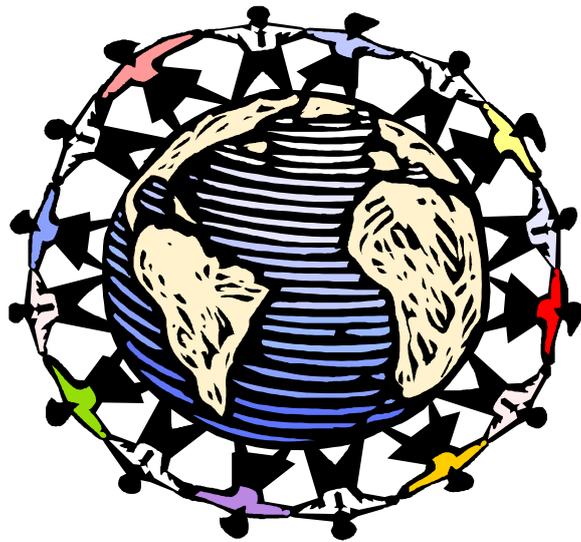


What Mission Means



A collection of
comments on the
definition of
Mission

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What Mission Means

The task of mission is central to the life of many Churches and Christian organisations. The language of mission is used frequently at Church meetings, events and services and many of the denominations have mission enablers, coordinators or resource people. Yet mission can mean very different things to different people and even the phrases we use in talking about mission may be interpreted in a variety of ways. There can be differences of emphasis, theology and practice, not only between, but also within, the various member churches of ACTS.

This booklet consists of a number of statements and views on mission, some personal, some reflecting a denominational or organisational position and some just thoughts or ideas that relate to Mission. They come from the members of the ACTS Mission Network and reflect the diversity of opinion and experience which we have on the Network.

With such a diversity of views and theology it may seem difficult to imagine how we can progress together, but as a Network, it is our hope that we may be able to stimulate discussion within and between our Churches on the meaning of Mission. As we explore each other's ideas and share our thoughts and beliefs we may find unexpected ways in which we are able to unite in our witness and proclamation.

There are of course things we do have in common and a number of threads run through the statements. There is acknowledgment of the centrality of Jesus, the all encompassing love of God and the guidance of the Spirit. It is perhaps in the celebration of the things we have in common and in talking and thinking about our differences that we will find ever closer unity in our proclamation of Christ.

Rev Colin C. Brown
Convener
ACTS Mission Network

Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland

PRAYER VISION

That the people of Scotland

in all its parts

May hear clearly the Gospel

of Jesus Christ

see the life of His Spirit

among His people

and come to know the love

of God the Father.

John K Thomson

A Reflective Summary of the Catholic teaching on the definition of Mission

Definition

**Evangelisation announces the
Kingdom of God
and makes it a reality in our midst.**

It brings the presence of Jesus into every human situation and life, aiming at the conversion and formation of individuals, the building up of Christian communities that in turn can evangelise and the permeation and transformation of societies and cultures with gospel values — making all creation new.

Comments

It is understood that this is a process involving many complementary steps. These include witness of life, listening, dialogue, proclamation, basic conversion, teaching (catechesis), sacramental initiation and life, promotion of social justice and peace, inculturation. It all has to be undergirded by prayer. It is principally a work of God—through the Holy Spirit—but one in which all Christians (whatever their specific vocation) are called to have a co-operative role.

The term ‘evangelisation’ and the term ‘Mission’ have become increasingly interchangeable in Catholic documents and writing in recent years—for better or for worse. The latter has more of a sense of being ‘sent’ and is also applied to God in terms of the ‘Mission of God’. In terms of the work of the church it is now applied not just to ‘foreign missions’ but more widely. Evangelisation is regarded as the essence and basic purpose of the church. Referring particularly to the decline of the Christian faith in traditionally Christian countries and cultures, Pope John Paul II has repeatedly called for a new evangelisation—new in scope, methods and ardour to address this. He has also stressed the vital place of proclamation of the Gospel message and of people having a personal encounter with Christ. He links the necessity of ecumenical work and efforts towards unity as very valuable to the effective and fruitful undertaking of mission/evangelisation.

Andrew Brookes

United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland

The URC Synod of Scotland believes that:

- Mission lies at the heart of the church's life and witness.
- Mission does not belong to the church, but the church shares as a partner in God's mission.
- The primary expression of the church's engagement in mission lies in the local congregation where all believers share in God's mission.

