

MISSIONAL EVANGELISM

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INTRODUCTION: GOD’S OWN PEOPLE

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

First Peter asserts a “strong”—and to modern ears a strange—image of the church, an understanding of the followers of Jesus Christ as a “chosen race,” a “royal priesthood,” and a “holy nation.” Not a natural or traditional grouping, this is a people formed by God’s undeserved mercy. And more, this people has an important task to fulfill: to proclaim God’s mighty acts. The community here described is not simply a voluntary gathering of like minded people who come together to develop their personal religious or moral well-being. Transformed by the receiving of God’s mercy, this people has been empowered to witness to God’s creative and redemptive activity.

Thus the church is a distinctive people: God’s own people; formed by a particular experience: the call from darkness into God’s light; with a specific purpose: to proclaim the story of God’s powerful and active presence in the midst of human history. Unique among human organizations, the church is not formed by human desires and decisions, but by God’s purposeful activity. The life and practice of the church is theological: it derives its origin, its substance, its motivation, and its direction from God.

It is within this perspective that we want to explore “missional evangelism.” Mission and evangelism are often talked and written about, as well as carried out, by different groups of people relying upon different definitions and methods. By bringing the two areas of thought and practice into relation with one another, we hope to contribute to a deeper and fuller understanding of the purpose of the church within contemporary society. We offer a working definition of missional evangelism: empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church proclaims and embodies God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ for the salvation of a broken and alienated world.

Our Context: Secularity and Spirituality

Missional evangelism calls not only for clarity about the identity and purpose of the church, but also about the social and historical context within which the church carries out its ministry. The scope of the church's concerns embraces the whole of created reality, even as it is realized in particular situations. The purpose of the church is not to accumulate power and influence, but to be God's own people, proclaiming God's mighty acts, for the sake of the world God so loved "that he gave his only son" (John 3:16).

The primary audience for our discussion is Christian churches within western cultures. These churches exist within societies which in their roots were nourished by the beliefs and practices of Christianity, but which have detached themselves from these roots. The complexity of contemporary culture cannot be fully explored here, but we lift up two relevant aspects, which at first glance appear to be contradictory: a growing secularity and an increasing emphasis on spirituality.

Secularity: Many people have turned away from the traditional teachings of the church and become secular. They believe that the challenges and opportunities of life can be understood without reference to God. Issues of religion and faith have been relegated to the margins, to the private realm where they are to be kept separate and distinct from the concerns of the public realm. For matters of public importance modern people rely upon the guidance of secular institutions: government and political parties, business leaders and economists, scientific and technological research.

Yet the promise of human knowledge and expertise which would usher in the so-called "good life"—happiness, abundance, peace, security for all—has not materialized. Instead, as evidenced by the tragic events of September 11th, we face a world of increasing fear, despair, alienation, and violence with declining and decaying religious, social, educational, and political structures. Mohandas K. Gandhi's warning against the seven social sins is still relevant: "politics without principle, wealth without work, commerce without morality, pleasure without conscience, education without character, science without humanity, and worship without sacrifice." A glance at the daily newspaper illustrates that these social sins have become the all

too common pattern, the accepted way of life within contemporary societies.

Spirituality: The increased interest in spirituality indicates that there is a widespread hunger and search for “the sacred,” for that which transcends and gives meaning to the difficult and confusing realities of everyday life. For example, according to Gallup and Jones in *The Next American Spirituality* (2000), a Gallup survey reported in *The New York Times Magazine* that 96 percent of the American population believed in God. In another recent poll two thirds of Americans stated that they had prayed in the last 24 hours. Thus even in a secular society many have a heightened interest in religious matters but not necessarily in a traditional mode.

Contemporary spirituality tends to focus upon the behavior, desires, or attitudes of the individual person for the purpose of meeting self-defined so-called “spiritual” needs within the private sphere of life. Such a spirituality does not involve commitment to a community, adherence to a particular religious tradition, or engagement in disciplined practices, but rather the permission for persons to pick and choose their own spirituality through broad experimentation with a variety of approaches (i.e., crystals, channeling, angels, 12-step groups, Bible study, or the eucharistic liturgy). We do indeed live in a new time: religion has become more pluralistic, more individualistic, and more private.

