

MISSIO DEI—A PEOPLE UNITED TO GOD IN MISSION

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*Introduction*¹

Before we begin our reflection on the involvement or practices of the *missio Dei* in the Church of the Nazarene, we need to understand clearly the meaning of this term and how it has come to us. Its implications for the entire ministry of the church, not just missions, are very broad and significant. So, we will begin with a summary of the details necessary to understand this paradigm of the mission.

David Bosch (1929–1992), a well-known South African missiologist, in his book *Mission in Transformation*, warns us,

We have to distinguish between mission (singular) and missions (plural). The first refers primarily to *missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, the self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Missio Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. *Missions* (the *missions ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church) refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *missio Dei* (Davies 1966, 33; cf. Hoekendijk 1967^a, 346; Rütli 1972, 232).²

I. Historical Background or Development of Missio Dei

The concept of *missio Dei*, God's mission, has a long history. It goes back to St. Augustine (late 4th century) and Thomas Aquinas (13th century), when they described the activity of the Triune God.³ But the term itself, *missio Dei*, has been more recently used in the 20th century, about 70 years ago.⁴

The *missio Dei* approach flourishes again as “a theological response to an existential crisis of mission in the mid-twentieth century.”⁵ The predominant concept of mission, particularly in the missionary movements of the West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was that mission belonged to the church, an ecclesiocentric approach. “They

¹ All biblical quotations in this work are from the King James Version, 1960.

² David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), 10.

³ Alex Sserwadda, *Missio Dei, A Fundamental Concept of Mission Theology* (2019). In https://www.academia.edu/42169792/MISSIO_DEI_A_FUNDAMENTAL_CONCEPT_OF_MISSION_THEOLOGY.

⁴ Melissa Turner, “Critically Analyse the Concept of *Missio Dei* and Its Significance for Contemporary Mission.” In https://eurasia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Critically_Analyse_the_Concept_of_Missio.pdf.

⁵ Chung-Hyun Baik and Sinwoong Kim, “*Missio Dei*,” *St Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology* at <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/MissioDei#section2.pdf>.

conceived of mission as having its origin in the church and therefore reduced it to church activities, such as evangelism and social action.”⁶

I continue with a very good summary that Baik and Kim, in their article “*Missio Dei*,”⁷ present to us of the resurgence of the concept and term *missio Dei*:

At the heart of this attempt [to redefine mission] was the idea of grounding mission in the nature and act of God. The intellectual origins of this development are attributed to Karl Barth’s lecture at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932. In this lecture, Barth “initiated the connection between missions and the doctrine of the Trinity,” proposing a theocentric understanding of mission (Flett 2010, 12). Soon, other theologians . . . joined the development of this approach to mission (Bosch 1991, 390). Among them was Karl Hartenstein, who first used the term *missio Dei* to articulate this ongoing development.... However, a missiological use of the term in relation to the emerging Barthian reflection on mission first appeared in Hartenstein’s essay in 1934 (Flett 2010, 131). This missiological reflection then began to gain wider acceptance through the International Missionary Council (IMC) at Willingen in 1952, although no explicit use of the term was found during the conference (Flett 2010, 11; see also Engelsviken 2003, 482). It was since Georg F. Vicedom’s book in 1958, entitled *Missio Dei: Einführung in eine Theologie der Mission*, that the phrase *missio Dei* became popularized in missiology (see McIntosh 2000, 631).

After the meetings in Willingen, this concept of *missio Dei* was accepted and incorporated by Protestants and then by the Orthodox and Catholic churches. And, in addition, another understanding of what *missio Dei* was, its process and its meaning, began to emerge, and it took on another nuance for some more liberal theologians. This second conception maintained that *missio Dei* means that God articulates himself, without the need for our help through missionary efforts in that sense. Thus, *missio Dei* is “God’s activity in the secular world over and above the church, saying, ‘the world provides the agenda.’”⁸

Bosch notes, “Supporters of the broad concept tended to radicalize the concept of the *missio Dei* as something greater than the mission of the church, to the point of suggesting that it excluded church involvement.”⁹ This caused some to question the usefulness of the concept of *missio Dei* since it lent itself to “being employed ... by people who subscribe to mutually exclusive theological positions [Hoedemaker].”¹⁰

Bosch states, “...[I]t is undeniable that the term *missio Dei* has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can be considered as the author or bearer of the mission. The mission is first and finally the work of the triune God: Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world; a ministry in which the church has the

⁶ Baik and Kim, “*Missio Dei*.”

