



Five Marks of Mission: History, Theology, Critique

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the Five Marks of Mission have become the latest in a long series of mission ‘slogans’ in the Anglican Communion, but little attention has been paid to their origin or theological presuppositions. This paper traces the development of an Anglican definition of mission from the 1984 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, at which a four-fold definition was first put forth, to the present use of the Five Marks of Mission across many parts of the Communion. The strong influence of evangelical mission thinking on this definition is demonstrated, as is the contributions from African Anglican bishops. Anglican mission thinking has shifted from emphasizing pragmatism and coordination to providing a vision for the Communion to live into. Mission thinking has been a site of genuine cross-cultural interchange among Anglicans from diverse backgrounds.

KEYWORDS: Anglican Communion, Anglican Consultative Council, David Gitari, Five Marks of Mission, Missiology, Benjamin Nwankiti

In recent years, the Five Marks of Mission have attained an omnipresence in Anglican and Episcopal thinking. At the General Conventions of the Episcopal Church in 2012 and 2015, the Marks formed the outline of the budget. The United Thank Offering of the same Church structures its grants in terms of this understanding of mission. In the Church of England, candidates for ordination are asked about the Five Marks at bishops’ advisory panels. At the 2016 meeting of the Anglican

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Consultative Council (ACC), one resolution proposed that the Five Marks be considered a fifth instrument of communion. The Marks are displayed, in five languages, on the Anglican Communion's website.² This definition of mission – to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptize, and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth – is, in parts of the Communion, ubiquitous.

Despite their central role in Anglican thinking about mission, little attention has been paid to the history, development, and theology of the Five Marks of Mission. While it is often noted that this definition was formulated at meetings of the ACC in 1984 and 1990, it is rarely noted that neither meeting referred to the list as 'marks of mission'. Nor is the strong influence through a handful of African bishops of global ecumenical and evangelical debates about mission on the formation of the Five Marks of Mission noted. Most significantly, few Anglicans have asked whether a three-decade-old understanding of mission that was a response to a particular set of theological concerns is best suited for a global Communion in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The use of the Five Marks of Mission in recent years should be seen as the latest invocation of a mission 'slogan' in the post-war Anglican Communion that can tend to sidestep important questions of contextualization and critical engagement in mission.

In this paper, I investigate the emergence of the Five Marks of Mission over 25 years, first as a definition of mission offered by the ACC in 1984 and 1990, then with the appellation 'Five Marks of Mission' in the mid 1990s, and finally their widespread use in many parts of the Anglican Communion beginning in the late 2000s. Several key themes emerge. First, the Five Marks of Mission are part of broader trends in Anglican mission thinking that has moved from an emphasis on coordination and cooperation of missionary effort to the provision of overarching visions and less emphasis on their detailed outworking. Second, Anglican mission thinking has been strongly influenced by conversations in ecumenical and evangelical bodies, at times parroting the words of other bodies and claiming them as its own. Third, the Five Marks of Mission, like other Anglican mission thinking, have been a site in which Anglicans of different cultural backgrounds have been able to discuss differences and reach consensus. Fourth, in a number of ways

2. Anglican Communion Office, 'Marks of Mission', available at: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission.aspx> (accessed 30 May 2016).

the current use of the Five Marks of Mission diverges from its original intentions. Fifth and finally, for all their ubiquity now, given the past history of Anglican mission slogans it seems likely that in a few years Anglicans will have moved on to a new mission slogan. That may be no bad thing.