Missional Evangelism

The guiding principle of our discussion is the claim that the framework for both mission and evangelism is God’s mission (*missio dei*). Thus the mission of the church is to discern, interpret, and participate in God’s mission by being sign, foretaste, and instrument of the coming reign of God. At the core of the church’s mission is evangelism, the proclamation of the Good News of the inauguration of the reign of God in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mission and evangelism are not synonyms, but are inextricably woven together in theology and practice. The tendency of many practitioners of evangelism and mission is to focus on various methods or strategies while losing sight of both the scriptural basis and the cultural context for such ministry. The danger of

focusing on methods, from social justice advocacy to marketing techniques, is the tendency to lose the wholeness of the gospel and the implications for the life of the world. To clarify what we mean by missional evangelism, in the following discussion we intend to probe deeper in the biblical meanings of mission and evangelism while at the same time pointing to the implications for the life and practice of the church.

We invite you into a learning journey with us to consider God’s mission, the church’s mission, and our ministry of evangelism, as well as how we can discern together God’s call for our life and ministry through Bible study, reflection, and discussion. Our goal is not to present a coherent treatise with all the answers, but to stimulate conversation about the meaning of mission and evangelism within the church today. Nor do we assume that there will be complete agreement about language, biblical references, doctrine, methods, or direction. Rather than different theologies or approaches being a threat to missional evangelism of the church, they may enrich and complement one another as they stimulate deeper reflection and discussion. Believing that the greatest benefit comes when minds and hearts are joined together, you are strongly encouraged to read and study this material with other members of your congregation.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. How does this description relate to the church as you know it?
2. Drawing upon the discussion of secularity and spirituality, describe aspects of the cultural context that you think are relevant to the practice of missional evangelism.
3. What images, ideas, practices come to mind when you hear the words: (a) mission, (b) evangelism?

MISSION: PARTICIPATION IN THE MISSIO DEI

To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love. (David Bosch)

Within Roman Catholic parishes, mainline Protestant churches, and evangelical congregations, the term “mission” carries

multiple and ambiguous meanings. For example, often linked with the term “outreach,” mission has come to represent for many congregations a variety of humanitarian efforts: service projects within the community, concern for the poor and needy, efforts for economic and social development, or participation in political pressure groups. Still other congregations understand mission in terms of church planting or church development, of expanding and strengthening the Christian church, usually through numerical growth and traditionally within “foreign” countries across the seas. All too often, these approaches (whether of service or development) have led to a spirit of paternalism, and even more of a problem, of triumphalism. In the process the true meaning of the gospel and its power to bring forgiveness and new life has been seriously compromised.

In this discussion of missional evangelism, we will define the church’s mission in terms of God’s mission (*missio Dei*). Involving the whole of God’s involvement in and with the world, *missio Dei* represents God’s self-revelation as the One whose love embraces the whole of creation. It is this mission in which the church is privileged to participate. Thus it is not so much that the church undertakes mission activities or programs, but that God’s mission calls into being and sends the church into the world. As expressed by the Second Vatican Council: “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origins in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Through the narratives and testimonies of the Bible, we discover that God is actively engaged in a redemptive mission in the midst of a conflicted and rebellious world. Those who believe the gospel and thus become part of God’s people, are called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to discern and participate in this mission. As God has sent Jesus Christ and the Spirit, so the church is sent into the world to be sign, foretaste, and instrument of the coming kingdom or reign of God. As sign the church is a called community which points itself to the promised fulfillment of God’s reign. As foretaste the church is a Spirit-filled community which manifests the first-fruits of the kingdom of God within its common life and shared ministry. As instrument the church is a Christ-formed community which

actualizes the liberation and reconciliation of God's reign in the midst of the concrete circumstances of life.

Now, having said that the church's mission is to be defined in terms of God's mission, what does this really mean? How do we know what God's mission is? As Christians we declare that the character of God's mission is defined by the life, teachings, and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth, God's beloved Son. And further, a primary resource for knowing Jesus are the writings and teachings of Scripture. Thus the search for clarification of the meaning of *missio Dei* and the implications for the mission of the church leads to Bible study.