⁷ Baik and Kim, “*Missio Dei*.”

⁸ Sserwadda, *Missio Dei*.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 479.

¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 479.

privilege of participating (cf. LWF 1988, 6–10).”¹¹ So in the past few decades, “there has been a subtle but decisive shift toward an understanding of mission as God’s mission [*missio Dei*].”¹²

II. Biblical-Theological Foundations of *Missio Dei*

As we have seen so far, the Latin term *missio Dei* is commonly interpreted as “God’s mission,” but it can also be understood literally as “God’s sending” (McIntosh 2000, 631). *Missio* refers to the intertrinitarian process of God’s own sending of himself into the world, denoting God the Father sending God the Son in the Incarnation and sending God the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Schirmacher 2017, 9–10).

Theologians find the biblical foundation for the *missio Dei* in a group of passages, centered on the key theme ‘sending’ (*missio*) in reference to the nature and activity of the triune God... [It] is noteworthy that this Trinitarian pattern of the *missio* includes the sending of Jesus by the Father (e.g., Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 4:18; John 3:17; Acts 3:20), the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Jesus (e.g., John 14:26; Luke 24:29; 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 5:6), Jesus’ sending of the disciples (e.g., Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:7, John 4:38; Acts 9:17) and sending people out by the church and by the apostles (e.g., Acts 8:14; Romans 10:15; 2 Corinthians 9:3; Ephesians 6:22; Philippians 2:19) [and sending the church into the world and sending God himself into the world].¹³

The Bible presents us with a portrait of God that is undoubtedly intentional... You could say that the mission of this book is to explore that divine mission and all that is behind it and flows from it in revelation to God himself, God’s people, and God’s world, as it is revealed to us in God’s Word [God’s mission document].¹⁴

I will now highlight these important points regarding the *missio Dei* and illustrate them with some biblical passages.

God’s Sending

The *missio Dei* postulates that, in the first place, God sends himself on mission; he is not only the one who sends, but at the same time the one sent. His essence is mission, he is mission and he is on mission. Initially, from creation, by doing everything for his praise and particularly the human being to have an intimate communion with him. After the disobedience of the first couple, their mission is the redemption of humanity and all creation to restore all that has been lost.

After the fall, when it seemed that the newly begun human history was about to end, God did not leave things at that. Rather, by His grace we see Him drawing near to them and heralding judgment and future redemption (Genesis 3:9-10, 14-15).

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 479.

¹² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 476.

¹³ Baik and Kim, “*Missio Dei*.”

¹⁴ Turner, “Critically Analyse.”

The Sending of Jesus

God's mission continues to expand, and so the Father sent his Son, Jesus. Christ continues God's mission in the world and is also God's mission. God had promised to send the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, as part of the *missio Dei* (Isaiah 7:14; 60:1-6).

Just as Karl Barth emphasized that mission is not only Trinitarian but also Christological,... although mission is Trinitarian, it is Christological as well, "because it is precisely Christology that accentuates God's entrance (his mission) into the world."... mission holds a pneumatological dimension because ... "the Spirit does not replace Christ, his presence is the presence of Christ. The mission of the Son is continued in the mission of the Spirit and made concrete by the mission of the disciples into the world" (see John 20:21-22).¹⁵

Jesus constantly expressed in his ministry that he was carrying out the Father's mission. "Jesus, the missionary par excellence... receives all from the Father."¹⁶

Jesus did not come on His own, but the Father sent Him (John 8:42). He did not speak his own words but the words of the Father who sent him (John 3:34; 7:17; 12:49). He did not do his own work but the work of the Father who sent him (John 5:36; 9:4). He did not come to do his own will but the will of his Father who sent him (John 5:30; 6:38).¹⁷

The mission is to participate in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with its overall goal of establishing Christ's reign over all creation.

Although the *missio Dei* originates in God's mission, Jesus' sending into the world was crucial and necessary for the fulfillment of God's mission. Together with God, everything that Jesus was and did personified the mission: he gave it a body and made it concrete. It provided the necessary basis for accomplishing God's mission in the world through his Incarnation, ministry (teaching and miracles), disciple formation, death on the cross, his subsequent resurrection, his commission to the church, and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Sending of the Holy Spirit

And without a doubt, Christ's sending of the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, to the 120 gathered in the Upper Room at Pentecost was key to the continuation of Christ's ministry and God's mission through the church.

