have been discussed and voted on by the Assembly delegates, including the following:

- 2005: Same Sex Marriage
- 2003: Public Witness and Same Sex Unions
- 2002: Distinction Between Marriage and Same-Sex Relationships
- 1999: Christian View of Marriage
- 1996: Homosexuality Reaffirmation of Position
- 1994: Family Violence
- 1993: Gambling and Video Casinos
- 1992: Gambling and Licensing of Casinos
- 1991: Racism
- 1991: Euthanasia
- 1991: Abortion Clinics Opposition
- 1990: Pornography Opposition
- 1989: Reaffirmation Abortion Opposition
- 1989: Alcohol Media Outlets
- 1987: Homosexuality
- 1986: Social Witness Use of Church Facilities
- 1984: Pay TV
- 1982: Abortion Opposition
- 1973: Third World Aid

⁴² A.J. Prosser, "Report of the Social Service Board," *United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces Year Book* (Saint John: United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, 1921), in Feltmate, 1, 2.

⁴³ Feltmate, 6.

- 1973: Alcohol and Drunk Driving
- 1971: Television Unwholesome Programming
- 1971: Alcohol Abuse
- 1969: Drugs Government Condemnation
- 1968: Racism and Civil Rights
- 1968: Adoption Foster Care
- 1967: Social Witness World Concerns
- 1966: Alcohol and Air Traffic Safety
- 1964: Tobacco and Christian Conduct
- 1964: Gambling and Lotteries
- 1963: Sunday Observance Lords Day Act
- 1963: Racism and Basic Human Rights
- 1962: Social Service Raise Welfare Standards⁴⁴

Although some of these may strike one today as almost quaint or antiquated by early twenty-first century sensibilities, taken together these (along with numerous others not listed) demonstrate that Atlantic Baptists have continually sought to live out what they have believed to be their responsibility to seek public good and advocate for the best interests of the wider society around them.

As further evidence of this commitment to the social dimension of the Gospel, the twentieth century saw Atlantic Baptists (whether as individuals or as a structure) participate in ventures such as: 'The Interprovincial Home for Young Women' which was located in Coverdale (now Riverview), NB; 'The New Brunswick Protestant Orphanage' which had been situated in Saint John, NB; Atlantic Baptist Senior Citizens' Homes Inc.; community-based interchurch outreach missions such as New Life Mission in Moncton, NB; Crisis Pregnancy Resource Centres; the Christian Action Federation (formerly the New Brunswick Drug and Alcohol Dependency Commission); to name but a few.

⁴⁴ *The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches*, accessed May 18, 2013, http://baptist-atlantic.ca/our-convention/our-governance/governing-documents/assembly-resolutions/.

Further, as a structure, the CBAC has evidenced its recognition of the importance of social engagement and witness through the implementation of the Social Action Commission (and the hiring of a Director) from the 1970's to the nineties, and after that the hiring of a Director of Public Witness and Social Concern in the early part of this century. Together, these initiatives have resulted in numerous study groups, position papers and resolutions as well as grass-roots workshops for local congregations and public advocacy for the vulnerable of our world.

From this very brief overview of nineteenth and twentieth century Maritime/Atlantic

Baptists and their commitment to social engagement, it is evident that the 2025 goal for
encouraging the development of missional thinking and behaviour within CBAC churches is not
so much an appeal to something novel as it is a renewed invitation to again pick up the call to not
only speak the Good News of Jesus Christ but equally important to embody it as well.

Overview of Thesis

Chapter One

The first chapter of this thesis will further introduce the reader to the concept of 'missional church', exploring its development, key concepts, implications for congregational leadership, and contribution to late twentieth/early twenty-first century evangelical discussions about that which constitutes the Gospel as well as its implications for the mission of the Church; that being the people of God, the Body of Christ.

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 will explore in light of key Scriptural and theological underpinnings the 'missional church model', and will conclude with my own personal reflections about the proper place that the missional paradigm and its practice ought to have within the Body of Christ.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three will explain the methodology and method utilized in the research component of this thesis, making use of both qualitative (interpretive) and quantitative (logical-empirical) in my research.

Chapter Four

The fourth chapter will present, explore and reflect upon the results of the quantitative survey which was forwarded via email to all active Solo- and Senior-Pastors within CBAC churches. Questions were asked and responses analyzed in light of five dimensions, each of which are deemed to be an integral part of a missional paradigm. Those five dimensions are: (i) Deep, (ii) Wide, (iii) Attractional/Outsider Focused, (iv) Partnering, and (v) Evangelism. Each of these five dimensions will then be examined according to four categories: Pastor (Aspirational), Pastor (Actual), Congregational (Aspirational), and Congregation (Actual).

Chapter Five

This fifth chapter will explore and reflect upon the qualitative interviews done with four CBAC pastors. Through these interviews I sought to more deeply explore certain essential core concepts pertaining to the missional paradigm, especially as generally understood within the

churches of the CBAC. These essential core concepts were: (i) what constitutes the Gospel; (ii) in general, what is this pastor's attitude towards the missional framework; and (iii) what is this pastor's fundamental understanding of discipleship and what does it look like in the context of the local church?

Chapter Six

Chapter 6 will be my concluding chapter. In it I will be presenting and synthesizing the essential conclusions of the research and study and comment on how they inform my understanding of the missional paradigm. In addition, I will offer proposals for how the CBAC structure can inform, resource, encourage and assess churches such that by 2025 80% of their churches can meaningfully be deemed as 'missional' (that is, ministering in a manner which reflects a commitment to and demonstration of 'integral mission').

Appendix

The Appendix will contain three sections:

- 1. A compilation of the Quantitative Survey data.
- 2. Transcripts of the Qualitative Interviews with four CBAC Pastors.
- 3. An Introductory Guide to Missional Church (called 'Mission Edge, You, and Your Church') for CBAC churches, leading to a five-hour, one-day strategic-planning workshop. Together these are designed to educate and encourage CBAC churches toward biblically living out an equally-passionate dual commitment to both the 'proclamation' and 'demonstration' of God's love found in Jesus Christ essentially becoming a missional-culture church.

Chapter One

AN EXPLORATION OF THE MEANING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSIONAL PARADIGM

Introduction

In using the term *missional church* in the '2011 Senior Staff Restructuring Report' the Council was making use of a concept that was and arguably still is in the process of being refined in terms of all that it entails.⁴⁵ Further, there have also emerged critics suggesting missional is simply another popular concept that has come along for a season; a neologism that will be replaced at a later time by a new emphasis. Indeed, a survey of Christian theology through the centuries and around the world (even one which restricted itself to theology broadly deemed to be within the boundaries of orthodoxy) would affirm that countless emphases and schools of thought have, at least to a degree, waxed and waned over the passage of time. Often, however, these various theological emphases have offered helpful refinement – if not outright correction – to existing distortions while also assisting the church to more fully appreciate its responsibilities of faithfully living out its calling to be the people of God for the place and time in which He has

⁴⁵ In an interview with the Biola Magazine, Dr. Ed Stetzer, currently Executive Director of the Billy Graham Centre for Evangelism at Wheaton College, stated: "it certainly has become the descriptor *du jour*. I think the problem is that people tend to see in missional what they want to see. If they want to see the church do more social justice, that's "missional." If they want to be more evangelistic, that's "missional." But I still think there's a power in a new or modified word that enables us to say, "We do need something different." I think missional has become a descriptor — an imperfect one — of the shift we might need in evangelicalism." Although a decade has transpired since the publishing of this interview, I believe it remains a valid observation. [Biola Magazine, Spring, 2009, accessed October 28, 2015, http://magazine.biola.edu/article/09-spring/inside-the-missional-movement/.]

them.⁴⁶ As Alfred Lord Tennyson penned "Our little systems have their day; They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken lights of thee, And thou, O Lord, are more than they."⁴⁷

Though cognizant that there would be limitations with utilizing missional language, the CBAC leaders who penned the 2025 goals believed that the missional conversation and paradigm could be used by God to bring constructive direction for the churches of the CBAC, many of which were expressing that they were struggling to understand their identity and calling in early 21st century life. These leaders shared the optimism of Ross Hastings, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada, who wrote that although most churches in the Western world were not growing and many professing Christians have chosen to opt out of the church, he remained hopeful for his optimism rested upon "the triune God of grace who still inhabits [his] church despite its beleaguered state, and is at work in the world through it to bring to completion the new creation Christ has inaugurated." 48

⁴⁶ Many years ago Dr. John Bowen, who later became Professor of Evangelism (Wycliffe College, Toronto) was staying in my home, and while watching a toy unicycle bear teeter from one side to another while it crossed back and forth across a string strung in the room, he commented that for him it was something of an apt metaphor for the church. The only time the bear was perfectly upright was when it was stationary, but as soon as it was in movement it was continually going off balance, only to be in the process of being corrected by the counterbalance of the attached balancing weights on either side. He remarked that given our brokenness and the fact that "now we always see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror" (1 Cor. 13:12), when the church is in movement it will always be going off balance but we can trust the work of the Holy Spirit to be always looking to apply his counterbalance to bring us back towards correction and proper balance.

⁴⁷ Alfred Lord Tennyson, "In Memoriam: Prologue", cited in Malcolm Guite, *Waiting on the Word: A poem a day for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (London, UK: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2015), 50.

⁴⁸ Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012), 19 – 20.

Alan Hirsch is a widely recognized leader within the Missional Church movement.⁴⁹ Though a lengthy quote, the following insights are helpful in terms of introducing one to the missional discourse. He writes:

First, let me say what *missional* does not mean. *Missional* is not synonymous with *emerging*. The emerging church is primarily a renewal movement attempting to contextualize Christianity for a postmodern generation. *Missional* is not the same as *evangelistic* or *seeker-sensitive*. These terms generally apply to the attractional model of church that has dominated our understanding for many years. *Missional* is not a new way to talk about church growth. Although God clearly desires the church to grow numerically, it is only one part of the larger missional agenda. Finally, *missional* is more than social justice. Engaging the poor and correcting inequalities is part of being God's agent in the world, but we should not confuse this with the whole.

Many churches have mission statements or talk about the importance of mission, but where truly missional churches differ is in their posture toward the world. A missional community sees the mission as both its originating impulse and its organizing principles. A missional community is patterned after what God has done in Jesus Christ. In the incarnation God sent his Son. Similarly, to be missional means to be sent into the world; we do not expect people to come to us. This posture differentiates a missional church from an attractional church. ...

A missional theology is not content with mission being a church-based work. Rather, it applies to the whole life of every believer. Every believer is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture.

Missional represents a significant shift in the way we think about the church. As the people of a missionary God, we ought to engage the world the same way he does – by *going* out rather than just *reaching* out. To obstruct this movement is to block God's purposes in and through people. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. ⁵⁰ (emphasis mine)

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⁴⁹ Alan Hirsch launched the Forge Mission Training Network in Victoria, Australia in 1996, which now has seen expansion into Canada, the United States, Russia, Scotland, England and Wales. A prolific writer and frequent conference speaker, he seeks to proactively develop strategies, approaches and postures that will take the church "into the world, amidst the many cultural changes, and actively engage others with the message of Jesus Christ." (from http://www.forgeinternational.com/about/#our-story, accessed October 6, 2016.)

⁵⁰ Alan Hirsch. "Defining Missional." *CTpastors*, Christianity Today. Fall 2008, accessed July 21, 2016, http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/fall/17.20.html.

Craig Van Gelder points to the 1998 book "Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America" (Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI) as having rapidly become a seminal work for understanding what it means for the church to be missional. He observes, however, that there still exists confusion over what the term really means.

Some appear to want to use it to reclaim, yet one more time, the priority of missions in regard to the church's various activities. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding continues the effort to define a congregation primarily around what it *does*. The concept of a church being *missional* moves in a fundamentally different direction. It seeks to focus the conversation about what the church *is* – that it is a community created by the Spirit and that it has a unique nature, or essence, which gives it a unique identity. In light of the church's nature, the missional conversation then explores what the church *does*. Purpose and strategy are not unimportant in the missional conversation, but they are understood to be derivative dimensions of understanding the nature, or essence, of the church. ⁵¹

Examples of Critiques of the Missional Church

As with any new theological or missiological conversation which arises, there are always those who position themselves as critics cautioning against those things which they perceive to be imbalances or worse. The missional movement is no different.

One such critique is Mike Breen's "Why the Missional Church Will Fail". His central argument is "the reason the missional movement may fail is because most people/communities in the Western church are pretty bad at making disciples." In his 2011 article he equates the missional movement with a shiny new car, but one without an engine and therefore not really able to go anywhere. Discipleship, he argues, is the engine of the church; the place where not only training and preparation but also healing and restoration takes place. Breen writes:

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⁵¹ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led By The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 17.

⁵² Mike Breen, "Why the Missional Movement Will Fail," accessed July 20, 2016, http://www.vergenetwork.org/2011/09/14/mike-breen-why-the-missional-movement-will-fail/.

If you make disciples, you will always get the church. But if you try to build the church, you will rarely get disciples. ... Discipleship is not only the boot camp to train them for the front lines, but the hospital when they get wounded and the off-duty time they need to rest and recuperate. ... When we don't disciple people the way Jesus and the New Testament talked about, we are sending them out without armor, weapons or training. This is mass carnage waiting to happen. How can we be surprised the people burn out, quit and never want to return to the missional life (or the church)? How can we not expect people will feel used and abused? ... Any discussion about mission must begin with discipleship.⁵³

A second example of a critique of the missional model is Timothy Muse's "Shift or Drift: A Critique of the 'Missional Manifesto'."⁵⁴ One primary concern that Muse raises is that the missional conversation gives undue emphasis to one particular aspect of God, His people, and the Christian life, all at the expense of other equally important attributes and responsibilities. To say that 'God is a sending God, a missionary God' and to define Christians primarily as 'missionary agents' is to substitute the part for the whole, he contends. A second concern he identifies is that the missional movement exalts mission itself to the place of God, asking if 'mission' really is "the originating impulse and organizing principle of the Church, or is that to be found in God Himself and such things as His love, pleasure, decrees, Word, etc.?"⁵⁵

Likely one of the most strongly worded and well publicized critiques to the missional movement was the 2018 document 'The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel', also known as 'The Dallas Statement' or 'The MacArthur Statement'. Drafted by John MacArthur along

⁵³ Ibid.

Shift or Drift: A Critique of the Missional Manifesto." The Aquila Report, April 30, 2011, accessed July 20, 2016, https://www.theaquilareport.com/shift-or-drift-a-critique-of-the-missional-manifesto/; the 'Missional Manifesto' was developed in 2011 primarily by North American pastors, theologians and authors such as Ed Stetzer, Alan Hirsch, Tim Keller, J.D. Greear, Linda Bergquist and Brad Andrews. Its intent was to give a sense of what some practitioners and thinkers mean when using the term. A document which underwent nine revisions, it is approximately 1600 words long consisting of core affirmations pertaining to matters such as Authority, Gospel, Kingdom, Missions, and Application.

with approximately a dozen other men, and amassing more than 12,000 signatories, it states among other things that social justice issues are not integral to the Gospel and the emphasis on social justice can in fact detract from it. To quote from the statement itself: "implications and applications of the gospel, such as the obligation to live justly in the world, though legitimate and important in their own right, **are not definitional components of the gospel**." (emphasis mine). Further, while this statement affirms that "God requires those who bear his image to live justly in the world," it then says:

We deny that true justice can be culturally defined or that standards of justice that are merely socially constructed can be imposed with the same authority as those that are derived from Scripture. We further deny that Christians can live justly in the world under any principles other than the biblical standard of righteousness. Relativism, socially-constructed standards of truth or morality, and notions of virtue and vice that are constantly in flux cannot result in authentic justice.⁵⁷

As so often is the case, there no doubt is a degree of legitimacy to each of these briefly noted critiques of the missional church. I take no issue with Mike Breen's contention that missional initiatives divorced from discipleship will be non-sustainable and will leave many wounded and disillusioned, but this is not to say that missional activities are necessarily devoid of nor mutually exclusive to discipleship. Missional activity ought not be bifurcated from nor a substitute for discipleship but should in many ways be the classroom where discipleship occurs, particularly if one sees discipleship as occurring in more of a relational, apprenticeship type model compared to sitting in a classroom-type setting simply ingesting propositional precepts.

Further, while one also cannot help but appreciate Timothy Muse's warning against blindly jumping on faddish theological bandwagons without carefully giving rigorous theological consideration to them, and while it is right to guard against skewing and granting undue

⁵⁶ Ibid., Section 4

⁵⁷ Ibid., Section 3

emphasis to particular aspects of God's nature and work, the missional model is not necessarily a distorting of who God is and consequently our subsequent calling. Rather, it is better understood as calling us back toward biblical balance in its reemphasis of particular truths that have historically been de-emphasized or distorted to fit into the cultural mindset and presumptions of earlier generations.

The caution "The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel" makes against allowing the culture of the day to define the social justice agenda of God's people is appropriate as there undoubtedly will be times when the current zeitgeist's definition of social justice will be at odds with a true Biblical understanding of justice. Such an acknowledgement, however, in no manner suggests that true social justice is not an integral part of the Gospel and only threatens to detract us from our true mission. The gospel consists of more than the right propositions or confessions. As Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the *Southern Baptist Convention* said in a 2018 interview, "the mission of the church is not simply to preach the Gospel but to disciple – to shape and form consciences of people to live as followers of Jesus in every area of their lives. [The church must] make consciences alive to what Jesus cares about, and one of the primary things Jesus cares about is the universal temptation to make certain people invisible because of their lack of power." Further, in an open letter to John MacArthur shortly after the publication of the 'The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel,' Pastor and blogger Rasool Berry says:

Fortunately, you are not alone in your passion for protecting the power and truth of the Gospel. There are many of us who share a drive to contend for the faith. That's why we challenge the Gospel reductionism presented in your posts. Rejecting that Jesus would have something to say about civil rights, or social injustice, dims the glory of God from

⁵⁸ Quoted in Stephanie Martin, "Russell Moore Responds to the Statement on Social Justice," accessed April 18, 2020, https://churchleaders.com/news/333559-russell-moore-on-social-justice-statement-on-social-justice.html.

shining in every facet of the Gospel's implications; that's why we challenge this reductionism. We hope, for the sake of the Gospel, that the social justice impetus laid out by our Lord Jesus Christ will mobilize the whole Church to proclaim the whole Gospel in times like these when they are desperately needed.⁵⁹

The Meaning of Missional: Insights from Ed Stetzer and Ross Hastings

To understand and probe the primary rudiments and principles of a missional paradigm, I wish to focus on some of the contributions of both Dr. Ed Stetzer who, as identified, currently serves as Executive Director of the *Billy Graham Centre for Evangelism* at *Wheaton College*, Illinois, and Dr. Ross Hastings, Associate Professor of pastoral theology at *Regent College*, Vancouver, British Columbia. Both of these individuals are practitioners as well as respected and widely-published scholars, and have a heart for the church to be faithfully living its identity and purpose.

Although Stetzer may well be included as one of those who, as Van Gelder states above, see missional as the attempt "to reclaim ... the priority of missions in regard to the church's various activities," 60 Stetzer helpfully identifies three modes of mission drawn from three primary writers of the New Testament: the *Petrine* Mission (1 Peter 2:9 – 12); the *Johannine* Mission (John 20:21), and the *Pauline* Mission (as seen in the ministry of the Apostle Paul).

The *Petrine* mission or mode points to the reality that as Christians we are called to be a missional people, or a missional *community*; that God doesn't just save people *from* their sin but that He also saves them *to* Himself and *to* the new community of His people. Integral to the

⁵⁹ Rasool Berry, "An Open Letter to John MacArthur About Social Justice." *The Blog of Rasool Berry*, September 7, 2018, accessed April 13, 2020, https://rberryblog.wordpress.com/2018/09/07/an-open-letter-to-john-macarthur-about-social-justice/.

⁶⁰ Van Gelder, 17.

Petrine mode of mission, therefore, is the drawing together of believers into "communities" in and out of which people are to grow in developing the mind and heart of Christ for the wider world around them.⁶¹ According to Stetzer the Petrine mode of missional life thus challenges the notion that many today often have that meaningfully belonging to a local Body of Christ is purely optional, especially if one in some manner feels disillusioned by it. Peter makes clear, Stetzer say, that it is God's intent and design for his people to mature and serve in and out of the context of covenantal community and communion.

Three things to note about this kind of missional community:

- First, we as communities of believers exist for God and for the good of the world, as we live into⁶² our calling of being royal priests;
- Second, the fact that we are to be a holy nation reminds us that we are to be a particular kind of community, one that is shaped by all that God in His mercy has done for us through Christ that we would incarnationally live and engage our context out of the mercy we have first experienced and in the manner that we understand Jesus would;
- Third, we as a community of God's people are to exude what Stetzer calls a 'centripetal attraction' through which God would draw people to him a missional community is to

⁶¹ Ed Stetzer, "Modes of Mission: A Missional People." The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer, December 28, 2016, accessed January 4, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/december/modes-of-mission-missional-people.html.

⁶² As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, the language of "live into" or "living into" which I will use in this thesis is intentional resulting from my belief that we never perfectly 'live out' a mission. As ones who are yet flawed (Romans 7:21ff.) and who still only "see dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12), missional living is better understood to be about establishing 'horizon markers' that help provide orientation and direction for Christians as they seek to be faithful to God's gracious call upon their lives.

be an attractive community as it lives by the Spirit in a winsome manner such that the world can't help but be drawn to it out of intrigue.⁶³

As the Petrine model calls us to be a missional people or community, the *Johannine* model calls us to live out and live in to a missional *posture*⁶⁴ of reflecting Christ's love through our serving of others.⁶⁵ God is a sending God. He sent "Abraham to the Promised Land, Moses to Egypt, Jonah to the Ninevites, Jesus to the world, the Spirit to the Church, and the Church to the nations."⁶⁶ Just as a friend once said to me, "I now understand that it is by looking at Jesus that I can know what God is like," so the watching world should know what Jesus is like by watching his church. By watching the church both *gathered* (as believers gather together for aspects like worship, fellowship, service) and *scattered* (as believers pulse out or scatter into their day to day lives of work and play), the wider world around us should have a clearer, rather than more distorted, understanding of what God is like. This missional posture can occur only through the enabling of the Spirit to be the presence of Christ in the world today.

The *Pauline* Model, Stetzer says, further calls the church to its mandate of multiplying itself through embracing the totality of God's mission, especially as it relates to the making of new disciples and the establishing of new communities made up of these disciples.⁶⁷ He notes that as Paul travelled from place to place, he typically followed a similar strategy. He would

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ed Stetzer, "Modes of Mission: A Missional Posture." The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer, January 11, 2016, accessed July 20, 2016, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edst-etzer/2016/january/modes-of-mission-missional-posture.html.

⁶⁵ Matthew 20:28 ("for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many"); Luke 6:40 ("Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will be like their teacher.")

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ed Stetzer, "Modes of Mission: A Missional Practice." The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer, January 19, 2016, accessed July 28, 2016, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edst-etzer/2016/january/modes-of-mission-missional-practice.html.

start in the cities, believing that they had the greatest potential for impact and gospel multiplication. There, he would seek first to evangelize people through preaching in the local synagogues or the like, and second Paul would then establish self-propagating congregations by drawing into community those who responded to the Good News so that they together through the Spirit would live out the same ongoing zeal for evangelizing and planting yet more multiplying churches.⁶⁸

These three missional modes which Stetzer identifies pinpoint three key characteristics of what it is to be missional:

- believers are not to be disembodied from the wider community, but rather are to be a meaningful, ongoing, integrated, giving-and-receiving part of the gathered or localized Body of Christ;
- ii. believers/churches are called to incarnationally live out the Good News by how they live and the posture they exhibit; and
- iii. with intentionality believers/churches are to be about the task of making known the Good News, thereby making new disciples who would themselves in turn make further new disciples.

Each of these can only occur through the stirring and the enabling of God's Spirit.

Another helpful observation that Stetzer makes is that of the dual movements of God's mission: the *centripetal* and the *centrifugal*.⁶⁹ Like a planet's gravitational force which draws objects in toward its centre, so through the presence of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit, the

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ed Stetzer, "Towards Missional Effectiveness: The Movements of God's Mission (Part 3)." The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer, December 27, 2016. Shalom, accessed January 4, 2017.

people of God are to live with a posture and a presence that authentically draws the watching world to it out of their desire to know more about these people and the hope they have. This *centripetal* movement of God's mission is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the Old Testament as God places Israel in the middle of the nations to be a light to them. It also is evident in the New Testament where, for instance, Jesus teaches "you are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ... let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." This centripetal force of mission reminds us that mission isn't only about what we do but it is equally about what we are. The nature of who we as God's people are is to be an attractional invitation to people everywhere around us.

But it is not enough to just *be* either, for in addition to the centripetal movement of God's mission there also is to be the corresponding *centrifugal* movement. Like a slingshot that propels a stone outward upon release, so God's people are propelled into the mission of living out and sharing the Good News of what God has done and is doing. The centrifugal movement is different compared to the centripetal as it is most evident in the New Testament, although it certainly is also apparent in the Old Testament, as seen in the story of Jonah being sent to Nineveh to warn people of coming judgement if they do not change their ways. Although the centrifugal movement of mission propels us to go, this 'going' ought not be exclusively understood in terms of crossing physical borders, as might be interpreted from the Great

⁷⁰ Cf. 1 Peter 3:15; Luke 7:16 ... whenever I read this latter verse from The Message which says 'they all realized they were in a place of holy mystery," I am reminded of a particular psychologist who regularly and enthusiastically attended the first congregation I pastored. He once said to me, "Greg, you know I don't believe what you all believe, even though I sometimes wish I could. But I'll admit this: I experience something here that I don't experience anywhere else in my life."

⁷¹ Cf. Isaiah 42;6; 51:4

⁷² Matthew 5:14-15; cf. Luke 2:32

Commission of "Go and make disciples of all nations,"⁷³ for as Acts 1:8 makes explicit, the church is also to cross those borders and boundaries that exist within one's own immediate neighbourhoods and communities, whether cultural, ethnic, racial, socio-economic, or other.

Without using the exact words, Ross Hastings similarly contends that if a church is truly centripetal (what he calls *deep*) then that naturally will stimulate the accompanying centrifugal impulse and passion of the church (what he calls *wide*). This outward movement results, he says, from the church's ongoing transformation – both individually and collectively – as it grows in knowing the heart and the mind of its Head and Saviour the Missionary God. It is this growth through the Spirit that spurs the church in always reaching out beyond themselves. And reciprocally, as the church lives into its true nature as salt and light in faithfully living out its centrifugal calling by permeating into the cultures, communities and world around it, the church discovers its ongoing need for, reliance upon, and gratitude to the Father in Heaven, fueling that constant desire to be drawing closer to Him. Hastings writes:

The church that is intimate with the triune missional God cannot fail to be intentionally and widely influential in all aspects of mission, the mission of fulfilling the cultural mandate that calls us to be fully human in all aspects of human life – marriage, family, vocation (Genesis 1-2); the mission of loving our neighbours (Matthew 22) through acts of compassion and justice seeking, because we love the God who created them and has in Christ reconciled the world himself, and the mission to evangelize and make disciples of all nations.⁷⁴

Accepting that this missional conversation is constructive for calling churches, including those of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*, to embrace their dual nature of being both centripetal as well as centrifugal (or 'deep' as well as 'wide', or 'gathering' as well as 'sending'), the next question that begs to be asked is, what is at the heart of that which is commonly referred

⁷³ Matthew 28:19

⁷⁴ Hastings, 12.

to as *the Gospel*, or the Good News. What is the message that churches have that their neighbours rightly need? In other words, in practical terms, what is at the heart of the mission of the church? Too often Christians can be prone to using language that they themselves find challenging to define for themselves, let alone attempting to explain it to others in ordinary conversations.

Hastings addresses this question by helpfully explaining that Jesus' contemporaries understood that the Good News was something greater than some 'individual existential experience,' which it often seems to get reduced down to today. Referring to F. F. Bruce's observation that Jesus' phrase of 'Peace be with you' (John 19:20) 'bore its literal meaning to the fullest extent,' Hastings writes that as Jews, Jesus' hearers understood that more than simply being "a deep individual existential experience, [it] was social and cosmic in its scope, a state of wellbeing in the whole creation''75 (emphasis mine). The implication of this is that because the One who is 'Shalom' (that is, Jesus) is to be the central reality in the life of any church, then through a continued "participation with the Son by the Spirit, and in the Spirit's power" the mission of the church today is to impart that shalom through all that it is and does.⁷⁶

But this still can leave one with the question of what does this shalom then look like, and how should it be made apparent or manifest within the enduring mission of the church?

A helpful depiction of shalom comes from a February 21, 1982 lecture by LeRoy Friesen who at the time was Professor of Peace Studies at Associated Seminaries. From his notes of Dr. Friesen's lecture, Dr. Erland Waltner (former president and professor at Mennonite Biblical Seminary) writes:

 $^{^{75}}$ Hastings, 24 - 25.

⁷⁶ Ibid

"The word (Shalom) is too big for anything in the English language. ... In contrast to our own use of the word 'peace' which might mean the absence of war or some kind of inner tranquility, the biblical term is an enormously expansive and comprehensive word. Wholeness might be the best one-to-one synonym, but even that is terribly inadequate. The word has to do with the totality of things and the relationship of all things within that totality ... with the harmony of all things, human and otherwise in God's creation, the harmony of relationships, the coming together in gentleness of that which shares participation in the creation of Yahweh. ... It has to do with well-being ... but not only of the nonphysical. The Hebrew did not tolerate soul-body distinction ... It included physical prosperity, material prosperity, and all that we are. Underneath this term is the assumption of a webbed inter-connectedness of all life which resists any pulling out of some quarter such as the intellectual or the spiritual ... and views us as wholes. Shalom has to do with the well-being and prosperity of the most fully-blossomed possibility for all that we are ... It has to do with corporateness, with sociality ... with the wellbeing of people and it was in the context of that corporateness that the individual experiences wellbeing and peace. ⁷⁷ (emphasis mine)

While it is in Chapter 2 that a theological foundation of the missional paradigm will be explored, I wish to emphasize here that although the Gospel surely carries certain propositional claims or truths, it is far more than the making known of such propositional truths. Returning to Stetzer who challenges those who equate 'making disciples' with only the didactic aspect of evangelism: "making disciples includes evangelism, but in 'teaching everything Jesus commanded,' love and good deeds are also a part of the disciple-making process."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Erland Waltner, "Shalom and Wholeness" in *Brethern Life and Thought*, 29, no 3, Summer 1984, 147. (These words of Friesen brought to mind John Donne's famous line of "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee" (Mediation XVII) and also of the Bruce Cockburn song "Each One Lost" (written about the fallen Canadian soldiers being returned from Afghanistan) in which the refrain states: "each one lost is everyone's loss you see, each one lost is a vital part of you and me" ... shalom recognizes that there can be no wellbeing of self without wellbeing of the other.)

⁷⁸ Ed Stetzer, review of *What is the Mission of the Church: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission,* by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), in *Themelios* (Online), 36, no 3, Nov 2011, 587, accessed February 22, 2017, https://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/what-is-the-mission-of-the-church-making-sense-of-social-justice-shalom-and/.

Lausanne, Integral Mission and the Mission of the Church:

A significant contribution to the dialogue probing the essence of the mission of the church was the Lausanne movement in late twentieth/early twenty-first century. The first Lausanne Congress occurred in Lausanne, Switzerland from July 16 to 24, 1974. Largely initiated by the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association*, it saw 2500 participants and 1000 observers from 250 countries and 135 Protestant denominations gather together. To understand something of the impetus for this gathering one has to look distantly back to the Edinburgh Conference of 1910⁷⁹ and that which followed throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Robert A. Hunt writes:

In 1910 it appeared as if the movement to spread Christianity worldwide was a virtually unstoppable force. The key strategic and theological fissures among Western missionaries seemed to have been largely resolved at the great mission conference at Edinburgh. Yet only half a century later, Christian missionaries believed their movement to be in disarray. The word "crisis" appears repeatedly in missionaries' own characterizations of mission in mid-twentieth century, and in place of regular world-wide mission conferences there emerged two distinct and often antagonistic mission movements claiming the mandate of 1910. ... Out of this situation the ecumenical and evangelical movements emerged as distinct Christian responses, each drawing on significant new synergies, and each with significantly different concerns ...

Evangelicals were increasingly disenchanted with the developments of the WCC [ecumenical] and the ways in which that organization began to emphasize social action and political action over evangelism, not to mention its perceived universalism and syncretism in theology. ... Like church and mission leaders associated with the WCC, members of the growing conservative evangelical movement, clergy and laity, were motivated by a powerful sense that Christianity and Christian missions were in crisis. They saw Christian values and Christian society as being under threat from theological liberalism and secularism in the West and from Communist atheism in the rest of the world. In the face of these threats they believed that only conversion to Christ could save

⁷⁹ The Edinburgh Conference could rightly be called the "third ecumenical missionary conference" as the first and second had already taken place in London in 1888 and New York in 1900. The main organizer of the 1910 conference was Joseph Oldham, a leader in the *Student Christian Movement* (SCM). SCM had begun in 1889 as the *Student Volunteer Missionary Union*, and as a leading voice for ecumenism, went on to play a vital role in the formation of both the *British* and the *World Council of Churches*. In 1928 *Inter-Varsity Fellowship* was formed by members of the SCM who took issue with what they perceived to be the liberal position of the SCM.

both the individual and society, and that evangelism was the only appropriate focus of mission. ...

In the years before the first Lausanne Conference in 1974, Graham's organization pioneered a form of grassroots cooperation in evangelism that cemented ties with evangelical leaders worldwide and could support worldwide undertakings on a scale of the 1910 Edinburgh conference.⁸⁰

By the time of the 1974 Lausanne Conference Billy Graham had already acknowledged that although the clear priority for the church was to be the saving of souls, a secondary responsibility in mission was to strive for ecumenical unity and to pursue social action.⁸¹ This, however, did not go far enough for many evangelicals gathered at the first Lausanne gathering.

John Stott and British evangelicals put forward the importance of Christians addressing social problems as integral to evangelism. More controversial voices from Latin America, notably René Padilla and Orlando Costas, challenged naïve concepts of either evangelism or social action divorced from the realities of cultural imperialism and the demand for social justice.⁸²

In his assessment of this 1974 Congress, C. René Padilla was pleased that it clearly asserted that the centrality of the kingdom of God was essential for a correct understanding of both the Christian mission and the role of the church in the world. This conviction was given expression in Paragraph 5 of the Lausanne Covenant, which states:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social action as mutually exclusive.

Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a

⁸⁰ Robert A. Hunt, "The History of the Lausanne Movement, 1974 – 2010." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 35 no. 2 (April 2011): 81 – 82.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.⁸³ (emphasis mine)

Important topics such as Christian social responsibility, radical discipleship, and church renewal/unity were emphasized at Lausanne I, but not to the neglect of other core convictions such as the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, and evangelism. Padilla's assessment of this first Lausanne Congress was that "Despite its shortcomings – especially its failure to point to the inextricable relation between evangelism and social responsibility – the Lausanne Covenant was a death blow to the traditional reduction of the Christian mission to the multiplication of Christians and churches." 84 (emphasis mine)

Padilla, a Latin American evangelical theologian, had become a central figure at

Lausanne I and subsequent congresses and initiatives (including those leading to the formation of *The Micah Network*)⁸⁵ and along with colleagues largely from the *Latin American Theological*

⁸³ C. René Padilla, "From Lausanne I to Lausanne III" in *Journal of Latin American Theology*, 5 no. 2 (2010): 21 – 22, quoting "The Lausanne Covenant," *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement*, 1974 – 1979, ed. John Stott (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press), 1996.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 26.

⁸⁵ Padilla's article "From Lausanne I to Lausanne III" provides an excellent overview of the various working groups, symposiums, consultations and conferences between Lausanne I and Lausanne III [including the Lausanne Theology and Education Group (later renamed the Theology Working Group), the Consultation on the Homogenous Unit Principle (Fuller Theological Institute; June, 1977); Consultation on Gospel and Culture (Willowbank, Bermuda; January 1978); Consultation on Simple Lifestyle (Hoddesdon, England; March 1980); Consultation on World Evangelization (Pattaya, Thailand; June 1980); the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Action (Grand Rapids, Michigan; June 1982); the Jarabacoa Consultation (held by the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL); (Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic; May, 1983); the Consultation on the church in Response to Human Need (sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship; Wheaton College, Illinois; June, 1983); the

Fellowship (the FTL) they together gave rise to the term of 'integral mission' (with 'integral' meaning whole or holistic, as in whole grain or whole wheat). Appointed a travelling secretary with the FTL in Latin America in 1959 (and later to become its General Secretary), through the 1960s he began writing and speaking out against the "evangelical barrier between social action and evangelism." David C. Kirkpatrick cites David Bebbington who

demonstrated that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Evangelical social action was largely justified theologically as the removal of "obstacles to the progress of the gospel" and continues to say "this method divided Christian mission into a primary, spiritual mandate and a subordinate (often muted) social mandate." **By contrast, integral mission is an understanding that posits that social action and evangelism are both essential and indivisible components of Christian mission** – indeed both are central aspects within the Christian God (the Spanish *integral* is used to describe wholemeal bread or wholeness) ...

Targeting this methodological barrier, Padilla remarked "this would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane.'87 (emphasis mine)

This metaphor of the two equal wings of a singular plane was essential to Padilla's thinking. Having moved beyond seeing social action as simply a natural implication of the

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International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization (Seoul, 1984); the Consultation on the Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization (Oslo, 1985); a Conference for Young Leaders (Singapore, 1987); the Consultation on Conversion and World Evangelization (Hong Kong, 1988); the Second Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization (Manilla, Philippines; July, 1989); and the Formation of the Micah Network ("Established in 1999, the Micah Network has grown into a worldwide movement of more than 500 Christian relief, development, and justice organizations, churches, and individuals. ... Its primary objective is to encourage the practice of integral mission according to the text from which it derives its name, a text that defines what God requires of his people: "To act justly and love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)).

⁸⁶ A very helpful overview of René Padilla and the role of the *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* in Latin America, the FTL (the *Latin American Theological Fellowship*), and CLADE I (the First Latin American Congress for Evangelization) is "C. René Padilla and the Origins of Integral Mission in Post-War Latin America" by David C. Kirkpatrick in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 67 no. 2, (April 2016): 351 – 371.

Gospel message and in that sense secondary to evangelism, Padilla asserted it to be an equal and essential component of it. He contended that the basic thrust of the New Testament is this:

In Jesus' person and work the kingdom of God has become a present reality and provides the basis of mission for the church. Between the times of Christ, the church looks back to the *already* that has been accomplished through Jesus' first coming and also to the *not yet* that points to the future completion of God's redemptive purpose at Jesus' second coming. Seen in the light of the kingdom of God, I conclude, both evangelism and social responsibility belong together. **The gospel is good news about the kingdom of God. Good works, on the other hand, are the signs of the kingdom for which we were created in Christ Jesus.** Both word and deed are inextricably united in the mission of Jesus and his apostles, and we must continue to hold both together in the mission of the church, in which Jesus' mission is prolonged until the end of time. ... A more biblical concept of mission suggests that there is no evangelism without a social dimension, and there is no Christian social action without an evangelistic dimension. ⁸⁸

The *Latin American Theological Fellowship* (FTL) was not content just to argue all this in theory, but were equally committed to putting the tenets of integral mission into action, and it became a movement that spread far beyond the boundaries of South America, ⁸⁹ challenging believers worldwide to explore anew what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ. Padilla writes:

⁸⁸ Padilla, 2010, 31, 33.

⁸⁹ This is not to suggest that there were not other Christian voices advocating similar understandings. Just one example, W. A. Visser t'Hooft stated in an opening speech at the 1968 Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches: "I believe, that with regard to the great tensions between the vertical interpretation of the gospel as essentially concerned with God's saving action in the life of individuals, and the horizontal interpretation of it as mainly concerned with human relationships in the world, we must get out of that rather primitive oscillating movement of going from one extreme to the other, which is not worthy of a movement which by its nature seeks to embrace the truth of the gospel in its fullness. A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless for the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation, of God's love for the world manifested in Christ." (emphasis mine) (Norman Goodall, ed., The Uppsala 68 Report (Geneva: 1968), 317 – 318 in C. René Padilla, "Holistic Mission: Occasional Paper No. 33 for Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya Thailand, September 29 – October 5, 2004, 1, accessed September 9, 2016, https://www.lausanne.org/wpcontent/uploads/2007/06/LOP33 IG4.pdf.)

By God's grace, this movement has been used by the Spirit to empower many Christians and many churches, especially in the global South, to lead a life of service to God and neighbor with a clear conviction of the inseparability of the kingdom of God and history of love and justice, of the personal and social, of evangelization and socio-political responsibility. ...

In a growing number of countries there is now a wide variety of ministries responding to all kinds of human needs: ministries to drug addicts, to street children, to the elderly, to prostitutes, to the handicapped, to single mothers, to prisoners, to the blind, to orphans, to refugees, to the unemployed – the list is endless. Clearly, more and more individual Christians and churches understand that God loves justice and demands justice and that they are called to be followers of the One who was anointed "to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18 – 19). ...

This life experience has been the forge of integral mission – a view of mission that conceives **evangelization** not as a means to become happy or successful according to worldly standards but **as a means to enroll people as followers of Jesus Christ engaged** in **God's mission to transform humankind according to God's purpose**. When a church sees mission in light of the kingdom of God, its members are set free to serve. ...

There is no place for a dichotomy between evangelization and socio-political responsibility: evangelization is done with a social conscience because the good news of the kingdom of God is meant to affect the totality of life on both a personal and a social level, and those who are evangelized are summoned to cooperate with other Christians in the fulfillment of the missionary task. On the other hand, social responsibility is exercised with an evangelistic conscience because the good works that are done are carried out in Jesus' name as visible signs of the kingdom of God that was brought into history by Jesus Christ. Something is missing when we serve our neighbor but refrain from giving an account of the hope that is in us and motivates our action. On the other hand, something is also missing when we share our faith verbally but our faith does not work through love. ⁹⁰ (emphasis mine)

Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to the Missional Paradigm

Another significant contribution to the early development of the missional paradigm came through the ministry and writings of Lesslie Newbigin. His books such as *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (1978), *The Other Side of 1984* (1983), *Foolishness to the Greeks: Gospel and Western Culture* (1986), and *The Gospel in Pluralist Society* (1989) provided a significant part of the rich soil which gave birth to the rise of the

⁹⁰ Padilla, 2010, 41 – 43.

missional conversation in the latter part of the twentieth and the early part of the twenty-first centuries.

Born in Great Britain in 1909 and educated at Cambridge, he began his mission work assigned to the Madras Mission of the Foreign Mission Committee of the *Church of Scotland*. One of his most significant early contributions was participating in 1947 in the discussions which led to the formation of the *Church of South India* (bringing together members of the Scottish churches, Congregationalists, Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians), of which he was made a Bishop at its inaugural service. Newbigin also became increasingly active in the work of the *International Missionary Council*, and eventually became its General Secretary. Even at this time he was perplexed as he encountered the separation of evangelism from various activities of social involvement, and longed to see them integrated. Newbigin writes in his 1993 autobiography:

The need was for ... a focus of concern for evangelism among all of the multifarious and fruitful operations in which the [World Council of Churches] was involved all over the world. But how is this to be done? ... Exciting programs were being pushed forward everywhere to help the churches in the newly independent nations to shake themselves free of the old missionary paternalism and become constructively engaged in nation building. This, and not the old-fashioned missionary preaching, was seen as the way to make the gospel relevant to these areas of rapid social change.⁹¹

Newbigin was instrumental in seeing the *International Mission Council* integrated into the *World Council of Churches*, but in time came to feel great regret for having pursued this as he came to believe there was little interest in "the direct preaching of the Gospel and for the

⁹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda* (Edinburgh, UK: Saint Andrew Press, 1993),185, in Terry Smith, "Transforming Partners: Global Discipleship in Canadian Baptist Churches with Reference to the STEP Program of Canadian Baptist Ministries" (Doctor of Ministry Thesis, Acadia Divinity College, 2010), 108.

building up of the Church" and missions was instead being defined as providing technical assistance and political action. 92

Following his time with the World Council of Churches in 1965, Newbigin returned to his role as the Bishop of Madras in India where he remained until his retirement in 1974. For the rest of his life he split his time between teaching, pastoring and writing, especially exploring how the gospel might engage the post-enlightenment culture in the West. Titles included *The Other Side of 1984* (1983), *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986), and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989).

The real question of his heart was 'Can the West be converted?' which was the title of an article he published in 1987 in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

A dozen years ago, at the Bangkok Conference on "Salvation Today," I happened to be sitting next to General Simatupang. ... We were in plenary debate, and Simatupang had just made an intervention. As he returned to his seat beside me, I heard him say under his breath, "Of course, the number one question is, can the West be converted?" In the following years I have become more and more sure that he was right. If one looks at the world scene from a missionary point of view, surely the most striking fact is that, while in great areas of Asia and Africa the church is often growing rapidly, in the lands which were once called Christendom, it is in decline; and, moreover, wherever the culture of the West, under the name of 'modernization' penetrates, it carries with it what Lippmann called the "acids of modernity," dissolving the most enduring of religious beliefs including the beliefs of Christians. Surely there can be no more crucial question for the world mission of the church than the one I have posed. Can there be an effective missionary encounter with *this* culture – this so powerful, persuasive, and confident culture which (at least until very recently) simply regarded itself as "the coming world civilization?" Can the West be converted? Can the West be

⁹² Dr. Terry Smith, quoting from a personal conversation he had with Lesslie Newbigin on December 30, 1993. Ibid., 109.

Paganisms with which foreign missionaries have been in contact during the past 200 years. Here, without possibility of question, is the most challenging missionary frontier of our time.", 7.

Whatever the challenges for mission, be it in the West or anywhere in the globe,
Newbigin believed that the local church (in terms of a corporate gathering of Christ's people)
was the essential unit of Christian existence, and the hope of the world (including the postChristian pagan West) being meaningfully engaged with the gospel required a "radical reconception of what it means to be a local congregation of God's people."

I have come to feel that the primary reality of which we have to take account in seeking for Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation. How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it. I am, of course, not denying the importance of the many activities by which we seek to challenge public life with the gospel – evangelistic campaigns, distribution of Bibles and Christian literature, conferences, and even books such as this one. But I am saying that these are all secondary, and that they have the power to accomplish their purpose only as they are rooted in and lead back to a believing community. Jesus ... did not write a book but formed a community. ⁹⁵ (emphasis mine)

Not only did Newbigin believe it was only a radically reshaped local church or believing community of ordinary men and women (who were transformed, equipped, empowered and mobilized by the Spirit of God and His resurrection power) that could meaningfully and effectively carry out God's missionary purposes, but he also became convinced that the church could not consider itself to truly be a church if it was not living into its God-ordained mission. Just as a human being cannot be alive if there is a cessation of breath, so the church could hardly be considered the church if it had ceased to live into its mission. The church can only be the church as it lives and speaks this Good News locally and to the ends of the earth. Further, the mandate to bear this Good News belongs to the church alone, and there is no back-up plan. As

⁹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, "Review of New Ways for Christ, by Michael Wright," *International Review of Mission* 65: 228, cited by T. Smith, 120.

⁹⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 227.

Smith explains, "The intention of God in Christ was made clear in the Gospels. He called and prepared a community that would be the bearer of this good news. He sends them out. 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,' and pours out His Spirit." ⁹⁶

A word of caution however: None of this should suggest that the church should ever think of mission as some kind of burden; instead it must embrace mission as the privileged reason for why it is called into existence.

If one looks at the New Testament evidence one gets another impression. Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed. It must be told. Who could be silent about such a fact? The mission of the Church in the pages of the New Testament is more like the fallout from a vast explosion, a radioactive fallout which is not lethal but life giving.⁹⁷

Expanding on the thrust of Newbigin's argument, Patrick S. Franklin writes:

When the church has been granted a taste of God's presence, power, grace, and reconciliatory and unifying love, it is transformed into a living testimony to the gospel. When it exhibits the selfless and sacrificial love of Christ, living not for itself but for the sake of its neighbours, it lives provocatively as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom of God. When God's presence manifests in this manner people start asking questions, and Newbigin finds it striking "that almost all the proclamations of the gospel which are described in Acts are in response to questions asked by those outside the Church." 98

Newbigin appealed to the church to never forget who the mission belongs to. In the final analysis, the mission never belongs to the Church itself but instead to the Triune God. The implications of this is the Church must not consider itself as the determiner of its mission, but rather must always be looking to join God in what He is already doing in His mission. Further, the Church should not therefore be its own auditor in terms of assessing how it understands and

⁹⁷ Newbigin, 116.

⁹⁶ Smith. 129.

⁹⁸ Patrick S. Franklin in *Didaskalia* (Otterburn, Man), 25 (Fall 2015), 171 (quoting Newbigin, p. 116).

carries out its mission, but rather must always be considering how God sees and evaluates their faithfulness.⁹⁹

David Fitch: An Overview of the Missional Movement since the 90's

Professor, author, pastor and church planter David Fitch provides a helpful overview for the development of two primary streams of missional practice in North America and explores the strengths and weakness of each of them.¹⁰⁰

The first of those groups is 'The Missional Network' (TMN), which is derived from a group called 'The Gospel and our Culture Network' (COGN) which consisted of six researchers who over a period of three years in the 1990's together published the groundbreaking book *Missional Church* (Guder, 1998). Two of those six – Alan Roxburgh and Craig Van Gelder – remain particularly active in writing, speaking and consulting as well as developing numerous books, articles and other resources, all oriented towards helping advance not just an understanding of missional but the commitment to living it out.

A second group has spawned off from the writing and thinking of two Australians, Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost. Their influential volume was *The Shaping of Things to Come*, and they too have been the catalyst for the formation of numerous networks as well. Since much of their work has been with churches which self-identify as Evangelical within North America, Fitch labels this group the 'Missional Evangelicals" (ME).¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Newbigin, 117.

¹⁰⁰ David E. Fitch, "The Other Missional Conversation: Making Way for the Neo-Anabaptist Contribution to the Missional Movement in North America," in *Missiology: An International Review*, 44 No. 4 (2016).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 467.

Both groups begin with *Missio Dei* (the mission of God) and give close attention to what He is already doing in the world. Out of their commitment to a trinitarian understanding of God and His mission, the TMN's emphasis is upon the agency, movement and leading of the Spirit. "The Father sends the Son, and the Father and Son send the Spirit into the world; the church finds its existence within this sending." The responsibility of the church is to be discerning how and where God is at work, and through its own equipping, empowering and animation of the Spirit to be joining Him there. The world rather than the church is to be the locus of mission, and the church is created to join in and get on board with what God is doing. For the TMN, it's not just that God's great work is what he did through Christ's death on the cross two millennia ago, but also what He is doing now through a cruciform movement of the Spirit. One outcome for the TMN is basically that if the church is not being attentive to and participating in what God is doing through His Spirit, then it has essentially ceased to be a church in any true sense.

Whereas the TMN focus on our call to follow wherever the Spirit leads, discerning where He is at work and joining in, the Missional Evangelical's (ME) focus is on our call to incarnate the presence of Christ into the world around us. For the ME's, individual discipleship is therefore key, and when discipleship occurs as it should it will propel the church in being the church it is called to be. By living in our contexts as God did in Jesus, we are to become the physical presence of Christ making known the coming of the Kingdom. According to Fitch, the consequence of this is that just as the TMN cultivates something of an insidious spirit of judgmentalism towards the church if it is not living responsively to the Spirit, so the ME's foster a similar spirit towards any in the Church that they deem to not be living out a life of discipleship as God calls them to.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Fitch offers a critique of both the TMN and the ME within his paper. For him the primary concern of the TMN, which likely tends to be more predominant within the mainline protestant tradition, is that discerning what the Spirit is doing can overshadow the authority of Scripture, such that rather than being concerned as much about what the Scriptures might say, they make Scripture secondary to what they discern the Spirit to be doing. As Fitch states it, "This process of Scripture interpretation ... leaves open the question of who does the interpreting, and of how scriptural interpretation can stay faithful to the logic of what God is doing in the world through Christ." ¹⁰³

Conversely, Fitch's critique of the ME is that it has a tendency towards an excessive individualism that lies at the heart of it. He writes "the MEs emphasize individual imitation of Jesus as opposed to a corporate participation in God's broader mission through what we might call the church. ... For the world to truly see the Kingdom, it must be visible as a way of life between people." Further, he cautions that it is too easy for any of us as individuals to read Jesus through our own cultural biases, or what Fitch calls "our own enculturated vision of Christ. How do we know that the *Wild Messiah* of Alan Hirsch is not the bohemian Christ of the marginalized districts of Melbourne, Australia from his early ministry days there?" ¹⁰⁵

As for my own assessment of both *The Missional Network* and what Fitch calls the *Missional Evangelicals*, both groups offer helpful counsel to the church in discerning its ministry. We as the church want to be alert to and join in what God is doing through the work of the Holy Spirit, and we also want to – both corporately and individually – live our lives as the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 470.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 471.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

incarnational presence of Christ in the world today. In my estimation, these objectives are not at odds with one another.

My concern is that there is something missing in both the TMN and the ME discourse, and that is an innate love for the church overall, the bride of Christ, whatever its flaws. Without wanting to diminish the Church's need to repent of many things, and in so many ways to awake to and live with potency into its God-given purpose, we nonetheless need to exercise the same liberal grace that God has first extended to us. We are always called to live within a dialectical tension where while we as the Church must rightly repent of the lethargy and complacency that in far too many ways marks us, we also have to live a life of love for the Church in all its myriad manifestations. It is my conviction that when one looks at the various expressions of the Church worldwide through all the centuries, each with their own excesses and hubris and probable heresies at some level, if God through His grace does not choose to work in some manner through all of us then I think it unlikely that He is able to work through any of us.

Conclusion

The development of the Missional Church discourse has arisen through the past century out of the desire of many to be attentive to how God is calling us to live into His mission. Like all schools of thought and movements, this one too no doubt has its excesses and limitations, but overall it has been a helpful corrective for the church as it continues to seek to live out its Godordained purpose of fully being a witness to the coming of God's Kingdom.

Chapter Two

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR A MISSIONAL PARADIGM

Introduction

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ...

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Genesis 1:1, 31 (NIV)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him

was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness. ... The

Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the

one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:1 ff. (NIV)

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything

God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities."

Romans 1:20a (NLT)

52

Any missional theology rests on and flows from all that God is, all that He has done, and all that He calls His people to in the Bible. These Scriptures point to Him as abundantly generous 106 and good 107 who not only creates but delights in and seeks to bless His Creation with true fullness 108. And creation itself witnesses to the immensity of His "profuse, generative love" 109 through its essentially incomprehensible magnitude, sophistication, and exquisiteness. 110,111 Although the ancients could peer into a clear night sky and be awestruck by the countless numbers of the starry hosts, they would never have been able to appreciate the expansiveness of all which God created, at least not in the manner that is now understood. Out of his love, God created "the heavens" – a universe consisting of billions of galaxies, 112 with each of these galaxies containing millions if not billions of stars, with an estimated total of some

¹⁰⁶ James 1:5 ... If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault (NIV)

¹⁰⁷ Psalm 143:10 ... "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may **your good** Spirit lead me on level ground." (NIV); Mark 10:18 ... "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. **Only God is truly good**." (NLT)

¹⁰⁸ Genesis 49:25 ... "May the Strong God – may he give you his blessings, Blessings tumbling out of the skies, blessings bursting up from the Earth – blessings of breasts and womb." (MSG); Psalm 67:6 ... Then the earth will yield its harvests, and God, our God, will richly bless us. (NLT);

¹⁰⁹ Michael Beck, *Deep Roots Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* (Franklin, Tennessee: Seedbed Publishing, 2019), 16.

¹¹⁰ Numbers 14:21 ... "Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth" (NIV); Psalm 8:1 ... "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens"

^{111 &}quot;Creation out of nothing is not a doctrine of power, but of love: because creation is *ex nihilo*, we must also say it is *ex amore*. Because there are not external constraints on God's act of creating, everything exists out of the sheer freedom of God's love. Things are not as they are because they have to be, but because God first loved them into being, continues to sustain them by this love, and will yet somehow transform them further in love." (Dr. Jacob Sherman, "Creation: An Act of Love" in 'Church Times', 19 February 2016, accessed November 24, 2019, (https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/19-february/features/features/creation-an-act-of-love.)

lil Galaxies are collections of many stars surrounding a common gravity centre, often a black hole, and the galaxies themselves are always continually travelling through the universe.

30 billion-trillion stars in all.¹¹³ As impressive and majestic as the cosmos is, the earth and all that it contains further illumines the exuberant fullness of God's love, all of which is displayed in its abundance, beauty, diversity, and complexity.^{114,115} Kreider is right when he says that "God is promiscuously generous; he shares the wonders of creation, the brilliance of the sun and seasons, with everyone – the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45)"¹¹⁶ (emphasis mine).

As already intimated, however, it is not only the breadth, intricacy and beauty of Creation that reveals God as a loving God, for Scripture itself is brimming with statements which likewise affirm all that creation testifies to -- that God is a God of love:

• "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." 117

https://futurism.com/earth-compared-to-the-universe, (accessed December 27, 2019); the average distance between each of these billions upon billions of stars is estimated to be some four light years (which translates to an average of 39 trillion kilometers, or some 23.6 trillion miles). That's just the average distance between any two stars. The distance across the universe is estimated to be somewhere in vicinity of 92 billion light years. To have some appreciation of how big a number 30 billion trillion would be, if one were to stack \$100 to a sum of 30 billion trillion dollars, that stack would reach some 20 trillion-plus miles, which would be an equivalent of more than 109,000 return trips between the earth and the sun.

¹¹⁴ Romans 1:20

¹¹⁵ At present there are approximately 1.9 million species that have been catalogued by science, but it is thought that the estimated total number of species may be in the order of 8.7 million or more. Although some 7 million of these are thought to be arthropods (such as beetles and insects), there also are estimated to be some 370,000 different kinds of flowering plants, 225,000 marine species, 60,000 different species of trees, and 5,500 different species of mammals. (https://www.britannica.com/science/species-taxon/Speciation, (accessed December 5, 2019).

¹¹⁶ Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 21.

117 Exodus 34:6 (NIV)

- "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments." 118
- "You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." 119
- "How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!" 120
- "Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love." 121
- "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, **abounding in love** and faithfulness." 122
- "Give thanks to the God of heaven. **His love endures forever**." 123
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." 124
- "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 125
- "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 126

¹¹⁸ Deuteronomy 7:9 (NIV)

¹¹⁹ Nehemiah 9:17 (NIV)

¹²⁰ Psalm 36:7 (NIV)

¹²¹ Psalm 48:9 (NIV)

¹²² Psalm 86:15 (NIV)

¹²³ Psalm 136:26 (NIV)

¹²⁴ John 3:16 (NIV)

¹²⁵ Romans 5:8 (NÍV)

¹²⁶ Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

- "the God of love and peace will be with you." 127
- "But because of **his great love for us**, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" 128
- "when the kindness and **love of God** our Savior appeared" 129
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**." 130
- "This is love: not that we loved God, but that **he loved us** and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." ¹³¹
- "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." 132

We ought not, however, settle for simply a surface reading of Scripture and an arbitrary extraction of isolated verses which speak of God as a God of love. To leave it there would be to do an injustice to Scripture, ignoring further and more complex descriptions of God. For example, there are verses which also speak of certain things which the Lord abhors, that He hates, that He promises to destroy:

• "I, the Lord your God, am **a jealous God, punishing** the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" 133

¹²⁷ 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

¹²⁸ Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

¹²⁹ Titus 3:4 (NIV)

¹³⁰ 1 John 4:8 (NIV)

¹³¹ 1 John 4:10 (NIV)

¹³² 1 John 4:16 (NIV)

¹³³ Exodus 20:5 (NIV) (cf. Deuteronomy 5:9)

- "He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him." 134
- "Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord" 135
- "Do not envy the violent, or choose any of their ways. For the **Lord detests the perverse** ...

 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked" 136
- "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community." 137
- "all sinners will be destroyed; there will be no future for the wicked." 138

Even such a brief survey of verses makes plain that although Scripture clearly speaks of a God who is loving, it does not portray Him as unidimensional or one to be trifled with or taken lightly. The question that needs to be meaningfully wrestled with, and which this chapter is meant to address, is how can we as God's people who wish to come obediently and humbly before His Word be sure that we are not framing Scripture according to our own preferences when we emphasize that above all else, God is a missional God of love whose intent is to bring blessing and wholeness and restoration to His creation?

