



## ***Focus Statement:***

# **Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in the World: Bringing God's healing and hope to a world in need.**

Our goal in year 3 is to be God's ambassadors in this world. This does not mean we are already perfect; it means we are willing to let God's light shine through us wherever we are at. It means listening (encountering God) in all things and however God chooses to do that revealing; it means living into the love and grace that God is (embracing); and it means becoming vulnerable, caring and connected to all people and all creation. It means cultivating a new identity for ourselves and our churches: God chooses to heal this world through us, and we need both the humility and the God-fidence to go forth and bring hope to those around us (embodying). We want to live into a future and the vision that God has invited us into: reconciliation, thriving in life, sharing beauty and joy, enacting justice, creating and preserving, embracing mystery and community, praise and inclusiveness and love and peace. We do this by seeking God, learning God's ways, fashioning our lives and our minds after Jesus, and praying for the gifts of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Our ambassador-ness comes from a place of humility and connectedness. We continue to build on all three Es (encountering, embracing, embodying) for how could we possibly be God's hands and feet and voice of hope in this world if we had not already experienced it? We choose to look at all of life through the lens of God's love and parenthood. We see God's character and creativity and generosity in the people we are surrounded by—those we love, but also in those we disagree with. We gaze upon and partner with God's created world with awe-inspiring wonder for all its beauties and complexities and feel God's presence and calling.

It is neither our competence nor a position of power that enables us to become ambassadors. It is God's invitation to live fully into the shalom God created and designed for us. It is part of the mystery of God that somehow, even in our shared brokenness, imperfections and muddled attempts to learn and reconcile, that God continues to show up, move into the neighbourhood, walk beside us and bring beauty, life and hope. How blessed we are to be invited to participate in this life!

Although year 3 might be the "culmination" of the visioning process, it is simultaneously the platform we are springing from. Where will this foundation we've been building lead us in the years to come? How will we continue to grow and flourish? It is, therefore, prudent to re-visit some of those initial yearnings, and ask if we have indeed released the things we felt were not useful, and if we've fully embraced the vision God has given us. The MCA E3 reference group has published a list of starter questions\* you can use if helpful, otherwise we encourage whatever route your reflections take.

### \*Reflection starter questions:

- Where do you see/hear/ experience God in your life/community/world?
- Where, when and how (with whom) have you Encountered Jesus? Embraced Jesus? What new thing did you experience?
- Do you feel/understand/know yourself to be "beloved of God"?
- Do you feel/understand/know yourself and your church community to be connected with God and each other?
- If we want to embody Jesus, who do we understand Jesus to be?
- Do you feel/understand/know yourself to be an ambassador in this life?
- How will we live out this call? Individually, as a church community, and as the universal church of Christ?