In John 16:5-7, Jesus tells his disciples, "But now I am going to him who sent me; and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have told you these things, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I should go; for if I did not go away, the Comforter would not come to you; but if I go away, I will send him to you."

The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), gave birth to the church and accompanied and led it with power in mission from its inception (see Acts). Today, he accompanies it in its global outreach and will accompany it to the end. In addition, through the

¹⁵ Sserwadda, *Missio Dei*.

¹⁶ Baik and Kim, "*Missio Dei*."

¹⁷ Paul R. Orjala, *God's Mission is My Mission* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House), 20; and Baik and Kim, "*Missio Dei*," quoting Hartenstein.

Holy Spirit, we receive his spiritual gifts as means of grace for the faithful and effective accomplishment of the mission.

The Sending of the Church (His Disciples)

Likewise, the church has been called by God on mission, through Christ, in the power of the Spirit, no longer as the initiator, or whose mission belongs to him, but as the Body of Christ with whose activity he participates in God's mission in a particular way. Since God is on mission throughout the world, mission is no longer to be perceived as from the West to others, but from anywhere to everywhere.

God has chosen the Body of Christ—his church—as the primary agent of mission and the members of that church—you and me—as his primary mission agents. But like Christ, we need to accept our mission and joyfully be involved in God's mission to see a lost world of alienated people reconciling to him and to each other. We need to be ready to be sent and also to send others.¹⁸

The church can only be authentically on mission in obedience as a *mission*.... The church must be missional; it is the defining trait, because not to be missional is not to be church.... Mission and the church are inseparable.... There is no call to a Christian life apart from a call to mission.¹⁹

Pentecost makes it clear that global mission in the power of the Spirit is the most important hallmark of the church of Jesus Christ. At least twice, Jesus told his disciples to wait until the Holy Spirit arrived before beginning the mission to all nations (Mark 16:15–20; Acts 1:4–11). The Holy Spirit would come in Jesus' place to convict the world of the gospel (John 16:7–11). When the Holy Spirit descended, the New Testament church and global missions began at the same time.²⁰

God's Sending to the World

Moreover, God accomplishes his mission both through the church and directly in the world. "...*Missio Dei* has been active throughout history, and it consists of God orienting himself to the whole world, both inside and outside the church, through historical events."²¹

The Last Sending

The last sending of the *missio Dei* is God's sending of the Glorified Christ at his Second Coming to seek his people and bring about the consummation of all time.

However, it would be to restrict the *missio Dei* to restricting it only to the term send. Rather, this term includes everything that needs to be done to announce salvation and what God does: the calling, the preparation, the sending out of workers, as well as the

¹⁸ Orjala, *God's Mission is My Mission*, 21.

¹⁹ Turner, "Critically analyze"; Bosch, *Mission in Transformation*; and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei*, God's Missional Nature in https://www.academia.edu/41088258/Missio_Dei_God_s_Missional_Nature.

²⁰ Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei*.

²¹ Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei*.

fulfillment of their various services. All these elements belong to the realization of God's love, as determined by the *missio*.²²

Missio Dei Connection to Discipleship

In the priestly prayer, Jesus asks the Father. "As you *sent me* into the world, so have I sent them into the world." "Jesus said to them (his disciples) again, 'Peace be with you.' As the Father has sent me, even so I *send you*" (John 17:18; 20:21).

In the New Testament, Jesus' sending of the disciples is seen as the continuation of Jesus' sending by his Father and the sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son. Jesus' sending by the Father (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16; Acts 3:20, 26; approximately 50 times in John) and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Jesus (John 14:26; 15:26; Luke 24:29) is designated by the same words "to send," etc. (from the Greek: *apostello* and *pempo* and related words, Latin: *missio*, etc.) and by other common expressions, such as sending people by God.²³

Thus, the mission of the church expressed in the Great Commission, (Matthew 28:16-20), shared by the risen Jesus to his original disciples, the Eleven, and through them to the church of all time is the way to specify the *missio Dei*. After Jesus laid the foundation for the continuation of the *missio Dei*, now through his teachings, death and resurrection, disciple-making becomes the way to make the *missio Dei* operative in the world through the church.

