



# Vision & Core Principles of the Central Mission Team

## VISION

### Mission is Central.

The Central Mission Team seeks to support the members of Central in fulfilling their calling to participate in God's mission to the world and to develop meaningful partnerships with like-minded churches and organizations.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

### **1. The Definition of Mission: Sending**

The root of the word mission means "to send," and we believe that God never draws us into relationship with himself without also sending us out to engage the world (Mark 3:13-16; John 20:21).

Jesus instructed his disciples that he would send his followers into the world as witnesses (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-49), ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9-10) and agents (Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:13-16) of the loving and dynamic reign of God. We, therefore, understand ourselves to be people who have been sent into our neighborhood, city and world in order to share the message of the gospel, to bear witness to the kingdom of God, and to seek the well-being and flourishing of all (Jeremiah 29:7).

### **2. The Source of Mission: The Triune God**

Mission does not primarily describe an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God and all mission is derived from the nature of God's being. In fact, the Triune God is defined in terms of mission. God the Father sent Jesus into the world, and Jesus describes himself as "the sent one" (Mark 9:37; John 5:37; John 8:18). Together God the Father and God the Son send the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; John 15:26).

God is on a mission. As Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17). He has a purpose and a goal for the world he has made, and God calls us to participate with him towards the accomplishment of that mission. As the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit, so now the Triune God sends the church to participate in his mission (John 20:21). Mission arises from the heart of God. It is communicated from his heart to ours and then from our hearts to our neighbors.

God's mission is to make himself known to the ends of the earth and to establish his kingdom and accomplish his will on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10; Act 20:27; Ephesians 1:9-10). The Triune God precedes and undergirds all our activity because God is the source of mission. John Stott writes, "Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God."

### **3. The Guide for Mission: Scripture**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments portray God bent on accomplishing his sovereign, purposeful

mission in the world from beginning to end (Luke 24:44-47).

On two separate occasions in Luke 24, Jesus takes his followers on a tour through the Old Testament in order to show that all the Scriptures are ultimately about the Messiah and that his message of repentance and forgiveness is to be declared to all nations. Jesus thus reveals that the Scriptures find their focus and fulfillment not only in the Messiah, but also in God's mission to the world. Mission, in other words, is what the Bible is all about.

And just as the Bible was the primary means of shaping God's people to participate in God's mission in the beginning, so the Bible continues to be the primary means God uses to form his people to be his witnesses now. Scripture determines the mission, and all our beliefs and actions regarding mission must be founded upon what the Bible teaches. In other words, the Bible not only reveals God's mission but also forms us to participate in it.

#### **4. The Instrument for Mission: The Whole Church**

God's called and sent people are the primary instruments God has chosen to enact his mission. As Christopher Wright suggests, "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission."

Mission cannot be relegated to one activity among many others, or reserved for a select few within the church. Mission must be the central defining characteristic of the whole church.

There is no participation in Christ without participating in his mission. To be a follower of Jesus Christ and to belong to his body is to be called into the mission of God. A missionary posture should thus be the normal expression of the church in all times and places. A church that fails to be missional, fails to be a church.

#### **5. The Arena for Mission: Everywhere! All the Time!**

The arena for mission includes the whole world (Mark 16:15) But this has not always been adequately understood. Discussion about mission often conjures up the thought of a particular "mission field" often located "elsewhere" like the inner city or a foreign country.

But the mission field is everywhere—including our own street. To live a missional life, therefore, means to adopt the posture of a missionary without ever leaving our own zip code. It means participating in God's mission right where we are.

Jesus focused his earthly ministry principally among one people in one place, but clearly intends to reach all people everywhere (Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 28:16-20). The call to "go into all the world" means geographically we must go everywhere (both near and far), practically we must do everything (both word and deed), and culturally we must engage every realm (not only spiritual life, but also social, economic, and political life) with the message of the gospel. As we do, we find that God not only uses us for good in the lives of others, but also uses others for good in our lives as well.

#### **6. The Character of Mission: Holiness**

Nothing undercuts our witness more than the failure to do God's mission in Jesus' way. The way in which the gospel is communicated must be consistent with the gospel itself.

The gospel is a message of love, grace, freedom, peace and joy and must be communicated in a similar spirit. There must be consistency between the message and the messenger (Philippians 1:27).

## **7. The Motive for Mission: Joy**

God commissions his followers to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to teach them all that God has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

As a result it has been customary to speak of a “missionary mandate” and to see the motive for mission as obedience to a command. But the early Christians never mention simple obedience to the Great Commission as the primary driver for mission. To do so, as Lesslie Newbigin pointed out, would turn mission into a burden rather than a joy. No, the motive for mission is joy. It begins with an explosion of joy produced by the gospel itself.

The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive must be shared, and the joy of the gospel is complete only when it is shared with the whole world.

## **8. The Goal of Mission: Praise**

The goal of mission is not self-serving. The goal of mission is the glory of God. Paul explains the primary reason why we participate in God’s mission. The goal is “that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:15).

The chief end of mission is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Lesslie Newbigin writes, “At the heart of mission is simply the desire to be with him and to give him the service of our lives. At the heart of mission is thanksgiving and praise. We distort matters when we make mission an enterprise of our own in which we can justify ourselves by our works...Mission is an acted out doxology. That is its deepest secret. Its purpose is that God may be glorified.”

## **9. The Beginning of Mission: Prayer**

In light of the fact that the mission ultimately belongs to God, the place to begin is with prayer (Matthew 9:36-38; Luke 10:2). We cannot hope to know what God is trying to do in the world or how we are supposed to participate without prayer.

Jesus made our dependence on him clear when he said: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Before we do anything else, we must begin on our knees.

## **MISSION TEAM**

*mission@centralchurchnyc.org*

Jamie Knauss  
jbknauss4@gmail.com

Brian Brenberg  
brian.brenberg@gmail.com

Scott Stephenson  
sstephenson@verisk.com

Ed Sirya  
esirya@centralchurchnyc.org