¹³⁴ Deuteronomy 7:9, 10 (NIV)

¹³⁵ Deuteronomy 18:12 (NIV)

¹³⁶ Proverbs 3:31-33 (NIV)

¹³⁷ Proverbs 6:16-19 (NIV)

¹³⁸ Psalm 37:38 (NIV)

Missional and the Old Testament

To answer the question just posed above, we must look within the broad narrative of Scripture itself, starting in the Old Testament, beginning with the Genesis account of Creation. The first two chapters of Genesis (and of the Bible) reveal not only a picture of the forming of a good creation but also of flourishing wholeness, intimacy, and fellowship; in short, a barrier-free communion between God and His Creation. 139 Upon sin's entry into the story, alienation is immediately present; evidenced in the shame, hiding and blaming. ¹⁴⁰ God calls for an accounting of what has transpired, and imposes penalties on the three main characters: the man, the woman, and the serpent. The consequences reach far beyond just them, however, impacting all aspects of creation.¹⁴¹ While this obviously is a scene of judgement and consequences for all, evidences of grace and mercy are also immediately present. Although the man's and the woman's roles were marred from what was originally intended, God demonstrated his ongoing care for these whom He had created by permitting them to safely leave the garden and providing clothing for them made with animal skins. 142 The words spoken to the serpent are also significant – that from this point on there would be enmity between "your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This is often interpreted by biblical scholars to be "the first statement of good news that evil will eventually be defeated" and that "in spite of what had happened, the Creator remained in control." ¹⁴³ As early as the 2nd century AD Christian thinkers were ascribing Christological significance to this verse, interpreting it as a

¹³⁹ Genesis 3:8

¹⁴⁰ Genesis 3:10, 11

¹⁴¹ Genesis 3:17: Romans 8:20

¹⁴² Johnson T. K. Lim, *Grace in the Midst of Judgement: Grappling with Genesis* 1-11 (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2002), 143.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 144.

foreshadowing that God would ultimately defeat and obliterate this evil that has been unleashed within and upon creation.¹⁴⁴

This theme of God's intervention is replete throughout all of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments). Although chapters 4 to 11 of Genesis continue to unravel the depths of humanity's profound "rebellion against God's good purpose for his creation" and portrays how the "consequences of humanity's sinfulness invade every nook and cranny of human life and all of God's creation," God's merciful deliverance remains evident, particularly in the account of Noah and the flood in Genesis (cf. chapters 6 ff.). Although this is another scene of judgement upon the earth due to humanity's rebellion and wickedness, God is also simultaneously providing a way of rescue not only for Noah – who had "found favor with the Lord" — but also for his family and ultimately all of creation by making a way for a new start for His created order.

This did not, however, halt the ongoing spiraling of human depravity, culminating in chapter 11 with the building of the Tower of Babel. Initially one might question the significance of such an undertaking in the biblical story, but it is understood to be an act of ultimate revolt and blasphemy against the Creator: partly in the desire of the people to make a name for themselves; partly in their attempt to protect themselves should they ever again experience another flood; and definitely to "keep (themselves) from being scattered all over the world" 147

¹⁴⁴ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 39.

¹⁴⁵ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), p. 28. Cited in Dean Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 23.

¹⁴⁶ Genesis 6:8

¹⁴⁷ Genesis 11:4

which was in direct contravention to God's mandate given to Noah and his sons to "fill the earth." Although God again brought judgement against the people's wickedness by confusing them through giving them different languages He again does not give up on nor abandon them, for the next chapter immediately opens with God appearing before a man named Abram and making a very particular covenant with him. "The Lord had said to Abram, Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." 150

This promise given to Abram is a "bridge-passage" between chapters 1 – 11 of Genesis (often referred to as primeval history) and 12 – 50 (the history of the patriarchs of Israel ...

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). "The early chapters establish the problem to which God's promise to Abraham is the solution." It is essential to note that God's covenant-promise with Abram is not for him only, but also for his family, his people, and for future generations that will follow. God is telling Abram that from him a great people will emerge; a people who are to have a peculiar or distinct identity, one which will be defined in significant measure by the part they will play in revealing and expressing God's love to all the world. It was God's missionary desire that the blessing he was pouring out on Abraham and his descendants would be poured out on all the nations.

¹⁴⁸ Genesis 9:1

 $^{^{149}}$ In Genesis 17:5 God renames Abram (meaning "exalted father") to Abraham (meaning "father of many nations")

¹⁵⁰ Genesis 12:1-3

¹⁵¹ Goheen, 27.

Flemming notes how "God's answer to this global pandemic of sin ... starts surprisingly small."¹⁵² This insight is a significant and important contribution to the missional paradigm, for often a missional response begins with what in essence is a mustard-seed-like initiative, ¹⁵³ an offering of a few loaves and fishes; 154 certainly nothing which initially appears sufficient for the scale of the need that presents and yet one through which God in His grace chooses to work by multiplying and blessing those things which are offered in His name and for His purposes. One of the biggest hurdles that can often hinder those who otherwise would wish to make a missional difference is the feeling that they are too insignificant, too weak, too old, or too limited to make any real difference or have any real impact. Centuries later the Apostle Paul would in his writings develop what could be called a theology of weakness. Paul explains how the treasure of the Good News of Jesus "shines in our hearts," but these hearts of ours – our lives – are at best like "fragile clay jars;" that is to say, they are like the ordinary, everyday dishware, in and of themselves possessing little ornate beauty or intrinsic worth, probably full of cracks and chips and all kinds of other imperfections.¹⁵⁵ The reality is, however, that it is through those same cracks and chips and imperfections that the radiant light of the gospel is able to shine most clearly. It often is God's way to use the weak and imperfect and inadequate to accomplish his purposes, 156 as suggested even as God establishes this covenant with Abram some two millennia prior to Paul writing his epistles.

¹⁵² Dean Flemming *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 23.

¹⁵³ Cf. Matthew 13:31, 17:20

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Matthew 14:13ff.

¹⁵⁵ cf. 2 Corinthians 4 ff.

¹⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:9 But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." (Good News Translation)

Flemming also offers three additional observations from Genesis 12:1-3 which "help to clarify the identity and role of God's people in God's mission."¹⁵⁷ The *first* is that these people whom God has chosen have an actual responsibility which they are expected to carry out; they are truly to be the tangible means for extending God's blessing and mercy to the whole world. They were never to forget that the reason why God was blessing them as a people was so that they could become a channel for passing that blessing on to others. Flemming's second observation is that there is a lifestyle requirement that is to be in keeping with this blessing which God is pouring out upon his people: obedience is required. While not wanting to limit God's ability to work redemptively with our inadequate responses, it also must be recognized that God's strategic plan nonetheless depends upon his people being obedient to His direction. All of God's future plans for pouring out his redemptive blessings depended upon Abram's initial obedience to leave his homeland in Ur and to journey to this as-yet-unknown promised land in Canaan. Likewise, obedience by generations to follow is also expected and required. The *third* insight offered by Flemming is that just as Genesis chapters 3 – 11 unveil how adversely impacted both humanity and all of creation are by the introduction of human sin, so this mission which God lays down before Abram and his descendants is correspondingly a comprehensive mission with the focus on both the redeeming of all people and the renewing of all creation. Flemming writes "the mission of blessing the nations that was given to Abraham's descendants cannot therefore be confined either to personal salvation or to something like material well-being. God's blessing includes his purpose to give his creatures all that they need to live the life that he intends for them."158

¹⁵⁷ Flemming, 24ff.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 26.

This observation is an important contribution for the contemporary discussion of the missional church, for as important as it is for the people of God to be concerned about people's spiritual, physical and relational wellbeing, they also have a responsibility for the appropriate care and blessing of all creation. Therefore, while caring for and ministering to the needs of fellow human beings is no doubt paramount, the church as God's people also shares a legitimate responsibility to care for other living creatures that are also a part of creation: for example, to steward and enrich the long-term fruitfulness of the earth or to minimize our carbon footprint out of a concern for global warming – all these things and so much more are part of the mandate of God's people to be an ongoing blessing by obediently participating in the "restoring of all human connections shattered by sin – with God, with one another, and with creation itself." 160

The Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12 is not the only occurrence in the Old Testament where we find this commissioning for Abram's descendants to live as a missional blessing to the wider world. Some 4 – 5 centuries later and just two months after their departure from Egypt, ¹⁶¹ God spoke these words to Moses on Mount Sinai: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel. ¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 22:6-7; Leviticus 19:23-25; Exodus 23:4-5, 12; Psalm 145:9

¹⁶⁰ Flemming, 26.

¹⁶¹ Exodus 19:1

¹⁶² Exodus 19:4-6

This Sinaitic (or Mosaic) Covenant¹⁶³, existing in three parts [(i) v. 4 – a reminder of God's liberating work on behalf of Israel (Exodus 1 – 18); (ii) v. 5 – a condition that calls Israel to live in obedience and faithfulness to this covenant; and (iii) v. 6 – the promise of who and what Israel will be in relation to God and the rest of the world], ¹⁶⁴ speaks of God's purpose for Israel: to be 'a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.'

William Dumbrell sees this priestly call in Exodus 19:6 as something of a commentary on Genesis 12:1-3 in that it explains how Israel will fulfill God's promise of being a blessing to all the nations. The fact that Israel is to be "a priestly nation" indicates that what the priests were to be to the people of Israel, so the people of Israel were to be to the wider world. The role of the priests was to mediate between God and the people/nations: to represent God to the people, and to represent the people to God (such as making sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the people). The way in which Israel, being set apart for God's use, was to represent His likeness to the nations was through the way they lived, being a holy people. This holiness pertained not just to

¹⁶³ Ibid., 35, 36. (Goheen provides an overview of how the concept of covenant tended to be used within surrounding cultures: "the term 'covenant' was generally used in the pagan cultures of the Ancient Near East to describe an agreement that governed a relationship between two parties, whether friends, nations, or marriage partners. It was a binding compact in which each party committed to being faithful for the established terms of the relationship. ... There were parity covenants made between equal partners (ex. Equally powerful empires) ... [and there] were also vassal covenants made between two unequal partners, for example between a great king and the subject peoples of his empire. ... These vassal covenants are similar to the covenants of the Old Testament. ... A vassal covenant described a binding relationship between a king and his subject people; the relationship was permanent and unbreakable, and it demanded the total commitment of both parties. Thus the covenant often was ratified by both parties swearing an oath of allegiance and committing themselves to the agreement. There might also be an imprecatory ceremony in which blood was shed, with each of the parties saying that if they failed to keep their side of the covenant, their own blood might be shed like that of the animals. ... The relationship continued as long as the vassal lived in faithfulness – but he became a covenant breaker on pain of death.")

¹⁶⁴ Goheen, 37.

¹⁶⁵ William Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 90.

keeping certain rituals and avoiding those things declared unclean, but in particular it called them to a peculiar kind of living marked by love, integrity, justice, and compassion. The way they lived before their neighbouring nations was to be a demonstration of what God is like. 166 Moreover, such a witness was to be as a holy people: a nation or community of blessing, and not just a group of holy individuals. God's love (and hence his nature), as well as the fullness of life that He intended for all, was to be visibly evident through how this community cared not just for one another but for the wider world around them as well.

If one were to consider only the Noahic, Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants, or even the examples of Jeremiah's call to his exilic countrymen to put down deep roots in Babylon and to "seek the welfare of the city" or Daniel who along with his companions (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) fully engaged and excelled within the cultural life of Babylon (where they were in exile) even while remaining uncompromisingly true to their God-given identity, 168 one might be excused for wondering whether the children of Israel only had the responsibility to show or demonstrate God's love. Did they not also have responsibility to give witness to that love through the use of word as well; through telling or proclaiming to others about God's love and purposes for all people? Was there never need of explanation of what God was up to? The Old Testament indeed does also present Israel's responsibility to speak of and tell the surrounding nations about their great God. Some examples would be Moses deciphering for Pharaoh all that God was up to; Joanh being sent on a cross-cultural mission to Nineveh to

¹⁶⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 121.

¹⁶⁷ Jeremiah 29:4ff.

¹⁶⁸ Daniel 1 ff.

¹⁶⁹ Flemming, 46.

¹⁷⁰ Exodus 5 ff.

warn them of pending destruction due to their wickedness if they did not change their ways;¹⁷¹ the prophet Isaiah announcing that Israel had the responsibility to be a witness to all the nations that Yahweh God is the one and only true God: "Gather the nations together! Assemble the peoples of the world! ... You are my witnesses, O Israel. ... There is no other God – there never has been, and there never will be. I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Saviour. ... You are my witnesses that I am the only God," says the Lord."¹⁷² Numerous Psalms likewise make clear that Israel was not only to bring its praise and worship before the Lord, but to call all nations to worship the Lord and to acknowledge all the glorious things that God has done among the nations.¹⁷³

The sad reality is that far too often the Israelites did not live out their missional purposes in the way that God had decreed, and much of the Old Testament consists of God's spokespersons – often the prophets – reminding and calling the people to stop ignoring their obligation to live out the kind of righteousness, integrity, compassion and justice to which they had been called.

- Do not twist justice in legal matters by favoring the poor or being partial to the rich and powerful. Always judge people fairly.¹⁷⁴
- Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. 175

¹⁷¹ Jonah 3 ff.

¹⁷² Isaiah 43:9-12

¹⁷³ Flemming, 53. (cf. Psalm 57:7, 66:8, 67:3-5, 96:7-9, 105:1)

¹⁷⁴ Leviticus 19:15

¹⁷⁵ Psalm 82:3

- Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. 176
- Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! 177
- The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. 178

Through these words of the prophets it remained clear that God's purposes for Israel continued to be that they would be a channel through which His blessing, justice and righteousness would flow to the wider world, and that they were to be a holy and priestly people; one which through their communal lifestyle and merciful practices would present to the watching world an embodied depiction of what God is like. As stated earlier, this calling to love justice and do mercy entailed Israel's enduring responsibility to care for creation as a further means of glorifying its Creator and caring for their fellow humanity.¹⁷⁹

The ministry of the prophets illustrated that although "all the way through this story God provided the means by which they might fulfill their calling ... [the Israelites] continually failed to be a holy people. ... As the prophets saw it, the problem was that Israel's heart was desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). It needed a new heart, a new spirit; it needed God's law written on its very being.¹⁸⁰

It would be a mistake to think that the Israelites had completely lost sight of these covenants which God had made with them centuries before. Despite their repeated failure to live

¹⁷⁶ Isaiah 1:17

¹⁷⁷ Amos 5:24 (NIV)

¹⁷⁸ Micah 6:8

¹⁷⁹ Leviticus 25:4; Isaiah 6:3; Psalm 104:10-30; 150:6; Isaiah 24:4-7 (cf. Joel 2:2-20); Jeremiah 2:7

¹⁸⁰ Goheen, 73.

out *their* part of the covenant to be a blessing to the nations, the people of Israel nonetheless selectively clung to their identity of being a chosen people and that God would fulfill the promises He made to Abraham and to Moses in terms of showering the fullness of His blessings on them. This is seen most clearly in how, as their political and social conditions deteriorated through centuries of exile and subjugation to foreign powers, they less and less foresaw the anticipated promised Kingdom as one where righteousness, justice, humaneness and mercy would prevail and in which they would serve as a light to the nations. Instead, they increasingly developed the expectation that upon the eventual coming of the Messiah the nation of Israel would be unshackled from the dominion of foreign powers and would not only be restored to their former glory but they would break free, rise up, and conquer the Gentile nations who would then become subject to them. It perhaps could be thought of as a form of 'Make Israel Great Again!'

Goheen tells how such an anticipation manifested itself particularly in the intertestamental period, that time between the writing of the prophets and the coming of Jesus.

Israel in the intertestamental period is a "seething cauldron" of eschatological hope, longing for the coming of the kingdom, torn asunder in factions and parties according to their differing visions of the coming kingdom. These factions differ on how and when God will act and how they are to live until he does. The Zealots are activists who advocate violence against their oppressors in holy war; they believe God will bring the kingdom through their heroic military efforts. ... [The] Essenes are quietists who advocate withdrawal from the pollution of paganism and prayer for God's kingdom to come. The Pharisees are sectarians who attempt to establish boundaries against the purity laws that will protect Israel's covenant identity from defilement ... [believing that] if Israel keeps itself from pagan pollution, God will act to deliver it from its enemy. The Sadducees walk the way of opportunistic complicity, compromising with the occupying powers; for them, maintaining the status quo and acting in expedience are the order of the day if the whole nation is not to be destroyed.¹⁸¹

68

¹⁸¹ Goheen, 69.

Though each different from the others, these various groups or factions nonetheless shared something fundamental in common, and that was a significantly distorted understanding of their divine election guaranteeing for them a triumphant outcome over their foes and looking forward to an eventual "turning of the tables, with Israel at the top and oppressors becoming the oppressed." Again, lost in all this was any continuing notion of their responsibility to be that blessing and light to all nations. In fact, each of them had in their own ways lost sight of any anticipation of the salvation of all Israel, believing that it would instead only be for those who constituted what each of them believed to be the 'true remnant;' in other words, those who were of their own individual camp and who followed their prescriptions.

It was into this world and time that Jesus of Nazareth was born, and "with the coming of Jesus, the promised gathering of God's eschatological people begins." ¹⁸³

Missional and the New Testament

Jesus is clearly central to all of Scripture, and throughout the two thousand years of church history Christians have believed that all of the Bible – both Old and New Testaments – ultimately point to the deliverance or salvation that is found in Him. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are each an account of his life, death and resurrection, and each of them begin with a clear statement of who they are writing about. Matthew starts his gospel with the words "this is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah;" Mark says "This is the Good News of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God;" 185 Luke begins "Many people have set

¹⁸² David J. Bosch, *Transformational Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 31.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Matthew 1:1

¹⁸⁵ Mark 1:1

out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us," ¹⁸⁶ and proceeds to tell of the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. John introduces his gospel by speaking of Jesus whom he initially refers to as the Eternal Word, saying "in the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God ... He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ... So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. "¹⁸⁷ Lest there be any confusion that the One John refers to as 'the Word' is Jesus, he concludes his gospel with these words: "Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written." ¹⁸⁸

Twice in what we know as the final chapter of his gospel Luke quotes Jesus as claiming that all Scriptures point to him. The first occurrence took place while Jesus walked along the Emmaus Road with two of his followers who, we're told, were kept from recognizing him. After they told this supposed stranger of the incredulous reports the women brought back asserting that not only was the tomb empty but they had also encountered an angel who told them Jesus was alive, he pointed out to them that "the Messiah would have to endure all these things before he would enter into His Glory." Luke relays how Jesus then "took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" 190 (though they still weren't aware of who they were talking to).

¹⁸⁶ Luke 1:1

¹⁸⁷ John 1:1, 10-11, 14

¹⁸⁸ John 21:25

¹⁸⁹ Luke 24·26

¹⁹⁰ Luke 24:27

Later in that same chapter Jesus again appeared, this time to the gathered group of the disciples. After convincing them that it was truly him, he reminded them, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." Luke continues on to say that he then "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Later in the New Testament the Apostle Paul would similarly write of how all the promises of God in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ: "For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding 'Yes!'" 192

Since Jesus is evidently integral and central to both the Old and the New Testaments, it would be wise to look at what he understood about the mission God had for his people.

Jesus, as well as the Gospel writers, saw himself as announcing the Gospel (meaning 'Good News') of the Kingdom, and that the Kingdom has now come in and through him. A sample of these verses are:

- "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God." 193
- "Jesus travelled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom." 194
- "the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and **the Good News** is being preached to the poor." 195
- "Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News." 196

¹⁹¹ Luke 24:44-45

¹⁹² 2 Corinthians 1:20

¹⁹³ Mark 1:1

¹⁹⁴ Matthew 4:23; cf. Matthew 9:35

¹⁹⁵ Matthew 11:5

¹⁹⁶ Mark 1:14

- "For the Good News must first be preached to all nations." 197
- "And then he told them, 'Go into all the world and preach **the Good News** to everyone." "198
- "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it." 199
- "Jesus used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people." 200
- "The Spirit of God is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.

 He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free." ²⁰¹
- Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you out to preach the Good News and you did not have money, a traveler's bag, or an extra pair of sandals, did you need anything?' 202

Continually this Good News that is spoken of in the various gospels is the "Good News of the Kingdom", ²⁰³ or as it often is simply referred to, "the Good News."

The question that next confronts us for understanding a theology of the missional model is to understand rightly what Jesus meant whenever he spoke of the Kingdom, for at no point did he ever go into significant detail so as to define it, no doubt in large part because it would already have been so well understood by his hearers as being "the restoration of God's rule over all the world."²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Mark 13:10

¹⁹⁸ Mark 16:15

¹⁹⁹ Luke 16:16 (NIV)

²⁰⁰ Luke 3:18

²⁰¹ Luke 4:18

²⁰² Luke 22:35

²⁰³ The "Kingdom," the "Kingdom of God," or the "Kingdom of Heaven" are referenced in excess of 100 times throughout the four Gospels (with only 3 being in the Gospel of John).

²⁰⁴ Goheen, 77.

Whenever he spoke of the Kingdom, Jesus tended to employ a number of different images²⁰⁵, just two of which were the gathering of sheep into a fold²⁰⁶ and the inviting of all to an overflowing banquet table made ready for them.²⁰⁷ In utilizing such images Jesus was introducing the radical understanding that this gathering was not for Israel only, but for all the nations in fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants: "I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd."²⁰⁸

This gathering of "other nations" includes not just those who are non-Jewish by birth, but also all those of Jewish birth who have been viewed as outsiders or unclean or lesser-thans: the poor, women, children, the infirm, the prodigals, tax collectors or other Roman collaborators, all who otherwise were considered to be the 'dregs' or disposables or outcasts of society. Jesus reveals that God's love is not limited, but rather extends to all human beings, cultures, peoples and nations.²⁰⁹ This understanding gives a new or more nuanced appreciation of Jesus' post-resurrection commission to his followers to go into 'all the world' preaching the gospel, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²¹⁰ This wasn't meant to be some kind of a burden or obligation or drudgery that needed to be fulfilled, but rather this was fantastic

²⁰⁵ Cf. Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 13

²⁰⁶ Luke 12:32; cf. Jeremiah 23:2-3; 31:10

²⁰⁷ Luke 14:15ff.; cf. Isaiah 25:6-9

²⁰⁸ John 10:16; cf. Luke 14:15-24

²⁰⁹ Dario Lopez Rodriguez in 'The liberating mission of Jesus: A Reading of the Gospel of Luke in a Missiological Key', p.25 references the offence that was taken when in Luke 4:25 – 27 Jesus references "two Gentiles as human beings worthy of the love of God." It is clear from the verses which follow (vv. 28-29) that those present at the Synagogue in Nazareth fully comprehended what Jesus was saying, and it was for that reason that the religious authorities attempted right then to kill him. Accessed February 9, 2020, https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.acadiau.ca:9443/doi/pdf/10.1177/026537889701400307.

²¹⁰ Matthew 28:19, 20

otherwise unthinkable great news that was to be made known to all people; that this thing that has happened in Christ is not only for some (i.e. the Jewish people), but for all!

This aligns with why René Padilla states: "To speak of the Kingdom of God is to speak of God's redemptive purpose for the whole Creation and of the historical vocation that the Church has with regard to that purpose here and now."²¹¹ He continues on to say "the central thrust of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ has come to fulfil Old Testament prophecy and that in his person and work the Kingdom of God has become a present reality [such that] here and now men and women can enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom of God."²¹² No longer are such blessings only an eschatological hope, even though the Kingdom is not yet here in its fulness. The Kingdom is understood to be a present reality (in terms of already experiencing its first-fruits or early signs), even while its fullness (in terms of the future completion of God's redemptive purposes) is yet to come. Jesus affirms that "the beginning of the last act of the drama ('the last days') has already begun in him."²¹³

Explicit references to 'the Kingdom' cannot be found within the Old Testament Scriptures themselves, for talk of the Kingdom only emerged in later Judaism.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, Jesus stands squarely within the deeply rooted eschatological hope of the Old Testament as time and again he spoke about this Kingdom and its arrival;²¹⁵ this Kingdom being understood as being the people of Israel living into their calling of being a light to the nations in the fullest

²¹¹ Padilla, C. R. (1984). "The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God." *Transformation*, I(2), 16.

²¹² Ibid., 16, 17.

²¹³ Ibid., 17.

²¹⁴ Bosch, 31.

²¹⁵Luke 10:9; 17:21

sense of the phrase. But in order for this to happen – for Israel to become that light by taking up its missional role and identity – two things would need to happen:

First, Israel must be *gathered* into a community, and then its people must be *renewed* to live in obedience to God's Torah. ... The announcement of the kingdom means that the eschatological gathering of God's people is beginning so that Israel might become a sign of salvation for the nations. Jesus' work of gathering begins as he invites Israel to turn from its failure and embrace the Kingdom of God and so to take up its calling.²¹⁶

Again, this is why Jesus spoke of the Kingdom as being not only "yet-to-come" but also as "now-here," for in Him this gathering had begun;²¹⁷ a gathering of people who not only looked forward to their promised salvation in the last days but who equally wanted to re-engage with their mandate to be a channel of that salvation.²¹⁸

To probe this present dimension of the Kingdom further, Padilla writes:

The basic premise of Jesus' mission and the central theme of his preaching is not the hope of the Kingdom's coming at some predictable date in the future, but the fact that in his own person and work the Kingdom is already present among men and women in great power. ... The Kingdom has to do with God's dynamic power through which 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached' (Matt. 11:5). ... The kingdom of darkness which corresponds to 'this age' has been invaded; the 'strong man' has been disarmed, conquered, and plundered (Matt 12:29; Luke 11:22). The hour announced by the prophets has arrived – the Anointed One has come to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18, 19). In other words, Jesus' historical mission can only be understood in connection with the Kingdom of God. His mission here and now is the manifestation of the Kingdom as a reality present among men and women in his own person and action, in his preaching of the gospel and his works of justice and mercy.²¹⁹ (emphasis mine)

²¹⁶ Goheen, 81.

²¹⁷ "The fundamental premise is that in the life and work of Christ, God has acted definitively in order to fulfil his redemptive purpose. The main Actor has appeared and the eschatological drama of Jewish hope has begun. Eschatology has invaded history ... here and now men and women can enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom of God." C. Rene Padilla in "The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God", 16.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Padilla, 16.

In his ministry Jesus calls people to leave everything and to come and follow him. Those who respond to his call become the community or flock to whom God desires to give the Kingdom.²²⁰ Goheen observes, however, that it is "important for the purposes of ecclesiology to note what is happening here. It is not that the church is displacing Israel. Jesus is not establishing a completely new community. Rather, Israel itself is being purified and reconstituted."²²¹ It is this reconstituted Israel that is becoming the church, as Padilla comments:

The whole thrust of the New Testament leads us to conclude that if the Church is to be properly understood, it must be seen in the context of God's universal purposes in Christ Jesus. God's intention is 'to bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head, even Christ,' meaning that "the Church is properly understood only when it is seen as the sign of God's universal Kingdom, the firstfruits of redeemed humanity. ... One cannot read the New Testament and still try to understand the Church apart from God's purpose for humanity and history, from which it derives its significance. ²²²

The church should not make the mistake of thinking of itself as being the Kingdom, but rather understand itself as being the community of the Kingdom, "in which Jesus is acknowledged as Lord of the universe and through which ... the Kingdom is concretely manifested" in the world.²²³ As G.E. Ladd states, "in the biblical idiom, the Kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it and are governed by it. The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. ... The Kingdom is the rule of God, the church is a society of [believers]."²²⁴ (emphasis mine)

The implication of all this is that the church as God's chosen people (to whom all, whether of Jewish birth or not, are invited) still has the unchanging and never-annulled call upon their lives

²²⁰ Ibid., 17. (cf. Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32)

²²¹ Goheen, 84.

²²² Padilla, 19. (cf. Ephesians 1:10)

²²³ Ibid., 18.

²²⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974), 111.

to live out God's mission of being a blessing to the nations; in other words, to live as a holy priesthood.

This continued calling to live as a holy priesthood extends into the letters of the New Testament, as evidenced most explicitly by Peter as he pens words that strongly echo God's covenant with Moses: "You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." ²²⁵

This new community of the Kingdom – these Jesus followers whom Peter was addressing – were admittedly unlike the descendants of Abraham in one significant way: they were no longer defined by the sharing of a common physical lineage, one which could trace back to Abraham. Now they were bound together by a stronger bond, and that was each having experienced for themselves God's mercy as found in and through Jesus. This reality that defined and united them together was the new reality transcending every other possible "dividing wall of hostility" that otherwise would have separated them, for now "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female, for ... all are one in Christ Jesus." And their mission, Peter says, continued to be the very same mission given by God to Abram/Abraham: "to show others the goodness of God;" again, harkening back to the Old Testament covenants in which they were called to demonstrate the goodness and love of God by the way they lived and by who they were.

²²⁵ 1 Peter 2:9

²²⁶ 1 Peter 1:3 ... "It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead."

²²⁷ Ephesians 2:14 (NIV)

²²⁸ Galatians 3:28

²²⁹ 1 Peter 2:9

The historic context of 1 Peter is that he is likely writing in the 60's CE to a church that is beginning to undergo significant persecution. This was not because of any crimes they had committed but rather in part because they were beginning to experience state-sanctioned persecution under the Roman Emperor Nero, and no doubt also in part because "their new-found faith in Christ Jesus had brought evident transformation and changes to their lives; and ... hence [their neighbours] resorted to maligning them (1 Peter 4:3-4)."230 It was in the midst of this kind of opposition which, for a host of reasons, likely made verbal witness to Jesus difficult that Peter calls his fellow followers of Jesus Christ to live a fully transformed life, one which is completely shaped by this mission of revealing or making known the goodness of God that is in Jesus Christ. It is this kind of living, Peter contends, that will draw others to want to know for themselves the reason for the differences within their lives, and which can then open the door for these believers to share the reason for the hope that they have. 232

For Peter, this hope – this marked difference in their lives – was solely rooted in all that God in Jesus Christ had done for them: "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."²³³ Peter also knew their mission was to fulfill the mandate of the Abrahamic covenant, which was to be a blessing to the nations; to share with all the reason for the hope that they have. Their mission as holy priests was to present God to the people, such that as the surrounding people

²³⁰ S.A.A. Fagbemei (2010). Transformation, Proclamation and Mission in the New Testament: Examining the Case of 1 Peter. *Transformation*, 27(3), 209 – 223, p. 216

²³¹ "It is remarkable that *eupopteuontes* in 2:12 refers to what is observable over a long period of time and in its present tense form allows it to be seen and reflected upon for a long period of time." (Ibid., 217)

²³² Cf. 1 Peter 2:12; 3:15

²³³ 1 Peter 1:18,19

watched these believers they would understand what God is like. And in turn, how did these believers themselves know what God is like? They could know what God was like by looking to Jesus, for Jesus not only revealed the heart of God by his example but he also set the example of the kind of life they were to follow. Peter instructs them: "For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

He never sinned.

nor ever deceived anyone.

He did not retaliate when he was insulted,

nor threatened revenge when he suffered.

He left his case in the hands of God,

who always judges fairly.

He personally carried our sins

in his body on the cross

So that we can be dead to sin

and live for what is right.

By his wounds

you are healed.

Once you were like sheep

Who wandered away.

But now you have turned to your Shepherd,

The Guardian of your souls." ²³⁴

²³⁴ 1 Peter 2:21ff.

The missional paradigm calls those who want to faithfully live out their God-given mission to understand that their missionary activity begins by looking deeply into Jesus and drawing near to Him in faith, for it is by looking at Jesus through Scripture that we are able to best understand what God is like.²³⁵ Moreover, Jesus' life, ministry and death is also the archetype which defines and casts the vision for how we as his followers are to live into the eschatological mission of "being a light to the nations" to all those around us. The sequential stages of missional witness is, then, that the watching world should come to know what God is like by watching His people as in community they graciously live their faith out in what James K.A. Smith calls "embodied practice as a better story."²³⁶ In turn, His people in community should increasingly know the heart and mission of God – or how to live this 'better story' – by keeping their eyes fixed upon Christ as they experience Him through one another, through prayer, through various experiences of life, and most especially and supremely through the words and truths of Scripture.

Thus far I have considered how both nature and the Bible points to God as what we can call a Missional God; one who is loving and generous and who delights in blessing and restoring His Creation. As a Missional God He is always in the process of calling out a missional people whom He not only wants to bless but whom He wants to use as a blessing to all those who are not yet a part of His people. This was clearly seen in the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants of the Old Testament (but certainly not limited to those examples), and also in the sending of His Son Jesus into the world announcing the arrival of the Kingdom and forming and commissioning a new people. The purpose of this new people – this new community – is to live out the

²³⁵ John 10:30, 14:9, Colossians 1:15

²³⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 181, as quoted in Hastings, 81.

eschatological hope of the Kingdom, that being that God's long-promised generosity and blessing for all the nations was about to be revealed in an entirely new way.

Missional and the Trinity

One key component of theological understanding that has not yet been explored is the role and function of the One who is commonly referred to as the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. Central to this missional discussion thus far has been the role of both God the Father and God the Son, with little comment about the role of God the Spirit. Integral to and implicit in missional theology is the understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God.

Dr. Ross Hastings probes Trinitarian theology in his book 'Missional God, Missional Church", and explains why careful consideration of the Trinity is relevant to properly understanding the mission of the church.

A concise Trinitarian understanding of God is that in Scripture God reveals Himself to be one God in three distinct persons, each co-equal and co-eternal, having the same nature and attributes, with each being fully God and hence equally worthy of worship and obedience.

God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons sharing the one divine nature, in a oneness of communion God has revealed himself as one God in three persons. The relational God, who is the personal God. The God who is open for human relations in Christ. The God who draws humans into his life through his people by the Spirit. This is central to mission, not peripheral. To be missional is to be trinitarian, and to be trinitarian is to be missional.²³⁷

Hastings further adds:

[Being] Trinitarian is not just to believe confessionally in the Trinity. The nature of the Trinity as person-in-relation is not a subsidiary doctrine or even an attribute of God among others. It is who God is, and it is the very center of Christian theology and therefore of mission. ... The Trinity has powerful relevance now and in every age, because it

²³⁷ Hastings, 84.

represents the profound relationality of God within Himself and therefore as expressed in his creation and sustaining and reconciling of the universe and humanity."²³⁸

This mutual relationality and communion as three persons in one within the Godhead protects us from falsely conjecturing that God as Creator engaged in the act of creation out of some sort of deficit or loneliness, as if He was longing for something more. This would imply a lacking or insufficiency within God, or that the communion experienced within the Godhead was not enough. Rather, the understanding of the Triune nature of God indicates that the impetus He created out of was "the richness of his intratrinitarian love [which] flowed over in a joyful *ekstasis* of that love." This is reminiscent of where this chapter began, understanding that God created "everything that has been made" out of His nature of profuse generative love, a love that has in no way been diminished by the arrival of humanity's sin and its consequences. Out of His continued love for His creation, God is intensely desirous for all of creation to be reconciled unto Him.

Fundamental to understanding what is meant by 'person' (one God in three persons) is understanding that the mutual relationality that exists amongst the three persons of the Trinity is not simply co-incidental (as in "isn't that lovely that these three persons love each other so"), but rather their mutuality and communion each with the other is a significant part of that which makes them 'persons'. The significance of this for mission is that what is true of the persons of the Trinity is also true for our understanding of human persons. The Christian concept of person is not that of the autonomous self-reliant individual as much as it is that of person-in-community. Hastings says it this way: "the distinctiveness and dignity and power of personhood-in-relation in

²³⁸ Ibid., 84, 86.

²³⁹ Ibid., 90.

²⁴⁰ Psalm 145:9 ... "The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation."

God serves to define human persons in a corresponding way."²⁴¹ The implication of this for the missional church is that whereas true personhood is found through restored and reconciled relationships both with our Creator and with our fellow humans, then those reconciled relationships both inform and define the mission of the missional church, which is to see people brought into whole and therefore reconciled relationship with both God and one another. In light of this understanding, verses such as 2 Corinthians 5:17ff. and Ephesians 2 offer a whole new textured richness to understanding the mission God's people have of advancing God's mission of bringing blessing and fullness to all.

When grappling with the theological understanding of the Trinity, three terms and concepts advanced by theologians through the centuries are helpful. One is 'perichoresis,' which comes from the Greek *peri*, meaning "around," and *chorein*, meaning "to give way" or "to make room." Some scholars speak of this as a sort of a choreographed dance where all members move as one, precisely and fluidly. Another is the word 'coinherence,' originating from the word *inhere*, which means to exist essentially or permanently within. Hastings explains that the Medieval theologians used two Latin terms as it related to the coinherence of the Trinity.

The perichoresis of the being of the persons was termed 'circuminsessio' (literally, their seatedness in one another). The perichoresis of *actions* ... was referred to as *circumincessio*. The latter depends on the former. ... This reflects both the trinitarian doctrine of appropriations (that to each person there has been given certain distinct roles) *and* the doctrine of the indivisibility of the works of the divine persons – *opera sunt indivisa* (that each person is coinherently at work on the appropriated work of the other).²⁴²

This perichoresis and coinherence of the Trinity can be glimpsed in John 20 where Jesus makes a post-resurrection appearance to his anxious followers who have gathered out of fear of being discovered by Jesus' persecutors. Here Jesus speaks those missional words that so

²⁴¹ Ibid., 94.

²⁴² Ibid., 99.

powerfully ring of God's mission: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (emphasis mine). John continues on to explain, Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This passage is instrumental in encapsulating what is often referenced as the missio Dei. As Bosch explains, "The classical doctrine of the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, is expanding to include yet another movement, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world." ²⁴⁴

The implication of these words of John 20:21-22 is that it is incorrect if one was to assume that the mission of the church belongs to the church itself, but rather the mission belongs to the Father. The church, Newbigin says, is simply to be a "sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's reign over all nations and things."²⁴⁵ As Guder expresses it, "the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or the goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness."²⁴⁶ The mission of the church is rooted in the divine love God has for all Creation, and likewise belongs to Him.

Missional and the Cross

One cannot explore the theological foundation of the missional paradigm without also considering the significance of the Cross for not only the Christian faith but for a missional paradigm as well. What does it mean to not only preach but holistically live our lives in light of the Cross?

²⁴³ John 20:21-22.

²⁴⁴ Bosch, 390.

²⁴⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 150.

²⁴⁶ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 5.

The Apostle Paul understood that the cross was to be core to our message. ²⁴⁷ The New Testament writers are unequivocal that Jesus is, as Ross Hastings says, "both the source of their pardon and the pattern of their lives." ²⁴⁸ The question which many scholars have grappled with for centuries has been whether Christ's death was the pardon just for some (as Reformed theologians tend to think, believing in a 'particular' or limited atonement and therefore understanding that Christ's redeeming act is only for those to whom it will be applied, or in other words the elect), or was his death vicarious for all humanity? I would align with Hastings, who himself appeals to Barth, in understanding that it is the latter. This need not, however, suggest a doctrine of universalism, thinking that all are saved regardless of their response to the gospel. Hastings writes:

The issue of the atonement's power does not depend on whether folks accept the verdict of God upon them as a result of Jesus' death and resurrection for them. Their failure to believe and accept that verdict does not alter the verdict. If their entry into the epistemic and existential value of the justification that Jesus has effected does not have a volitional component, humans would not be free in any sense. Conversely, were God to force the human into faith it would no longer be faith.²⁴⁹

The missional understanding of our calling as the people of God is undergirded by this understanding that Christ has died for all (although it would be unfair to insinuate that those who hold a position of limited atonement cannot hold to a missional understanding), and as God's people we have the privilege of making known the fantastic news of this once-and-for-all redemption through Christ, inviting people everywhere to fully take hold of and live into all that which Christ has done for them.

²⁴⁷ Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; 9:16; 15:3-4; Galatians 6:14

²⁴⁸ Hastings, 223.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 225.

Hastings also helpfully draws out the implications of the kind of death which Christ died for those who are a part of this community of his followers.

The pierced hands and feet not only convey an accomplished redemption – they suggest the nature of the King and the kingdom. They reflect a Christ who is a servant, giving his life for the world. They set a pattern for his disciples as to how they can expect to minister – as servants who give their lives for the world, who can expect to suffer in applying reconciliation and redemption to the world in mission. ... True Christianity, if the image of Christ with nail-scarred hands is anything to go by, is a metanarrative that does not wield power and oppressiveness – it is revelation of a triune God in three persons who love each other with perfect mutuality and submission, and who creates and redeems human persons to love that way too. ... Being in union with Christ here on earth means entering in to the pain and suffering of the world as he did.²⁵⁰ (emphasis mine)

In light of this, the cross ought to be understood as far more than only an accomplishment of reconciliation and pardon, though it is all that. It also sets the pattern for how we are then to live as the church in our calling to be the physical embodiment of the presence and the way of Jesus in the world today.

The manner in which we understand what is happening at the Cross will also have significant impact on how we understand our mission. The New Testament employs dozens of word pictures, or analogies, to depict what God is doing through Christ's death on the Cross and His subsequent Resurrection from the Grave. Of these various images John Stott writes:

[Underlying] them all is the truth that God in Christ has borne our sins and died our death to set us free from sin and death. Such images are indispensable aids to human understanding of doctrine. And what they convey, being God-given, is true. Yet we must not deduce from this that to have understood the images is to have exhausted the meaning of the doctrine. For beyond the images of the atonement lies the mystery of the atonement, the deep wonders of which, I guess, we shall be exploring throughout eternity.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 231.

²⁵¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 168.

Examples of such word pictures include:

- Justification a metaphor from the law courts; the opposite of condemnation, it is more than simply being declared "not guilty" for it is to be declared innocent²⁵²
- Redemption an image from the marketplace it means to buy or buy back, whether as a purchase or a ransom; it is the act of paying the price demanded; one example would be that of a slave redeeming himself by finding a way to purchase his freedom through paying his owner his market value as a slave²⁵³
- Reconciliation an end to an estrangement, a restoration of broken relationships;
 typically, it is one party taking the initiative and choosing to freely forgive the
 other, stretching out an embrace of acceptance, inviting the other to accept it, with
 the second party then considering this extension of grace and choosing whether or
 not to accept the offer; if accepted, the gulf is bridged, the relationship can be
 rebuilt²⁵⁴
- Salvation means both to heal and to rescue, or to be saved from destruction, as if
 your house was left standing after a tornado razed everything around it; it is this
 word the thief on the cross uses as he calls out to Jesus to save himself and his
 companions²⁵⁵
- Imputation infusion of money or other assets to be credited to your account, or someone paying off your indebtedness with their own provisions²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Romans 4:4-5,16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9

²⁵² Romans 5:1; Romans 5:16; Galatians 2:16; 3:24

²⁵³ 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19

²⁵⁴ Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18 – 21; Ephesians 2:15ff.; Colossians 1:20-22

²⁵⁵ Luke 19:9; 23:42; Acts 4:12; Romans 13:11; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 1:5, 9-10; Jude 3; Revelation 7:10

- Grace favor or kindness, especially that which is unearned or unmerited; a gift,
 but one which must be accepted in order to benefit from it²⁵⁷
- Sanctification to cleanse and set apart for a special purpose²⁵⁸
- Atonement a word relating to sacrificial systems; in Paul's day a person who sinned would bring a sacrifice to make reparation for an offence or injury; implicit within such a sacrifice would be the recognition that death is always required wherever forgiveness or reconciliation occurs, either 'the wronged' dying to the notion of 'still being owed' because of the wrong they have experienced, or death to the offender to pay for the wrong he/she has done²⁵⁹
- Propitiation closely aligned with 'atonement' above, though propitiation speaks
 to the removal of wrath through the offering of a gift²⁶⁰

The point of citing such word-pictures or literary images is to draw attention to all that God was doing for us in and through Christ's life, death and resurrection. As recognized by Stott above, it is likely that just as no individual image could do full justice to all that God was doing, neither could they in their entirety fully capture and convey to our finite understanding all what God in His infinite love was doing through Christ on the Cross. That being said, however, every one of these images individually and together point to God being the initiator as He at His expense creates a way of deliverance for His Creation and for all He loves, which is every individual.

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²⁵⁷ Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; 11:6; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 12:9; Ephesians 2:5; 7-9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:7; James 4:6

²⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:9

²⁵⁹ Matthew 26:28; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Romans 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter

²⁶⁰ Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

Often the cross is portrayed as being primarily or exclusively about God meting out His justice and wrath on sin; as in 'wrong has been done, someone has to pay for that wrong, so God sends His Son to pay that price'. While this is a popular and widely held theology, particularly within reformed circles, I would contend that in light of all that has been considered in this chapter that is an inadequate view. Yes, sin is horrendous and one is not wrong to say, as Scripture does, that God hates sin, but His vitriol towards it isn't so much on account of it being an insult against Him as if He is some kind of ego-centred narcissist, but rather because sin disfigures and robs His much-loved creation of all that He in that love intends for them. It is on account of this great love which He has for His creation that God at His expense provides the way for rescue and for redemption.

This is what was earlier meant in saying that how we understand the cross will have significant impact on how we understand our calling. If the cross is *primarily* understood as being the anger of God exacting vengeance against sin, then that can become the defining motif for Christians within their culture, leading to a kind of 'name it and shame it' response toward those who are caught in sin's grip. If, however, the Cross is understood as displaying the truth that there is no distance to which God in His love will not go and no cost that He will not pay to bring rescue, deliverance and newness of life to His Creation, then that becomes the defining pattern for all those who are called by His name. Such an understanding becomes then a clarion call to God's people in that rather than our sitting back waiting for people to find their way to us; we are in reality a sent or 'co-missioned' people who are to do all that is possible to convey this wonderful news of God's love to people wherever they are and in whatever their circumstances.

What Constitutes the 'Good News'?

Considering the Baptist context of this inquiry (in that this is a consideration of Missional understanding within the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*), it is important to consider what in fact constitutes the Good News, or Gospel, for Baptists have often identified strongly as a Gospel people. "We need to preach the Gospel," "We need to share the Gospel," "We need to live the Gospel" … these phrases and many like them are not unfamiliar within the rhetoric of Atlantic Baptists. Also, as has already been identified within this chapter, there are numerous occasions in the New Testament Gospels where we read of how Jesus preached the Good News, or the Gospel (depending on the Scriptural translation that is read), 'of the Kingdom'.

In his essay "What is the Gospel" Ron Sider explores what the word 'gospel' meant for Jesus as he spoke of it. Many Atlantic Baptists would no doubt identify with "forgiveness of sins" or a "sin management" interpretation of the Gospel that is a common understanding for self-professing Evangelicals within western Christianity. Sider writes "If you ask evangelicals what the gospel is, the answer of many is: 'Forgiveness of sins'. Or, if they have studied theology: 'Justification by faith alone'. Frequently the impression is given that the core of Christian faith, the essence in comparison with which other things are less important, is forgiveness of sins."²⁶¹

The problem with this understanding, Sider says, is not so much that it is wrong as that it is incomplete. Later in this same article Sider states "Let me be absolutely clear. Unmerited forgiveness of sins, justification by faith alone in Jesus' atoning death, is at the very heart of Christian faith. Jesus came to die on the cross as the ransom for our sins." But the Gospel is

²⁶² Ibid

²⁶¹ Ron Sider, What is the Gospel? in Transformation, 1999, 16 (1), 31.

more than that, and the problem when we exclusively limit the Gospel to just that is it leads to reducing the Good News of the Kingdom to being exclusively about an inner, spiritual relationship between the individual soul and God, and this at the expense of the importance of living out the transformed Kingdom life pursuing the values and priorities of God's reign here on earth. The Gospel is about loving God and loving others in the manner modeled by Jesus. It is living a life oriented towards being a conduit or vessel for God's blessings of life to be poured out to those around us. It is about dying to the agenda of self to instead be proactively participating in God's agenda of blessing for those around us.

Sider calls us to give careful consideration as to what Jesus meant as he spoke of the Gospel.

Jesus came, claiming to be the long-expected Messiah and announcing that the Messianic reign of God was breaking into history in a special way in his person and work. ... There are two basic strands in the prophets' Messianic predictions: a vertical and a horizontal component. The vertical component promises that the Messiah will bring a new right relationship with God. And the horizontal component predicts new relationships with neighbours.²⁶³

The vertical component is that we can enter into God's Kingdom only by sheer divine grace. Jesus did pay the price for our sins. We are forgiven and given new life through him. The horizontal component of the Gospel is that we are called to new, reconciled relationships; first within the community of Jesus' disciples, or what we call the church, and then into the wider world. According to Jesus it is impossible to separate a right relationship with God from a right relationship with our neighbour. In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus says "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive you." This is not some heretical view of works righteousness but rather a

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²⁶³ Ibid.

demonstration of how important it is to God that we who have experienced God's mercy in Christ then live that mercy out to others as well.

Sider identifies seven implications to understanding that the Gospel according to Jesus is "that the Messianic reign has in fact begun and there is now a reconciled and reconciling community whose visible life is a sign of the kingdom that has already begun and will someday arrive in its fullness."²⁶⁴ As a means for better understanding the theology of the missional paradigm, they will be listed here. If the gospel is not just forgiveness, but the good news of the Kingdom, then:

- 1. We cannot separate a reconciled relationship with God and a reconciled relationship with Christ's body
- 2. We are better able to understand that reconciled social and economic relationships in the body of Christ are one part of salvation
- 3. We understand more clearly that ministering to both the physical and spiritual needs of people is not some optional possibility, but essential to the gospel
- 4. Any sharing of the gospel that does not include a significant concern for the poor is unbiblical ... ([understanding that] there is now a new Christian community where human dignity, social empowerment and economic justice for the least and the poorest are now being modeled and promoted in the power of the Spirit)
- 5. We see more vividly that the Christian community, if it is faithful, will always challenge what is wrong in the status quo ... [for] Jesus' Messianic community can never comfortably fit into any fallen society
- 6. We perceive more distinctly that there must always be a sharp distinction between the church and the world
- 7. We cannot share the gospel adequately just by preaching; we have to live it too ... words and deeds must go together.²⁶⁵

David Suryk, in a sermon at the 2016 Midwest Faculty Conference called 'What is the Good News of Jesus Christ?' similarly acknowledges that for many the Gospel is typically thought of as only being about a person being in sin and needing rescue from God's Judgement,

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 33.

²⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶ David Suryk, *What is the "Good News" of Jesus Christ? Part 1*, July 23, 2017, accessed January 9, 2020, https://blog.emergingscholars.org/2017/07/what-is-the-good-news-of-jesus-christ-part-1/.

with Jesus then being presented as the one who will save the person from his or her sins. Suryk explains that to understand what is meant by 'Good News' (or 'euangelion') one needs to look especially at Isaiah chapters 40 to 52. It was from Isaiah 40 that John the Baptist quoted when he identified himself as the One sent to prepare the way for the coming Lord. This chapter begins the long section of 13 chapters which anticipates God's coming to rescue Israel out of Exile and to reign, not just over a restored Israel but over all the earth and its inhabitants, as God had spoken of in both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants. Also, when the Apostle Paul identifies himself as being a servant of Jesus and/or the Good News,²⁶⁷ he was claiming that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises to redeem not just Israel, but the whole world. The time of the blessing of all nations had now begun in Jesus Christ! ²⁶⁸

Suryk notes that the term gospel was not one which originated with Jesus, but rather was one which he (and then later the Biblical writers and the early church) adopted out of wider culture, for it was a term often employed in regards to emperor worship, as in "when a new emperor ascended to the throne, this *gospel* was announced throughout the empire." It was for this reason that Paul's use of the term 'gospel' could have been interpreted as a treasonous act as it was "a subversive challenge both to Israel's King Herod and to Caesar, the Roman Emperor."

²⁶⁷ Romans 1:9, 15, 16, 17; 15:16; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 2:12; **Galatians 3:8**; **Ephesians 3:6**; Colossians 1:5

²⁶⁸ The nature of this blessing is that they would be "freed from service and loyalty to other gods so that they might serve the Lord in every area of their lives; social, economic, and political"; Goheen, 34.

²⁶⁹ David Suryk, *What is the "Good News" of Jesus Christ? Part 2*, accessed January 8, 2020, https://blog.emergingscholars.org/2017/07/what-is-the-good-news-of-jesus-christ-part-2/. ²⁷⁰ Ibid.

Building on Paul's understanding of the Gospel,²⁷¹ Suryk further states that "Paul's Gospel is thus the royal announcement that the crucified Messiah Jesus was raised from the dead to be the world's true Lord. ... The summons of this Gospel is for all persons in the world of every ethnicity, race and culture to "repent and believe" that Jesus is Lord and to live lives accordingly. This Gospel summons men and women to abandon all rival loyalties and loves, and to embrace Jesus as Lord so that they can begin to live a new life of obedience."²⁷²

In short, the Good News of the Kingdom is that God is all in for humanity, and in and through Jesus Christ the fullness of God's blessings has now begun to be poured out on all – blessings of true and abundant 'resurrection' life²⁷³ which can be experienced by choosing to relinquish one's old ways and instead begin to meaningfully live in obedience to and alignment with the merciful and bountiful fullness of the reign of God. The posture of such a kind of resurrection living is that of Christ's own cruciform life, remembering that it is only those who lose their life for Him will find it.²⁷⁴ Living according to 'the Kingdom' or under 'the reign of God' is what Donald Kraybill calls an upside-down way of living, but only because it is directly inverted from the way the world otherwise calls us to live. The truth is, however, to enter in and

Suryk references N.T. Wright's book 'What Paul Really Said', Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 65-66, where Wright says that God's gospel concerning Jesus is first a two-fold announcement about God: (i) the God of Israel is the one true God, and the pagan deities are mere idols (the O.T. message); and (ii) The God of Israel is now made known in and through Jesus himself (the N.T. message). More specifically, the Gospel is a fourfold announcement about Jesus: (i) in Jesus of Nazareth and specifically in his cross, the decisive victory has been won over all the power of evil, including sin and death themselves; (ii) in Jesus' resurrection the New Age has dawned, inaugurating the long-awaited time when the prophecies would be fulfilled, when Israel's exile would be over, and the whole world would be addressed by the one creator God; (iii) the crucified and risen Jesus was, all along, Israel's Messiah, her representative King; and (iv) Jesus was therefore also the Lord, the true king of the world, the one at whose ever knee will bow. Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Romans 6:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20

²⁷⁴ Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Luke 17:33; 1 Peter 1:18

live according to the Kingdom is to enter into that which in actuality is a right-side up way of living. This is the kind of resurrection living for which we were originally created.²⁷⁵ As Jesus himself says, "The Thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."²⁷⁶

Conclusion

Understanding that at its heart the missional paradigm is the message that "God is for humanity in Christ,"²⁷⁷ then the missional message is all about calling God's people to join in to His mission of extending His grace and restoration to all. This chapter began by considering how creation itself points to a Creator God of love, and then progressed to considering how both the Old and New Testaments explicitly reveal this God which we catch glimpses of in Creation. The God of Scripture – the God who exists as Trinity, the God who comes to our level through the Incarnation and who through His incarnated Son underwent both the ignominy and the glory of the Cross and the wonder of the resurrection – is as the Scriptures affirm a merciful and loving God; one that not only cares but acts on behalf of those who are far from grace. One of the primary ways in which God wishes to make His blessings known is through calling His people to join Him in His mission, that we as His community would meaningfully and tangibly live out into our neighbourhoods and world the same love and restoration and grace that we have first experienced through Jesus.

²⁷⁵ Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978).

²⁷⁶ John 10:10

²⁷⁷ Hastings, 223.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As previously acknowledged, when the 2011 "Senior Staff Restructuring Proposal" (which included the stated goal that by the year 2025 eighty percent of [CBAC] churches would display a missional culture) was accepted by what is now the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*, the leadership of the CBAC had not yet fully defined that which was meant by the missional paradigm, nor had they identified by what means a church would qualify as being considered a missional congregation.

The impetus for the writing of this thesis was to explore the meaning, legitimacy and theological foundations of the missional paradigm, as well as to investigate the extent to which the missional model was understood, accepted and already existent within the churches of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*.

The Research Summary

To assess the extent to which the missional paradigm is understood and signs of missional engagement are already exhibited within the life and culture of CBAC churches, I conducted a quantitative survey which was distributed via email to all senior/lead and solo pastors²⁷⁸ of CBAC churches. This survey was then followed by qualitative interviews with four

²⁷⁸ It was intentional that only one pastor per church receive the survey: therefore, the survey was sent to all lead and solo pastors, whether they were serving full-time or part-time.

CBAC Pastors who in my opinion have a good grasp of and are living out a missional paradigm in their own life and ministry.²⁷⁹

Permission of the Research Ethics Board

A proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Board of *Acadia University* seeking approval for the research as proposed to be conducted. This permission was granted on March 9, 2018 with the provisos that:

- As per TCPS2 Article 3.2(d), (i) the consent form of the quantitative survey would indicate that due to the anonymous nature of the survey, it would be impossible to withdraw responses once submitted, and (ii) those pastors taking part in the qualitative interviews would be informed that they would not be able to withdraw their responses after a period of 30 days following the interview
- All consent forms (qualitative interviews) and letter/emails of explanation (quantitative surveys) would indicate that "all data will be safely stored via a password-protected computer and/or a password-protected network folder" and also contain the warning that "any data sent electronically or stored online may be legally accessed by domestic or foreign authorities."

Any and all data received in the conducting of this research was safely stored via a password-protected computer and/or a password-protected network folder. This study was deemed by both the researcher and the Research Ethics Board to present minimal risks to participants in either phase of the research, and all completed questionnaires and/or notes from the qualitative interviews were treated with utmost confidentiality.

²⁷⁹ These interviews were recorded with permission of the participants.

The Quantitative Survey

The Quantitative Survey consisted of an online questionnaire comprising of 140 questions. Distributed by Advanis, ²⁸⁰ an explanatory email which I prepared accompanied each survey to introduce the intent of this research, explain that participation was totally voluntary, and to invite the pastors' participation. A total of 317 CBAC pastors were invited to participate and 140 completed the entire survey for a participation rate of 44.16%.

The survey began with a number of preliminary questions to assist with obtaining an understanding of the respondents and also the contexts in which they serve. Information asked included aspects such as the pastor's age, location served, years in ministry, years from retirement, size of congregation, the pastor's appraisal of the health of the congregation s/he serves, the pastor's own understanding of the missional paradigm, and the pastor's assessment of the congregation's understanding of the same.

All questions within the survey were randomized both by sections and topics using a mix of both positive and negative statements, with tabulation accounting for both.²⁸¹ Apart from Part I (Information About Survey Participants and Congregations They Serve) all the questions utilized a scale of 1 to 10 inviting respondents to indicate degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements presented.

Questions and their responses were analyzed in light of five dimensions which I identified, each of which I came to believe from my research to be an integral part of a missional paradigm. These five dimensions are:

²⁸⁰ Advanis is a privately-owned Canadian market and social research firm located in Ontario, Canada.

²⁸¹ In the scoring of the results of the quantitative survey which can be found in the appendix, negative questions are noted and scores are correspondingly appropriately converted.

- Deep (prioritizing individual growth in understanding, experiencing and living out the Spiritual life that is found in Christ)
- 2. *Wide* (prioritizing the living out of one's faith through personally demonstrating the compassion, love and mercy of God)
- 3. Attractional/Outsider Focused (a congregation prioritizing being a bridge-building and welcoming presence to the people who enter in)
- 4. *Partnering* (prioritizing the fostering of partnership both formal and informal with other groups/organizations within the community, even those who may not be part of the religious faith community)
- 5. *Evangelism* (prioritizing the making known of the Good News, or Gospel, that is found through the Bible, centred in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ).

These five missional dimensions were then examined according to four categories:

- Pastor
 - Aspirational
 - Actual
- Congregation
 - Aspirational
 - Actual

As explained, excluding the questions from Part 1 all individual statements were scored in terms of the expressed degree of Net Agreement or Net Disagreement with each one. The cumulative number of statements which were scored by the respondents as an 8, 9, or 10 in terms of 'degree of agreement' were considered 'Net Agreement' while conversely the cumulative number of statements which were scored as a 1, 2, or 3 in terms of 'degree of disagreement' were

considered 'Net Disagree'. (The exception would be for those statements which were intentionally asked in the negative, and scoring was therefore registered accordingly.)

Also, a score was assessed for each of Section A ("Pastor's Understanding of Missional") and Section B ("Congregation's Understanding of Missional") of Part III ("Questions on Understanding of Missional") as a means of evaluating the degree to which the Pastor self-assesses his or her own understanding of missional and the degree to which the Pastor assesses the congregation to understand the missional paradigm. The score for each of these respective sections was determined by taking the sum of total 'Net Agreement' (so the total of responses scored as an 8, 9 or 10) of each of the ten statements within that section. The Pastors' assessed their own understanding of missional understanding at an overall score of 62.5 while they assessed their congregation's understanding of missional at an overall score of 34.5.

The score for each of missional dimensions in Part IV was calculated in a different manner from the scoring of Part III. In Part IV scores for each of the four sub-categories of the five missional Dimensions were assessed by multiplying the mean score of each category (or numeric average of all the responses within the five statements of that section) by a factor of 100.

