

TRINITARIAN MISSIOLOGY: A VIEW FROM WCC'S "TOGETHER TOWARDS LIFE"

Dr. Girma Bekele

Around The Canadian Churches Forum table Canadian Churches gather to reflect on and animate events and trends in global and Canadian Christianity. In 2015 CCF will engage conversations around this important affirmation from the World Council of Churches. CCF's new administrator, also a missiologist, reflects on some of the significance of this document.

The governing theme of "Together Towards Life", the new affirmation of the WCC on Mission and Evangelism, is: "How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?"¹ It is perhaps the most important WCC statement on evangelism since the 1982 Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation." It is driven by a global desire "to seek vision, concepts and directions for a renewed understanding and practice of mission and evangelism in changing landscapes."²

Missio Dei – (The Mission of God)

The document begins a call for re-discovering the Trinitarian origin of mission and expands on the role of the Holy Spirit. It affirms that mission originates with God as creator. In the Genesis creation account, God is revealed as Creator, architect and Lord of history. The intrinsic value of the humanity indeed is rooted in being created in the image of God. The goodness of creation intrinsically oriented toward serving the needs of all people. The missional quest for global social justice, care for the environment and the safeguarding and final restoration of creation are mandates



fundamentally rooted in the creation motif – that the Triune God is "the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life."³

The coming of Jesus in history was an eternal expression of God's eternal faithfulness in keeping promises to redeem humanity and restore creation. In the self-unveiling movement of God in human history, Jesus Christ, conceived and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is the ultimate and final revelation. He came that we may have life and, and have it to the full (Jn. 10:10). The Holy Spirit who has been at work from all eternity, in creation and through the history of salvation, is now continuing the same mission of restoration.

What are the major implications of Trinitarian approach to mission?

First, mission originates with God. Therefore the church gets its true and authentic meaning, and indeed its very existence, from the triune personhood of God. Who this God is - that is to say God's identity and self-disclosure in human history - dictates the missionary identity of the church. The Triune God sends the church to the world.

Second, at the heart of the Missio Dei is Christ. Mission is not, therefore, a sudden and arbitrary action of God. In the trajectory

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¹ WCC, "Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscape" (Central Committee 28 August–5 September 2012 Kolympari, Crete, Greece), paragraph 10.

² *Ibid*, page 1.

³ *Ibid*, paragraph 2.



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of the history of Missio Dei, Christ is the focal point – the sum and the end of all previous progressive revelations of God. Jesus gives identity, meaning and purpose to the Church, for in him the reign of God has drawn near to humankind.

Third, Missio Dei is Pneumatological. Just as through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the in-breaking God's reign in our world is announced, the coming of the Holy Spirit also attests to an eschatological invasion of the Reign of God in the here and now. These two events—the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit—are experienced as the first fruits of the harvest (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) and as the pledge or guarantee of what is to come (Eph. 1:14).⁴ Now the Spirit is at work continuing Christ's redemptive work, restoring not only humanity but the entire creation, for "both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit's grace."⁵

There are four interconnected missiological motifs within the work of the Holy Spirit as this work expresses and continues the mission of the Triune God:

The Life-giving Spirit of Mission.

The same Spirit is at work: in creation and its continued renewal, in the creation of the nation of Israel as the vehicle of God's redemptive work; in the voices of the prophets; birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the same Spirit that gave birth to the Church—empowering and directing (gifts and discernments) its call to mediate God's love to the world until the end of time. The Spirit continually transforms the church for "authentic Christian witness is not only in what we do in mission but how we live out our mission."⁶

Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins. The goal of Missio Dei is the redemption of creation and justice in its entirety, as God reigns over all dimensions of human existence, because through the coming of Jesus "God's reign is interpreted as the expression of God's caring authority over the whole of life."⁷ Justice for those who are consistently pushed to the margins is at the heart of God's compassionate heart. As such, "mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine mission as a vocation from God's Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all."⁸

Spirit of Community: Church on the Move. The very existence and life of the church flows from within the love of the Triune God. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). A church can be truly missional only to the extent that it is being continually transformed from within by this love. This has a huge implication for Christian mission. It is an intentional living of the community of Christ as the embodiment of the new social order – the new government, which is inaugurated by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the head of his Church which is commissioned to the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The global missional paradigm, as we move forward in this time of dramatic change, calls for an increased unity. Mission is no longer from the "West to the rest, but from everywhere to everyone". This means contemporary global missionary paradigms need to function as expressions of an international hermeneutical community – a diverse community with diverse contexts united in common listening. The Holy Spirit invites the global church to unity, and to mediate God's redemptive love to the world: crossing all frontiers.

