

The Church of St. Mark & St. Peter (CMP) Mission Theology and Policies Document

*“It’s not that the Church has a mission; the mission of God has a Church.”
“Mission is to the Church as flame is to fire.”*

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document serves the following purposes:

- To provide the members and leaders of CMP with a biblical and theological framework by which to think about Christian mission, and what it means to be a missional church.
- To ensure that mission is always central to the purpose, identity, and activities of CMP.
- To guide the leadership of CMP (PLT and staff) in determining our missional priorities and commitments for the next two years.

Readers are encouraged to read this document prayerfully and thoughtfully – and perhaps also with a mug of coffee in hand! It will take about 30 minutes; or you can take several sittings to work through it, as you prefer. You might also wish to mark up this document as you read it.

1.2 The Process

This document arose out of a process that was initiated in January, 2021. It began with a series of sermons on mission preached by the Rev Chris Barrigar. These sermons were during Zoom services, and so the sermons were followed by discussions with CMP members in each service. This sermon series was then followed by Mission as the theme for Lent, 2021, with five weeks of discussions, on Wednesday evenings, on various topics within the theme of Mission. These discussions were open to the congregation, and several were facilitated by CMP members – Clayton Grassick, Fiona Crossling, and Jeremy Favreau. CMP members not on Zoom were mailed forms inviting their feedback on mission principles and priorities for CMP. From all of this, Chris Barrigar then wrote a first draft of the document, with feedback from Clayton, Fiona, and Jeremy. This was then reviewed and refined by the Parish Leadership Team, and this final version approved by the PLT in June, 2021.

1.3 The Big Picture:

Here’s the structure of this document:

1. Introduction
2. Mission within the overall life of CMP
2. A Theological Foundation for Mission
3. Four Modes of Mission
4. Enabling Mission
5. Mission at CMP for the next two years
6. Additional matters

2. Mission within the overall life of CMP

Our overall life within CMP is structured by the following areas:

- **Worship:** our principal form of gathering before God;
- **Ministry:** our activities *within* CMP, including community building, discipleship formation, and pastoral care;
- **Mission:** what we do *beyond* CMP;
- **Enabling Ministries:** the ministries that make Worship, Ministry, and Mission possible, such as prayer, administration, finance, property maintenance, and the Parish Leadership Team.

A vital congregation ensures that all four of these are healthy. Readers are reminded that this document is about *mission* at CMP (what we do beyond the CMP community), not ministry (what we do within the CMP community).

3. A Theological Foundation for Mission

Scripture tells us that God has a vision for humanity, which we can identify by two terms, one from each testament—*shalom* (a Hebrew word that means every part of creation being a healthy unified whole as God originally intended for it) and *the Kingdom of God* (Jesus' central concept). Undergirding and motivating this *shalom*-kingdom vision is God's own character of *agape*-love. We understand what constitutes *agape*-love through God's own Trinitarian nature (in the mutual self-giving of the persons of the Trinity to each other) and through the teaching and life of Jesus. From Jesus we can define *agape*-love as: *self-giving for the blessing of God and of others*. Consequently, obedience to and imitation of Jesus' *agape*-love for the world becomes our motivation for joining in God's *shalom*-kingdom mission.

The New Testament teaches that the Kingdom of God will only be fulfilled at the *eschaton* (Christ's return and the new creation; Rev. 21); nonetheless, through Jesus of Nazareth God's Kingdom has begun to "break into" our world now (Lk.17:20-21). Many words are used in the New Testament to describe this kingdom, words such as salvation, redemption, forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. Why is there such a range of descriptions for the Kingdom of God? Because God's world is multifaceted, humanity is complex, and so a range of different terms bring out different elements of what this *shalom*-kingdom looks like in our complex, multifaceted world.

