



MCA VISION 20/20 Report

*Report provided by Betty Pries, Credence & Co.
November 3, 2018*

Background

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” (Frederick Buechner) What is MCA’s deep gladness? What is the world’s deep hunger?

As seasons change and one generation makes space for another, the deep hunger of the world also changes. What is the world’s deep hunger today? What we know is this: We are living in what is believed to be the loneliest time in history; mental health issues are on the rise, and the yearning for inner rest is profound. The world’s deep hunger can be summarized as a longing for meaning, purpose and belonging – and rest. This longing is not just in the world “out there,” it is also a longing in our pews!

Alongside the world’s deep longing, we are observing a fresh openness to wonder and mystery. The world’s longing is a profound and even urgent missional moment for the church: Meaning, purpose, belonging and rest have been at the center of the church’s deep gladness. We believe in a God to whom we belong and in whom we also belong to one another! This gives meaning and purpose to our lives. And, in God, we experience a type of rest that enlivens us for the work of pouring ourselves out for the world. What would it look like for MCA to claim (or re-claim) its sense of calling? What would it look like for each congregation in MCA to do so? How would this reclaiming define our congregations and drive our relationships with our neighbours near and far? How would it change us at a deeply personal level? What would happen when our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger would meet?

As MCA we have been on a renewal journey entitled Vision 20/20. All renewal journeys are first and foremost spiritual journeys; they are a time of deepening and coming close to God. This has also been true for us: Over this year we have listened for the place to which God is calling us. We have sought to understand both the



credenceandco.com



world's longing and our deep gladness. The following report shares where we have been and where the journey may take us in the years to come.

Where we have been

The MCA Vision 20/20 journey was led by a Reference Group. The journey began in Fall 2018 with a survey. The closing summary of the survey results stated the following: *In summary, we love the church and see many signs of hope. We enjoy worshipping and fellowshiping together. We appreciate the diversity within our congregations and within MCA. We value relationships, the care and support we show each other, and the sense of belonging we find within our congregations. We are energized by service opportunities and projects, and are encouraged to see young people engage with these. We are filled with hope by stories of how the good news is transforming peoples' lives, and we look for more ways to spread the gospel. We affirm the MCA priorities to equip congregations and train leaders, and build more connections between MCA congregations. We recognize the importance of the Camp Valaqua ministry, and see this as a main point of connection for MCA churches.*

We also recognize the challenges facing our congregations, MCA, and the wider church in the context of the current time we are in. We have questions about how we will sustain MCA ministries within the new MC Canada structure. Nonetheless, our commitment to the church is strong and we continue to trust in God's Spirit to guide us. Rooted in Anabaptism, we are committed to the gospel and willing to following in Christ's footsteps, wherever they may lead. As one person stated: "I firmly believe the church is the body of Christ visible and active in the world today. I believe that life within the church can be difficult, but life outside the church is not what Christ envisioned."

We followed the survey with a gathering in November 2018. During that event we considered the role of the church in the context of the world's deep longing in the midst of the 21st Century dynamics. We explored the discipline of prayer, the rhythms of renewal and the indicators of thriving congregations for the time we are living in. Many found this event worshipful and inspiring. Each person was sent away with an invitation to pray and to listen for how God was calling MCA.

When we gathered again in March 2019, we wrestled and discerned together. We explored the theme of "wilderness spirituality" and discerned what MCA is called to *release*: (1) an absence of prayer; (2) the need to box people in and trappings that do



credenceandco.com



not define our core; (3) a clan way of being and exclusivity; and (4) past conflicts, feeling small, external measures of success. We also discerned that MCA is being called to *embrace* the following: (1) prayer and prayer practices; (2) core commitments and engagement with the deep longings of our time; (3) deep community; (4) to be formed in our character; and (5) a recommitment to MCA's ministries.

A Reference Group worked with the outcomes of March 2019 to create a path or vision for MCA for the coming three years. MCA is committing to a three-year journey with this path. This path (or vision) is entitled,

Encountering, Embracing and Embodying Christ in Life, in Community, in the World.

- Year One: Encountering, Embracing and Embodying Christ in Life
 - How do we nurture our relationship with God?
 - How do we reclaim prayer & spiritual disciplines?
 - How do we remember that we are deeply beloved?
 - How are we formed so we are able to give ourselves to the world?

- Year Two: Encountering, Embracing and Embodying Christ in Community
 - How do we practice deep community, hospitality and welcome in our congregations?
 - How do we allow ourselves to heal from old narratives (past conflicts, feeling small) so that we can celebrate God's activity among us?
 - How is the character of our community formed so that we reveal the face of Christ to the world?