The Synod of Scotland believes that participation in God's mission calls the church to:

- 1. Proclaim the good news of the kingdom –
Tell**
- 2. Teach, baptise and nurture believers -
Teach**
- 3. Respond to loving service -
Tend**
- 4. Seek to transform unjust structures of society -
Transform**
- 5. Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation,
to sustain and renew the life of the earth –
Treasure**

These are known as the five marks of mission and each has a local, national and global aspect to them involving members individually, corporately as local congregations, the Synod of Scotland and as the church in the UK.

The URC is a partner church in the Council for World Mission –CWM. Presently the Synod of Scotland has a 5-year focus in partnership with Presbyterian Church in Cuba where we are engaging in exchange visits, learning about each others' countries and churches and in the future we hope to link in bible study projects congregation to congregation.

The URC has a special way of working with Christian Aid via Commitment for Life and countries of focus change approximately every five years. The present projects supported are in Palestine, Jamaica, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Each congregation commits to one country and is educated as to its needs and people respond individually through a percentage of their earnings.

Maureen Stewart

'Mission for the 21st Century'

Some thoughts from a
Quaker Perspective

Christians around the world will, in 2010, be recalling in various ways the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference held in 1910, and marking its centenary. The Religious Society of Friends, as a member Church of ACTS, will therefore have an involvement in this.

The following considerations arise out of a Quaker understanding of our faith:

1. The message of hope transmitted by Jesus is a message for all humankind. Its core is the conviction that we are all children of God, unique, precious, each containing a seed of the Divine. None of us is beyond redemption.
2. This is a message that is to be shared with all humanity, a truth of great importance in our fractured and self-obsessed world.
3. It is a message sharply at odds with much of contemporary social, political and cultural values. Finding our voice and enabling it to be heard is a challenge for all of us and all our Churches.
4. The challenge of mission work must be to convey this message of the possibility of human transformation, of the reality of God's power and love underpinning the

whole of creation, in a way that is fully consistent with the inclusive spirit of the teachings of Jesus.

5. In a multi-faith world, we must be respectful towards the central tenets of other world religions and explicitly recognise and affirm that no human being has a monopoly on truth. We must be willing to learn from the experiences and insights of people of other faiths and none. There can be no room for triumphalism or exclusivity.
6. We should humbly acknowledge that at times in the past our overseas mission activities have been too closely associated with colonial occupations, lack of respect for indigenous culture and conversions made through unethical means. In the words of a World Council of Churches Report in May 2006*: 'All should heal themselves from the obsession of converting others.'
7. There are complex theological arguments about the nature of Jesus, his relationship with God, his uniqueness. These are questions that have caused divisions in the Christian family since the time of Paul. Mission activity should be based not on any dogmatic assertions about these issues, but rather on how we can encounter God and learn to live lives true to our deepest selves, seeking that of God in ourselves and others.
8. Concerning humanitarian work by faith communities, the above-mentioned WCC Report affirms: 'In the area of humanitarian service in times of need, what we can do together we should not do separately.'

9. The greatest moral and spiritual crisis facing humanity in the 21st century is that of planetary protection against global warming. Can we find a way of living together sustainably on our planet, God's earth? The integrity of creation is under threat by human greed. The challenge of mission work today must be to witness powerfully and prophetically to the need for and the possibility of transforming our lives and our communities in the spirit of Jesus and other spiritual guides. Where better to begin than with ourselves and our own churches?

“Remember Jesus’ answer to the woman of Samaria: ‘neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father ... God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in Truth.’ In the depth of meditation, in the gathered meeting we rise above all limitations. Gone are the concepts of Quakerism and Vedanta. Gone are the ideas of being a Quaker or a Hindu. All these concepts are valid on their own level. They have their place, but they are transcended when we merge our minds in Spirit. I believe this is what Jesus and all the other World Teachers wanted us ultimately to do.”

*Swami Tripurananda, 1979,
quoted in
Quaker Faith and Practice 27.10*

**Report from an interfaith consultation on ‘Conversion – assessing the reality’ held in Italy in May 2006.*

*Full report available from
<http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?id=2252&L=0>*

Scottish Marriage Care

MISSION STATEMENT

Scottish Marriage Care aims to enhance and sustain marriage, relationships and family life within a framework of life-long learning.