⁴David Bosch, "Evangelism and Social Transformation," in Tom Sine (ed.), *The Church in Response to Human Need*, (Monrovia: MARC, 1983), 278.

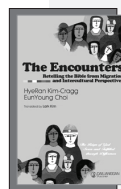
⁵"Together", paragraph 20.

⁶"Together", paragraph 29.

⁷David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, 1991), 35.

⁸"Together", paragraph 37.

Recommended Resources



The Encounters: Retelling the Bible from Migration and Intercultural Perspectives

HyeRan Kim-Cragg and EunYoung Choi.

Invites readers to encounter biblical figures whose lives were marked by migration and crossing boundaries, illustrating God's desire for compassionate intercultural faith journeys.



Critical Inquires: A Reader in Studies of Canada

Lynn Caldwell, Carrienne Leung, and Darryl Leroux

Critical framing of Canada as an ongoing colonial project illustrating how policy programs are all shaped within this colonial matrix which celebrates whiteness and subjugates racialized others to the dominant group's economic, cultural and societal norms.



Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes

This new affirmation of the 2013 World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan Korea illustrates profound changes in Global Christianity as the faith recognizes and responds to God's call in a changed global context.

Available at: www.ccforum.ca/news/mission-and-evangelism



Evangelii Gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)

This apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis is written around the theme of Christian joy in order that the Church may rediscover the original source of evangelization in the contemporary world.

Available at: www.ccforum.ca/news/mission-and-evangelism



M ARION CURRENT

The Canadian Churches Forum is grateful to Marion Current who supported our ministry through her estate planning with Link Charity. Ms. Current, who passed away in 2013, was appointed by the United Church of Canada as a missionary to Korea where she served for 37 years. Throughout her life she shared her gifts of love and caring for the powerless and for peace, justice and harmony in the world.

Changes at the Canadian Churches Forum

A 'courtship' with the Canadian Council of Churches

In 1963 the Canadian School of Missions and Ecumenical Institute became "an independent program agency of the Canadian Council of Churches" (CCC). This organization would later change its name to "The Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries" (CCFGM). In 2014 CCFGM and CCC began a "courtship" as they contemplate strengthening their relationship to respond to the changed global and Canadian contexts. One option being considered is to form a new CCC "Commission on Mission, Evangelism, and Culture". This commission would continue the work of the Canadian Churches Forum, bring to the table a wider representation of Canadian Christianity, and parallel conversations at the level of the World Council of Churches and other global institutions.

Staff Changes

After 9 years as Co-Director and 5 previous years as a resource person for the Canadian Churches Forum, Alice Schuda is moving on. Alice's work guiding the Forum through many changes and her gifts as a skilled designer of program and facilitator were honoured at a gathering of friends and colleagues. In 2014 Alexandra Jimenez left her role as administrative staff after 8 years for full time work with Romero House. She continues to serve the Forum as our accountant. The Forum

welcomed a new administrator, Dr. Girma Bekele who brings a wealth of administrative experience from work in organizations in Ethiopia, England, and Canada. He also holds a PhD in Missiology from Wycliffe and provides pastoral support to Ethiopian Churches in North America. Rev. Jonathan Schmidt continues his work as Director.



Board member news

A talented and committed group of people serve on the Forum's Board of management. Congratulations to several for recent accomplishments; Aruna Alexander was presented an Ontario Newcomer Champion Award, Bob Faris published his book, 'Liberating Mission in Mozambique', and Sonia Hinds began serving as a Parish Priest in Saint Lucia (in the Caribbean Windward islands)

2014 FORUM PROGRAMS



Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry

The Canadian Churches Forum has fully moved into its new mandate to be a centre for intercultural leadership development and ministry learning. At the core of this work has been the development of the 6 day program "Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry" (DUIM).

Successfully run in Toronto several times, in the spring of 2014 the DUIM program was offered at the Centre for Christian Studies in Winnipeg. In 2015, in addition to Toronto offerings, the program will be hosted by the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Manitoba. Local host teams are being developed in other Canadian locations.

We need your help in promoting this well designed resource for the Canadian Churches. Consider participating in the course, and let others know about this opportunity to nurture cultural relevance, understanding, and awareness in your context.