To illustrate what it might mean to interpret the mission of the church in terms of the event of Jesus Christ, we will look briefly at the Gospel of Mark. Believed by most scholars to be the first "gospel" ever written, the evangelist Mark created a new literary form: the communication of the good news of Jesus Christ in story form. The purpose of this story or narrative is not to entertain or simply to inform, but to provoke, invite, and stimulate mission. The use of narrative enables the account of Jesus—his teachings and his activities—to be dynamic rather than static, to engage the imagination of readers and to call forth an active response. In other words, the entire gospel can be seen as a "Great Commission."

The Proclamation of the Kingdom

From the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark, the "good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God" (1:1) has definite content: the coming of the rule or kingdom or reign of God. With the announcement: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news" (1:15), the stage is set. Baptized by John and anointed by the Spirit, in Jesus of Nazareth the promised and long expected salvific rule of God breaks into human history. For the evangelist Mark, it takes the entire narrative of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection to unfold the meaning, scope, and power of God's rule. As Jesus preaches, teaches, heals, feeds, comforts, and confronts, the shape and quality of life within the reign of God is made clear.

The picture of Jesus sketched by Mark's Gospel is far from reassuring, particularly for middle-class contemporary Christians. Jesus speaks and acts with an authority which

confronts everything which is not in line with God's rule. He eats with tax collectors and sinners, declaring "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (2:17). Manifesting God's forgiveness and mercy, he violates religious sensibilities by performing healing acts on the sabbath (3:1-5). He exhibits power over life and death by bringing new life to a dead child (5:21-43), as well as demonstrating command of the forces of nature (4:35-41).

Rather than being received with acclaim and gratitude, Jesus' loving acts of compassion are seen as threatening acts of confrontation. Far from recognizing Jesus as the inauguration of God's long awaited redemptive rule, the good religious people of his day begin to plot his destruction (cf. 3:6; 11:18; 14:55). Surprisingly, it is the unclean or demonic spirits who recognize his true identity: "You are the Son of God" (3:11). Even the disciples fail to understand: "Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?" (8:18).

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus' ministry is characterized by conflict, by the struggle of God's new order to displace the order of sin and death. Therefore, all those who have succeeded in the old order, who trust in religion, wealth, or power, react violently when their false sources of identity and security are threatened.

The story of Jesus in Mark's Gospel ends with betrayal (Judas), denial (Peter), harassment (chief priests and scribes), and even abandonment by God ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 15:33). It is the resurrection, God's confirmation of Jesus' identity and mission, which enables us see that the cross is not just an unfortunate incident, but the place where God establishes God's rule. The Lutheran theologian Duane Priebe offers this summary of what we learn about God's mission from Mark's gospel: "In the context of Jesus' resurrection, what Jesus does—his baptism, his authority on earth to forgive sins, his activity as a friend of sinners and the lost, and his death on the cross in order to include sinners in the festival of God's salvation—is seen as God's own activity. In Jesus God comes to identify with sinners, to forgive sins now, to give life to those who suffer under the violence of our world, to enter into death and hell to deliver those who perish under God's judgment. God takes up into God's own being our suffering, sin and death, to share with us God's life and fullness."

The Way of the Cross

God's mission, and thus the church's mission, as interpreted by the story of Jesus' mission in the Gospel of Mark involves costly discipleship, the following of the crucified Jesus: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (8:34). To be sign, foretaste, and instrument of God's reign calls the church from the comfortable ways of the world. While the church may still be concerned with community outreach, political issues, and church growth, these practices are to be shaped not by the success orientation of the world (bigger, better, more), but by the way of the cross: the path of self-sacrifice and humble service (cf. 9:35). It is this path which leads to wholeness and fulfillment, to forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life. Dying with Christ is the only way to rising and living with Christ.

It is also true that the way of the cross is as challenging today as it was in Jesus' day. Both those within the church, and those to whom we seek to proclaim the Gospel, are all too much like the rich man, who after hearing the conditions for eternal life "was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions" (10:17-22).