Values

- We believe every individual is unique, of intrinsic value and capable of growth, development and self-determination.
- We respect each individual within a marriage or couple relationship.
- We believe in equality without judgement, partiality or discrimination on any ground.
- We believe children should be given the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary for forming good relationships.
- We believe our work enables us to contribute credibly to the public debate on marriage and relationships.
- We respect the influence a faith base can have on the life choices of individuals.
- We believe the multi-cultural society in which we live bring a richness of experiences and a diversity of perspectives.

Operational Principles

We are committed to:-

- Providing relationship services which are professional, accessible, safe, confidential and empowering.
- Achieving consistently high standards of service by regular monitoring and evaluation.
- Quality Assurance procedures based on evidence of best practice and operating within responsible boundaries.
- Promoting Equal Opportunities and opposing discrimination in all aspects of our work.
Continuous improvement and best value.
- Co-operation with other service agencies who provide complementary or similar services in the best interest of service users.
- Being an open and accountable organisations which routinely consults with service users and other stakeholders.
- Respecting and developing the skills and experience of our staff, volunteers and members.
- Attracting a wide spectrum of volunteers from local communities to enhance the quality and relevance of our work via diversity and richness of family relationships.

(Please note that this Mission Statement reflects the aims, values and principles of Scottish Marriage Care and not the Roman Catholic Church)

Views from a Healthcare Chaplain

Working ecumenically with those from Christian denominations, and with people from faith communities of different cultures and backgrounds – together with those of no declared faith means, for the Healthcare Chaplain that mission is very much patient centred. It takes its lead from the patient and does not seek to impose or assume any particular world view or faith.

Vulnerable people are encouraged to use the strengths of whatever beliefs and spiritual resources they have, making it the responsibility of the chaplains to enable and facilitate this – not to proselytise.

Chaplains also provide religious care, worship, sacraments etc to those for whom it is appropriate. Thus chaplains are both representative of their own faith community and representative of the care policy of the NHS and therefore it is important not to see ‘conversion’ as the aim. Rather it is the best and most appropriate spiritual care for each person, taking into account and respecting from where they have come.

Mission in this context is therefore the commitment to stand beside people in their time of need in order to facilitate the appropriate kind of spiritual care which will enable them to find that peace or acceptance or healing which is possible.

In a multi-faith context, a major part of that mission is to listen and learn from others – it is about the quality of care we can offer and the respect with which we honour other people as children of God.

Chris Levison

Thoughts on Mission 1

**This text was prepared for the meeting of CAIRS
8th June 2004 by John Munro**

These notes were prepared in some haste, and condensed from a week I led on Iona in 1999, entitled “Sent by the Lord”. On reflection, it was not perhaps a good idea to try to deliver material in 10 minutes that had been designed for group work in 10 hours over five days! The result was a bit like slapping various colours on a canvas without really making them into a coherent picture. And there was no time for discussion. So if anyone feels like responding to what is here, I am happy to hear from you. What follows is an expanded version of my comments at the CAIRS meeting

Definitions of Mission.

David Bosch, renowned South African missiologist, noted that over the past fifty years there has been a remarkable escalation in the use of the word ‘mission’ among Christians. He said that before the 1950s there a fairly circumscribed set of meanings: sending of missionaries, activity of missionaries; area where missionaries are active; agency sending missionaries; non-Christian world – ‘mission field’; base from which missionaries work in the mission field’; local congregation without a resident minister; series of special services or rallies to spread the gospel.

But these meanings are of recent origin. According to Bosch, prior to the sixteenth century, the word 'mission' was used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, ie with reference to the 'sending' of the Son and the Holy Spirit by the Father. It was only in the sixteenth century that the word 'mission' was first used, by the Jesuits, to refer to the sending of people to other people with the gospel, in the case of Loyola the sending of 'missionaries' to Japan and China. Prior to that time the church had referred to the activity we know as 'mission' by other phrases such as "propagation of the faith", "preaching of the faith", "apostolic proclamation", "expanding the church, "planting the church", "propagation of the reign of Christ", "illuminating the nations" (David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Orbis New York 1996, p228)

The new use of the term 'mission', with which we are now so familiar, soon became linked with the European colonial expansion. Bosch's book begins with the recognition that the link has come to an end, as the Western colonial enterprise has come to an end (though we could argue that as Western powers have discovered how to engage in neo-colonialism, so have the mission agencies!)