Recognising God's deep desire for the transforming effect of this *shalom*-kingdom leads to *passion* in us for God's mission. Recognizing our own frailty leads to undertaking mission with *self-reflection and humility*, including learning from the wisdom and failings of others, past and present. Recognising God's sovereignty means seeing where God *is already at work* among others. Recognising our human propensity to arrogance means not imposing our "solutions" but genuinely *listening* to people in their need. Recognising that mission must always be God's mission, not our mission, means depending on God in *trust* and in *prayer*, while simultaneously being willing to try new ways, to *risk*—risk mistakes, risk failure, even risk rejection along the way, as we step out in trust to learn new ways of mission. Recognising that we are to love God with all our *dianoia* (Greek for "analytical rationality"; Mt.22:37) means *thinking deeply* about faith and the world around us, recognizing simplistic approaches to mission often don't work, and can even cause harm. Thinking deeply about the complexity of creation and of humanity prompts an intentional and systematic approach to discerning our role in God's mission.

4. Four Modes of Mission

In light of our earlier definition of agape-love, we can define mission as *blessing people beyond the CMP community*. CMP will structure its mission efforts according four modes or types of mission—four ways to bless others beyond our community. This four-fold pattern is certainly not the only framework by which to understand God’s mission, for such frameworks are always imperfect. Nonetheless, such a framework gives us a way to think and act strategically and with intentionality. The following four forms are not in order of priority, for they are all needed together in the reign of God. (We shall discuss priorities for CMP further below in this document.) It can be particularly helpful to approach each of these through the theme of *reconciliation*—that God’s *shalom*-kingdom mission is to bring reconciliation at all levels: between God and humanity (Rom.3:23); within individuals themselves (reconciling and healing our inner broken and divided selves, 2 Cor.5:17); between individuals (Mt.18:15); between communities, within and between nations (Rev.22:2); and even between humanity and creation.

4.1 Soul Care

An essential part of humanity is the *soul*, from the Greek word *psyche*. We often think of “soul” as that part of us which will persevere into eternal life and the new creation. While this is certainly part of the meaning of *psyche* in the New Testament (NT), yet the NT also uses the word more broadly, as equivalent to the Hebrew word *nephesh*, meaning the whole person, including body, mind and emotions. So, soul care involves God’s reconciling, healing, redemptive work in all these aspects of the totality of a person. Here we will identify three forms of soul care:

- *Evangelism*. God, in his sovereignty, reveals himself to humanity when and where he wills, yet God’s self-revelation has taken definitive form in Emmanuel—for in Jesus of Nazareth God became human “and dwelled among us.” So significant is Jesus for how we humans live with God and with each other, that seeking to invite people into discipleship to Jesus is a form of loving others. The conventional term for this mode of loving people is “evangelism” (from *euangelion*, Greek for “Good News”). Evangelism must never be an arrogant triumphalism but rather a gracious and sensitive invitation to the life of following God incarnate; thus, when people choose to enter into a relationship with God through following Jesus, it brings God, and us, great joy. “Pre-evangelism” refers to practices that establish pathways, such as through conversation or community, through which people may encounter, and become attracted to, the way of Jesus. These pathways provide opportunity for the sorts of thresholds people often go through on their way to faith, such as developing a trusting relationship with a Christ-follower in their life, developing curiosity about the life of faith, opening themselves to the possibility of change in their own views or way-of-life, actively seeking to understand Christ more deeply, and, at some point, deciding to follow Christ. This is always a journey, one that cannot be rushed or coerced, and must be allowed to unfold within God’s time and at the person’s own pace.
- *Discipleship*. God’s desire is not simply for “a decision to follow Christ”—this is just a first step (though a big one), as God’s desire is for ongoing growth and maturity in faith, for a life of *discipleship*—a life-long process of growth in holiness, in obedience, in character, in gifts and fruit of the spirit, in wisdom, in justice and righteousness, in living ever-more fully the two great commandments; and doing all this within a community of other Jesus-followers.
- *Healing*. Soul care can also include *healing* (*therapeuō*; ex: Mt8:16, Mk.1:34)—healing our wounded emotions, our weak will-power, or our false reasoning. This can also be understood as

reconciliation within ourselves—the divinely-guided work of healing our own internally-divided selves. Some might suggest that healing should be considered as part of discipleship, but the categorization is not particularly important—what is important is that the church is concerned for, and providing opportunity for, soul care as healing ministry and mission.

