

Conversations for Mission: An AGM Field Guide

Why | How | Who

Our Annual General Meetings create a wonderful opportunity to talk together about the mission and purpose of our Christian communities as they gather to select leaders and plan for the year ahead. A dedicated time during the AGM to discuss and pray about the mission of the community can be a powerful catalyst for that mission and for drawing the members of the community together around that Christ centred mission. Of course, there is other business to do during an AGM and time is at a premium.

This “field guide” suggests that community leaders triage which mission conversation would be most beneficial for them to begin with and have **only one** conversation with the AGM participants. This is just a short moment to get the conversation going in a way that will help move the community forward. Plan to follow-up this 15 minute introduction with more conversation, vision, planning, action, and prayer as a group. While each of these topics could be the focus of a week long workshop, this resource is a quick start, 15 min conversation, to build momentum from the moment when members are together planning for their future.

The conversations can be used as-is but will benefit from a bit of preparation. Perhaps there are handouts you would like to print or flip charts you would like to setup. They aren’t strictly necessary but will help the conversation go more smoothly.

Following the conversation please use the QR Code to let Rev. Nick know how it went and ask any questions you might have about planning the follow-up.

Option 1: Why Finding our Why: Why us?

What is our gift and passion as Christian Community?

Our Christian Community has a particular character and gifting of the Spirit as we relate together as community to Christ in our midst. Our passion and expression of the Gospel is shaped by who we are and where we are. It is why we keep coming together to worship and to follow Christ. Look at the people beside you, people whose lives we pray for by name weekly, why are these people, your people? Why do you find belonging here? How is what you value shaped by and reflected in your Christian Community?



We're going to take just 5 minutes to speak briefly with one partner about our why.

- Why is this your Christian Community?
- What is our purpose here and now?

Now we're going to come together and spend just 10 minutes talking as a whole group about the Why for our community, what's our passion, what's our mission? This will eventually come together as a mission statement for us, though likely not in our limited time today. There will be other opportunities for us to talk together about our mission, how we live it out as a community and who we share it with in our neighbourhood. This conversation today will help point our leadership in a particular direction and give them a bit of a mandate for how to form our vision for mission.



How are we known and how do we want to be known in the neighbourhood? "That's the church that helps the seniors home... that puts on the picnic... that cares about reconciliation" We can start with what we do but should get to why we do it. There can be more than one area of passion but what is the most important one to you and our community? What is one area we can focus on to make the difference we want to see for one another and for our neighbours?

God is at work in all the places and people we have listed. God is at work in our area community leagues and schools, businesses and parks. How we connect to one another as communities does more than grow our mission, it is an essential part of why we have a mission to begin with. This list gives our leadership a great number of contacts to seek out, to listen to and to find partnerships with. Those conversations can help shape our own mission, what we really care about as a Christian community and what we can do about it here together. For now, let's conclude this little mission moment with a prayer.



Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified, we pray to you for ourselves and all our neighbours, that in our lives, vocations and ministries we may serve your purpose of wholeness and life; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.



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Option 3: Who do we serve? Who are we in relationship with in our neighbourhoods?

We end our worship with the same words most of the time “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” and so we go out from church into our neighbourhoods, and as we serve Christ in our neighbours we receive gifts from our neighbours which change us. But what comes our way, absolutely can’t be predetermined by some mission strategy, grant application or action plan. We do know we will discover and receive wonderful things, because the God of abundance is abundantly present in our neighbourhoods, but exactly what we will discover is utterly unpredictable: as such is the way of the Spirit of God. If the life of our faith is to make an impact in our neighbourhood it must be about people first, who we are working with and how our gifts and passions work together. We’re going to spend just 15 minutes talking about how well we know our neighbourhood. Who are the people we could be listening to understand this place and God’s work in it, and how do we hear their voices?

Work through the following categories for about 10 minutes total. A Flip Chart for each might or individual handout may work better than plenary discussion.

Places and Spaces: Where do people in our neighbourhood bump into one another? (list them) How can we be present with people there? How do listen to people there?

Neighbours: Who are the leaders, connectors, story tellers in our community and neighbourhood? (name them) How are we connected to them? How do we listen to them?

Associations: Who are the other non-profits in our neighbourhood? (list them) How do we show up for them? How might we discover values or goals we share for the neighbourhood?

Institutions: Who are the businesses and community centres around us? (list them) What do they see in our neighbourhood?

As we wrap up our conversation, are there some common threads that are emerging? Is what we care about most as a community becoming more clear? Our leadership will spend some time crafting this into a short mission statement for the next year or more for our community. We’ll share that mission statement with you and make it part of future opportunities to talk together about how we live our mission and who we share it with. For now, lets conclude this little mission moment with a prayer.



Draw us together as your Church, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love everywhere we are and in every relationship we hold. All this we pray in Jesus name.



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Option 2: How are we a Christian Community? What are the things we do that invite others into the life of faith we share?

We know the life of our Christian community is more than the worship and prayers we offer together. We are part of something active and enlivening together. Our activity as a Christian community gives expression to what we are passionate about, how we want our community to make a difference and how we make space of others to be part of the mission we share. Christian author Diana Butler Bass suggested 3 areas of activity to consider for communities reaching out in mission: Belonging, Believing and Blessing. We're going to spend just 5 minutes on each category, brainstorming how we want to be active in the year ahead. There are many big and small things that we may already be doing, but what is one thing, old or new, that you think we should focus on? 15 minutes truly is not enough for the whole of this conversation but it is a starting point for our leadership. There will be more opportunities for those who are ignited by this conversation to discuss our mission, but for now let's just spend a few minutes to hear from one another and the Holy Spirit.

Work through the categories one at a time. Present all the questions at once. Receive every idea with thanks. They can be sorted by leadership later.

Belong: We are a community where all are welcome, where all belong and where we know we are better together, learning, helping and growing together in faith. Creating a space of welcome and inclusion through invitation and hospitality is one way we can be a small reflection of God's Kingdom here in Edmonton. As we consider our work in the year ahead...
(present the questions all at once)

- How might we be a faith community where we know that we belong together?
- How might we listen to and hold the stories of one another?
- How might we recognize and celebrate the Spirit's work in all people?

Believe: We are a faith community; our joy and hope are a gift of the Holy Spirit and the life of the Good News of God in Christ. Our faith shapes how we see the world and one another and is what connects us to one another as a church family, as God's people. Our faith is something we do with the whole of ourselves, heart, mind, body and soul. As we consider our work in the year ahead...

- How might we be strengthened in faith together?
- How might talk about and share faith with our neighbours?
- How might we know our faith as a part of our whole selves?

Bless: The Holy Spirit, at work in our faith and relationships calls us to action, to be a blessing to one another and to our wider community, striving for healing, justice, beauty and truth. As we consider our work in the year ahead...

- How might we act together for the good of the Creation?
- How might we support and work with people or groups in our community?
- How might we know our blessings as tools to bless one another?

Thank you all for your input and ideas. It is good to be part of a Spirit inspired community. This gives our leadership lots to think about as we consider the work we have to do together. We will prioritize these actions and consider how they support our mission and who we can share them with. For now, let's conclude this little mission moment with a prayer.



Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with us as we take counsel for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honour and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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