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Read Mark 2:1-17. What do we learn about the reign of God from this passage?
2. Read Mark 10:32-45. What does this text tell us about what it means to follow Jesus?
3. Describe central aspects of the church's mission as participation in God's mission (*missio dei*).

EVANGELISM: THE CHURCH AS MESSENGER AND MESSAGE

The great need in evangelism is not for some new program, nor for a fresh wave of activism, but for a renewal of theological vision and a reworking of our basic conceptuality. (William J. Abraham)

As with mission, the term "evangelism" carries multiple and ambiguous meanings. The religious landscape is becoming populated with departments, programs, and even ministers of

evangelism. Popular “how to” books are filling the religious bookstores, even one entitled: “Entertainment Evangelism.” Some approaches focus on the message, some on the intended results, some on the recipients of the message, and some on the methods used to transmit the message. Traditionally, evangelism has had to do with the “saying” of the gospel, the proclamation of the salvation to be found through faith in Jesus Christ. But evangelism as practiced today covers a wide variety of activities in the church: from winning the souls of individuals to social and political activism, from Bible study programs for “disciplining” to the recruiting of new members through marketing techniques aimed at “church growth.”

When we turn to the Bible, the concept of evangelism derived from the gospels is related to the term “to proclaim good tidings” (*euangelizesthai*) from the Old Testament. Not only used in general reference when good tidings from God occur, it also has close connection to the announcement of God’s salvific activity (see Isaiah 52.7).

In the post-Easter context the terms related to evangelism are oriented toward the proclamation of that which God has done through Jesus Christ. This proclamation does not expressly include the requirement of conversion or positive response. The disciples of Jesus are called to the extravagant task of spreading the message of God’s love. Rather than protecting this message from the evils of the world, they are instructed to give the gospel away to all who would listen. The good news is offered without conditions, scattered as seed upon a rocky soil. While the church’s proclamation of the gospel is a crucial part of the process, we must remember that it is the seed, not the soil, that produces abundant new life. And when the seed is God’s word, it can produce abundant fruit not only in good soil, but among the rocks as well. Thus the basic definition of the Christian use of the term evangelism is simply “to proclaim the message of salvation.”

The Incarnational Nature of Evangelism

Within our discussion of missional evangelism, we understand evangelism in an incarnational manner. That is, the church is not only called to proclaim, but to embody the gospel. As a people of salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14) the church “proclaims good

tidings” not only in word but in deed. As they rejoice in the blessings of the gospel, it will be the quality of relationships, the dynamics of mutual love, the concern for the stranger and outcast, that serve as the evangelizing community’s trademark and credentials: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 14:35). God’s love and forgiveness are mediated through the words and actions of those who are called and sent into the world as Jesus and the Spirit are sent. Rather than a planned program, missional evangelism will become natural and spontaneous. A people transformed by the gospel simply will not be able to keep the good news to themselves. With the Holy Spirit as the active evangelist (cf. Acts 1:8), the proclamation of the gospel will overflow into the world from a people rejoicing in the new life of God’s reign.

The faithful and effective proclamation of the evangel requires not only the verbal transmission of the message but also the embodiment of the good news of God’s message of salvation in Christian discipleship practiced by communities of faith.

In each of the gospels, commission texts are included to describe Jesus’ sending the disciples into the world. In the gospel of John no specific tasks of evangelism are indicated. The most helpful clue is the statement “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). This assertion, though more ambiguous than other commission directives, points toward the Incarnation as a guide to living as embodiments of God’s message of salvation through Jesus Christ in the world.

With God’s sending of Jesus, the identity of the church emerges as one that embodies Jesus’ instruction of being sent to the world. Although Jesus’ commission in the gospel of John seems ambiguous with regard to any content, Jesus’ sending actually represents the proclamation of the evangel. Jesus proclaims the evangel in his teaching as well as his life, death, and resurrection thereby maintaining the organic character of the evangel’s proclamation. The message and the messenger become intimately bound together. Jesus sends the disciples, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to love and serve the world in the light of his life, death, and resurrection.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is also descriptive of evangelism in the context of John’s gospel, similar to the

mission of God and the sending of Jesus Christ. The mission of the Holy Spirit relates to Jesus, to the disciples, and to the world. The mission of the Holy Spirit to Jesus is to glorify, reveal, bring remembrance, witness, and to bring life. The mission of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world is to convince, admonish, illuminate and judge. The power and guidance of the Holy Spirit is behind and ahead of the disciples' mission in the world.