III. Implications of Missio Dei for the Church of the Nazarene

As Nazarenes, reflection on the theme of *missio Dei* is not new. As early as 1985, Nazarene missionary and missiologist Paul Orjala wrote the book *His Mission is My Mission* (NPH). In this simple but very well articulated writing, the author was perhaps one of the first Nazarenes to focus the mission on the *missio Dei*.

Then, in 2011, some 26 years later and now 14 years ago, some professors at our Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City compiled the book *Missio Dei, A Wesleyan Understanding* (Beacon Hill Press). And certainly, over time there have been other contributions from Nazarenes on this subject. Unfortunately, I believe that neither of these two books was translated into Spanish.

So, in a sense, for us Nazarenes to speak of *missio Dei* is to pick up the subject, although I would not know how much this matrix concept of mission has intentionally influenced the approach and practice of ministry to our local churches, and even globally to our church.

We will now discuss how the *missio Dei* coincides with some aspects of our Wesleyan theology and propose some practices for the ministry of the Church of the Nazarene based on this theme.

Let's look at theology...

If the church's practices are not motivated by red-hot theological convictions, the church rushes to go from fashion to fashion in search of the next new idea in passing. In contrast,

²² Schirmacher, *Missio Dei*.

²³ Schirmacher, *Missio Dei*.

if the church's practices spring from deep theological convictions, the church will remain centered on God and His purposes.²⁴

Theologically, there are many coincidences between Wesleyan theology and the *missio Dei*. Hence, the first practice as Nazarenes of the *missio Dei* that I suggest has to do with relating this concept of mission to our theology.

1. *Missio Dei and the Memory of God*

[M]ission begins with God's love for all [his sending love] ... from the depths of his love for us, the Father has sent his own beloved Son to reconcile all things to himself, that we may together with all men, through the Spirit, be made one in him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God (Goodall 1953:189).²⁵ God always acts from his love, which is why "God's mission flows from God's love in the Trinity and guides the mission in every aspect."²⁶

Henning Wrogemann and Theo Sundermeier, two German missiologists, have derived the *missio Dei* from God's love: "God comes to people as a lover." Wrogemann appeals to the expression "*misio amoris Dei*" and argues that this action on God's part should be understood as an expression ... of its essence."²⁷

Hence, through the emphasis of the *missio Dei* as the love of God, we can relate it to two great theological themes of ours: grace and holiness. *Missio Dei* is grace—it is eminently grace. It clearly reflects the grace of God on mission from creation to the end of all things. The motivation for God's mission is his love, the love we do not deserve, but desperately need.

On the other hand, the *missio Dei* as love leads us to the life of holiness. We hold as Wesleyans that God is essentially holy love. And since the core of the life of holiness is love for God and for our neighbour, then the dominant purpose of God's plan on mission is to make us holy, to fill us with his love. This is through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit accomplished by Christ on the cross and in the resurrection. We could affirm, with the *missio Dei* in mind, that God in essence is a mission of love or love in mission, the holy missionary love.

In this sense, the *missio Dei* is consonant with both our distinctive mission and our mission statement. That is, we contribute as the Church of the Nazarene to the *missio Dei*, God's mission, by "spreading biblical holiness throughout the world" and by "making Christlike disciples in the nations": forming, equipping, multiplying, and sending disciples.

2. *Prevenient Grace*

The doctrine of prevenient, prior, or preparatory grace for salvation agrees very well with the *missio Dei*. We believe in a God who seeks us, who persuades us to himself, who uses the circumstances of our life without him to draw us to him, showing us our need for him. We are in the crosshairs of his mission, as main objectives since we are born and God never gives up. The

²⁴ Keith Schwanz and Joseph Coleson (ed.), *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2011).

²⁵ Baik and Kim, "*Missio Dei*."

²⁶ Sserwadda, *Missio Die*. The author quotes The Lausanne Movement Cape Town commitment of 2010.

²⁷ Schirmacher, *Missio Die*, 52-53.

missio Dei presents us with a God who has done everything possible and impossible to achieve his mission of transforming love in us.

