

PART II: MISSION AND PROCLAMATION

“ . . . he has anointed me to bring good news . . . ”

The Trinitarian Mission of Salvation

24. Together we believe that God has a mission (*missio Dei*). This mission emanates from the heart of God, and the Trinity is a paradigm for a holistic understanding of this mission. This holistic mission includes: a) care for creation, as represented by the Father’s command in Genesis 1:28, b) love for others, as represented by the Son’s command in John 13:34–35, and c) the proclamation of the Gospel, as represented by the outpouring of the Spirit upon the apostles in Acts 1–2. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is called to a transforming and missionary discipleship. The ministry of Jesus on earth is the model for the church as it fulfills the divine mission. Just as Jesus was anointed to proclaim the Good News (Lk. 4:18) on earth, the church has the same mission. It is a proclamation to be carried out through word and deed.
25. As Christians we respond in multiple ways to God’s life-giving mission on earth. Equipped by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to build a community of hope wherever the Gospel is shared and lived across the globe. Whether presented by direct evangelism or demonstrated in acts of love, the message of the Gospel is always the same. This proclamation is at the very center of what the church is called to do: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18–19). Our proclamation is therefore Christ-centered and scripturally based. After all, it is Christ who commissions us to proclaim the Gospel and Scripture gives us the content of our proclamation of that Gospel. In proclaiming this message, we always hope that the conversion of human subjects will take place, resulting in their transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment. The church’s goal is the salvation of the world to the glory of the triune God.

Proclamation in Word

26. The words of the prophet Isaiah, read and claimed by Jesus for his own ministry (Lk. 4:18), provide a template for the Christian

ministry: we have been called and empowered to bring that Good News to others. This mandate comes through both the words of Jesus (Mt. 28:19–20) and the teaching of the apostles (2 Tim. 2:1–2).

27. The Good News is the Word of God, the incarnate Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the Scripture. Christ himself is the message that God has provided the way of salvation, that sin can be forgiven, and that Jesus is the one through whom salvation is given and received: the power of God unto salvation given without cost to all who receive it (Rom. 1:16). It is God's desire that everyone should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The Good News frees us from captivity to sin, death, the devil, and the powers and principalities, and so opens up a new and abundant life for us. God's saving and transforming acts also reach beyond humankind and include all creation (Gen. 2:7; Jn. 3:8, 20:22; Rom. 8:18–22).
28. Proclamation takes place in various ways. Creation declares the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). A primary way we proclaim the Good News is through our lives and actions. We are also encouraged to speak to others of this message (Rom. 10:13–15). Proclamation takes place from the pulpit, in evangelistic meetings, through personal testimony, in Bible studies, in small groups, in songs and music, and in all kinds of personal encounters. All who are part of the church have the joy, the right, and the obligation to share with others the Good News of Jesus Christ. In short, we have been called to be Christ's witnesses before the world (Acts 1:8). Some followers of Jesus have been specially gifted and called to proclaim the Good News (Eph. 4:11), but all who are followers of Jesus Christ have the privilege of sharing the Good News by bearing witness to their encounter with him and its effects upon their lives. The encounter with God transforms our lives, moving us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13–14) and giving us an abundance of life (Jn. 10:10).
29. Whenever we celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper, we live as a community that is called into fellowship with our Lord and Savior. In baptism we die and rise with Christ (Rom. 6:3–11) and in the Lord's Supper, eating the bread and drinking the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (1 Cor. 11:26). Any action or deed that is freely offered to others in the light of God's love and in the power of His Spirit may communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ (Mt. 25:34–36). Thus, the message of the Gospel is proclaimed first through the Word of God in Scripture, then in the words of those who follow Jesus and the goodly lives that they live

(Mt. 5:13–15), and in the various actions or deeds they perform as they seek the welfare of all human beings and the earth.