A summary of the findings and my observations of the quantitative survey is found in Chapter 4. That chapter contains the summary findings of the data as well as my reflections upon

Recognized Limitations of the Quantitative Survey/Reliability of Results

It is acknowledged that (i) there inevitably is a degree of limitation in the exact veracity of each statement that was created for the purpose of measuring each of the identified missional Dimensions, and (ii) that the scoring of both the Aspirational as well as Actual Dimension for

both the Pastor and the Congregation is subjectively assessed by the pastor alone. The implications of these two limitations is that rather than consider the data as meticulously precise in every circumstance, one would be better served to instead focus on overall patterns and comparative results (although the overall consistency in scoring as evidenced through relatively low Standard Deviations²⁸² and Coefficient of Variation²⁸³ combined with the overall symmetry of Aspirational scores exceeding Actual do in my opinion lend credence to the trustworthiness of the overall survey and interpreted score). If more resources had been available, I would have wished to administer a similar survey to a limited number of sample churches to ascertain the degree of correlation between the pastors' assessments and those of the congregations.

A further limitation is that not all invited pastors responded to the survey, although the overall participation rate of 44.16% is deemed respectable. Further to this relatively high participation rate of nearly 45%, from a general observation the demographic representation of the respondents is seen by CBAC senior staff as generally compatible with the demographic representation of CBAC pastors and their churches in terms of age distribution, ratio of full-time/part-time pastors, and size of church.²⁸⁴

²⁸² The Standard Deviation is calculated by (i) determining the mean (or mathematical average) of the numbers; (ii) for each number subtract the mean and square the result; (iii) calculate the mean of those squared differences; and (iv) take the square root of those squared differences.

²⁸³ The Coefficient of Variation is calculated by dividing the Standard Deviation by the mean, with higher Coefficient of Variations indicating greater range within the numeric responses.

²⁸⁴ Although such statistics are not kept by the CBAC, as one who has served with this denomination for the past seventeen-plus years and in consultation with other CBAC leaders, we are confident that the 44.16% of CBAC pastors who responded are consistently representative of CBAC pastors.

The Qualitative Interviews

Through the use of qualitative interviews with four CBAC pastors I sought to delve more deeply into some of the findings of the quantitative survey as well as probe each pastor's own understanding of the importance and value of the missional paradigm. Further, in our conversation we especially explored two essential core concepts which are integrally interwoven into the missional conversation: what is meant by the Gospel and how ought discipleship occur within the Christian life.

Each of these interviews were between 60 - 90 minutes in length and with each of the pastor's permissions they were recorded and then transcribed for future consideration.

My reflections upon the qualitative interviews with the four pastors is contained in Chapter 5. That chapter is laid out in two parts. The first part is an overview or a synopsis of the interviews themselves in which I relay certain parts of the conversations I had with each of the pastors, especially as they related to three key questions:

- What is the Gospel?
- How do you understand the phrase 'word and deed' in the missional context?
- What do you understand discipleship to entail?

Part Two of the Qualitative Research contains my reflections and observations gleaned from the interviews in an overall manner

Chapter Four

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

"An Exploration of CBAC Pastors Self-Assessment and Assessment of their Congregations with regards to Five Missional Dimensions"

Results, Observations, and Reflections

Purpose of This Survey

In the 2011 "Senior Staff Restructuring Proposal" of the then-called 'Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches' [CABC] (and now called the 'Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada' [CBAC]), which was formally adopted at their Annual Meeting in August of 2011, the goal was stated that by the year 2025 "eighty percent of CABC churches will demonstrate a missional culture." Anticipated markers of what would constitute a missional church were at that time identified. The purpose of this quantitative research was to explore, through an online survey with CBAC pastors, how well the missional paradigm is currently understood by the churches of the CBAC, and to also assess the degree to which those characteristics are already being exhibited.

Five Missional Dimensions

As explained in Chapter 3, in order to assess the extent to which the missional paradigm is understood, and also to assess the extent to which missional dimensions are already being

²⁸⁵ Schofield, et al., Senior Staff Proposal: Proposed Restructuring of Senior Staff of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, 8.

exhibited within the life and culture of CBAC churches, a quantitative survey was electronically distributed via email to all solo²⁸⁶ and senior/lead Pastors²⁸⁷ of the CBAC (implying that only actively serving pastors were surveyed, and only one pastor per congregation). The questions asked were randomized by topic employing a mix of both positive and negative statements, with tabulation accounting for both. Respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement (from 1 to 10) with statements exactly as worded. Questions and their responses were analyzed in light of five dimensions, each of which being deemed an integral part of a missional paradigm:

- 1. *Deep* (prioritizing individual growth in understanding, experiencing and living out the Spiritual life that is found in Christ)
- 2. *Wide* (prioritizing the living out of one's faith through personally demonstrating the compassion, love and mercy of God)
- 3. Attractional/ Outsider Focused (a congregation prioritizing being a bridge-building and welcoming presence to all who enter in)
- 4. *Partnering* (prioritizing the fostering of partnerships both formal and informal with other groups/organizations within the community, even those who may not be part of the religious faith community)
- 5. *Evangelism* (prioritizing the making known of the Good News that is found through the Bible, centered in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ).

These five dimensions were then examined according to four categories:

Pastor

²⁸⁶ The term 'solo pastor' is used to refer to a pastor who is the only called pastor of a congregation (the term called means the pastor has been officially called or recognized to be that congregation's pastor through a duly constituted process of congregational affirmation).

²⁸⁷ The term senior or lead pastor refers to a pastor who is identified by the congregation, as the name suggests, as the lead or senior pastor of that congregation's pastoral/ministry staff.

- o Aspirational
- Actual

Congregation

- Aspirational
- Actual

Participation in this survey was voluntary, and feedback was received anonymously. A letter was also distributed with this survey to explain the intent of this approximate 75-minute survey, and to invite the pastors' participation. A limited number of supplementary questions were also asked to better understand both the respondents and the contexts in which they serve. A total of 317 CBAC pastors were invited to participate with 140 completing the entire survey. This tabulates to a participation rate of 44.16%.

Scores for each of the four sub-categories of the five missional Dimensions were assessed by multiplying the mean score (or numeric average) of each category by a factor of 100.

Summary Results

The overall scores of the various Missional Dimensions were:

	PASTOR	CONGREGATION	PASTOR	CONGREGATION
	Aspirational	Aspirational	Actual	Actual
Deep	735	666	740	603
Wide	772	661	751	579
Attractional/	802	708	705	607
Outsider				
Focused				
Partnering	809	733	756	596
Evangelism	889	758	778	586

Table 4.1 Complete Scores for Each of the Five Missional Dimensions

The results indicate that with the exception of the *Deep* Dimension (Pastor) where the Actual exceeds the Aspirational score, every other result was consistent with the overall pattern that:

- Aspirational Scores (of both Pastor and Congregation) exceeded the Actual Scores of both, and
- Both the Aspirational and Actual scores of the Pastors exceeded the respective scores of the Congregations.
- 3. With the exception of *Attractional/Outsider Focused*, the Actual score of the Pastors exceeded even the Aspirational scores of the Congregation with regards to each of the other four Dimensions.

Observations and Reflections from the Data

The rank of each missional dimension from highest to lowest for each category were as follows:

PASTOR	CONGREGATION	PASTOR	CONGREGATION
Aspirational	Aspirational	Actual	Actual
Evangelism (889)	Evangelism (758)	Evangelism (778)	Attractional/Outsider
			Focused (607)
Partnering (809)	Partnering (733)	Partnering (756)	Deep (603)
Attractional/Outsider	Attractional/Outsider	Wide (751)	Partnering (596)
Focused (802)	Focused (708)		
Wide (772)	Deep (666)	Deep (740)	Evangelism (586)
Deep (735)	Wide (661)	Attractional/Outsider	Wide (579)
		Focused (705)	

Table 4.2 Ranked Scores – Highest to Lowest

The cumulative or total score²⁸⁸ for each of the five dimensions in descending Order are as follows²⁸⁹:

Dimension	Total	PASTOR	CONGREGATION	PASTOR	CONGREGATION
		Aspirational	Aspirational	Actual	Actual
Evangelism	3011	889	758	778	586
Partnering	2894	809	733	756	596
Attractional/	2822	802	708	705	607
Outsider					
Focused					
Wide	2763	772	661	751	579
Deep	2744	735	666	740	603

Table 4.3 Total Scores for Each of the 5 Missional Dimension

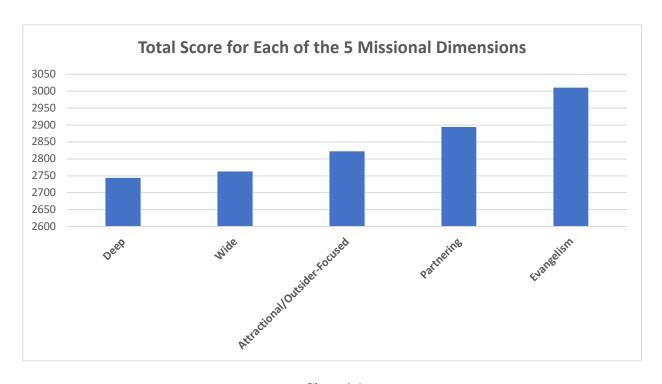


Chart 4.1

²⁸⁸ The score for each Dimension is calculated by summing each of the four scores [Pastor (Aspirational) + Congregation (Aspirational) + Pastor (Actual) + Congregation (Actual)]. ²⁸⁹ See also Table 4.3 and Chart 4.1

Observations from the ranking of the five Dimensions:

There is significant symmetry between the Aspirational scores of the Pastors and
Congregations (Pastor: Evangelism, Partnering, A/OF, Wide, Deep; Congregation:
Evangelism, Partnering, A/OF, Deep, Wide) whereas for Actual there is greater
divergence between the two (Pastor: Evangelism, Partnering, Wide, Deep, A/OF;
Congregation: A/OF, Deep, Partnering, Evangelism, Wide).²⁹⁰ This may be an indication that the Actual priorities of the Pastor may at times diverge from the Actual priorities of the Congregation.

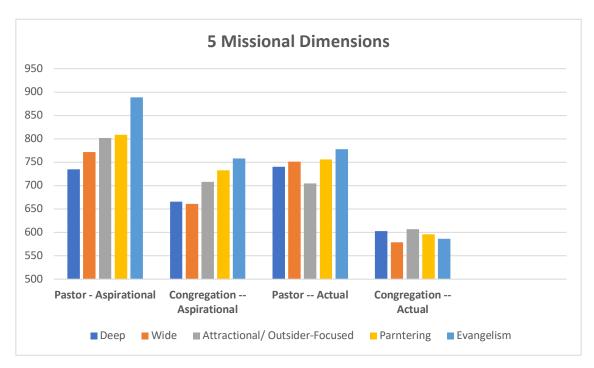


Chart 4.2

2. *Evangelism* receives the highest score in three of the four categories [Pastor (Aspirational); Congregation (Aspirational); and Pastor (Actual)], but slips to the fourth

²⁹⁰ See Chart 4.2

priority in terms of the Congregation (Actual) (while remaining the highest priority for the Pastor)]. This result indicates that the Congregations' Aspirational desire and/or willingness to be engaged in sharing their faith exceeds their Actual engagement in it.

One possible conclusion from this observation is that the reality may not so much be a lack of motivation for the Congregation to be engaged in sharing their faith as it is a lack of confidence in their knowing how to share their faith within the cultural landscape they find themselves. Pastors may therefore find their congregations open to receiving practical, viable encouragement to know how to winsomely and meaningfully share their faith.

3. It is worth noting that of the five Dimensions, *Deep* ranks last for pastors Aspirationally and ranks only fourth in terms of Actual (and as already acknowledged, is the only Dimension where Actual exceeds Aspirational). Three observations can be made with regards to this: (i) Pastors may be harder on themselves than they should be, assessing themselves to be less faithful in this Dimension than they actually are. This may be out of a sense of internalized guilt feeling they are not giving this Dimension the priority they feel they should, when in actuality they actually are more faithful with regards to this Dimension than they give themselves credit for. (ii) This may also indicate a tendency of pastors to prioritize caring for the spiritual needs of others ahead of tending to their own spiritual nurture and growth. (iii) While not explicitly explored within the survey, this result may also imply that pastors are struggling to know how to meaningfully engage in those spiritual practices in a manner that would helpfully take them deeper into their Christian walk and experience.

- 4. It is of interest that in terms of Actual the highest scoring two Dimensions for the Congregation are *Attractional/Outsider Focused* and *Deep*. This may suggest that those who are a part of the Congregation carry a default assumption that what they expect of themselves (or perhaps what they feel has been expected of them over the years) in terms of their role of being a good church participant is that they help the church be attractional to outsiders and that they be growing in their own spiritual walk with Christ. Lower on their Actual priorities are those Dimensions that speak more to their responsibility of actively serving in ministry [in descending order: *Partnering* (3), *Evangelism* (4), and *Wide* (5)].
- 5. The Missional paradigm is often spoken of as affirming the equal priority of both Word and Deed, with each being integral to and dependent upon the other. Connecting the *Deep* Dimension most closely to the priority of the 'Word' (since Deep relates to one's own personal commitment to individual growth in understanding, experiencing and living out the Spiritual life that is found in Christ), and connecting the *Wide*Dimension most closely to the priority of 'Deed' (since Wide relates to committing to living one's faith out through personally demonstrating the compassion, love and mercy of God), then it is worth noting and perhaps concerning that in actuality these two Dimensions *Wide* and *Deep* were, cumulatively speaking, the lowest two Dimensions of the five. In other words, these scores would indicate that CBAC churches possess a relative weakness in both *Word* and *Deed*.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ In making this observation I acknowledge that *Evangelism* could also be linked to the priority of 'Word' just as *Partnering* could also be considered integral to 'Deed'.

Part I: Biographical Data and Ministry/Congregational Context

- Age of respondents:²⁹²
 - 39% are age 60-plus (the implication of which is that more than a third of these Pastors are eligible to retire in the next five years, though only 25% of respondents indicated they anticipated retiring within that time span²⁹³)
 - 68% of respondents are age 50-plus (meaning more than 2/3 are eligible to retire in next 15 years)
 - o Only 11%, or approximately one-tenth of respondents, are age 40 or less²⁹⁴

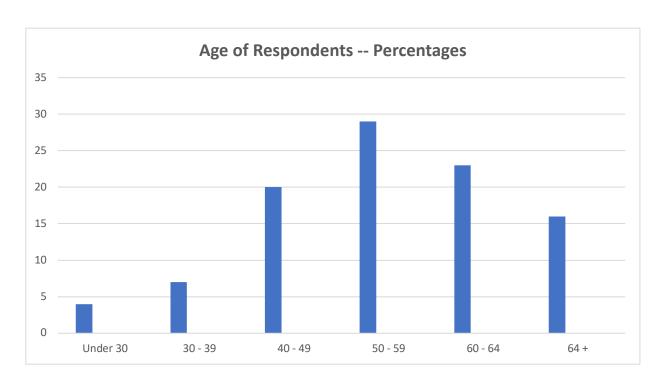


Chart 4.3

²⁹² P. 209 - I. 1.

²⁹³ P. 212 - I. 10.

²⁹⁴ See Chart 4.3

- Province in which the Pastors serve²⁹⁵
 - o 44% of respondents serve in New Brunswick
 - o 50% in Nova Scotia
 - o 6% in PEI
 - o 1% in Newfoundland and Labrador²⁹⁶

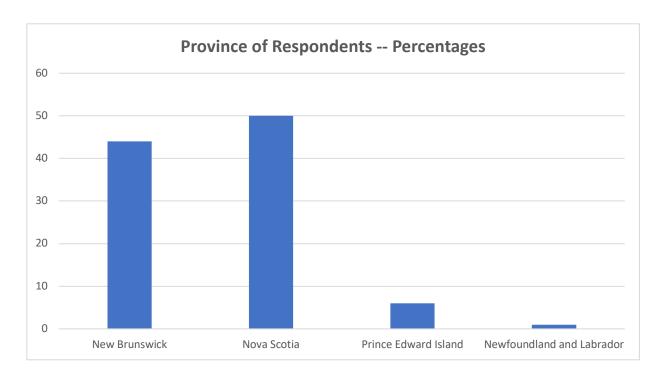


Chart 4.4

²⁹⁵ P. 209 - I. 2. ²⁹⁶ See Chart 4.4

Full-time or part-time:

- 71% of respondents are engaged in full-time ministry
- 10% are part-time and bi-vocational²⁹⁷
- 19% were part-time but not bi-vocational²⁹⁸

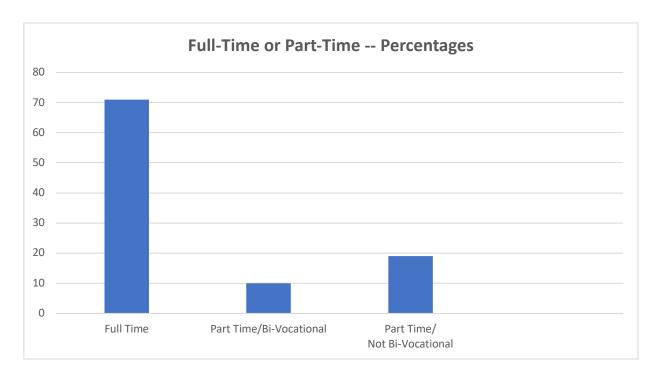


Chart 4.5

²⁹⁷ Bi-vocational is understood as being that the Pastor supplements what they earn from ministry through being employed elsewhere.

298 See Chart 4.5

- Average Worship Attendance of Congregation (or primary congregation) served²⁹⁹
 - o 39% of respondents pastored a church where the average attendance was less than 50
 - o 35% pastored a church with an average attendance between 50 to less than 100
 - o 27% of respondents pastored a church with an average attendance of 100 or more³⁰⁰

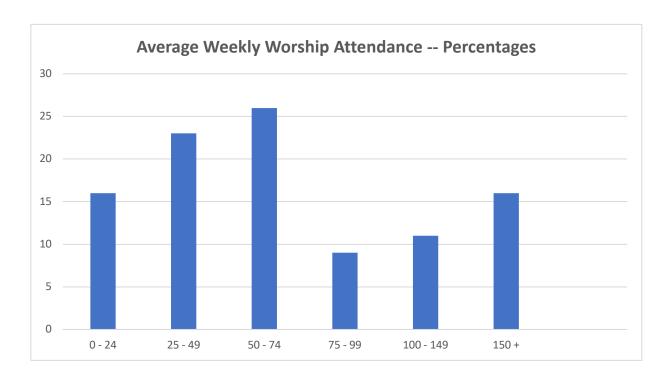


Chart 4.6

²⁹⁹ P. 210 - I. 6. ³⁰⁰ See Chart 4.6

- Years of Total Pastoral Service³⁰¹
 - 50% of respondents have served in ministry for 20 years or more
 - o 23% having served in ministry for less than ten years
 - 45% of respondents have been serving in their current ministry context five years or less
 - \circ 75% of respondents for ten years or less³⁰²

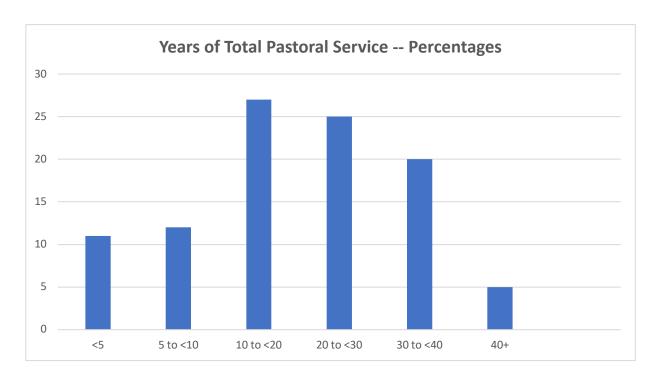


Chart 4.7

³⁰¹ P. 211 - I. 8.

³⁰² See Chart 4.7

- Years of service in present congregation³⁰³
 - 5% of respondents have served their present congregation for 20 years or more with 75% having served less than 10 years³⁰⁴

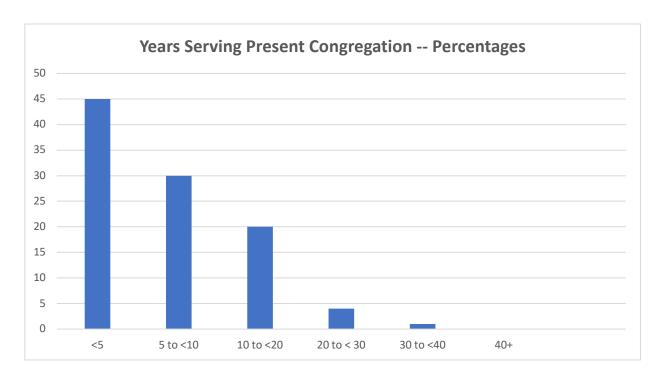


Chart 4.8

³⁰³ P. 212 - I. 9. ³⁰⁴ See Chart 4.8

Further observations:

- 51% of responding Pastors acknowledged having given at least some consideration to leaving ministry in the past five years³⁰⁵
- 71% of respondents identified that within the past five years they have experienced physical, emotional, financial, mental, relational, family or vocational challenges³⁰⁶

Part II: The Pastor's Assessment of the Health of the Congregation They Serve:

- Two questions particularly probed the Pastor's view of their congregation as well as of the lay leadership within that congregation:
 - o 63% of respondents had net agreement³⁰⁷ with the statement that they consider their congregation to be "an excellent congregational family" and are "grateful for all the ways that God is at work" through them;³⁰⁸ and fully 80% gave that statement a 6 or higher³⁰⁹
 - o Perhaps less encouraging is the fact that less than one in two Pastors (46%) had net agreement with the statement that the lay leaders of the congregation they serve are "godly, competent, humble leaders who are always trying to anticipate what God is doing" (though that number jumps to 84% of respondents who

³⁰⁵ P. 209 - I. 4.

³⁰⁶ P. 210 - I.5.

 $^{^{307}}$ Net agreement constitutes a score of 8-10, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 10 being "Strongly Agree".

³⁰⁸ P. 213 - II. 1.

³⁰⁹ As one who serves within the denominational family and works with churches all throughout the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* for more than 17 years, I was pleasantly surprised by how affirming Pastors were of their churches and how God is using them ³¹⁰ P. 213 - II. 2.

scored this a 6 or more, and only 6% had net disagreement³¹¹ with this statement); this should be noted as a possible expression of need for these churches to be receiving encouragement and equipping in terms of developing godly, competent leadership

- The following three questions probed the Pastor's assessment of the relational health of their congregation, and it could be interpreted that the numbers indicate that collectively the pastors express a relatively high degree of confidence in the relational health of their congregation:
 - Only 14% of respondents identified relational tensions within their congregation as being problematic for welcoming and incorporating new people,³¹² while 53% of pastors registered a net disagreement with this inquiry
 - Only 18% of respondents agreed with the statement that their congregation
 "simply tries to keep the peace at all time, even when that interferes with our obedience to being the church God is calling us to be," while 41% registered net disagreement
 - Less than one in ten (9%) registered net agreement that their church was controlled by one key extended family, while more than two-thirds (67%) registered net disagreement³¹⁴

 $^{^{311}}$ Net disagreement constitutes a score of 1-3, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 10 being "Strongly Agree".

³¹² P. 214 - II. 3.

³¹³ P. 216 - II. 8.

³¹⁴ P. 217 - II. 9.

- Two questions explored the Pastor's assessment of the giving patterns of those who were a part of their congregation. I was personally surprised by how high the Pastors rated the financial giving by the members and participants of their Congregation.
 - Only 18% of Pastors identified that a withholding of a tithe or the practice of inconsistent giving was causing financial hardship for their congregation, and 45% of Pastors registered a net disagreement with this³¹⁵
 - Further, 56% of pastoral respondents registered net agreement with the statement identifying that the people of the congregation they serve "are generous givers to the ministry" of their church, while only 7% registered net disagreement³¹⁶
- Three questions explored the Pastors' assessment of the current impact and future viability of the congregation they serve:
 - O Less than one in five Pastors (19%) identified a net agreement with the statement that the people of the congregation they serve are "fearful and pessimistic about their church's future" (although only slightly more than 1 in 3 registered a net disagreement, indicating that 2/3 of the pastors did feel there was at least some measure of concern for the long-term future of the congregation they serve)³¹⁷
 - More than a third of pastoral respondents (36%) expressed net agreement with the statement "the congregation I serve has not seen much numeric or financial growth resulting from its efforts to show God's love into its community," while less than one in four (24%) scored net disagreement with it.³¹⁸ This indicates that

³¹⁵ P. 214 - II. 4.

³¹⁶ P. 215 - II. 6.

³¹⁷ P. 215 - II. 5.

³¹⁸ P. 216 - II. 7.

nearly two-thirds of churches who believe they are seeking to embody God's love into their communities are not seeing a corresponding reciprocation in terms of new believers becoming an integrated part of the local congregation. This can serve as a caution to any church that although the missional paradigm may (and I believe deeply does) express a faithful vision of what the church is called to be by God, it would be a mistake to think of it as a "church growth strategy." People in our neighbourhoods – especially those not already possessing a predisposition to be looking for a church to belong to – do not typically become a part of a church just because of the way it is serving and loving its community, as most people will naturally assume that's what the church should be doing anyway. Our missional witness may well add credibility to our message and invitation, but cannot be a substitute for our actively inviting people to explore a life of faith within the context of a local Congregation.³¹⁹

John, NB, made this point in a recent conversation. When asked how new people made their way to that church, he responded: "Friends. Invitations. That would be our main means. We have some people who come here because they hear the things we do in the community and they want to check us out. When I first started here I thought that'll be it. People are going to hear the great work we do in the community, but that's been hardly any. Very few people. People don't really get that excited about it. They hear about it and they think "well that's nice, it's probably what you should have been doing anyways" but it's not going to move them to go to church. In the same way if you heard that the mosque in Moncton was handing out Christmas gifts to every school kid in the city and loving them and helping them out, you probably wouldn't go to the mosque on Monday just because you were so pumped by what you heard. It might change your perception but it's not going to make you faithful. It's the power of the invitation." (Rev. Rob Nylen, personal conversation with Greg Jones, December 17, 2019).

Approximately half (51%) of respondents affirm that the congregation they serve
is on a positive trajectory and can "anticipate great days ahead" and only 7%
registered outright disagreement with this.³²⁰

Part III: Questions on Understanding of Missional

- Scattered throughout the survey were ten questions for the pastoral respondent to assess their own understanding and conceptual embrace of the Missional Paradigm, and similarly ten questions for the purpose of the Pastor to assess the Congregation's understanding and embrace of Missional. Each question was assigned a score based upon the net agreement to each of the questions (or net disagreement with regard to those statements that were posed in the Negative)³²¹
 - A primary observation is that the Pastor's Self-Assessed Understanding of
 Missional (62.5) was significantly higher than the Pastor's assessment of the
 Congregation's Understanding of Missional (34.5).³²² In other words, the Pastors
 assessed themselves to have a far better understanding and living out of the
 Missional paradigm than they perceive of the Congregation.
 - For example, when asked to assess their level of agreement with the statement "I believe I have a good understanding of what it means to live missionally," the pastoral respondents received a score of 69,323 whereas

³²⁰ P. 217 - II. 10.

³²¹ To view these following results in chart form, see Chart 4.9.

³²² The score for the Pastor's Self-Assessed Understanding of Missional and the Congregation's Understanding of Missional was determined by calculating the mean scores of III. A. and III. B.

³²³ P. 218 - III. A. 1.

when asked to assess the Congregation's level of agreement the averaged score dropped to 20.³²⁴ This is a significantly large difference.

- Three questions explored the Pastor's and the Congregation's view of the legitimacy
 of the Missional paradigm as it related to the unchanging mission of the church at all
 times and in all places:
 - o When asked whether they as Pastor had a "negative view of the missional emphasis, believing it to be a distraction to the mission of the contemporary church," only 4% of respondents registered a net agreement with that statement, while 78% registered a net disagreement.³²⁵ This resulted in a score of 78 for the pastors, indicating that more than three-quarters of the respondents had a high regard of the missional emphasis as being important for the church if it wished to be faithful to its calling. Again, this score dropped significantly when a similar question was asked pertaining to the congregation: "I believe that to whatever extent they are aware of it, the people of the congregation I serve have a negative view of the missional emphasis, believing it to be more of a distraction to the mission of the contemporary church." The Congregational score was 52.³²⁶
 - o When asked if they as Pastors viewed the missional emphasis as "only another in a long list of 'bandwagons' that come and go, and ... of little long-term value to the church for living obediently before God,"³²⁷ the pastoral respondents registered a 71% net disagreement (and hence a score of 71) for themselves as

³²⁴ P. 223 - III. B. 1.

³²⁵ P. 218 - III. A. 2.

³²⁶ P. 223 - III. B. 2.

³²⁷ P. 219 - III. A. 4.

Pastors but this dropped to a 39% net disagreement (or a score of 39) when asked how the people of the congregation they serve view the Missional paradigm.³²⁸

- The pastoral respondents were asked to assess how important they personally feel it is to 'enflesh' "God's love and grace through acts of kindness, mercy and justice," and scored a 92 indicating they were in high agreement with this statement. When asked how important their congregation felt it was, the pastors' assessment of the congregation dropped to 69. 330
- Through the latter half of the 2010's, the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* have in their promotional resources been utilizing the question of "Will you join God in changing Atlantic Canada one neighbourhood at a time?" Pastors were asked about the extent that they have found this question to be "inspirational and highly motivating" to them personally, and the score was only 46.³³¹ When asked to assess this for the people of their congregation, the score dropped to 22.³³²

³²⁸ P. 224 - III. B. 4.

³²⁹ P. 220 - III. A. 5.

³³⁰ P. 225 - III. B. 5.

³³¹ P. 220 - III. A. 6.

³³² P. 225 - III. B. 6.

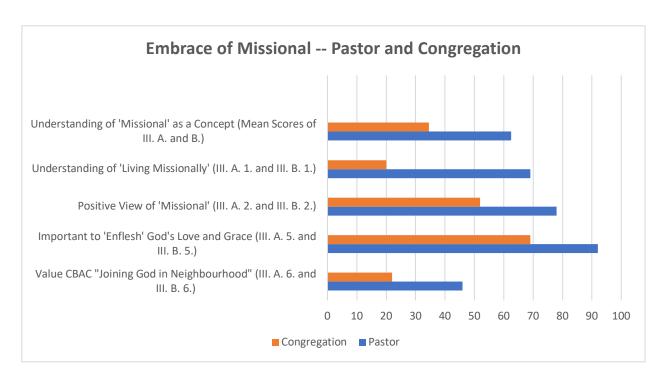


Chart 4.9

• Pastoral respondents were asked two questions exploring how they felt the people of the congregations they served understood what it was to be the church and how their spiritual life integrated into all of life. When asked if the "people of the congregation I serve primarily think of church as something they go to rather than something they are," only 24% had net disagreement with this statement.³³³ Similarly, when asked if people tended to separate their spiritual lives from their secular only 29% expressed net disagreement.³³⁴

Some observations that can be made from this section are:

 Pastor's identify a greater understanding of and affinity with the missional paradigm than they assess exists within the congregations they serve.

³³³ P. 226 - III. B. 7.

³³⁴ P. 226 - III. B. 8.

- Pastors felt the question of "Will you join God in changing Atlantic Canada one
 neighbourhood at a time?" was not highly captivating for either them as a pastor or for
 the congregation they served (though they felt more positively impacted by it as a pastor
 than they perceived it was by their congregations).
- Only a relatively small proportion of the people who make up CBAC congregations
 apparently have a view of their Christian identity and faith integrating into all aspects of
 their life, for most think of church as first and foremost something they attend rather than
 something that they are.

Part IV: Assessing Five Missional Dimensions

The remainder of the survey assessed the five individual missional Dimensions of *Deep*, *Wide*, *Attractional/Outsider Focused*, *Partnering*, and *Evangelism* in terms of:

- Pastor Aspirational
- Congregation Aspirational
- Pastor Actual
- Congregation Actual

Each of these were scored by pastoral respondents indicating the degree of agreement or disagreement with five unique statements pertaining to each of the four categories.

While countless observations could be made of each of the five Missional Dimensions, focus will be restricted to three for each one.

(1) **Deep**

The stated definition of the *Deep* Dimension is "prioritizing individual growth in understanding, experiencing and living out the Spiritual life that is found in Christ." Practices or disciplines that might be a part of such a dimension could include activities such as regular Bible reading and study, intentional times of personal and/or corporate prayer, journaling, retreats, listening to sermons and teachings, etc.

Cumulatively, the *Deep* Dimension ranked 5th or in last place of the identified five Missional Dimensions. As indicated below it ranks 5th in terms of 'Pastor – Aspirational' and 4th in terms of 'Pastor – Actual'. It fares slightly better for the Congregation ranking 4th in terms of Aspirational and 3rd in terms of Actual.

The scores of the Deep dimension were:

	Aspirational	Actual
Pastor	735	740
	Rank – 5 th	Rank – 4 th
Congregation	666	603
	Rank – 4 th	Rank – 3 rd

Table 4.4 Scores of **Deep** Dimension

Observations:

1. Although ranking near the bottom in terms of both Aspirational (5th) and Actual (4th), a significant percentage of pastors affirm the importance of the daily practice of Bible study and prayer, with 89% having net agreement with the statement that "every Pastor should attempt to make time for at least ten minutes of focused personal Bible study and prayer every day"³³⁵ and 66% affirming that most weeks they have, at least five times per

³³⁵ P. 228 - IV. (1). (i). A. 1.

week, "a time for personal devotions, each of which consists of a minimum of ten minutes of personal Bible ready/study and prayer." Further, only 14% registered a net agreement with the negative statement that "they often fail in maintaining a consistent time for personal bible reading/study and prayer." 337

The pastoral respondents' impressions were that the people of the congregation they serve do not tend to give the same priority to such disciplines (even though in comparison to the other four Dimensions *Deep* ranks slightly higher for Congregation than Pastors), with only 63% registering net agreement with the statement that "the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that personal daily devotions ... are important for Christians who want to be growing in Christ." Further, that percentage drops even more to 44% net agreement with the statement that they as pastor believe that "the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that they have a deep desire to grow in their knowledge of both Scripture and key theological understandings, and to be encouraged to live their lives in alignment with this knowledge," that only 29% express net agreement that "the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that it is important to access supplemental resources ... that will take them deeper into their understanding of Scripture and the Christian life," and that only 36% affirm that "the people of the congregation I serve consider themselves to be people committed to going

³³⁶ P. 234 - IV. (1). (ii). A. 1.

³³⁷ P. 235 - IV. (1). (ii). A. 2.

³³⁸ P. 231 - IV. (1). (i). B. 1.

³³⁹ P. 232 - IV. (1). (i). B. 2.

³⁴⁰ P. 233 - IV. (1). (i). B. 4.

beyond the surface themes of Scripture and knowing how to rightly understand the fullness of God's Word." ³⁴¹

When the pastor assesses the Actual practices of the people of the congregation they serve, the numbers register lower. Only 15% of Pastors expressed net agreement with the statement that "most people in the congregation I serve consistently set aside a time for personal daily devotions – at least five time per week"³⁴² and 40% of Pastors identify "the lack of the discipline of personal daily Bible reading/study and prayer as having a detrimental effect upon the personal and ministry lives of the congregation I serve."³⁴³

Perhaps the most concerning observation to be noted is that less than one in two pastors (45%) expressed net agreement with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve consider obedience to Scripture to be one of their highest values"³⁴⁴ and that only a little more than a third (36%) of pastoral respondents expressed net agreement with the statement "I believe the people of the congregation I serve consider themselves to be people committed to going beyond the surface themes of Scripture and knowing how to rightly understand the fullness of God's Word."³⁴⁵ It could be argued that these relatively low numbers are of even greater significance when considering the denominational context, as examination of the 1905/06 Basis of Union (while in part reflecting the historical era it was created in, as evidenced in the phrasing pertaining to "The Christian Sabbath" as a day which is "to be kept sacred to religious purposes by

³⁴¹ P. 233 - IV. (1). (i). B. 5.

³⁴² P. 237 - IV. (1). (ii). B. 1.

³⁴³ P. 238 - IV. (1). (ii). B. 2.

³⁴⁴ P. 239 - IV. (1). (ii). B. 5.

³⁴⁵ P. 233 - IV. (1). (i). B. 5.

abstaining from all secular labour and sinful recreations") indicates that the CBAC identifies itself to be a theologically orthodox Baptistic body which regards Scripture as the ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice. These aforementioned observations of relatively low regard to Scripture as their ultimate authority combined with low rate of serious engagement with Scripture may point towards a possible devaluing of Scripture by the people of CBAC congregations. The implications of this is that Scripture is no longer perceived to be nor treated as the ultimate and trustworthy guide for CBAC congregations to appeal to, or, even if people do believe they look to it as their guide, they are not as well versed in knowing it beyond a more superficial level.

- 2. A second observation to be made is to note again that the Pastors scored higher on *Deep* Actual than they did on Aspirational, which is the only time Actual exceeded Aspirational in any of the categories. One reason for this could certainly be the idiosyncratic wording and subject matter of the questions for each category, but it could also be that pastors would feel a sense of self-incrimination that they are not engaging in these practices as faithfully as they would really want to.
- 3. A third observation is that it is positive to note that less than half of the pastors (44%) who responded to this survey understood that their primary role in discipleship was simply to teach a correct understanding of Scripture through their preaching and teaching ministry.³⁴⁷ This indicates that more than a half of CBAC pastors understand discipleship to include more than simply conveying proper Scriptural and/or doctrinal knowledge and

³⁴⁶ Or, as the CBAC Basis of Union says regarding the Scriptures: "they are the only perfect, supreme, and infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice." (https://baptist-atlantic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Basis_of_Union-updated-2017-with-new-CBAC-name.pdf; accessed January 28, 2019)

³⁴⁷ P. 230 - IV. (1). (i). A. 4.

understanding to those who are a part of their congregation. As important as this is – and it is – discipleship is more than imparting proper information, but to be engaging in a process of life transformation which is based upon the person of Jesus and his work as seen through the truth of Scripture.

(2) *Wide*

The stated definition of the *Wide* Dimension is "prioritizing the living out of one's faith through personally demonstrating the compassion, love and mercy of God." This commitment emerges from a belief that God calls His people to witness to the Good News of His love not just by the words we speak, but by the way we treat and care for those around us.

Cumulatively, the *Wide* Dimension ranked 4th out of the identified five Missional Dimensions with a score of 2763. As indicated below it ranks 4th in terms of 'Pastor – Aspirational' and 3rd in terms of 'Pastor – Actual'. It fares worse for the Congregation ranking 5th (or last) in terms of both Aspirational and Actual.

The scores of the Deep dimension were:

	Aspirational	Actual
Pastor	772	756
	Rank – 4 th	Rank – 3 rd
Congregation	661	579
_	Rank - 5th	Rank – 5 th

Table 4.5 Scores of Wide Dimension

Observations:

1. An assumption of this thesis is that the missional understanding of the gospel is that as central as the message of "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" is to the Gospel, it is not the full extent of the Gospel. Rather, the Gospel also includes

declaring how this central message penetrates and impacts every area of life, from how we live in our communities to the kind of employees we are to how we care for the environment to how we relate to our family members. In the survey Pastors were asked to express their degree of agreement with the following statement: "I believe that there is only one definition of the gospel, and that is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and in order to be saved individuals must acknowledge their sinfulness, ask for forgiveness, invite Jesus to enter in as head of his or her life, and commit to walking in obedience to Him. Preaching anything other than this (e.g. how to have a good marriage, the importance of caring for the environment, our responsibility to do justice, how to be a good boss, etc.) is to fail to preach the Gospel."³⁴⁸ Just over one in four pastoral respondents (27%) agreed with this statement while nearly one in two (or 48%) registered Net Disagreement with this statement. This indicates that Pastors of the CBAC have diverging opinions as to what it actually means to "proclaim the Gospel" of Jesus Christ.

2. There was, however, greater agreement amongst the pastoral respondents that the true mission of the church was broader than just that of "leading lost people to put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord."³⁴⁹ Only 6% felt the church was "straying from its true mission when it gets involved in compassion ministries such as food banks, soup kitchens, welcoming refugees, visiting the imprisoned, etc."³⁵⁰ while 77% expressed net disagreement with this. In keeping with the subject of the mission of the church, it is worth noting that while 66% of Pastors had net agreement with the statement "As Pastor I

³⁴⁸ P. 240 - IV. (2) (i) A. 1.

³⁴⁹ P. 241 - IV. (2) (i) A. 2.

³⁵⁰ Ibid

have a clear, concise understanding of the mission of the congregation I serve,"³⁵¹ (and only 4% registered net agreement), the pastoral respondents did not affirm the same for the people of the congregation they serve. Only 29% expressed Net Agreement with "the people of the congregation I serve have a clear, concise understanding of the central mission of our church."³⁵² This indicates that while Pastors believe they have a clear understanding of the mission of the church (one which includes more than just leading people to put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord" (see above), this clarity is not shared by the people of the congregation. It appears work needs to be done to assist congregations in identifying and owning the central mission of their church.

3. A third observation to be made from this section is that although *Wide* overall ranks 5th Aspirationally (with a score of 661) and 3rd in terms of Actual (with a score of 579), it appears that the majority of pastoral respondents feel the people of the congregation they serve struggle in terms of integrating their faith into the day to day relationships and activities that they are a part of. One example of this is that less than one in two pastoral respondents (46%) expressed Net Agreement with the statement that the "people of the congregation I pastor believe they should live their faith out wherever life takes them through the week ... into the classroom, working at the factory, serving in their local community club, coaching hockey at the rink, taking care of their sick child, etc."³⁵³ and a second is that only 41% of respondents expressed Net Agreement that "the people of the congregation I serve want to develop meaningful, caring relationships with non-Christian people around them; ones in which they can graciously yet transparently and

³⁵¹ P. 248 - IV. (2). (ii) A. 5.

³⁵² P. 245 - IV. (2) (i) B. 4.

³⁵³ P. 243 - IV. (2) (i) B. 1.

openly speak of their Christian faith."³⁵⁴ A third statement that assessed this integration of faith into life was where only 29% of pastoral respondents expressed Net Agreement with the statement "The people of the congregation I serve are actively involved in living and integrating their faith into the wider community through their everyday activities (examples of these could be being on a refugee welcoming committee, working with youth at risk, coaching basketball, scrapbooking, etc.)."³⁵⁵

These figures indicate that it is only in a minority of CBAC churches that the people of those congregations are naturally and authentically yet with intentionality seeking and knowing how to integrate their faith in to their day to day activities.

(3) Attractional/Outsider Focused (A/O-F)

The stated definition of the *Attractional/Outsider Focused* Dimension is "as a congregation prioritizing being a bridge-building and welcoming presence to the people who enter in." While missional entails an emphasis that the church is a sent people commissioned to go out in love and service to a needy and hurting world around it, this does not dismiss the need for the church as a gathered presence to be an inviting, welcoming and safe place for people to gather, explore and discover more of the life that God invites them to through His Son Christ Jesus.

Cumulatively, the *Attractional/Outsider Focused (A/O-F)* Dimension ranked 3rd out of the identified five Missional Dimensions with a score of 2822. As indicated below, it ranks 3rd in terms of both 'Pastor – Aspirational' (with a score of 802) and 'Congregation – Aspirational'

³⁵⁵ P. 250 - IV. (2). (ii). B. 2.

³⁵⁴ P. 244 - IV. (2). (i). B. 2.

(with a score of 708). In terms of Actual priorities, however, they diverge, with it slipping to 5th and final place for the 'Pastor – Actual' (with a score of 705) but first in rank for 'Congregation – Actual' (with a score of 607).

The scores of the Attractional/Outsider-Focused dimension were:

	Aspirational	Actual
Pastor	802	705
	Rank – 3 rd	Rank – 5 th
Congregation	708	607
	Rank − 3 rd	Rank – 1 st

Table 4.6 Scores of Attractional/Outsider-Focused Dimension

Observations:

1. It is positive to note that a strong majority of pastoral respondents (82% net agreement) indicated a solid desire that the church they pastor be a 'safe place' "for finding community and/or inquiring about and growing in the Christian faith" and that 94% had net agreement that they wanted their church to "be known for being a welcoming and loving community open to all." When it comes, however, to the pastor's confidence in their congregations to correspondingly strive "to effectively welcome and incorporate the new seeker or member into our congregation," that confidence drops significantly to 44% net agreement. Further, when asked if "the people of the congregation I serve seek to do everything with excellence, and constantly ask themselves how they can continue to improve," a meager 20% of pastoral respondents expressed a Net Agreement. More encouraging, however, was that only 36% of pastoral respondents indicated that people of

³⁵⁶ P. 252 - IV. (3). (i). A. 1.

³⁵⁷ P. 254 - IV. (3). (i). A. 5.

³⁵⁸ P. 262 - IV. (3). (ii). B. 2.

³⁵⁹ P. 262 - IV. (3). (ii). B. 3.

the congregation they serve primarily evaluate possible changes to their church or worship services according to their own comfort level as compared to asking if it will enhance their effectiveness in reaching those around them.³⁶⁰

2. A concern that should be noted is that the pastoral respondents seemed mixed in terms of whether the church they serve has a positive reputation within their communities. Less than one-half (44%) had net agreement with the statement "I believe that generally speaking the non-churched residents who are aware of the existence of our church would have a positive impression of who we are."³⁶¹ Admittedly this may reflect the pastors' perception that secular people are more prone to have negative impressions of churches in today's world, but it also indicates that even if this might be the case, their church hasn't presented itself in a manner that would challenge such assumptions. Further, only 60% of pastors think their own congregational members believe that "non-Christian guests who come into our church as newcomers leave with a very positive impression of who we are."362 Similarly, when asked their degree of agreement with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve have confidence that guests checking out our congregation will have a very positive experience, and this helps them feel confident in personally inviting friends and acquaintances to come to church with them," only slightly more than one in two (51%) expressed net agreement.³⁶³ This means that in approximately half of CBAC churches people who are a part of that church don't have

³⁶⁰ P. 263 - IV. (3). (ii). B. 4.

³⁶¹ P. 254 - IV. 3. (i). A. 4.

³⁶² P. 256 - IV. 3. (i). B. 2.

³⁶³ P. 263 - IV. (3). (ii). B. 5.

confidence that guests they may invite will leave with a positive impression of what they experienced there that day.

3. A third observation that can be made from analyzing this data is that there doesn't appear to be a particular hunger or strong passion to be reaching those who are not yet a part of the Christian faith. Only 28% of pastoral respondents expressed net agreement with the statement "The people of the congregation I serve believe that they are willing to do what it takes to reach people around them who do not yet know Jesus Christ."364 On top of this, only slightly more than one in two pastoral respondents (54%) expressed net agreement with "I believe that a congregation should always be considering what changes they need to be making that will help them experience numeric growth within their congregation."³⁶⁵ Another statement which received a low Net Agreement score of 15% was "the congregation I serve is known in our community as being a group who know how to throw great parties/celebrations in our community."³⁶⁶ Even with a rather superficial read of the Gospels it is evident that Jesus often met people at times of festive occasions or meals, ³⁶⁷ and it could be argued that hosting gatherings (and also being a part of other peoples' gatherings) can be a great way for eradicating walls of ignorance, indifference or hostility between people of faith and those without.

³⁶⁴ P. 255 - IV. (3). (i). B. 1.

³⁶⁵ P. 259 - IV. (3). (ii). A. 3.

³⁶⁶ P. 260 - IV. (3). (ii). A. 5.

³⁶⁷ In the book of Luke alone, there are at least ten stories of Jesus dining with various people at various times.

(4) Partnering

The stated definition of the *Partnering* Dimension is "prioritizing the fostering of partnerships – both formal and informal – with other groups/organizations within the community, even those who may not be part of the religious faith community." The Missional paradigm believes that our call as followers of Jesus is to be joining God in what He is already doing in us, through us, and all around us. This involves the understanding that God is at work through individuals and groups that surround us, even many who may not be aware or particularly concerned that they are involved in His work. Examples could be women's shelters, food banks, after-school tutoring programs, community bands, recreational sports, etc. Missional awareness understands that there will be times when individuals and groups may be interested in partnering with initiatives that our congregations may be spearheading as they recognize the positive contribution it makes to the greater community, just as there will be other times that we will be able to join with them in what they are doing out of the recognition of the positive contribution their endeavours are making in the lives of people within the wider community and world. Moreover, such partnerships not only multiply impact but foster friendships, and these friendships can naturally become fertile grounds for the seeds of the Gospel to land and germinate.

Cumulatively, the *Partnering* Dimension ranked 2nd out of the identified five Missional Dimensions with a score of 2894. As indicated below it ranks 2nd in terms of 'Pastor – Aspirational' (with a score of 809), 2nd for 'Congregation – Aspirational' (with a score of 733), 2nd for 'Pastor-Actual', but slips to 3rd in rank for 'Congregation – Actual'.

The scores of the Partnering dimension were:

	Aspirational	Actual
Pastor	809	756
	Rank – 2 nd	Rank – 2 nd
Congregation	733	596
	Rank – 2 nd	Rank – 3 rd

Table 4.7 Scores of **Partnering** Dimension

Observations:

1. The pastoral respondents appear to be substantially open to engaging in partnerships, whether those be with other congregations or with secular organizations, even though only 56% expressed net disagreement with the negative statement that "As Pastor I would not be comfortable forming partnerships with other congregations or secular organizations that may not subscribe to the same essential theology that I do." Other statements received significantly higher degree of affirmation such as "I am grateful for the community organizations that are able to muster resources for helping people in need within our community" (86% net agreement); "as pastor I am very open to the congregation I serve forming partnerships with community organizations as we are able" (71% Net Agreement); "as Pastor I would encourage and see it as important ministry for the people of the congregation I serve to be involved in valuable community organizations as food banks, women's shelters, refugee settlement committees, etc." (81% Net Agreement); and "if the congregation I serve is looking to launch or maintain an initiative into our community or beyond, I would welcome partnering with businesses

³⁶⁸ P. 264 - IV. (4). (i). A. 1.

³⁶⁹ P. 265 - IV. (4). (i). A. 2.

³⁷⁰ P. 265 - IV. (4). (i). A. 3.

³⁷¹ P. 266 - IV. (4). (i). A. 4.

and/or community organizations that would similarly share an interest in the initiative."³⁷²

2. The pastoral respondents were not as confident in the congregation's support for partnership, as indicated by lower numbers of support such as only 49% net agreement with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve are supportive of our church partnering with community or business organizations in worthwhile endeavors that will benefit our entire neighbourhood/community;"373 58% net agreement with "the people of the congregation I serve would view themselves as people who are appreciative and supportive of the various organizations within our community;"374 and 49% expressing net disagreement with the (negative) statement "the people of the congregation I serve believe that our mission should consist of initiatives that exclusively belong to the church, because partnering with other organizations may restrict us in our messaging or cause us to compromise on our values."375 When it comes to statements inquiring as to the congregation's actual engagement in Partnering, the numbers were even lower: "the people of the congregation I serve prayerfully seek to discern where God is at work in the community around us, and as God directs and enables they get involved with those initiatives"³⁷⁶ (25% net agreement³⁷⁷); "the people of the congregation I serve actively partner with other churches in our community to meet the needs of the community"378

³⁷² P. 272 - IV. (4). (ii). A. 4.

³⁷³ P. 268 - IV. (4). (i). B. 2.

³⁷⁴ P. 268 - IV. (4). (i). B. 3.

³⁷⁵ P. 269 - IV. (4). (i). B. 5.

³⁷⁶ P. 273 - IV. (4). (ii). B. 1.

³⁷⁷ Admittedly, this may not absolutely mean that those people are closed to doing this, but rather that they haven't been encouraged and/or in the practice of doing so.

³⁷⁸ P. 274 - IV. (4). (ii). B. 2.

(35% net agreement); "the people of the congregation I serve have meaningful partnerships with non-Christian organizations in meeting the needs of the community" (34% net agreement); and "the people of the congregation I serve eagerly look for new ways to build connections with organizations within our community" (24% net agreement).

3. It is startling to see such a low percentage (19%) of net agreement for the statement "the people of the congregation I serve have a disproportionate impact within our neighbourhood/community (through means such as engagement with community organizations, or their quiet caring for their neighbours, or advocating for the dispossessed and powerless of the community, etc." Admittedly, 48% of respondents scored this a 6 or higher, but even with such an allowance this remains disconcertingly low as this assessment is not being made by indifferent or unknowing non-believers who may be jaded towards the church, but by individuals who by their calling are not only to love the local church but are integral to the life and mission of that church. Further, one would think that even a most rudimentary understanding of Scripture, and especially the New Testament, would lead those who profess the name of Christ to know that God's people are to be distinct by the way they love others, and yet it seems that majority of CBAC churches are not having a greater positive impact in their community than many other individuals or groups who make no such claim to be followers of Jesus.

³⁷⁹ P. 274 - IV. (4). (ii). B. 3.

³⁸⁰ P. 275 - IV. (4). (ii). B. 4.

³⁸¹ P. 275 - IV. (4). (ii). B. 5.

(5) Evangelism

The stated definition of the *Evangelism* Dimension is "prioritizing the making known of the Good News of the Gospel that is found through the Bible, centered in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ." The Missional paradigm emphasizes the importance of both word and deed, and thus while it affirms the importance of tangibly expressing God's love and Good News through actions, it does not in any manner de-emphasize the responsibility to be making disciples, which includes inviting others to discover and accept for themselves the new life that can be theirs through Jesus Christ.

Cumulatively, the *Evangelism* Dimension ranked 1st out of the identified five Missional Dimensions with a score of 3011. It ranked 1st in each of the following three categories: 'Pastor – Aspirational' (with a score of 889); 'Congregation – Aspirational' (with a score of 758); and 'Pastor – Actual' (with a score of 778). It slipped to 4th in rank in terms of 'Congregation – Actual (with a score of 586).

The scores of the Evangelism dimension were:

	Aspirational	Actual
Pastor	889	778
	Rank – 1st	Rank – 1 st
Congregation	758	586
	Rank – 1 st	Rank – 4 th

Table 4.8 Scores of Evangelism Dimension

Observations:

1. It is clear that the pastoral respondents are emphatic that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ, as evidenced through the strong percentage of net agreement with the following statements: "I believe that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally

accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord" 182 (94% net agreement; with 76% rating this 10/10 and a further 11% scoring it at 9/10) and, "I want my life to be a witness for Jesus Christ and pray that God will use me to point others to Him"383 (97% net agreement; with 78% rating it a 10/10 and a further 14% a 9/10). Further, when asked whether salvation can be found apart from Christ but rather through good works that have been done ("I believe that God looks at the quality of the life lived, and grants admission to His eternal presence not based so much upon whether they accepted Christ but rather according to how much good they have done"384), 91% registered a net disagreement with this, with 84% rating it 1/10 (for strongly disagree) and a further 6% rating in 2/10. This is a solid indication that the strong embrace of missional by CBAC pastors that was demonstrated in Part III ought not be interpreted as any diminishing of a robust conviction that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. While this was not exactly articulated in the survey, it is more that CBAC pastors understand both actions and words must point to all that God has done for this world through Jesus Christ, but not that we are to trade in one mission (making Jesus Christ known) for another (doing whatever good we are able to do).

2. Although as already explored in 5.1. above, 94% of CBAC pastors express net agreement with the conviction "there is only one way for in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as

³⁸² P. 276 - IV. (5). (i). A. 1.

³⁸³ P. 277 - IV. (5). (i). A. 2. (this is the highest Net Agreement in the entire survey)

³⁸⁴ P. 278 - IV. (5). (i). A. 5.

Saviour and Lord," only 71% of CBAC pastors expressed a net agreement that they are able to "easily and winsomely explain the gospel message to lead a friend or acquaintance to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord."385 Although a further 14% admittedly gave themselves a score of 7 (or just one below net agreement, for a total of 85% giving themselves a 7 or more) it nonetheless remains the fact that 30% of our pastors express at least some measure of uncertainty or struggle to explain and/or lead a friend or acquaintance to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. When this is then combined with the pastors' assessment of the congregations that they serve, the numbers become more acutely concerning. Although the pastors expressed 81% net agreement with the statement that "the people of the congregation I serve generally would affirm that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord"386 and a further 79% net agreement with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that one of our church's chief values is that people would come to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord,"387 the scores drop precipitously when considering the congregant's actual confidence for and/or competence in sharing their faith. Pastors expressed only a net agreement of 21% with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain why they are a Christian to a friend or an acquaintance"388 and 16% net agreement with the statement "the people of

³⁸⁵ P. 284 - IV. (5). (ii). A. 5.

³⁸⁶ P. 280 - IV. (5). (i). B. 2.

³⁸⁷ P. 281 - IV. (5). (i). B. 4.

³⁸⁸ P. 286 - IV. (5). (ii). B. 2.

the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain the gospel message and lead a friend or an acquaintance in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord."³⁸⁹ These significant gaps may indicate a ready willingness for people (both pastors and congregants) to receive relevant training in knowing how to appropriately share their faith as opportunity may provide.

3. It is positive that 78% of pastoral respondents expressed a net agreement with the statement "As Pastor I try to help the people of the congregation I serve understand that Evangelism often occurs over the long process of developing meaningful relationships with people (as compared to thinking it typically should take place in a single conversation)." This is a strong indication that as important as it is to be sharing of the Good News with other, it normally is not in a one-time conversation, but typically requires developing authentic relationships which require time, energy and commitment, and a sensitivity to the timing of the Spirit.

Top Ten Scoring Statements of Survey

- 1. 97% // "I want my life to be a witness for Jesus Christ and pray that God will use me to point others towards Him." [Evangelism/Aspirational/Pastor P. 277 IV. (5). (i). A. 2.]
- 94% // "As Pastor I want our church to be known for being a welcoming and loving community open to all." [Attractional-Outsider Focused/Aspirational/Pastor P. 254 IV. (3). (i). A. 5.]

³⁸⁹ P. 286 - IV. (5) (ii). B. 3.

³⁹⁰ P. 283 - IV. (5). (ii). A. 3.

- 3. 94% // "I believe that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord." [Evangelism/Aspirational/Pastor/ P. 276 IV. (5). (i). A. 1.]
- 4. 92 (Score) // "I believe that as believers we do want people to know the life-giving, hoperestoring love that is found through Jesus Christ, and it is therefore essential that we as believers 'enflesh' God's love and grace through our acts of kindness, mercy and justice.

 [Pastor's Understanding of Missional P. 220 III.A.5]
- 5. 91% (net disagreement) // "I believe that God looks at the quality of the life lived, and grants admission to His eternal presence not based so much upon whether they accepted Christ but rather according to how much good they have done."
 [Evangelism/Aspirational/Pastor P. 278 IV. (5). (i). A. 5.]
- 6. 90% // "As a Pastor I want to help the people in the congregation I serve have a mature understanding of the central tenets of Scripture and Christian theology."

 [Deep/Aspirational/Pastor P. 229 IV. (1). (i). A. 2.]
- 7. 90% (net disagreement) // "I counsel the people of the congregation I serve against having close friendships with people who are not believers and do not show any interest in coming to Christ." [Wide/Actual/Pastor P. 246 IV. (2). (ii). A. 1.]
- 89% // "I believe that every Pastor should attempt to make time for at least ten minutes of focused personal bible study and prayer every day." (Deep/Aspirational/Pastor P. 228 IV. (i). A. 1.]
- 9. 89% // "I believe that it is important that the people of my congregation see themselves as living their faith out wherever life takes them through the week ... into the classroom,

working at the factory, serving in their local community club, coaching hockey at the rink, taking care of their sick child, etc." [Wide/Aspirational/Pastor – P. 241 - IV. (2). (i). A. 3.]

10. 86% // "I am grateful for the community organizations that are able to muster resources for helping people in need within our community." [Partnering/Aspirational/Pastor – P. 265 - IV. (4). (i). A. 2.]

Lowest Ten Scoring Statements of Survey

- 9 (Score -- Negative) // "The people in the congregation I serve would primarily value
 missional acts of service and kindness as being a means to our ultimate end of telling
 people the Good News of Jesus Christ." [Congregation's Understanding of Missional –
 P. 227 III. B. 9.]
- 9% // "The people of the congregation I serve have frequent positive faith conversations with non-believing friends and acquaintances." [Evangelism/Actual/Congregation P. 287 IV. (5). (ii). B. 4.]
- 15% // "I believe that most people in the congregation I serve consistently set aside a time for personal daily devotions at least five days per week each of which consists of a minimum of ten minutes of personal bible reading/study and prayer."
 [Deep/Actual/Congregation P. 237 IV. (1). (ii). B. 1.]
- 15% // "The congregation I serve is known in our community as being a group who know how to throw great parties/celebrations for our community." [Attractional-Outsider Focused/Actual/Pastor P. 260 – IV. (3). (ii) A. 5.]

