



Focus Statement:

To Encounter, Embrace, and Embody Christ in the World

Background: With the restructuring of Mennonite Church Canada we, the congregations of Mennonite Church Alberta, felt a call to really look at who we are and who we want to be. Over the course of 2 years we met, prayed, discussed, pondered and worked at discerning what we needed to hold on to, and what we needed to release, to be the church God wants us to be. Together we discerned a number of areas to consider and work on, and these were collated into our three year action plan: To Encounter, Embrace, and Embody Christ in Life, in Community, and in the World. Year One we looked to encounter, embrace and embody Christ is life by looking inward to find God's amazing love living within us, and outward to see it all around us, while embracing God's presence and our identity as beloved children of God. We also worked to embody Christ as learned to live as beloved children of an amazing and omnipresent God. In year two we expanded our gaze to see God living within our church communities - both local and broader. We embraced God speaking through Scripture, Song, and each other as we explored what it means to embrace our identity as Christ's people, and embody Christ in Community, and as Community. This year we want to go even further, as we look to encounter, embrace and embody Christ in the world.

Where do we see God at work in the world? Can we see that work, even beyond the church, or Christian endeavours? Can we encounter God in a puppy that joyfully approaches us and won't be ignored? Can we encounter God in a homeless person begging on the street? Can we encounter God in the beauty of people worshipping through a different religion? Can we embrace God's presence even in a storm, literal or figurative? Can we embrace our identity as God's hands and feet on earth? Can we embrace God's call to love the world? Can we embody Christ in our day to day interactions? Can we embody Christ as we worship together? Can we embody Christ even as we deal with conflict and hardships?

Suggested activities:

- **Reflect on the vision process and the goals of years one and two.**
Take some time to think and pray about how the work we have done will help us be the people we are called to be. How will we continue to grow and flourish? Have we fully released the things that were holding us back, and fully embraced the challenges to which we have been called?
 - o **Do not be discouraged** if you feel you are at a different point in your own process than the overall church. We encounter, embrace, and embody Christ continually and at different rates. We are all in process.
- **Continue to look for God at work in the world around and in us.** Pray that God will open your eyes, ears, and other senses to truly encounter God in daily life, in the people around you, in creation, in the arts, in worship, and in other ways. Listen for God speaking to you in unusual ways.
- **Remind yourself of God's promises** and embrace the fact that God loves you and can do more working through you than you could ever do yourself.



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-Consider what it means to be salt, light, an ambassador for Christ, It is the daily interactions, motivations and underlying identity of who we are that make us ambassadors for Christ.

-Pick an item from the bucket list to help you as you continue to grow in your ability to encounter, embrace, and embody Christ in the world.

Individual Practices

Deepening our connection to the world

Connecting to core commitments

and each other

Pick one practice to take up for a year



- Start each day by looking in the mirror and repeating: I am salt for the earth, I am light for the world, I shine my light before others, So that, through me, they may see God.
- Pray the Serenity Prayer every day
- Take a walk and wonder at the nature (grass, flowers, trees, sky) that God has created around you, and give thanks.
- Plant a garden, harvest fresh vegetables, make preserves and contemplate the goodness of the earth. Listen to the cues that the earth gives you when the harvest is ready or not. Change some of your landscaping to edible plants.
- When saying grace, be grateful for each person and each step of the journey that was needed for the food you are eating to come to your plate.
- Reach out to someone from a different faith and have a conversation. Listen for God speaking even through someone with whom you disagree.
- Go to an art exhibit; experience God through another person's eyes.
- Look to see God in any manifestation of goodness, beauty, creativity, justice, kindness.
- Volunteer to help at a homeless shelter or a place that serves food to the homeless.
- Volunteer at a thrift store.
- Donate blood to help someone you don't know.
- Memorize key scriptures for Year 3 so that they come intuitively to mind in situations

- Read a book (or books) from the curated list from Common Word
- Read a theological book by a non-Mennonite author. How does this expand your understanding of God?
 - Or if you've mostly read non-Mennonite authors, try a book like "Anabaptist Essentials". What parts engage your passions? This might be the calling that you want to explore this year.
- Join an interfaith book club
- Each week plan one "Sweet Surprise" - a kind deed done anonymously for someone who does not expect it.
- Visit a senior from your congregation
- Commit to pray every day for our government (local, provincial, federal)
- Pray and practise the gifts of the Spirit (one each month?) Look for these gifts in others and validate them.
- Do a prayer walk in your neighbourhood. Pray God's blessings and protection over the neighbourhood and ask to see how God is at work and how you can partner in that work. Try this format:
 - Encounter - Look for God at work in the Community;
 - Embrace - Give thanks for how God is at work in the Community;
 - Embodiment - Find way to partner with God in the Community.



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- Invite a neighbour into your home. Get to know people in your neighbourhood.
- Sign up for an online course through Canadian Mennonite University or Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary - perhaps on Conflict resolution or Creation care
- Take a course/read up on reconciliation and/or conflict resolution



Congregational Practices

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- Book a portable CMU on a related topic
- Start a Bible Study on being light to the world (Menno Media has some great resources in their Salt and Light curriculum) (<https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light/>)
- Start a book study to study one or more of the books on the curated CommonWord list.
- Organize a group to try out different volunteer opportunities in your area: (some possible examples)
 - MCC Thrift Store
 - Meal for the homeless
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Camp Valaqua work day
 - Blood Donor Clinic
 - Community Justice Ministries, such as Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)
 - Mennonite Disaster Service
 - Villages/Village Goods
- Include a minute for mission in your worship services to help raise awareness of places people can contribute/volunteer
- Publicize "God Sightings" - places people in your congregation have seen God/Christ in their daily lives.

- Organize regular prayer meetings which include prayer for world events
- Invite Guest speakers from other churches, other faiths, other nationalities (with Covid we have increased our capacity for connecting over distances) or to speak about some of the above mentioned charitable organizations
- Invite a local indigenous elder to teach a Sunday School series on Indigenous beliefs
- Engage as a church community in creating (or reviewing your existing) mission statement.
- Have your church organize/partner with a community clean-up day. This could be picking up litter in the neighborhood, or it could be being the hub/home base for gathering recycling, repurposing, chemical clean-up, etc. for home nearby.
- Host a community craft or garage (Trunk?) sale
 - This could include the sale of coffee and/or baking for a cause,
- Participate in Mennonite World Conference: <https://mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022>
- Organize a prayer walk: Invite people from the congregation to



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walk around the community that God has placed your church in. As you walk, pray God's blessings and protection over the community and ask to be shown God's work being done and opportunities for your congregation to partner in that work.

• Hold an event that invites people from the community into the church that creates a space for people to get to know the church. Get out and invite people.