The Missiological Path from 1963 to 1984

The Anglican Congress of 1963 in Toronto represents the emergence of Communion-wide thinking about mission. To that point, and afterwards, Anglican mission was set in a context of paternalistic relationships between 'older' churches in the Euro-Atlantic world and 'younger' churches in the former colonies. Missionary effort was fractured and barely coordinated among a disparate set of independent missionary agencies and synodical bodies. 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ' (MRI), the manifesto that emerged from the Toronto Congress, is remembered for its clarion call to envision a new way of thinking about what it means to be a global Communion in the service of mission.³ But MRI also emphasized the need for greater coordination and planning, calling for a comprehensive study of needs and resources in the Communion, increased financial giving, and greater inter-Anglican consultation.⁴ Rather than accepting disparate efforts at mission, Anglican leaders urged cooperation. Indeed, one result of this new emphasis was a 1972 meeting in Greenwich, Connecticut that for the first time brought together the heads of various Anglican mission agencies who resolved to work more closely together. When the first ACC meeting took place in 1971 in Limuru, Kenya, it noted that 'churches are planning more comprehensively and more co-operatively.... These things give reason to hope that MRI is permeating the common life of the Communion.'⁵

But there were problems with MRI. Its major result was a directory of projects: churches, mainly from the global south, submitted projects they wished to have funded by other Anglican churches, mainly from the Euro-Atlantic world. The second ACC meeting in 1973 upheld the

3. Jesse Zink, 'Changing World, Changing Church: Stephen Bayne and "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence"', *Anglican Theological Review* 93.2 (2011), pp. 243-62.

4. Stephen F. Bayne, Jr (ed.), *Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ, with Related Background Documents* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), pp. 17-24.

5. *The Time Is Now: Anglican Consultative Council, First Meeting, Limuru, Kenya, 23 February to 5 March 1971* (London: SPCK, 1971), p. 47.

concept of MRI but criticized the “‘shopping list’ mentality” that accompanied it.⁶ The ACC proposed instead the idea of Partners in Mission: each province would hold a consultation to which it would invite representatives of other provinces; together, they would identify priorities for the province and how they might be funded. Such a proposal, the ACC believed, would be faithful to the vision of MRI but be a ‘more comprehensive and flexible approach’ than the Directory of Projects.⁷

Partners in Mission (PIM) replaced MRI as the motivating slogan for Communion-wide mission. Scores of consultations were held around the world until the PIM process ran out of steam in the 1990s. But PIM also encountered its own problems. Although the consultations at the heart of the PIM process were welcomed by many, it was a struggle to surmount inequalities between provinces. At a 1986 meeting of mission agency representatives in Brisbane, Australia, the representatives of ‘partner churches’ (i.e. those from the global south) issued a statement which was, in part, critical of PIM: ‘We have always been unhappy with the unconscious “First World” tendency to tell us what is best for us without “taking us seriously”’.⁸

But there was a more serious problem. For all the talk of coordination, consultation, and planning, there was unclarity about what mission actually was. Resolution 15 from the 1978 Lambeth Conference asserted that PIM consultations had to be concerned with ‘the meaning of mission as well as its implementation.... PIM consultations may be weakened or confused by the failure to recognize that their purpose is to bring about a renewed obedience to mission and not simply to make an existing system efficient.’⁹ Section One of that Lambeth Conference, titled ‘What is the Church for?’ and under the chairmanship of Desmond Tutu, began to articulate how it understood mission, highlighting among much else the belief that Christians were to ‘involve themselves with others in the quest for better social and economic structures’.¹⁰ The 1981 ACC meeting concurred with the need for a new understanding of mission and, in its first resolution, established the first Advisory Group on Mission Issues and

6. *Partners in Mission: Anglican Consultative Council, Second Meeting, Dublin, Ireland, 17–27 July 1973* (London: SPCK, 1973), p. 54.

7. *Partners in Mission*, p. 56.

8. Quoted in Alan Nichols, *Equal Partners: Issues of Mission and Partnership in the Anglican World: Popular Report of the Mission Agencies Conference Brisbane, Australia, December 1986* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1987), p. 48.

9. *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London: CIO Publishing, 1978), p. 42.

10. *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978*, p. 56.

Strategy (known as MISAG I), a body that would meet between ACC meetings to consider these issues further. In the years leading up to the 1984 ACC meeting, then, there was the beginning of an effort to seek greater clarity on just what mission was.