Keith Schwanz, professor at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, in the preface to the aforementioned book, *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding*, reminds us that

...missionary literature describes God's initiative in seeking to redeem the world, which is understood as prevenient grace from the Wesleyan theological perspective. God's prior grace draws people to God. Further, Wesleyans believe that God offers the invitation to all through unlimited atonement. Christ died for all, all who receive God's gift through faith are saved. Since God is already working through prevenient grace, the role of the church is to participate in God's mission already begun. God's desire is that every person may be spiritually alive through faith in Jesus. The church, then, must extend God's reconciliation to all with whom it comes in contact.²⁸

So *missio Dei* feeds our radical optimism because in the words of Jesus, "My Father has hitherto worked, and I work" (John 5:17).

Internships...

Next, I would like to propose some specific practices so that as the Church of the Nazarene we can live the *missio Dei*.

1. The church needs to be made aware of the close relationship between the *missio Dei* and our Wesleyan theology, through biblical teachings and preaching, personal and group conversations, among other means.
2. The church must understand its existence and identity as a mission. An important element of God's reconciling mission, *missio Dei*, was and is the formation of a redeemed People of his as an agent of the mission, seeking the reconciliation of the world through Christ. This new people is invited by God to join him in participating in his mission in the world.
3. Church on mission. Following the guiding concept of the *missio Dei*, the church must focus or refocus its ministry on God's mission through the church guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This will lead the church to collaborate with God in the extension of the Kingdom in the world.
4. The Kingdom of God. "The reign of the Kingdom of God holistically completes the concept of *missio Dei* as it reveals our growing holistic relationships with our loving creator who simultaneously unites us as one body of believers, participating in one mission, the *missio Dei*; where the triune God is eternally glorified... *missio Dei* illuminates the church as 'a people who belong to the Kingdom and clearly must have a central role in its realization' (Arthur 2013)."²⁹

In the end, the *missio Dei* has the ultimate goal of establishing the Kingdom of God in all its fullness between the human family and the world. The Kingdom was Jesus' message and inaugurated it by coming into the world and through his ministry and work—sacrifice and resurrection. We saw the manifestations of the Kingdom with Jesus, and even today God

²⁸ Schwanz and Coleson, *Missio Dei*.

²⁹ Turner, "Critically Analyze"; Sserwadda, *Missio Dei*.

continues to establish and extend his Kingdom, to grow his Kingdom, to bring it to its final and total consummation eternally.

5. Incarnational shipping. Although the most direct emphasis of the *missio Dei* is the God who sends—himself, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church—the incarnational dimension is implicit and must be explicitly highlighted. For God as a person whom he sends are people to embody the gospel through their lifestyle.

The model of mission we receive from Jesus' example is the incarnation. Jesus came not only by taking on our humanity, but also by embodying who God is: his Kingdom, love, and purposes for humanity. As a church, we must imitate him and guide the mission, more than in strategies and methods, in people and as people to be and live Christ for others.

6. Discipleship as a mission. A culture of discipleship needs to be promoted and developed as the heart or axis around which the pastor and mission are carried out in the church. This requires an assessment of our current condition regarding our understanding of what the church is and its mission. And then design and develop a local strategy and process, a route, to form disciples and disciplers of several generations.

7. Pastoral ministry. Pastoral ministry plays a key and strategic role in leading the church to assume and practice God's mission, *missio Dei*, as its own mission.

Andrew Purves, professor of Pastoral Theology, argues that practical theology [which includes pastoral care] "is concerned with action: first, with God's action, the *missio Dei*; and secondly with the action or praxis [participation] of the church in her life and ministry in faithful communion with the God who acts, the mission of the church ... our actions are only a participation in the Holy Spirit, to the human response of our Lord on our behalf to the previous action of God."³⁰

Will Willimon emphasizes, "Ministry is therefore something that God does through the church before it is something that we do."³¹ Therefore, the pastoral care of the pastor and the church must be carried out aware that it is not really our ministry to others, but us uniting ourselves to the care that God in mission and the Good Shepherd are already carrying out.

8. The new generations. The *missio Dei*, moreover, directs us to aim to minister to all generations and human families. So creatively, it should aim to reach and develop Christ-followers of children, youth, adults, married couples, and entire families as the missionary force of the church now and into the future.

9. Evangelism. Develop contextual evangelism strategies or plans as part of the local discipleship process to follow God and Christ in what you are doing in the world. We target all types of people, regardless of their lifestyle, background, sexual orientation, or ethnicity; no one is left out. We believe that the God in mission of love is capable of transforming every human being and reality in this world.