Bosch explores in depth a model for mission for a post-colonial post-modern era. Section headings in *Transforming Mission* give an idea of the range of his study – **Mission as:** the Church-with-Others; *Missio Dei*; Mediating Salvation; Quest for Justice; Evangelism; Contextualisation; Liberation; Inculturation; Common Witness; Ministry of the Whole People of God; Witness to People of Other Living Faiths; Action in Hope.

I think we could well spend a CAIRS day discussing some of these themes. Bosch gives only a few pages to “witness to people of other living faiths” and I think we might wish to consider also ‘witness **with** people of other living faiths.’

Also in Bosch’s study is a survey of the “faces of the church-in-mission” using the pattern of the Gospels, which again could be the topic of a study day. he uses the “six salvific events” portrayed in the New Testament – “the incarnation of Christ, his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the Parousia” (Bosch p 512), to illustrate different emphases in mission. A summary is given here. We could set up a day on mission based on these topics:

Faces of the Church-in-Mission

(David J Bosch, Transforming Mission chapter 13)

1. Incarnation: ‘Three-Mile-an-hour God’ (Koyama)

- Focuses on the practice of the human Jesus on the dusty road, moved with com-*passion* for people on the edge
- The One who sides with the people in shanty towns on the edge of the city
- A Christ who suffers in and with the victims of oppression
- Critic of the comfortable church that discusses ‘correct attitudes’ to wealth

- Source in Luke's Gospel (4:14-18)
- Christ the Servant, bearer of the Kingdom of God at hand.
- Christ is in world, and the church is to join him there
- "Come, follow me."

1. Christ died on the cross.

Christ died for my sins on the cross

- The church is the new, saved community, with whom God has a special relationship.
- The 'elect' chosen for a purpose, cf the 'select' chosen as God's favourites
- An insider/outsider mentality
- The cross is the unique badge of the Christian faith
- The cross challenges a 'natural' faith; a permanent challenge to 'cosy' spirituality.
- The cross a symbol of self-giving
- "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." John 20:21
- "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "Repent and believe in me."
- The cross and reconciliation

1. Christ risen from death.

- "Christ – Crucified *and Risen* – challenges human power." (Melbourne Conference on World Mission and Evangelism 1980. Proposal to entitle the conference "Christ Crucified

- – challenges human power.” Insertion of “and risen” by the Orthodox representatives.
- Christ and new-creative life for the world
- The calling of the church to live the resurrection life in the world
- The church to be a sign of contradiction against forces of death and destruction – unmasking modern idols and false absolutes.
- The human capacity to be co-creator with Christ.

1. Christ Ruler of all

- Christians live ‘between the times’ – between ascension and the fulfilment of all things.
- Commitment to Christ’s Lordship comes before all earthly authority.
- Not to opt out of society into little islands of Christian faith, in a hostile sea., but to live in the world where Christ Pantocrator reigns
- Possibility of transformed society and history. Commitment therefore to justice and peace
- Emphasis on ecumenical life
- Hold the connection between Cross and Ascension – the Servant King

1. Mission in the power of the Spirit.

- The church as the community witnessing to the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Emphasis on healings and other signs of the presence of God’s power.

- The spirit-filled church is *the* sign of the closeness of the Kingdom of God.
- · The Spirit must not be held hostage by the church.
- · Spirit of God present to all people of the world faiths
- · Worship and mission. Orthodox insistence that the Eucharist is the most missionary of all the activities of the church. Worship *is* mission.
- · The Eucharist at the same time the celebration of the presence of God, and human completeness in his presence; and also an invitation to share our bread with the hungry

1. “Christ will come again”

- focus on second coming of Christ
- a new heaven and new earth.
- Future holds priority over the present and past. Christ is ahead of us. A future for the nations and a future for history (cf Francis Fukuyama)
- The mission of the church is to witness to the temporary, provisional nature of society, and to hold up the hope of a new society in God’s time.

Bosch is clear that the six ways of mission should never be seen in isolation from the others, just as the life of Christ cannot be divided. He attempts an integrated statement of mission, drawing on all six. “Mission is the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus wagering on the future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God’s love, made visible in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.”