Proclamation in Deed

30. We affirm that the biblical mandate of proclamation must be translated into real-time engagement in acts of love and works of mercy within the community, so that the message we proclaim would remain credible and relevant.
31. One way proclamation in action is accomplished is through our lives offered up to God, reflecting the ongoing transformation that takes place in the minds, hearts, and lives of all who place their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1–2). What we do is as important as what we say. The proclamation of the Gospel, therefore, requires living our lives consistently with the Good News we have received.
32. Furthermore, in our deeds, the interrelation between God's commandments to care for the world, love our neighbor, and proclaim the Gospel must constantly be kept in mind. Our mission practice must be carried out in solidarity with people who suffer and also address the root causes of injustice and oppression. In this way we are not only hearers of the Word but also doers (Jas. 1:22). Together we affirm that people living in poverty and on the margins across the globe are not only recipients but also agents of mission, whose voices and lives need to be respected and heard in our respective churches.
33. Works of mercy begin with respect for human dignity, based not on generic philosophical tenets but as a call from God: "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed" (Prov. 19:17). As we listen faithfully to Scripture, so also we listen attentively to the cries and struggles of the people around us, all of them created in the image of God. Participation in God's mission calls every community to look beyond its own comfort zones and walls in order to embrace fully its missional commitment in the world. Connecting with the struggles of the community is a vital part of understanding the relevance of the Gospel of Christ and our mandate to proclaim it. For this reason we agree that faith ought to be reflected in actions of mercy practiced within the community and beyond, as in the example of Tabitha in Acts 9:36.
34. Hence, there is always an opportunity waiting for those who want to follow Jesus' example and offer their service in love through actions of mercy. Further, it ought to be noted that the

cross presupposes the fact that the peace that the world receives from Christ cannot be fully enjoyed if some people are still left unhealed and suffering. The pain of the world should therefore connect Christians with all of God's creation. In this way Christian proclamation in word and Christian mercy in deed go hand in hand.

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Case Studies in Proclamation

The Lutheran commitment to proclaiming the Word of God in the vernacular is beautifully exemplified by nineteenth-century evangelist-translators Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno of Ethiopia. Both were captured and enslaved in their youth; later, when they were freed, they became Christians and worked with Swedish missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea. While Onesimos had a burning passion to share the Gospel with his compatriots, he had been kidnapped from his homeland at such an early age that his Oromo vocabulary was rather poor. Aster, by contrast, not only had a larger vocabulary but a phenomenal memory, compiling a grammar and a fifteen-thousand word dictionary of Oromo, as well as five hundred songs, tales, riddles, and proverbs from the Oromo. Together, Onesimos and Aster translated the entire Bible into Oromo for the first time, which was published in 1899. They dedicated the rest of their lives to preaching missions and setting up schools for literacy, giving Oromos their written language and the Good News together.

Proclaiming the Good News and teaching the Word of God go together in Pentecostal settings, as an example from Papua New Guinea shows. Especially in the remote areas, evangelism began with telling Gospel stories presenting the message of salvation. Missionaries started schools to teach the Papuans to read and write. Pentecostals were also involved in the translation of the Bible into the many indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea. In 1967, the Assemblies of God established the International Correspondence Institute (now Global University) that within two years rose to an enrollment of 30,000. The program began with an evangelistically-oriented course called *The Great Questions of Life*, which was followed by a catechetical course called *Highlights in the Life of Christ* and *Your Helpful Friend* about the Holy Spirit. *The Christian Life Series* is a discipleship course, and later a leadership program was initiated called *The Christian Service Series*. The basic courses have been administered free of charge. Today Global University continues to offer evangelistic and discipleship courses, and

at the same time it has expanded into college-level and post-graduate education for ministers.

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Common Concerns and Challenges

35. Building on our shared agreement on the Trinitarian mission of God and the nature of proclamation in word and deed, we take up now specific areas of concern or challenge.
36. *Ethics.* The most significant area of concern we share is the ethics of mission. Both of our teams have observed dishonest and dishonorable forms of mission, strategies of “by whatever means necessary” that disregard both the high standard of holiness demanded of apostolic witnesses and the full humanity of all people. We are dismayed when missionaries carry out their programs in total ignorance of the local culture or history. We are frustrated and ashamed when Christians attempt to “evangelize” members of other churches as if those other churches simply did not exist. We agree on the importance of recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of mission, both in the church’s proclaiming and in the hearers’ response to what is proclaimed. This theological insight should make us humble as to our calling, our missional activities, and how we engage others. Proselytism disrespects the potential recipient as a person and violates other Christian communities that seek to proclaim the Good News as well.⁶
37. *Unity of the church.* We are mindful of the fact that the quest for Christian unity has its source in Jesus’ high priestly prayer (Jn. 17) and the renewed relevance in the missionary movement, most famously the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, when for the first time Christians faced up to the scandal of their hostility and competition in the mission field. While we deplore “sheep-stealing,” we also recognize that Christians may leave a church on account of its failures to carry out the whole mission of God, and we invite all churches to serious self-critical assessment. We also observe that the apparent success of Christian churches in a society can actually drive division, while persecution and minority status can foster close cooperation. We commend complementary partnerships between churches that seek not to “steal” members

⁶*Call to Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism: A Reader for a Global Conversation*, ed. John Baxter Brown (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022).

but to strengthen one another. We also stress the importance of visible aspects of unity alongside spiritual or invisible unity. Our dialogue has shown that trust can be built, expressions of unity can be fostered, and common witness is possible.