In effect, soul care involves a range of aspects. Furthermore, sustained collective soul care produces mission as *church planting*—establishing new communities of worship, ministry, and mission.

4.2 Social Care

God is concerned for the holistic wellness of the whole person and the whole of society, including for people’s dignity and their basic needs to be healthy and safe. We see this through countless parts of scripture, such as: Deut.10:18: “God defends the cause of the fatherless, the widow, and the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing”; Amos 5:24: “Let justice roll on like a might river”; James 1:27: godly religion includes looking after those who are vulnerable. Thus, mission includes responding to the needs of those, regardless of their language, culture, or religion, who are vulnerable (to abuse, neglect, or exploitation), who are under-resourced (in terms of food, healthcare, shelter, clothing, education, etc.), who suffer (physically or emotionally), whose value or dignity is denied, and who need allies and advocates. God’s concern for vulnerable people is rampant throughout scripture. This includes God’s desire that those who are socially “last” will be “first” (Mt.20:16). Moreover, we are to be part of the solution for others, including as advocates for those who are vulnerable or oppressed: “I freed the ones who cried for help...I took up the cause of the stranger” (Job.29:16); “Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17); “The spirit of the Lord is upon me...to set the oppressed free” (Jesus in Luke 4); among many other texts from scripture.

Social care, as part of building God’s *shalom*, needs to include *dianoia*—thinking deeply about the complex issues (spiritual, political, economic, cultural, etc) that give rise to such vulnerabilities, to better understand and redress underlying systemic causes of vulnerability and oppression. *Shalom* through social care also includes building healthy relationships in society, such as strengthening bonds within communities and working for peace and reconciliation within and between conflicted communities. Social care is not to be a “cover” for covert evangelism, as some have done—social care is provided unconditionally, as a form of obedience to God and as loving others, whether the other shows interest in Christian faith or not.

4.3 Environment Care

In Genesis 1 humanity is described as the *tzelem* (image/agent) of God, meaning that God gives humanity the vocation of being God’s representative on earth, including as stewards or caretakers of creation, with responsibility to care for the well-being of our planet—actually, God’s planet. Of course, the stewards of someone’s property are never permitted to harm the owner’s property, which has been placed in their care. We are all aware of how deeply humanity (including ourselves) has failed in this responsibility of creation care, and thus how we have harmed ourselves and our neighbours, locally and globally, by our failure to exercise proper stewardship of creation. Acting to protect or enhance the well-being of our physical environment, locally and globally, is an important form of both loving God and loving others.

4.4 Soma Care

In the Greek New Testament, the whole church is sometimes called *soma Kristou*—the *body of Christ*. We see in various New Testament texts one part of the church helping another part of the church, for instance with finances, with leadership support, and in times of persecution. This form of mission seeks to support other Christian churches, or parachurch organizations (not denomination-based organizations), either because they are *less resourced than ourselves* (and we have resources of space, funds, or people that can support them), or because they are *persecuted*. In the latter case, throughout history there have always been parts of the world where Christians have been persecuted. Today, persecution continues in numerous parts of the world, including India, China, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere. Such persecution ranges from minor discrimination, through various forms of harassment, to physical abuse, imprisonment, and even death.

5. Enabling Mission

To be effective in mission, the following principles will be practiced at CMP. (Priorities for the next two years will be discussed in section 6 below.)