- 5. 16% (Net Disagreement) // "I believe that the people of the congregation I serve think that discipleship consists primarily in learning and believing the right doctrinal truths." [Deep/Aspirational/Congregation P. 232 IV. (1). (i). B. 3.]
- 6. 16% (Net Disagreement) // "I believe that the lack of the discipline of personal daily Bible reading/study and prayer is having a detrimental effect upon the personal and ministry lives of the people of the congregation I serve." [Deep/Actual/Congregation – P. 238 - IV. (1). (ii). B. 2.]
- 7. 16% (Net Disagreement) // "I believe that most of the people in the congregation I serve feel they are too stretched and busy to have adequate time and energy to be involved in ministries of compassion, care and connecting into our community."
 [Wide/Actual/Congregation P. 251 IV. (2). (ii). B. 4.]
- 8. 16% // "The people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain the gospel message and lead a friend or an acquaintance in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord." [Evangelism/Actual/Congregation P. 286 IV. (5). (ii). B. 3.]
- 19% // "Generally speaking, the people of the congregation I serve develop meaningful relationships with non-Christian people, ones in which they can graciously and transparently speak of their Christian faith." [Wide/Actual/Congregation P. 250 IV.
 (2). (ii). B. 3.]
- 10. 19% // "The people of the congregation I serve have a disproportionate positive impact within our neighbourhood/community (through means such as engagement with community organizations, or their quiet caring for their neighbours, or advocating for the dispossessed and powerless of the community, etc.)." [Partner/Actual/Congregation P. 275 IV. (4). (ii). B. 5.]

(Tied with the previous statement) ... 19% (Net Disagreement) // "When the people of the congregation I serve consider whether we should make changes to our church or to our worship services, most tend to evaluate those changes in terms of "will I like/be comfortable with this?" more than "will this make us more effective in reaching those around us?"" [Attractional-Outsider Focused/Actual/Congregation – P. 263 - IV. (3). (ii). B. 4.]

Concluding Summary Observations from the Findings of the Quantitative Survey

To conclude this chapter on the results of the quantitative survey designed to examine how well the missional paradigm is understood and embraced by the churches of the CBAC, I am making five summary observations.

The first is that as was anticipated, and which in part formed the basis of this thesis and research, the Aspirational scores for both pastors and congregations exceeded the Actual in every category measured but one (with that one exception being that of *Pastor – Deep* Dimension where the Actual exceeded Aspirational). This indicates that often both the Pastors as well as the laity of CBAC congregations already possess a longing or desire to be further along in their faith than they currently are, but perhaps are struggling to have a vision or a strategy for how to more fully incorporate those existing aspirational desires into their day to day lives. For those who have leadership roles within the CBAC (i.e. the denominational leaders particularly as they relate to the pastors, and the pastors as they relate to the laity), rather than lament over or chide them that they aren't further along than they are (as both denominational and pastoral leaders sometimes may be prone to do), it would be more constructive to consider how they could be encouraged, equipped and resourced – while also removing any unnecessary hindrances or

obstacles that stand in their way, whether real or perceived – so that congregations could live into that greater actualization for which they already long. This is no doubt a task of leadership.

A second observation from this research is that Pastors express a significant appreciation of, identification with, and commitment to the Missional paradigm of ministry, considering it to be faithful to our Scriptural imperative of making disciples and showing God's love to a broken and hurting world. A concern uncovered, however, is that not only do Pastors generally exceed Congregations in each of the five Missional Dimensions, but there is evidently a significantly large gap between Pastors and Congregations. In terms of understanding and living out a missionally-shaped life. This might not be as much of a concern if the congregations were innately living it out without knowing the language of it, but this does not appear to be the case. Rather, according to the perceptions of the pastoral respondents it generally appears that their congregations have a significant distance to go to be living their faith out in a missional manner. Congregations were scored low both in their passion for sharing the Good News through word and through deed.

This offers a great opportunity for the CBAC and the pastors to collaborate to build a deepening knowledge and understanding of the missional call upon followers of Jesus Christ, and to cast a vision and create a means for helping advance the missional conversation and model.

³⁹¹ III. A. 1. (P. 218), 3. (P. 219), 5. (P. 220)

³⁹² III. B. 1. (P. 223), 3 (P. 224)

³⁹³ III. B. 7. (P. 226)

³⁹⁴ IV. (5). (ii) B. 1. (P. 285)

³⁹⁵ IV. (2). (ii). B. 2. (P. 250)

A third observation from this research is the lack of engagement with, knowledge of, and deference to Scripture by a substantial portion of CBAC congregations.³⁹⁶ As a denomination that would generally identify itself as evangelical with a core value of fidelity to Scripture, this was surprising. It well may be worth asking whether many of the structural changes that have become common place over these past two or more decades within many CBAC churches (such as the demise of Sunday school or other pedagogical-type opportunities, a move to what at least some might consider to be more experiential and perhaps less theologically-robust worship music, the diminished use of liturgical resources such as Responsive Readings, unison prayers, reading of historic creeds, etc.) has resulted in a less Scripturally literate congregation than may have existed a generation ago.

Fourth, there was evidenced in the data a distinct separation of faith from day to day life for many within CBAC congregations, be that in terms of knowing how and/or feeling free to speak of their faith in the context of the relationships they share with people around them, or of having a vision for or knowing how to integrate faith and witness into the day to day activities they find themselves involved in.³⁹⁷ It seems that many in CBAC congregations have a segregated view of their faith, seeing it as most relevant for those times when they are "at church" (as compared to being the church) and for matters of personal or private morality and faith.

A fifth and final observation from this research is that although 63% of pastoral respondents had net agreement with the statement "I consider the congregation I serve to be an

³⁹⁶ IV. (1). (i). B. 2. (P. 232), 4. (P. 233), 5. (P. 233); IV. (1) (ii). B. 1. (P. 237), 5. (P. 239)

³⁹⁷ III. B. 8. (P. 226); IV. (2). (i). B. 1. (P. 243), 2. (P. 244); IV. (2). (ii). B. 3. (P. 250); IV. (4). (ii). B. 1. (P. 273), 4. (P. 275)

excellent congregational family and I am grateful for all the ways that God is at work through our congregation"³⁹⁸ and 51% expressed net agreement with "I believe that even though we face challenges, the congregation I serve is on a positive trajectory and based on what we have been observing, we can anticipate great days ahead,"³⁹⁹ numerous other responses from those same respondents scored their congregations rather low in terms of their engagement with and attentiveness to guests⁴⁰⁰ as well as their impact and reputation within the neighbourhoods in which they live.⁴⁰¹ The responses from the participating pastors appears to indicate that congregations are not hungry to seize every opportunity that they may have to maximize a positive encounter with those who may wander in to the church building some Sunday morning, or in terms of the reputation that church may have within the wider neighbourhood.

³⁹⁸ II. 1. (P. 213)

³⁹⁹ II. 10. (P. 217)

⁴⁰⁰ IV. (3). (i). (B). 2. (P. 256); IV. (3). (ii). B. 3. (P. 262), 4. (P. 263), 5. (P. 263)

⁴⁰¹ IV. (3). (i). (B). 5. (P. 257); IV. (4). (ii). B. 5. (P. 275)

Chapter Five

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

"Interviews of Four CBAC Pastors Exploring Their Understanding
of Gospel and Discipleship as Integral Components of the Missional Church"

Synopsis, Observations and Reflections

A Synopsis of the Qualitative Interviews

Through the use of qualitative interviews with four CBAC pastors I attempted to explore more deeply certain essential core concepts pertaining to the missional paradigm, especially as generally understood within the churches of the CBAC. These essential core concepts were: (i) what constitutes the Gospel; (ii) in general, what is each pastor's attitude towards the missional framework; and (iii) what is each pastor's fundamental understanding of discipleship and what does it look like in the context of the local church?

Some might think these questions to be elementary, presuming for example that the term 'Gospel' seems blatantly self-evident within a Christian setting, but my experience and understanding is that the meaning of the term can vary in different congregational settings. At times it can be conceived of in a reductionistic manner as being primarily about escaping the consequences and power of sin, and having personal assurance that sin is forgiven and overcome in one's life. Others understand the Gospel more as an announcement that, in Jesus Christ, God is now in the process of bringing His fullness and restoration to all of His creation. The question I wished to consider in relation to these two understandings of the Gospel is whether either understanding by itself captures the full essence of what the Gospel is, or whether they complete

rather than compete with one another in terms of understanding that which constitutes the Gospel, the Good News.

A second primary topic I wished to explore with these four pastoral leaders was their understanding of and value for the missional conversation or paradigm. Do they primarily think of it as just another fad that has come (and perhaps has already gone, or at least is in the process of going), or do they think that at its core it addresses realities that should be integral to the church 'in all places and at all times'?

The third primary question I wanted to investigate with these leaders was their understanding of discipleship, exploring with them what spiritual maturity ought to look like for the Christ-follower, and how CBAC churches could more effectively grow mature followers of Jesus. Is the process of discipleship understood as simply a cognitive exercise; one of filling people's minds with 'Bible truths', believing that right knowledge will automatically lead to maturity and right behaviour? If that is what discipleship is, then what of those individuals who may have outstanding knowledge of Scripture and even theology but seem underdeveloped when it comes to exhibiting fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control?⁴⁰²

To consider these core concepts and others related to them, and to unpack some of the findings of the quantitative survey which was undertaken, I interviewed four well-respected Pastors of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* who in my opinion are viewed by many as being both capable and insightful as they reflect upon matters of Christian faith and life.

A description of these four pastors are:

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⁴⁰² Galatians 5:22, 23 (NIV)

- Pastor 1 brings 32 years of ministry experience to his role as part-time Lead Pastor of a rural church situated in the verdant rolling hills of south-central New Brunswick. In the past this pastor has served as an Associate Pastor (including responsibility for youth), Solo Pastor, a missionary serving in Africa, and for five years served with an NGO involved with food security issues. The congregation he currently serves is a smaller intergenerational church that is well known in its region for undertaking various imaginative missional initiatives which have had significant impact both locally and globally.
- Having 22 years of ministry experience behind him, Pastor 2 is no doubt recognized as one of the leading pastors within the CBAC. A much-sought-after seminar and conference speaker as well as commentator on ministry challenges, he has served in excess of ten years as Lead Pastor of an inner-city congregation situated in an urban centre in Atlantic Canada. This church traces its roots back to the middle of the 19th century but has been on a trajectory of growth and redevelopment for much of the last 25 years while remaining located within their core neighbourhood. They are a community of diverse people from different ethnicities, economic backgrounds and ages.
- Pastor 3 is a single parent with a background in the performing arts. Some ten years ago she came to Christian faith which shortly after precipitated her enrolling in the CBAC's denominational seminary (Acadia Divinity College, or ADC) out of her thirst to know more about this new reality in which she found herself. It was during those years of study at ADC that she experienced a call to Pastoral Ministry, and she has now served in ministry for the past six years. Having experience as an Associate Pastor with responsibilities for family ministry and community outreach and engagement, she has a

passion for understanding how Christians are to live their faith in a faithful and engaging manner with the wider world they find themselves in. She currently serves as Pastor of Families and Children at a larger suburban church in NB. This church describes itself as a church committed to growing "passionate and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ ...

Disciples who will worship, learn and serve – all for the glory of God."

• Pastor 4 serves as Co-Pastor of a historic, vibrant inner-city church dating back to 1843 that describes itself as being a socially and theologically diverse congregation dedicated to Christ and His Kingdom work. This pastor's Christian formation and early pastoral training began within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, but he has now served as a CBAC pastor for the past 25 years. He is one who thinks deeply about the role and mission of the church, and is passionate for people to discover for themselves the life Jesus invites us to.

Although each of the interviews essentially followed the same flow of questions, like any good conversation they each tended to a degree to go in unique directions. The transcripts of the interviews are available in the Appendix, but in this chapter I will primarily focus on the aforementioned three core questions.

I intentionally directly quoted these pastors quite extensively out of the desire for the reader to experience something of the unique personality and passion that each of these pastors bring to the subject matter.

Question 1: What is the Gospel?

Pastor 1:

Compared to the other interviewees, this pastor expressed a somewhat different emphasis to, if not understanding of, the Gospel. Each of the others essentially expressed that the core of the Gospel was the message that in and through Jesus there is the offer of forgiveness of sins and the promise of Eternal Life, and this offer is open to all who will acknowledge their need of it and accept it through faith. However, when asked, "What is the Gospel?" he replied:

My understanding of the Good News as we read of it in the Gospels is that it all has to do with the Kingdom. It has to do with the fact that this isn't the end of the story, this world that we live in. It's being redeemed; Christ is its Redeemer; 'get on the bus and be part of it'. That's the Gospel! In many ways we're a long ways from that in terms of our proclamation; you know, rather than start at creation and talking about the world that fell under sin and God redeeming that whole world, we want to start at the cross and talk about people's sin and forgiveness making sure that you're on your way to heaven. As Baptist churches ... our concept is that we get saved, we're safe, and that's kind of it, and we do our best to invite other people into that as well. ... The idea of joining Jesus in His Kingdom movement and leaning into a present limited reality [which] will be a fulfilled reality – living different around that – yeah, I think we're off the mark there and I'm off the mark there very often. Because ... we have spoken of this very limited part of the Gospel for so long, when we talk to people ... [and] begin to say 'Jesus is the King of a Kingdom and he is inviting you into that Kingdom, that begins now and lasts forever,' that they don't get. That would be so foreign because it's foreign to us inside the church and we haven't used that language.

Wanting to explore deeper exactly what he meant by this, I asked how necessary the understanding of "believe and be saved" is to understanding the Gospel. Did he understand it to be central to everything that the Gospel is, or did he view it as something peripheral but which we have made central? He responded:

I think it's the latter. I just preached a series of sermons out of Colossians 1, and the commentators kept saying we have to read this against the backdrop of the Roman Empire. All of Paul's language is basically saying to the church 'you think the Roman Empire is the power to deal with? You think Caesar is the person who is king and ruler over all? Well, let me tell you about Jesus.' And he uses the same kind of language that they would be familiar with and that would come out of the Roman Empire and he attaches that to Jesus, and he goes right back to Creation and firmly inserts Jesus into the

Creation story to basically say 'the Roman Empire is nothing compared to this King and His Kingdom.' So to me that's the Gospel ... to join your life to Jesus as King and His Kingdom and to live your life accordingly; not just to get saved and wait for Heaven.

Still wanting to know what place repentance and belief had in this pastor's framework, I posed the hypothetical and highly improbable scenario that he comes upon a car accident and there is a severely injured person who has 30 seconds to live and knowing they are soon about to pass into Eternity this person asks him 'What must I do to be saved?'⁴⁰³ Did he believe there was any hope to offer such an individual? He answered:

Well sure, we can always go back to the thief on the Cross. He didn't have a lot of time on his hands. But you know, we're asking people to repent. And what does that mean? It means to turn around and live your life differently. Well what does that mean? Repentance recognizes that Jesus is Lord and that my life needs to follow him, and you can do that on your death bed. If a person's death bed experience is 'man, I realize that for a long time I wasn't on the Jesus track, living the life that Jesus calls me to,' they might not be able to put the language of the Kingdom to that, but they know there was a way forward that they should have been on. If they say to Jesus 'Jesus, I recognize you in this moment that You are Lord' that is always the beginning point. But it should be a reverse funnel where that recognition and declaration takes you more out into the world, crossing borders and breaking down walls as Jesus did, that should become our lives. There is that starting point. It's just that too often we don't get very far beyond that.

Before I left this question of what for him exactly constitutes the Gospel, I posed the piano-keyboard metaphor with him, asking him if he was saying it's wrong to think of 'Repent and believe' as being the Middle C of the Gospel even if the Gospel rightly understood also involves far more than that. His response was:

I think it's a dangerous thing we've come upon because it comes with the assumption that 'as long as I do this, it's all I have to do.' We don't preach it as the starting point; we preach it as an end in and of itself. I remember Brian McLaren's illustration when he was with us in St. Andrews⁴⁰⁴; we're supposed to be in a race, the starter's gun fires, we launch off the line, and then we stop and celebrate saying 'Great, the race is done!' rather than realizing that there's a finish line way up there and we're to keep running. So I do think it's dangerous in that sense for what does it fulfill at that point? So yeah, while it

⁴⁰³ Cf. Acts 16:30

⁴⁰⁴ The then CABC's Evangelism Conference that was held at the Algonquin Hotel in St. Andrew's, N.B., in the early 2000's.

could be the middle C as long as we say start here, but [I want to say] 'let me go on and teach you something else; let's expand out from here.'

Pausing for a moment, he then added

It's interesting to me that Jesus never really taught that. Jesus did say 'Come and repent,' but he always talked about the Kingdom of God. And people who come and ask him how to get into the Kingdom he would tell stories like the Good Samaritan where someone had to cross poverty borders and ethical borders and it cost him and that kind of stuff. Imagine if we really said to people 'come and be a Christian and this is what it's going to mean: it's going to take your money and your time and make you really uncomfortable.' Think of Joseph and Mary and the Christmas story. Look what we've done with it! Those poor people, their lives were never again the same. They never again lived a normal life after saying yes to God. Their lives were in turmoil, they were on the run for a number of years, they finally got back to Nazareth and then had to deal with who knows what in terms of bringing up Jesus. So when she said yes it wasn't Mary saying 'oh you mean I'm going to say yes and then I'm going to be in every little manger scene and people are going to swoon over me. Oh won't that be lovely.' It wasn't that all. I think she knew. I think Mary had a pretty good idea as soon as the angel said, 'oh, by the way, you're going to get pregnant.'

Pastor 2:

When asked the opening question of 'What is the Gospel?', Pastor 2 also began with connecting it to the Kingdom.

The shorter version for me would be 'the coming of the Kingdom.' It is Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God and the future redemption starting now of all things ... starting with the forgiveness of sins and the outworking of all that salvation in our lives as we allow Christ to be Lord of our lives, putting things back together, and it begins to spread though our homes and communities ... that would be the short answer ... just the coming of the Kingdom.

My next question was "Why do you think the issue of repentance and forgiveness has to be so central to the coming of the Kingdom?" to which he answered:

Because I have got to leave my kingdom behind. If someone is going to truly experience the Kingdom of God you can't be the king, and so for me it's really around Lordship, surrender. I think the challenge for today is about really communicating it in a way that's not ignoring but leaving behind some of the old language that we're used to and that people got stuck upon, and come at it in a new way. When I think about the Kingdom it's that repentance is 'I'm abandoning my lordship of my life and handing the reigns

over to Christ asking him to be Lord of my life.' And you can't have Christ's Kingdom and still try to be King.

In asking him the question of whether he felt Middle C alone ("repent and believe") was the Gospel, or if the Gospel involved all '88 keys' each which were to find their centre or their grounding in Middle C, I didn't receive a direct answer. Instead he said:

The language we use in our teaching around here is that it is like a home renovation. So Jesus is the renovator, he comes on in and he's working rooms at a time, but it's not instant, a renovation doesn't happen instantaneously. It's work, it's painful, it's decisions, there are walls that need to come down. There's rubble that needs to be thrown out. There are new coats of paint that need to be applied. It's just a constant process.

Pastor 3:

When asked what her understanding of the Gospel was, Pastor 3 replied "It's the Good News. There's hope. When people ask me why I believe what I believe, I would have to say it is because I've found out through personal experience there is hope in this world and for this world, and this hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ and that he is the hope for everyone. But it requires a relationship to have with him." Wondering how this talk about hope might strike one who was not a believer, I asked her what it meant to have hope. "Is this like a hope we might have in Santa Claus, or we hope tomorrow might be sunny?" Her response was no, continuing on to say "the hope that I have is that while I'm living on this earth I have someone who walks this life with me and who is there for me to turn to in both the good times and the bad, and then there is also the hope that when I die this is not the end, but that I will have eternity with God in heaven."

I wanted to drill down more deeply about how she would explain the connection that exists between the relationship with Jesus and the hope she feels she has in him, so I asked her: "Is the relationship the vehicle or the means or the prerequisite for salvation – in other words, are

we saved through the relationship? -- or is the relationship a benefit of the salvation? To say it another way, are we saved through the relationship, or is it that by being saved we are invited into the relationship?" (Admittedly, I was the one who introduced the word of 'salvation' in the question; it was not a word she had specifically used to that point.) She responded:

I think it's two sides of the same coin, or simultaneous interactions. We're invited into relationship through faith, and it is through faith in that person of who Jesus was and is that allows for salvation. So we are saved through faith, but not just faith in anything; it's faith in a specific person and what they did, and in order to believe that you are required to have at least the beginning of a relationship. It is that you've at least met the person; you don't necessarily know everything about them yet because the relationship is new but because you're in relationship with them you want to get to know more.

Asked the follow-up question of how the Gospel then relates to issues such as justice or the environment or caring for the needy, and whether these kinds of initiatives are core parts of the Gospel or something other than the Gospel, her answer was "It's a part of the Gospel. The Gospel is about modelling Jesus, and he emphasized taking care of children and the poor and looking out for those who are marginalized in society, which is now what we consider to be social justice. And then when it comes to the environment we're called to steward our world, it was created for us, and you take care of your gift."

I still felt uncertain as to whether Pastor 3 was saying these elements are integral components of the Gospel itself, or things which are important but something other than or secondary to the Gospel, so I asked her if the Gospel was just "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," or if the Gospel also includes these other aspects which I had identified, such as pursuing social justice, addressing communal wrongs, etc. Her answer was that "those things like the environment and social justice are ripple-out effects of the Gospel message, but I get that once people begin focusing on social justice or the environment or whatever the causedu-jour is, that's the initiator instead of it rippling out from the sharing of the Gospel." I

interpreted from this that what she was saying was that although they are integral components of the Gospel, we also have to be intentional to explain how the person of Jesus Christ speaks truth to all these issues and be careful that we do not gut the core part of the Gospel by becoming so preoccupied by these other matters.

Pastor 4:

Asked what he understood the term 'Gospel' to mean, Pastor 4 replied:

The Gospel begins with God and His love for humanity – His Special Creation – who have been separated by sin from Him, and He took the initiative to reconcile with us by sending His Son Jesus who was the perfect sacrifice who laid down His life for us, and we experience God's grace and we are adopted into His family, and we're separated from Him no longer because of Christ. I also believe that succinctly the gospel always has a component that we cannot save ourselves – only God can save us. How that impacts me in terms of my preaching and my ministry would be that one phrase 'we cannot save ourselves but only God can save us' ... it reminds me not to lay undue burdens on others, that we do not earn our salvation, we do not earn God's favour."

He then went on to say "I don't think we need to spend a lot of time convincing people of sin; I think the Holy Spirit does that. There is this innate sense within all of us that understands what sinfulness is."

I wanted to know what his understanding of sin was, so I asked him whether sin referred only to the wrong things we did that displeased God, or did it speak to the break of our personal relationship with God, or was there also a societal or cosmic sense of sin that the gospel also addresses. His response was:

Definitely. Like many of us of a certain age I was certainly aware of liberation theology, and in our circles it initially was not looked upon favorably. So liberation theology in the sense that the Gospel is more corporate and there are people-groups in our world who are oppressed and who need to be set free, who need to be liberated, and the Gospel carries a tone of justice for those people. While I wouldn't say that defines the Gospel I would say that the Gospel includes that notion as well.

I explained to him that the analogy that I used with each of the pastors was that of a piano keyboard, understanding that if Middle C was the message of "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved", and if all the other 87 keys of an 88 keyboard were other themes such as how to be a kind of spouse that God would call us to be, or what kind of employer should we be, or how should we care for dispossessed refugees moving into our land, or how should we steward the natural environment around us, then what would he term the Gospel to be? Would the Gospel strictly speaking just be Middle C, or would it be that plus all the other keys/topics, all of which found their grounding or their centre in this Middle C (just as every other note of a piano keyboard notation-wise is written in relationship to its position as compared to Middle C)? His answer initially indicated that he felt the Gospel strictly speaking was Middle C alone, or maybe also including C-sharp and C flat which would then be "repent and be baptized' because belief is a cognitive thing but the 'repent and be baptized' are actions ... they're engaging us." This still left me with a degree of uncertainty in light of the analogy as I presented it to him, so I followed up by asking "to have clarification, are you saying then that C flat (or B) to C sharp alone is the Gospel, and everything else is mere application of the Gospel? Or are you saying that rightly understood all application of what God has done for us in Christ is part of the good News?

His answer was:

When you're talking about living out the Gospel – that's been called Gospel fluency lately – I do believe the Gospel has something to say to how we live our lives in every arena of our lives. I was thinking of another analogy before you started with the piano analogy. I think that in every generation and in every time and in every culture the Gospel has to apply to all of life. Our role is to be good students of both our culture and of the Scriptures and to see where those connections are and to point them out to others. I had this insight personally that in our time it seems to be just part of our cultural *zeitgeist* that people are doing a lot of ancestry and DNA stuff and they have these questions of 'who am I?' 'Where did I come from?' 'Why am I here?' They think that by understanding their DNA or their ancestry these deep questions are going to be answered

and somehow give them fulfilment and purpose and significance and meaning in life. I think that's a culture question that is answered by the Gospel.

Question 2: How do you understand the phrase 'word and deed' in the missional context?

Having explored the understanding that each of these pastors had of what actually constitutes the message of the Gospel – or the Good News – I also wanted to probe whether they found the missional paradigm as important, to what extent they valued the 'word and deed' language, and whether they saw one (word or deed) as more important than the other.

Pastor 1:

Pastor 1 affirmed that a missional framework ought to characterize the Church in all places and at all times.

Oh yea, no question. It is to characterize the Church in all places and all times. I think the pendulum for we as Baptists have swung toward the mission ... the deed gospel ... because it's been lacking for so many decades, but suddenly we've found this whole new thing within a Christianity we've always had but we really didn't recognize. Like how long have we been talking about the Kingdom of God in our churches? Twenty years? Like that's the language we use? Before we didn't talk about Christianity being a part of a growing Kingdom. I think if what we call deed isn't firmly rooted in Kingdom language, then it can easily become gimmick.

When it came to the phrase 'word and deed' his preference would be to

use the words proclamation and demonstration. The deed is demonstrating the word that you're speaking. To demonstrate something you haven't spoken, or to speak something you haven't demonstrated ... neither of them can stand alone. So I think we need to be careful of that. I tend to be a bit of a pendulum guy, and when I came back from Kenya social justice stuff was so front and centre that suddenly all these issues came so huge and in my preaching I was trying to figure this out. I think I became very obsessed with 'feeding the hungry' at the expense of the word and bringing people along and trying to help them understand how all this connects with the words that we as Baptist people tend to be familiar with. Think of it all. All our programming and what we think when we think of what it means to be the Church and begin to program around that ... it's very much that limited 'you must be saved' kind of message; our expectation in an idealistic way of thinking is that someone's going to happen into our church, they're going to hear

a sermon that says 'you're a sinner and need to be saved', they're going to get saved, and they're going to join the church. That really kind of sums what ministry often looks like for us. But the reality is when you look at the churches that are really successful or effective, you might go in and hear that message but boy, you will have already heard about this church, feeding the hungry and demonstrating the Kingdom in various ways. When people see that in our church and know that's who we are in the community, and then when they hear us preach the gospel, then it's not hard for them to put two plus two together and go 'okay, these people are living in a different world than I'm living in'.

Pastor 2:

Pastor 2's take on the missional paradigm, in terms of whether it is more of a passing fad or if at its essence it ought rightly to characterize the Church in all places and at all times, was:

In some senses it was a corrective that was needed. I think of it as being kind of like seatbelt laws. They came along and reminded us that maybe we should be safe and looking after ourselves; it was this big emphasis and it was all the rage and everybody was talking about it or upset about it, but now it's just all normal. In some ways I hope that the whole emphasis to call people to understand that their faith should be expressed in some way as a church and individually was an emphasis that was needed at the time but now hopefully it's kind of normal and you don't need to talk about it as much anymore. To me the problem with even using the word missional is it sounds like it is some kind of new program we have dreamt up, when it has always been an important part of being a people of faith, all the way back from Genesis 12 on through to the end of the Bible, it is that God's people would put on display the character of God through the way that they live internally and externally. As we surrender to the Kingdom that's always the way the Spirit is going to take us. My problem is that people talk about missional and they just kind of avoid it because it sounds like it's some special new-fangled thing that someone who writes books or blogs made up, but it's not. It's just trying to give language to the truth that 'our faith must have an outer expression'. The fact that we even have to talk about it should be embarrassing, in some regards. To me it just means so many different things. People say 'oh, [your church] is missional.' I don't even know what that means any more. Does it mean that if you just have a foodbank you're missional? That's not fair. I don't think that's a right reflection, or if you give money to missions overseas does that make you missional, or if you convince people to do something nice to a neighbour does that make you missional? It seems really flimsy to use that word to describe those things as a one-of nice thing.

With regards to the relationship of 'word and deed' and how we should view them, Pastor

2 said he has

a hard time separating the two in my mind. I preached through the book of James in October. I just think deeds are an expression of the faith we have; they are just one big knotted pile to me. I don't know that you can just remove one without the other. I think of it in relation to a marriage and if you were to say 'how do I separate my feelings of love for [my wife] and my actions towards [my wife]?' they are all sort of mushed together in the same thing. To me, even trying to separate them or talk about them as unique in and of themselves can sometimes do a disservice to the unity that is supposed to be found there. Deeds to me are sometimes forcing yourself to do things you might not always want to do, but they should be as you grow in your faith, the fruit of a faith that is alive and growing at some level.

Pastor 3:

In asking her whether she believed the missional emphasis was only a passing fad, of if at its essence it is to rightly characterize the church in all times and at all place, she was unequivocal in her response: "It is to characterize the church in all places and at all times. It's what we're called to do. It's not a fad. We treat it as a fad, but it's not." Acknowledging that the concept of 'word and deed' is often integral to the missional conversation, I next asked her if she felt if either word or deed should take preference over the other, or even if we should pour all our energies into one as compared to the other. Her reply indicated that she did not really view them as two distinct entities but really as "two sides of the same coin."

We need both. Deed should come out of understanding the word, and the word without deed is dead, as they say. So if we only do good deeds for people but we don't share about Jesus ... and the fact that he loved us so we will love others, then we are no different than any other social agency that is helping others. On the other if all we do is preach at people, then [if] they don't see actions they aren't going to sense authenticity, for if we are to love people we're not going to leave them cold and hungry and everything else.

This raised the question for me whether that meant that she was suggesting we were to do deeds only so that we can have legitimacy in speaking the Word. "No. God calls us to deed because we are to look at every person as He does, as His creation and to love and respect them as such, whether they understand that or not."

A final question I asked Pastor 3 was whether she thought we as believers are more drawn to deed today as we find it more socially acceptable and less embarrassing to give the cup of water in Jesus' name as compared to having to talk about Jesus. In other words, can deed become a diversion for us?

Yes, though I'm not sure I would speak of it as diversion. How I think I would phrase it is it is easier for people to see a need and try to address the need. I see someone who's hungry so we feed them. Someone doesn't have clothes, so we get them clothes. Somebody can't pay their oil bill, so we help them. But we're not very good when it comes to the intangible need and we back away from the idea that just because someone has all the material necessities met, that we don't have something that they need – which is Jesus. I just preached on this last Sunday. Churches in general are very good at realizing they need to serve the poor – and so they should – but they back away from trying to engage with the demographic that looks like they have the world by the tail. That's going to require them to be able to have a reason for the hope that they have, and I don't think a lot of our congregations are ready and prepared to know how to explain that, and they're afraid of the pushback from people who don't believe. That's why these days its less about being worried about offending people; I think that's a cop-out. I think it's more [that] people are just afraid that they won't know how to answer.

Pastor 4:

Pastor 4's reply to the question of whether the missional emphasis is only a passing fad, or if at its essence it is to characterize the church in all places and at all times was "I think there is a sense where right now this seems to be more significant culturally, ... and yet I would also say I'm of the conviction that the church should always be missional." Pertaining to the interplay of 'word and deed' and whether one should have precedence over the other, he explained:

I am certainly comfortable with the two-pole concept of word and deed; the Gospel applying and being communicated and delivered in Word and in Deed. My sense is that we need discernment and we need to be led by the Spirit in terms of how the gospel is communicated in every context. I think there are ... [contexts] where you would with words communicate in one way that would be ineffectual in another context. For example, a few years ago I watched a lecture series at Oxford University that Tim Keller did with students there, and he presented the Gospel over a series of evenings in a variety

of ways that were intellectual and philosophical and theological. You would want to be very different if the context were different, say if you were just talking to people downtown in the soup kitchen in your city or my city. I certainly believe 'empty bellies have no ears' so there are times Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' has merit. There are times we need to begin meeting the basic needs because they're so focused on those needs that initially they are never going to be able to hear what we're saying.

Asked whether he had any concerns about where emphasizing both word and deed could lead, as in whether we could abandon our commitment to expressing the Gospel in Word and instead simply want to embody it in deed, he answered:

People can go to extremes in either direction. There is humanitarian [activity] that takes place in the name of Christ and people will never know that Christ's name is part of it, but maybe in some mysterious way they experience the love of God despite the fact that we don't draw clear connection and that from the outward appearance it looks no different than any other NGO or humanitarian effort. By the same token I think that the proverbial street preacher on a soap box on the corner yelling at people about their sin really may not be connecting with nearby people who are left feeling like 'this guy doesn't care anything about me, and he doesn't care about anything I care about, so why should I listen?' This guy in reality may be putting up a wall. And yet, a very close friend of mine says he's a Christian today because of some crazy street preacher.

Question 3: What do you understand discipleship to entail?

Pastor 1:

Although I had run out of time in my interview with this pastor prior to exploring this topic in particular, in our conversation he did reference that in his sermon that next Sunday he was quoting Melissa Skelton.⁴⁰⁵ He explained that Archbishop Skelton says that Joseph (who became Mary's husband) "was the best that tradition had to offer."

When Mary came to him with her story he responded to her out of his tradition and law and religion and he did a splendid job of it. He added mercy to the law and was a very upright, outstanding person at that level. But God was calling him to something much more radical. God was going to colour outside the lines and wanted Joseph to get involved in that. And so the angel came and said 'we need you to set your religion aside because God is doing something that is outside of all those boxes.' I think we're always

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⁴⁰⁵ The current Anglican Bishop of New Westminster, BC, Canada.

in danger of taking our Christianity and confining it within our tradition and our religion and God is always saying 'yeah, but I'm over here doing something that your religion doesn't allow you to do. I'm over here loving prostitutes. I'm over here bringing Syrian refugees into Canada even though 63% of Canadians don't agree with this. I'm colouring outside of the box, so if you want to get involved with the Gospel, with the Good News, with presenting it and demonstrating it, this is what it's going to look like'.

I would understand from this that Pastor 1 would agree that discipleship entails forming a faith people who can discern when, where, and how God is colouring 'outside the lines', so to speak; to shape a people who have eyes to see and ears to hear what God is doing 'beyond the margins' with those who often would take us outside of our safe and comfortable boundaries.

Pastor 2:

For Pastor 2, discipleship is the process of renovation that he spoke of earlier.

Discipleship is working out my salvation with fear and trembling. I've made this commitment, and returning to the renovation analogy, now the renovation work begins. I've bought the house and now I'm in the renovation process, and it's going to be a lifelong process of God renovating me from the inside out. This is not just me going to adult Sunday School or being in an adult Bible Study; this is the daily reflection of allowing Christ to be Lord of my life. We're in a season of transition church-culture wise. Discipleship is that thing I do when I go to that class and fill in the answers in the booklet. Discipleship needs to move beyond that to a daily discipline of just reflecting on God's call on every aspect of my life. I think we're in a transition culturally. I know we're in it here. It's been almost exclusively reduced to 'I went to a class, so I must be a disciple, I must be growing in my faith.'

I asked him how he best understood discipleship, and what responsibility did an individual have for their own ongoing discipleship. He acknowledged that ongoing discipleship does not come easy. The first thing, he said, was to be honest about it.

[We need] to be transparent about it; to be honest about that it's a challenge, it's difficult, it's ongoing, I haven't got everything figured out. I think that's very freeing for people. We can talk openly about where we're at with our faith, what are the things we're finding really difficult, where are the things we're experiencing real joy. And the other one is just encouragement. One of the things that was really interesting [in a recent congregational survey we did] was that one of the questions was 'what's something we can do to help you grow in your faith?', and one of the answers that surprised me that

we've seen quite a few times is 'just be patient with me.' People are trying to figure these things out. They're living in complex, difficult circumstances sometimes and they're just trying to figure it out. That really struck me that this was one of the things people would say. Just be patient with me. Pastorally that struck me as a real good word to remember. So yeah, transparency and encouragement would be two things.

I was curious about whether he saw spiritual formation as a component of or as being the same thing as discipleship. His answer was "It's the foundation. This is where I mean the transparency comes in. We're doing those things, but we're honest about the challenge of frequency, the challenge of faithfulness, the challenge of taking two steps forward and then a couple steps back. Those are all very important things but they're not the quick fixes that they often get communicated to be." He cited the example of a member of his congregation who for years has been a professional counsellor and has recently come to Christian faith. She said to him that one of her challenges now was that there are certain aspects of the counsel that she once would have offered that she no longer feels she can in good conscience give. He relayed that he said to her

'Your vocation is now coming under the Lordship of Christ, and you're now wrestling with it.' It didn't come day one, but it's happened in the first few years, and now she's taking these things and asking 'do I believe this?', 'do I believe that?' 'Can I still make a career of this if I'm actually teaching this?' It's not easy. It's tough work. She was discouraged and I said to her, 'this is exactly where you should be right now. This is exactly what the process looks like of this transition that you're making in your life.' I think she thought it would be all joy and peace and sunshine and rainbows, but it's tough work to make that transition. So that's what I mean by transparency. She's being really honest about the renovation work that's going on. It's complicated. To me that captures what discipleship is really all about.

Pastor 3:

Pastor 3 said that her understanding was that "discipleship is training, and we are training believers to be scattered. It's about strengthening them in their own walk, encouraging them but also teaching them in their own faith to keep moving in that. It's about equipping them to share

their faith with other people; it's about equipping them to serve God in whatever capacity He calls them to do so."

As a follow-up, I asked her how a person could best contribute to their own journey of discipleship, and was discipleship the same things as spiritual growth? Her answer was that she did not think discipleship was the same thing as spiritual growth, though "spiritual growth is certainly a part of discipleship. I would think of spiritual growth as the personal and discipleship is the being equipped to go forth, or being equipped to do so. Coming to understand what it means to be present with God, to come into His presence, taking time to be with God."

I asked if it is important to 'read your bible and pray every day.'. Is that integral to this? Her response was "I think it's incredibly important, but often it's more important to seize five minutes here and five minutes there, and that stimulates my hunger for more of it. I think reading Scripture and praying every day is incredibly important but it's not enough. We can do all that and never really be in God's presence."

Having some extra time to explore this further with her, I asked how we as pastors, leaders, denominations should best look to contribute to the spiritual growth and discipleship of people in their churches. She said that she felt that "our biggest problem is that our pastors are not living it ... they're like doctors who don't pay attention to their own symptoms. Pastors confuse sermon preparation with time with God. The vision has to be to inspire pastors that they need to do this."

The final question I asked Pastor 3 relating to discipleship was whether discipleship happened 'outside the lab'? In other words, does this happen best by running away to retreats or does discipleship happen best in the doing of everyday life? She felt that the way I worded the question – of 'running away to a retreat' – expressed my own attitude towards such experiences,

but she then continued on to say that "it takes both-and, not either/or. It involves retreats, time alone with God, etc., but then also going out into the world, being with others, ministering to them, loving people, serving people. It's kind of like the co-op model in education ... time spent in the classroom/lab, then we're out applying it. It is this moving between alone time with God and moving out, but it's not where we just do all one and then go do all the other."

Pastor 4:

When I asked Pastor 4 what he understood to be meant by discipleship, and how well he believed church as he has experienced it is doing discipleship, he answered "I don't believe discipleship is only cognitive. I definitely believe in 'along the way' kind of discipleship. I believe that discipleship is a purposeful, intentional, and relational process of making Christ a part of our identity." At this point I interrupted him to ask how that practically happens within their congregation. He replied:

This is actually a big emphasis for us right now, and we're in the midst of trying to figure this out. The whole reason why we launched this initiative last fall called 'The Gathering' was really to begin to invite people into a more intentional process of discipleship. I would say that it's all going to be relational – it's all going to be Gospelbased – but it's going to look different for different people. For some people we're starting out with a book club idea where they'll read a book that's about the Gospel and then they'll come together to talk about that; for others it's going to be part of a triad with two other people where you will not only study together and explore questions together, but have accountability and prayer for one another. For others, it will be an intentional process of discipleship where you'll look back into your past and then apply the gospel to various formational life experiences you've had, and doing that with others.

Reflections and Observations from the Interviews

1. Pertaining to the Pastors' understanding of what constitutes the Gospel:

My first reflection from the four interviews was that in their own way each of these pastors in essence affirmed that integral to the Gospel is the message that salvation is found in and through a personal response to the person and work of Jesus Christ, which would be consistent with the expressed conviction of CBAC pastoral respondents in the Quantitative Survey. In IV. (5) (i) A. 1. (p. 276) 94% of pastoral respondents expressed net-agreement with the statement "I believe that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord."

This is not to say that each of the pastors were expressing this core conviction in exactly the same way. Pastor 1 likely was the most hesitant to speak of the Gospel in an explicit "repent and believe" kind of manner, but when questioned further on this it appeared that his biggest hesitancy was that it would become reduced to an easy cognition-only faith which failed to truly embrace the Lordship of Christ and a pursuit of the Kingdom. He believes that perhaps like many streams within evangelical faith, we within the CBAC have been guilty of emphasizing this part of the Gospel message to the exclusion of other equally or perhaps even more important parts of the Gospel message; that to respond to the Gospel is also to say that we want to follow Jesus in living out His Kingdom values here. For him, the problem with 'the Gospel message' as it is often understood is that we have a propensity to become myopic making it the sole focus, such that people presume that as long as they have said the right words or prayed the right prayer then 'they're in, and there isn't anything else they need to do.'

Like Pastor 1, Pastor 2 also connected the Gospel to being about the Kingdom, understanding that Jesus is "ushering in the Kingdom of God and the future redemption starting now of all things ... starting with the forgiveness of sins and the outworking of all that salvation in our lives as we allow Christ to be Lord of our lives." When asked how important repentance was to the message of the Kingdom, he replied that it was essential because before we can embrace God's Kingdom we have to leave our own little kingdoms behind. He felt the challenge in speaking about the Gospel in today's culture is not that we have to jettison those core parts of the gospel of repenting and believing, but that we must find language that freshly and meaningfully expresses what the Gospel really is and what it truly calls us to.

Pastor 3 expressed her understanding of the Gospel in what could be described as a more traditional way, explaining that it was the message of the hope that we have in Jesus; this hope being that while we live on this earth we have someone who is always with us caring for us and is always present with us. Such hope, she says, is not only for while we yet live here on this earth, but it is an eternal hope in that "when I die this is not the end, but ... I will have eternity with God in heaven."

Like both Pastors 1 and 2, Pastor 3 also understood that the Gospel is broader than just a "repent and believe" message, for the Gospel is also a call or invitation for us to follow Jesus committing to live like Him, caring for that which He cares for, which is all of Creation, beginning most especially with our fellow humans who find themselves on the margins of life.

Pastor 4's answer to the question of what constitutes the Gospel was probably the most theologically grounded as he spoke more of the salvation history that started with Adam and Eve in the Garden leading up to the grace and adoption that is found in Jesus, and that only God can save us. He identified the Gospel as starting with "God and his love for humanity – His special

Creation – who have been separated from Him," a story which leads to the solution of that separation which is that He sent "His Son Jesus who was the perfect sacrifice who laid down His life for us, and we experience God's grace and we are adopted into His family, and we're separated from Him no longer because of Christ." He also acknowledged that the Gospel is about transformation, for it informs us how we are to live "in every arena of our lives."

My conclusion is that in their own ways each of these four pastors affirm that integral to the Gospel is the message that God offers forgiveness and mercy and new life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus, but it would be a mistake to think that all that is required is a cognitive response of mental assent. The Gospel is transformative in that all of life is then to be lived differently in light of all that God has done for humanity in and through the gift of His Son.

2. Pertaining to the Pastors' assessment of the 'word and deed' missional paradigm:

Pastor 1 was firmly convinced that what is often called the missional paradigm today is not at its essence merely a fad that has come, but rather is a reality which is to "characterize the church in all times and places." He believes this missional conversation is essentially a course correction for us Baptists in Atlantic Canada for it was something we never really heard of until perhaps the past twenty years. Further, while he agrees with the concept of 'word and deed' where each are equally integral to both the Gospel and to our witness, he does caution that deed has to be firmly understood and rooted in Kingdom language, for if not "it can easily become gimmick." This accounts for why he prefers the terms 'proclamation and demonstration' over

⁴⁰⁶ As acknowledged in the Introduction to this thesis, a strong case can be made that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the then Maritime Baptists were strongly engaged in various social/justice initiatives, even if that engagement waned and perhaps increasingly focused upon matters of private morality and the vices of others such as alcohol, tobacco, and various forms of entertainment.

'word and deed.' It's too easy, he contends, for it to become word *or* deed, whichever one we might feel more comfortable with or which requires less of us. For him, 'proclamation and demonstration' innately imply that you can't rightly have one without the other; that each require and complete the other.

This is why Pastor 1 cautioned that we must evaluate and understand deed in light of God's Kingdom priorities, for if we fail to we can easily become sidetracked by the agenda of our ever-changing culture and lose sight of the agenda of the Kingdom. He further made a helpful statement which expresses how word and deed both complement and complete the other: "When people see [the church feeding the hungry and demonstrating the Kingdom] in our church and know that's who we are in our community, and then when they hear us preach the gospel, then it's not hard for them to put two plus two together and go 'okay, these people are living in a different world than I'm living in'."

Pastor 2 likewise affirmed that rather than being a passing fad the missional paradigm is, at its heart, something that should characterize the church in all places and at all times, and views its development in the past decades as a needed corrective for the church. He was the only one of the four pastors who connected the missional impulse to the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12. He described the missional conversation as giving language to the truth that "our faith must have an outer expression. The fact that we even have to talk about it should be embarrassing, in some regards."

A most helpful insight that this pastor offered pertaining to 'word and deed' was his comment that it truly should be difficult for any of us to separate the two, comparing it to being like his marriage with his wife, wondering how he could ever separate his feelings of love for her from his actions toward her. "To me, even trying to separate them or talk about them as unique

in and of themselves can sometimes do a disservice to the unity that is supposed to be found there."

Pastor 3 likewise affirmed that the missional call is to characterize the church in all its various manifestations in all places and at all times through the centuries. Her words were "we treat it as a fad but it's not." With regards to 'word and deed' she like both Pastors 1 and 2 believes that they can only be artificially separated, for they really are akin to two sides of the same coin. Both are needed and equally important for obedience in living into the Kingdom.

She very helpfully raised the concern that while churches have tended to make significant strides in embracing their responsibility in serving into their communities, too many of them have become weak at being able to share the Good News in word. Referencing Peter's words for believers to "worship Christ as Lord of your life ... [and] if someone asks you about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it" she says this is something we're not very good at anymore. Believers are reluctant to speak of their faith, she says, not out of fear of offending [someone], but because they are afraid they don't know how to explain it. Her observation correlates with the findings of the quantitative survey in which only 21% of pastoral respondents indicated net agreement with the statement "the people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain why they are a Christian to a friend or an acquaintance." 408

Like each of the other three pastors, Pastor 4 believes that the church has always been called to be missional, although he thinks "there is a sense where right now this seems to be more culturally significant." With regards to the interplay of 'word and deed' he believes that both are required and equally important. "I am certainly comfortable with the two-pole concept

408 IV. (5). (ii). B. 2. (P. 286)

⁴⁰⁷ 1 Peter 3:15

of word and deed, the Gospel applying and being communicated and delivered in word and in deed." This means that for him we as believers have to be content to know that context will often determine when deed might be appropriate and when word is appropriate, and our context will also impact the shape and tone and manner in which those words and deeds are offered.

My conclusion pertaining to these pastors' view is that the missional praxis is not simply a fad of the decade but rather a call to the church-at-large to be living into the fullness of its Godgiven mission. It seems that the church has often struggled to maintain balance in word and deed, or proclamation and demonstration, often being drawn more towards one at the expense of the other.

These sentiments of the four pastors agree with the findings of the quantitative survey. 84% of pastoral respondents affirmed that rather than merely being a passing fad, the missional emphasis is actually "a renewed calling to the church to embrace its full responsibility of giving witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ through both proclamation and demonstration."409 Also, 69% of respondents expressed net agreement with the statement "I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would agree that as believers we do want people to know the lifegiving, hope-restoring love that is found through Jesus Christ, and it is therefore essential that we as believers 'enflesh' God's love and grace through our acts of kindness, mercy and justice."⁴¹⁰

3. Pertaining to the Pastors' considerations of discipleship.

As acknowledged earlier in the chapter, I was not able to directly inquire of Pastor 1 about his understanding of the nature and importance of discipleship, but his reference to

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⁴⁰⁹ III. A. 3. (P. 219); also 4 (P. 219) ⁴¹⁰ III. B. 5. (P. 225)

Archbishop Skelton's writing regarding the importance of being open for God to do the unexpected and to work beyond the boxes in which we expect Him to be operating offers a powerful insight to his understanding of what maturity looks like in the life of a Jesus follower. It was clear from our conversation that he would want mature believers to always be keeping an eye out for how God is working in situations all around us, especially when it is in ways that we at first might not expect.

Pastor 2 identified that humility and transparency should be a part of the discipleship process, understanding that it is not a cut-and-dried, neatly defined, simple three-step process. It is the hard work of renovation that he had spoken of. As he said, "I've bought the house and now I'm in the renovation process, and it's going to be a lifelong process of God renovating me from the inside out." This process that he is speaking of (and which at other times and in other conversations may be referred to as the work of 'sanctification) comes with a fair degree of mess, often times being two steps forward one step back. It takes time. People are living in the midst of great complexity, he contends, and it is a journey for them to discern how God wants to be leading them and working through them in the midst of all that.

Pastor 3 understood discipleship to be that process of strengthening believers in their own walk, encouraging and teaching them how to continue on in the journey that God has for them. She said it involves aspects such as equipping people in the sharing of their faith and enabling them to serve in whatever capacity or place that God calls them to. Her understanding was that although spiritual growth was a part of discipleship, it was not the same thing. Discipleship is a both-and process, she believed. It rightly ought to involve periods of withdrawing (admittedly, not a word she used ... but meaning retreats, sabbath rests, time alone with God) and then going

into the world, being with others, ministering to them, loving them. It's not to be all one or the other.

Pastor 4 was quick to emphasize that discipleship ought not be thought of as only a cognitive or mental exercise, but rather should be an 'along the way' kind of discipleship. He went on to describe that at [his home church] they are looking to create what sounded like an apprenticeship model of discipleship, though one where everyone gets to contribute to the apprenticeship journey of all the others. To this end they have created a whole series of new initiatives, all of which have been designed to bring people together for opportunities to share meaningfully with one another in both faith and life.

My take-away from these pastors' considerations of the importance of discipleship is that they all consider discipleship to be a core responsibility of the church, that it is a process that is more than cognitive for it is also relational, practical, life forming and life giving. Like each of the other elements we spoke of, it seems this time in which we find ourselves is a time when many old models of discipleship are no longer effective, and new models are being sought and created.

Conclusion of Chapter

Through the use of qualitative interviews with these four CBAC pastors, I explored more deeply three primary considerations: what is it that we are speaking of when we speak of the Gospel; how important for the church is the missional conversation of these past couple of decades, and what exactly is discipleship and what does it typically look like in the context of a local church?

Regarding the first question of what the Gospel in fact is, these four pastors were in general agreement that the centre or core of the Gospel is the understanding and message that Jesus Christ died for us and through his death and resurrection he overcame the power of death and the grave and all that entails. To unpack this further, integral to this message is that God not only takes the initiative, or has taken the first move toward us, but also at his own expense/cost/pain He in His mercy has through Jesus provided the means or the way for people to enter into a restored relationship, vertically and horizontally. Apart from this provision, all people would remain stuck in a state of alienation or enmity from Him, one another, and His creation.

The Gospel more broadly understood or presented is that God is a God of love and wants people everywhere to experience the fullness of life that He initially created them to know. This message that God is for us, that He's on our side, and that He invites us into such fullness of life is, then, the Gospel in full bloom.

This is why I keep returning to the analogy of middle C (or C4 in a scientific pitch notation) and the 88 keys on a full-sized piano keyboard.⁴¹¹ Whether we understand the Gospel to be exclusively middle C, or if it is better understood as analogous to all 88 keys will have great implication for both the message we speak and the mission we live out.

Compatible to the pastoral responses in the quantitative survey, these four pastors understand that while the message of "Christ's dying for our sins" is central to all that is the Gospel and can be thought of as our 'middle C', that message alone does not fully encapsulate

⁴¹¹ Music is written employing a treble clef which typically is for those notes which are higher tin tone than middle C, and a base clef which typically is for those notes that lie below or are lower in tone than middle C. When writing music in this manner, middle C lies just below the stave when using the treble clef and just above the stave when using the bass clef.

the Gospel. Rather, they understood the Gospel to also entail all that it means to live into the full life that Christ's death unlocks and discloses.

Secondly, these four pastors also were in alignment with the findings of the quantitative survey in their understanding that the missional paradigm is in actuality a call to the church to be what it has always been meant to be. While new emphases and trends and neologisms will inevitably come and go, at heart the missional call for the church to be faithful in both word and deed, or proclamation and demonstration, is what the church has always been called to.

Thirdly, these four pastors each shared the conviction that discipleship is more than only the act of imparting or transferring cognitive and conceptual understanding of the precepts and doctrines of the Christian faith (though that is rightfully an essential component of it); it also should involve apprentice-like 'training in righteousness,' to use words from the King James Version of the Bible. Discipleship should therefore also be on-the-ground and practical, modelling and ingesting a new and different way of living because of the worldview-jolting implications of the Gospel itself. 413

In conclusion, these qualitative interviews did not significantly challenge the conclusions of the quantitative survey discussed in Chapter Four, but rather were compatible with and affirmed the general findings.

⁴¹² 2 Timothy 3:16.

⁴¹³ Romans 12:2 ... let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION TO THESIS

Introduction

The intent of this study has been to explore one of the 2025 goals of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* (formerly the *Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches*), that a minimum of 300 churches would intentionally identify as and demonstrate markers in keeping with the missional paradigm. Throughout this study I have asked the following questions:

- 1. What is meant by the term 'missional'?
- 2. Is the missional conversation merely a trendy topic soon to be forgotten, or is it more substantially important and enduring, therefore warranting the CBAC's attention?
- 3. If it is important and enduring, to what extent is the missional paradigm understood and embraced by the pastors and congregations of the CBAC?
- 4. In what way(s) can the denominational structure of the CBAC inform, encourage, resource and assess CBAC congregations so they meaningfully live out a missional culture?

In this final chapter summating the findings of the study, I will address these four questions and answer them in light of the findings of the research.

1. What is meant by the term 'missional'?

It remains a challenge to present a precise, universally accepted definition of the word 'missional', as the term has been used and interpreted in a variety of ways especially over the past quarter-century. Based on this inquiry and the contribution of writers and resources cited

such as Ed Stetzer, Ross Hastings, René Padilla, Lesslie Newbigin, Alan Hirsch, David Fitch, the Lausanne Movement, and others, I contend that the missional conversation emphasizes that God reveals Himself as a missionary God who is eager for His love to reach all who are as yet 'outsiders'; or in other words, who do not yet know and have not yet experienced the fullness of the life He offers. It is clear from the record of Scripture that through His Spirit this has always been God's activity, and He continually calls the Church as His people to join Him in this endeavour. The Church, as the community of God's redeemed people, is always to be making known – through both Word and Deed, or Proclamation and Demonstration – the fullness of His life-giving and soul-restoring love that is supremely found in and through Jesus.

The struggle in defining missional is that no matter what is incorporated into that definition, there is much that will be unsaid. For example, four further insights to ministry and life that the missional conversation offers are:

(i) God is already at work all around us.

We don't have to persuade God to act. God is neither reluctant nor stingy with His grace but rather scandalously extravagant in His love. 414 Understanding that *to love* is to be othercentred in terms of wanting that other to know true fullness and flourishing is why *love* is to be the primary lens through which we are to view God. God certainly reveals other attributes about Himself: Eternal, Righteous, Holy, Wise, Just, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and more. And yet it is this same One, whose name observant Jews in Jesus day would not even utter lest they blaspheme it, whom Jesus invites us to know as 'Our Father', 415 – the loving and protecting One, the One who rescues, the One who relentlessly searches for and finds us when we become

⁴¹⁴ Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 53.; cf. Matthew 20:1-6

⁴¹⁵ Matthew 6:9; cf. Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6

lost (like the lost sheep⁴¹⁶ or the lost coin⁴¹⁷). Further, any of these other rightful and proper ascriptions of God's nature can only be properly understood as we view them through the primary lens of His love.

Not only is God actively seeking those who are far from Him, but He is calling us as His people to join Him in this mission! Our responsibility is to pay attention to what He is doing, and the various ways in which He is inviting us to join Him. In order to do this, we need to always be observing what He is doing *in* us and *through* us and *around* us.

Asking the question of what God might be doing *in* us requires our being attentive to those passions or visions that God may be stirring within our own lives, whether as individuals or as a part of His body. It could be a growing burden or an emerging desire to become involved in some activity or undertaking that would help illumine or make tangible His love. Examples of such promptings could be joining or forming a settlement committee for a family of new Canadians, or establishing a work-reintegration program for ex-offenders as they re-engage into our communities after having served their sentences. Maybe it is finding a solution for the homeless of our neighbourhoods, or starting a neighbourhood Bible study out of our home. It may be to write a book or create a piece of music, a sculpture, a poem. In time and through discernment we may discover that some of these inner stirrings prove to be the fruit of our own imagination and not necessarily of God, but at other times we discover they truly are ways He is inviting us to join Him in what He is in the process of doing within us. This is why openness and discernment are always such key parts of the process.

⁴¹⁶ Luke 15:1-7

⁴¹⁷ Luke 15:8-10

We also need to be attentive to ways in which God might already be working *through* us, whether individually or as a church body. We often are already doing things that are genuinely God-ordained, and He wants us to continue. An example might be serving in the job we already have, perhaps as a teacher or a truck driver or a tax accountant. It might be our ongoing commitment to regularly visit an elderly shut-in neighbour, or serving as a leader with youth. It might be coaching minor hockey. There are many such ways in which God is already working through us.

Finally, we also need to consider how God is already at work *around* us in our neighbourhoods and in our world. Sometimes His work will have his name attached to it (as in an explicitly Christian ministry) but often it will not. Ways in which God might be at work in our neighbourhood could be a soup kitchen, an after-school tutoring program, a volunteer community band, or a local bowling league. If we discern that these are ways and places where God is already at work, then these may be places where He wants us as His people to become involved. These are the kinds of places where we have opportunity to engage as the hands and feet and aroma of Christ through building genuine relationships and tangibly expressing His love and grace into our broken world.

(ii) God's approach is for us to start with those on the margins.

A second insight the missional paradigm offers is that as God's people we are to be particularly attentive to those who may be the most disadvantaged and/or who find themselves positioned at the extreme margins of our communities. After all, this is what Jesus did in the cases of Matthew, Zacchaeus, the lepers, the multitudes of hungry and ill people, the woman with the issue of blood, and on and on. He saw them. He heard them. He cared for them. This often will include those who are socio-economically marginalized, but not exclusively. In some

ways the disadvantaged can be the materially-affluent but spiritually-disadvantaged such as Matthew or Zacchaeus; or they can be the jaded, the betrayed, the abused, the disillusioned, the overlooked. The missional imperative calls God's people to start with those on the fringes in the recognition that if we don't begin there, then it is likely we will never reach there.

(iii) Missional understanding eradicates the sacred-secular divide.

A third helpful contribution of the missional dialogue is that it affirms there cannot legitimately be any compartmentalization of life into the spiritual and the secular. As God's people we are to be His servants and agents of His grace and purposes at all times and in all places, and not only as we 'gather' or come together as His people for activities such as worship and study and play. We also are to be His presence as we 'scatter' or disperse out to wherever life takes us: to our homes and with our family, to our workplaces, to our places of recreation and leisure. These equally are spheres of service and ministry every bit as much as serving within our local church. A missional community has a deep awareness that to understand where their church is on a Thursday afternoon at 2:15, they only need to consider where their people happen to be at that particular time.

(iv) The missional paradigm confronts a reductionist view of the gospel.