³⁰ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: John Knox, 2004), xxv.

³¹ William H. Willimon, *Calling & Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 16.

10. Entire sanctification. As a denomination, including all of our local churches around the world, we could place a global emphasis on the experience of entire sanctification through the Holy Spirit as indispensable to mission. This core doctrine must be preached and taught in every local church, creating the atmosphere to be experienced and witnessed by every Nazarene.

11. Worship. “Driven by love, the ‘peculiar people’ (1 Peter 2:9) respond to God’s call to embody God’s reconciling mission of the world [the story of God’s mission]. On the Sabbath, a day of rest and renewal, God’s people gather to praise, confess, and send. Both show God’s mission; both express adoration.... This involves cooperating with God. It would be absurd to praise God for his mighty acts, but refuse to participate in his mission, either out of negligence or opposition to God’s way.”³²

Therefore, our worship needs to be mission. That is, more than just worship, mostly singing and preparing for preaching in worship, worship first needs to be focused on God, not on our preferences. It must be the platform or springboard that will lead us to full participation in the mission.

In worship we recognize and exalt God in his mission, and we are filled with him so that at the conclusion of our corporate worship we can continue in collaboration with his mission in the reality of life. Worship that doesn’t lead us to mission is not biblical worship.

12. Compassion. “Compassion is at the core of God’s work [and care] in the world. Alleviating suffering and freeing the oppressed are priorities for God. Therefore, these are also the priorities of God’s people, God’s hands and feet in the world. We must seek out the needy and the suffering, and offer them relief in the name of our compassionate God.”³³

It is imperative that the church continue to equip every Nazarene and local church to assume a lifestyle of constant compassion. At the same time, it is important to get involved in the work for our communities and actively participate in social transformation, and to offer material and spiritual help in times of natural disasters and of all kinds. In this concrete way we will be uniting ourselves to the mission that God is carrying out in the world, beyond the church.

13. Missions. Missions such as sharing in God’s mission, the *missio Dei*, in the nations is a way to become partners or join in what God is doing in all the countries of the world.

According to *Ad Gente* (Latin for “To the Peoples”—it is a fundamental decree of the Second Vatican Council [1965] of the Catholic Church), the church is sent by God to preach the gospel to all, and this sense of sending is grounded in the mission of the Trinity: God the Father sent God the Son through the Incarnation; Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit of God the Father on the day of Pentecost; and Jesus Christ sent his own disciples and apostles to found the church. Therefore, the church is by its very nature missionary and is sent out into the world to preach the gospel and plant churches.³⁴

The sending of missionaries from one country to another is still necessary, although more than individual missionaries, God desires to raise up a missionary people. However, the missionary’s ministry must consist of realizing what God is already doing among his people and

³² Schwanz and Coleson, *Missio Dei*.

³³ Schwanz and Coleson, *Missio Dei*.

³⁴ Baik and Kim, “*Missio Dei*.”

uniting with him. In reality, the most significant task is not simply to carry out the mission with the people of a country, but to leave the mission in their minds and hearts, and to train leaders, pastors and churches as agents of God's mission, and to continue from their place to other nations. This principle is for both global and local missions. We need to continue to approach the missionary ministry of the church in this way following the *missio Dei*.

14. Feast of love. Perhaps they could remember the so-called Love Feast. Wesley took this concept from the Moravians and modified it. It then became a common practice among Methodists in the U.S. colonies, and eventually, Bresse made it a regular practice among the early Nazarenes.

This feast basically consisted of a special time held every two months in the Sunday afternoon service at the First Church in Los Angeles and especially on Christmas Day. It was a celebration of God's love, a means of grace for his people, who edified them to continue with the *missio Dei*.

The love feast included prayer, public reading of the scriptures, distribution of bread and water, and singing; Most of the time was reserved for testimonies. Conversion or complete sanctification was common. Eyewitness accounts often describe love feasts as spiritually intense events. It is recorded that between 500 and 700 people attended the Christmas service, which lasted two and a half hours.³⁵ Could we hold this feast again today in our local churches around the world?