5.1 Vision, Initiative, and the Holy Spirit

Ideas, vision, and initiative within any of the four modes of mission can arise from the leadership or from members of CMP; however, it is the role of the Pastor and PLT to discern which ideas and initiatives should be shaped, prioritized, and undertaken within the life of the congregation. Moreover, while the items identified in section 6 below give us direction and priorities, we recognize that circumstances can change (no one expected Covid-19!), and we need to be responsive to such changes; thus, while guided by section 6 below, we remain open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit may at times call us to slight or significant changes in direction, priorities, or practice.

5.2 Prayer: Parishioners will be encouraged to pray for the needs and activities of mission. Prayer information will be placed in the Pulse and Sunday bulletins, and prayer for mission will be regularly included in our worship services; home groups will also be encouraged to pray for mission concerns. A prayer group specifically for mission could also be formed.

5.3. Education: CMP members will be provided educational opportunities regarding the four forms of mission, including *theology* (why these are important to Christian mission), *analysis* (the spiritual, psycho-social, cultural, political, and economic issues that give rise to the need for these forms of mission), and *action* (what practices, events, or forms of action can be taken by us individually and collectively). At least one Sunday per month should be designated “Mission Sunday,” with some attention given to the theme of mission either in the sermon or in the announcements. Modes of education can include sermons, seminars, etc., as appropriate to adults, youth, and children. The point of education is not simply to convey information, but to deepen our understanding of, passion for, and commitment to mission.

5.4 Action – Doing/Going: Mission happens when we do something about it! Opportunities will be provided for CMP members to engage in the various forms of mission relationally and physically. Actively engaging in mission also has an important reciprocal role in the life of a church community, in

that it is also an important mode of discipleship-formation. “Doing” mission can also include “going”—whether locally, regionally, or globally. (With regard to “short-term missions,” see section 6.2 below.)

5.5 Partnering: It is important not to re-invent the wheel, and not to make mistakes that could be avoided had we learned from others. Partnering with others, both Christian and non-Christian (depending on a particular objective) can often be more effective and produce greater effects than undertaking a project or effort on our own. Although sometimes a particular mission project or action needs to fill a void and thus be initiated from scratch, in principle partnering with other churches or organizations should be practiced whenever possible. Partnerships may be prioritized by organizations to which our members are already connected.

5.6 Geographic scope: The New Testament Church was concerned with geographically-dispersed mission. As appropriate to our level of resources and our sense of God’s call on us in particular matters, each of the four modes of mission should be attentive to local, provincial, national, and global possibilities.

5.7 Social media

Social media has become an important part of Canadian society for a variety reasons, including its ease of use and its ability to connect widely with people. CMP will seek to employ social media as may be helpful within its mission objectives. This will inevitably involve some experimentation in the process of learning how to use social media for these purposes.

5.8 Finances: There are two sides to the financial side of mission: givings and expenses. Engaging in mission requires *giving*—giving our time, our energy, our money. Sacrificial giving is at the heart of Christian discipleship. Members of CMP will be encouraged to give generously of their time, energy, and finances to support our mission efforts. In terms of how we distribute these givings for mission, there are two possible philosophies. One is to spread money among many recipient organizations, so each organization receives a small amount (a few hundred dollars); this allows us to show support to, and be connected to, a wide number of organizations and types of mission. The other is to focus on just a few organizations, in order to give a more substantial amount to each organization. This also enables the congregation to pay closer attention to the work of these fewer organizations, and form closer relations. The recommendation here is to move to the latter approach. We also have CMP members who are leaders in other organizations (at present Tim Keener, Fiona Crossling, Sally Richmond, and Jeremy Favreau); it is appropriate for us to consider particular support to organizations in which our own members provide leadership. Furthermore, both St Mark’s and St Peter’s brought into the merger different group that were being financially supported by each congregation; the proposal here is that some of these groups should be maintained from both former congregations. In terms of our parish budget, since the formation of CMP we have been budgeting 5% of total expenses for mission purposes (in 2020 this was about \$9500). The PLT seeks to maintain this percentage.