A missional understanding of the gospel does not weaken or water down the Gospel but calls for a return to a more robust Biblical understanding of it. The Gospel is about more than securing one's *Get out of hell-free* card.⁴¹⁸ The Good News is that the Kingdom has begun in and through Jesus Christ. In Jesus God has begun the process of making outsiders insiders.

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⁴¹⁸ This is an intentional reference to an element of the board-game *Monopoly*. The *Get Out of Jail Free* card is "a metaphorical way to refer to anything that will get someone out of an undesirable situation or allow them to avoid problem." (from www.dictionary.com, accessed May 11, 2020).

This in no way downplays the significance of the Cross and the empty tomb. Quite the opposite, for just as the Cross is central to Scripture itself with the Old Testament anticipating it and the New Testament explicating it, so the Cross also is central to everything a believer believes and does. After all, it is through the Cross and the vacant tomb that we as believers see the fullest expression of God's love and purposes for us.

It is through this passion event that we begin to grasp how God, of His own free initiative, rescues us from our own sin and rebellion. Out of His love He pays the price to make this rescue possible, taking upon Himself the humiliation, suffering, cost, and death that is required. True reconciliation and restoration of relationship always necessitates death: it did for God, it will for us. This is not death for the wrong-doer, but rather death for the wronged; for if there is to truly be reconciliation it is the wronged who must surrender or release or die to that persistent thinking that they are yet owed something – anything – to make it right.

Christ's death and resurrection displays just "how wide, how long, how high and how deep" 419 His love actually is. The enormity of God's generative love demonstrated at the Cross is what redefines and reshapes the recipients' entire being. When we are on the receiving end of such a great love it naturally ought to ignite a spontaneous combustion of Kingdom-zeal compelling us toward joining in God's ongoing mission. This is why experiencing God's love within our own lives must be a prerequisite to joining Him in mission, as it His transforming love that will reshape every aspect of who we are: from what we think is important in life to how we view relationships, families, neighbours, material wealth, jobs, our employers, our employees, the environment – truly everything.

⁴¹⁹ Ephesians 3:18

This is why the missional discourse does not water down the cross in its call to incarnate God's love in how we live as well as proclaim it in our language and our story. Rather, the missional paradigm illumines the vibrancy and potency of the Cross, fully animating the Good News itself. The Gospel is more than just the story of Jesus dying for our sins, though it certainly is not less than that. The Gospel is the Good News that transforms all of life, for the Cross changes everything: the kind of person I am, how I view others, my destiny, the ultimate destiny of all of God's creation. When we as the Church limit the preaching of the gospel to exclusively that of "Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave," we reduce the gospel down to a single note (returning to the keyboard analogy used earlier). To monotonously plunk this 'middle C' of the Gospel, thinking of it in itself as the entirety of the Gospel, is reducing what is not only beautiful but truly life-giving and we risk making it into a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."420 The Gospel message we proclaim and live is not a single note, but rather myriads of notes all of which find their centre in that enduring Middle C note. By skillfully and artfully bringing together and interweaving all these various gospel-notes, what can be created are beautifully inviting compositions that stir the imagination, convict the heart, cultivate hope, and transform lives.

2. Is the missional conversation merely a trendy topic that will soon be forgotten, or is it more substantially important and enduring therefore warranting the CBAC's attention?

From this inquiry it is clear that the missional imperative is far more than simply a trendy topic, regardless of whether it will fade in the coming years. Rather, missional is better understood to be a timely correction or calling to the church to return to what the church has

⁴²⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:1

always been meant to be in all places and at all times in history. This Scriptural and theological examination and reflection confirms that the Triune God is fully a God of love, and even sin's introduction and all its resulting chaos and destruction in no way diminishes nor dampens God's love for His creation. God – Father, Son and Spirit – created out of love, and it is out of that same love that God continues to rescue people from the clutches of sin and all its consequences.

The Bible reveals God as One who cares for his people spiritually, physically, relationally. He provides for material and spiritual needs. He does not sit back unaware or unmoved by people's plight, but comes to their level and enters into their need. Not only is this who God is, but this is also the kind of people that He calls us to be.

The missional emphasis is not about abandoning the Word of God or the message of new life that is found through responding to Jesus Christ in faith and trust, nor is it about substituting "giving a cup of cold water" in place of telling people the Good News of God's love and purposes for them. Rather, it is recognizing that Word and Deed – Proclamation and Demonstration – not only complement but truly require and complete the other.

That the missional model is a renewed, substantially important call to the church to faithfully understand and live out its mission was affirmed by the CBAC pastors:

"I believe the missional emphasis is not really a new emphasis, but in actuality is a
renewed calling to the church to embrace its full responsibility of giving witness to the
Good News of Jesus Christ through both proclamation and demonstration." 421 – 84% Net
Agreement 422

⁴²¹ III. A. 3. (P. 219)

⁴²² A reminder that 'Net Agreement' means that the pastors scored these statements as an 8, 9, or 10 (out of a maximum of 10) in terms of degree of agreement with the statement.

• "I have a negative view of the missional emphasis, believing it to be a distraction to the mission of the contemporary church in that it hinders the church from fully living into its true mandate of leading people to personal salvation and resulting transformation." 423 – 78% Net Disagreement

In a similar manner, as identified in Chapter 5, each of the four pastors interviewed also affirmed that the missional emphasis was in actuality simply a renewed calling to the church to embrace its full responsibility of giving witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ through both proclamation and demonstration. 424

While the missional paradigm will no doubt eventually fade into the background (and may already be) and be replaced by new topics of interest and passion, it does not mean that it was "much ado about nothing," to borrow from Shakespeare. The missional conversation has been and continues to be a needed correction for the contemporary church to realize that it is not Word or Deed; not the Gospel or Justice. Rather, we are called to both Word and Deed, to tell and to embody to all, beginning with those on the margins, the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. To what extent is the missional paradigm understood and embraced by the pastors and congregations of the CBAC?

The results of both the quantitative survey as well as the qualitative interviews affirmed that CBAC pastors express significant identification with and commitment to the missional paradigm of ministry, considering it to be faithful to God's true calling to His church. For

⁴²³ III. A. 2. (P. 218)

⁴²⁴ P. 181

example, regarding the statement "I believe I have a good understanding of what it means to live missionally" the pastors gave themselves a score of 69. Further, the pastoral respondents of the survey overwhelmingly expressed high agreement with and commitment to the importance of both proclamation and demonstration of the Good News of Jesus Christ, as seen in following statements.

- "I want my life to be a witness for Jesus Christ and pray that God will use me to point others towards Him." 426 97% Net Agreement
- "I believe there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord." 427 94% Net Agreement
- "I believe that as believers we do want people to know the life-giving, hope-restoring love that is found through Jesus Christ, and it is therefore essential we as believers 'enflesh' God's love and grace through our acts of kindness, mercy and justice." 92% Net Agreement.

The results of the quantitative survey demonstrated that there was, however, a significant gap in terms of the pastors' assessment of their own understanding and embrace of the missional paradigm and that of the congregations they serve. As compared to the already noted score of 69 which the pastors gave to their own understanding of what it means to live missionally, their combined assessment of their congregation's understanding dropped to 20.⁴²⁸ Further, in terms

⁴²⁵ III. A. 1. (P. 218)

⁴²⁶ IV. (5). (i). A. 2. (P. 277)

⁴²⁷ IV. (5). (i). A. 1. (P. 276)

⁴²⁸ III. B. (1) (P. 223)

of overall scores of Part III, the Pastors self-assessed understanding of missional was 62.5 whereas the overall score of the congregation's understanding of missional was 34.5.

Further demonstration of this gap between the pastors' self-assessment and their assessment of their congregations were evidenced in statements which related to the congregations' understanding and embrace of their own responsibility for sharing the Gospel in word and demonstrating it in deed. For instance:

- "The people of the congregation I serve have a disproportionate positive impact within our neighbourhood/community (through means such as engagement with community organizations, or their quiet caring for their neighbours, or advocating for the dispossessed and powerless of the community, etc.). 429 19% Net Agreement
- "The people of the congregation I serve would have a strong concern that people around them come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour." 430 51% Net Agreement
- "The people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain why they are a Christian to a friend or an acquaintance." 1431 21% Net Agreement
- "The people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain the gospel message and lead a friend or an acquaintance in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord." 16% Net Agreement

As low as these scores may be, the results of the survey do not particularly point to an antipathy by the congregations towards the missional paradigm as much as a combination of lack of understanding and confidence coupled with their simply having been shaped by the values and

⁴²⁹ IV. 4. (ii). B. 5. (P. 275)

⁴³⁰ IV. 5. (i). B. 1. (P. 279)

⁴³¹ IV. 5. (ii). B. 2. (P. 286)

⁴³² IV. 5. (ii). B. 3. (P. 286)

pressures of our contemporary secular society. In terms of the aspirational scores for the congregation, many of the affirmations remained fairly high as seen in the following statements:

- "The people of the congregation I serve generally would affirm that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord." Agreement
- "The people of the congregation I serve often feel there is a barrier to their being able to openly integrate their faith into their relationships with non-churched friends." while this only had a 21% Net Agreement, it also only registered a 20% Net Disagreement, with a total of 55% of pastoral respondents scoring this as a 6 or more in terms of agreement with the statement (indicating a greater degree of agreement than disagreement to this statement)
- 4. In what way can the denominational structure of the CBAC inform, resource, encourage and assess CBAC congregations to meaningfully live out a missional culture?

One further finding from the quantitative survey was what I interpreted to be a relatively low score for the CBAC congregations' engagement with and commitment to Scripture.

Although pastors expressed a Net Agreement of 63% with the statement that the people of the congregation they serve "would affirm that personal daily devotions including but not limited to Bible reading/study and prayer are important for Christians who want to be growing in

⁴³³ IV. 5. (i). B. 2. (P. 280)

⁴³⁴ IV. 5. (i). B. 3. (P. 280)

Christ,"⁴³⁵ these pastors did not particularly assess the people of the congregation they serve to be serious students of Scripture or theology at a deeper level.⁴³⁶

Moving from the assessment of the congregations' Aspirational views of the Scriptures' place and priority, the Actual scores were even lower:

- "I believe that most people in the congregation I serve consistently set aside time for personal daily devotions at least five days per week each of which consists of a minimum of ten minutes of personal bible reading/study and prayer." 15% Net Agreement
- "I believe that the lack of the discipline of personal daily Bible reading/study and prayer is having a detrimental effect upon the personal and ministry lives of the people of the congregation I serve." 438 39% Net Agreement
- "The people of the congregation I serve consider obedience to Scripture to be one of their highest values." 439 45% Net Agreement

Personally speaking, I find this relatively low engagement with and commitment to Scripture on behalf of the congregations of the CBAC one of the most concerning results of the quantitative survey study, and a challenge for the congregations of the CBAC as well as the denominational structure overall. Again, I do not interpret this to be a resistance against Scripture as much as a decline of the discipline of daily engagement with Scripture.

Interestingly, an April 2019 study commissioned by the American Bible Society and conducted by the Barna Group found that "those who are most engaged with the Bible have a greater

⁴³⁵ IV. (1). (i). B. 1. (P. 231)

⁴³⁶ IV. (1). (i). B., 2. (P. 232), 4. (P. 233), 5. (P. 233)

⁴³⁷ IV. (1). (ii). B. 1. (P. 237)

⁴³⁸ IV. (1). (ii). B. 2. (P. 238)

⁴³⁹ IV. (1). (ii). B. 5. (P. 239)

curiosity to know more about the Bible and Jesus" and that "the more engaged people are in the Bible, the more they are likely to cite no frustrations [when it comes to using the Bible]."440

Combining the four factors of (i) CBAC pastors' acceptance of and embrace of the validity and practical value of the missional paradigm; (ii) the low levels of awareness and understanding of the missional paradigm by the congregations of the CBAC; (iii) the fact that the Aspirational scores exceed the Actual scores for both pastors and congregations (indicating a desire and willingness by both for deeper faith experiences and vitality; and (iv) the demonstrated relatively low level of serious engagement with Scripture within the congregations of the CBAC, opportunity is ripe for the CBAC and its leaders to develop resources that:

- Promote regular engagement with, study of, and deeper understanding of the
 Bible
- ii. Help inform and educate both CBAC pastors and congregations in understanding the essence and mission of the local church
- iii. Assist pastors, lay leaders and congregations as together they explore the compatibility between the congregation as it currently exists with what the Bible teaches pertaining to the Church's essence and mission, and identify concrete next steps they together can take to move into greater alignment with God's call to that local church.
- iv. Develop cohorts, forums, and other resources for the purpose of supporting pastors and/or lay leaders in their ongoing responsibility of keeping the missional paradigm before their congregations

⁴⁴⁰ American Bible Society, "The State of the Bible, 2019." 13, 14, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/state-of-the-bible-2019 report 041619 final.pdf.

To this end, the final piece of this thesis is located in the Appendix, and it consists of a congregational study guide for CBAC churches that serves both as a primer to what it means to be missional (only in the resource the phrase 'mission edge' is utilized), and a strategic planning guide for congregations and their leadership to use for together discerning God's current purposes for the church in light of the time and place in which He has them. The process will conclude with a challenge to each participating CBAC congregation to affirm its commitment to be a 'Mission Edge' (i.e. Missional) congregation and accordingly seek to live into the Mission-Edge mandate.

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Appendix 1

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY DATA COMPILATION

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Part I: Information About Survey Participants and Congregations They Serve

1. My age is:

viy age is.	
(1) Under 30	4%
(2) 30 to 39	7%
(3) 40 to 49	20%
(4) 50 to 59	29%
(5) 60 to 65	23%
(6) 66 or older	16%
Base	140

2. The congregation I serve is located in:

(1) NB	44%
(2) NS	50%
(3) PEI	6%
(4) NL	1%

3. Please check the sentence which best applies to you:

(1) I am a full-time pastor	71%
(2) I am a bi-vocational pastor	10%
(3) I am a part-time pastor but not bi-vocational	19%
Base	140

4. I have seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry over the past 5 years.

(1) Not at all	49%
(2) I have given it some consideration	36%
(3) Definitely	15%
Base	140

5. In the past 5 years I have personally experienced the following:

(1) Burnout	24%
(2) Physical health concerns	40%
(3) Mental health concerns	18%
(4) Financial struggles	29%
(5) Lack of ministry opportunities necessitating a period of not serving in ministry	2%
(6) Significant church conflict	27%
(7) Marital/family issues	14%
(8) Unreasonable workload	18%
(9) None of the above	29%

6. On a typical Sunday the congregation(s) I pastor has an average weekly attendance of approximately:

·FF =		
(1) 0 to 24	16%	
(2) 25 to 49	23%	
(3) 50 to 74	26%	
(4) 75 to 99	9%	
(5) 100 to 149	11%	
(6) 150 or more	16%	
Base	140	
Minimum	9.00	
Maximum	650.00	
Mean	87.08	
Std. Deviation	94.66	
CV	1.09	

7. I estimate that the total number of people who would identify as being a part of our congregation(s) is approximately:

congregation(s) is approximately.	
(1) 0 to 24	9%
(2) 25 to 49	15%
(3) 50 to 74	14%
(4) 75 to 99	15%
(5) 100 to 149	16%
(6) 150 to 199	10%
(7) 200 or more	21%
E	Base 140
Minimum	6.00
Maximum	2000.00
Mean	148.86
Std. Deviation	211.39
CV	1.42

8. I have served in 'called' pastoral ministry for: (years)

F (5)	
(1) Less than 5 years	11%
(2) 5 to less than 10 years	12%
(3) 10 to less than 20 years	27%
(4) 20 to less than 30 years	25%
(5) 30 to less than 40 years	20%
(6) 40 years or more	5%
Base	140
Minimum	0.00
Maximum	55.00
Mean	20.01
Std. Deviation	12.47
CV	0.62

9. I have been pastoring my present congregation (even if in different roles) for: (years)

(1) Less than 5 years		45%	115)
(2) 5 to less than 10 years		30%	
(3) 10 to less than 20 years		20%	
(4) 20 to less than 30 years		4%	
(5) 30 to less than 40 years		1%	
(6) 40 years or more		0%	
1	Base	140	
Minimum		0.00	
Minimum Maximum		0.00 35.00	
Maximum		35.00	

10. I anticipate that my retirement from pastoral ministry will take place in: (years)

anticipate that my retriement from pastoral ministry win		
(1) Less than 5 years	25%	
(2) 5 to less than 10 years	21%	
(3) 10 to less than 20 years	26%	
(4) 20 to less than 30 years	17%	
(5) 30 to less than 40 years	6%	
(6) 40 years or more	4%	
Base	140	
Minimum	0.00	
Maximum	60.00	
Mean	12.97	
Std. Deviation	11.32	
CV	0.87	

Part II: Questions Assessing the Health of the Congregation from Pastor's Assessment

1. I consider the congregation I serve to be an excellent congregational family and I am grateful for all the ways that God is at work through our congregation.

NET Agree	63%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	12%
(8) 8	18%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	26%
Base	140

2. The lay leaders of the congregation I serve are godly, competent, humble leaders who are always trying to anticipate what God is doing and where He is leading.

NET Agree	46%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	2%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	27%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	11%
Base	140

3. The congregation I serve has significant unresolved relational tension that eventually proves to be a barrier to welcoming and incorporating new people.

	1 1
NET Agree	14%
NET Disagree	53%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	16%
(2) 2	21%
(3) 3	16%
(4) 4	8%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	6%
(8) 8	5%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	5%
В	ase 140

4. The congregation I serve struggles with limited resources because members give inconsistently or at a very minimum level as compared to the practice of tithing.

NET Agree	18%
NET Disagree	45%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	14%
(2) 2	14%
(3) 3	18%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	8%
(8) 8	8%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	8%
Base	140

5. The people of the congregation I serve are fearful and pessimistic about our church's future, feeling our best days are behind us.

NET Agree	19%	
NET Disagree	36%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	16%	
(2) 2	9%	
(3) 3	11%	
(4) 4	11%	
(5) 5	16%	
(6) 6	10%	
(7) 7	8%	
(8) 8	8%	
(9) 9	4%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	8%	
Base	140	

6. The people of the congregation I serve are generous givers to the ministry of this church.

NET Agree		56%	
NET Disagree		7%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		2%	
(2) 2		1%	
(3) 3		4%	
(4) 4		5%	
(5) 5		11%	
(6) 6		9%	
(7) 7		13%	
(8) 8		21%	
(9) 9		16%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		19%	
	Base	140	

7. The congregation I serve has not seen much numeric or financial growth resulting from its efforts to show God's love into its community.

NET Agree	36%	
NET Disagree	24%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	9%	
(2) 2	9%	
(3) 3	5%	
(4) 4	11%	
(5) 5	11%	
(6) 6	9%	
(7) 7	9%	
(8) 8	16%	
(9) 9	9%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	11%	
I	Base 140	

8. The congregation I serve simply tries to keep the peace at all times, even when that interferes with our obedience to being the church God is calling us to be.

NET Agree		18%
NET Disagree		41%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		11%
(2) 2		14%
(3) 3		16%
(4) 4		11%
(5) 5		11%
(6) 6		11%
(7) 7		8%
(8) 8		6%
(9) 9		3%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		9%
	Base	140

9. The congregation I serve is largely composed of, or controlled by, one key extended family.

NET Agree	9%	
NET Disagree	67%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	34%	
(2) 2	18%	
(3) 3	15%	
(4) 4	8%	
(5) 5	8%	
(6) 6	5%	
(7) 7	4%	
(8) 8	4%	
(9) 9	1%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%	
Base	140	

10. I believe that even though we face challenges, the congregation I serve is on a positive trajectory and based on what we have been observing, we can anticipate great days ahead.

NET Agree	51%	
NET Disagree	7%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%	
(2) 2	1%	
(3) 3	1%	
(4) 4	4%	
(5) 5	10%	
(6) 6	11%	
(7) 7	16%	
(8) 8	16%	
(9) 9	12%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	23%	
Base	140	

Part III: Questions on Understanding of Missional

- A. <u>Pastor's Understanding of Missional</u> (as self-assessed by Pastor)
 - 1. I believe I have a good understanding of what it means to live missionally. Score -69^{441}

NET Agree	69%	
NET Disagree	2%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%	
(2) 2	0%	
(3) 3	1%	
(4) 4	1%	
(5) 5	6%	
(6) 6	8%	
(7) 7	14%	
(8) 8	24%	
(9) 9	24%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	21%	
Base	140	

2. I have a negative view of the missional emphasis, believing it to be a distraction to the mission of the contemporary church in that it hinders the church from fully living into its true mandate of leading people to personal salvation and resulting transformation. (Negative)

Score – 78

NET Agree	4%	
NET Disagree	78%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	42%	
(2) 2	21%	
(3) 3	15%	
(4) 4	8%	
(5) 5	5%	
(6) 6	2%	
(7) 7	3%	
(8) 8	3%	
(9) 9	1%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%	
Bas	e 140	

⁴⁴¹ The Scores through all of Part III are calculated as the sum total of the Net Agreements.

3. I believe the missional emphasis is not really a new emphasis, but in actuality is a renewed calling to the church to embrace its full responsibility of giving witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ through both proclamation and demonstration. Score – 84

NET Agree		84%
NET Disagree		1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		0%
(2) 2		1%
(3) 3		1%
(4) 4		1%
(5) 5		2%
(6) 6		1%
(7) 7		11%
(8) 8		12%
(9) 9		25%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		46%
	Base	140

4. I believe that the missional emphasis is only another in a long list of 'bandwagons' that come and go, and that it is of little long-term value to the church for living obediently before God. (Negative)

Score - 71

icore / i	
NET Agree	4%
NET Disagree	71%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	35%
(2) 2	19%
(3) 3	18%
(4) 4	8%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	1%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	3%
Base	140

5. I believe that as believers we do want people to know the life-giving, hope-restoring love that is found through Jesus Christ, and it is therefore essential that we as believers 'enflesh' God's love and grace through our acts of kindness, mercy and justice.

Score - 92

NET Agree	92%	
NET Disagree	1%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%	
(2) 2	0%	
(3) 3	0%	
(4) 4	1%	
(5) 5	0%	
(6) 6	1%	
(7) 7	5%	
(8) 8	13%	
(9) 9	24%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	55%	
Base	140	

6. I like the CBAC's question of 'Will you join God in changing Atlantic Canada one neighbourhood at a time?' and find it to be inspirational and highly motivating for me. Score – 46

NET Agree		46%	
NET Disagree		14%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		3%	
(2) 2		4%	
(3) 3		7%	
(4) 4		4%	
(5) 5		11%	
(6) 6		16%	
(7) 7		10%	
(8) 8		14%	
(9) 9		10%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		22%	
	Base	140	

7. I often feel I am already busy enough pastoring my congregation and don't really have the time/energy to also be giving encouragement for the church to be moving in a missional direction. (Negative)

Score – 49

NET Agree	11%
NET Disagree	49%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	20%
(2) 2	19%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	13%
(5) 5	14%
(6) 6	7%
(7) 7	6%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	5%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

8. I personally believe that only those churches that truly are missional will be able to survive in this time of rapid social change.

Score – 46

NET Agree	46%	
NET Disagree	11%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%	
(2) 2	2%	
(3) 3	6%	
(4) 4	5%	
(5) 5	16%	
(6) 6	9%	
(7) 7	13%	
(8) 8	16%	
(9) 9	12%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	19%	
Base	140	

9. I have been seeking to read and understand the missional conversation, or related conversations around the missional church.

Score - 41

NET Agree	41%	
NET Disagree	12%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%	
(2) 2	1%	
(3) 3	9%	
(4) 4	6%	
(5) 5	11%	
(6) 6	16%	
(7) 7	14%	
(8) 8	21%	
(9) 9	9%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	11%	
Base	140	

10. I have found the missional emphasis to be something that has been exciting and rejuvenating for me personally.

Score – 49

NET Agree		49%	
NET Disagree		8%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		1%	
(2) 2		2%	
(3) 3		4%	
(4) 4		3%	
(5) 5		13%	
(6) 6		15%	
(7) 7		13%	
(8) 8		17%	
(9) 9		11%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		21%	
	Base	140	

Average Score for Pastor's Self-Assessed Understanding of Missional – <u>62.5</u>

B. Congregation's Understanding of Missional (as assessed by Pastor)

1. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve have a good understanding of what it means to live missionally.

Score - 20

NET Agree	20%	
NET Disagree	13%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%	
(2) 2	6%	
(3) 3	4%	
(4) 4	12%	
(5) 5	18%	
(6) 6	19%	
(7) 7	19%	
(8) 8	11%	
(9) 9	4%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%	
Base	140	

2. I believe that to whatever extent they are aware of it, the people of the congregation I serve have a negative view of the missional emphasis, believing it to be more of a distraction to the mission of the contemporary church in that it hinders the church from fully living into its true mandate of leading people to personal salvation and resulting transformation. (Negative)

Score – 52

NET Agree	4%	
NET Disagree	52%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	13%	
(2) 2	19%	
(3) 3	20%	
(4) 4	19%	
(5) 5	14%	
(6) 6	4%	
(7) 7	8%	
(8) 8	1%	
(9) 9	1%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%	
Base	140	

3. I don't think the people in the congregation I serve have a good understanding of, or even interest in, what it means to be a missional church. (Negative) Score - 30

12%
30%
9%
8%
13%
18%
18%
9%
13%
8%
1%
4%
140

4. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would generally consider the missional emphasis to be only another in a long list of 'bandwagons' that come and go, and that it is of little long-term value to the church for living obediently before God. (Negative)

Score – 39

NET Agree		9%	
NET Disagree		39%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		9%	
(2) 2		8%	
(3) 3		23%	
(4) 4		14%	
(5) 5		16%	
(6) 6		11%	
(7) 7		11%	
(8) 8		7%	
(9) 9		0%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		2%	
	Base	140	

5. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would agree that as believers we do want people to know the life-giving, hope-restoring love that is found through Jesus Christ, and it is therefore essential that we as believers 'enflesh' God's love and grace through our acts of kindness, mercy and justice.

Score – 69

NET Agree	69%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	15%
(8) 8	17%
(9) 9	20%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	32%
Ba	se 140

6. The people of the congregation I serve are generally unaware of CBAC's question of 'Will you join God in changing Atlantic Canada one neighbourhood at a time?' (negative)

Score – 22

NET Agree	24%	
NET Disagree	22%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	8%	
(2) 2	2%	
(3) 3	12%	
(4) 4	9%	
(5) 5	14%	
(6) 6	15%	
(7) 7	16%	
(8) 8	9%	
(9) 9	8%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	7%	
Base	140	

7. The people of the congregation I serve primarily think of church as something they go to rather than something that they are. (Negative)

Score	_	24

NET Agree	24%
NET Disagree	24%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	5%
(3) 3	14%
(4) 4	19%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	13%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	12%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	8%
Base	140

8. The people of the congregation I serve tend to divide their lives into two parts: the Christian (or spiritual) part of their life, and their secular (or everyday, ordinary) lives. (Negative)

Score – 29

NET Agree	14%
NET Disagree	29%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	6%
(2) 2	8%
(3) 3	16%
(4) 4	17%
(5) 5	12%
(6) 6	15%
(7) 7	12%
(8) 8	8%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

9. The people in the congregation I serve would primarily value missional acts of service and kindness as being a means to our ultimate end of telling people the Good News of Jesus Christ. (Negative)

Score -- 9

NET Agree	43%	
NET Disagree	9%	
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%	
(2) 2	0%	
(3) 3	5%	
(4) 4	1%	
(5) 5	6%	
(6) 6	16%	
(7) 7	26%	
(8) 8	18%	
(9) 9	14%	
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	11%	
Base	140	

10. I believe that the people in the congregation I serve would welcome a resource that would assist them in understanding what it means to be missional and how they can begin to live their faith in a missional direction.

Score - 51

51%	
5%	
1%	
1%	
4%	
4%	
7%	
16%	
16%	
20%	
16%	
16%	
140	
	5% 1% 1% 4% 4% 7% 16% 20% 16% 16%

Average Score for Congregation's Understanding of Missional as Assessed by Pastor – $\underline{34.5}$

PART IV: ASSESSING FIVE MISSIONAL DIMENSIONS

(1) DEEP

(i) <u>Deep//Aspirational</u>

A. Pastor – Deep//Aspirational (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Deep//Aspirational/Pastor) – **Score**

735442

Minimum	3.40
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.35
Std. Deviation	0.92
CV	0.13

1. I believe that every Pastor should attempt to make time for at least ten minutes of focused personal bible study and prayer every day.

NET Agree	89%
NET Disagree	2%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	0%
(5) 5	2%
(6) 6	2%
(7) 7	5%
(8) 8	12%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	63%
Base	140

⁴⁴² The Scores through all of Part IV are calculated as the Mean Score multiplied by 100.

2. As a Pastor I want to help the people in the congregation I serve have a mature understanding of the central tenets of Scripture and Christian theology.

NET Agree	90%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	2%
(6) 6	1%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	17%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	54%
	Base 140

3. I believe that a part of my job description as Pastor is to serve as a 'theologian in residence' within my congregation.

NET Agree	51%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	18%
(8) 8	19%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	21%
Base	140

4. I believe that as Pastor my primary role in discipleship is teaching a correct understanding of Scripture through my preaching and teaching ministry. (Negative)

NET A	4.407
NET Agree	44%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	10%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	21%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	18%
Base	140

5. I often look for tools that will encourage the people of the congregation I serve to develop the daily practice of spiritual disciplines including but not limited to personal Bible reading, study and prayer.

NET Agree	52%
NET Disagree	3%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	7%
(6) 6	12%
(7) 7	20%
(8) 8	25%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	16%
Base	140

B. Congregation – Deep//Aspirational (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Deep//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score**

666

Minimum	2.20
Maximum	9.80
Mean	6.66
Std. Deviation	1.32
CV	0.20

1. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that personal daily devotions including but not limited to Bible reading/study and prayer are important for Christians who want to be growing in Christ.

NET Agree		63%
NET Disagree		5%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		0%
(2) 2		4%
(3) 3		1%
(4) 4		2%
(5) 5		4%
(6) 6		11%
(7) 7		15%
(8) 8		26%
(9) 9		18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		19%
	Base	140

2. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would affirm that they have a deep desire to grow in their knowledge of both Scripture and key theological understandings, and to be encouraged to live their lives in alignment with this knowledge.

NET Agree	44%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	3%
(5) 5	12%
(6) 6	17%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	13%
Base	140

3. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve think that discipleship consists primarily in learning and believing the right doctrinal truths. (Negative)

NET Agree	19%
NET Disagree	16%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	6%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	19%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	13%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve would affirm that it is important to access supplemental resources (outside of the preaching, teaching and Bible Study they experience as a part of our congregation) such as books, seminars, courses, etc. that will take them deeper into their understanding of Scripture and the Christian life.

NET Agree	29%
NET Disagree	13%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	8%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	17%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	25%
(8) 8	13%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	13%
Base	140

5. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve consider themselves to be people committed to going beyond the surface themes of Scripture and knowing how to rightly understand the fullness of God's Word.

NET Agree	36%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	16%
(6) 6	16%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	16%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	10%
Base	140

(ii) <u>Deep//Actual</u>

A. Pastor – Deep//Actual (as self-assessed by pastor)

Summary (Deep//Actual/Pastor) – Score	740
Minimum	2.20
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.40
Std. Deviation	1.42
CV	0.19

1. Most weeks I have - minimum of five times per week - a time for personal devotions, each of which consists of a minimum of ten minutes of personal bible reading/study and prayer.

NET Agree		66%
NET Disagree		11%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		4%
(2) 2		2%
(3) 3		5%
(4) 4		6%
(5) 5		6%
(6) 6		3%
(7) 7		9%
(8) 8		19%
(9) 9		11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		36%
	Base	140

2. I often fail in maintaining a consistent time for personal bible reading/study and prayer. (Negative)

NET Agree		14%
NET Disagree		46%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		12%
(2) 2		19%
(3) 3		14%
(4) 4		9%
(5) 5		11%
(6) 6		7%
(7) 7		13%
(8) 8		9%
(9) 9		2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		4%
	Base	140

3. I believe that as Pastor I am effective (through my preaching, teaching, and counsel) in helping the people within the congregation I serve to have a mature understanding of the central tenets of Scripture and Christian theology.

NET Agree	60%
NET Disagree	2%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	0%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	24%
(8) 8	29%
(9) 9	18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	14%
Bas	e 140

4. I intentionally seek out resources and make them known to the people of my congregation to assist them in going deeper in their understanding of God's Word and living the Christian life.

NET Agree	47%
NET Disagree	5%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	14%
Base	140

5. As Pastor I invest time in intentionally reading in the areas of theology, Christian ministry, mission, etc.

NET Agree	64%
NET Disagree	3%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	17%
(8) 8	24%
(9) 9	16%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	25%
Base	140

B. Congregation – Deep//Actual (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Deep//Actual/Congregation) – Score

603

Minimum	1.00
Maximum	10.00
Mean	6.03
Std. Deviation	1.55
CV	0.26

1. I believe that most people in the congregation I serve consistently set aside a time for personal daily devotions - at least five days per week - each of which consists

of a minimum of ten minutes of personal bible reading/study and prayer

NET Agree	15%
NET Disagree	19%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	5%
(3) 3	10%
(4) 4	12%
(5) 5	26%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	8%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	5%
Base	140

2. I believe that the lack of the discipline of personal daily Bible reading/study and prayer is having a detrimental effect upon the personal and ministry lives of the people of the congregation I serve. (Negative)

NET Agree	•	39%
NET Disagree		16%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		1%
(2) 2		6%
(3) 3		8%
(4) 4		6%
(5) 5		16%
(6) 6		9%
(7) 7		14%
(8) 8		14%
(9) 9		9%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		16%
	Base	140

3. The people in the congregation I serve find it easy to talk with their fellow church friends about the ways they see God is working in their life.

NET Agree	32%
NET Disagree	11%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	16%
(6) 6	16%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	9%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	8%
Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve understand that in many ways discipleship happens best as they are living into the mission of tangibly expressing God's love into our world through acts of kindness, compassion and justice.

NET Agree	39%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	12%
(6) 6	15%
(7) 7	21%
(8) 8	18%
(9) 9	9%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	12%
Base	140

5. The people of the congregation I serve consider obedience to Scripture to be one of their highest values.

NET Agree	45%
NET Disagree	9%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	22%
(8) 8	19%
(9) 9	9%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	16%
Base	140

(2) Wide

(i) Wide//Aspirational

A. Pastor – Wide//Aspirational (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Wide//Aspirational/Pastor) – **Score**

772

Minimum	3.60
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.72
Std. Deviation	1.41
CV	0.18

1. I believe that there is only one definition of the gospel, and that is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and in order to be saved individuals must acknowledge their sinfulness, ask for forgiveness, invite Jesus to enter in as head of his or her life, and commit to walking in obedience to Him. Preaching anything other than this (e.g. how to have a good marriage, the importance of caring for the environment, our responsibility to do justice, how to be a good boss, etc.) is to fail

to preach the Gospel. (Negative)

NET Agree	27%
NET Disagree	48%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	21%
(2) 2	14%
(3) 3	13%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	3%
(8) 8	9%
(9) 9	5%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	14%
Base	140

2. I believe that the church's only true mission is that of leading lost people to put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, and that it is therefore straying from its true mission when it gets involved in compassion ministries such as food banks, soup kitchens, welcoming refugees, visiting the imprisoned, etc. (Negative)

NET Agree	6%
NET Disagree	77%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	55%
(2) 2	13%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	5%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	1%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

3. I believe that it is important that the people of my congregation see themselves as living their faith out wherever life takes them through the week ... into the classroom, working at the factory, serving in their local community club, coaching hockey at the rink, taking care of their sick child, etc.

NET Agree	89%
NET Disagree	2%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	2%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	2%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	59%
Bas	se 140

4. I believe I should personally find ways, in keeping with my abilities and temperament, to be meaningfully involved in my community; examples could be coaching baseball, being a volunteer firefighter, tutoring children, delivering meals on wheels, participating in community theater, or any number of other ways.

NET Agree	66%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	16%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	39%
Base	140

5. As Pastor I consider that if people from the congregation I serve are involved in secular community organizations at the expense of their being able to be involved in the ministry of the church, this hinders the church being able to fulfill its mission. (Negative)

NET Agree	14%
NET Disagree	39%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	10%
(2) 2	16%
(3) 3	12%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	17%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	8%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

B Congregation – Wide//Aspirational (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Wide//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score** 661

Minimum	1.20
Maximum	9.80
Mean	6.61
Std. Deviation	1.69
CV	0.26

1. The people of the congregation I pastor believe they should live their faith out wherever life takes them through the week ... into the classroom, working at the factory, serving in their local community club, coaching hockey at the rink, taking care of their sick child, etc.

NET Agree	46%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	3%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	24%
(8) 8	16%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	17%
Base	140

2. I believe the people of the congregation I serve want to develop meaningful, caring relationships with non-Christian people around them; ones in which they can graciously yet transparently and openly speak of their Christian faith.

NET Agree	41%
NET Disagree	9%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	19%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	17%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	9%
Base	140

3. I find that the people of the congregation I serve primarily act as consumers of religious goods and services, rather than as agents of God's love to a broken and hurting world. (Negative)

NET Agree	19%
NET Disagree	32%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	8%
(2) 2	12%
(3) 3	12%
(4) 4	17%
(5) 5	14%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	10%
(9) 9	6%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve have a clear, concise understanding of the central mission of our church.

NET Agree	29%
NET Disagree	11%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	22%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	6%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	9%
Base	140

5. The fear of condoning questionable/sinful lifestyle often causes the people of the congregation I serve to hesitate in developing relationships with their non-

believing neighbours. (Negative)

NET Agree	13%
NET Disagree	45%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	9%
(2) 2	14%
(3) 3	22%
(4) 4	10%
(5) 5	16%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	6%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

(ii) Wide//Actual

A. Pastor – Wide//Actual (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Wide//Actual/Pastor) – Score

Minimum	3.20
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.51
Std. Deviation	1.33
CV	0.18

751

1. I counsel the people of the congregation I serve against having close friendships with people who are not believers and do not show any interest in coming to Christ. (Negative)

NET Agree	3%
NET Disagree	90%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	63%
(2) 2	20%
(3) 3	7%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	3%
(7) 7	0%
(8) 8	1%
(9) 9	0%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

2. Beyond serving as Pastor of my congregation, I am actively living and integrating my faith into the wider community through my involvement in one or more ongoing commitments in my community (examples could be coaching baseball, being a member of a local hiking club, belonging to a local group of motorcyclists, playing pick-up hockey, volunteering at the hospital, etc.).

NET Agree	57%
NET Disagree	15%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	16%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	29%
Base	140

3. I often feel that I am already too stretched and busy to feel that I have adequate time and energy to be involved in ministries of compassion, care and connecting into the community I serve. (Negative)

NET Agree	22%
NET Disagree	38%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	13%
(2) 2	12%
(3) 3	13%
(4) 4	9%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	12%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	3%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

4. I intentionally encourage the people of the congregation I serve to be engaging their culture in ways such as becoming involved in the local arts community, getting involved in serving in politics, advocating for the poor, ministering to those caught in addictions, etc.

NET Agree	49%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	2%
(5) 5	15%
(6) 6	15%
(7) 7	15%
(8) 8	23%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	14%
Base	140

5. As Pastor I have a clear, concise understanding of the mission of the congregation I serve.

NET Agree	66%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	27%
Base	140

B. Congregation – Wide//Actual (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Wide//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score** 579

Minimum	3.20
Maximum	9.20
Mean	5.79
Std. Deviation	1.03
CV	0.18

1. I believe the members of the congregation I serve are cautious about engaging culture if it means having close friendships with people who are not themselves

believers and do not show any interest in coming to Christ. (Negative)

NET Agree	15%
NET Disagree	38%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	7%
(2) 2	11%
(3) 3	19%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	14%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	13%
(8) 8	9%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve are actively involved in living and integrating their faith into the wider community through their everyday activities (examples of these could be being on a refugee welcoming committee, working with youth at risk, coaching basketball, scrapbooking, etc.).

NET Agree	29%
NET Disagree	12%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	6%
(3) 3	5%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	18%
(6) 6	18%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	17%
(9) 9	7%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	5%
Base	140

3. Generally speaking, the people of the congregation I serve develop meaningful relationships with non-Christian people, ones in which they can graciously and transparently speak of their Christian faith.

NET Agree	19%
NET Disagree	10%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	9%
(5) 5	21%
(6) 6	19%
(7) 7	22%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

4. I believe that most of the people in the congregation I serve feel they are too stretched and busy to have adequate time and energy to be involved in ministries of compassion, care and connecting into our community. (Negative)

NET Agree	21%
NET Disagree	16%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	6%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	10%
(5) 5	19%
(6) 6	19%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Bas	se 140

5. The people in the church I serve struggle to understand how their own individual involvements in the community are, in reality, an expression of the church at mission in its community. (Negative)

NET Agree	20%
NET Disagree	26%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	6%
(3) 3	17%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	17%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	9%
(9) 9	5%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

(3) Attractional/Outsider-Focused (A/O-F)

(i) <u>A/O-F//Aspirational</u>

A. Pastor – A/O-F//Aspirational (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (A/O-F//Aspirational/Pastor) – **Score**

802

Minimum	4.60
Maximum	10.00
Mean	8.02
Std. Deviation	1.07
CV	0.13

1. I strongly desire that people who come into our church as spiritual seekers or 'just checking us out' would find our church to be a 'safe place' for finding community

and/or inquiring about and growing in the Christian faith.

NET Agree	82%
NET Disagree	2%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	2%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	12%
(9) 9	16%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	54%
Base	140

2. I believe it is important for the church building to have a pleasing 'curb-appeal' so that it would physically be an attractive presence within our community.

NET Agree	59%
NET Disagree	2%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	17%
(8) 8	22%
(9) 9	15%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	22%
Base	140

3. I believe that generally speaking the non-churched residents in our neighbourhood/community are largely unaware that our church exists. (Negative)

in the state of th	1011 011 01115 05: (1 10 Butt 1 0)
NET Agree	8%
NET Disagree	57%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	14%
(2) 2	18%
(3) 3	25%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	8%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	8%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

4. I believe that generally speaking the non-churched residents who are aware of the existence of our church would have a positive impression of who we are.

NET Agree	44%
NET Disagree	7%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	11%
(7) 7	20%
(8) 8	24%
(9) 9	9%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	10%
Bas	140

5. As Pastor I want our church to be known for being a welcoming and loving community open to all.

NET Agree	94%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	0%
(5) 5	0%
(6) 6	2%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	7%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	68%
Base	140

B. Congregation – A/O-F//Aspirational (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (A/O-F//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score**

Minimum	2.80
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.08
Std. Deviation	1.27
CV	0.18

708

1. The people of the congregation I serve believe that they are willing to do whatever it takes to reach people around them who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

NET Agree	28%
NET Disagree	14%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	5%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	15%
(6) 6	15%
(7) 7	17%
(8) 8	17%
(9) 9	5%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve would think non-Christian guests who come into our church as newcomers leave with a very positive impression of who we are.

NET Agree	60%
NET Disagree	3%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	2%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	25%
(8) 8	25%
(9) 9	20%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	15%
Base	140

3. The people of the congregation I serve would believe it to be important for the church building to have a pleasing 'curb-appeal' so that it would physically be an attractive presence within our community.

NET Agree	59%
NET Disagree	8%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	5%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	30%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	14%
Base	140

4. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would think that generally speaking the non-churched residents in our neighbourhood/community are largely unaware of the existence of our church. (Negative)

NET Agree	7%
NET Disagree	56%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	14%
(2) 2	19%
(3) 3	22%
(4) 4	15%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	7%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	3%
(9) 9	3%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Ba	se 140

5. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve would think that generally speaking the non-churched residents who are aware of the existence of our church would have a positive impression of who we are.

NET Agree	52%
NET Disagree	9%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	13%
(7) 7	17%
(8) 8	33%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	7%
Base	140

(ii) A/O-F//Actual

A. Pastor – A/O-F//Actual (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (A/O-F//Actual/Pastor) – **Score** 705

Minimum	3.60
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.05
Std. Deviation	1.21
CV	0.17

1. I personally strive to encourage the congregation I serve to be far more focused upon their future than their past.

<u> </u>	
NET Agree	76%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	2%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	23%
(9) 9	20%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	34%
Base	140

2. When I am planning services or preparing sermons or leading worship, I am always considering how to connect to those who are new to faith and/or new to our congregation in addition to those who have been long time believers/members.

NET Agree	70%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	15%
(8) 8	18%
(9) 9	18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	34%
Base	140

3. I believe that a congregation should always be considering what changes they need to be making that will help them experience numeric growth within their congregation.

NET Agree	54%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	15%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	24%
Ba	se 140

4. I believe that the worship service of the church is primarily for those who are already Christians, and therefore should be focused primarily on those who are already committed Christ-followers as compared to those who are seekers in our midst. (Negative)

NET Agree	14%
NET Disagree	39%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	17%
(2) 2	9%
(3) 3	14%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	16%
(7) 7	10%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

5. The congregation I serve is known in our community as being a group who know how to throw great parties/celebrations for our community.

NET Agree	15%
NET Disagree	39%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	14%
(2) 2	11%
(3) 3	14%
(4) 4	10%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	13%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

B. Congregation – A/O-F//Actual (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (A/O-F//Actual/Congregation) – Score

Minimum	1.00
Maximum	10.00
Mean	6.07
Std. Deviation	1.73
CV	0.28

607

1. I believe that the people of the congregation I serve are mostly focused on themselves and their wants when it comes to considering how our corporate

worship services should be structured/formatted. (Negative)

NET Agree	23%
NET Disagree	33%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	6%
(2) 2	12%
(3) 3	15%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	10%
(9) 9	7%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve consistently strive to effectively welcome and incorporate the new seeker or member into our congregation.

NET Agree	<u>U</u>	44%
NET Disagree		7%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		2%
(2) 2		2%
(3) 3		3%
(4) 4		7%
(5) 5		12%
(6) 6		11%
(7) 7		19%
(8) 8		17%
(9) 9		13%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		14%
	Base	140

3. The people of the congregation I serve seek to do everything with excellence, and constantly ask themselves how they can continue to improve.

NET Agree	20%
NET Disagree	15%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	12%
(5) 5	18%
(6) 6	19%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

4. When the people of the congregation I serve consider whether we should make changes to our church or to our worship services, most tend to evaluate those changes in terms of "will I like/be comfortable with this?" more than "will this make us more effective in reaching those around us?" (Negative)

NET Agree	36%
NET Disagree	19%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	7%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	8%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	13%
(8) 8	14%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	11%
Base	140

5. The people of the congregation I serve have confidence that guests checking out our congregation will have a very positive experience, and this helps them feel confident in personally inviting friends and acquaintances to come to church with them.

NET Agree	51%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	8%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	25%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	12%
Base	140

(4) Partnering

(i) Partnering//Aspirational

A. Pastor – Partnering//Aspirational (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Partnering//Aspirational/Pastor) – **Score** 809

Minimum	4.00
Maximum	10.00
Mean	8.09
Std. Deviation	1.29
CV	0.16

1. As Pastor I would not be comfortable forming partnerships with other congregations or secular organizations that may not subscribe to the same essential theology that I do. (Negative)

NET Agree	20%
NET Disagree	56%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	25%
(2) 2	13%
(3) 3	18%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	8%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	3%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	5%
Base	140

2. I am grateful for the community organizations that are able to muster resources for helping people in need within our community.

NET Agree	86%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	1%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	7%
(8) 8	14%
(9) 9	22%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	50%
Base	140

3. As Pastor I am very open to the congregation I serve forming partnerships with community organizations as we are able.

NET Agree	71%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	5%
(6) 6	8%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	37%
Base	140

4. As Pastor I would encourage and see it as important ministry for the people of the congregation I serve to be involved in valuable community organizations such as food banks, women's shelters, refugee settle committees, etc.

NET Agree		81%
NET Disagree		4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		1%
(2) 2		1%
(3) 3		1%
(4) 4		0%
(5) 5		1%
(6) 6		3%
(7) 7		11%
(8) 8		16%
(9) 9		21%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		44%
	Base	140

5. In my pastoral prayers I often include praying for organizations or resources within our community such as schools, our elected politicians, youth resource centers, women's shelters, etc.

NET Agree	59%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	16%
(8) 8	21%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	25%
Base	140

B. Congregation – Partnering//Aspirational (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Partnering//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score** 733

Minimum	2.60
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.33
Std. Deviation	1.46
CV	0.20

1. The people of the congregation I serve feel that being involved in community activities (coaching sports, being on a bowling team, tutoring after school, etc.) distracts them from their real Christian commitment to their church family.

(Negative)

NET Agree	6%
NET Disagree	61%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	18%
(2) 2	14%
(3) 3	29%
(4) 4	9%
(5) 5	11%
(6) 6	7%
(7) 7	6%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve are supportive of our church partnering with community or business organizations in worthwhile endeavors that will benefit our entire neighbourhood/community.

NET Agree	49%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	3%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	23%
(8) 8	14%
(9) 9	16%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	19%
Base	140

3. The people of the congregation I serve would view themselves as people who are appreciative and supportive of the various organizations within our community.

NET Agree	58%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	3%
(5) 5	8%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	25%
(8) 8	24%
(9) 9	18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	16%
	Base 140

4. The congregation I serve is reluctant (or refuses) to allow our facility to be used by organizations that do not explicitly identify as Christian. (Negative)

<i>j U j j</i>	\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \
NET Agree	11%
NET Disagree	54%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	22%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	6%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	9%
Base	140

5. The people of the congregation I serve believe that our mission should consist of initiatives that exclusively belong to the church, because partnering with other organizations may restrict us in our messaging or cause us to have to compromise on our values. (Negative)

NET Agree	11%
NET Disagree	49%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	17%
(2) 2	10%
(3) 3	21%
(4) 4	17%
(5) 5	13%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	4%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	3%
Base	140

(ii) Partnering//Actual

A. Pastor – Partnering//Actual (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Partnering//Actual/Pastor) – Score

756

Minimum	2.40
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.56
Std. Deviation	1.35
CV	0.18

1. As Pastor I prayerfully seek to discern where God is at work in the community and world that is around the congregation I serve, and I accordingly look for opportunities to get involved with what He is doing (whether personally or by encouraging the people of the congregation I serve to get involved with it).

NET Agree	59%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	0%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	9%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	24%
(9) 9	16%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	19%
Base	140

2. As Pastor I value (or would value) the opportunity to serve on a Board or other working committee/team of what might be considered to be a non or nominal faith-based organization (examples could include volunteer fire department, a women's shelter, Habitat for Humanity, a local Rotary Club, etc.)

NET Agree	57%
NET Disagree	15%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	5%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	6%
(7) 7	12%
(8) 8	14%
(9) 9	18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	29%
Base	140

3. I intentionally seek to affirm and celebrate the people from the congregation in which I serve for their involvement in and commitment to important community organizations or initiatives.

NET Agree		47%
NET Disagree		4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		47%
(2) 2		4%
(3) 3		47%
(4) 4		4%
(5) 5		47%
(6) 6		4%
(7) 7		47%
(8) 8		4%
(9) 9		47%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		4%
	Base	140

4. If the congregation I serve is looking to launch or maintain an initiative into our community or beyond, I would welcome partnering with businesses and/or community organizations that would similarly share an interest in the initiative.

NET Agree	<u>, </u>	69%
NET Disagree		6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		1%
(2) 2		1%
(3) 3		4%
(4) 4		1%
(5) 5		4%
(6) 6		3%
(7) 7		16%
(8) 8		22%
(9) 9		21%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		26%
	Base	140

5. I frequently look to express appreciation - both in private and public - to those in our community who positively enrich our shared life as citizens.

NET Agree	50%
NET Disagree	5%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	10%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	20%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	16%
Bas	e 140

B. Congregation – Partnering//Actual (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Partnering//Actual//Congregation) – Score 596

Minimum	1.00
Maximum	9.60
Mean	5.96
Std. Deviation	1.63
CV	0.27

1. The people of the congregation I serve prayerfully seek to discern where God is at work in the community around us, and as God directs and enables they get involved with those initiatives.

NET Agree	25%
NET Disagree	14%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	18%
(6) 6	16%
(7) 7	13%
(8) 8	14%
(9) 9	5%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve actively partner with other churches in our community to meet the needs of the community (be those spiritual, physical, social, relational, etc).

NET Agree	35%
NET Disagree	19%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	5%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	10%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	18%
(8) 8	18%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	e 140

3. The people of the congregation I serve have meaningful partnerships with non-Christian organizations in meeting the needs of the community (be those spiritual, physical, social, relational, etc.).

NET Agree	34%
NET Disagree	9%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	2%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	15%
(6) 6	14%
(7) 7	22%
(8) 8	17%
(9) 9	8%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	9%
Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve eagerly look for new ways to build connections and relationships with organizations within our community.

NET Agree	24%
NET Disagree	15%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	7%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	19%
(6) 6	16%
(7) 7	13%
(8) 8	13%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	7%
Base	140

5. The people of the congregation I serve have a disproportionate positive impact within our neighbourhood/community (through means such as engagement with community organizations, or their quiet caring for their neighbours, or advocating for the dispossessed and powerless of the community, etc.).

NET Agree	19%
NET Disagree	21%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	7%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	11%
(4) 4	9%
(5) 5	21%
(6) 6	12%
(7) 7	17%
(8) 8	12%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

(5) Evangelism

(i) Evangelism//Aspirational

A. Pastor – Evangelism//Aspirational (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Evangelism//Aspirational/Pastor) – **Score**

889

Minimum	1.60
Maximum	10.00
Mean	8.89
Std. Deviation	1.10
CV	0.12

1. I believe that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	94%
NET Disagree	3%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	0%
(5) 5	0%
(6) 6	1%
(7) 7	2%
(8) 8	7%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	76%
Base	140

2. I want my life to be a witness for Jesus Christ and pray that God will use me to point others towards Him.

NET Agree		97%
NET Disagree		1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		1%
(2) 2		0%
(3) 3		0%
(4) 4		1%
(5) 5		1%
(6) 6		1%
(7) 7		0%
(8) 8		5%
(9) 9		14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		78%
	Base	140

3. I regularly pray for individuals by name that they might come to place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	64%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	5%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	13%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	14%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	35%
Base	140

4. There are times when I become distraught in my spirit as I think of loved ones and neighbours who will go into eternity without having placed their faith in Christ for salvation.

NET Agree	65%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	19%
(8) 8	22%
(9) 9	12%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	31%
Base	140

5. I believe that God looks at the quality of the life lived, and grants admission to His eternal presence not based so much upon whether they accepted Christ but rather according to how much good they have done. (Negative)

	7
NET Agree	3%
NET Disagree	91%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	84%
(2) 2	6%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	2%
(6) 6	1%
(7) 7	1%
(8) 8	1%
(9) 9	0%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

B. Congregation – Evangelism//Aspirational (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Evangelism//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score** 758

Minimum	3.20
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.58
Std. Deviation	1.36
CV	0.18

1. The people of the congregation I serve would have a strong concern that people around them come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

NET Agree	51%
NET Disagree	6%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	4%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	12%
(7) 7	21%
(8) 8	19%
(9) 9	15%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	17%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve generally would affirm that there is only one way in which people can have the assurance of salvation and all that it entails, and that ultimately it is through personally accepting the forgiveness and embracing the new life that comes through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	81%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	0%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	3%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	19%
(9) 9	22%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	40%
Base	140

3. The people of the congregation I serve often feel there is a barrier to their being able to openly integrate their faith into their relationships with non-churched friends. (Negative)

NET Agree		21%
NET Disagree		20%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		4%
(2) 2		6%
(3) 3		9%
(4) 4		4%
(5) 5		21%
(6) 6		18%
(7) 7		16%
(8) 8		14%
(9) 9		1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		6%
	Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve would affirm that one of our church's chief values is that people would come to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	79%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	1%
(4) 4	0%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	15%
(9) 9	19%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	46%
1	Base 140

5. The people of the congregation I serve are super-excited when they hear of someone accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	67%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	2%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	6%
(6) 6	7%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	22%
(9) 9	15%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	30%
Base	140

(ii) Evangelism//Actual

A. Pastor – Evangelism//Actual (as self-assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Evangelism//Actual/Pastor) – Score

778

Minimum	2.40
Maximum	10.00
Mean	7.78
Std. Deviation	1.46
CV	0.19

1. I have to admit that too often I am essentially indifferent to the lost state of people around me who, to the best of my knowledge, do not know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. (Negative)

NET Agree	6%
NET Disagree	64%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	25%
(2) 2	20%
(3) 3	19%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	7%
(7) 7	9%
(8) 8	4%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Base	140

2. It is rare for me to openly talk about my faith with strangers unless it is within the church context of preaching, leading a Bible Study, counseling, etc. (Negative)

NET Agree	12%
NET Disagree	46%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	19%
(2) 2	15%
(3) 3	13%
(4) 4	12%
(5) 5	9%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	6%
(9) 9	2%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

3. As Pastor I try to help the people of the congregation I serve understand that Evangelism often occurs over the long process of developing meaningful relationships with people (as compared to thinking it typically should take place in a single conversation).

NET Agree	78%
NET Disagree	1%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	0%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	4%
(7) 7	12%
(8) 8	22%
(9) 9	15%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	41%
Base	140

4. As Pastor I often seek in my preaching and teaching ministry to simply and explicitly explain how a person becomes a Christian, and invite people to make a personal response to it.

NET Agree		59%
NET Disagree		5%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree		0%
(2) 2		1%
(3) 3		4%
(4) 4		4%
(5) 5		6%
(6) 6		7%
(7) 7		19%
(8) 8		20%
(9) 9		18%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree		21%
	Base	140

5. I can easily and winsomely explain the gospel message to lead a friend or acquaintance to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	71%
NET Disagree	4%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	3%
(4) 4	1%
(5) 5	4%
(6) 6	5%
(7) 7	14%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	24%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	36%
Bas	e 140

B. Congregation – Evangelism//Actual (as assessed by Pastor)

Summary (Evangelism//Aspirational/Congregation) – **Score** 586

Minimum	2.00
Maximum	9.60
Mean	5.86
Std. Deviation	1.43
CV	0.24

1. The people of the congregation I serve individually pray by name for individuals who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

NET Agree	34%
NET Disagree	7%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	1%
(3) 3	4%
(4) 4	6%
(5) 5	12%
(6) 6	20%
(7) 7	21%
(8) 8	11%
(9) 9	11%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	12%
Base	140

2. The people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain why they are a Christian to a friend or an acquaintance.

NET Agree	21%
NET Disagree	11%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	2%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	6%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	17%
(6) 6	17%
(7) 7	24%
(8) 8	13%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	4%
Base	140

3. The people of the congregation I serve could easily and winsomely explain the gospel message and lead a friend or an acquaintance in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

NET Agree	16%
NET Disagree	13%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	1%
(2) 2	3%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	16%
(6) 6	26%
(7) 7	15%
(8) 8	13%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	2%
Base	140

4. The people of the congregation I serve have frequent positive faith conversations with non-believing friends and acquaintances.

NET Agree	9%
NET Disagree	16%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	4%
(3) 3	9%
(4) 4	14%
(5) 5	30%
(6) 6	10%
(7) 7	20%
(8) 8	6%
(9) 9	1%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	1%
Bas	se 140

5. The people of the congregation I serve think that their role in evangelism is to ask me as pastor to talk to their family member or friend about Jesus Christ.

(Negative)

(110gative)	
NET Agree	19%
NET Disagree	25%
(1) 1 - Strongly disagree	4%
(2) 2	7%
(3) 3	14%
(4) 4	11%
(5) 5	19%
(6) 6	15%
(7) 7	11%
(8) 8	10%
(9) 9	4%
(10) 10 - Strongly agree	6%
Base	140

Appendix 2

TRANSCRIPTS OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Interview 1: December 13, 2019

Pastor 1 brings 32 years of ministry experience to his role as part-time Lead Pastor of a rural church situated in the verdant rolling hills of south-central New Brunswick. In the past this pastor has served as an Associate Pastor (including responsibility for youth), Solo Pastor, a missionary serving in Africa, and served for five years with an NGO involved with international food security issues. The congregation he currently serves is a smaller intergenerational church that is well known in its region for undertaking various imaginative missional initiatives which have had significant impact both locally and globally.

Q: What is the Gospel?