In the context of global Christianity, the ferment in the Anglican Communion over mission in this period was unexceptional. Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* was a key contribution to Roman Catholic efforts to rethink mission after Vatican II. The World Council of Churches (WCC) had debated mission from multiple angles and in multiple fora in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1980 meeting of the WCC's Council on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in Melbourne highlighted the significance of the Kingdom of God for mission. One result of the WCC's work was the 1982 document *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, a call to witness to Christ and the Kingdom and live in solidarity with those exploited and rejected by structures in society.

But it was the global evangelical movement where some of the most intense debates about mission took place, and which would have the greatest influence on what became the Five Marks of Mission. At the 1974 First International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, nearly 3000 evangelicals had gathered under the leadership of Billy Graham and John Stott. That meeting is remembered, in part, for the debate that took place over what became known as holistic mission. Evangelicals in the Euro-Atlantic world, particularly Graham, emphasized personal evangelism and individual conversion. But speakers from Latin America and elsewhere challenged the narrowness of this focus and argued that Christian mission needed to address societal ills as well.¹¹ This debate spilled over in ensuing years, with Stott playing a key mediating role. The 1982 Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility held in Grand Rapids, Michigan produced *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*. It expressed an emerging consensus that mission comprised both personal evangelism and work for systemic change: 'They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird.' Christian social action, the report noted, could include 'seeking to transform structures of society'.¹²

11. Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), pp. 151-80.

12. *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 21 (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and World Evangelical Fellowship, 1982), pp. 23, 44.

The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) was also considering similar issues. In 1983, a number of evangelicals met in Wheaton, Illinois to consider the church's response to human need. The title of its final statement was a single word: Transformation. It was a word that had been used in passing in the Lausanne statement, the *Ecumenical Affirmation*, and the 1982 Grand Rapids commitment. But it now became the central concept, integrating the Kingdom emphasis from the WCC's work as well. Transformation, the report noted, could be applied both to countries in the global south, who had traditionally been seen as in need of development, and to Western nations, who had traditionally not been part of the missionary agenda.

Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God... We have come to see that the goal of transformation is best described by the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God.¹³

The statement contained firm words on the importance of Christian involvement in society:

though we may believe that our calling is only to proclaim the Gospel and not get involved in political and other actions, our very non-involvement lends tacit support to the existing order. There is no escape: either we challenge the evil structures of society or we support them.¹⁴

These beliefs were rooted in the ministry of Jesus who

identified Himself with the poor ... [and] exposed the injustices in society.... His was a prophetic compassion and it resulted in the formation of a community which accepted the values of the Kingdom of God and stood in contrast to the Roman and Jewish establishment.¹⁵

Anglicans were involved in all of these conversations. John Stott had been vicar of All Souls, Langham Place in London. But a key role was also being played by the first generation of African Anglican bishops. Two in particular stand out. David Gitari became bishop of the Diocese of Mount Kenya East in 1975. He was actively involved in international ecclesial bodies, including the second Anglican Roman Catholic International Dialogue, the CWME, and WEF's Theological Commission.

13. 'Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need: The Wheaton '83 Statement', in Vinay Samuel and Christopher Sugden (eds.), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003; originally published by Eerdmans, 1987), paras. 11, 13, pp. 254-65 (257).

14. 'Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need', para. 3, p. 256.

15. 'Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need', para. 27, p. 260.

He had been present at the gatherings in Lausanne, Grand Rapids, and Wheaton. In his understanding of mission, he said, he 'refused to put a wedge between evangelism and socio-political responsibility. We believe that this approach is required by obedience to the Great Commission and to the Great Commandment.'¹⁶ He repeatedly discussed the importance of challenging structures in society that exclude and demean, drawing on the story of Jesus healing the man at the pool of Siloam in John 5:

the social structures were such that the society, with all its selfishness and useless piety, would not give this man a chance to be healed. Jesus was convinced that what needed stirring up was the social pool of a stagnant, selfish Jewish society for the holistic healing of men.¹⁷

Gitari modeled this in his ministry as well, founding an innovative department of Christian community services in his diocese that engaged in a wide range of social programs and frequently speaking out against corrupt and exclusionary political regimes.

