



Leading Congregations in Mission *The Journey Ahead*

Doctrine and Covenants 163:1

“Community of Christ, your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.”

Mission is relational! The relational nature of God in relationship with all aspects of creation calls us to discern and live the essence of our identity and calling as invitational Christ-centered *communities* of justice and peace—expressions of hope for what our world might become in Christ.

Living with Essential Questions – The Key to our Future!

*How do we discern, embrace and risk living fully into our identity and calling as
Community of Christ in a changing world?*

This is the broad overarching question we must pursue—a question that draws deeply from the well of our sacred story as a people and calls us into God’s unfolding future. Pursuit of the following questions help us live into our identity and calling as Community of Christ in a changing world:

- ***Discern*** – How do missional/spiritual practices become a way of life that lead to ongoing encounters and new insights?
- ***Embrace*** – How do we make room for new insights even when they may be disruptive to our preconceived notions?
- ***Risk Living*** – How do we take initial steps to experiment with new insights as we risk new ways of being disciples and the church?
- ***Community*** – How does our emerging identity as *Community* of Christ draw from the well of our sacred story and point us in the direction of our future?
- ***Christ*** – Who is the living Christ—the Word made flesh to us? How do we live and convey the message in tangible ways so others can encounter the living Christ today?
- ***Changing World*** – How do we become more at home living on the prophetic edge, experimenting our way into the future, and trusting in God and one another?

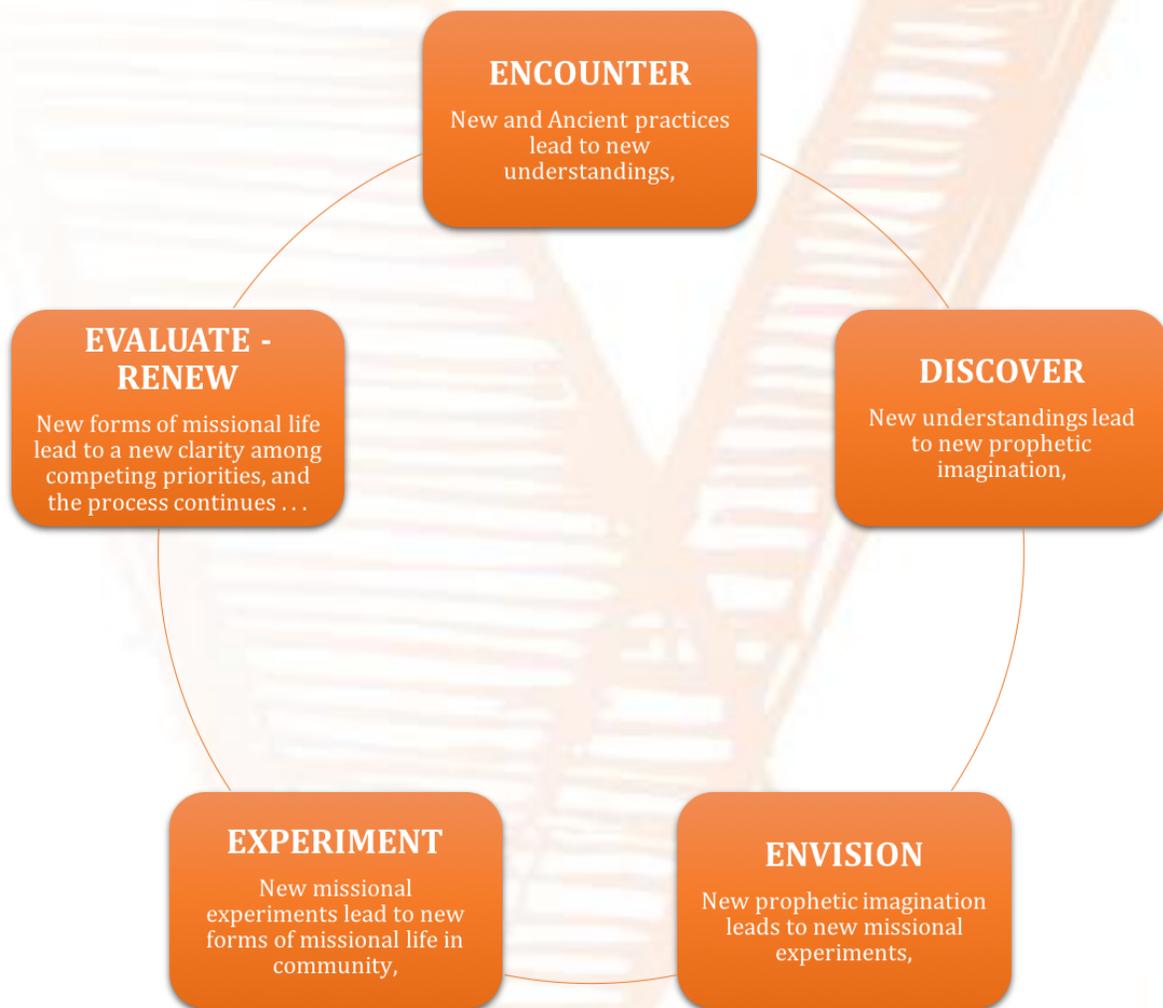
Practices as Initial Steps toward Missional Living

The missional/spiritual practices are the key to discovering our future! They lead us into *new and deeper* relational encounters with God and others in sacred community. Over time through repetition and experience they become a *shared way of life*. They increasingly define who we are as communities of Christ.