6. Mission at CMP for the next two years

Every form of blessing others is a form of God’s *agape*-love. For each of our four areas of mission there is a much greater need, and range of ideas, than we can possibly accomplish, so the following items

identify priorities and practices for the next two years (beginning September 2021), with two years as a manageable timeframe for implementation and assessment.

The challenge of two types of location – hospitality as the bridge

An important feature of CMP, that affects how we do mission, is that while some of our members live in Ville St-Laurent (VSL) many are located away from VSL, dispersed around the island of Montreal and even off-island. This requires a dual geographic focus for CMP: to engage in mission in VSL, yet to also facilitate mission in the neighborhoods where our non-VSL members live. Each of the four modes of mission can be practiced from both our church building and our homes, and a particularly effective means for transcending this dual focus is *hospitality*, by which to build trusting, serving relationships with those around us.

Hospitality can serve multiple forms of ministry and mission simultaneously, including discipleship, pastoral care, social care, pre-evangelism, and even *soma* care. A post-Covid priority will therefore be placed on developing hospitality—both in our building and in our homes. (The latter can be facilitated by various resources, such as Rosaria Butterfield’s *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World*.)

6.1 Soul Care as Evangelism

Education: Online (Zoom) seminars will be offered for interested parishioners on such themes as: having authentic conversations about faith; telling one’s own story; understanding and responding to questions people have about Christian faith and life; and understanding evangelism as a process.

Action: We will continue to offer Alpha as a pathway for pre-evangelism. To enable both VSL and non-VSL members to be involved, Alpha may be offered in our building and/or online. We will continue to use social media advertising for inviting residents of VSL to Alpha and CMP.

Partnering: We will seek to continue to partner with Alpha Canada and others, such as Church 180 in Laval.

Discipleship and Healing: Within the organizational structure of CMP, discipleship and healing come within the purview of Ministry rather than Mission; so, this document will not identify proposals or priorities for discipleship and healing. Nonetheless, silos must be avoided, and so discipleship-formation processes will be shaped to integrate mission.

6.2 Social Care:

There are countless social issues that CMP could address. In our mission conversations during Lent, CMP members expressed particular concern for: loneliness; immigration and refugees; racism; homelessness; domestic abuse; English-French relations and reconciliation; settler-indigenous relations and reconciliation; human trafficking; and mental/relationship health. We will therefore focus on these areas, although even these are vast in scope and some of these areas will receive less attention than others. We will prioritize among these as expressions of interest and commitment come forward (from either parishioners and from the PLT) and as the PLT discerns from among these.

Education: As identified by project need.

Action: Priorities will be placed on immigrant ministry, English-French relations/reconciliation, anti-racism, and mental/relational health. (The last of these are already providing through our GriefShare and DivorceCare online support groups.)

Partnering: Appropriate partners, in church and in society, will be sought as any particular effort or project is undertaken. Proposed financial partners will include Logifem (women's shelter, Sally Richmond).

6.3 Environment Care:

Environment care will focus on: i) improving practices in our homes (domestic/personal lifestyle changes); ii) advocacy to government and/or businesses for best practices; iii) modelling environment care through how we use our church property (readers should note that recycling practices in our church come within the purview of "Enabling Ministries -- Building (Cleaning)" rather than "Mission," and thus are not discussed further in this document.)

Education: Possibilities include: information on specific topics in the Pulse/bulletin, and in the Sunday announcements; periodic sermons on Mission Sundays; enviro-care and resisting-consumerism themes incorporated into our children and youth ministries.

Action: Planting pollinator gardens and lawns at the church; using our rear space (behind the building) for vegetable gardens; finding ways to provide collective challenges and to keep each other accountable for our practices in our homes; advocacy by letter-writing on an ad hoc basis; informing CMP members of outside enviro-care events they can join in

Partnering: TBA.

6.4 Soma Care:

This involves resourcing parts of the wider church less resourced than us; and supporting the persecuted church. We will continue to support our two tenant congregations by renting space to them at a discounted rate; however, the Chinese Alliance Congregation will increase their rental payments over the next two years to our requested rate; and Montreal Church of Jesus will continue to do the floor-cleaning in the building. We have also been asked to continue financial support to Christian Direction.