Benjamin Nwankiti became Bishop of Owerri in Nigeria in 1968. While he had a lesser profile internationally than Gitari he attended some international events, such as the 1980 WCC meeting in Melbourne. His understanding of mission was also expansive. As he later recalled of the early years of his episcopacy during the height of Nigeria's civil war,

Church members were living in fear and the number of Refugees pouring into the enclave called Biafra ... was frightening. It was my humble task to liaise with leaders of the different denominations in the service of our people. With the help of the World Council of Churches and CARITAS refugee camps, feeding centres, [and] clinics were set up in the different parts of our Diocese.... In that setting one saw clearly the mission of the Church.¹⁸

His later ministry was characterized by an effort to reach out to those on the periphery of society. He founded the Akpodim Blind Centre, which worked with blind people to prepare them for life in society. At a

16. David Gitari, 'Evangelisation and Culture: Primary Evangelism in Northern Kenya', in Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way: Studies in Integral Evangelism: Essays presented to Walter Arnold on the occasion of his 60th birthday* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1989), pp. 101-21 (113).

17. David Gitari, 'The Mission of the Church in East Africa', in Philip Turner and Frank Sugeno (eds.), *Crossroads Are for Meeting: Essays on the Mission and Common Life of the Church in a Global Society* (Sewanee: SPCK/USA, 1986), pp. 25-42 (37).

18. Quoted in Ernest N. Emenyonu, *A Good Shepherd: A Biography of the Most Rev. Dr. Benjamin C. Nwankiti* (San Francisco: African Heritage Press, 2003), p. 93.

diocesan synod, he urged his people to care particularly for those who were disabled:

Raising money for the disabled is comparatively easy.... The real challenge is to know the disabled as brothers and sisters instead of supporting them as a burden. This challenge exposes the real handicap of the churches – the spiritual poverty of their members and the crippling of their wills by sin.¹⁹

Nwankiti did sponsor a Year of Evangelism in his diocese in 1981 that had a traditional view of individual evangelism, but it is clear that his understanding of the church's role in society was much broader than personal proclamation.

Forming a Five-Fold Definition of Mission

When the ACC met in 1984 in Badagry, just outside Lagos in Nigeria, there was a clear sense among many Anglicans that not only the process of mission but also the meaning of mission needed to be rethought; an emerging consensus among evangelicals about the relationship of evangelism and social action; and a number of African bishops who were working out the implications of these views in their own dioceses. MISAG I – of which Nwankiti had been a member – reported to this meeting. Their report, as expected, contained a clear call for the priority of mission in the church. The church needed 'an enormous work of reconstruction and reform' to, as the title of the report had it, give mission its proper place.²⁰

The group on mission and ministry at the 1984 ACC was chaired by the Bishop of Southwark, Ronald Bowlby. David Gitari was a consultant to the group and Benjamin Nwankiti was its secretary. Edmond Browning, then the Bishop of Hawaii and soon to be elected Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, was a member as well. Several key assertions in the group's lengthy report were influenced by recent trends in ecumenical mission thinking. There are lengthy quotations from both the 1983 Wheaton report and the 1982 Grand Rapids paper. One of the central themes of the ACC report is transformation, the word that had been introduced with such force a year earlier in Wheaton. Indeed, there are near verbatim (and uncited) quotations from the 1983 document. The section

19. Benjamin Nwankiti, 'Presidential Address, delivered at the Third Session of the Eighth Synod of the Diocese of Owerri on Monday, July 27 1981 in St. Peter's Church Arondizuogu' (Owerri: Diocesan Press, 1981), p. 18.

20. Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group, *Giving Mission its Proper Place* (London: ACC, 1984), p. 12.

quoted earlier about there being 'no escape' from participation or challenge in structures of society appears in the 1984 ACC report.²¹ The 1984 report also emphasizes a transformation that leads to a new community. In words lifted almost directly from the Wheaton document, the 1984 ACC report argues that Jesus' 'prophetic compassion' led to the 'formation of a community which accepted the values of the Kingdom of God and stood in contrast to the Roman and Jewish establishments'.²²

This is the context in which the much-remembered definition of mission is set:

The mission of the Church is therefore:

- (i) To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom;
- (ii) To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers;
- (iii) To respond to the human needs by loving service;
- (iv) To seek to transform unjust structures of society.²³

Several items should be noted about this definition. First, there is a clear connection made between mission and church with the introductory statement: 'the mission of the Church is...'. Second, it is clear from the rest of the report that these aspects of mission were seen in sequential order: a person is evangelized, baptized, nurtured, and taught, and then one works to respond to their needs, and then works with them to transform society. Third, in the entirety of the report and proceedings of this ACC, the phrase 'marks of mission' is never used. Fourth, the connection between this definition and the evangelical thinking in years immediately leading up to it is obvious. Indeed, the fourth aspect of mission is comparable to what was quoted earlier from the 1982 Grand Rapids commitment.

As was true of ecumenical and evangelical missiology in this period, the 1984 ACC report on mission was a genuinely cross-cultural effort. Gitari authored the initial draft, which explains the heavy borrowing from the 1982 and 1983 documents.²⁴ The group's chair, Ronald Bowlby, recalled in an interview that Nwankiti and Gitari played a significant role in the conversations: 'There was something a bit different about what they brought with them, given that they were not from the developed world.' Browning had also been developing ideas

21. *Bonds of Affection: Proceedings of ACC-6, Badagry, Nigeria, 1984* (London: ACC, 1984), p. 59.

22. *Bonds of Affection*, pp. 57-58.

23. *Bonds of Affection*, p. 49.

24. David Gitari, *Troubled but not Destroyed* (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2014), p. 161.

about the both-and nature of social action and spiritual renewal and must have been a significant actor.²⁵ Bowlby is humble about the work: 'There was nothing original about our work, but we did manage to push mission up the agenda a bit. I remember thinking, "This is a good thing to be doing."' ²⁶

The 1984 ACC passed no resolution adopting the definition of mission, though by accepting the report it effectively gave its approval. The resolutions related to mission that did pass were those from MISAG: that churches be encouraged to conduct a 'mission audit', that MISAG continue, and that there be greater emphasis on coordination, planning, and mission strategy.²⁷ The mission audit resolution encouraged churches to consider their missionary efforts under headings that were modeled on the four-fold mission definition.

In its history, the Anglican Communion has produced no shortage of reports from official bodies about various worthy topics: ecumenism, inter-faith relations, the family, and, indeed, mission. Few of these are remembered or studied. Even fewer have produced statements that years later become central to church policy. Most lapse almost immediately into obscurity. At first, the 1984 mission report seemed destined to join the company of this latter group. In the foreword for a book of essays produced by a 1984 meeting on mission in the Diocese of Connecticut, Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie noted 'the four major elements of mission' identified by the ACC, though this was slightly undermined by his omission of the introductory statement 'the mission of the church is...' and his misquoting of the fourth aspect as 'to labour for justice within and among nations'.²⁸ It is not clear if this misquotation is accidental or a deliberate distancing from the evangelical language of transformation. Regardless, it shows the fluidity around the definition. When the mission agencies met in Brisbane in 1986, part of the continued effort at greater coordination, a survey revealed that most people were satisfied with the ACC 'Statement on Mission', though it was noted that the definition showed the 'unduly strong influence of Wheaton and Lausanne, without sufficient

25. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *The Heart of a Pastor: A Life of Edmond Lee Browning* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement, 2010), p. 79. The personal papers of Bishop Browning are insufficiently catalogued in the Archives of the Episcopal Church to allow for consultation and so I have been unable to ascertain whether this collection might offer a further perspective on this and a later ACC meeting.

