



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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Prince George – Smithers Home Mission

Handbook

Every mission project has a plan. It's always good to make plans, to have goals, and to work to achieve them, in the knowledge that our plans are never the last word. There's a Yiddish proverb that says, "Man plans, God laughs," which has been adapted into English as "Man proposes, and God disposes." We make our plans with the words of James 4:15 in mind: "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Smithers Home Mission's plan for Prince George is laid out in our Handbook. And according to this plan, the mission work has four stages. The first six months were the "initiation period," Phase One. Years one to three of the mission work were to make up Phase Two, the "founding period." During years four and five, the plan speaks of the "expansion period," and finally years six through ten are to make up the "institution period."

Phase Four: Institution Period

The mission work began in March of 2008, which means that we are now almost through year seven, and among other things, that reminds us of how time flies! But in terms of our plan, this also means that we are well into Phase Four of the work, the "Institution Period." So what does this mean?

According to our Handbook, we have two "sub-goals" during this period. The first goal is confirmation and strengthening of local leadership, and the second is institution of the local congregation. This is the ultimate goal of any mission work, whether it's being done on the "home front," or internationally – to establish faithful churches of Jesus Christ that will, by God's grace, continue to grow and develop, and fulfill the Great Commission.

Five Outcomes

Under the heading of these ultimate goals, we are working toward five "outcomes." These outcomes are:



1. Church members have sufficient foundation upon which to build further in God's Word, are prepared to serve God and their neighbour in a Christian manner, are prepared to support the local church, the broader church federation, and their community in general.
2. Church Council knows its responsibilities, is able to provide good leadership, supervises the scriptural use of the sacraments, and encourages and develops the spiritual life of the congregation.
3. Catechesis is provided and well-attended, and Bible study groups are active.
4. The congregation is actively involved in the community and in continuation of outreach to those who do not know Christ.
5. The congregation knows its responsibilities with respect to encouraging and the training of men to become ministers of the Word; with respect to communicating with other churches within the federation; with respect to Christian education of their children in home and school.



When we make plans, it's always helpful to use those plans. That may seem like a truism, but how often do we set goals, and then put them up on the shelf, never to think of them again? Plans such as these help to keep us on track, whether in a mission setting, or in an established congregation. In fact, many of our goals are the same; if you think about those five outcomes listed above, you'll notice that they could be outcomes that any established Canadian Reformed Church should be working towards.

Evaluation

So how are we doing, in light of those plans? With thankfulness we note that the mission congregation currently is home to fifty-two members, twenty-six of whom are communicant members. We haven't experienced the kind of growth that we would like to see over the past two years, but in part that has been the result of members moving to other congregations in the federation. Despite having people move away, we have also welcomed others who have moved to Prince George, so we have maintained our numbers. And we are very thankful for God's provision in this area as well.

We have had a number of visitors and inquirers over the past year, but this has, unfortunately, not translated into numerical growth. We know that numerical growth isn't everything, and that faithfulness to God's Word and calling is central to our mission, as missionary and as congregation. But being faithful to our calling to be a salt and light in our community means reaching out with the gospel message, and we pray that the response to the gospel call will be great. And on a more practical level, for the working of the church, a growth in membership would be a great blessing for all of us.

Life of the congregation

As far as the life of the mission congregation goes, in most ways, the life of the church is not that much different from that of other congregations in our church federation. We meet twice for worship each Sunday, we get together

regularly for other activities, including Bible studies, catechism classes, and social events, and we face the same challenges that established congregations face.

However, there is one area we need to focus on in order to move toward institution, and that is the development of local office-bearers. The Prince George Mission Congregation remains under the authority and supervision of the Smithers church council, and in order to be instituted as a congregation in the Canadian Reformed Churches, we need local leaders. This is something that we have been working on, but more work is still necessary. In established congregations, the availability of qualified men who can provide leadership within the congregation may be a part of church life that we take for granted. But I think every missionary and mission congregation can understand the value of good leaders, because we need them!

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, as we work toward institution, please pray that the Lord will equip men to be leaders of the Prince George Canadian Reformed Church. Pray that the Lord will prepare the hearts and minds of people in our community to respond to our outreach efforts and the call of the gospel. Our congregation is largely made up of people from different church backgrounds – people who were already familiar with the gospel message. And it is a joy when people are led to discover the specific blessing of being a part of a Reformed church. But we would like to reach those who are “unchurched,” and our prayer is that many will be brought in to the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd. May the Lord bless our plans, and may they be made, and built upon, an understanding that every plan we have can only be worked out with the Lord's blessing.

*Pastor Jim Witteveen
Prince George, BC*





Beyond Jihadist Violence

Times are changing very fast in the Muslim world. Even a handful of years ago, a Muslim would not dare whisper religious doubts or criticism. Freedoms gained initially in the privacy of SMS (phone text messaging) and internet socializing are bursting out today into the public arena. Significant gospel implications affirm the role of the "Divine Hand" in all that is going on despite related distressing events.



A North European Mohammed?