My understanding of the Good News as we read of it in the Gospels is that it all has to do with the Kingdom. It has to do with the fact that this isn't the end of the story, this world that we live in. It's being redeemed; Christ is it's Redeemer; get on the bus and be a part of it. That's the Gospel. In many ways we're a long ways from that in terms of our proclamation; you know, rather than start at creation and talking about the world that fell under sin and God redeeming that whole world, we want to start at the cross and talk about people's sin and forgiveness and making sure that you're on your way to heaven. As Baptist churches because our concept is that - we get saved, we're safe, and that's kind of it, and we do our best to invite other people into that as well. The idea of joining Jesus in his Kingdom movement and leaning into a present limited reality but will be a fulfilled reality ... living differently around that ... yea I think we're off the mark there and I'm off the mark there very often. Because, and I think part of it, we have spoken this very limited part of the Gospel for so long, when we talk to people even in these rural areas that still know what the church is and what it is to be saved and still have a bit of that language left, if we begin to say "Jesus is the King of a Kingdom and he is inviting you into that Kingdom, that begins now and lasts forever", that they don't get. That would be so foreign because it's foreign to us inside the church and we haven't used that language.

Q. When you speak of our having a limited sense of what the Gospel is, all of which revolves around being saved, whatever our phraseology of that is — I've been saying it's "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

And what we fail to add to that is "And the Kingdom is near." We've lost that little piece that Jesus always tagged on.

Q. How necessary is it ... is that understanding of the Gospel of "believe and be saved" ... is it central to everything that the gospel is, or is it something peripheral that we've made central?

I think it's the latter. I just preached a series of sermons out of Colossians 1, and the commentators kept saying we have to read this against the backdrop of the Roman Empire. All of Paul's language is basically saying to the church "you think the Roman Empire is the power to deal with? You think Caesar is the person who is king and ruler over all? Well, let me tell you

about Jesus." And he uses the same kind of language that they would be familiar with and that would come out of the Roman Empire and he attaches that to Jesus, and he goes right back to Creation and firmly inserts Jesus into the Creation story to basically say "the Roman Empire is nothing compared to this King and His Kingdom." So to me that's the Gospel ... to join your life to Jesus as King and His Kingdom and to live your life accordingly; not just to get saved and wait for heaven.

- Q. So as a pastor, imagine you come upon a car accident and a person has 30 seconds to live and they know they're going into eternity and so they ask you Pastor, what must I do to be saved? Do you go in talking about the Kingdom? Is there any hope for them? Well, sure, we always go back to the thief on the Cross. He didn't have a lot of time on his hands. But you know, we're asking people to repent. And what does that mean? It means to turn around and live your life differently. Well, what does that mean? Repentance recognizes that Jesus is Lord and that my life needs to follow after him, and you can do that on your death bed. If a person's death bed's experience is "man, I realize that for a long time I wasn't on the Jesus track, living the life that Jesus calls me to, they might not be able to put the language of the Kingdom to that but they know that there was a way forward that they should have been on. If they say to Jesus "Jesus, I recognize you in this moment that You are Lord" that is always the beginning point. But it should be a reverse funnel where that recognition and declaration takes you much more out into the world, crossing borders and breaking down walls as Jesus did, that should become our lives. There is that starting point. It's just that too often we don't get very far beyond that.
- Q. I've been pushing back against those who say the Gospel is simply "repent and believe." I would say that it's like that's Middle C to a piano keyboard. If you think of Middle C, it's the centre of a piano keyboard: in writing music everything from Middle C and higher is essentially written in the treble clef, and everything from Middle C and below is written in the base clef. In this sense all other notes are understood or written in relation to Middle C. Would you say that I'm wrong to think of "Repent and believe" is wrong to think of it even as the Middle C.

I think it's a dangerous thing we've come upon because it comes with the assumption that "as long as I do this, it's all I have to do." We don't preach it as a starting point; we preach it as an end in and of itself. I remember Brian McLaren's illustration when he was with us in St. Andrews, we're supposed to be in a race, the starters gun fires, we launch off the line, and then we stop and celebrate saying "great the race is done!" rather than realizing that there's a finish line way up there and we're to keep running. So I do think it's dangerous in that sense for what does it fulfill at that point? It makes me safe, but does it go out to change the world and be salt and light. So yea, while it could be the middle C as long as we say start here, but let me go on and teach you something else; let's expand out from here.

It's interesting to me that Jesus never really taught that. Jesus did say "Come and repent", but He always talked about the Kingdom of God. And people who come and ask him how to get into the Kingdom he would tell stories like the Good Samaritan where someone had to cross poverty borders and ethical borders and it cost him and all kind of stuff. Imagine if we really said to people "come and be a Christian and this is what it's going to mean: it's going to take your money and your time and make you really uncomfortable." Think of Joseph and Mary and

the Christmas story. Look what we've done with it. Those poor people, their lives were never again the same. They never again lived a normal life after saying yes to God. Their lives were in turmoil, they were on run for a number of years, they finally got back to Nazareth and then had to deal with who knows what in terms of bringing up Jesus. So when they said yes it wasn't Mary saying "oh you mean I'm going to say yes and then I'm going to be in every little manger scene and people are going to swoon over me. Oh won't that be lovely." It wasn't that at all. I think she knew. I think Mary had a pretty good idea as soon as the angel said "oh, by the way, you're going to get pregnant."

Q. How might we as 21st century western 'evangelical' (but not in the Donald Trump way) have distorted the gospel from what is truly meant?

I'm quoting a lady in my sermon on Sunday who is a Canadian Anglican whose name is Melissa Skelton. She says about Joseph that he was the best that tradition had to offer. When Mary came to him with her story he responded to her out of his tradition and law and religion and he did a splendid job of it. He added mercy to the law and was very upright, outstanding person at that level. But God was calling him to something much more radical. God was going to colour outside the lines and wanted Joseph to get involved in that. And so the angel came and said "we need you to set your religion aside because God is doing something that is outside of all those boxes." I think we're always in danger of taking our Christianity and confining it within our tradition and our religion and God is always saying "yeah but I'm over here doing something that your religion doesn't allow you to do. I'm over here loving these prostitutes. I'm over here bringing Syrian refugees into Canada even though 63% of Canadians don't agree with this. I'm colouring outside of the box, so if you want to get involved with the gospel, with the Good News, with presenting it and demonstrating it, this is what it's going to look like."

Q. I want to follow up with that. It's not that I disagree that God is doing a new thing. But is there a danger to that. Are we in a place where we no longer feel that Scripture is as binding of an authority; it's almost as if we're setting the table for "progressive revelation". God is doing a new thing; therefore we no longer need to adhere to Scripture which was then. How do we tell what is us chasing the winds of culture vs. what is truly that which God is doing? Yeah, but I don't think it's anything new to any age. I think it's the way that God has always operated. I remember years ago when I was a young pastor asking a group of pastors "what do you do when God breaks his own rules?" I was met with mouths agape. But there are stories in the Old Testament where God was very clear about what it was to be holy, to not get involved with other nations. But then he would turn around and say that they should take in the stranger, and that was part of his call. Melissa Skelton says that there was always room within the Jewish law for mercy. I think God was constantly going outside his parameters, and was always saying to Israel "it's not just going to be you." God's intention was always to win the world, and that couldn't happen within the confines of Judaism, especially what the religious people and scribes and Pharisees had done with it. So yeah, I don't think it's anything new. He's not saying "oh now I want you to be involved with that group over there." Jesus was always involved with the fringe people, saying "I know religion doesn't let me do this but love does, mercy does."

Q. So is there room for any more boundaries? Is everything a go? Is there anything we can't affirm?

This would be my answer to that question ... are there any boundaries where we say "we just can't associate with that." We definitely live in a society where we are in a downhill slide. I fear for the day when childhood pornography will become acceptable. What's stopping us? We've gone to everything else. But our mistake quite often is we think that to associate with or to love is to affirm. I think that's where we have to say just because I love this person or care for this person doesn't mean that we affirm.

Q. As the CBAC we talk about the importance of both word and deed. Do you think one is to take precedence over the other, or even that we should pour all our energies into one as to the other?

My understanding of word and deed ... well, I would prefer we would use the words proclamation and demonstration. The deed is demonstrating the word that you're speaking. To demonstrate something you haven't spoken, or to speak something you haven't demonstrated, neither of them can stand alone. So I think we need to be careful of that. I tend to be a bit of a pendulum guy, and when I came back from Kenya social justice stuff was so front and centre that suddenly all these issues came so huge and in my preaching I was trying to figure this out. I think I became very obsessed with "feeding the hungry" at the expense of the word and bringing people along and trying to help them understand how all this connects with the words that we as Baptist people tend to be familiar with. Think of it all. All of our programming and what we think when we think of what it means to be the church and begin to program around that ... it's very much that limited "you must be saved" kind of message; our expectation in an idealistic way of think is that someone's going to happen into our church, they're going to hear a sermon that says "you're a sinner and need to be saved", they're going to get saved, and they're going to join the church. That really kind of sums what ministry often looks like for us. But the reality is when you look at the churches that are being really successful or effective, you might go in and hear that message but boy, you will have already heard about this church, feeding the hungry and demonstrating the Kingdom of God in various ways. When people see that in our church and know that's who we are in the community, and then when they hear us to preach the gospel, then it's not hard for them to put two plus two together and go okay these people are living in a different world than I'm living in.

Q. Do you believe the missional emphasis is only a passing fad, or at its essence is it to characterize the church in all places and at all times?

Oh yea, no question. It is to characterize the church in all places and at all times. I think the pendulum for we as Baptists have swung toward the mission ... the deed gospel ... because it's been lacking for so many decades, but suddenly we've found this whole new thing within a Christianity we've always had but we really didn't recognize. Like how long have we been talking about the Kingdom of God in our churches? Twenty years? Like that's the language we use? Before we didn't talk about Christianity being a part of a growing Kingdom. I think if what we call deed isn't firmly rooted in Kingdom language, then it can easily become gimmick. My favorite Kingdom explanation was Bruxy Cavey who said something to the effect that the Kingdom is where "God's will and God's way has sway." Yeah, that's good, but we still have to have the conversation about What's God's will and what's God's way. We still have to have the conversation about God's Kingdom as compared to just preaching a salvation message.

Q. For the past year or two, the CBAC has used the phrase "Joining God in our Neighbourhoods". What does that phrase say to you?

Oh man, that's a hard one for me. Being a pastor of a rural church, the lines are drawn so definitively in so many ways. You have families who haven't been church families for generations and generations, and you have families who have been church families for generations and generations. To win people from those families who haven't been ... wow, it's hard work. I guess I just struggle with it. We say that as though once we say that we're just going to walk across the street and we're going to find someone in tears who will say to us "please, tell me how to know Jesus." It's just not that easy. Do I think that God's already doing something that He's inviting me in to, or that he's inviting me to come along with Him while we co-create together?

Q. What evidences should we look for to discern where God is at work? Does He only work through those who explicitly work in His name?

I think the Kingdom shows up in places we would never expect it ... in a least expected place.

Interview 2: December 17, 2019

Having 22 years of ministry experience behind him, Pastor 2 is no doubt recognized as one of the leading pastors within the CBAC. A much-sought-after seminar and conference speaker as well as commentator on ministry challenges, he has served in excess of ten years as Lead Pastor of an inner-city congregation situated in an urban centre in Atlantic Canada. This church traces its roots back to the middle of the 19th century but has been on a trajectory of growth and redevelopment for much of the last 25 years while remaining located within their core neighbourhood. They are a community of diverse people from different ethnicities, economic backgrounds and ages.

Q. What is the Gospel?

The shorter version for me would be "the coming of the Kingdom." It is Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God and the future redemption starting now of all things ... starting with the forgiveness of sins and the outworking of all that salvation in our lives as we allow Christ to be Lord of our lives, putting things back together, and it begins to spread through our homes and communities ... that would be the short answer ... just the coming of the Kingdom.

Q. Why do you think the issue of repentance and forgiveness has to be so central to the coming of the Kingdom?

Because I have got to leave my kingdom behind. If someone is going to truly experience the Kingdom of God you can't be the King, and so for me it's really around Lordship, surrender. I think the challenge for today is about really communicating it in a way that's not ignoring but leaving behind some of the old language that we've used and that people get stuck upon and come at in a new way. When I think about the Kingdom it's that repentance is "I'm abandoning my lordship of my life and handing the reigns over to Christ asking him to be Lord of my life." And you can't have Christ's Kingdom and still try to be King.

Q. I've been using the analogy of the piano keyboard and middle C. Is the Gospel middle C alone ("believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"), or is it all 88 keys which find their centre in that one reality.

The challenge is defining what are those 88 keys. There's a temptation in our day to say that if middle C is that then 'D' to the right of it is the social issue of the day that is my bugaboo. What I wonder, are the 88 keys really how that one reality works its way out into all of life ... how I care for the environment, the kind of husband that I am, the kind of employer I am, what I expect of the government. Is all of that the gospel, or only the middle C. The language we use in our teaching around here is that it is like a home renovation. So Jesus is the renovator, he comes on in and he's working rooms at a time, but it's not instant, a renovation doesn't happen instantaneously. It's work, it's painful, it's decisions, there are walls that need to come down. There is rubble that needs to be thrown out. There are new coats of paint that need to be applied. It's just a constant process. For some people discipleship has been all about learning information and not about transformation. We have a lot of people who are very biblically smart who aren't very gracious; there's not a lot of fruit of the spirit in their lives. That's been one of the metaphor's that we use ... the renovating of our lives. It's inside out; it's a process. We don't say this to give us an excuse to be lenient with people who continue to live in sin or people who struggle to give things up; but it is a part of the reality. It is a process.

Q. How might we as 21st century western 'evangelical' (but not in the Donald Trump way) might have distorted the gospel from what is truly meant?

Well, I think of two things. And I'm conscious that someday someone will look back on our day and our preaching and will say "man, they were so focused on this they missed that." It's easy to be critical in hindsight. My context is, and I tease Kevin Vincent about this all the time, I'm burying all of his grandfather's converts, who haven't been in church in thirty years. They came forward at an altar call, we baptized them, we added them to our membership, we boasted about their numbers, and we haven't seen them since. So we're living in that generation where the gospel is purely about responding to a moment with a prayer out of guilt or remorse or maybe genuine repentance, but then nothing really came out of it. I would say that emphasis of being contented with a conversion moment experience or whatever you want to call it, that has been the challenge now to say to people you missed out on a whole life time of growing in faith and experiencing the Kingdom of God in your life now and forgiveness and peace and hope and joy and life of service and all that stuff, because there were a lot of people who just kind of became Christians and came to church a lot. I think of it this way, that their kids didn't really grow up in a Christian home even though Mum and Dad said they were Christians and went to church a lot; there was no real evidence in their home life that that they were people of faith outside of maybe grace at dinner. Q. And not even a private morality? Yeah, there may be some of that, but the kids just never seemed to grow up with any strong convictions. So now their calling me "Dad has died, and he was a member at Main Street", they haven't been to church, even their Mum and Dad were never to church all of their later years. What was that all about? They have this great big resounding affirmation that this person was a great church person and a person of faith. And I'm not saying that we don't say that. But then I have my church people who go to those services and think "well they never went to church and you're going to sing their praises". It's just interesting times.

So that's the one piece. The other part of that is the dramatically changing culture that we're a part of and how much that is shaping how we view our faith, think about our faith. Not only are we wrestling with the gospel as it was presented to us and how do we feel we need to embolden it or add some flesh to the bones that maybe weren't there that we feel need to be there now. And part of that is just driven by the culture we live in, there is no imagination for the gospel and it's a negative thing in some cases. For example on Sunday I preached on basically Jesus came to save us because we needed saving, and I spent probably the first eight minutes trying to go in the back door to convince people they were sinful, because I knew if I just said "hey, you know, you're all sinful" I was going to lose people, because just the culture we live in today you have to talk about these things in a way that people will hear them and that's a challenging skill to develop. But it's just the day that we're in, it's different, and the gospel as it was presented in the language of the forties and fifties and sixties, we have to think about how we share the message in a new day.

Q. How is the Gospel meant to be communal?

I think, and this isn't sexy and people don't get excited about this, but community is the Arrow Leadership Program of discipleship for each person. Someone once said Arrow is getting taken apart and put back together. When we talk about life groups, or small group ministry here, I say you being in community and having to deal with annoying people and people who think

differently than you and people who struggle with different sins than you and how do I relate to them and how am I gracious to them, all of that, trying to figure that out, that is a huge part of what discipleship is all about. You take the Epistles, Paul's letters tended to be some sort of reflection on the gospel, and the last half is stop suing each other, you can't say that, don't treat people that way, it was all the communal part of what it means to be in a family together. The gospel actually should be helping us figure that out. I think the temptation is to say "people peeve me off so I'm just going to go do my own thing" but you then miss out on a degree of sanctification or discipleship or whatever, as you're never really forced to confront people different than you or don't like what the same things that you like or whatever. All of that – wading through all of that – is a part of discipleship. So the communal piece is essential!

Q. As the CBAC we talk about the importance of both word and deed. Do you think one is to take precedence over the other, or even that we should pour all our energies into one as to the other?

I have a hard time separating the two in my mind. I preached through the book of James in October. I just think deeds are an expression of the faith we have; they are just one big knotted pile to me. I don't know that you can just remove one without the other. I think of it in relation to a marriage and if you were to say "how do I separate my feelings of love for [my wife] and my actions towards [my wife]?", they are all sort of mushed together in the same thing. To me, even trying to separate them or talk about them as unique in and of themselves can sometimes do a disservice to the unity that is supposed to be found there. Deeds to me are sometimes forcing yourself to do things you might not always want to do, but they should be as you grow in your faith the fruit of a faith that is alive and growing at some level.

Q. Do you believe the missional emphasis is only a passing fad, or at its essence is it to characterize the church in all places and at all times?

I think in some senses it was a corrective that was needed. I think of it as being kind of like seatbelt laws. They came along and reminded us that maybe we should be safe and looking after ourselves; it was this big emphasis and it was all the rage and everybody was talking about it or upset about it, but now it's just all normal. In some ways I hope that the whole emphasis to call people to understand that their faith should be expressed in some way as a church and individually was an emphasis that was needed at the time but now hopefully it's kind of normal and you don't need to talk about it as much anymore. To me the problem with even using the word missional is it sounds like it is some kind of new program we have dreamed up, when it has always been an important part of being a people of faith, all the way back from Genesis 12 on through to the end of the Bible, it is that God's people would put on display the character of God through the way that they live internally and externally. As we surrender to the Kingdom that's always the way the Spirit is going to take us. My problem is that people talk about missional and they just kind of avoid it because it sounds like it's some special new-fangled thing that someone who writes books or blogs made up, but it's not. It's just trying to give language to the truth that "our faith must have an outer expression." The fact that we even have to talk about it should be embarrassing, in some regards. To me it just means so many different things. People say "oh, [your church] is missional." I don't even know what that means any more. Does it mean that if you just have a foodbank you're missional? That's not fair. I don't think that's a right reflection, or if you give money to missions overseas does that make you missional, or if you

convince people to do something nice to a neighbor that makes you missional? It seems really flimsy to use that word to describe those things as a one-of nice deed thing.

Q. For the past year or two, the CBAC has used the phrase "Joining God in our Neighbourhoods". What does that phrase say to you?

This is the language I would use ... it's a blunt phrase to address the issue that our faith needs to have legs in some external way. It's not meant to be theologically deep or to capture an imagination. I think it's kind of blunt and requires some fleshing out around it. What does that look like? What does it mean? It's kind of a blunt term to address the issue of, we are not meant to be communes of silos.

Q. What evidences should we look for to discern where God is at work? Does He only work through those who explicitly work in His name?

My first response is wherever there's a pulse that's where God could be at work or is at work. Whether people are responding to the degree or not, but I really believe God is present and active everywhere. That's my starting assumption. With this band that is doing their thing, whether they recognize it or not God is somehow working there. And then for me it's about entry points. I might join the band. The win for me isn't just that they brought some common good to the community – I mean that's fine – but I would be hungry to see that redeemed to a fuller extent. All of these to me become entry points, common platforms to have conversations with people about why is this good, why do you hunger for good, why are you trying to improve these people's lives, what is it about life that makes it meaningful, all of that stuff together just becomes an entry point for further conversations. I think in some ways we have settled for "I volunteer at this food bank and so I'm a missional Christian," and I think there has to be some more robust thinking around what the the old Sun Life Youth Ministry Training Manuel language used to say. It would say that we ought to use CPR – cultivating, planting, and reaping. Some of the things that we do are creating an environment where people can trust us ... I think about our work, we do some partnership work that is explicitly not very Christian but we're cultivating relationships that give us permission to do other things. And then there's planting things you do where you are sharing the gospel, seeds are being sown, people are experiencing the love of God in some real tangible, personal ways. And then there's reaping which you are ultimately moving toward which is how do I help this person come face to face with their Creator and welcome Him into their life and they become a part of the Kingdom. In my mind you need a little bit of all three and different things are required in different circumstances, in some places you need to start with cultivating and it could be years before you get to reaping. That language has always been kind of helpful to me.

Q. One of the Mission Edge markers is that we embrace partnerships? Are there any cautions that should be heeded in this?

It's great because it forces you to live with a real amount of tension. Let me give you an example. We partner with the YMCA which has a Newcomers Connection. Right in the middle of the Syrian Refugee crisis, we got asked if we would use out church bus to take the men to the mosque. I hung up the phone from the Y, and I kind of chuckled to myself and said "well this will be an interesting conversation with our deacons ... will [our] church bus be seen at the parking lot at the mosque? That could be quite entertaining." We're now bumping up and outside of our comfort zone about what we do in this situation. We've got this partnership,

we've been asked to help, it's a tangible need, these people are coming from these war-torn countries, so we decided we'd let them use it, but in the end it didn't need to get used because the hotel shuttle took them or something. In these partnerships you're always bumping into "well, what do we do with this? Should we do that? Is this too far?" We're always being broached with those topics. Some of the work we do in the North End there's a health clinic in there and some of their advice around lifestyles and all that stuff is challenging for us. They know where we stand on issues, so we're constantly having really difficult conversations to help navigate. The only caution I would have is if you don't have any appetite for this, then don't get involved in partnership, because you're constantly going to be pressured to ask how to we articulate faith and our position in faith and not to waver in it and what issues do we not want to waver on and which ones are not as big of a deal. That whole mushy realm is part of partnerships, and if you don't have an appetite for it and if you want everything to be neat and tidy and black and white, then don't do it, because you won't find any of that there. So that's the first thing I would say. You have to have an appetite for constant reflection and conversation, not just at the staff level but the board also needs to feel comfortable that we're going to go into this with eyes wide open. There has to be a greater good in terms of we're doing this because we are cultivating relationships with key peoples and communities and having a seat at the table to influence here, there and there. It's tricky.

Q. What do you understand is meant by discipleship? How well do you believe church as you have experienced it is doing discipleship?

My definition of discipleship is working out my salvation with fear and trembling. I've made this commitment, and returning to the renovation analogy, now the renovation work begins. I've bought the house and now I'm in the renovation process, and it's going to be a life-long process of God renovating me from the inside out. This is not just me going to adult Sunday School or being in an adult Bible Study, this is the daily reflection of allowing Christ be Lord of my life. We're in a season of transition church culture wise. Discipleship is that thing I do when I go to that class and fill in the answers in the booklet. Discipleship needs to move beyond that to a daily discipline of just reflecting on God's call on every aspect of my life. I think we're in a transition culturally. I know we're in it here. Any time we talk about discipleship the next word we tend to add a word to it is 'classes'. It's been almost exclusively reduced to "I went to a class, so I must be a disciple, I must be growing in my faith." We just did a ten-minute survey and we made them do it in the service. We're just now entering the data into a great big fancy computer program that's going to crank out some results for it. It's been fascinating to us. Absolutely fascinating. So we're going to have a real better answer for our own church here in a couple of weeks, but we're really serious about how to help people embrace real faith and not just "I go to church stuff".

Q. How do you best contribute to discipleship for yourself?

First is to be transparent about it, to be honest about that it's a challenge, it's difficult, it's ongoing, I haven't got everyone figured out. I think that's very freeing for people. We can talk openly about where we're at with our faith, what are the things we're finding really difficult, where are the things we're experiencing real joy. And the other one is just encouragement. One of the things that was really interesting as we did our survey was that one of the questions was "what's something we can do to help you grow in your faith?", and one of the answers that surprised me that we've seen quite a few times is "just be patient with me." People are trying to

figure these things out. They're living in complex, difficult circumstances sometimes and they're just trying to figure it out. That really struck me that this was one of the things people would say. Just be patient with me. Pastorally that struck me as a real good word to remember. So yeah, transparency and encouragement would be two things.

Q. So with your people do you really try to ground them in the personal disciplines; is spiritual formation a component or the same thing as discipleship?

It's the foundation. This is where I mean the transparency comes in. We're doing those things, but we're honest about the challenge of frequency, the challenge of faithfulness, the challenge of taking two steps forward and then a couple steps back. Those are all very important things but they're not the quick fixes that they often get communicated to be. We have a lady in our church who is actually studying at the Divinity College. She's been a counsellor for years, but she's taking basically the version of the Christian counselling course, because she became a Christian and she realized as she was sitting in counselling sessions and she said, "I can't really give this same advice any more with a clear conscience because I don't believe it." She wanted to take some theological education so that she could be a Christian counsellor now and give Christian advice, and I said to her this is the working out of her salvation. Your vocation is now coming under the Lordship of Christ, and you're now wrestling with it. It didn't come day one, but it's happened in the first few years, and now she's taking these things and asking "do I believe this?", "do I believe that?". Can I still make a career of this if I'm actually teaching this? It's not easy. It's tough work. She was discouraged and I said to her, "this is exactly where you should be right now. This is exactly what the process looks like of this transition that you're making in your life." I think she thought it would be all joy and peace and sunshine and rainbows, but it's tough work to make that transition. So that's what I mean by transparency. She's being really honest about the renovation work that's going on, it's complicated. To me it captures what discipleship is really all about. It's not if I snap my fingers and now I'm different. I use the analogy all the time with couples who get married who think the day after I'm married I'll be a radically different person than I was the day before we got married; that suddenly I'll be more patient, more agreeable, better looking or whatever. It just doesn't work that way. You're still the same person the day after as you were the day before, just now you're legally a married couple. Same is true for Christians: you have the Holy Spirit living in you, but now the renovation work needs to begin.

Q. How important is an apprenticeship model for discipleship in a church's plan? How does discipleship work out into day to day life?

For me it comes back to the ability to think and reflect, I don't think it's typically something we've been very good at. We've sort of been "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" kind of people. There needs to be coaching along the way for this too. Part of the challenge, especially those we're working with, don't have a church background. They don't have that foundation of "I trust the Scriptures and believe them to be true." That's not even on their radar. They think the Bible is sketchy at best, most new Christians. So they want to be a Christian and they don't even trust reading the Bible. So the issue isn't that I just need you to read the Bible because you should; it is that I need to convince you that it's worth reading and it's not going to make you a mean person. Discipleship is starting at such a different point than what it used to. We're not taking bad church kids that rebelled for a few years and they already have their Josh McDowell study bible at home and they just need to dust it off and go at it again. They just are starting

from such a different place. Discipleship looks so different. They need such different things now than even twenty years ago.

Q. So what brings them into a journey of faith if they think Scripture is sketchy at best? They don't make the connection that what they've been hearing and what drew them in is from Scripture. Those are connections that we make. One of the things we talk about as staff here, we need to hold our Bibles more when we're preaching even if we're not reading from it all the time, we have so much stuff on the screen, but people need to make the connection to the book. Even if you're reading from your phone it's not enough. There needs to be some means of the centrality, even symbolically, of the Scriptures in what's happening in the preaching time. If they just see you moving around on the stage, they think these are just thoughts from his head, he's kind making this up, he's got a cool little talk that he did, who knows where it came from. We want them to know "we're teaching you stuff from this book.

Q. What brings them in to a journey of faith with you folks? Is it they're drawn to what they're hearing from the pulpit, is it through friendships, is it they were desperate or their lives were completely broken and they experienced grace? You say these just aren't church kids who have had a few years of wandering away.

It's all over the map. Some of them it's life. Some of them its "I've been successful but that's not done it for me." Some of them is that life's been harder than I thought it would be and I thought I would be in a different place than I am right now. Some of them its crises. Some of them its friends begging them to come to church and dragging them in, and it's not as bad as they thought it would be. And we have a lot of people who haven't been to Catholic church since they were confirmed. They've got this distant church memory but not much of a theological memory, but they kind of remember church. We have a lot of lapsed Catholics. Q. How did they make their way to you guys? Friends. Invitations. That would be our main means. We have some people who come here because they hear the things we do in the community and they want to check us out. When I first started here I thought that'll be it. People are going to hear the great work we do in the community, but that's been hardly any. Very few people. People don't really get that excited about it. They hear about it and they think "well that's nice, it's probably what you should have been doing anyways" but it's not going to move them to go to church. In the same way if you heard of the mosque in Moncton was handing out Christmas gifts to every school kid in the city and loving them and helping them out, you probably wouldn't go to the mosque on Monday just because you were so pumped by what you heard. It might change your perception but it's not going to make you faithful. It's the power of the invitation.

Q. How important is evangelism for the church today?

Our challenge here is that the word has imagery associated with it that isn't always helpful. Even though we use the word to some people it is a stumbling block. We would say that there is both passive and active evangelism. Passive evangelism is you are faithfully following Christ in your own life and people will take notice, or should take notice, in your neighbourhood, when you're away with you kids at a hockey tournament, there should be just something about you that people will notice that there is something funny about you. And then there's the active evangelism. How do I engage the people in my sphere of influence. We've been doing this thing around the Christmas Eve Service. Who is God calling you to reach out to, have for

coffee, pick up, bring, have coffee with after as debrief, all around Christmas Eve. There is someone who is spiritually seeking in your sphere of influence. Who is it? And how do you be intentional about engaging them in a faith conversation at some level?

It's a tough one and we need to do a way better job equipping people for that. Again, it's so complicated, and the questions that people today ask. I think people are more likely to push back really strongly and they've got real good questions that they ask that our people really struggle with. They've got real good issues with the church that are hard to argue with. Our people feel really uneasy engaging anyone in a conversation about faith because of the culture we're in right now that is not very positive about church.

Q. What do you understand to be the challenges for evangelism today?

We've been doing this series at Advent called "A Better Story" ... that the Christian story is the best story that's being told in our culture today. Really and truly, how do you make sense of life. There's a lot of uncertainty around that as we've abandoned any sense of truth, so I do think there's an incredible opportunity because there's a lot of uncertainty and there's a lot of questions and people are wondering about stuff. I think there's an incredible opportunity.

The challenge is I think it requires a different way. Sitting down and reading the Romans Road, while helpful in some circumstances, again I think in most circumstances most people aren't even going to trust the Bible. You just have to start at a different starting point than maybe you started in the last generation. I think that's the biggest challenge. You can't assume people trust the pastor, trust the church, or trust the Scriptures. I think there's greater skepticism than there was before, which isn't insurmountable but just means you have to prepare people differently.

Q. Can you just unpack that a little bit? What's required then for today to prepare people differently?

In truth, I'm not sure. That's part of the reason for the survey. What are people telling us about their fears around these topics, because we've got to figure out a better way to equip people to do evangelism, give people some tools for their tool belts that they can employ. Part of it is educating them on what the unchurched, dechurched, the nones, the dones, all that crowd, what are some of their questions, where are they at, being comfortable with not having answers at times, allowing the Holy Spirit to be at work, even if we're not sure we can always give the best response to things. We really don't know. We're trying to figure that out. When I visit with people who say I'm praying with so and so and I'm inviting them to come to church on Sunday but you need to know, here are their seven gripes about the church. They had a priest who said this to them once. Your starting line is at such a different place.

Q. When I'm at [your church] in a typical service how many people around me are there as seekers? I go in and think everyone's a committed Christian here?

We're going through the initial results of our survey, and we asked people "which describes where you are in your faith journey? My faith is growing, it's growing slowly, it's flat, I'm not a Christian and I'm open to faith, I'm not a Christian and I'm closed to faith." We had 5% of the congregation say that they're not a Christian. 5% of 480 adults who filled out the survey. (It's about 25 people.) Not as many as I thought, which again is eye opening for me. So we now have some actual stats on this now.

Q. My final question is this ... what do you see for the state of the church in Atlantic Canada as you project out 30 years?

I don't know. I tend to be a little bit more hopeful by nature. I just think we're going to be in a major period of adaptation. Every church – rural church, city church, small church, big church – is going to have to adapt to the new cultural realities, and just really get to know people in their communities and what their needs are. I think that means having to leave some assumptions and some ways of doing things behind. We're here wrestling with some really big questions about how do we keep doing church going forward. Just because we have a large number of people – more than other churches on Sunday – doesn't mean that we're convinced that they way we're doing it is right. Everybody is in a real season of reflection. I tend to be hopeful by nature and think that we'll figure it out. The conversations that I have with a few of the clergy in our area probably wouldn't give me that presumption. Q. Over half of our CBAC pastors had a net agreement with the statement that "the congregation they serve is on a positive trajectory and based on what they have observing they anticipate great days ahead." My problem is I'm so myopic here. What I see here makes me hopeful, but then if I listen to the stories of some of the pastors that I meet, and the whole thing is shot and we're burning at the stake. They must really lift your spirits. Oh yea, it's a great time. I can't wait to get together.

Interview 3: December 12, 2019

Pastor 3 is a single parent with a background in the performing arts. Some ten years ago she came to Christian faith which shortly after precipitated her enrolling in the CBAC's denominational seminary (Acadia Divinity College, or ADC) out of her thirst to know more about this new reality in which she found herself. It was during those years of study at ADC that she experienced a call to Pastoral Ministry, and she has now served in ministry for the past six years. Having experience as an Associate Pastor with responsibilities for family ministry and community outreach and engagement, she has a passion for understanding how Christians are to live their faith in a faithful and engaging manner with the wider world they find themselves in. She currently serves as Pastor of Families and Children at a larger suburban church in NB. This church describes itself as a church committed to growing passionate and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Q. What is the Gospel?

It is the Good News. There's hope. When people ask me why I believe what I believe, I would have to say it is because I've found out through personal experience there is hope in this world and for this world and this hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ and that he is the hope for everyone. But it requires a relationship to have with him.

Q. Explain to me a bit about this hope. Is it like a hope we have in Santa Claus that he'll come on Christmas Eve, or that tomorrow might be sunny?

Well, no, because Santa Claus is not real. The hope that I have is that both while I'm living here on this earth I have someone who walks this life with me and who is there for me to turn to in both the good times and the bad, and then the hope is also that when I die that is not the end, but that I will have eternity with God in heaven.

Q. You said it requires a relationship to have that hope. The question is, is the relationship the vehicle for salvation – are we saved through the relationship? – or is the relationship the benefit of the salvation? (And maybe I'm introducing the term of salvation). In other words, are we saved through the relationship, or by being saved are we invited into the relationship? I think it's two sides of the same coin, or simultaneous interaction. We're invited into relationship through faith, and it is through faith in that person of who Jesus was and is that allows for salvation. So we are saved through faith, but not just faith in anything; it's faith in a specific person and what they did, and in order to believe that you are required to have at least the beginning of a relationship. It's that you've at least met the person, you don't necessarily know everything about them yet because the relationship is new but because you're in relationship with them you want to get to know more.

Q. How might we as 21st century western 'evangelical' (but not in the Donald Trump way) might have distorted the gospel from what is truly meant?

In some situations, at least in the past and we're facing the repercussions of this, it was that we made it all into rules and regulations and morality. You must be this and you must be that, in place of who we must follow. Now there's also been more emphasis on a "prosperity gospel" twisting what Scripture actually says – interpreting being blessed as being rich.

Q. Do you think we have overly individualized the gospel? Is the gospel meant to be more corporate?

Well I think our individualistic society has permeated the church where it has become "all about me and my relationship with God", but as in James, faith and action is to be together. If you believe you can't be individualized as it's not about us. After all, we're brought into community to encourage one another and for worship and I mean, the very act of communion is communal. Our whole faith is based on giving up ourselves and dying to ourselves, which is totally countercultural.

Q. How does the Gospel relate to justice, to the environment, to caring for the needy? Is that a part of the Gospel or outside of the Gospel?

It's a part of the Gospel. The Gospel is about modelling Jesus, and he emphasized taking care of children and the poor and looking out for those who are marginalized in society, which is now what we consider to be social justice. And then when it comes to the environment we're called to steward our world, it was created for us, and you take care of your gift.

Q. So how does all of that – if we as a denomination are talking to churches or to leaders about "making known the gospel" – is the Gospel just "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved", or does the Gospel also include these other aspects of caring for those in need, of pursuing social justice, of addressing communal wrongs, or are we getting distracted from the Gospel?

Those things like the environment and social justice are ripple-out effects of the Gospel message, but I get that once people begin focusing on social justice or the environment or whatever the cause-du-jour is, that's the initiator instead of it rippling out from sharing the Gospel.

Q. Sometimes I use the analogy of a piano, and ask is the gospel Middle C ("believe on the Lord Jesus Christ") and if we go anywhere else we're straying from the gospel, if we preach on the environment, if we preach how to have a good marriage, if we preach on how to reconcile, how to care for the needy? All those other 87 keys ... are they the gospel or are they not the gospel? Is the Gospel all 88 keys that find their centre in Middle C, or is the Gospel just Middle C alone?

That's a very interesting question. Hmm. I think it includes all 88 keys, but knowing that Middle C is the note that you have to keep coming back to play in order to play any other song. When you do scales, which is the basis of everything in playing the piano, you start with C, and you go from there. So everything goes out from Middle C.

Q. I think it's a key question for churches, when we talk about missional then what is the gospel, as we seem to want to go to one side or another. Do our pastors think that anything other than "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is to deviate from our mission, or if our mission naturally leads us there. So what do we think of when we think of mission, and the Gospel. So I sometimes wonder if Evangelism is 'plunking' middle C and it doesn't resonate with people, when we could be writing sonata's.

To me it makes it sound as if we're trying to make the gospel more interesting to make it appealing. We don't need to make it more interesting; we just need to make it relatable. Are you writing the message to make it more attractive? I don't think Jesus needs it to be made more

attractive. But if you are writing the music to help people understand what Jesus is, then that is different.

Q. So I'm just trying to get at "what is the gospel?"

I think as you say, it's Middle C but the other things ripple out from it. Social justice and environmental action are not the gospel, but are ripple out effects of understanding the gospel and having a relationship with Christ.

Q. What is your motivation?

My motivation in whatever I do is to try to point people toward a relationship with Jesus Christ knowing that he is the answer to transforming their life, he is the answer to their everlasting life, he's the answer to those things such as "having a good marriage, taking care of the environment, and everything ese. I want people to know who He is and to know that they are loved by him, and that they are welcome into a relationship with Him. The biggest impact for me coming to understand is that the transformation that comes from realizing I wasn't a complete waste of space. Maybe not everyone experiences that, but everyone sometime asks "why is this crap happening to me?" and "why am I here, because my life makes no sense. Am I just going to die and become worm food?" I don't think anyone was created just to be worm food.

Q. As the CBAC we talk about the importance of both word and deed. Do you think one is to take precedence over the other, or even that we should pour all our energies into one as to the other?

No. I think of them as two sides to the same coin. We need both. Deed should come out of understanding the word, and the word without deed is dead, as they say. So if we only do good deeds for people but we don't share about Jesus in the sharing and the fact that he loved us so we will love others, then we are no different than any other social agency that is helping others. On the other if all we do is preach at people, then they don't see actions they're not going to sense authenticity, for if we are to love people we're not going to leave them cold and hungry and everything else.

Q. So does God call us to deed only so we can have legitimacy in speaking the Word? No. God calls us to deed because we are to look at every person as He does, as His creation and to love and respect them as such, whether they understand that or not.

Q. Do you believe the missional emphasis is only a passing fad, or at its essence is it to characterize the church in all places and at all times?

It is to characterize the church in all places and at all times. It's what we're called to do. It's not a fad. We treat it as a fad, but it's not. And I still say that the motivation to become missional in some circumstances is still motivated by the desire to not close the door instead of being motivated by a sense of a calling to mission.

Q. Do you think there's any sense that giving the cup of water in Jesus' name is more socially respectable or less embarrassing than having to talk about Jesus ... so in other words, that it's a diversion.

Yes, though I'm not sure I would speak of it as a diversion. How I think I would phrase it is it is easier for people to see a need and try to address the need. I see someone who's hungry so we

feed them. Someone doesn't have clothes, so we get them clothes. Somebody can't pay their oil bill, so we help them. But we're not very good when it comes to the intangible need and we back away from the idea that just because someone has all the material necessities met, that we don't have something that they need – which is Jesus. I just preached on this last Sunday. Churches in general are very good at realizing they need to serve the poor – and so they should – but they back away from trying to engage with the demographic that looks like they have the world by the tail. That's going to require them to be able to have a reason for the hope that they say they have, and I don't think a lot of our congregations are ready and prepared to know how to explain that, and they're afraid of the pushback from people who don't believe. That's why these days its less about being worried about offending people; I think that's a cop-out. I think it's more people are just afraid that they won't know how to answer.

Q. For the past year or two, the CBAC has used the phrase "Joining God in our Neighbourhoods". What does that phrase say to you?

It says that we need to be the church outside of the church. When it was first developed by the Youth and Family department, that's what it was about. It was about doing things in our communities as opposed to focusing everything in the church. It's about the church being the church outside of the church. But where I think we've gone wrong with this we've looked at our communities as projects – where can we go and do something to fix what's wrong with our community – and the majority of people in our community don't think they need fixing. I think we need to stop thinking about "what can we do in our community" and think along the line of "how can we be in our communities."

Q. So what does it mean to be in our community?

It means building relationships with people not for the specific purpose that you're trying to bring around conversion as that's not our job. It's loving people by getting to know them, and joining them in what they're doing in their lives and not thinking about how we can make this better by fixing them. Q. So how would we, if it's not about bringing around conversions, not lose the baby with the bath water and just become what you talked about earlier where we become just a social do good social agency. A. This is where we need to address the issue as individuals. Our people and our leaders need to be with people. You have said it, but people don't take it to heart. When people hear "join God in the neighbourhood" people think "what else can we do?" I think we need to do less doing and just be with people, because Jesus spent a lot of time being with people. I see our churches as being more about the doing and less about the building of relationships, because they don't know how to communicate with people outside of the church. But it's not about conversions as much as it's about conversations. We're just called to talk with people and share with them when we get the nudge of the Holy Spirit to do so. We're not to go hunting them down. But when we encounter those God puts in our path, then we have to have the boldness to share about our faith. But we don't go do everything we do with that intention. We build relationships so we get in a position where we have trust with people so that we might can share our faith with them; but again it's not about looking at them as projects to convert.

Q. Could a community band directed by an atheist be an example of God at work in the neighbourhood?

We believe that where God leads us He has already gone ahead of us, and we believe that God is able to use everybody. Well, signs of people questioning – not necessarily coming to the point of belief – but at least saying "I don't know what I think" are still evidences of God at work. So I don't think it has to explicitly be Christian for it to be a place where God is at work.

Q. So can it simply be a blessing that enriches our communal life, that brings people together that otherwise would be alone, and that is something we could get behind, or is there a danger in casting out net too wide in terms of understanding what it means that God is at work.

A community centre dance class for seniors livestreamed by the National Ballet School can be a great blessing, as it is improving the life of those people. Where we need to be the presence is by being involved in that — even if serving tea and coffee and getting to know those people so that we can partner that and continue on. Q. So that's the question: is that a legitimate place for Christian's to be involved because that's an example of where God is at work, and we can come alongside and be there as well? Absolutely, because are not all good things of God?

Q. One of the Mission Edge markers is that we embrace partnerships? Are there any cautions that should be heeded in this?

One thing I've noticed is that churches sometimes embrace partnerships only to end up relying upon the partners to do everything. We might give them space or a bit of money, but we don't show up and participate with them on the ground, actually participating. It should be more than financial partnering, though that may be a place to actually start. An example of this would be the Wolfville school. They didn't initially want anything to do with us, and then I talked with the school about the church doing a special offering at Thanksgiving and giving it to the school to help some of their families in needs with gift cards, asking them if that would be something they'd be interested in. They said most definitely, and although I initially thought it might be a couple of hundred dollars, we ended up raising over \$1200. This blew the school away, and that opened up the doors for further opportunities for more hands on. Q. Would you therefore not interpret that as "joining God in the neighbourhood" and would you not interpret it as the school as being a great place for Christians to be joining God in. I think that it's vital that we're partnering with our schools, but we have to earn our place there now a days ... it is not automatic. So then I was accepted as a volunteer there, and then I went for their what used to be called their "Christmas Shopping Party" but now is called their "Holiday Shopping Party". I was in the school and I was getting the kids – both Christian and Muslim – coming up and saying "this is my pastor" and introducing me to their friends and to other families who were other backgrounds, and then these families trust you to send their kids to you.

Q. What do you understand is meant by discipleship? How well do you believe church as you have experienced it is doing discipleship?

My understanding is that discipleship is training, and we are training believers to be scattered. It's about strengthening them in their own walk, encouraging them but also teaching them in their own faith to keep moving in that, it's about equipping them to share their faith with other people, it's about equipping them to serve God in whatever capacity He calls them to do so.

Q. As a follow up, how do you best contribute to your own discipleship? Connected to this, is discipleship the same thing as spiritual growth?

No, I think spiritual growth is a part of discipleship. I would think of spiritual growth as the personal and discipleship is the being equipped to go forth, or being equipped to do so. Coming to understand what it means to be present with God, to come into his presence, taking time to be with God. It's been helpful to not only understand why this is necessary but also to know why I struggle with that, out of issues of self-worth.

Q. How important is "read your bible and pray every day"?

I think it's incredibly important, but often it's more important to seize five minutes here and five minutes there, and that stimulates my hunger for more of it. I think reading Scripture and praying every day is incredibly important but it's not enough. We can do all that and never really be in God's presence.

Q. How do pastors, leaders, denomination, look to best contribute to the spiritual growth and discipleship of people in their churches?

I think our biggest problem is that our pastors are not living it ... they're like doctors who don't pay attention to their own symptoms. Pastors confuse sermon preparation with time with God. The vision has to be to inspire pastors that they need to do this.

Q. Anything else dealing with Spiritual growth and discipleship for our people? Also, can it – does it – happen outside of the lab? In other words, does this happen by running away to retreats or does discipleship happen best in the doing?

By saying running away to retreats gives expresses your attitude towards them, but thinking of discipleship and spiritual growth as separate, or thinking of spiritual growth is a part of discipleship. It takes both and, not either/or. It involves retreats, time alone with God, etc., but then also going out into the world, being with others, ministering to them, loving people, serving people. It's kind of like the co-op model in education ... time spent in the classroom/lab, then we're out applying it. It is this moving between alone time with God and moving out, but it's not where we just do all one and then go do all the other.

Q. How important is evangelism for the church today? What does it mean?

It is essential! Evangelism is intentionally sharing the gospel with others, but not everyone in the church should be evangelists, as it has to do with one's gifting. I don't even think everyone is called to do the work of the evangelists, as Paul says God has given different gifts to different people.

Q. Do you think there seems to be a shortage of people with the gifts of evangelism? I think there are a shortage of people who are trained to understand their gifts of evangelism.

Q. What are the opportunities and the challenges for the church in Atlantic Canada today in terms of evangelism?

The opportunities are endless because we're living in an ever-increasing secular society, but people are more and more questioning their existence. I find people more open than ever about conversations about spiritual things. I've never had people shut down a conversation, tell me not to pray for them, that kind of thing. They'll never say no. On the other hand, I think we cannot

underestimate the importance of knowing how to use language and how to have conversation that will not put them off; how to use your own story that can connect to their story. The challenges for evangelism today are not in the community but rather in our people, in that our people are not embolden, they are fearful of sharing faith, they don't fully feel they can tap into the power of God, and that God goes before them into these situations. The problem isn't with our society or culture – the opportunities are there – the challenges are within our churches and our people.

Interview 4: December 12, 2019

Pastor Four serves as Co-Pastor of a historic, vibrant inner-city church dating back to 1843 that describes itself as being a socially and theologically diverse congregation dedicated to Christ and His Kingdom work. This pastor's Christian formation and early pastoral training began within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, but he has now served as a CBAC pastor for the past 25 years. He is one who thinks deeply about the role and mission of the church, and is passionate for people to discover for themselves the life Jesus invites us to.

Q. What is the Gospel?

The gospel begins with God and his love for humanity – His special Creation – who have been separated by sin from Him, and He took the initiative to reconcile with us by sending His Son who was the perfect sacrifice who laid down His life for us, and we experience God's grace and we are adopted into His family, and we're separated from Him no longer because of Christ. I also believe that succinctly the gospel always has a component that we cannot save ourselves ... only God can save us. How that impacts me in terms of my preaching and my ministry would be that one phrase "we cannot save ourselves but only God can save us" reminds me not to lay undue burdens on others, that we do not earn our salvation, we do not earn God's favour.

Q. How might we as 21st century western 'evangelical' (but not in the Donald Trump way) might have distorted the gospel from what is truly meant?

We have identified our sins, but it's really an arbitrary list of sins, and so there is always going to be a sense where the gospel applies culturally, and it's always going to look different in each culture, and yet we really do need to be careful about speaking for God particularly where Scriptures are not clear or are even silent. I don't think we need spend a lot of time convincing people of sin; I think the Holy Spirit does that. There is this innate sense within all of us that understands what sinfulness is.

- Q. Does the Gospel only address our individual relationship with God or is it broader than that? In other words, is sin only our break of relationship with God? Or is there a cosmic or societal sense of sin that the Gospel also speaks to? A. Definitely. Like many of us of a certain age I was certainly aware of liberation theology, and in our circles initially it was not looked upon favorably. So liberation theology in the sense that the gospel is more corporate and there are people groups in our world who are oppressed and who need to be set free, who need to be liberated, and the gospel carries a tone of justice for those people. While I wouldn't say that defines the gospel I would say that the gospel includes that notion as well.
- Q. I want to use an analogy with you. It is the analogy of a piano or keyboard. If we understand that often when we talk about the gospel we express it as being "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved", the question is ... is this the extent of the Gospel or is it the centre of the Gospel, if you think it's even that. Think of the note of middle C on a keyboard; think of how middle C is pivotal to understanding the base clef and treble clef. When you start to learn to play the piano you find your way around the key board working out from Middle C, when you learn scales you start with the Scale of C and advance from there? So my question is, is the Gospel just striking or repetitively

plunking Middle C, or is the Gospel knowing how to skillfully and artistically play all 88 keys, creating beautiful soul-stirring music from those? Does the Gospel therefore include how to care for the environment, the kind of employer or employee we should be, how we have reconciliation in family, how we care for the poor, how we are to engage civilly? Is all of that – how shall we then live – the gospel, or is the gospel just middle C? Speaking to your analogy, I think that if not part of Middle C the maybe C sharp and C flat are "repent and be baptized" because belief is a cognitive thing but the "repent and be baptized" are actions ... they're engaging us. I'm not trying to push, but to have clarification, are you saying then that C flat (or B) to C sharp (or D flat) is the gospel, and everything else is application? Or are you saying that rightly understood all application of what God has done for us in Christ is part of the Good News? When you're talking about living out the Gospel, that's been called Gospel Fluency recently, I do believe the Gospel has something to say how we live our lives in every arena of our lives. I was thinking of another analogy before you started with the piano analogy. I think that in every generation and in every time and in every culture the Gospel has to apply to all of life. Our role is to be good students of both our culture and of the Scriptures and to see where those connections are and to point them out to others. I had this insight personally that in our time it seems to just be part of our cultural zeitgeist that people are doing a lot of ancestry and DNA stuff and they have these questions of "who am I?", "where did I come from?", "why am I here?". They think by understanding their DNA or their ancestry these deep questions are going to be answered and somehow give them fulfillment and purpose and significance and meaning in life. I think that's a culture question that is answered by the Gospel.

Q. Just to explore this a little more, how does the Gospel speak to this or answer this? It's in term of identity, and our identity is found in Christ. Our identity is not just found in our chromosome and DNA, but our identity is found in Christ. What do you mean by that, our true identity is found in Christ. How does Christ speak to my identity? I believe our deepest human need is to feel acceptance: acceptance by one another and acceptance by God. In Christ we are accepted by God. So it begins there. Because of Christ God accepts us. I believe we all want to feel like we matter, that we have importance, we have significance. I've been using this analogy with the recent sale of our church building. We had a sense of what our building was worth, and we were hoping that we would get a good price for it based on what we thought it was worth. But in reality, whether it's a car or a church building or a house, it's really only worth what someone will pay. Are you with me? Jesus gave his own life for me. That's how much I'm worth. So I have value. God accepts me. I have value. And God loves me. Amazingly he knows everything about me. He knows all those things even I don't like about myself, but He still loves me and He forgives me.

Q. How is the Gospel meant to be communal? Have we overly individualized the Gospel and missed some of its corporate or communal dimension?

Initially my response when you ask this is because of the Gospel and as we grow in knowledge and grace of the Gospel, what we have experienced from God we extend to others. So in that sense it's communal. And we also recognize that as I articulated earlier we are adopted into God's family in Christ then we are brothers and sisters with all who are in Christ.

I have spent a good part of my life within the church and I believe the church is foundational to the Gospel. We belong not just to God but we belong to one another. Again, as I said earlier, we have been adopted into this family, and this family is the church, the Body of Christ. Having said that however, I don't think that every single local expression of the church embodies Gospel values. It's unfortunate and I don't think that our particular expression of the church – or any, for that matter – is the perfect expression. So my response to the person who says "I'm out of the institutional church because of its flaws" then I say "okay, well what is the church going to be for you" because the church is certainly a part of the gospel. Another part of that is you're not perfect, I'm not perfect, so what right do we have to expel others for also being imperfect.

Q. As the CBAC we talk about the importance of both word and deed. Do you think one is to take precedence over the other, or even that we should pour all our energies into one as to the other?

I am certainly comfortable with the two-pole concept of word and deed, the Gospel applying and being communicated and delivered in Word and in Deed. My sense is that we need discernment and we need to be led by the Spirit in terms of how the Gospel is communicated in every context. I think there are ways in one context where you would with words communicate in one way that would be ineffectual in another context. For example, a few years ago I watched a lecture series at Oxford University that Tim Keller did with students there, and he presented the Gospel over a series of evenings in a variety of ways that were intellectual and philosophical and theological. You would want to be very different if the context were different, say if you were just talking to people downtown in the soup kitchen in your city or my city. I certainly believe "empty bellies have no ears" so there are times Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" has merit. There are times we need to begin meeting the basic needs because they're so focused on those needs that initially they are never going to be able to hear what we're saying.

- Q. Do you have any concerns with where you think emphasizing both word and deed could lead, or has there been anything you have observed that has caused you concern? I'm wondering whether we sometimes run to deed because it's more acceptable to others or it's not as embarrassing as mentioning Jesus needs or we misapply those words that are likely wrongly attributed to St. Francis of "Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary use words" such that we abandon the importance of explaining in word the Gospel? I think people can go to extremes in either direction. There is humanitarian need that takes place in the name of Christ and people will never know that Christ's name is part of it, but maybe in some mysterious way they experience the love of God despite the fact that we don't draw clear connection and that from the outward appearance it looks no different than any other NGO or humanitarian effort. By the same token I think that the proverbial street preacher on a soap box on the corner yelling at people about their sin really may not be connecting with nearby people who are left feeling like "this guy doesn't care anything about me, and he doesn't care about anything I care about, so why should I listen." This guy may in reality be putting up a wall. (And yet, a very close friend of mine says he's a Christian today because of some crazy street preacher.)
- Q. Do you believe the missional emphasis is only a passing fad, or at its essence is it to characterize the church in all places and at all times?

I think it interesting you use the word emphasis. One of my theology profs said "all of theology is a matter of emphasis." I think there is a sense where right now this seems to be more significant culturally or in our time, and yet I would also say I'm of the conviction that the church should always be missional. We've been having these Wednesday evening things called "The Gathering." We invite people to come together for a meal and then we do just really basic teaching on aspects of the Gospel, and one evening it was about sharing our faith. We were trying to help people understand their own story of faith, and to share the Gospel through their own story of faith. In our table discussion we were going back and forth in terms of the question of how intentional do we need to be to make sure we get those three or four key points in our story, and we share them with everybody. At one point I said to our table group we need to be careful that we don't give the message "you need to be converted because I need to do evangelism."

Q. For the past year or two, the CBAC has used the phrase "Joining God in our Neighbourhoods". What does that phrase say to you?

What's good about that phrase is that initially it's humbling because it doesn't begin with us; it begins with God. It acknowledges that God is doing work that isn't dependent on us; doesn't have to happen through us. He accomplishes what he wants to accomplish in a variety of ways, and it's up to us to discern that. I also love it because I serve in an area that is often in the news but not for good news stories. I try to constantly remind people or warn people that when God looks at our city that's not all He sees – the things that we are in the news for. When God looks at our city He loves our city, He sees possibility, He sees potential, He sees people He cares for, He sees all kinds of things that we miss. One of our values is partnerships, and so we try to affirm our partners in the good and valuable work they are doing and they are doing God's work. That's one of the big reasons why we want to partner together.

Q. What evidences should we look for to discern where God is at work? Does He only work through those who explicitly work in His name? Is God at work in a community band that is directed by an atheist that goes into a nursing home to play for people.

Going back to our discussion, many times on word and deed we've had this conversation with folk who have a problem with too much emphasis on the deed side and not enough emphasis on the word side – the proclamation side of the Gospel. My response has been to direct them back to Matthew 25 where we read about the feeding of the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison ... nowhere is there any talk about cognitive assent that people are directed to do. The sheep and the goats are separated entirely by their acts and so there is a sense of mystery – and we don't take any one passage of Scripture and build an entire theology around it; we need to take all of Scripture together – however, there's no question in my mind that those who are feeding the hungry or giving the cup of cold water to the thirsty, or are clothing the naked, who are visiting the sick and imprisoned – are doing God's work.

Q. One of the Mission Edge markers is that we embrace partnerships? Are there any cautions that should be heeded in this?

There are a few areas that we look at. One is the work that they are doing looks like it's good work; the people that are involved we feel like we can work with, and that we have shared values with them. Those may not be theological values but those are shared values.

Q. Jesus never said "whenever you played in a community band on a Sunday afternoon, you played unto me?" So, can we say God is at work through a community band that's directed through an atheist and see that as a place where God is at work in our community, thinking that if it was lost our community would be a poorer place. In that sense, is this an example of God at work in our neighbourhood and a worthwhile place for a Christian – and hence, the church - to be involved in? (And of course the community band example is just a token example of what could be a thousand other things we could identify.) I feel like there has to be some sort of an experience or a message that point people to God, and maybe the arts themselves do that – maybe just the beauty, people who are using their God given abilities to make others feel better – maybe that's a part of God's work and His gift to us. We had this conversation at an Elder's Retreat lately and we were wanting to draw in on how important communication is. I was asking to what end? They just said "well everyone feels better." I just felt they were overstating the importance of it. There's got to be some more noble pursuit than just making people feel better. A statement we came up with from our retreat on partnerships is this: "Joining God and joining others with aligned values who are making a difference through a myriad of cultural touch points in our world."

Q. What do you understand is meant by discipleship? How well do you believe church as you have experienced it is doing discipleship?

I don't believe that discipleship is only cognitive. I definitely believe in "along the way" kind of discipleship. I believe that discipleship is a purposeful, intentional and relational process of making Christ a part of our identity. **Q. How's that practically happen for people in your church?** This is actually a big emphasis for us right now, and we're in the midst of trying to figure this out. The whole reason why we launched the initiative last fall called "The Gathering" was really to begin to invite people into a more intentional process of discipleship. I would say that it's all going to be relational, it's all going to be gospel-based, but it's going to look different for different people. For some people we're starting out with a book club idea where they'll read a book that's about the Gospel and then they'll come together to talk about that; for others it's going to be part of a triad with two other people where you will not only study together and explore questions together, but have accountability and prayer for one another and do life together. For others it will be an intentional process of discipleship where you'll look back into your past and then applying the gospel to various formational life experiences that you've had and doing that with others. The material we're using for this is Mike Breen and 3DM (Missional Discipleship).

Q. What do you understand to be the challenges for evangelism today?

In one sense evangelism is vital because without evangelism we have no future church. In another sense the word 'evangelism' carries with it baggage that has become a barrier to our intended or desired goal; the way we have communicated or carried our mandate. We too often push people away rather than to draw them closer to Christ. I think the opportunities never change. People are people; people need God. Admittedly, we've seen that in certain cultures at certain times the fruit seems to be much more bountiful. **Q. Is that because God has abandoned us or because we're not being attentive to what God is calling us to?** I think it's not that God has abandoned us, but we are missing the opportunity. We are focusing over here and the need of the culture and the need of people is over here. God has something for these people that is addressing exactly what they need, but we're delivering what we're delivering.