The Sending of the Church

The church is sent to the world to share God's message of salvation by attempting to live in a manner resembling the self-giving love that characterized Jesus' ministry, thereby bringing Jesus to the world. In John 15.12-13 Jesus tells the disciples, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." The disciples are called to love as Jesus has loved, a completely self-sacrificing love not accomplished by human strength, but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The incarnational character of the proclamation of the evangel by the church as sent messenger to the world presents serious implications for Christian discipleship in communities of faith. By maintaining the organic relationship of content and method in the embodiment and sharing of the evangel, words and actions are woven together in the practices of Christian communities. This holistic practice then reclaims the depth of discipleship that includes orthopraxis (right living) as well as orthodoxy (right doctrine). Through the embodiment of the evangel in practices of Christian discipleship in communities of faith, as well as the invitational sharing of the message of salvation, the church fulfills its mission as sent messenger and message to the world.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What images come to mind when you hear the word "gospel"? As you share with others in the group, notice the similarities and/or differences in your images.

2. What is meant by the “incarnational” nature of evangelism?
3. Study each of the commission texts: Matthew 28.16-20, Mark 16.14-20, Luke 24.44-49, John 20.19-23. Identify a key image or concept from each.
4. How does envisioning the church as messenger and message inform your understanding of missional evangelism?

COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT: READING AND INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE TOGETHER

The Bible is the source of our knowledge of God, of our vision of God’s purpose, of our encounter with the Messiah, of our call to vocation as God’s people, of our hope for creation’s healing. (Paul Hanson)

Our entire discussion of missional evangelism assumes that the Christian community has a divine calling or vocation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church is shaped into a particular—even peculiar—people whose calling is to discern and participate in God’s redemptive mission in the world. As this community incarnates or embodies the gospel, its very way of life becomes a witness to the world. The church is sent into the world to live as sign, foretaste, and instrument of the reign of God. Leading lives “worthy of the calling” (Eph. 4:1), such a community will be characterized by humility and gentleness, patience and love, “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

The foundational resource for shaping such a people is Scripture—the witness to God’s mighty deeds. As interpreted within the life and worship of the contemporary church, the Bible has authority and relevance. It is as Christian communities read, listen, reflect, and learn together, that they will experience the inspirational and imaginative force of the narratives and teachings of the Bible: their power to in-form, re-form and transform the human imagination. Thus as the church seeks to discern God’s mission and the implications for their missional evangelism, the substantive study of Scripture must be at the

heart of the process. More than having periodic Bible study groups, communal discernment means that congregations will be intentional about (1) forming a context of mutuality, (2) engaging in faithful conversation, and (3) affirming the unity of the Holy Spirit.

A Context of Mutuality

Communal discernment requires a context of mutuality in which people are participating in and being formed by a togetherness of faith, hope, and love. As they practice “bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2), members of the church will learn how to be open and honest with each other; sharing and dealing with the issues that touch and shape people’s lives most deeply. As faithful members of the body of Christ, mutuality involves being “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).

At present, many churches lack both the expectation and the experience of such a mutuality. Coping with the many demands of family and work, gathering for only an hour on Sunday morning, and involving diverse groupings, most churches do not stimulate the sense of a shared venture or adventure. Yet, without a substantial experience of mutuality, communal discernment is simply impossible. The challenges and opportunities of missional evangelism call the church to set aside the time and the space to slow down and develop the skills of listening to and learning from one another.