Recently a dozen French journalists were machine gunned by two Jihadist

Frenchmen of Algerian descent. Another of Malian descent murdered four fellow citizens in cold blood from among hostages held in a Parisian supermarket. These three suicidal killers seem to have been motivated by bizarre Muslim objections to the making of any images of their prophet. Yet many Shiite Muslims adore and publicly display a rendering of what Mohammed supposedly looked like. His portrait is very much like the popular one of Jesus by a Mormon artist, revered by some Christians. He is pictured as a fair, long-haired northern European. (Strange indeed, as both Arab and Jew are Semites!) Yet no threats have been made against

Muslims displaying images of Mohammed.

Fearless Daring

The fact is that the majority of Muslims openly oppose the zealot Jihadist ideology and agenda. A prominent Arab TV, radio, and internet journalist, Ibrahim Eesa, fearlessly mocks Sharia laws and even more sacred sayings attributed to Mohammed (*Hadith*). He repeatedly says that he does not believe in such a god and does not belong to such a religion.

Islamic fanatics declare such people back-sliders (*murta-deen*) and issue religious edicts (*fatwa*) calling for their murder. Thankfully, now some Arab govern-

Left: Arab youth are no longer intimidated by Islamic traditions.

لِمَاذَا تَدْعُونَنِي: «يَا رَبُّ يَا رَبُّ» وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَفْعَلُونَ مَا أَقُولُهُ؟
كُلُّ مَنْ يَأْتِي إِلَيَّ وَيَسْمَعُ كَلَامِي وَيَعْمَلُ بِهِ
يُشْبِهُ إِنْسَانًا بَنَى بَيْتًا وَخَفَرَ وَغَمَّقَ وَوَضَعَ الْأَسَاسَ عَلَى الصَّخْرِ.
فَلَمَّا حَدَّثَ سَيْلُ الذَّهْرِ ذَلِكَ الْبَيْتَ فَلَمْ يَقْدِرْ أَنْ يَزْغِرَ عَنْهُ
لَأَنَّهُ كَانَ مُؤَسَّسًا عَلَى الصَّخْرِ.
وَأَمَّا الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يَعْمَلُ فَيُشْبِهُ إِنْسَانًا بَنَى بَيْتَهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ
مِنْ دُونِ أُسَاسٍ
فَصَدَمَهُ الذَّهْرُ فَسَقَطَ خَالًا وَكَانَ خَرَابٌ ذَلِكَ الْبَيْتُ عَظِيمًا...
(عيسى المسيح)



that they do so with much discretion. Please keep them and all converts in your prayers. As their numbers increase, the anger and violence of the fanatics will also grow.

All of Grace

A significant lesson from their journey, that we must all learn, is that these sisters and other Muslim converts did not need to be told what was wrong with their religion. They did not need to hear arguments defending the authority and reliability of the Bible. They have no difficulty believing that Jesus is God incarnate or that He came to die for our sins (which Islam denies). Obviously, what is most needed is the power of God's Word and Spirit.

Top left: Issa-almasih website daily features Christ's words. **Top right:** Young Arab women are internet savvy.

ments provide armed protection for such daring intellectuals. Millions of loyal admirers follow and support them.

Heavenly Jesus

Another popular satirist, Tawifee Okasha, recently attacked the Sharia law version of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." It calls for, among other things, amputating the hands of thieves, which he called barbaric religious savagery. In the same program he said that what Jesus taught about love and forgiveness "is the maxim of heavenly genius and wisdom."

A caller to his program with

a distinctly Muslim name responded, saying, "that is because Jesus (Issa) came from heaven, and that is why we must all worship him..." Okasha thanked him and went on to say: "I used to think that turning the other cheek to the one who slaps you is weakness. Now I know it is rather an expression of strong faith that God is the one who defends and avenges..."

Thinking Christians

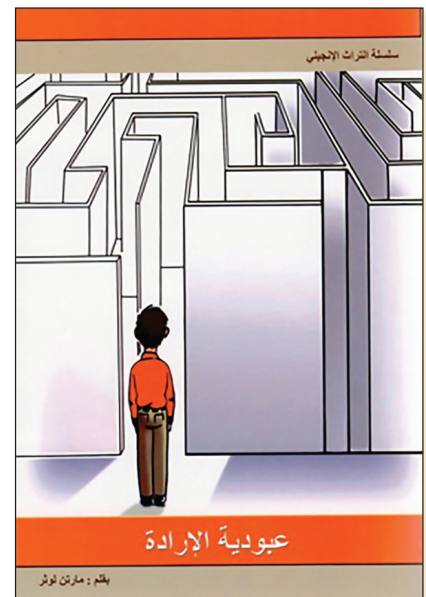
An assistant university professor in her mid-30s became strongly disenchanted with all religions. Still, she wanted to connect with those whom she calls "thinking Christians who are serious about their faith."

One of her female students whom she describes as "bright and brave," also of Muslim background, told her about a radio broadcast that "helped her better understand the beliefs of Christians." She also shared links with her to some Christian websites. This led the professor to listen, read, and try to learn more. What was the result? She concluded:

"...Mohammed and the Koran say some nice things about Jesus. Yet, hundreds of millions of Muslims are deprived of true knowledge...they miss the realities about who Jesus was and what his earthly mission was all about...It is also now clear to me that most Christians are similarly ignorant of their own religion...they do not appreciate the profound simplicity of Jesus' teaching, life and mission..."

They now have a mission—to tell others about who Jesus truly is. Their own security requires

MERF Arabic publication of Luther's Bondage of the Will



"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."—1 John 5:20

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