(Bosch, *Transforming Mission* p519)

Competition to catch the meaning of Mission

A more impressionist image of the meaning of mission comes from a competition organised by the then British Council of Churches twenty years, to find the 'best' definition of 'mission'. The results were published in the BCC magazine *Vision One*. Here are the top three:

**“Mission is breathing out that
which we are continually taking in,
rather than holding our breath.”**

**“Mission is God’s activity in the world, including church,
as likely in weakness as strength.”**

**“Mission is taking neighbours through the darkness to light
their candles from the light of the world”**

Here, we could discuss the differences in emphasis from the winner’s experiential based sense of sharing, through an incarnational witness to God-in-the-world, to the third specific witness to Christ as the source of light for the world.

Mission as a cross-cultural activity.

I believe that engaging in mission is a particular form of cross-cultured activity, which for centuries has included the attempt to export an ideology, world view, faith system and culture. While all these attempts to transfer intellectual and spiritual material from one people to another still go on,

there is now a possibility of understanding mission in new ways. At the CAIRS meeting, Michael Ipgrave mentioned Kenneth Cragg's distinction between 'embassy' and 'hospitality' – the former describing so much of mission activity over five hundred years as ambassadors interpreted one culture to another, while the latter recognises the need to sit down at table for fellowship. But as Michael pointed out, the idea of hospitality, with the implication that one is the host and another is a guest, no longer fits well in say, a multicultural English city. Who is the host and who is the guest there?

Is it possible to move beyond both these metaphors to one which supports the complex reality that we both share common human ground and at the same time inhabit a territory that is entirely unique? We can be invited by the other to step onto their ground, so that we might see the view from where they stand: this is in some way a venture into the sacred, holy ground of the other, in the course of which movement we may find that we are on divine holy ground (link to Martin Buber and the 'Eternal Between' present whenever an 'I' and 'Thou' meet).

The metaphor of 'ground' is one I have been struck by, ever since I came across a sentence written by Olive Schreiner, daughter of missionaries of South Africa, whose novel, 'The Story of an African Farm' (OUP 1992) was published in 1883.

"She thought of the narrowness of the limits within which a human soul may speak and be understood by its nearest of mental kin, and of how soon it reaches that solitary land of

the individual experience, in which no fellow footfall is ever heard.”

If mission is a cross-cultural activity, whatever else it is, Olive Schreiner reminds us that we don't have to travel to engage in cross-cultural activity since we practise it with every other human being we meet. Even though we may share common ground with family and close friends, we always reach a point beyond which the territory of the other is unexplored by any other person. If our interest is in discovery and enlargement of our horizon, rather than domination of the territory of the other, then it can be one of the most enriching things we can do as humans, to explore together the areas where we can stand together in our view of the landscape, and those points where we see things quite differently.

Whatever we think 'mission' means, I see this as the most important beginning to the enterprise – seeking with all our energies to meet the other in some ground where we may understand and be understood, and engage in action if we can for transformation. (Teasing links to the Trinity and hypostasis for those who like that sort of thing!) Personally I find that exercise is just about enough to be going on with, and would leave more advanced 'mission' to others better equipped.

Lastly, a beautiful example of someone trying to understand the faith of another, and expressing it in his own thought forms. Quoted by Andrew Ross in his study of the Jesuits in Japan and China from the 16th to the 18th century, it is said to have been composed by the Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722)

(Andrew Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, Edinburgh University Press, 1994 p197)

Books referred to here and at the CAIRS Meeting:

Simon Barrow, 'Christian Mission in Western Society'. CTBI London 2001

Kenneth Cracknell, 'Justice, Courtesy and Love, Theologians and Missionaries encountering World Religions, 1846-1914' Epworth Press, London 1995

Andrew Ross, 'A Vision Betrayed, The Jesuits in Japan and China 1542-1742 EUP 1994

Olive Schreiner, 'The Story of an African Farm' OUP 1992

Anton Wessels, 'Europe: Was it Every Really Christian?' SCM London 1994

John Munro

Thoughts on Mission II

This text was prepared by Dr Nelu Balaj,
Racial Justice Officer, ACTS

What is Mission? Towards an Understanding of Mission

The word 'mission' comes from the Latin 'missio' which means 'to send.' In Medieval Latin, the word was used to mean an assigned task. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines mission as 'the act or an instance of sending'. Today, the word is widely used in the secular world and is generally used to describe the task, or the purpose of an organisation.