Learning for International Faith Engagement (LIFE) Seminar

This program is for leaders and hosts of international faith trips. LIFE is grounded in the breadth of knowledge and experience from decades of global partnerships, mission exposure visits and mission trips. It engages participants as primary sources of content, drawing from their diverse backgrounds and experiences.

In 2014 Life Seminars were offered in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia and Ottawa, Ontario. Locations for 2015 offerings will include Saskatchewan and Ontario.

For more information about Forum programs follow us on Facebook or visit www.ccforum.ca

Mission Personnel Programs

The Canadian Churches Forum continues its historic work supporting overseas personnel of our member and other denominations.

The **Mission Discernment Event** helps participants discern their interest in and suitability for placement with global partners and programs such as the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. Persons preparing for overseas placements participate in the **Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry program**. The program provides skills for living and working in cross-cultural settings with a focus on their overseas context. The **Re-Entry program** provides a critical space for returning ministry personnel to contemplate how they integrate their international experiences into their lives in Canada and the US.

Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry

6-day interactive program with practical skills for intercultural ministry in your own context

Register now for 2015 programs

For more details and to register, visit: www.ccforum.ca

Fun, challenging, and useful for any ministry setting!

Join an exciting learning community with trained facilitators, an intercultural mentor, and diverse resource guests offering:

- A faith based approach to theories of culture and healthy relationships across difference.
- Understanding one's own culture and how it shapes ministry with others.
- Examples of how diversity shapes ministry.
- Activities to apply learning to your context.

"It was one of the best learning events I have attended, in that it allowed me enough time to consider how I might apply learnings to my context."

- participant,
Winter 2014 DUIM





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The Canadian Churches Forum's Facebook page is a growing wealth of resources for intercultural ministry including recommended readings, videos, pictures, reflections and events.

If you are not a Facebook user, you can look at our page like any website. If you are on Facebook you can support us by "liking" us and sharing our posts with others.

Why Support The Canadian Churches' Forum?

Our work weaves together a history of almost 100 years of ecumenical intercultural ministry and global engagement.



The current landscape for ecumenical collaboration is filled with opportunities and challenges. Now more than ever, the Forum needs strong support from individuals who value the work we do and the richness of ecumenical partnerships for mission and ministry. You can help by telling others about our work and programs. Please also see the enclosed appeal and support our work with your contribution.

Founded in 1921, The Canadian Churches Forum has been working ecumenically for almost 100 years to respond to the changing context of Mission and Ministry. The Forum is a strong ecumenical presence among its partner denominations and in the wider community engaged in theological reflection on global, cultural, and faith issues. It is a resource to hundreds of individuals and congregations engaged in the important task of being faithful people in God's church in the world.

Who We Are

We are an ecumenical agency that works in partnership to foster intercultural leadership, learning and ministry. Our members are the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, Scarborough Missions, and the United Church of Canada. In addition, we work collaboratively with dozens of other faith-based agencies in Canada and internationally.

What We Do

We offer programs for people involved in intercultural mission and ministry, provide forums for dialogue, publish a number of resources, and encourage cross cultural and international dialogue. Our programs include:

Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry

Mission Discernment

Re-entry for International Personnel

Orientation to Canada

Learning for International Faith Engagement (LIFE) Seminars

Workshop Facilitation including Inter-Cultural Development and Anti-Racism Training

Publications

Sojourning:

A Leaders Guide for Short Term Mission Travel

On Your Way:

A Guide to Your Overseas Intercultural Experience

Coming Home:

A Re-entry Workbook for Returned Missionaries and Volunteers

Here Among Us

A Guide to Intercultural Experience for Visitors to Canada

Forum Focus Annual Newsletter



FORUM FOCUS

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Canadian Churches' Forum 2014

Revenue	Actual 2013	Estimated 2014
Partner Churches	72,800	58,500
Donations/Bequests	6,173	12,000
Program Fees	29,591	33,475
Investment	73,565	20,000
Publication Sales	2,228	4,495
Total Revenue	\$ 184,357	128,470
Expenses	Actual 2013	Estimated 2014
Staff	131,117	122,334
Programs	18,892	23,265
Publications	3,786	4,576
Rent & Insurance	12,748	11,703
Administrative & Office	16,804	19,327
Total Expenses	\$ 183,347	181,205

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Canadian Churches' Forum