26. Ronald Bowlby, telephonic interview by Jesse Zink, 9 February 2016.

27. *Bonds of Affection*, pp. 60-61.

28. Robert Runcie, 'Foreword', in *Crossroads Are for Meeting*, p. ix.

emphasis on the contribution from the Anglican ethos to mission'.²⁹ Benjamin Nwankiti chaired the mission section of the 1988 Lambeth Conference and its report also noted the four-fold definition. The report's main focus was elsewhere, however, including on the impending Decade of Evangelism. Still, the idea of transformation worked its influence at Lambeth as well. One of the pastoral letters issued at the conclusion of the conference was titled 'On the Gospel and Transformation' and rather than offering a list of bullet points, it rolls the four-fold definition into a single sentence: 'Personal evangelism, nurturing disciples, practical caring and the struggle for justice are bound up together and belong together, just as we do in the Body.'³⁰ But the mission definition lacked prominence. As Walter Asbil, then a cathedral dean in Ottawa, Canada and soon to be an ACC delegate recalled: 'I do not remember hardly any mention anywhere of the original four statements – they seemed to disappear into the report and lie quietly on the shelf unnoticed.'³¹

Ecumenical thinking about mission continued to evolve in this period. In particular, a new focus on what became known as JPIC – Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation – appeared in the work of the WCC. The 1988 San Antonio meeting of the CWME highlighted the significance of creation for mission: 'Mission in Christ's way must extend to God's creation. Because the earth is the Lord's, the responsibility of the church towards the earth is a crucial part of the church's mission.'³² In March 1990, the WCC organized the World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, South Korea. It led to ten affirmations – about God's option for the poor, the equality of men and women, creation as beloved of God, the divine basis of human rights, and so forth – and four covenants concerning a just economic order, global security, preserving creation, and eradicating racism and discrimination.

These new missiological emphases were a clear influence on the ACC when it met in Wales in July 1990. Ronald Bowlby and Benjamin Nwankiti were no longer members. David Gitari attended but was part of the group that wrote a report on 'Unity

29. *Progress in Partnership: Report of the Mission Agencies' Conference, 8–13 December 1986, Brisbane, Australia* (London: ACC, 1987), p. 24.

30. ACC, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988: The Reports, Resolutions & Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988), p. 327.

31. Walter Asbil, letter to Jesse Zink, 12 February 2016.

32. Frederick R. Wilson (ed.), *The San Antonio Report: Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), p. 54.

and Creation'. The section on 'Mission, Culture, and Human Development' was chaired by Walter Asbil, soon to be consecrated coadjutor bishop of Niagara. The only holdover member from the 1984 mission group was Edmond Browning, now Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

The report of this group makes clear that it wants to 'bring up to date the definition of mission which has been developing within the ACC, and to relate that to the current phase of human history'.³³ It repeats the 1984 definition and then adds,

We now feel that our understanding of the ecological crisis, and indeed the threats to the unity of all creation, mean that we have to add a fifth affirmation:

(e) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.³⁴

Just as the influence of the 1982 and 1983 Lausanne-related statements on the 1984 definition are clear, so too is the influence of the JPIC process on this addition. The affirmations and covenants from Seoul are summarized in the report and Anglican churches are asked to accept the Seoul covenants and 'take action on the points which relate to their own urgent local concerns'.³⁵

It is difficult to reconstruct what transpired to produce the additional 'affirmation' in the mission definition, though it again appears to be a cross-cultural process. Asbil recalls the key role of Browning, as well as the representative from the Scottish Episcopal Church, Ian Watt, dean of St. Andrew's and convener of the SEC's mission board. But as the conversation developed, Asbil recalled, people from many parts of the world reflected on environmental degradation in their own context and agreed the addition was important.³⁶ By the end of the meeting, though there was no formal resolution on the topic, the ACC's definition of mission had been expanded. Not only had it been expanded, there were new resources to accompany it: the mission report includes a litany of mission, which takes each aspect of the definition and rather creatively turns it into an opportunity for repentance and commitment.³⁷ Still, though there were now five 'affirmations' of mission, the phrase 'marks of mission' is nowhere used.