The terms 'mission' and 'missionary' can boast a respectable pedigree. The word 'mission', as sending, has the same connotation as the Greek words 'meaning to send' and 'send forth a messenger, agent, message or command', which together occur over 200 times in the New Testament. However, the notion of 'mission' in the New Testament is not expressed exclusively through the term 'sending' – and does not exclusively carry the connotation associated with the notion of sending. It is widely accepted that 'sending' is not even the primary intended meaning of mission in the New Testament, but mission in the New Testament texts is expressed through a large number of terms and comprised a variety of missionary approaches.

The term 'mission' in its 'sending' usage was employed for the first time by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century to describe the task of its members, who were sent to distant places, to reconvert the Protestants, and to convert the pagans in the new colonised territories. Before that the word was used in relation to the doctrine of Trinity to convey the act of the sending of the Son by the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son. Therefore, it is not inaccurate to assert that the origin of the term, in its 'sending in order to convert' usage, was closely associated with the colonial expansion of the West.

Often in the past (and to some extent in some circles even today) it was customary to consider mission essentially as 'sending' and to understand it mainly in terms of 'a programme to win others, in your point of view, or to your side, by permission and even by coercion.'" But as mentioned above, the 'propagandistic' meaning of mission is not the main intended meaning for mission in the New Testament texts or in the tradition of the church and its early teachings. Rather the New Testament texts reveal a plurality of meaning for mission and an array of theologies of mission. Moreover it is commonly held that mission is not a static concept and churches in different eras and different contexts have developed different understandings of mission.

For this reason it is very difficult to define mission and to produce a formulation of what mission is that would do justice to 'biblical basis', historical developments, practical expression and theological developments and orientations.

Bosch argued that there is not such thing as 'mission,' period, but mission is in continual shift, adaptation and 'transformation', or 'on-the-way'. He also points out that 'mission ultimately remains undefinable' and attempts to confine it to narrow proclamations should be avoided.

When describing the mission of the church, one needs to pay attention to the three important elements of missionary activity kerygma, which denotes the proclamation of the God's message of salvation koinonia, which signifies the sharing of fellowship in unity and equality of all believers in communion with the trinity and diaconia, which refers to serving the needs of the people.

Mission as a concept conveys at least two contributions: one historical and the other theological. Historically mission refers to the attempt of the church to evangelise or witness, in different ways and forms, to people or groups of peoples who are situated beyond the church boundaries. Theologically mission signifies the expression of God's inner life into the history of creation through the history of salvation, which reveals his love by his continuous self giving in the struggle of redemption of the world, manifested, firstly through Jesus' death and then inaugurated in his resurrection.

To put it in a nutshell and in very general terms (and a rough formulation), the mission of the church has to do with the task of the church to take part (as one of the agents) in God's mission (*Missio Dei*) of salvation (liberation from principalities and powers) towards a hope of new life and new reality; in

the fulfilment of the eschaton which is the final revelation where God is all in all – h formulation).

30.

The Salvation Army

UNITED KINGDOM

VISION STATEMENT

“We will be a Spirit-filled, radical,
Growing movement
with a burning desire to lead people
into saving knowledge of Jesus Christ,
actively serve the community
and fight for social justice.”

UNITED KINGDOM 20/20 VISION

“Our vision is that by the year 2020,
we shall see a network of healthy,
reproducing and mission orientated corps,
strategically placed within every viable
community in the Territory,
each sharing with others, in a culturally relevant way,
the eternal and abundant life
Christ died to provide and commissioned his Church
to proclaim, together with a similar
network of social services, delivery units,
each meeting physical, emotional and
spiritual needs.

Five Marks of Mission

1. Proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom
2. Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers
3. Responding to human need by loving service
4. Seeking to transform unjust structures of society
5. Safeguarding the integrity of creation, sustaining and renewing the life of the earth

The Five Marks of Mission were adopted in the 'Called to be the One' process developed by Churches Together in England. They originally appeared as Four Marks of Mission in a Methodist document of 1885 and were later adopted as Five Marks of Mission by the Lambeth Conference and then by The Methodist Church and by the United Reformed Church. They are now used by various bodies.



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