Faithful Conversation

Communal discernment requires that people not only spend time together but talk with one another about things that matter. More than the surface sharing of opinions, or even energetic debate, faithful conversation is a multi-layered dialogue. As such it involves *self-respect*: a knowledge of and respect for one’s own beliefs or position, and *self-exposure*: an acknowledgment of and openness to the other as other, as distinct and different. And perhaps most important, a *willingness* to get so caught up in the to-and-fro of the dialogue that participants may be profoundly changed in the midst of the process.

Churches that are encouraging faithful conversation discover that it involves affirming rather than denying the

significant differences which exist within the congregation. After all, if everyone thought alike, there would be no need for dialogue. Faithful conversation thus assumes not only the true and honest sharing of thoughts and insights but also the authentic interest in the thoughts and insights of others. It thus calls for a level of vulnerability and engagement that is open to and even eager for new learnings. In the process of comforting and building up one another (cf. 1 Thess. 5:11), the practice of faithful conversation will enable Christians to “admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them” (1 Thess. 5:14).

The Unity of the Holy Spirit

In order for dissimilar persons to engage one another with self-respect, self-exposure, and openness to change, there must be a deeper unity that serves to encourage dialogue within the community. Scripture itself offers insight into how such unity comes about. The miracle of Pentecost illustrates the nature of Christian community and Christian communication. The diverse concepts, images, and commitments of various groups—as expressed in their languages—became the vehicle for communal understanding: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” (Acts 2:7-8).

The events of Acts 2 describe how the coming of the Spirit enabled peoples long separated by language and culture suddenly to hear and understand the message of God’s mighty works. They did not all become alike (they continued to speak different languages), yet by receiving the Holy Spirit they were freed from the bondage of isolation that had made them fearful and suspicious of one another. Within the community created by Pentecost the barriers of language were overcome by the experience of new unity and mutual understanding in Christ.

Thus faithful conversation does not depend upon all members of the congregation speaking the same language (whether ethnic, professional, cultural, or theological), but upon their openness to the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit active and present in their midst. As expressed by one congregation engaged in communal discernment: “The Holy Spirit renews people and creates a new and diverse community. The Spirit of

the Lord liberates human beings from all the fears and forces that destroy life in community as God intended. In the Spirit of Christ we are transformed. We are new.”

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How do people within your congregation understand the authority of the Bible?
2. How does communal discernment shape the practice of missional evangelism?
3. Read Acts 2. What do we learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in communal discernment from this text?
4. How might your congregation encourage faithful conversation within a context of mutuality?

CONCLUSION: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

The nature and mission of the church are grounded in the nature and missionary activity of the triune God. The mission of the church is to participate in the reconciling love of the triune God who reaches out to a fallen world in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit brings strangers and enemies into God's new and abiding community. (Daniel L. Migliore)

Our intent in writing this essay has been to stimulate a discussion within the church about the intimate relationship between mission and evangelism, and to ground this discussion in the biblical witness to God's mission. As God's own people, the church is charged with the responsibility of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Further, the church's proclamation is shaped by the communal interpretation of the biblical narratives and teachings through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We have related mission and evangelism by offering a working definition of "missional evangelism": empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church proclaims and embodies God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ for the salvation of a broken and alienated world. This definition was explored through a discussion of mission as participation in *missio Dei* as interpreted by the story of Jesus' mission in the Gospel of Mark. Evangelism was considered by focusing upon the church as messenger and message as interpreted through the incarnational

emphasis of the Gospel of John. We then briefly considered the importance of discernment—reading, studying, and interpreting the Bible—within the communal life of the church.

We hope that our discussion has contributed to the exploration of mission and evangelism within your congregation. We also hope that your journey will continue as you consider the implications of missional evangelism for the life and ministry of your church within its particular context and with its particular gifts.

Pulling Your Learnings Together

(As you consider the following questions, it will be helpful to refer to your responses to the questions following each section.)

1. How has your understanding of mission been informed by linking it with evangelism?
2. How has your understanding of evangelism been informed by linking it with mission?
3. What does the discussion of God's mission (*missio Dei*) contribute to the practice of missional evangelism?
4. What does the discussion of the church as messenger and message contribute to the practice of missional evangelism?
5. What would need to change in order for your congregation more fully to practice missional evangelism?

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