38. *Eschatology*. At one time eschatological urgency was a major motivating factor in Pentecostal missions, especially the expectation that Christ would return again soon in glory. While this theme is not as emphasized today as it was at the beginning of the movement, Pentecostals still think of themselves in terms of living in the “last days,” which is a key motivation for reaching the lost (Lk. 15). However, with the passage of more than a hundred years since the first revivals, Pentecostals have faced the task of building for the long-term, for example in establishing schools and hospitals, resulting in a more holistic mission. For their part, Lutherans recall that the earliest days of the Reformation were also marked by an eschatological urgency, which over time was transmuted to a principled amillennial stance, leading instead to extensive socioeconomic reforms such as the common chest, poor relief, schools for children and university reform, and health care initiatives, which have continued to the present day. This same dynamic of a developing eschatology is at work in the New Testament itself.
39. *Interfaith and intercultural dialogue*. Together we recognize that mission work often takes place locally, among people who share Christians’ own language and culture. While even this requires sensitivity and wisdom, how much more when Christians cross the boundaries of language, culture, ethnicity, and religion. Together we acknowledge that dialogue with peoples of other faiths is complementary to mission work, neither an alternative nor a threat to mission. It is an expression of respect and love for our neighbors and for the work God may be doing among them (Mt. 2:1–12, Jn. 16:5–11, Acts 17:16–34). Likewise, reflecting on the often distressing history of cultural and political imperialism, together we urge respectful and attentive engagement with cultures other than our own, listening well before we attempt to speak, for the upbuilding of just and peaceful societies.
40. *Contextualization of the Gospel*. Together we recognize that the church is required always to explore meaningful ways of interacting with different religions and cultures. Here the church’s greatest challenge is the contextualization of the Christian message with a positive yet discerning attitude toward the local culture. Contextualization is the process that attempts to interpret

Scripture with the context of the recipients in mind, in order to make it more understandable to them while respecting their full humanity. Concerns about syncretism and the danger of culture undermining divine truth must not be overlooked. We are both “called out” of the world to worship (1 Pet. 2:5–9) and “sent back” into the world to serve as effective witnesses (Jn. 17:18, 20:21). But such concerns must not dampen or suppress our efforts toward contextualization. This dialogue between Pentecostals and Lutherans illustrates the benefits of different Christian traditions engaging together to find ways to be a meaningful witness of Christ to all.

PART III: MISSION AND THE POOR

“ . . . to bring good news to the poor . . . ”

Introduction

41. As Christians, we take seriously the call we have received, that in following Jesus we are to carry a message of “good news to the poor,” which includes all who are vulnerable, marginalized, living with disability, or otherwise in need. It would be easy to be selective in our readings of the Bible, noting, for instance, that even Jesus observed, “You always have the poor with you” (Mt. 26:11). Anyone hearing these words might conclude that poverty is an intractable problem. But Scripture has much to say about the poor and their care (Deut. 15:11, Prov. 14:31, Is. 58:6–10, Mt. 25:40, 1 Jn. 3:17–18), and above all, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20).
42. Jesus was himself born of a poor woman in humble circumstances. Mary, expecting the child promised by the angel, sings a joyful song (Lk. 1:46–55). This song became known as the Magnificat, because in it Mary exalted God’s marvelous mercy towards her. In his explanation of the Magnificat, Luther pointed out that God did not regard Mary’s “humility” as a moral virtue, but her “low estate,” her being poor, her “nothingness.” It was precisely Mary, a poor woman, who was chosen to be God’s servant and to be called by all generations a blessed one.⁷
43. In his inaugural sermon, Jesus began with the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed

⁷Martin Luther, “Commentary on the Magnificat,” in *Luther’s Works* vol. 21 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 297–358.