Education: Information in the Pulse/bulletins; special preachers or speakers as opportunity arises.

Action: We have members of CMP involved with InterVarsity and Power2Change, and will continue to partner with them within our available resources, such as continuing to offer meeting space in our building for IVCF/GBU group at CEGEP Vanier. We remain open to offer our ministry team as occasional support to other churches as requests or opportunities arise, within our resources.

Partnering: Proposed financial partners: Barnabas Aid; Christian Direction (Tim Keener); Power2Change (Jeremy Favreau); Interserve (Fiona Crossling).

7.0. Additional Matters

The following are additional related matters.

7.1 Terminology

For purposes of clarity, it is worth noting there is traditionally a difference between *mission* and *missions*. The former (*mission* singular) is traditionally used to refer to Christian outreach in its broadest sense (thus includes all four forms of mission above); the latter (*missions* plural) is used more narrowly to refer to a specific aspect of Christian mission, namely sending missionaries or mission partners abroad, cross-culturally.

7.2 Short-term Exposure

People often find it a transformative life-experience to participate in short-term trips, ranging anywhere from a week to a few months, to communities and churches in contexts quite different from their own. Often called “short-term missions,” these trips are frequently taken to under-resourced, developing areas, whether local, regional, or abroad. Such exposure—to see how others live, how they worship, create community, engage in ministry and mission, and to see the challenges they face in their context—often has a deep effect, reshaping participants’ understanding of the world, of God’s action in the world, and our assumptions, values, and place therein. We wish to facilitate such transformative life-experiences among the members of CMP; however, there are significant potential problems to be avoided with such short-term trips.

One problem is that such trips get mislabeled “missions,” as if anyone can be effective in another context, in any sort of substantial missional way, during such brief periods. During a short-term trip personal stories of how God has worked in one’s life can certainly be shared in the recipient community, and physical labour can certainly be contributed to a local project. Yet short-term trips do not give enough time to build the sorts of substantial relationships, nor the depth of understanding of local culture or local issues, which are necessary for substantial and sustainable effects. The benefits of short-term trips are far more for those going than those “receiving.”

Another problem is that these trips can easily turn into “poverty tourism,” travelling in and out of a poor area as the ones with the privilege of such travel, then leaving the under-resourced people behind, waiting for the next “poverty tourists” to arrive. As one person put it (quoted in a blog), “The visitors do not really interact with us. Aside from the occasional comment, there is no dialogue established, no conversation begun. Poverty tourism is a one-way street: They get photos; we lose a piece of our dignity.”

Short-term trips are therefore to be encouraged within the life of CMP, though as “exposure trips” rather than as “short-term mission trips.” Consequently, in the ministry structure of CMP such trips come within the purview of Discipleship Ministries (since these trips serve to re-shape our discipleship) rather than within the purview of Mission. Such trips must be planned in such a way as to ameliorate the potential problems described above. At the same time, while we avoid the term “short-term missions,” we encourage those who have gone on short-term exposure trips to explore with God and with others a possible commitment to long-term missions, and we support mission partners committed to long-term missions – concerned to learn from, and avoid, the mistakes and harms of the past yet carrying on the New Testament vision of the Gospel and God’s *shalom*-kingdom for all nations.

7.3. Receiving Mission Partners

In the history of missions, Canada has been a “sending” nation, sending missionaries and mission partners to other parts of the world. However, the growth of Christianity in many of the traditional “receiving” countries, and the declining influence of Christian faith in Canada, means that the Canadian church should now see itself as both a sending and receiving body. The Gospel is to be taken not just from North to South, or West to East, but from everywhere to everywhere! CMP commits itself to better understanding this dynamic and exploring how we may support the process of the Canadian church receiving mission partners to Canada.