Q. What do you see for the state of the church in Atlantic Canada as you project out 30 years?

We've been having some interesting discussions as we say we're building for the next 100 years. It's interesting we've been talking about whether we should take our organ, and I've been saying who knows but in 10 or 20 years the organ may be the vinyl of today. In our lifetime we've been living with the trend of urbanization; I wonder if in 30 years there won't be a trend back to ruralisation. I find it interesting that I see a lot of people who are living in tiny houses, who are going off grid, or people who are sailing all the time. I think there are cultural trends that affect us all. I think if there's a pushback to rural life then the institutions of the past will re-emerge, and people are always going to be longing for community, people are always going to have a need to care for one another and to connect, and I think the church will always have a role. At my first Billy Graham School of Evangelism there was this old guy who pastored the church he was at for 36 years and he said "Clearly God preferred the small church; that's why he made so many of them." Q So you're not so worried that the church as we know of it won't largely disappear from the landscape 30 years from now? CBAC, if it still exists at all, won't be called that. There will be voluntary associations of groups like the Willow Creek Network or C2C or ones like them will emerge. I think there will still be institutional church. I don't think it will be obliterated. I suspect the trend will be more toward bi-vocational pastors.

Q. Coming back to discipleship ... how important is calling people to discipline of devotional life or spiritual formation a part of discipleship?

I think the only way we have a future is that we continue on the journey of faith to grow and be transformed by the Spirit, and we are intentional about putting ourselves places where that can happen. I often say, and I will say it again when we start the new year, that we provide a number of both simple devotions and opportunities for people to grow because at the end of the day "my own spiritual growth is my own responsibility." **Q. What are those places where discipleship or spiritual growth happens?** It involves learning, it involves serving, it involves being in community. The emphasis in our time on emotional healthy spirituality has been positive for spiritual formation because it's made a connection with the most formative experiences of our lives, which is our families of origin.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to talk about? One of the things we have been exploring is missional communities. Missional communities are a group of people – maybe families – who commit to doing life together, who meet regularly, who serve together, maybe they have a particular affinity ... so maybe they're a part of a football team or hockey team and their mission is to serve that community, but they're also a part of a local church. There is also an intention for evangelism in that they are caring for others in a way that will point them to Christ and invite them into community as well. I see missional community as connected to a church; I don't see it as being a church in and of itself. I describe missional outreach, which I think is different than missional community, as engaging practical needs of the community outside the church through ministries of compassion and justice by mobilizing disciples who bring a gospel presence and share God's love through word and deed. This is different from missional communities in that missional communities is doing life together with a particular shared defined focus, where missional outreach is every individual Christian wherever you find yourself in the community you can do this: you can engage practical needs of the community outside the church through ministries of compassion and justice by mobilizing disciples who

bring gospel presence and share God's love through word and deed. We can all do this whether we have a team around us or if we're by ourselves. **Q. Would you think that in the ideal every local church should be a missional community with numerous micro-missional communities within it?** Sure, I could live with that. Not every church is hitting some cultural touch point; meeting some community need.

Appendix	3
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MISSION EDGE, YOU, AND YOUR CHURCH:

© Greg Jones

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new Creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

"We Cannot Become What We Need to Be By Remaining What We are" (Max DePree)

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Introduction

I'm glad you're here.

I really am.

One of my key values in life is that every person matters and is a gift; there are no unimportant people. I'm therefore glad you're here because you are a gift that God has given to the rest of us ... to your family, your church, your community, your world. Our world is different because you are here. This is true if you're 7 years old, 27, 57 or 97.

For that reason alone I'm glad you're here.

I'm also glad you're here (meaning that you're looking at and starting to read this Guide) because it indicates that you have at least some interest not only in God but also in His purposes for you, your church, and for this world. As long as you have life God has a purpose for you. I know that we live in a time when faith can be tenuous for many people, and I hope that if this is the case for you this resource will both deepen and stretch you in your ongoing engagement with Jesus Christ.

I have already said that one of my key values is that every person matters and is a gift. I want you to also know that I believe that every church (i.e. every local gathering of Christ followers) is precious and to be valued as important to God's Kingdom. We live in a world that wants to value everyone and everything for their (or its) utilitarian value, meaning how strong, how fast, how good, how attractive, how rich, how powerful they are. I love how God turns all that on its head in His Kingdom. As the Apostle Paul says "some parts ... that seem weakest and least important are actually most important." 443

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⁴⁴³ 1 Corinthians 12:22

All this is to say that regardless of who you are, how old or young you might be, how big or small your church might be, how firm or how tenuous your faith might be, I'm glad you're here.

I firmly believe in the God of the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ultimate come-back story. The Great News contained in Scripture is that our future need not be defined by our past. Therefore, I always believe that there's a hope and a future for your church.

You'll discover as you read through this introduction to *Mission Edge Churches* that your future is most dependent upon the degree of your willingness to be the church that God calls you to be – for the place (or neighbourhood) to which He has called you, for this time in which He has planted you, and for the future to which He is leading you. My firm faith conviction is that all churches that are meaningfully and prayerfully striving to be all that God calls them to be will have a future. Such obedience is not easy, and such a journey can be costly. It requires a willingness to step out in faith, being uncertain of where that faith-journey might lead you. It means living sacrificially, whether that involves loving the 'hard-to-love', generously giving of your material means, or letting go of things that carry great sentimental meaning for you.

I trust that as you read through and interact with this Guide you'll consider your personal journey as well as that of your church to be sacred. This Guide is not written to place a burden on you, but to encourage you to be all that God is calling you to be. I am standing on the sidelines, cheering you and your church on, offering you this guide as an orientation map for a way forward.

Allow me to briefly explain the reason for and intended use of this Guide. Its purpose is to introduce you and your church family to what it means to be a *Mission Edge Church*, with the

goal that your church will commit to meaningfully being one of at least 300 CBAC⁴⁴⁴ *Mission Edge Churches*.

It is designed to be read by you a chapter at a time over four weeks (one chapter per week). At the end of each chapter are a series of questions for you to prayerfully consider. Then, for each of the first three weeks you will meet for an hour or two with a small group to share with one another your thoughts and insights about the questions for that week. On the fourth week, rather than meet with your small group (unless your small group happens to be your entire congregational family), you will come together for a day-long workshop where you will be led in exploring more deeply the various themes that you have discussed.

Your church leadership team who are giving oversight to this initiative (perhaps your Deacons or Elders or a specially-created *Mission-Edge* Vision Team) will be listening and recording notes of the various insights and contributions offered during that day-long workshop. They will then take those findings and prayerfully digest them considering what God is saying to your congregation through the entire process, after which they will prepare a report with a plan and/or recommendations which they will bring back to your congregational family for acceptance or further reshaping.

When I was in Grade 12 I had the opportunity to attend the Urbana Student Missions

Conference held every third year in Urbana, IL. In truth I don't remember a whole lot of what I heard and experienced at that Conference apart from this: God can't steer a parked car. In life I have found that sometimes it's all too easy to become that parked car. This process isn't going to give you all the answers, resolve all your questions, calm every concern, promise easy guarantees, or give you a simple three-step plan. It instead is intended to help introduce you to

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⁴⁴⁴ Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

becoming a *Mission Edge Church*, and encourage you to begin moving ahead so God can do what only He can do, and that is to lead you in the ongoing process of always becoming the Church and churches He calls you to be!!

Week One

"Why Has God Called Us Here?"

It was a picture-perfect spring evening. Brand new in my role as a Regional Minister with the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* (then known as the *Convention of Atlantic Baptists Churches*) I was driving along enjoying the unspoiled beauty of the Belleisle Bay of New Brunswick. Although this province had been my home for all but three years of my life, at the time this was new territory for me.

I was on my way to meet with a Pastoral Search Committee of one of our congregations, and had given myself extra time as I wasn't exactly sure how long the drive might take. I remember thinking that although this was a spectacularly beautiful area, it sure felt like I was in the 'boonies' (I later realized it wasn't nearly as remote as I initially thought). At one point I caught a glimpse of a little white church. I knew it wasn't the church I was heading to, but was curious about its denomination so I turned around and drove back to check it out.

This is when it happened.

Now, before I go further I will tell you that I'm typically a bit of a skeptic whenever I hear claims from those who say they have heard a direct message from God. I think it sounds either a bit hokey (as if it's from the script of 'The Blues Brothers') or at least a bit presumptuous; a claiming for oneself some form of spiritual superiority. It seems like a manipulative way to say "You can't question what I'm saying."

And yet even owning my own baggage, all that I can tell you is I sensed that God met me there as I pulled in to that little church yard. It was a place of epiphany for me.

Whatever it was, I know I wasn't expecting it. Up until that moment I was merely driving along, kind of minding my own business, enjoying the beauty around me, not thinking any deep thoughts in particular.

So what happened?

As I pulled into the parking area, I saw that the church was one of ours ... meaning it was a church that was of our denominational family. I knew of the church by name, but because this was a new area to me I hadn't known where it was located. Sitting there looking at that picturesque but rustic church building, my head dropped and these words seemed to spontaneously well up within me ... "Oh God, why have you brought me here into this role now? So many of these little churches are not going to make it!"

That was not a particularly faith-filled or optimistic sentiment, especially for one who had just come into the denominational role of working with such churches to encourage them towards Kingdom flourishing. And yet, this was the gist of what I was feeling.

Immediately I heard (though admittedly not with my ears) the words "that's not my purpose for them." My initial thought was, "Wow, where did that come from?" But then a whole jumble of impressions erupted. I don't know if they came in a micro-second, or over the next couple minutes. Regardless, here's what I felt I heard God say.

First of all – and this is important – I didn't sense God say that it wouldn't happen; that a number of such churches wouldn't close. In fact, I felt I was hearing that there was real danger and even likelihood it would happen to too many, and not just in rural or other areas coping with out-migration or community decline.

I believed I did hear, however, that these closures weren't what God was purposing for churches, and needn't be inevitable. In other words, it would be wrong for us to blame God if

churches closed, thinking He pulled the plug on them or that it was inevitable as they had lived out their natural life. We also shouldn't chalk it up to the demographics of the area or the spiritual lethargy of these times.

I also sensed God saying: "If my people – this church and all churches – will be the people I call them to be for this place and this time, then they will have a future." The clear point of all this was that the future of these churches would rest on whether they were willing to be obedient to whatever – and I mean whatever! – God was calling them to.

Next, Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones came flooding into my mind. If you're not familiar with what I'm referring to, it's a great read full of vivid imagery. I won't quote the entire passage but you can read it for yourself in Ezekiel 37. The gist of it is that God is addressing a despondent nation of Israel while they are exiled in Babylon. Believing that their doom is certain and that the Kingdom has been lost, God announces through his servant Ezekiel that He will yet bring the Jewish exiles back to their cherished Jerusalem.

In his astonishing vision, Ezekiel is led to a valley that is filled with the gruesome sight of dry bones and the Lord asks him "Can these bones become living people again?" "You alone know, O Lord" he replies. God commands Ezekiel to speak to those dry bones telling them that

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⁴⁴⁵ Admittedly, this question – "Why has God called us here for this place, this time, and the future into which He is leading us?" – has been a guiding question that for years has been instrumental in my ministry, and I'll explain more about that shortly.

⁴⁴⁶ If you like many struggle to understand the historical flow of the Old Testament, a very rough approximation of general timeline would be: Abraham to Joseph (approximately 2100 – 1850 BCE); Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt (1850 – 1450 BCE); the Exodus out of Egypt and the desert wanderings (1450 - 1400 BCE); the period of the Judges (1400 – 1100 BCE); the United Kingdom of Kings Saul, David and Solomon (1090 – 930 BCE); civil war divides Israel into the Northern Kingdom [Israel – ten tribes] and the Southern Kingdom [Judah – two tribes] (930 BCE); the Northern Kingdom [Israel] destroyed and scattered by Assyria (725 BCE); the Southern Kingdom [Judah] conquered by Babylonians and its people taken into exile (590 BCE); Jews from the Southern Kingdom start returning to Jerusalem (535 BCE).

He (God) is going to bring them back to life again. Ezekiel does as he is told, and all of a sudden there is a thunderous rattling noise all throughout the valley as those dry bones begin to shuffle together, reassembling and attaching themselves as complete skeletons. As Ezekiel watches, muscles, ligaments and then flesh forms over the bodies. What a macabre scene! Yet even with all this, the bodies remained lifeless.

God then tells Ezekiel to call 'the breath' to come from the four winds and breathe life back into these lifeless bodies. Ezekiel obediently does as he is told, and remarkably, living breath comes and enters those dead bodies, they come alive and stand "on their feet, a huge army."

It was this scene that played like a mental movie clip as I sat there outside that little church. To be clear, I didn't sense that God was saying all these churches scattered throughout Atlantic Canada were already dead and lifeless. Not at all. The message I was hearing was one of hope, not judgement and rebuke. But too many of these same churches were languishing and therefore fragile and vulnerable, failing to live into the fullness that God purposed for them.

There are two other impressions that were very clear as I sat there in my car.

The first was that we as a denominational family were to open our eyes to the great resource or gift that God had granted to us in having approximately 450 churches scattered throughout the four provinces in Atlantic Canada. In other words, a great opportunity that we as Atlantic Baptists already have is that we have at least some sort of ministry presence within 450 neighbourhoods and communities throughout this part of Eastern Canada.

Some of these churches no doubt had good reputations, others perhaps not so much; but we were at least somewhat known within those neighbourhoods. Other denominations looking

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⁴⁴⁷ Ezekiel 37:10

to establish a foothold in this region would be ecstatic to have the kind of existing community relationships that we as a family of churches already have. What this meant was that rather than lament that we have "too many churches" (something that I have heard from time to time) I powerfully sensed God saying that our call was to see all these locations – whether small or large or in between – as gifts entrusted to us by God. It was God's desire to breathe His breath into all these churches so that they would become vibrant outposts of His love, grace and mercy in the neighbourhoods and communities in which they were located.

The second impression cycled me back to the first message or idea I had initially perceived – the one that said that these churches would have a vital future if they would be whoever and whatever God calls them to be for the place and time in which He has them. I understood that this didn't mean that all churches were to become clones of one another, but that each was to fully live into their unique God-given identity and purposes that He had specifically for them. For some it would mean recommitting to their ongoing ministry journey for that was still God's call for them; for others it might mean closing their church and joining with another church or other churches because that was how they could best reach their neighbourhoods today. 448

I'll again say, I'm not prone to having experiences like this. But I also will say that I look back to that evening as pivotal, believing that at that time God commissioned me to this role

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⁴⁴⁸ One might think this seems contradictory to the primary message that it wasn't God's purpose for these churches to close, but an important distinction needs to be made here. A church choosing to cease their affairs and merge with another (or others) so to better reach their region ought not be viewed as a death or closure as much as a rebirth of that church albeit in a different form. A church closure was to be understood as a church ceasing to exist with no new form reemerging; rebirth – whether as a replant or as merger or as part of a new church in another location and under another name – would mean the church (as the community of Christ followers) was continuing to live on as the church that God was calling them to be.

I have had with our denomination for these past 18-plus years. Again, forgive me if this all sounds self-aggrandizing. It's simply my best effort to relate what I believe I experienced that night, and why I believe asking and answering that underlying question "why has God called us here for this place, this time, and the future into which He is leading us?" is foundational and fundamental for our effectiveness and faithfulness as local churches.

This has been a crucial and significant question since my earliest years in ministry going back to my first congregation in Middle Sackville, New Brunswick. Like many churches in the early 1980's, the Middle Sackville Baptist Church was a congregation experiencing a degree of decline such that when a candidating pastor asked the Search Committee what their vision was for the church in five years' time, one of the members half-jokingly responded "that the doors would still be open." The individual who made that statement was one of the finest and most faith-filled individuals in the congregation, but at that time he was simply acknowledging that if they stayed on their current trajectory of decline, their future existence was precarious.

As the story was later relayed to me this caused that particular pastor to withdraw his name, thinking that if the limit of this church's vision was simply to keep their doors open, it wasn't the place for him. (Personally, I was always kind of glad that this had happened, for if he hadn't withdrawn his name I would not have had the blessing of pastoring this congregation/field as my first pastorate.)

I'm not exactly sure how others who were a part of the congregation might remember it, but I recall in the early years a certain ongoing anxiety about what God could possibly do

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⁴⁴⁹ This was actually a two-church field which also included the precious people of Midgic, but what I relate to you is particularly about the Middle Sackville congregation.

through them. The memory I have is kind of an ongoing wringing of the hands from worry, and conversations that tended to be something like this:

- "What can God do here ... after all, we're such an old congregation?"
- "What can God do here ... after all, our building is so outdated?"
- "What can God do here ... after all, we're so small in comparison to the other churches around us?"
- "What can God do here ... after all, we're located so far out of town?"

As we began to acknowledge these fears and apprehensions and work through them, a new conversation gradually began to take shape. It went something like this: "What if we were to figure out why God has called us here for this place and this time, and live into that? If we can't figure it out, then we should just shutter the place up and go and join one of the other nearby churches who knows why they're here. But if we can figure out what God's purpose is for us, then let's get on that, while praying God's blessing upon every other church around us."

For a variety of reasons, we saw God do some amazing things in those next half-dozen years as we sought to be faithful to his call to us. It wasn't all success by any means, but we started to see that little congregation turn around as it modelled the love and grace of God into the lives of people in that neighbourhood and town and region. Slowly the church began to grow; not that it's all about numbers, but then again numbers are significant for they represent people being touched in some manner by the Good News that is found in Jesus Christ. The congregation roughly tripled in size, from around 40 to about 125 some eight years later. Even better is that this congregation avoided significant turmoil or conflict as it grew into a thriving intergenerational congregation of children, teens, university students, adults both single and in

families, and seniors. Perhaps best of all is that this church is yet today a thriving, creative, missional presence within their neighbourhood and beyond.

There is a church building (maybe a mission hall) in the town of Wenatchee, Washington, with these words painted on its outside wall: "God could have chosen anyone to be here, but he chose you." This is precisely it!! God has chosen you and your church family to be the right people to reach your neighbourhood (and the world at your doorsteps) with the life-giving news of all that God offers through Jesus Christ. If He wanted someone else to do it, He would have chosen them and not you.

This journey for your congregation is all about seeking how God wants to use you – the people you are, with your strengths, your frailties, your abilities and fallibilities. God's purpose for your church is that you would be a vibrant, invitational Gospel community making known both through your words and also through your actions the love that God has for all! This, in short, is what being a *Mission Edge Church* is all about (though it will be unpacked in more detail in the following chapter).

For now the question to wrestle with before God is this: Are you still willing to be used in whatever way that God wants to use you?

For Reflection: (As you work your way through this section, try to resist thinking about what others should do to change. Let your primary focus in all these exercises be on what God wants to be saying to you.)

- 1. Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 (in the *New Living Translation* if possible ... you can find it at biblegateway.com).
 - a. What stands out to you out of this passage?
 - b. Why is having a good skeleton essential for a living person? What is the problem with being only a skeleton? When you think of 'dry bones' a skeleton essentially and then think of your church, what comes to mind?
 - c. Do you think there's any significance for us today that even after the skeletal remains had reassembled and been covered with "tendons, flesh and skin" they still needed to be filled with the "breath."
- 2. What are your thoughts about the phrase of "being the people/church God calls you to be for the place He has you in, the time He has you in, and for the future He is leading you to"?
 - a. Why is it important to include "and the future He is leading us into"? Do you think churches in general lean with anticipation into the future, or are they more likely to lean back into the past, wishing things could be like they used to be? If you could only pick one, which direction (past or future) should the church's focus be?

3.	On a s	On a scale of $1 - 10$, how willing are you for your church to be obedient to whatever				
	God is	s calling you to?				
	a.	After g	giving an overall score for yourself, similarly score yo	ourself on each of		
		these items (don't get hung up on whether your church would ever need to do				
		these things; this exercise is to ask you about your willingness if it was clear God				
		was calling you to do any of these things in order to be more effective and fruitful				
		in ministry):				
		i.	Removing pews and using chairs instead			
		ii.	Changing the name of your church			
		iii.	Leaving your building and renting space instead			
		iv.	Ceasing your operations and joining with another ch	urch		
		v.	Never singing another hymn again			
		vi.	Singing only hymns in the future			
		vii.	Tearing down your building and building new			
		viii.	Having people different from you using and perhaps	at times inadvertently		
			damaging your building			
		ix.	Never being in 'your' church building again			

4. Can you identify 'internal' reasons why God may be hindered from doing all that He would like to through your church (meaning rather than identifying things happening

around you that you can't really control, confine yourself to internal matters that you can control)?

- 5. It is important for churches to know why they exist. Sometimes these are called 'Vision Statements'. A Vision Statement is a short statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from the ministry of your church. Ideally, a good Vision Statement should be:
 - a. Honest (meaning appropriate for you as a congregational family)
 - b. Ten words or less
 - c. Essentially unforgettable
 - d. Intriguing (especially to those who are outside of Christian faith)
 - e. Inviting
 - f. Energizing

Some examples of Vision Statements that other churches have developed are:

- A Place for Everyone
- Solving Life's Puzzles Together
- Living out what we believe
- A place where faith and real life intersect
- Connecting: To God, one another, our world
- Making a lasting difference
- Solid at the Core, Open at the Edges
- Real People. Real Life.

Write a unique vision statement for your church keeping in mind the five criteria of a good vision statement.

6. As you finish this first chapter, note any insights, thoughts, observations, questions that you have found helpful, and then pray to God asking Him to direct you and your church family in this journey of becoming the people that God is calling you to be.

Week Two

"Learning to Love the Hard-to-Love"

He was small, wiry, and volatile. I forget the details, but somehow he made his way to our church and there had found a place where he could belong ... at least on the fringes. I wasn't sure of his story, though I think there had been a period of incarceration in his past. Room was made for Kenny because at our best we at First Baptist Moncton were a church that attempted to recognize and honour the inherent God-given dignity of each person who came to us,⁴⁵⁰ remembering that we – both individually and corporately – were called to be the physical presence of Jesus in our community.⁴⁵¹

This didn't mean we excelled at loving everyone; we certainly didn't. We were but neophytes on a journey. It was challenging to know how to love some of the people that God sent to us. Kenny was certainly high-maintenance; incredibly exasperating, and potentially even dangerous at times. In fact, I remember how one Sunday morning just moments before our worship service was to begin that one of our Deacons came and asked me to talk to Kenny. He was upset about something and was mouthing off that he was going to kill someone. Thankfully Kenny never did harm anyone, but he wasn't always easy to have as a part of the church, and I and others were frustrated with him at times.

I felt that at best we were probably something of a safe place for Kenny and a place he could belong; likely something he never had much of. I suppose my personal compassion for him came in the realization he essentially was a fifty-year old man with a five-year old's

⁴⁵⁰ Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 25:40

⁴⁵¹ Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12ff., Galatians 3:27, Colossians 1:18,

emotional composition. I remember that our youngest daughter Molly was five at that time, and I was struck by the incongruence that while it would be unthinkable that we as a society would ever expect her as a five-year-old to somehow survive on the streets on her own, we expected all the Kennys out there to somehow muddle through.

There's one particular incident regarding Kenny that stands out in my mind. Before I tell you the story, you have to understand that on this particular day I was incredibly upset at him. I don't remember why. As I'm writing this now, I'm wondering if what I'm about to tell you may have happened the day after Kenny had made his threats. Regardless, whatever it was, I admittedly was really irked at him, and I didn't handle or hide my irritation very well.

It was a Monday morning and Kenny showed up at my office asking if I would take him for a coffee so we could talk. I agreed. While we sat together in a nearby park, he said something that I just wasn't expecting. He told me he disagreed with something I said in my sermon the previous day. That he – or anyone – disagreed with me wasn't what startled me; it was the fact that Kenny had actually been listening and had processed something I had said.

I asked what it was he had disagreed with. He told me it was that I had said every person who was a part of the Body of Christ was important to the rest of the body; that everyone had something important and necessary to contribute. He then said "I give nothing. I take, but what do I have to give back?" (After all these years I admittedly can't remember the conversation word for word, but I certainly remember the essence of it and I remember the impact his words would come to have on me.)

I'm not particularly proud of my first thoughts when Kenny said this to me. I was still pretty peeved at him, and my first impulse was to agree with him and tell him that I didn't have any idea what he contributed either. Trying to think of something that I could possibly say, and

still dealing with my own anger at him while also figuring he probably wouldn't really get what I was saying, I heard these words come out of my mouth: "Well Kenny, at least you help us learn how to love hard-to-love people." Not my finest moment I know.

I'm not sure what if any impact those words made on him, but as soon as they were out of my mouth a whole bunch of realizations began to dawn on me.

My first thought was essentially this: 'Wait a minute! That in fact IS why God sent
Kenny to us ... to help us learn how to love hard-to-love people.' In fact, seen in this light
Kenny is more of a gift to us than we are to him! If our goal in the Christian life is to become
increasingly like Jesus, then don't we need to learn how to really love even when it is difficult to
love? After all, as the Apostle Paul emphasizes "while we were still sinners, Christ died for
us."452 In other words, while each of us were "hard to love" Christ out of his love died for us!

As all this was rolling over in my mind, I realized I still had it wrong. I was wrong to imagine that Kenny alone was the one hard to love. The truth is, we're all hard to love. You are. I am. We all are Kennys. We all are hard to love. And this is one of the primary reasons why God calls us into meaningful, ongoing community with one another ... not because it's easy or always fulfilling to be in community together, but because at times it's downright hard, and will require everything we have to give – just exactly like Jesus gave to us.

That's the thing about love. It's easy to talk about. Generally, it's pretty easy to think we are such loving people; of course we love faceless and nameless people – provided they remain at a distance, and particularly if they don't pose any significant inconvenience or threat to us.

Those of us who are married, however, or who have been brought up in a family or lived with a roommate or been a part of a church family for any period of time, we all know it's not always

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⁴⁵² Romans 5:8 (NIV)

easy to love someone when you have to do life up close with that other person – when you come face to face with their annoying idiosyncrasies and disappointing flaws and irritating political views and just plain weirdness. The local church – the place where we are to live life out in covenant-community with our fellow believers – is to be one of the primary classrooms where we begin to learn how to love like Jesus loves.

This love that we are called to exhibit is not just to be confined to fellow Jesus-followers within the Body. We are equally to love those in the wider world with the kind of love with which God has first loved us.⁴⁵³ Think of the verses which speak of this:

- "Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 454
- "Do everything with love." 455
- "If you love only those who love you [or are easy to love], why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them!" 456
- "What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well' but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?"⁴⁵⁷
- "This is my commandment. Love each other in the way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."458

⁴⁵⁴ 1 John 4:7, 8

⁴⁵³ 1 John 4:19

⁴⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 16:14

⁴⁵⁶ Luke 6:32

⁴⁵⁷ James 2:14-16

⁴⁵⁸ John 15:12.13

- "Don't just pretend to love one another. Really love them. ... Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other." 459
- "Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins." 460
- "If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing." 461

The memory of that conversation with Kenny always moves me deeply because it reminds me that as followers of Jesus we are called to sacrificial love, loving one another even when it is hard or inconvenient or risky. In short, we are to want to love, and work at loving, as God loves. Through both Scripture and all that God has done – His act of Creation, Jesus' Incarnation, His death and resurrection, giving the Comforter⁴⁶² – we see that God is a self-sacrificing, generative, pursuant Love⁴⁶³ and that He (Father, Son and Spirit) sends us as His people into our neighbourhoods and into all the world to model and *enflesh* that same kind of sacrificial, generative, pursuant love.⁴⁶⁴ It is this kind of love that is to at the very heart of *Mission Edge Churches*.

The CBAC and 'Mission Edge Churches'

First the "why" and "what" of *Mission Edge Churches*.

⁴⁵⁹ Romans 12:9, 10

⁴⁶⁰ 1 Peter 4:8

⁴⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 13:3

⁴⁶² John 14:26 (KJV) – also translated as Advocate, Helper, Friend,

⁴⁶³ Jeremiah 31:3: John 3:16: Romans 5:8: Romans 8:37-39: Ephesians 2:4: 1 John 4:8, 16

⁴⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 11; Psalm 82:2-4; Proverbs 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 58:6-7; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:37-40; Luke 6:35-36; Luke 6:38; John 15:12-13; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 John 3:16-18

Church delegates who attended the 2011 *Oasis* (the Annual Gathering of the churches of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*) formally accepted a plan that outlined what the CBAC might look like by the year 2025 if we would "humble ourselves and seek the Lord." Incorporated in this plan were a series of goals, one of which was that by that year "80% of CBAC churches would display a missional culture."

The term *missional* was not necessarily a familiar term for all, and so at that time some possible markers were identified to express what a church with a missional culture might look like. Such markers included:

- Churches being defined and known by the effectiveness of their ministry in their community and beyond
- Churches understanding that a significant way of addressing and meeting the spiritual needs of their members would be by mobilizing them and their spiritual gifts outward into their wider community
- Whether on their own or in partnership with other community agencies (or both),
 churches actively engaging the community through ministries addressing issues such as poverty, affordable housing, literacy, justice for oppressed people groups, addictions recovery, disaster relief, stewardship of resources, etc.

Missional terminology emerged in earnest in the last decade or two of the twentieth century. Some contend that this missional emphasis is only a fad or bandwagon that will have its day and will eventually give way to something new. Others see it as calling the church back to the fullness of its mission as the people of God for the place and time in which He has them. This latter understanding is the view of this guide and the CBAC's invitation to churches to embrace *Mission Edge*.

At the heart of the missional understanding is that God is a God of Love, and it is His intent to bring blessing and wholeness and restoration for His whole Creation. Since humanity is a part of this Creation, God wants to bring you and me and our neighbour next door and those who live on the other side of the world this same blessing, wholeness and restoration. He therefore calls, equips, and mobilizes those who are His people (that is, the Church) to join Him in living into and carrying out this mission.

A decision was subsequently made by the CBAC to tweak the language and to begin using the term of 'Mission Edge' instead of missional. Although the terms were generally understood to be interchangeable, the expression Mission Edge was felt to convey that as followers of Christ we as CBAC churches want to live as agents of God's love on the front line (or 'edge') of His mission into the world. At the time of the terminology change, the goal was also restated that "by the year 2025 a minimum of 300 of CBAC churches will identify as Mission Edge Churches." This guide is one means to help you individually and your church family understand what this may mean for you, and enable you to covenant together to be one of the 300 Mission Edge churches.

Joining God in Your Neighbourhoods

Mission Edge starts with the realization that in love God by His Spirit is always operating way out in front of us. We deceive ourselves if we think that by our best efforts we need to 'kick-start' God into action, as if He is like some old motorcycle engine reluctant to start. Rather, He's already at work and it is He who invites us into what He is doing in bringing His Kingdom presence and transformation into our communities. Our responsibility is to open up our eyes and

consider all that God is already doing in us, through us, and around us, all in light of how He wants to further use us.

Mission Edge living calls us to look Upward, Inward and Outward:

- Upward in worship
- Inward in getting to know Him through the study of His Word, prayer, meditation, and fellowship with one another; and
- Outward into our neighbourhoods and world, getting to know, love, and serve the people and world around us.

The formal definition of *Mission Edge Churches* is this: "communities of Jesus-followers who align themselves around His continuing mission of sacrificial love – starting right within their neighbourhoods, and from there radiating His love to neighbourhoods all around the world."

Although this is the definition for *Mission Edge Churches*, is this not what every church is rightly called to be? Communities of Jesus-followers, who align themselves around Jesus' ongoing mission of sacrificial love, living out this sacrificial love starting right where we're located and from there reaching out into the wider world as we have opportunity. How could any church pull back from that and still consider themselves a church?

In short, *Mission Edge Churches* meaningfully live into their calling of 'Joining Jesus in their Neighbourhoods' 465 **as His physical presence**. Do you get that? The local, neighbourhood church is to display and manifest the physical presence of Jesus. People should be able to look at the church and see Jesus every bit as much as Jesus' contemporaries in Galilee could see him in the flesh some 2000 years ago. God's purpose for the Church – and consequently for each local

⁴⁶⁵ This is the Vision Statement of the CBAC

church outpost in every place – is and has always been that we would be His people, living the Jesus-way in this world that God so deeply loves and moves into.

Let me be crystal clear. The *Mission Edge* model does not for a moment suggest that all churches become clones of one another. Just the opposite!! In so many ways each church is to be unique, just as every individual is to be unique. Your church community is unique in terms of the people who make it up, the abilities and other resources that are accessible to them, the communities in which you are located, and the needs and opportunities that exist within your particular community. That's why each church must always honestly be asking the all-important question, "Why is God calling us here for this place and this time?" and then seeking to live out the answer they receive. A note of caution, however: it can be all too easy for even the best intentioned and most devout of us to be guilty of presuming we know the answer to that question without ever really taking it before God and waiting on Him and listening to Him for His answer.

Without minimizing the uniqueness of each local congregation or community of God's people, there are certain core elements of our mission that should be common to every community of Jesus-followers, in every place through all of time, who seek to live out the Gospel. We have therefore identified six markers or characteristics that ought to naturally distinguish every *Mission Edge* Church.

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⁴⁶⁶ Central to being a *Mission Edge Church* is grappling with what the Bible means when it speaks of the Gospel (often referred to as the Good News). The Gospel is more than simply knowing that "Jesus died for our sins", though it's certainly not less than that as that is at the very core of the Gospel. The Gospel also rightly addresses concerns such as compassionate care and advocacy "for the least of these", social justice issues, creation care, and so much more, because the central message of the Gospel is that God loves His creation and He is the Initiator in seeking to heal all of creation (Romans 8:21, 22) ... including our alienated relationship with Him and with one another. At the core of the Gospel, then, is that at His own 'cost' God in love has paid the price to restore us to relationship to Him. This is powerfully demonstrated through the Cross and the Resurrection. This is the only way there ever can be true reconciliation between alienated parties. It always has to be the 'wronged' – the one who has suffered the offence – who

Before identifying these six *Mission Edge* markers, let me emphasize two quick points. The first is that these are not listed in any sense of decreasing rank of importance. Imagine a wheel that has six spokes all emanating from the hub. What if someone was to ask you to identify the most important spoke? You couldn't do it, because every spoke is integral to the structure of the wheel. It's the same way with these six *Mission Edge* markers. The first marker is admittedly intentionally placed first, not because it's more important than the others but because all the following markers should be equally evident in both modes (gathered and scattered) of the church which are identified in the first marker.

Secondly, like the spokes of a wheel, all six of these markers require and reinforce the others, not unlike the various fruit of the Spirit.⁴⁶⁷ Each of the fruit ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control," as the New International Version identifies them) essentially require and complete one another. One can't really say I have peace but not joy, or goodness but not gentleness, or faithfulness but not self-control. It is similar with the six identified *Mission Edge* markers. While it would be appropriate to consider how we might challenge ourselves or grow in effectiveness with regards to any of the particular markers, they are all interdependent and reinforce the other.

The Six Mission Edge Markers

Lives the Jesus Way (Both When Gathered and Scattered) – A *Mission Edge* church recognizes that the local church is like a beating heart, continually contracting and

ultimately pays the price to bring the 'offender' back into restored relationship. As long as I as the 'offended' believe that the offender yet owes me something to make up for the offence, I can't be in truly restored relationship. I have to release them from their debt to me, and I can only do that by 'dying' to the sense that I am entitled to further restitution.

⁴⁶⁷ Galatians 5:22.23

expanding, over and over and over again, renewing life in the process. This means the church is the church not just when it gathers together, but also as its people scatter or 'pulse' out to their normal day-to-day worlds. Coming together we *gather* around Jesus in practices of worship, learning, community, and preparation. Such gathering together around Jesus also renews, prepares and then propels us to scatter outwardly with Jesus into our daily lives: to our families, our offices, the factory floors, the classrooms, the hockey rinks and baseball diamonds and theater groups. In all these places we seek to join in what Jesus is doing as we serve as His hands and feet.

- Radiates Hospitality In a world with far too much unkindness and isolation, *Mission Edge Churches* are composed of people who extend welcome and kindness to all who cross their paths. The word 'kind' comes from the word 'kin' or 'kindred.' Kin are those people who are close to us, like family. Hospitality is about welcoming all we meet as family, as kindred. In welcoming all as kin, we are living out *kin'dness*, a fruit of the Spirit. Hospitality is viewing all of life as God's table, where we get to welcome others to come and sit and be family; to know and be known, to love and be loved.
- Fluent in the Good News People of *Mission Edge Churches* know and celebrate the Story of the Good News and understand how to comfortably and naturally speak it in ways appropriate to the various contexts they find themselves. God's grand story is one we first heard from others who passed it along to us with joy and hope, with the hopes that it might become our Story too. We are here because this Story of God entered the story of our life. Like people who can hardly wait for the opportunity to tell a piece of terrific news that we have heard, so we want to let others in on what we have experienced and found to be true. Both in our gathering and our scattering, people of *Mission Edge*

- *Churches* want to be fluent as they speak the language of God's love, telling their neighbours who Jesus is and what God is up to, even in the here and now.
- Embodies the Good News Mission Edge Churches understand that God calls us to make His love known not only through words, but also through our actions rooted in grace and truth. This means we also want to tell the story of the Good News through living lives that have been transformed by the power of this story. Both the Incarnation (God taking on human flesh in Jesus) and Scripture make clear that God's love is concrete, tangible, relevant out of the knowledge that both the physical as well as the spiritual are important to God. Giving a cup of cold water, being the first to apologize and take responsibility, feeding the hungry, providing for those in need, caring for our neighbour's children, driving a senior to a doctor's appointment ... all are ways we can make visible the reality of the Good News Story found in Jesus.
- Embrace Partnerships *Mission Edge Churches* seize on the truth that God is already at work all around us, and He is inviting us to join Him in what He is doing. People of these churches therefore embrace partnering with others who are similarly moved by God's agenda, whether that's sharing in hosting an *Alpha* gathering, providing afterschool tutoring for children, coaching a minor hockey team. 'Embracing Partnerships' can mean welcoming others to join you in what God is leading you or your church to do; or it may mean your partnering with them in what they are doing. Partnerships not only multiply impact but facilitate friendships, and these friendships can naturally become fertile grounds for sharing the Good News Story.
- <u>Contextual Responsiveness</u> People of *Mission Edge Churches* know that they are uniquely rooted in their place. There is no one who can know and love a place like those

who live in its midst. People of *Mission Edge Churches* understand that even their micro-culture around them is continually morphing, and they have a responsibility to keep abreast, studying and considering how they can most appropriately speak and live into that culture lest they needlessly become a stumbling-block hindering others in their journey to Jesus. Such churches also develop eyes to see the unique way God is at work among them. They understand how important cultural intelligence is and like spiritual detectives they look to discern God's loving purposes for their special corner of the world. Rather than operate out of hostility, fear or arrogance, *Mission Edge Churches* adopt a posture of grace, calmness and humility as they seek to join Jesus in building bridges with those in their neighbourhoods around them.

Is this everything to being a *Mission Edge Church*? Well, no and yes. No in that there would always be more to say and explain and expand and nuance. Yes, however, in that being *Mission Edge* is about a direction that you are headed, a journey that you're on.

When I first arrived in Vancouver as a seminary student, having never even visited the West Coast before and not knowing anybody, I caught the bus from the West Point Grey area and headed downtown to Granville Street and the Pacific Centre. When it was time to head home after completing my shopping, I realized that not only did I not know which bus to take, I didn't even know which direction I should be heading. I got on a waiting bus and told the driver my predicament. He asked where I was headed, told me what bus number to watch for, and then he said "Always look to see where the mountains are. The mountains are to the North (behind North Vancouver) and once you see them, you'll know which direction you should head." That

has stayed with me. Often when the next steps have seemed obscure or murky to me, I at least have wanted to make sure I had reference points in place from which I could orient my next step.

The Mission Edge model offers some helpful 'reference points' for us. One reference point is that whatever our mission will ultimately look like, it will be about loving people with a sacrificial love even when we discover their name is 'Kenny' and they prove to be hard and difficult and costly and exasperating to love. A second is that rather than imagining we're looking for God to join us in our mission, we instead are looking to join Him in what He already is doing. Some ways in which we can discern what He is doing is to consider what 'holy mischief' He seems to be stirring in us (i.e. what lights us up – what we may be passionate about), through us, and around us. Some of our mission will be done jointly with our fellow community of Jesus-followers, other parts of our mission will be those things that He calls us personally to as extensions of that local church. And the third horizon-marker really has six smaller markers within it:

As communities of Jesus-followers we want to:

- Live the Jesus Way (both when Gathered and Scattered)
- Radiate Hospitality
- Develop fluency in the Good News
- Embody the Good News
- Embrace Partnerships
- Be Culturally Responsive.

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⁴⁶⁸ 'Holy Mischief' is a phrase that Michael Beck of Fresh Expressions US is often fond of using.

For Reflection:

- Read Luke 10:25 37. Identify three insights from this passage that speak to being a
 Mission Edge Church.
- 2. An explicit definition of love has not been given in this chapter. What do you understand Jesus means when he says to "love your neighbour"?
- 3. How has spiritual maturity typically been understood in your church? What is your response to the assertion that a key part of maturing in Christ is that we learn how to love even when it is hard and costly to love.
- 4. What is your response to the understanding that the church exists as it both *gathers* and *scatters*? What does it mean to be 'the church' when you are at your office or taking care of your grandchildren or at the rink cheering on the home team?
- 5. *Mission Edge* calls us as God's people to make known His love through both our words as well as our actions. We typically are wired to want to emphasize one over the other, but we are equally called to do both. Many people find it challenging to think of how to

explain their faith to someone else even if they're interested. Imagine this scenario: You're on an airplane, and the person in the seat next to you has discovered that you identify as a believer, and has been asking you about that. Just as you are landing and you have only 2 and a half minutes before it will be time to deplane the person outright asks you this question: "So, what does it mean to be a Christian, and if I wanted to become one what would I need to do?" In a maximum of 250 words, what would you say to them? (to assist you with thinking about this, you will see a number of contributions others have given to this in *Resources* at the end of this book).

- 6. Is there any reason you can think of why your church would not want to commit itself to be a *Mission Edge Church*?
- 7. In finishing, note any insights, thoughts, observations, questions that you have found helpful, and then pray that God will give you a heart that longs for the same things that He longs for. Pray also that He will help you see that your work, your home, your volunteer activities, your places of recreation are all places where He gives you opportunity to serve Him there, and that He also will open your eyes to the ways in which He wants to use you in those various places.

Week Three

"What's in Our Hand?"

"So let's think about it. What do we have? What do we have in our hands?" Silence.

"No really, think about it. We have been given so much. What do we have?" Blank stares. A little shuffling of feet.

Finally, after an indeterminant time a hesitant voice speaks up, "Well, I have Alzheimer's."

"Yes. ... Yes Lloyd. Yes you do. Thank you. And so, for the rest of us ... what do we have?"

Again, crickets, as they say. You could have heard a pin drop.

"We have so much. Let's list the things we have in our hands."

Again, no one was speaking up so as always wanting to be supportive of Heather – the pastor of this little church, the one asking the questions, and most importantly his wife – Lloyd again spoke up, "Well, as I said, I have Alzheimer's."

Thinking that she should perhaps try to work with this, Heather⁴⁶⁹ turned to Lloyd and said "Yes Lloyd, you do have Alzheimer's. But that's not all you have. You have numerous abilities, interests. Let's think about those. What do you like to do?"

"Well, I like to sing."

⁴⁶⁹ Having entered into ministry later in life, Pastor Heather was serving her first small congregation in semi-rural Nova Scotia. I have Heather's permission to share this story with you, and although I haven't captured everything precisely, she assures me it represents the gist of what happened.

"You do like to sing, don't you? And you're a good singer." Turning to the others,
Heather continued: "So Lloyd likes to sing. What about the others of you? What do you like to
do? What skills, what interests do you have? What kind of resources have we been given that
we can put to use?"

The conversation in the room began to open up a bit as people started to chime in. They had a piano, and a piano player (likely it was Heather herself, the Pastor). They had a building people could meet in. They had hymnals. They had a furnace for heat, and electricity for putting the tea on, and chairs to sit on. As Maritimers they certainly knew how to put together sandwiches and sweets ... enough to feed a proverbial army. They had numerous relationships with people in their community, phones to use, cars to drive. Like popcorn starting to pop, people began to catch on and they kept offering their input.

Initially their thinking had been they had very little to work with, as they were just a small congregation – not more than a dozen on a 'good Sunday.' They had so many limitations. Their building was small and outdated; no doubt it would be considered quaint by some. Moreover, it wasn't *their* fault that people had generally lost interest in church, and for those relatively few who still attended, there were all kinds of larger, better resourced churches all within an easy drive that drew them away. As a small church they couldn't possibly hope to compete with those larger churches.

This exercise challenged them to see things differently. Rather than a preoccupation with all they didn't have, they began to consider all those things that God had entrusted to them. A weather-tight building. Electricity. A furnace. Chairs. A piano. A piano player.

Connections and relationships into the community. Hymnals. Individuals and families in the community coping with dementia. The knowledge of how to put on a lunch. On and on it went.

Truth is, I'm not sure how it all transpired as I wasn't there and only heard about it after the fact, but basically when they began to add all this together – the resources they had available to them, the life-experiences they brought to the table (such as living with and loving those who are elderly and experiencing the effects of dementia), and some of the needs they were able to identify within their community – the idea began to form that one thing they could perhaps do to show God's love into their community was offer a choir for those living with dementia. After settling upon this as one possible undertaking they could attempt, they began to get serious about doing it. Soon, they began a weekly afternoon choir practice/hymn sing for such individuals within their community.

Word began to spread, and numbers began to grow. Interestingly, those impacted by this ministry weren't just those who came to sing, but perhaps even more significantly included the caregivers to these family members. This time offered something of a respite for the spouses, children, and other caregivers, offering them a couple of hours once per week to drop their loved one off at a place where they would be safe and cared for, and they themselves could use that bit of time to go get a few groceries, or stop to get a coffee and relax, or simply to go home and catch a few winks without having to keep one ear open. Soon, invitations began to be received for the choir to go out and sing, maybe at a seniors' residence or a special service. It meant that not only were these individuals experiencing some socialization while they were enjoying singing (as I understand it, singing involves a part of the brain that is often spared by the ravages of the dementia) but they were also able to give back, something fundamentally important for all of us as humans.

And all of this began with Pastor Heather asking the question "What's in our hand?"

This is always a key question for any *Mission Edge Church*. For Pastor Heather the question had come from Luther Snow's book 'Asset Mapping' that she had discovered in a class she was taking at nearby Acadia Divinity College.

As I understand it, Snow's book essentially builds from God's question to Moses in Exodus chapters 3 and 4. Moses is in the process of trying to tell God that he's just not up to the task that God has for him (that of going to Pharaoh with the little message that he should give the Israelites a few days off to wander out to the wilderness to worship). When Moses tries to tell God he's far too inadequate for such an undertaking, God responds by asking him "What's that you've got in your hand?" You likely know what it was. It was a rod; a shepherd's stick or staff. We're not told whether this rod was some powerfully symbolic ceremony-stick that perhaps his father-in-law Jethro had given him, or if it was merely some broken stick he had picked up by the side of the path. Either way it makes little difference to what happens next. Regardless of the nature of this stick or rod, God instructed Moses to throw it on the ground and when he obediently complied the stick became a snake no less!! (I have to admit, I am no fan of snakes.)

Of course, in Moses' day a snake was far more than just a snake, for the deadly Egyptian cobra was a symbol of Pharaoh's power. There's therefore a lot to unpack out of the significance of Moses' rod or staff being turned into a snake, but that can be for another time. For our purposes, the significance is that when Moses obediently laid his ordinary shepherd's staff before God, God did the extraordinary with Moses' ordinary.

God still is in the business of wanting to do the extraordinary with our ordinary, no matter what that might be. It may be our limited skills, our building, our pews, our financial

resources, our relationships ... whatever ordinary things we have through which He can do the extraordinary if we will only obediently lay them down before Him.

This story of Pastor Heather and her little Mt. Denson church is one of my favorite stories that illustrates this principle: God wants to work through those ordinary things that we often feel are too mundane, too commonplace. God wants to work through you and through your church, no matter what your size, your age, your resources, your location. He wants to bless and love your community through your *Mission Edge Church*, and as you serve Him in these kinds of ways He will open up opportunities where you'll be able to share with others "the reason for the hope that you have." 470

It is right and natural that as Christians we wish to glorify God. Glorify is one of those words that we can all to easily use but find a challenge to define precisely what we mean by it. The term 'glory' can refer to the presence, the greatness, and the splendour of God. It is also a word that speaks of the reputation or character of God. Therefore, to want our lives to 'glorify God' means that we want to live our lives in a manner that reveals God's presence and helps others have a greater understanding of God's true character, of what He truly is like. As *Mission Edge Churches*, then, we are to live our lives in community in ways that as people observe and experience us, they'll have a greater or more accurate understanding of what God is like AND they'll also experience God's actual presence through our behaviour.

It therefore is important that we as churches think of how God wants to reveal Himself to our communities through us. This little church at Mt. Denson identified that a choir for people with dementia could be one of the ways through which their neighbours could experience God's actual love and care and consequently gain a clearer understanding of what He is truly like.

⁴⁷⁰ 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

The question for you and your church to explore is, how does God invite you to glorify Him? In other words, how does God want to show your neighbours His loving and compassionate care through you? (Hint ... think about where your abilities and gifts, your passions, and effectiveness for the Kingdom intersect ... this is likely where God would call you to be engaged in serving Him.)

For Reflection:

- 1. Read Exodus 4:1 4. Why do you think God asked Moses to throw his rod on the ground? What might the rod have represented to him? What strikes you as most significant in the rod becoming a snake?
- 2. Too many of us often think that because we're not the Sydney Crosby (hockey) or the Mozart (music) of anything, that means we don't have any skills, abilities, or gifts. That's not true. We all have some skills. In thinking about "what's in our hand", make a list of all the skills that you personally have. Be as extensive and creative as you can. (You can find a sample list in the 'Resources' at the end of this Guide.)
- 3. Now, think of the skills that you know other people in your church have that you don't have. Again, be as exhaustive as you can.

- 4. What resources has God given to you as a congregation? Just like the church at Mt. Denson had a building, heat, furnace, electricity, piano, piano player, hymnals, etc., what are the things that your church has? Be as exhaustive as you can in answering this question.
- 5. What might it mean for you to "throw to the ground" those things that are in your hands? What might it mean for your church?
- 6. Think about the neighbourhood/community your church is located in. What are some unique needs and opportunities that you can think of?
- 7. Can you think of one unique ministry or mission your church isn't currently doing that you think God is giving you opportunity to do?
- 8. *Mission Edge Churches* embrace partnerships. This means that at times we are able to support others in the things they are doing (this could include everything from helping out at a Food Bank to serving at a school breakfast program to coaching minor hockey to building homes with Habitat to hosting Alpha with another church).

- a. Identify all the organizations and groups that you can think of that are in their way - showing God's love or caring about the things God cares about, and note what they are doing.
- b. Can you think of things you as a church are doing, or could be doing, that groups such as these might be willing to partner with you on?
- 9. As you finish this section, note any insights, thoughts, observations, questions that you have found helpful, and then pray to God asking that He will open your eyes to see all the various resources that He has put in your hand, and that He also will show you what it means to lay those things down before Him to use. Pray also that He will help your church family likewise see the ways He wants to creatively use you within your own neighbourhood and beyond.

Week Four

"Mapping Out the Adventure!"

Ok, I admit it. I really like trips. Frankly, the longer the better.

I think it goes back to being a kid and going on vacation with my parents. We would (or better said, they would) pack up the tent trailer and we'd head off to places like Sebago Lake in Maine or Kejimkujik in Nova Scotia. I also always looked forward to those weekends when we would head out for the four-hour drive to the home of my grandparents in western New Brunswick. A highlight of the trip would be getting to Fredericton where we would stop for a treat of a bottle of Coke and a bag of barbeque chips (still a favourite!).

As an adult I've been fortunate to enjoy some great trips. One that stands out to me is the summer Wendy and I were married. We stashed all our essentials into our little non-air conditioned Chevrolet Chevette (how's that for a flash from the past?) and drove cross-continent in eight days so that I could begin seminary at Regent College in Vancouver. I loved that trip! I considered it to be Part 2 of the honeymoon, though I am not sure that's exactly how Wendy saw the marathon driving. I still can vividly recall putting up our little pup tent each night (except the night in Bismarck, North Dakota when it was about 105° F/40° C in the evening ... so we used the \$50 my folks had given to us for a rainy night and we got a wonderful air conditioned room at the Comfort Inn that seemed very luxurious at the time), rolling out the sleeping bags, cooking supper on the two-burner Coleman stove, and then the next day again seeing mile after mile of passing countryside and spectacular mountain passes.

In 1998 we took our first cross-Canada trip as a family. Our three girls were 12, 10, and 3 at the time. Molly was only turning 3 on that trip and realizing that she would have few if any

memories of it I purposed then to do one more cross-country trip with her prior to her graduating from high school.

That trip happened twelve years later, the summer Molly was turning 15. For the first leg of the journey (all the way to California) it was just Molly, me, and our dog, Kenzie. In all we had 35 days set aside (having saved a week of vacation from the previous year). Towing a travel trailer meant we weren't able to travel as quickly as I had anticipated, so it was late on many of the nights as we were pulling into a campground or a Wal-Mart parking lot.

We travelled all the way to Vancouver Island, then down through Washington to the Oregon Coast and on to the California coast. It was there in San Francisco that Wendy finally was able to join us for the rest of the trip back home.

The reason why I tell you about my enjoyment of travel is because taking a trip is something of a metaphor or picture for the journey that you as a church family are on.

There have been plenty of trips that I have planned that haven't worked out. One that my wife will often remind me of is that I had promised her that we would go to England while my brother and his wife were living there. It is now nearly 30 years since they moved back to Canada, and we still haven't made it to England.

Here are a few observations about trips that might have relevance for this journey that you and your church are on.

First, understand that planning a trip is not the same thing as actually taking the trip. As I have already said, I have planned a number of trips that we haven't been able to take. Similarly, I have seen numerous churches make plans for a trip, only to end up never actually taking the trip. On many occasions I have later consulted with these same congregations and when I talk with them about strategic or intentional planning for their future they will tell me they have

already tried, but to no avail. When I press a little deeper I discover they did do some planning at one point, but never actually followed through by putting the plan into action. Don't do that. As important as it is to plan your trip, don't stop there. Be intent for your congregation to actually follow through in "taking the trip."

Second, embrace the trip as an adventure. I find there are two kinds of travelers. The first are those who essentially moan and complain about how far it is, how it's not like home, that they're missing their bed and their television and the food back home. The second kind of travelers are those who are always eager for what yet lies ahead, the new territory they'll see, the progress that will be made. Be traveler number two. Commit yourself and keep a positive spirit. Lean into the journey; adopt a can-do spirit of adventure. No matter how tired you might feel at the end of one day, be excited about all that will happen the next.

Third, recognize that any trip requires distinguishing between things you need to take with you and things you need to leave behind. When Wendy and I moved to Vancouver to start married life, there were many items we needed to leave behind, that we just couldn't fit into our little Chevette. However, Wendy still reminds me that we took too much ... my books, a sewing machine, good china, and more ... all crammed into our little Chevette along with our tent, camp stove, cooler and more. The point remains we just can't take it all with us; not for a trip that's going to be worthwhile. Like the Israelites leaving Egypt, we need to be prepared to travel light, taking the essentials with us and leaving the non-essentials behind.

Fourth, understand that as a congregation you likely won't get to do everything you've planned to do, but also be prepared for many new opportunities that will emerge that you hadn't initially anticipated.

I know that Molly and I (and Wendy after she joined us) were able to do lots of what we anticipated doing. We saw the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa; camped at Pancake Bay Provincial Park in Ontario (we had great memories of camping there some 12 years previously); reconnected with plenty of friends along the way; saw the Rocky Mountains; visited Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks; drove along Howe Sound, visited Vancouver Island; saw the Redwoods Forest and the coastline of California; and visited Mount Rushmore.

There were also lots of things we thought we'd get to do but which ended up not working out. We really wanted to visit Alcatraz but that wasn't to be. There were other landmarks that Molly wanted to see that we missed. All my life I had wanted to drive over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and although we did get to do that, it was very anticlimactic as it was cold, rainy and foggy and I really didn't manage to see the bridge at all. (In fact, one huge surprise was that the California coastline was far cooler than I was anticipating; it was almost like being on the Bay of Fundy. Admittedly, a friend of ours did try to prepare us when she told me "remember what Mark Twain said, 'the coldest winter I ever experienced was one summer in San Francisco.'")

But there was much we were able to do that we had never anticipated. A few highlights that stand out in my memory were: Driving the 'Highway to the Sun' in Glacier National Park; discovering the rugged beauty of the Oregon Coast; visiting Hearst Castle on the coast of California; and really every view and vista we saw as we rounded a corner or crested a hill.

You see, the point is we wouldn't have been able to experience all that if we didn't do the planning for the trip, and then even more importantly actually follow through in taking the trip ... in putting our plan into action.

Fifth and finally, embarking on a new journey can be daunting. I remember the anxiety I felt in the pit of my stomach that foggy morning Molly and I drove away from Saint John, wondering whether we would really make it all the way. Were we crazy to think we could? Would calamity befall us? Would the Jeep and trailer withstand the rigors of the trip? To this day I am so glad that we didn't let the apprehension deter us, for in the process we made life long memories that we as a family continue to savor and talk about.

I hope you and your church family will similarly plunge into this exciting trip of intentionally becoming a *Mission Edge Church*. I am glad you have made the commitment to be a part of this planning process that will culminate with you and your church family spending a day together working on some of the final plans exploring what being a *Mission Edge Church* could look like for you.

During that day you will revisit many of the matters you have considered thus far, especially as they relate to the vision and the mission of your church. Together you will consider the needs and opportunities that exist everywhere around you in your neighbourhood and in your world. You will itemize the various resources and abilities that God has placed in your hand. You will identify those things you absolutely must take with you into this future journey; and those things you now will have to leave behind. Together you'll consider what Jesus would do with the same resources you have if he was in your neighbourhood in the same physical manner that he was when he was walking around Galilee with his disciples some 2000 years ago. You'll also ask yourself if (i) you are currently doing those same things, (ii) if not why not, and (iii) are you willing to do those things?

God is not done with you as a church. As long as you have life He has a plan for you and purpose for you. So plunge into all that He has ahead for you!

For Reflection:

- Read Exodus 16:1 4. If you're not certain of the context, check out the chapters that
 come before it. It is early on in the Israelite's Exodus from Egypt heading for the
 promised land.
 - a. What strikes you about this passage? How might it relate to your situation?
 - b. What has happened for the Israelites just two chapters earlier? What's the significance of that to what's happening here in the early part of Exodus 16?
 - c. In what ways are we prone to behaving like these Israelites?
- 2. What will it mean for you to lean into this journey you as a church are embarking on?
- 3. Will you covenant that you will:
 - a. Pray for the Pastor and others giving leadership through this exercise
 - b. Be supportive of the journey through your prayers, patience, positivity, participation and philanthropy (meaning financial support).
 - c. Encourage others to equally participate in a positive way.

4. In finishing, note any insights, thoughts, observations, questions that you have found helpful, and then pray asking God to give you a continued right attitude about this exercise, and that you will commit to completely doing your part to be fully supportive of it. Ask him to multiply these efforts and bring Kingdom blessing out of them, just as Jesus multiplied the few loaves and fish to feed the 5000.

In Closing: For Congregational Leaders

Making Use of *Mission Edge*, You, and Your Church

Introduction

One of my favourite quotes might not even be an actual quote. It is often ascribed to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry⁴⁷¹: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

Whether an accurate transcription of anything Saint-Exupéry actually wrote,⁴⁷² I think it's a great quote. Obviously, if one wants to build a ship it would be necessary to find workers (both men and women!), divide the work, and give the requisite directions, but if we don't first instill a "yearn(ing) for the vast and endless sea," the love, passion and commitment for the undertaking will be lost.

However true that might be for a great project such as building a ship, it is even more true for Jesus-followers as we look to carry out the love-mission that God calls us to in these days. I think that if we are honest, many of us find ourselves questioning how and where we fit into the communities that God has placed us in.

That's where this resource and strategic-planning process comes in. Not only is it meant to introduce your congregation to *Mission Edge Churches*, but it also is about cultivating a vision

⁴⁷¹ Saint-Exupéry (1900- 1944) was a French writer, poet and aviation pioneer, perhaps best known internationally for his work 'Le Petit Prince ('The Little Prince').

Are Researchers have not found a precise match for this statement in the translations of his work, although there is this passage from his 1948 book 'Citadelle' (Section LXXV): "Building a boat isn't about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It's about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love." (from www.quoteinvestigator.com)

of what God wants to graciously do through them. The Mission Edge invitation is not about trying to guilt people into endlessly doing more and more. Instead, it is intended to help them discover ways God wants to work through them in those places where He already has planted them and in ways that are in keeping with who they are.