- Year Three: Encountering, Embracing and Embodying Christ in the World
 - How are we being invited to pour ourselves out as the Body of Christ for the world, bringing healing and hope to a world in need?
 - To what is God calling us with respect to our engagement with the world?



credenceandco.com



Where we are going

The Reference Group took the outcomes of the collective discernment in March and wrestled further, asking, “What does it mean to live into the three themes we have discerned?” In response to this question, we are proposing the following:

- Collectively, we will engage with one theme per year, in the order identified above.
- A task group will be selected to help guide each year’s focus. (Tim: we didn’t actually decide this. Would this be a good idea so it doesn’t all rest on you?)
- We will extend an invitation to each person, leader, pastor, congregation, church committee, denominational committee and MCA, inviting all to participate in this phase of VISION 20/20.
- Each year, MCA will provide a concrete list of ideas/practices from which congregations, committees, individuals and MCA can choose.
- We will commit ourselves to at least one practice per year to reflect each year’s focus.
- MCA will provide a package with additional ideas, information, reminders and resources to support these practices.
- With the help of the task group, we will share our experiences with one another, encouraging each other on our journeys.

What we will do (Year One)

Each person, committee and congregation is invited to choose from the ideas on the list provided.

After six months, evaluate the ideas chosen, as so led by the Spirit. You may choose to continue an idea, add a new idea or exchange an idea you have tried with another one. When choosing from among the items on the list, consider the question: How do are these practices helping me/us to *Encounter, Embrace and Embody Christ in Life?*

What we will do (Years Two and Three)

Stay Tuned! More information will be shared at the start of Years Two and Three to help guide our focus for those years.



credenceandco.com



Year 1: Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in Life

Deepening our Faith; Engaging in Prayer & Spiritual Practices

Committees	Personal
Committees: Begin each meeting with several minutes of silence and/or contemplative prayer.	Personal: Commit 5 - 20 minutes per day to prayer (spoken prayer, walking prayer or contemplative prayer).
Committees: Begin each meeting by inviting each person to share for a minute about how they are doing; follow each person's sharing by praying for that person.	Personal: Begin a gratitude journal. Personal: Listen to a daily faith-based spiritual podcast.
Committees: Commit 5 minutes of every meeting (midway or toward the end) to listening for how God is calling your committee at this time.	Personal: Ask a person to be your "spiritual friend," inviting them to ask you about your faith journey.
Committees: Devote one meeting / year to a focus on deepening faith / reading Scripture with new eyes.	Personal: Read one or more books on the theology and practices of prayer.
Committees: Fast from one activity, replacing the energy you would normally devote to this activity with prayer and/or spiritual reading.	Personal: Take up an intentional practice to see God in everyday life, in music, nature, the faces around you, the world.
Committees: Review your existing work. Ask how it is deepening people's belonging to God and how it is addressing the world's deep longing for meaning, purpose and belonging.	Personal: Develop a statement for yourself and that you can share re: why you are a person of faith and why you go to church.
	Personal: Take up fasting; practice the Sabbath.
	Personal: Take up the practice of prayer through the course of the day.
	Personal: Practice daily Scripture reading / Lectio Divina.



Credence & Co.
SUPPORTING LEADERS, TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS

credenceandco.com



Congregations	MCA
Congregation: Plan a congregational retreat to learn about spiritual disciplines.	MCA: Initiate a prayer week that can be followed by each congregation.
Congregation: Teach practices of prayer via a book study.	MCA: Bring congregations together in regional groupings for a time of prayer
Congregation: Invite one person per Sunday to share in worship about their encounter with the mystery of God.	MCA: Appoint three people to act as a “team” to be available to teach Adult SS in various MCA churches on the practices of prayer and other spiritual disciplines.
Congregation: Begin a prayer group that meets specifically to pray for the congregation, its people, its ministries, MCA and the larger world.	MCA: Collect and develop prayer and worship resources that allow people to hear the Scriptures and/or to pray in new ways.
Congregation: On the fourth or fifth Sunday of the month, plan a differently-styled worship service that help your congregation to meet God in a new way.	MCA: Send out prayer requests for each congregation (once or twice / month) so congregations can pray for each other.
Congregation: Invite 2 – 3 people to arrive at worship early each Sunday to pray for the congregation and the worship service before it begins. Let the church know this is happening.	MCA: Link two congregations together to be prayer partners for one another. Extend this to invite individuals in each congregation to be prayer partners individually for one another.
Congregation: Include a few minutes of silence / space for contemplative prayer each Sunday as part of the prayer time in the service.	
Congregation: Begin a morning contemplative prayer time that people stop in to join on their way to work. Advertise this for the community.	Congregation: Begin a healing service twice / year for anointing with oil – do this as part of the regular worship service.
Congregation: Begin a contemplative prayer time prior to worship or at a separate time (e.g. once / month on a Sunday evening)	Congregation: Devote the worship of one Sunday / quarter to the practice of prayer with the whole service structured around prayer or singing.



Credence & Co.
SUPPORTING LEADERS, TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS

credenceandco.com