



“The West Coast Christian Accord [WCCA] is a document designed to unify like-minded leaders and churches to form a coalition from which a united stand can be mounted, where we agree to support one another in love, both with words and actions. While it is not intended to be a comprehensive doctrinal statement it is intended to be a statement of faith concerning the authority of scripture on gender identity and human sexuality.”

The above statement is taken from the WCCA website. (westcoastchristianaccord.com, accessed Dec. 10, 2018)

The website also asks and answers three questions:

- 1.) What is the WCCA?
- 2.) Who is it for?
- 3.) What is the purpose?

These questions are followed by 14 - We Affirm Statements and 12 - We Deny Statements. Opportunity is also extended on the website for leaders of organizations to sign the WCCA.

A leader who signs the WCCA would be committing the organization to, “re-establish what it means to be an ‘Evangelical Christian’ in a day and age when long-held, traditional beliefs, convictions, and lifestyles are rapidly changing. 2) To establish a coalition of Pastors and leaders who stand and act together on these convictions.” (westcoastchristianaccord.com/about, accessed Dec. 10, 2018)

The question posed above, “Will the EMCC sign the WCCA?” is a question not easily answered until EMCC leadership have considered such questions as:

1. How did Jesus think about, speak about and engage with social issues and the political system of His day? What are the implications of the answer to this question for the EMCC today?
2. What are the upside and downside consequences of accords like the WCCA?
3. What do we need to remember and learn from such faith-based political movements as the Rev. Jerry Falwell led “moral majority”?
4. Is the language of the WCCA in alignment with the statements of belief of the EMCC and do they define our beliefs about the state of evangelicalism in Canada, gender identity and human sexuality?
5. If the EMCC does not sign the WCCA then how should we disciple our people to engage with social, political and other issues the WCCA raises?

Toward a decision around the question, “What view does the EMCC hold of the WCCA and how will we engage with its invitation to join the coalition?” I have heard back from the Theology Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. Graham Burkhart. As well, I had the privilege of participating in the discussion about the WCCA at the recent Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) President Days. In both instances the feedback received was as expected, caution. The questions I posed to the Theology Commission and raised at the EFC gathering proved to be helpful in reflecting carefully on both the long-term witness of evangelicals and the question of “what did Jesus do?” regarding political engagement.



The Presidents at the EFC day affirmed their desire to see EFC continue to represent evangelicals as a positive voice to governments toward solutions AND to provide good “fodder” for media regarding who we are as evangelicals. The latter statement is important as a counterbalance to the negative representation of media toward evangelicals. Further, we agreed as Presidents to help our churches to become actively and visibly engaged in community restoration, reconciliation and renewal.

In view of the input of the Theology Commission (see appendix below) and the input received from the EFC our EMCC National Board agreed with my recommendation to:

- a.) Not sign the WCCA as an organization; and
- b.) To encourage our churches not sign the WCCA.

Appendix: EMCC Theology Commission – Thinking Biblically

The question of – “Signing the West Coast Christian Accord”

October 2018

Members of Theology Commission – Dr. Graham Burkhart (Chair), Pastor Graham Gaessler,
Pastor Andrew Mills, Pastor Conrad Neudorf

1. Regarding question 1: *the implications of the answer to this question for the EMCC?*

- We do not see Jesus’ preaching addressing the social issues of his day (unless we list Pharisee-ism as a cultural ill) if we are defining social issues as we do in our day. Rather, Jesus’ preaching was more a presentation of a whole new culture (“kingdom”). Moreover, it seems to us that Jesus was not inclined to think of people as problems to be addressed but lost to be rescued.
- We understand that in proclaiming “Jesus is Lord” the early church was presenting a clear alternative to “Caesar is Lord.” In light of this, we understand that the teachings of Jesus had/have political implications but we wouldn’t want to say that Jesus’ message should be interpreted as an ‘outside → in’ approach as is typically what we see in moral crusades that confront the contemporary culture.
- Jesus’ ministry had a prophetic function. As such, a passage like Matthew 24 could be taken as a word of reprimand to a whole culture but Jesus regularly reached out to individuals, including the social misfits, to call them to himself without condoning their behaviour (lifestyle).
- We understand the EMCC as to have positioned itself as an ‘inside → out’ movement rather than an ‘outside → in’ movement. In other words, we see the transformation of society as being a work of the Holy Spirit rather than being accomplished through our public declarations regarding our position on issues. However, it is understood that we need to give guidance to our churches and people regarding the issues of our day and therefore need to consider our alignment with the WCCA.



2. Regarding question 2: *What are the upside and downside consequences of accords like this?*

- The up-side of signing a document such as the WCCA is that we position ourselves with other signatories on the matter. The down-side of signing a document such as the WCCA is that we position ourselves with other signatories on the matter. In other words, in signing this document we clearly and properly identify with other Evangelicals who believe that there are behaviours that fall short of the divine will and creative design, and therefore wrong (transgression), but in so doing we also might surrender our ability to control how we are presented on the matter.
- Some have expressed reservations regarding both the tone of the WCCA and the manner in which some of the statements could be taken. Conrad is the only one of our group who does personally know some of the pastors who were involved in the creation of the WCCA and he does not share the same reservations that have been expressed by those of us who do not know them.

3. Regarding question 3: *What do we need to remember and learn from faith-based movements like the “Moral Majority”?*

- We do not believe that our moral authority is a function of our political standing. Movements such as The Moral Majority seem to have a very political view of how authority is wielded. We understand that our authority comes from God as he has communicated himself through his Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We believe that we can wield such authority even if we are in a minority.
- It seems to be the case that movements such as the ‘Moral Majority’ have a limited and short-lived impact. However, our evaluation of that movement is not simply based on the questions of the utility of the approach. It is our concern that using an issues-based measure of alignment for the Evangelical movement could move us away from the disciple making mandate that we have embraced with The Way of Jesus approach.

4. Regarding question 4: *Is the language of the WCCA in alignment with the statements of belief of the EMCC and so they define our beliefs about the state of evangelicalism in Canada, gender identity and human sexuality?*

- The language of the WCCA has presented more of an obstacle for some of us than others.
- While we are all in agreement with the general position that the WCCA takes relative to homosexual practice and gender reassignment, some of us have some concern regarding the tone of the WCCA and how it communicates the position.
- Further to this, the question was asked by one of our members, “Do we want to have sexuality and transgender as core elements of a statement defining evangelicalism in Canada?”



5. Regarding question 5: *If the EMCC does not sign, how should we engage with the issues the WCCA raises?*

- If we don't sign on to the WCCA would it be interpreted by our church leaders that we have no position on the matter?
- If we do sign on to the WCCA would it be interpreted that we are in full agreement with everything in this document?
- Whether we sign or don't sign we believe that we would need to provide additional guidance to our churches. In other words, we don't see the WCCA as a short cut for us.