



World Partners
Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
Following Jesus Together

EMCC Theology of Integral Mission

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Why Do We Need This Document?

As followers of Jesus in Canada, many are asking questions about our place in society. As we feel the waning in the meaning and purpose of labels like “evangelical” and “church” and “Christian” in the wider society, there is a call to find and keep our lives clearly centered on Jesus. This has been expressed in the EMCC in recent years as a call to live “the Way of Jesus”, and it applies to life in each person’s neighbourhood, as well as everywhere else in the world that God invites us to participate in His life and His mission.

But “Mission” and “Missions” have a variety of uses in our Canadian churches. With Missions staff and departments, or local outreaches using the term, it is sometimes thought of as a program or an activity of the church. But indeed, theological guidance always brings us back to the character of God as a Sender, and the Church being sent by God. As Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, and Christopher Wright, among others, have helped us articulate: “*The Church doesn’t have a mission, but the Mission of God has a Church*”.¹ Mission is the first activity of the Spirit, as an overflow from Pentecost.

So, along with the global church, let us in Canada continue to be a Community of Followers of Jesus on mission together. Let’s relentlessly commit ourselves to the way Jesus invites us to live, enabling

His life, mission, character, love and teachings to be experienced in a community of disciplers committed together on the journey. (summary of the Way of Jesus markers).

Basic Affirmations

The Mission of God

We do affirm that it all starts with the mission of God (*Missio Dei*). His desire is to love and commune with human beings and to bless them by including them in the benefits of His rule, that is, His kingdom. To this end he created human beings, as he created the

¹ From *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission*, Dearborn, T, pg. 2

remainder of creation to be in harmony with him. After Adam and Eve fell from communion with him, God planned how to restore all things back to Himself. He called Abraham and his descendants, Israel, to be the community through whom all nations would be blessed.² He revealed the Old Testament Scriptures through them. He came to the world through Israel in the person of Jesus Christ, and paid for humanity's atonement, rising from death to show that this was effective.³ Jesus showed those who followed Him that God's Kingdom was eternal and He sent his followers into the world to proclaim this to all nations,⁴ and to offer, through faith in Jesus, forgiveness, the indwelling Spirit who transforms and empowers human character, and the eternal life, which begins to manifest in our lives now, and indeed is forevermore with God. The transformed character of believers in Jesus results in unity among them in the church. The church is charged with the task of pronouncing God's offer of reconciliation to the whole world. It also carries out loving action in this world as believers become agents of God's love and demonstrators of the kingdom God is bringing, in which God desires that human beings thrive in every way, spiritually, physically, socially, and mentally/emotionally. His reconciliation also extends to all that God created, which, in the beginning was all declared very good, and in the end, will be renewed forevermore.⁵

The Community of Followers of Jesus – The Church

As one body of believers, and as members of the Global Church, the EMCC must proclaim God's desire for communion with people and the way provided for that to happen through Jesus Christ. We must encourage people to be reconciled to God, and facilitate the discipling in the ways of the Lord Jesus, and their gathering of such reconciled people into church communities, who join the *Missio Dei*.

Sent into the World Together

Together with the Global community of followers of Jesus, we must work for the flourishing of all people in whatever ways God sets before us, walking side by side. We must do so, paying attention to how the contextualization of the good news of the Kingdom will enable transformation⁶ through our proper stewardship of God's blessings and resources, persevering faith lived out together with all Jesus' followers, and depending solely upon the Spirit's empowering to triumph over evil.

Key Considerations for Participation in God's Mission

As we seek to effectively co-labour with Christ and the Global Church,⁷ the EMCC is considering opportunities and challenges. As we acknowledge current realities, as well as what we affirm, we can move toward best practice.

1. The prevailing worldview in Canada insists that spirituality is about opinions, that Truth is

² Genesis 12: 1-3

³ Acts 4: 11-12

⁴ Matthew 28: 19-20

⁵ Genesis 1: 31, Revelation 21:5

⁶ 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23

⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:9

relative, and that spiritual belief systems are merely an aspect of culture or individual preference. This may affect both the confidence of followers of Jesus in, and the openness of others in our context to receiving the message of Jesus' restoration.

2. The perception that the church is beleaguered in Canada may give rise to a protectionist mindset that wants to make the preservation of our physical, social, and spiritual resources our main, if not only priority. This perception, can negatively lead the Church to see participating in God's mission alongside the Global community of follower of Jesus as a peripheral activity, or simply too "dangerous".

3. The church in Canada can hesitate to integrate our acts of love and mercy with gospel proclamation, for fear of the former being seen as a lesser act of love of Jesus in its own right. When acts of mercy are paired with proclamation, those receiving or observing these acts can have the perception that followers of Jesus are employing a 'bait and switch' approach.

4. As an individually-focused culture, Canadian followers of Jesus may be fearful that we are so flawed that if people look closely at our lives, they will be turned away from the Jesus we claim to follow.

5. As followers of Jesus in Canada, we may be more concerned about how others in our Canadian culture will view our efforts in joining God's mission in other parts of the world than about how people there, and God, view them.

6. The Canadian church has the potential to "distort" the good news by missing that every culture can follow Jesus without needing to assume particular forms. Could the Canadian church still be perpetuating a false sense of cultural superiority through judgmentalism or lack of cultural awareness and understanding?

7. As followers of Jesus, within the EMCC, do we truncate the Gospel as the Message of salvation (the redeeming work of Christ on the Cross) without the fuller expression of the Good News of the Kingdom?

Towards Best Practice

1. We are invited to more urgently, persistently, and confidently remind ourselves that the Bible's narrative of the state of affairs in the universe is True in every sense of the word. Jesus Christ is the only means of every aspect of salvation and restoration. We are invited to showcase this message, as wisely as possible, through the fullness of our lives and participation in God's Mission.

2. We are invited to listen to the Global community of followers of Jesus, who can advise us on the wisest means of proclamation and contextualization, in ways that will help people to consider the message of Jesus and His Kingdom.

3. We are invited to pray, asking God to give us the desire, boldness, wisdom, patience, and opportunities of making his Kingdom restoration known.

4. We are invited to remind ourselves that the worldview barriers in Canadian/Western cultures are not prevalent everywhere in the world. Many societies accept that the spiritual realm is central to all things. Therefore, we are invited to participate in integral development, equally valuing all aspects (physical, social, mental, emotional, spiritual).

5. We are invited to think in terms of discipling in every context, inclusive of integral development. We will walk the road together with the Indigenous-led Church, enabling God's vision for salvation through Jesus Christ, reconciliation and renewal of all things to God, and the triumphing over the works of the Devil to be guided by the Lordship of Christ, and our humble service to Jesus as we follow Him on mission together to the world.

6. We are invited to fulfill God's purpose for the church by using our resources and influence to show and share God's message of all-encompassing restoration to the world. As part of this, we must affirm and support disciple-makers to join in God's mission to the world, collaborating alongside the Global community of followers of Jesus.