



Community of Christ
Western U.S.A. Mission Field

**Foundational Principles of Mission
Working Draft**

The following foundational principles are a working draft and are intended to shape how we approach ministry and leadership in the Western Field. These principles are drawn from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and experience with missional discovery and engagement in a variety of contexts.

Principle 1: Mission begins with encounter.

God's nature is missional or *outward moving*. Our response begins and is formed by God's enduring love for us revealed in the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and *continuing presence* of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

We encounter God's love and emerging vision through missional practices (i.e. the diversity of practices and ways persons experience God), our relationships in sacred community, ministry with others, and in situations and places that don't yet reflect Christ's vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on earth.

Principle 2: Mission is disruptive.

Following God's movement in the world is often disruptive to our personal and organizational agendas. Even with our best efforts we can't fully anticipate God's emerging future nor can we plan it into being.

Becoming missional is about an *awareness and openness* to follow the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit that call us to take the next faithful step and begin to see with new eyes the potential for wholeness in people, situations, and relationships.

Principle 3: Mission is relational.

Authentic and Christ-like relationships provide the foundation for journeying together in discernment and mission. Without a community of trust and safety individuals will not feel free to imagine and risk something new for their own lives, their relationships with others, their congregation, and their local neighborhoods.

Our willingness to go deeper in our relationships with others leads to fuller expression of the *nature and mission* of God and opens up opportunities to give and receive Christ's invitation, hospitality and healing.

Principle 4: Mission is risking something new.

God is constantly creating in Christ through the promised Holy Spirit. We are called to actively participate in the new creation by discerning and co-creating God's unfolding vision for our future. This vision will challenge attitudes, trends, and actions that are in direct conflict with Christ's vision of the peaceable kingdom.

We are called to risk living into this future together- a future that is increasingly real to us. In this way we create pathways into the future for others to follow.

Principle 5: Mission is contextual.

Congregations and other expressions of the church have the capacity and imagination to engage meaningfully in their local contexts when hope is present. The message and mission of Jesus Christ (i.e. the Word become flesh) must be creatively lived out in each unique context for the gospel to come to life. Each generation is called to live and express essential truths in their own language and form (see D&C 162:2e).

There is *no one legitimate form* for congregational life or small groups. Form should follow missional imagination, function, and align with the core dimensions of Christian community throughout the ages (i.e. disciple formation, community formation and care, and sharing in Christ's mission of invitation, hospitality, and healing).

We are a global faith community and are connected to local missional expressions occurring in many parts of the world. We engage in mission locally and participate globally by *increasing our capacity* to share generously with others.

Principle 6: Mission is most fully expressed in Jesus' proclamation in Luke 4:18,19.

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. □ He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, □ 19 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.

Mission in Community of Christ is understood through the lens of Luke 4:18, 19 and defined by five bold mission initiatives - Invite People to Christ, Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, Pursue Peace on Earth, Develop Disciples to Serve, and Experience Congregations in Mission.

Relationships are the *entry point* through which we discover our mutual need for new life and healing in loving community. The initiatives will look different throughout the church in

response to unique gifts, contexts, and needs. These initiatives when lived out in their totality bring the full reconciling and restoring power of Christ's ministry to all dimensions of life.

Principle 7: Mission evolves from giftedness and calling.

Becoming missional is not about discerning a grand vision and then finding people skilled to realize the vision. Mission emerges from the collective and unique giftedness of a specific congregation or small group.

Becoming missional occurs when God's people imagine how their unique gifts can be utilized for the sake of others in their local contexts. This most often does not occur at one time but emerges as individuals begin to imagine how they can live out the gospel in tangible ways.

Principle 8: Mission is a long journey in the same direction.

Lasting change only occurs when people can find language to *describe and critique* their current reality and then begin to *discover and embrace* an alternative future. It takes time for culture (i.e. collective perspective and norms) to begin to shift and a new way of being to emerge.

Becoming incarnational is about living into the strange and new behaviors of the peaceable kingdom of God in community. Leaders of mission lead by cultivating an environment of hope, discernment, discovery, and innovation – not by providing the answers. The questions that call us into new conversations and ways of living are as important as the insights that emerge over time.

The Christian community has been striving to live into the strange and new behaviors of the peaceable kingdom for centuries. Culture change takes time and requires patience and persistence.