15. Contract Renewal Service.³⁶ This is another practice from our Wesleyan heritage that would be helpful to pick up. Wesley published his "Directives for Renewing Our Covenant with God" in 1780, in which he embodied the essence or core of spirituality as he understood it: the total commitment of one's whole life to God. Wesley believed that serious Christians—those followers of Jesus who desire their lives and actions to conform to their beliefs and intentions—would benefit from an annual service of reflection and dedication, in which Christians were invited to:

- To see life from God's blessed and eternal perspective (the potential for the mission for which we were *formed*).
- Confessing the sin that warps us and our absolute need for God's mercy and grace (the problem for mission caused by *the warp*).
- To offer ourselves to God in Christ, who will receive us and assign us our work (the promise for mission in our *reformation*).

It would be a great blessing for our church to hold a service each year to renew our covenant commitment to God and His mission!

³⁵ Dirk R. Ellis, "The Forgotten Feast," *Holiness Today*, May 15, 2019. Wesley prepared a special prayer for this occasion, Covenant Prayer. Updated versions in Spanish can be found at <https://transformaelmundo.com/2022/07/15/oraciones-que-cambiaron-el-mundo-juan-wesley-y-la-oracion-del-pacto/> and in https://www.ngumc.org/files/fileslibrary/bishop/covenant%20prayer_spanish.pdf.

³⁶ Schwanz and Coleson, *Missio Dei*.

16. The approach and practices of the Nazarene missionary and missiologist Paul Orjala can serve us here. In his aforementioned book, Orjala asks the question: how do we know that biblical mission is being carried out? I would like to add the following six indicators that Nazarenes can use as part of our practices starting with the *missio Dei*.³⁷

1. When the church is penetrating the world in the power of the Spirit with a relevant witness of Christ and the gospel.
2. When new people are finding Christ as Savior and are being transformed into sentient members, and ministering in his church, extending the Kingdom of God in new lives.
3. When believers are experiencing God's sanctifying grace through the cleansing and filling of the Spirit, which equips them for mission.
4. When new churches are being planted and thus the Kingdom of God is spreading to new geographical areas and into new cultural and social units.
5. When the church as the Body of Christ is ministering to individuals in social service (meeting people's temporal needs) and bringing about necessary changes in appropriate social action.

When these activities are carried out in such a way and in such a spirit that it can be said that what the church is doing is what God is doing.

Conclusion

In summary, I quote from the Lausanne Covenant, in its article 15 (God's Purpose), which states,

The triune God is a missionary God, who has called us to participate joyfully in his redemptive mission in the world. It seeks to clarify that mission is, first and foremost, about God and his redemptive purpose and initiative in the world.... Put plainly, mission is more about God and who he is than it is about us and what we do.... It is not enough to simply proclaim Christ. Our central proclamation must be reconceptualized within the larger framework of God's mission (*missio Dei*) and with the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.³⁸

Being immersed in a world in crisis, changing and challenging, in which we have had to live and minister, it is essential that, as the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of Christ around the world, we unite with God in his mission, as our highest priority. Without neglecting who we are as a church, our denominational mission, our Wesleyan theology, the values and vision that identify us, we can use the *missio Dei*, God's mission, as our ally.

It is our desire that the implementation of the practices suggested in this writing will serve us as the people of God to focus on the *missio Dei* and impact our world by contributing to

³⁷ Orjala, *God's Mission is My Mission*, 24-25.

³⁸ Timothy C. Tennent, "Lausanne and World Evangelicalism: Theological Distinctives and Missionological Impact," (2014) in <https://lausanne.org/es/contenido/lausana-y-el-evangelicalismo-mundial-distintivos-teologicos-e-impacto-misionologico>.

the extension of the Kingdom. And thus, we are part of a movement of God in our generation and beyond. May we go from *missio Dei* to *motus Dei*, “the movement of God.”³⁹

Let us remember that “Mission is born in the heart of God. God is the source of a love that sends. This is the deepest meaning of mission. It is impossible to penetrate further; mission exists simply because God loves people.”⁴⁰ It all begins and ends with the *missio Dei*, God’s mission.

May God help us to accept this crucial challenge with joy and dedication! We remember Wesley’s words: “The most important thing is that God is with us.”

³⁹ Wes Watkins, “From ‘*Missio Dei*’ to ‘*Motus Dei*’: The recovery of movement” in <https://evangelicalfocus.com/middle-eastern-perspectives/27422/from-missio-dei-to-motus-dei-the-recovery-of-movement>.

⁴⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 260.