The Hedgehog Concept

In his book *Good to Great*⁴⁷³ author Jim Collins introduces the 'Hedgehog Concept.' This understanding is based on the ancient Greek parable that although the fox knows many things, the hedgehog's advantage is that it knows one big thing. In the parable the fox uses many strategies to try and catch the hedgehog. It sneaks around, plays dead, pounces quickly. Not so for the hedgehog. Unlike the fox it is not quick, agile, or particularly sly. In fact, there's a long list of things it doesn't do especially well. There is, however, one big advantage the hedgehog has, and it is this one advantage that has enabled the hedgehog to not only survive but thrive in spite of the fox's best efforts. The hedgehog's advantage is literally its protection. Like the farlarger porcupine, the hedgehog is covered by a coat consisting of sharply-pointed quills. When feeling vulnerable or threatened, it flexes its muscles in such a manner that causes those quills to rigidly stand up erect becoming crisscrossed, interlocked, and unyielding. It then protects itself by curling its head and feet into its body in a circular shape, in essence becoming a prickly ball.

Collins' point is that like the hedgehog, healthy and effective organizations (which includes congregations) similarly know, rely on, and utilize the one big thing that is its natural advantage.

⁴⁷³ Jim Collins, Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't (USA: William Collins, 2001).

You might have at least two questions as you consider this in regards to the congregation you're a part of. The first question could be "Isn't every church supposed to have the same mission – hence, shouldn't every church have the same Hedgehog Concept?" Your second might be, "How does an organization know what it's unique Hedgehog Concept is?"

Let's address the initial question first. While it is true that every church should have the same essential mission – making God known, glorifying Him, embodying His love, growing disciples – the truth is that every church will not only verbalize that mission in a slightly different way, but will also live it out in ways unique to who they are in their particular context or setting.

Let's use the example of two restaurants to illustrate. Both restaurants share a common mission. They both seek to provide great-tasting, locally-sourced food for an appropriate cost while providing exceptional customer service.

The first restaurant is what is typically known as a fine-dining restaurant. Situated in a repurposed warehouse overlooking a harbour in a trendy part of town, attention is given to every part of the experience: the music that is played, the art that hangs on the walls, the uniquely designed china and stoneware that has been exclusively created for them. This is the kind of restaurant that prides itself on minute attention to detail, perfect execution, culinary excellence, and brilliant service.

Contrast this first restaurant with a second restaurant. Again, like the first restaurant, this restaurant shares a common mission: to provide great tasting, locally-sourced food at an appropriate price while providing exceptional customer service. The second restaurant is a family diner fronted by a large parking lot situated in a blue-collar section of an industrial city.

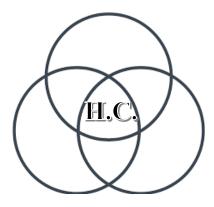
This restaurant bills itself as providing quality homestyle food, served in large portions, in a pleasant and family-friendly environment.

Both restaurants have a similar mission, but they are two very different kinds of restaurants and hence each has a very different Hedgehog Concept.

Now imagine two churches. The first is a small, elderly congregation with 18 in attendance 'on a good Sunday.' This church is located in a small Maritime town that just four months ago lost its primary employer that directly or indirectly provided 38% of the wages in the county. The second church easily has an average attendance of over 600 in two weekend services, is debt-free with a new facility that is only five years old and is located in a prosperous, growing section of a major city.

The two churches have fairly similar mission statements: one says "Love God, Love People, Make Disciples"; the other "to Reach Up, Reach Out, and Reach In." Both churches genuinely want to love God, love people, and see people come to and grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. The way in which they each live out this mission in their diverse contexts is most different, however. They would have very different Hedgehog Concepts from one another even though they share a common mission.

This leads to the second question of how can an organization know what their unique Hedgehog Concept is? The Hedgehog Concept (H.C.) is identified by answering three questions. Imagine that each circle in the following diagram (a typical Venn diagram) represents one of those three questions. You'll see that the three circles all have a common overlap or intersection with one another. Similarly, your Hedgehog Concept is found by looking at where your answers to the three questions all overlap or intersect with one another.



The three critical questions you need to ask as you prayerfully seek to identify your Hedgehog Concept are:

- 1. What is it that we do incredibly well?
- 2. What is that we are incredibly passionate about?
- 3. What is it that will truly grow God's Kingdom, including but not limited to our church? (This third question is not exactly Jim Collin's third question ... his is 'What will fuel the organization's economic or resource engine?' I think as local churches we have even a higher priority such that while we obviously need to be financially viable to survive, our understanding of flourishing is more connected to the growing of God's Kingdom.)

As you as leaders are exploring what it means for you to be the church that God calls you to be, I encourage you to wrestle with these three questions. This is why I find Collins' Hedgehog Concept so helpful for us, as these answers help identify what God is calling us to.

You see, we can be good at certain things but have no real passion for them. We might have people who are good at teaching Scripture or balancing financial books or taking care of children or visiting shut-ins, but if those same people don't have a passion or a zeal for doing those things they will only do them half-heartedly and reluctantly, if at all.

So while it's understandably important to itemize the skills and abilities which you as a congregation bring to the table (for instance, if you as a congregation don't have dentists within

your congregation, or have access to dentists who are willing to partner with you, then opening a free dental clinic might not be a viable option for you at the present time) it is equally important to consider what the people of your congregation are naturally passionate about. Admittedly, within every church there are always some necessary undertakings that simply require people to step up and do out of faithfulness, even if it's not what they are most passionate about. That being said, it is nonetheless true that if our people don't bring a passion or love to what they do, that lack of enthusiasm will inevitably show itself.

What do I mean when I speak of having passion for something? By passion I mean it is something you love to do and just can't wait to do. Imagine that right now it's Tuesday evening and you have plans for doing something on Saturday that you just love to do. If you're like me, you go to bed wishing Saturday would hurry up and get here. That's a picture of being passionate about something.

Let me give you an example. A few years ago, a Pastor-friend of mine invited me to spend a day with him on Grand Manan Island where we would go 4-wheeling together. He borrowed an extra 4-wheeler from his cousin, made stacks of lobster sandwiches and thermoses of coffee, and we spent the better part of the day exploring spectacularly beautiful parts of Grand Manan I had never seen before.

It was a phenomenal day! In fact it was so good that when I arrived home that evening I enthusiastically told my wife Wendy that it was the best day I ever had! (She asked if I was saying I thought it was a better day than our wedding day, or the days our children were born.)

The point is that for me, if today was Tuesday and someone was to invite me to go 4-wheeling with them this Saturday, I would go to bed tonight wishing tomorrow was Saturday. And I wouldn't be doing it out of some burden or obligation; it would be my privilege, my

delight. This is because when we're passionate about something, it's not a chore or duty but rather it's something we find great meaning and/or enjoyment in and we do whatever it takes to pursue that passion.

So that brings us back to the second question for you: what could you as a congregation do that everyone would enthusiastically be on board with? I know this is a tall order, and maybe engaging in ministry isn't always going to be the kind of fun that a day 4-wheeling might be, but it should lie in that direction. Passion breeds joy, dedication, enthusiasm, energy. When we're passionate about something, it's hard to hold back; no one needs to be telling us that we ought to be showing up and doing it.

My point in all this is as you explore where God might be leading you as a congregation, start with these two questions: first, "What are we good at?" (in fact, really good at) and second, "What are we passionate about?"

These two questions alone are not enough, however. It's easy for us as churches to do things we're both good at – that we have the ability to do – and that we really enjoy and are passionate about, but from which we have not for years seen one iota of new life or Kingdom fruit. Not to be unkind, but I could give plenty examples of where I've seen this. I'm sure you probably could too.

This is why it is essential that we also drill down on that third question of 'what is it that we could do that will truly grow God's Kingdom?'. What is it that we could do – that we're good at and passionate about – that will also enable us to meaningfully live out our Gospel-calling of connecting with those that we haven't been connecting with, embodying God's love to those we haven't been ministering to, edifying and encouraging our fellow believers, creating new joy or energy in our fellowship? In exploring this third question we have to ponder

considerations such as who we are, the context we find ourselves in, our locale, the micro-culture we're a part of, the resources we have to work with. Questions we therefore need to explore are: Who are the people around us that God is calling us to? What would be meaningful and relevant to them? How do we relate with them in ways that open up conversations and relationships rather than prematurely close them down?

This then is the caution for you. As you as leaders seek to plot your future direction, think deeply and talk honestly about who you are and where you are. While you certainly want to incorporate faith and stretch yourself out of your comfort zones, avoid coming up with a plan or objectives that look spectacularly good on paper but which really don't fit with your congregation or your context. You want to avoid ending up with a plan the congregation half-heartedly endorses but which they won't personally embrace and commit to. It's too easy for church members to simply affirm a plan, thinking they're not opposed to it and will go along with it as long as it's up to somebody else to carry out.

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody

This reminds me of the story about Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. It goes something like this. "There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have."⁴⁷⁴ This is what you want to avoid. Churches often fail to carry out their objectives or new directions because they fail to really tap into the

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⁴⁷⁴ Author unknown.

abilities and the passions of their people, giving them an opportunity to see how their participation and dedication can truly contribute to the growing of God's Kingdom. If we settle on a plan which we think everybody has committed to but nobody really has, then we haven't hit upon the Hedgehog factor for our church.

The Mt Denson Example

Chapter 3 of this Guidebook titled "What's in our Hand?" includes the story of a little Baptist Church located in Mt. Denson, Nova Scotia, and the neighbourhood choir they developed. Although not everyone necessarily became equally involved in the choir which they developed for their neighbours with dementia, that undertaking became a ministry focal-point for the whole church to rally around and support in whatever manner possible. This 'ministry of excellence' also created a positive 'buzz' about the church within the wider community, as neighbours began to take note of what they were doing. It was like the Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:12 "Live an exemplary life among [your neighbours] so that your action will refute their prejudices." An integral part of our calling as communities of Jesus-followers is for the faith we profess to be visible by the kind of lives we lead. We are to live distinctly winsome, othercentred lives that will contribute to a dismantling of walls that can otherwise exist between churches and the wider community in which they are located.

There is one other lesson from the Mt. Denson story that I want to emphasize. Although this choir became something of a 'signature ministry' for that church, it never became the only thing they did. They still met and worshipped regularly. They still had weekly Bible Studies.

Seniors were still visited and the sick were cared for. And it will be the same for you. Although

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 $^{^{\}rm 475}$ Adapted from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*.

through this process you may find that this will be a time to draw some of the ministries you have been doing to a close, it doesn't mean that everything will cease as you create some new *Mission Edge* directions or steps for your congregation. In most churches there will still be worship services, benevolent ministries, youth groups, care for seniors, house groups, crisis-care, those kinds of things. In fact, I hope that this strategic planning exercise may cause you to rethink the things you're doing, asking what it would take to make them even more effective and fruitful for God's Kingdom purposes. This may be a catalyst for reimagining and/or reinvesting in some of those core ministries you've been doing.

This strategic planning exercise can be, however, an important time to recalibrate, redefine and refocus your congregation's various ministries and endeavours to better align with what God is calling you to and in keeping with the identified six *Mission Edge* markers.

Remember, the goal in all this is not for your church to become something it's not, but that it will become even more of what God is calling you to be (which admittedly might look quite different from the look you currently have).

Recommended Steps for the Using this Resource

As simple as this resource is designed to be, it nonetheless will require a degree of oversight, attention and guidance from leadership within your congregation. What follows is an overview of recommended steps and considerations to assist you. It is impossible to be thoroughly exhaustive and answer every possible question or address every conceivable scenario, so you should feel free to adapt and shape all this in ways that will make it a positive and meaningful investment of your congregation's time and energy.

1. Select a Team to give oversight to the *Mission-Edge* Strategic Planning Initiative:

The first step is to select a team that is tasked with the responsibility of giving oversight to this undertaking. Being responsible to give oversight does not suggest that it is on this team to do everything themselves. Rather, their role is to ensure that tasks are appropriately delegated and there is suitable support so people can successfully engage and participate.

This team could be an existing group – so perhaps the Deacons or Elders, depending on your governance structure – but it may be more advantageous to create a new team or working-group. Whoever the team is, it is imperative that those serving on it are passionate about your church being on mission.

The team could be called 'The *Mission Edge* Vision Team' and be composed of both formal leaders of the church (i.e. deacons/elders) as well as others from the congregation who likewise are trusted, future-oriented and discerning. It also is strongly recommended that this Team include the Pastor/Lead Pastor, though the Pastor should not be the one carrying the main load.

Other qualities to look for in a team member should include the ability to "see what could yet be" and that they be spiritually insightful and mature, collaborative, harmonious, humble, and attentive to details. In the end you want your team to be as diverse as possible in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and length of time in the church.

2. Create a check-list of necessary steps.

One of the first responsibilities of your *Mission-Edge* Vision Team is that they brainstorm and create a master list of required steps that will ensure success in carrying out this

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⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Hebrews 11:1, 6 in *The Message*

exercise. The following pages are not presented as a comprehensive list, but are offered to help prime their thinking as they build the list:

\checkmark	DATE	TASK		
I. Prior to the Mission Edge Strategic Planning Exercise:				
		Ensure that this initiative has been presented to and properly approved by the Congregation (that it is duly approved according to your church's governance policy)		
		Individually read through "Mission Edge, You, and Your Church" to familiarize yourselves with both the intent of and the content of Mission Edge and this strategic planning initiative for your church. It is important that you have a good understanding of the process so you can answer any questions people may have about it		
		Develop a Prayer Engagement Strategy for your congregation for upholding this initiative. You could recruit a prayer team who commit to praying daily for this undertaking for a period of ten weeks: two weeks prior to its start; the four-week duration while you are engaged in small groups; and for four weeks after as the Vision Team prayerfully discerns all that they have heard and work on formulating a future strategic plan to be brought back to the church.		
		Identify and recruit leaders for the small groups (you can estimate the number of groups by approximating the total number you think will be involved, and divide that number by eight): Each group should have a Discussion Leader and a hospitality host (if meeting in a home different than the group leader). Each small group will also appoint a 'scribe' who will record the essence of all the conversations.		
		Provide orientation for group leaders so that they understand their primary responsibilities to: • Keep the tone of meetings friendly and safe for all • Ensure that all have good opportunity to participate, and that the opinions/views of a few don't dominate the others • Manage the time so all the questions can be explored • Ensure that a Scribe is selected who will record the essence of the conversation, feedback and ideas and that all written notes are gathered and forwarded to the Vision Team • Understand that this is a facilitator's role which they'll be undertaking; not a teaching role		
		Identify the time(s), location(s) for each of the weekly group meetings		

✓	DATE	TASK		
I. Prior to the Mission Edge Strategic Planning Exercise: (continued)				
		Champion and promote this initiative to your congregation, encouraging as many as possible to commit to taking part; your primary sign-up period will be in the three weeks prior to the start of Week One (while the ideal goal is of course 100% participation, it is important that you have at least 50% who sign up and participate for this to have value for your church) Ensure that each person participating knows which group they will be in and where and when they will be meeting Order sufficient copies of "Mission Edge, You and Your Church" from the CBAC office Select the Facilitator for the Week Four Day-Seminar this could be someone from your own congregation or an outside consultant (it is important that whoever this is has good experience as a facilitator and a good understanding of the process so as not to impose his or her own		
		Arrange for the details of the Week Four Day Seminar (promotion, registration, room set-up, refreshments, lunch, clean up, etc.) Have all involved personnel (<i>Mission Edge</i> Vision Team, Pastor, Deacons/Elders, Group Leaders, etc.) read entirely through the <i>Mission Edge</i> Guide and then have a combined meeting to answer any questions that these leaders may have (if you're not exactly sure of the proper answer to some of the questions, feel free to improvise and give what seems most reasonable as understood by the Mission Edge Vision Leadership Team)		
		 Encourage your Pastor to do a lead-up series of sermons on relevant themes some possible suggestions could include: The definition and the six markers of a Mission Edge Church God's purpose for His Church What's in Our Hands? (Moses and his Shepherd's Staff) Making Much out of Little God's Economics (the story of the Feeding of the 5000) Being Found Faithful (the Parable of the Talents) (also see 'Scriptural Rationale for Mission Edge Churches', p. 398) 		
		Other: Other:		

√	DATE	TASK
II. Dui		Weeks of Mission Edge Strategic Planning Exercise:
		Be available to trouble shoot, answer questions, problem solve,
		provide encouragement
		Fully participate
		Ensure that all written feedback is collected each week from the various groups, collate the input received, disseminate to the Vision Team members, begin to review the insights and observations of your fellow congregants Other
		Other
III. Af	ter the Four	Weeks of Mission Edge Strategic Planning Exercise:
		Ensure that all Notes and Summaries from the Week Four Day Seminar have been gathered and disseminated to all the Vision Team members.
		 Vision Team Members meet weekly for the next two weeks (longer if necessary) to prepare a Report and Plan for the Congregation. Included in this report will be: (See Sample Template in Resource Section) Based on all the conversations and insights gleaned, a SWOT assessment of your local congregation (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) [Note: this was not explicitly addressed in small groups, but it is for you as a Team to consider in light of everything you heard] A draft Vision Statement for recommendation to the congregation (see Week 1/[Question 5 at end of chapter] and Week Four/Day Seminar [Part 1/Question 2/e./ii.]) A recommendation for the church to identify as and commit to being a 'Mission Edge Church' (see Mission Edge Covenant) Identification of current ministries which are to be continued and sharpened in light of Mission Edge Markers Identification and recommendation of current ministries that should be concluded Recommendation of one - three new ministry priorities 1 - 2 new priorities if congregation's weekly attendance is less than 40 2 - 3 new priorities if congregation's weekly attendance is between 40 - 150 Maximum of 3 new priorities if the congregation's weekly attendance is greater than 150 Recommendation of 2 - 3 measurable action steps for each of the new ministry priorities

√	DATE	TASK	
III. Af	I. After the Four Weeks of Mission Edge Strategic Planning Exercise: (continued)		
		Facilitate a congregational gathering where you as the <i>Mission Edge</i> Vision Team will bring your report and recommendations for consideration by the congregation, seeking feedback and/or approval. Two matters to note: • This congregational gathering could be a Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon, or some other time that works for your people. • The spirit in which you as the Team are to bring your report is one of humility essentially conveying "this is what we believe we are hearing God saying"; "Have we heard right?"	
		Other:	
		Other:	

3. After Acceptance of Report by Congregation – the Implementation Phase

At this point in the process it is important that you realize the work of the Vision Team is not yet done, but in many ways is just beginning. So far you as a congregation have been planning your adventure. Now the adventure begins as you enter into the Implementation phase.

There may be wisdom in the *Mission Edge* Vision Team continuing their work for another 6-12 months for the purpose of providing follow-up and any required support. In this way they can serve as champions and encouragers of the priorities and objectives and can ensure that progress is being made in implementing the strategic priorities and corresponding objectives.

This may mean that they will continue to periodically meet with individuals and groups as required (Pastor, Board, other's delegated with responsibilities) to inquire of the progress being made. Their role is not to be heavy handed but to ensure the priorities and objectives are kept before the congregation and that they are being accomplished within the established timeline.

As appropriate, after a period of 6-12 months the Vision Team will dissolve and pass the responsibility of ongoing visioning and shaping the continuing journey back to the leadership Board(s) and/or committees of the congregation.

Conclusion to Chapter

We began the chapter with the reference to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's statement that in order to build a ship you need to first cultivate a love for the "vast and endless sea."

This entire initiative has really been about that ... helping your congregation cultivate a love and passion for continually becoming the church that God is calling you to be as an outpost of His blessing and hope within your community. My goal for you is that through this investment you as a congregation will discover your Hedgehog Concept (or you sweet spot, your unique gifting) of how God wants to uniquely work through you.

This resource is not offered so much as a solution to all your congregation's challenges as it is meant to stimulate an ongoing openness to the new life that God wants to stir up within you as you together discover more of your unique giftings as a church in your community and continue to live into your calling of being God's people, here and now.

This will not happen without leadership, however. That is why I am grateful for your willingness to serve in this way. Don't be fearful that you will do it wrong; with both humility and trust in one another knowing that God will guide you through it all. Allow me to conclude with these words the Paul speaks to Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love [humility], and self-discipline."

Let the adventure begin!!

RESOURCES

Strategy Day Seminar

"Putting It Together"

9:15 - 3:30

Guidelines for the day:

- 1. We will intentionally welcome the Lord to be with us in this day, and entrust that everything we say will be consistent with Colossians 4:6 ... "Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone."
- 2. While this will be a day to talk about both the strengths and the weaknesses of our own church, it is not a time for any of us to speak accusingly or ill of anybody or cause anyone to feel defensive.
- 3. Understand that this is a time to speak freely and there will be no bad ideas. Ultimately our goal today is to be listening to what God through His Spirit is saying to us as a community of faith, and one way we will hear from God is as we listen to one another. Not every thought offered is necessarily of God, but one of the signs that it might be of God is if it resonates deeply with most of us and is clearly obedient to what God calls us to through Scripture. Our congregation's Vision Team will take the results of today's discussion, prayerfully reflect upon and consider all that has been discussed, and at a later date will return with a report/proposal for the congregation's ultimate acceptance.
- 4. Please appreciate that this is not a day for making a 'shopping list' of all the things we personally might want our church to be. Rather it's a day for exploring and discerning what God's future purposes are for us so that we might continue to be effective in extending the love of His reign into our community and world.
- 5. We will need to manage our time. Although we might wish to spend more time on some of the topics/questions, our leaders may at times need to limit our discussion to keep us on track.
- 6. In the discussions we have today, somewhat controversial topics may arise that could easily divert us from the central purpose of the day. If this should happen, it may be wise that we note them and refer them to our congregation's leadership for them to follow up on at another time, as necessary.

Schedule and Outline

9:00 – 9:15 <u>Arrival</u> ... Coffee/Tea/Refreshments

9:15 – 10:30 **Prayer**

Part 1: Why Has God Called Us Here?

- 1. Read Ezekiel 37:1 14. (15 minutes total for this question)
 - a. What stands out to you from that passage?
 - b. On a scale of 1-5, to what degree might we see our church represented by the "dry bones"? Why might you choose that number?
 - c. If God wanted to put His 'breath/wind' in us in a new way, would we be open to it? Why or why not? What might that look like?
- 2. Regarding the question "Why has God called us here for this place, this time, and the future that He's calling us to?":
 - a. On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think we already know the answer to that question? (5 minutes)

- b. Describe the composition of our congregation in terms of size, ages,
 gender representation, occupations (retired, professional, blue collar, self-employed), etc. (5 minutes)
- c. Describe in a general sense our neighbourhood(s) that our congregation comes from and/or which are within our congregation's wider community.
 If there are a variety of neighbourhoods in terms of affluence, needs, etc. consider the unique needs each may have. (10 minutes)
- d. How has our society/culture changed in the past 25 years, and how might that have an impact on ministry? (5 minutes)
- e. We know there are verses such as Matthew 28:19 & 20 ("Go and make disciples"), 2 Corinthians 5:19 ("he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation"), Luke 10:27 ("Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and strength and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself") and 2 Peter 2:9 ("as a result, you can show others the goodness of God") all of which speak to the mission of all churches everywhere, but
 - i. How might our God-given mission be uniquely shaped given who we are with our composition, the community we live in, the culture we live in, and the time we live in?" (5 minutes)

- ii. A vision statement is a short statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from the ministry of your church. Ideally a Vision Statement should be:
 - Honest
 - Ten words or less
 - Essentially unforgettable
 - Intriguing (especially for those outside of Christian faith ... therefore not to be preachy or written in 'Christianese')
 - Inviting
 - Energizing

Compose a vision statement that would describe us for who we want and are committed to be? (30 minutes)

10:30 - 10:45 **Break**

10:45 – 12:00 Part 2: Learning to Love the 'Hard to Love'

- 1. Mission Edge Churches "Joining God in their Neighbourhoods" (10 minutes)
 - a. Definition Communities of Jesus-followers who align themselves around His continuing mission of sacrificial love starting right within their neighbourhoods, and from there radiating His love to neighbourhoods all around the world

b. 6 Markers –

- i. Lives the Jesus Way (both when Gathered and Scattered) this is the understanding that the church is the people, and the church is wherever its people are ... living lives patterned on Jesus both when gathered together and when scattered throughout their neighbourhoods doing everyday life. (The remaining 5 markers are all to be evidenced as the church is both gathered and scattered.)
- ii. Radiates Hospitality –Extending genuine welcome and kindness to all who cross their paths
- iii. **Fluent in the Good News** People of *Mission Edge Churches* know how to comfortably and naturally speak the Good News in ways appropriate to the various contexts they find themselves in
- iv. **Embodies the Good News** People of *Mission Edge Churches* also understand that God calls us to make His love known not only through our words, but also through our actions rooted in grace and truth.
- v. **Embraces Partnerships** *Mission Edge Churches* stay alert for others who are moved by God's purposes, and naturally form partnerships (whether formal or informal) to pursue such purposes
- vi. **Contextually Responsive** *Mission Edge Churches* are attentive to the unique context (place and time) in which they find themselves, and seek to live as bright lights of God's love in ways that can be recognized by the wider neighbourhood.

- 2. To what extent are we actually "a community of Jesus followers who want to align with his continuing mission"? Are there times when we might have a different mission than what his mission is? (10 minutes)
- 3. Read Luke 10:25-37. How many of the *Mission Edge* markers are you able to find evidenced in this passage? (10 minutes)
- 4. Identify why each of these markers are important for a church to effectively minister into its neighbourhood and beyond? (20 minutes)
 - a. Lives the Jesus way (both when Gathered and Scattered) -
 - b. Radiates Hospitality -
 - c. Fluent in the Good News -
 - d. Embodies the Good News -
 - e. Embraces Partnerships -
 - f. Contextually Responsive -
- 5. While acknowledging that these *Mission Edge* markers are truly inter-related and interdependent, which ones would you identify to be our strongest two and which do you think would be our weakest two? (10 minutes)
- 6. Dream of some new ways in which our congregation might encourage or exhibit each of these six markers, be that while gathered or scattered. (10 minutes)

7. Ask yourself this question: Does the *Mission Edge* model represent the kind of church we are seeking to be ... a church that wants to obediently live out the Good News of the Gospel in the neighbourhood and community in which God has place us? Are we willing to commit to growing in being this kind of church? Discuss. (5 minutes)

12 Noon – 1:00 <u>Lunch</u> (on site)

1:00 – 2:15 Part 3: What's in Our Hand?

- 1. Read Exodus 4:1-4. (10 minutes)
 - a. What do you think the rod or staff might have represented for Moses?
 - b. What was the significance of the rod becoming a snake?
 - c. What lesson(s) should we learn from this passage that applies to us today?
- 2. Make a list of all that God has put in our hands ... the abilities, skills, gifts that God has blessed the people of our congregation with. (10 minutes)
- 3. Make a list of all the other kinds of resources God has blessed us with as a local congregation? (5 minutes)
- 4. Needs in our community: (20 minutes total)
 - a. What are the needs that exist in our neighbourhoods? (5 minutes)

- b. What organizations/groups are addressing these needs. (5 minutes)
- c. Are there some needs that aren't already being (adequately) addressed? Circle those needs that are not being addressed, at least not fully. (5 minutes)
- d. Are there some needs that aren't being (adequately) addressed that God might be moving us to address? Which ones? How might we do begin to address them?(10 minutes)
- 5. Are there two or three priorities that we believe God might be calling us to move towards? If so, what might they be? Are there changes we would need to make? Are there some things we might need to stop doing? (25 minutes)

2:15 - 2:30 **Break**

2:30 – 3:45 Part 4: Mapping Out the Adventure

- Read Exodus 16:1 4. If you're not certain of the context, check out the chapters that come before it. (10 minutes)
 - a. What has happened for them just two chapters earlier?

- a. What strikes you about this passage? How might it relate to our situation?
- b. In what way are we prone to behaving like these Israelites
- 2. In Session 1 this morning we explored drafting a Vision Statement for our church, which we said would describe in a clear and inspirational manner the long-term desired change resulting from the ministry of our church.
 - a. Keeping those statements in mind, discuss and dream up between 3 possible new key priority areas which you believe your church would be well suited to address, and which you believe God is calling you to address (at least two of which should be directed towards those who are currently not a part of yours or any other church family). [Examples of key priority areas could be: caring for isolated seniors in our community; serving homeless youth in our area; providing practical life-skills training to people in our community; ministering to single parent families; filling gaps in food security.] (30 minutes)
- 3. Having identified up to three key priority areas, now brainstorm possible 'action steps' that would provide practical steps towards addressing the three key priority areas
 - a. there should be a minimum of three 'action steps' for each key priority area. (30 minutes)
- 4. Close the day by asking people to: (5 minutes total)

- a. Pray for the Vision Team who will take all the feedback gleaned from this day and will prayerfully prepare a final report/proposal to bring back at a later date as a plan for the church to adopt
- b. Pray that God will bless this initiative and will multiply the impact from it.

The Mission Edge Covenant

Understanding that *Mission Edge Churches* are **communities of Jesus-followers who** align themselves around His continuing mission of sacrificial love – starting right within their neighbourhoods, and from there radiating His love to neighbourhoods all around the world, and believing that this expresses God's purpose for Christ's Church as He animates and empowers it through His Holy Spirit, and affirming that at our best this is what we have always believed our church should be, we hereby affirm our commitment to live out our identity and calling as a *Mission Edge Church*.

To that end, we commit – together and individually – to fully being and becoming this kind of church. We believe the church is a people, and as Jesus-followers we are His church in our neighbourhood (along with all other Jesus-followers of other fellowships). We are church when we're gathered together, and we are also church as we pulse into our day to day world, living into our calling to be the aroma and presence of Christ in each of those places.

As we gather and as we scatter, individually and together we will look to live out the six *Mission Edge* markers of:

- Living the way of Jesus wherever we are
- Radiating Hospitality to all
- Developing Fluency in Telling the Story of the Good News
- Embodying the Good News through our actions, especially through how we care for those around us

- Valuing and Embracing Partnerships
- Being Contextually Responsive

We acknowledge we won't do any of this perfectly but the Lord being our helper and enabler this will be the direction in which we will walk.

Sample Report Template

Presented by: The Mission Edge Vision Team

Based on the feedback received from the Mission Edge Strategic Planning Process

Church:
Date:
Team Members:
A SWOT Analysis of our Current Ministry:
S – Strengths
W – Weaknesses
O – Opportunities
T-Threats
A Draft Vision Statement:
A Recommendation that We Formally Commit to being a 'Mission Edge Church' (if the commitment has not been made at a previous time ensure you register your church as a Mission Edge Church at missionedgechurches.ca.)
Current Ministries which we recommend recommitting to and sharpening: (Note ways in which they can both be sharpened through the Mission Edge Markers and/or are expressions of these Markers)
Current Ministries which we recommend no longer doing:

New Mission Edge Mission Priorities:

- 1. Mission Priority Number 1
 - a. Action Step 1
 - b. Action Step 2
 - c. Action Step 3
- 2. Mission Priority Number 2
 - a. Action Step 1
 - b. Action Step 2
 - c. Action Step 3
- 3. Mission Priority Number 3
 - a. Action Step 1
 - b. Action Step 2
 - c. Action Step 3

Scriptural Rationale for Mission Edge Churches

The <u>definition</u> of <u>Mission Edge Churches</u>: communities of Jesus-followers who align themselves around His continuing mission of sacrificial love – starting right within their neighbourhoods, and from there radiating His love to neighbourhoods all around the world

- Proverbs 9:17 ... *If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord.*
- Isaiah 1:17 ... Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.
- Micah 6:8 ... O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.
- Matthew 5:13, 14, 16 ... You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world. ... In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your Heavenly Father.
- Matthew 25:37 40 ... Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we every see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!"
- John 15: 12 13 ... Love each other the way that I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.
- Ephesians 5:1, 2 ... Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.
- Ephesians 4:1, 2 ... Therefore I beg you to live a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.
- James 2:14-17 ... What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well" but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.
- 1 John 3:16 18 ... We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion how can God's love be in that person?

6 Markers:

1. Lives the Jesus Way (Both When Gathered and Scattered)

Proverbs 3.5-6... Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Luke 9:23-24... Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

Ephesians 2:10 ... For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Colossians 3:16-17,23... Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. ... Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. ... Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 ... Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others

2. Radiates Hospitality

Leviticus 19:33 – 34 ... Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land.³⁴ Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Luke 14: 12-14... He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Acts 28:2 ... The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

Hebrews 13:2 ... Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!

1 Peter 4:9 ... Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

3. Fluency in the Good News

Matthew 4:19 ... Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

Matthew 10:7 ... Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

Mark 16:15 - 16 ... And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved."

John 4:35-36... You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

Romans 10:14 ... But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

1 Peter 3:15 ... if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way.

4. Embodies the Good News

Luke 6:35 – 36 ... "Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.

Galatians 6:2 ... Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Philippians 2:5 – 11 ... You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave.

Hebrews 13:16 ... And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

1 John 3:16-18... We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

5. Embraces Partnerships

Ecclesiastes 4:9 ... Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed

Luke 5:6 ..._And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

Luke 10:5-6... "Whenever you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.' If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you.

Acts 18:3 ... Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was.

Colossians 3:14 ... Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

6. Contextual Responsiveness

Acts 10:15 ... But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean."

1 Corinthians 9: 22-23 ... When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. ²³ I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

Hebrews 12:14 ... Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life.

1 Peter 2:12 ... Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

Revelation 7:9 ... After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.

Resources for Gospel Fluency ... Sharing our Faith

(With Reference to Chapter Two; Question 5) Integral to being a *Mission Edge Church* is a high commitment to expressing the Good News of Jesus Christ through our words. This we call being 'Fluent in the Good News' (or Gospel Fluency for short). *Mission Edge* also affirms the equally high commitment to demonstrating this same Good News through our actions, but actions are not to be thought of as substitution to the importance of our telling of the Good News. This articulation of Good News is to be present both in the Gathered and Scattered modes of the church ... meaning the creative telling of the Good News is to be a normal part of our life when we gather (so in teaching sessions, sermons, small group studies, etc.) and also when we scatter, as we're given opportunity to speak with others of the "reason for the hope that we have." 477

The fact that we are committed to telling the Good News does not mean that we necessarily find it easy to know what to say, especially as we're out in the so-called 'normal' world living our day-to-day life. To this end I have approached a number of friends and colleagues for whom I have a great deal of respect, and have asked them to share with you something of what they would say if presented with the following scenario:

You're on an airplane, and the person in the seat next to you has discovered that you identify as a follower of Jesus and has been asking you about that. Just as you are landing and you have only two and a half minutes before it will be time to deplane the person outright asks you this question: "So, what does it mean to be a Christian, and if I wanted to become one what would I need to do?" In a maximum of 250 words, what would you say to them to them?

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⁴⁷⁷ See 1 Peter 3:15,16

You'll see I have listed their responses alphabetically, and also that some included a response to a secondary request I made of them to describe what we are speaking of when we talk of 'the Gospel' (or Good News). Their titles and/or roles are listed as of 2020.

Rev. Dr. Chris Backert – Chris is National Director of *Fresh Expressions US*, he also serves with the *Baptist General Association of Virginia* in the area of growth and venture development.

What is a Christian and how do I become one?

A Christian is someone who has committed themselves to following Jesus Christ, because they believe that he was raised from the dead, and that the key to all of life is found in trusting that what he did and what he taught, above trusting in anything else (including ourselves), is the way to finding true life. A Christian believes that the quest to find true life cannot be found without Jesus because of something called "sin". Sin is a word that has fallen out of comfort in our modern vocabulary, but it is such an important word because it is one word that describes everything that is wrong in the world, including the things that are wrong in ourselves. A Christian is someone who has recognized that they are unable to be free of the sin that hurts them, and others, by their own efforts and that this lack of freedom keeps them stifled from becoming the person that God, in all God's wisdom, created for them to be. It also puts up a barrier to the presence of God being active in their life. In order to become a Christian, you make a decision to submit your will or heart to the way of Jesus and choose the way of Christ above the path you have been following. If this is genuine, you receive God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and you are enabled to receive the life of Jesus into your actual life, which can transform each day, and give you a power to life that you haven't had before.

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is that the life of Jesus Christ, because he was raised from the dead, is available to each person in whatever circumstances they find themselves, to restore what has been broken in their lives, if we will trust in the power of his resurrection.

<u>Rev. Dr. Michael Beck</u> – Michael is Director of Re-Missioning for *Fresh Expressions US* and Cultivator of Fresh Expressions for the *Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church*. An author and adjunct seminary professor, he also serves as co-pastor of *Wildwood UMC* along with his wife Jill.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

I'm not sure I've ever met a real Christian. That term comes from the idea that a human being would be identified as a "Little Christ" or someone who lives and loves like Jesus of Nazareth in such a way that their lives are intertwined and almost indistinguishable. I'm more comfortable with the language of E. Stanley Jones, "I know many Christians-in-the-making." I consider myself to be one. And what that means for me is someone who has encountered and submitted their life to Jesus Christ. This is a daily journey of denying our own selfish impulses, which are often contradictory to Jesus' way of selfless love.

Jesus came to me on the floor of a jail cell, I had essentially burned down my life and had nowhere left to go. I felt his presence and he spoke to me, not in an audible voice, but certainly a voice I could hear. My whole life as a street kid and an orphan I had accepted the title "bastard." Jesus called me his "beloved child." Every day since then I've been doing my best to live in relationship with Jesus, and listen for his voice. I just encourage you to find a safe quiet place when you have a chance, really try to tune out all the chatter of the world, and invite Jesus to talk to you and see where it goes! Depending on how that conversation works out, I would encourage you to find a church nearby, you can Google them, they are everywhere. Find one that seems interesting to you, call the pastor, ask them the same question you asked me and see what they say.

What is the gospel?

The gospel is a historical person who lived 2000 years ago named Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was God in the flesh. In his incarnate life he showed us how to be human beings. In his death on the cross he took everything that was wrong with the world into his own body and broke its power. This includes anything that was wrong in us. Through a relationship with his risen self, lived out in community with others, we can be the fullness of who God created us to be.

Mr. Shawn Branch – A licenced evangelist with the Anglican Church of Canada, Shawn currently works in Parish Development with the *Anglican Diocese of Fredericton*. In this role he helps mobilize congregations to reach out into their communities and help raise up innovative leaders for the church.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

A Christian is someone who lives their life modeled after Jesus – they strive to be people of Hope and Good News that God loves them. As followers of Jesus, we believe that living our lives the way He lived involves caring for those around us. We aren't meant to live in isolation or fending for ourselves, we are called to come alongside those around us – celebrating the good and suffering with the bad.

Our relationship with God means that we are connected to the One who created us. The Bible tells us that He breathed life into us and that He knew us even before we were born. God wants to be in relationship with us – so much so that the Father, sent His son Jesus to live among us so that we could see the life He intended for us.

We are still human and broken people. Our lives do not automatically become perfect, because we are not perfect. But through our relationship with God and each other, we learn to walk with each other. His desire is that we would have a full life.

When I became a Christian, I knew that the "thing" I was searching for was found – that hunger was satisfied. And because of this, the difficult days have been easier, the challenges can be put into perspective and I know that I'm not walking it alone.

<u>Rev. Dr. J. R. Briggs</u> – A National Trainer & Equipper for *Fresh Expressions US*, J.R. is also a Pastor, author, adjunct Professor, and Founder and President of *Kairos Partnerships*.

What is a Christian and how do I become one?

War. Racism. Pain. Death. Loneliness. Famine. Shame. Sin. Disease. We know the world is broken, not as it was intended to be – and it needs to be set right. And despite technological advances we cannot rescue ourselves from the pain and brokenness.

What humanity needed was (and is) *shalom* —wholeness, rightness, restoration back to goodness. The good news is that God, who created this world, has initiated a hope-filled, cosmic rescue plan — enacted and fulfilled in and through the life, death, and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ — in order to redeem all of creation.

Jesus ushered in a new kingdom – the rule and the reign of God – marked by grace, justice, love, and hope. We are all kings and queens of our own kingdoms/queendoms, anything by which we exert our "reign" over (our house,

our bank accounts, our cars, etc.). Jesus invites us to transfer our kingship to his kingship.

Anyone at any time who rethinks their way of life and submits to King Jesus by acknowledging God's kingdom of love - available *right now*. This impacts everything – our individual lives and the entire world. Jesus, sent by God the Father, is here to heal, redeem, reunite, rescue, and put back together what has been broken.

This invitation of grace and forgiveness is free, accessible, and available to anyone - regardless of background, age, ethnicity, gender - through the work of Christ through fully surrendering our kingdom to his, and through a hopeful, lifelong commitment to learn from Jesus how to live in the new reality of the rule and the reign of God.

Redemption. Renewal. Reunion. Restoration. Reconciliation. It really is good news.

Rev. Dr. Rhonda Britton – Rhonda is the Senior Pastor of New Horizons Baptist Church in Halifax, NS, a historic inner-city church that traces its roots back to 1832 when it was established by black refugees. Rhonda is currently Moderator of the African United Baptist Association, and will serve as President of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada for the year 2020 – 2021.

What is a Christian and how do I become one?

Being a Christian is committing to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Human beings are imperfect. We commit sin every day. Our sin causes us to be separated from God, but God wants to be in relationship with us. God promised to send a savior to reconcile our relationship. Christians believe Jesus is that savior. We believe Jesus was God incarnate—a perfect being that came in human flesh to redeem the flesh. The Bible teaches that eternal condemnation is the price for sin. Jesus died for all of humankind to pay that price. He died for you. The best news is that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and is alive today. Awesome! His resurrection is the proof of his divinity. It is the promise that his followers will have a friend and advocate through this earthly life and an eternal home with God after our earthly death. To become a Christian all you have to do is believe that Jesus died for you and accept his gift of salvation. Give him your heart and your life. Discipleship means you no longer live for yourself. You live knowing your life is intended to glorify God, your Creator. You must surrender your life to God beginning today. Pray this with me: "Holy God, I am a sinner. I need your mercy. I believe Jesus died for me. I want to follow Jesus; loving and living as Jesus taught. Save me by your grace and shape me into who I should be. Amen." You are saved! Hallelujah! Here's my card. Let's stay in touch.

<u>Rev. Dr. Rupen Das</u> – Formerly a professor of *Humber College* in Toronto and a Global Field Staff with *Canadian Baptist Ministries*, Rupen is currently the President of the *Canadian Bible* Society and also Research Professor at *Tyndale University*.

What is a Christian and how do I become one?

To be a Christian is to know that there is a God who is worthy to be worshiped and that He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. To know this God and worship Him, I have to acknowledge 1) that I have ignored Him most of my life and chosen to do my own thing, and 2) that the only way to know this God is through Jesus Christ. As I read about Jesus in the Bible, I see that He forgives people for them ignoring God or for their rebellion against Him. I see Him healing, answering prayer, and providing for the needs of people. Jesus reveals what God is like – that He is not a God who is distant and unconcerned, but a God who is deeply concerned about each of us. In fact, the Bible refers to Jesus as Immanuel – meaning God who is with us.

To become a Christian is to know this God personally, and I would need to acknowledge Jesus is God and submit to His authority and leading in my life.

What is the Gospel?

The Good News is that the Kingdom of God is now revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, who invites us to be citizens of the Kingdom. We enter the Kingdom by acknowledging either our indifference towards God or our rebellion against God, and accepting the forgiveness that Christ offers.

Rev. Dr. Charles Harvey – Charlie and his wife Fran are retired missionaries having faithfully served in Africa with Canadian Baptist Ministries (and its previous names) since the late 1950's. Through their trusting faith and genuine love for all that God brings their way, together they have impacted the lives of countless individuals both here in Canada and throughout Africa.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

As I see it the term Christian applies to someone who has asked Jesus to manage his life. Jesus is God's son and has made it possible for us to have a meaningful, life-changing relationship with our Creator. Jesus did everything necessary for us to have a dynamic relationship through his Spirit who can actually manage our lives from within our hearts. When we ask Him in prayer He is able to manage us for our good from within our thought- and decision-making system. This spirit of Jesus infuses us with qualities of love, joy, and peace in a way it is hard to imagine. To initiate this relationship, humbly invite the Spirit of Jesus to begin working in your heart.

What is the gospel?

The word basically means Good News. Good News is only good news for someone with yearning for a richer, more meaningful life. The Good News is that Jesus through His Spirit can bring transforming changes to our deepest being. Jesus loves us deeply He is willing and able to forgive us for living with our backs turned to him for years.

Ms. Katie Jewett, MA – Katie is a faith-rooted community researcher, neighbourhood builder, and parent. She is currently serving as Tidal Impact Neighbouring Coordinator with the CBAC's Youth and Family Department.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

[Katie began her answer with this explanation: Before I answer the question, I would like to reimagine it. I live most of my life locally, and rarely fly—a conscious decision I have made in order to live well with the rest of Creation, both human and otherwise. Instead, I imagine meeting a neighbour at the farmers' market, on the city bus, or on the walking trail by my house. In the 2½ minutes that my toddler is occupied, my neighbour asks me what it means to be a Christian, and how to become one. Acknowledging that God has been working in her life long before my arrival, this is my response.]

To answer, we must start with Jesus. Born to a poor young woman through an unplanned pregnancy, Jesus had brown skin and belonged to a people who were being brutally colonized. He lived a refugee and died a convicted criminal. He was fully human. He was also fully God, and through him we can know God.

God's plan was always for us to live in right relationship—with ourselves; with others, both individually and collectively; with the rest of Creation; and with God. It was this way in the beginning, and it was GOOD.

While the world God created is still good, our relationships are now also broken because of sin. The good news is that God loved the cosmos so much that God came to Earth as Jesus to make everything whole again (Jn. 3:16-17).

Through his teachings and his life, Jesus modelled right relationship as God envisioned it. He proclaimed good news to the poor, he released captives, he made the blind see, and he set free the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-19). Those on the outside, he brought to the centre, giving them honour and dignity. Those in power, he invited to join him in humility and grace. He offered all of Creation, ourselves included, a way to be reconciled. Through his death and resurrection, he made it possible for us to be fully alive. This is God's greatest desire.

Someday, we believe Jesus will return, completing God's dream of restoration complete. Until then, God's Spirit is present with us. Amazingly, God invites all of us to be part of this story by journeying together towards justice, peace and love in all our relationships.

At this point, my toddler gets tired of waiting, so we part ways with a promise to continue the conversation—and the journey—again soon.

[After I had received this wonderful contribution from Katie, I had a follow up email in which she said "Just as a PS, I meant to include a link to a song I've been listening to a lot lately. For me, this expresses very well the kind of radical hospitality that God offers us, and that we can offer to others. Enjoy!" This is the link she included ... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfKVe4-j48w ... you can probably find it by googling 'Common Hymnal Unproduced' 'Come to the Table']

<u>Rev. Greg Jones</u> – In addition to being the writer of this Guide, Greg is an Associate Executive Minister with the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*, and serves as Director for Congregational Renewal.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

A marriage ceremony I've used says this: "Your marriage joins you for life in a relationship so intimate that it will profoundly affect your whole being. It offers a love that is true and mature as you commit yourself to one another freely and without reserve, for the sake of a deeper, wider life together." That's true for marriage, and even more true for what it means to be a Christian.

Being a Christian affects our entire lives, and starts with understanding that God is not only real but that He loves us profoundly. He doesn't hide from us, but actively pursues us. We cross over to being a Christian, or a Jesus follower, when we stop running from that love and choose to embrace it instead.

This love is not just make-believe. It is concretely experienced in a number of ways, including as we live in ongoing community with other Jesus followers. This is what it means to be a part of a church.

The cross of Jesus is crucial because it is there we see the depths of God's love, and shows that it's not up to us to somehow score enough points to earn God's favour. It expresses an acceptance that knows no limits.

Experiencing God's love is transformational. It changes us from the inside out: making us more – not less – human as it compels us to live His love to others both through what we do and what we say.

A Christian is one who has said yes to God's love and who wants to love Him back, both by loving fellow Jesus followers and joining them in expressing His love to others.

What is the Gospel?

The message that Jesus died for us and is the one who changes us and everything is at the very heart of Christian faith. But the Gospel is more than that. More broadly, the Gospel is about loving God and loving others in the manner modeled by Jesus. It is living a life oriented towards being a conduit or vessel for God's blessings of life to be poured out to those around us. It is about dying to the agenda of self to instead be proactively participating in God's agenda of blessing all of creation around us.

Rev. Dr. Aaron Kenny – Aaron is the Lead Pastor at *Bridgewater Baptist Church* in Bridgewater, NS. Prior to this he and his wife Erica (who also serves as pastoral staff at Bridgewater Baptist) were with *Canadian Baptist Ministries* living in Kenya from which he managed various relief and development programs while also facilitating training amongst denominations in Africa.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

A "Christian" simply means someone who in faith follows the way of Jesus, which means we find our identity and direction in life flowing from our relationship with God through him.

God created all things to be in relationship or harmony with God, and at the heart of God's good world we were to bear God's image (or reflect God into the world).

No person can be fully human apart from God who is the author and sustainer of life. And yet, the freedom to reject our creator, to define good and evil on our own terms, and to shape our lives in opposition to the character and wisdom of God has been given to us all.

We see the consequences of that rebellion and brokenness all around us and feel it within our own lives as we experience brokenness and lack within ourselves.

The story of God reaching out to restore our true humanity and bring us back into abundant life – that is the story of Jesus. The story of Christmas and the story of Easter are really the story of God coming into the world, to identify and experience the suffering and brokenness of this world, and to bring that deep and destructive wound into God's own self, so that we can be healed and made whole.

How does that happen in your or my life?

It begins with a step of faith.

Believing that God loves you and desires for you to live in relationship with God. Jesus tells us that God is not an impersonal force or abstract idea, but that God is a person and we can speak to God as our Father, who sent His son to become a human, to die and be raised to new life, and ultimately restore us all to that fullness of life that never ends.

To trust in God's love and what God has done for us in Jesus begins with a step of faith. You can express that step in many ways, but I think it is most helpful to say a prayer, to talk to God in your own words. You might say something like:

"God I need you. I am broken and disconnected from you. Forgive my rebellious heart. Take my life, my hurt, and my pain, and transform me. Breath your spirit and life into me. Help me to follow you step by step in faith every day of my life; pick me up when I fall down, and help me to come to know and love you through your son, Jesus."

We are not meant to follow Jesus alone. Here are my contacts, I want to keep praying for you and I am here if you would like to talk so more.

<u>Rev. Renée MacVicar</u> – Renée is the Associate Pastor for Community Engagement with *Hillside Baptist Church*, Moncton. Prior to this she served as Director for the Young and Family Department of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* and Associate Pastor at what is now *RiverCross Church*, Saint John.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

Being a Christian means inviting God to lead your life and be the forgiver of everything you've done against God and other people. We know God can do this because of what Jesus has done. It means rather than saying you can figure out your life, this world and how to make everything better, you're trusting God to lead your life and use you in all the ways God's righting wrongs in our world. If you want to become a Christian you talk to God directly and tell God your heart – how you invite God to be the leader of your life and the forgiver of your sins. Tell God you want to become His child.

What is the gospel?

The Gospel is the Good News that because of what Jesus has done and who Jesus is, we can be saved from sin and a new Kingdom has been ushered in. We can become a part of that new Kingdom here and now, by changing our allegiance

from whoever or whatever we've held as Lord and leader of our life and inviting Jesus to be the Lord of our life.

<u>Father James Mallon</u> -- Father James is a best-selling author and founder of *Divine Renovation*, currently pastor of *Our Lady of Guadaloupe Parish* in Dartmouth, NS, and was just recently the Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal and Leadership Support for the *Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth*, Nova Scotia, Canada.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

To be a Christian means to be a follower of Jesus, but not as one would follow a philosopher or historical teacher. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died for us and rose from the dead. This means that he is alive and that I cannot just know about him but that I can know him personally and intimately just as I can know that I am known in the same way. Through Jesus I can know God fully and experience right now the salvation he offers. This salvation is not just about where I will go after I die, but being saved from myself, my own failures, my brokenness and experiencing God's forgiveness for the things that I have thought, said and done that are wrong. To follow Jesus means that he lives in us and calls us to manifest his presence in the world, so that our world can become a bit more heavenly. In the Bible we are even called his ambassadors. If you would like to learn more about becoming a Christian and joining the community of his followers that is called the Church I would love to help you find a church that runs a program called Alpha. It is a wonderful way to learn more about God's love and to answer many of your questions. It will also help you take the next step.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the Good News that God has not left us to our own devices but has intervened in the world so that we can be free to have a relationship with Him here and now through his Son Jesus Christ. It is the Good News that our past does not have to define us, that our weakness and failures don't define us, that we were created to be part of something greater than ourselves, that life is not meaningless and that we are known and loved. In one word, the Gospel is simply, Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Peter Reid – Since 2008 Peter has served as the Executive Minister of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*. Prior to this he pastored a number of CBAC congregations in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

To be a Christian is to be a Jesus follower. Jesus came to offer a relationship with God and a whole new way of being in the world. I would say that Jesus came to show us that God is not interested in religion but in relationship. If someone wants to know what God is like, and, if someone wants to know what a "Christ follower" looks like, one should look at the life of Jesus.

In John's Gospel (a record of the life of Jesus from the Apostle John) we read, "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) It is God's intention that we find life, (eternal life, not so much a future promise rather, a quality of life we can experience right now). This new kind of life we can experience is all about a relationship with God. Jesus talked about this when he defined "eternal life." "And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God..." (John 17:3) To "know God" experientially, is to have a relationship with God.

We simply have to admit our need of God, surrender our wills to God and make a conscious decision to become a "Jesus follower" and, he will give us the free gift of eternal life.

What is the Gospel?

The world is broken, dysfunctional and estranged from God (sinful). The plan of God was to send Jesus into the world to die on the cross to reconcile us (and all things) to right relationship with God. We gain access to this relationship by recognizing and accepting Jesus as Lord, whereby we receive eternal life. By accepting Jesus, we accept "the way" of Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Anna Robbins – Anna is the President of *Acadia Divinity College* and Dean of Theology at *Acadia University*, both of which are located in Wolfville, NS. At ADC she also is the Dr. Millard R. Cherry Professor of Theology, Ethics and Culture, and the Director of the Andrew D. MacRae Centre for Christian Faith and Culture.

What is a Christian?

I would want to tailor the following to what I know of their experience and context (which is crucial for engaging appropriate language and concepts):

A Christian is someone who takes seriously the historical reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as "God with us," and accepts his invitation to "Follow me."

Being a Christian means accepting that God desires his Creation to flourish, yet people often hurt the natural world, and one another. Christians believe that through dying on the cross and being raised to life, Jesus showed God's love to us in the midst of our brokenness, and made a way for all creation to be rightly related to God again. Jesus is working through his Spirit to make all things new; death gives way to life, enemies are friends, communities thrive, the poor know God's favour, and we can be agents of hope for the world. Being a Christian gives us a new relationship with God and fresh perspective and priorities. We are given a renewed sense of purpose and meaning.

If you want to become a Christian, start by simply talking to Jesus. Tell him you want to follow him. Confess your failures, accept his love. Ask him for the courage to live your life according to his agenda and not your own. This is not easy, but you will be encouraged as you connect with Christians in a local church, and as you read the Bible, starting with the gospel of Luke. Tell others about the great things you are learning and keep talking to God every day.

What is the Gospel?

Jesus Christ walked on this earth to show God's love and invite us to a transformed life of repentance and new priorities, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through his life, death, and resurrection, he healed our relationships with God and one another, and sends us as agents of healing and hope to the world.

<u>Rev. Dr. Terry Smith</u> – Terry has been the Executive Director of *Canadian Baptist Ministries* since 2016, and prior to that was the Director for International Partnerships for 12 years.

What is a Christian and how do I become one?

I think I would give two answers:

#1 – Do you mind if I buy you a coffee in the terminal of the airport so I can explain my own journey more fully?" And if the person said, "No, I can't because I am in a hurry", I would say something like this:

#2 - That's a good question because you said, "be a Christian" and "become one (a Christian)". Being a Christian is not unlike what we are doing right now – being a passenger on an airplane. We are passengers because we became ones when we freely chose to board this airplane, and to trust the pilot to get us to our destination.

Being a Christian is about making a choice to entrust our lives into the hands of someone else, who knows the route, has mapped it out and has the ability to be in that position. We trusted our lives to the pilot of this plane.

When I became a Christian, I recognized that I couldn't 'fly the plane', that is, lead my life myself. I couldn't reach the correct destination in spite of all my intentions and willpower which I could muster. The way was been clouded over by something the Bible calls sin.

Jesus Christ said that he came so that we could live full and meaningful lives. A sceptical person (Thomas) who was wondering about the way ahead asked "How can we know the way?" Jesus replied "No one knows the way (to the Father, ie, God) except me." And he added, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except by me."

In the most basic sense, becoming a Christian is putting our confidence in Jesus-Christ, who can lead us through our clouded path, to the Father. And being a Christian is choosing every day to live out that decision by continuously trusting him to lead our lives.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is a gift. God wants us to live full and meaningful lives. He gave his son, Jesus Christ, to pay a debt in order for us to experience that wholeness. Jesus lived and died, and was raised again, in order to lead us to the Father. The Good News, or Gospel, is just that: God gives us true life if we trust in Jesus.

<u>Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops</u> – Robin is Executive Minister/Region Missionary with the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska.

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

From the beginning of time God created us to be with him, but our sins, (selfishness) have created a separation between us and God we could never overcome. We cannot be or live good enough in our own strength to make up for our sin. He sent Jesus, his son, to the world to live, teach and ultimately die for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus being fully God and also fully human was able to break through the separation by overcoming death and rising alive victorious. When we believe that Jesus died for our sins and trust in Him alone we receive eternal life, we are passed out of death into life and are guaranteed to be in God's presence forever. Our belief is evidenced by our living as Jesus described in the New Testament, see the Sermon on the Mount. This new life in God's Kingdom as one of His followers begins

when we believe, and that belief changes how we live, love, and think. We are called to gather in community with other followers to worship, encourage one another and work together for all who God has created until His return.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is God's redemptive story of creation, a fallen world, restoration, and completion unveiled throughout the Scriptures. Jesus Christ is God's son, crucified, buried and risen from the dead, saving us from sin and death, calling us to follow Him, in the new Kingdom he has ushered in, the Holy Spirit fills us, transforms us, empowering us to live today as we look forward to the fulfillment of God's Kingdom.

<u>The Rev. Canon Lisa Vaughn</u> – Lisa is the Parish Vitality Coordinator for the (Anglican) *Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island.*

What is a Christian, and how do I become one?

For me, I consider myself an apprentice. Someone who draws close to Christ to embrace, learn, practice and share a life of extravagant Grace. This Jesus, whom we call Christ (God's anointed), brings a freedom or liberation, and a satisfaction to life like nothing else. When I gave myself fully to God I experienced a sense of what Jesus called "abundant life" that made all the difference. Not that life is perfect or without its hardships. It's just that I have an inner joy now. I know who I am as a precious, loveable Child of God. And I'm learning to love others in that radical way too, just like Jesus lived and taught. I find my heart is changing to be more like that of Christ, the more I lean into my faith and it's exciting!

If you were interested in exploring becoming a Christian, it might be helpful to find someone or a couple of active Christians to talk with about that. Maybe a regular conversation over coffee at Tim's and talk about your questions and consider the basics of this faith. Being a Christian is more than just saying 'yes' to a question. It's more of a growing into this apprentice role, individually and with others who are also apprenticing. So being a Christian or an apprentice of Christ also requires we're part of a faith community in worship, service, prayer, study, giving, etc. We can't do it alone.

Let me share this illustration about coals in a hot, burning fire. Take the coal out and set it aside and it goes cold. Put it back in the fire and it's alive again! Just like being a Christian. We need the faith community.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the ultimate loving transformation of our whole beings – heart, mind, body and soul – through the extravagant Grace of God in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

What is "in your Hand?" (see Week 3)

Examples of Personal Skills: (see Questions 1 & 2)

Arts and Crafts; Automotive maintenance/repair; Basic Carpentry; Boating/Sailing; Computers; Cooking and Baking; Dental care; First Aid Training; Financial Expertise; Fishing (Stream/River); Gardening; Grocery Shopping on a Budget; Household Budgeting; Hunting and Field Dressing; Interior Design and Decorating; Knot-tying; Legal expertise; Medical care; Painting a room (or a house or a barn); Photography; Playing an Instrument; Putting up Preserves (making jam or pickles); Quilting; Raising small animals (e.g. chickens); Sewing; Tutoring

Examples of Resources that Your Church may have: (see Question 3)

Building and its amenities (such as Chairs; Eating area; Electricity; Heat; Kitchen; Parking Lot); Financial Resources; God's presence; Musical Instruments/equipment; Relationships within your community; Skills (various - list); Vehicles; Volunteers

Other Resources

<u>Life In Christ: A New Relationship</u> (Studies for Membership Classes or Small Groups) by John W. Bartol. Published by the Atlantic Baptist Mission Board of the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*.

Ministry & LGBTQ. published by Youth and Family Department of *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*, c. 2017.

<u>Neighbourhood Assessment Workbook</u>, by Rev. Renée Embree. Published by the Youth and Family Department and the *Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada*.