Throughout *Leading Congregations in Mission* we have emphasized three simple yet life changing practices:

- ***The Mission Prayer*** cultivates spiritual awakening to the movement of God everywhere.
- ***Sharing in the Round*** embodies and shares Christ’s invitation, hospitality, and healing.
- ***Dwelling in the Word*** invites us to encounter and *live into* the sacred story in our time.

As we engage *fully and consistently* in the practices above we encounter *the living Word made flesh* in ways we would have never imagined. New inspiration and prophetic imagination emerge as scripture is illuminated with cultural and relational encounters. We experiment our way into new ways of being disciples and communities in Christ. The journey (i.e. missional process) continues as the practices lead us deeper into the heart of God’s vision for the church and our world.



Navigating into the Future

Our willingness to risk new and deeper relationships *with* God, *with* one another, and *with* strangers *will reveal* the way toward receiving, embodying, and sharing Christ's peace in all its dimensions (i.e. our five mission initiatives). These relationships are at the heart of each of the four compass points. *Together* we awaken relationally and spiritually, discern and lead, encounter new contexts, and live into new ways of being *communities of Christ* through the four compass points below:

- **Missional Practices** awaken us to new and deeper relationships with God and others. Trust in the practices, they will reveal God's unfolding future!
- **Missional (Shared) Leadership** calls us to discern, risk, and lead together in sacred community. Leading is first about following—being disrupted with God's agenda!
- **Missional Context** challenges us to enter, discover, and relate the message and mission of Christ to our changing world. The Word must become flesh!
- **Missional Process** moves us beyond static models to new ways of being shaped and sent. This not about programs but a new way of living together with Christ into the future.

The Principles Collectively Describe the Essence of Christ's Mission

1. **Mission begins with encounter.** — We encounter God, God's love, and God's mission in Christ through missional/spiritual practices, in our relationships in community (congregations, small groups, and neighborhoods), in ministry with others, and in situations and places we are sent.
2. **We most fully live out Christ's mission through Jesus' proclamation in Luke 4:18-19:**

 **Invite People to Christ**
Christ's mission of evangelism

 **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**
Christ's mission of compassion

 **Pursue Peace on Earth**
Christ's mission of justice and peacemaking

We equip ourselves to live this mission by:

 **Develop Disciples to Serve**
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

 **Experience Congregations in Mission**
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

3. **Mission is relational.** — Being in relationship with God and others is at the heart of Christ's mission! We deepen our relationships by creating safe communities of trust for imagining and risking something new.



4. **Mission is disruptive.** — We are open and willing to allow our conventional understandings (ways of being and doing ministry) to be disrupted by the Holy Spirit and thus, see with new eyes.
5. **Mission is risking something new.** — God is constantly creating something new in Christ and we are called to become a new creation that risks living into the future of Christ's vision.
6. **Mission is contextual.** — We creatively live out the message and mission of Jesus Christ in our unique contexts while being connected in prayerful support to a global faith community.
7. **Mission is a unique expression of giftedness and calling.** — Mission emerges from our collective and unique giftedness *and* our use of those gifts for the sake of others.
8. **Mission is a long journey in the same direction.** — Lasting change occurs when we live into the strange and new behaviors of the peaceable kingdom that over time cultivate hope, discernment, discovery, and missional innovation.

A Long Hope-filled Journey in the Same Direction

Hope is the most important currency we have to spend as a faith community – hope not as passing optimism but hope as an awakening to see what we could not see before. Hope lifts our vision to see beyond the reality of the present to the possibility of God's future.

Leaders of mission understand the embodiment of God's love in Christ is much more than a system of belief. It is the *ongoing revelation* of God's movement with, through, and among us. It leads us to discover *where and how* God is moving in our world – especially situations and places no one expected God's future to emerge.

We are connected with the long journey of those who have traveled the path before us. We are ordinary people, just like those we read about in scripture, whose simple willingness to follow led to a journey of discovery and divine possibility beyond their imagination.

Now in this moment we are called to write the next chapter of the story. The invitation is being extended again. The only remaining question is:

Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision? The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.¹

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 164:9e,f