33. *Mission in a Broken World: Report of ACC-8: Wales 1990* (London: Church House Publishing, 1990), p. 101.

34. *Mission in a Broken World*, p. 101.

35. *Mission in a Broken World*, p. 104.

36. Walter Asbil, letter to Jesse Zink, 12 February 2016.

37. *Mission in a Broken World*, pp. 109-10.

'The Five Marks of Mission'

The Anglican mission slogan of the 1990s was 'Decade of Evangelism', an effort launched at Lambeth 1988. The Decade of Evangelism marked a missiological shift in at least one important respect: it was essentially a recognition that the strategy of greater coordination and cooperation so strongly endorsed in both MRI and PIM and represented by MISAG I and the 1986 Brisbane meeting of mission agencies no longer worked. Rather, the Decade of Evangelism was an umbrella term that established a vision and encouraged all Anglicans to work out the implications of that vision in their own context for themselves.

One way in which the Anglican Communion as a Communion could support the Decade of Evangelism was by providing resources, convening conferences, and focusing attention on this new theme. Among the resources that were produced, the five-fold ACC definition of mission played a modest role. In her contribution to a volume of essays on the theme of evangelism, Janet Hodgson of USPG noted the mission definition, particularly its emphasis on transformation and the kingdom. Basing her argument on the definition, she wrote that the Decade of Evangelism needed to be focused not simply on personal conversion but also to integrate social responsibility under the rubric of transformation.³⁸ Similarly, at the 1995 Global Conference on Dynamic Evangelism (G-CODE 2000), which served as a Communion-wide mid-point review of the Decade, Jubal Neves, bishop of South Western Brazil, referenced the 'five avenues of Mission' in his report, but drew on the teachings of a Brazilian Catholic bishop to add a further five 'aspects (or witnesses)' for mission: a life of faith, prayer, simplicity, good reception, and a social commitment.³⁹ At the same conference, a delegate from New Zealand, apparently not aware of recent updates, cited the 'fourfold mission statement'.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the 1993 joint meeting of the ACC and the Primates focused on the Decade of Evangelism and continued refinement of PIM. Other lists were being produced as well.

38. Janet Hodgson, 'Decade of Transformation: Proclaiming, Celebrating and Following as the Paradigm of Change in People, Church and Society', in Colin Craston (ed.), *By Word and Deed: Sharing the Good News through Mission* (London: Church House Publishing, 1992), pp. 14-32 (14-16).

39. Jubal Neves, 'Evangelism in a Context of Poverty, Political and Social Instability: A Witness from Latin America', in *The Cutting Edge of Mission: The Report of G-CODE 2000: Global Conference on Dynamic Evangelism beyond 2000: Mid-Point Review of the Decade of Evangelism* (London: Anglican Communion Publications, 1996), pp. 46-51 (50).

40. Graham Miller, 'New Zealand', in *The Cutting Edge of Mission*, pp. 109-10 (109).

The Church of England produced a list of 10 'marks of mission'.⁴¹ MISAG II countered with ten principles of partnership.⁴²

It is difficult to determine exactly how the ACC mission definition became the slogan 'Five Marks of Mission'. *A Growing Partnership*, a 1994 report from the Church of England's Board of Mission, noted a 'five-fold understanding of mission' from the Anglican Communion and asserted 'mission is characterised by five marks'.⁴³ In the General Synod debate on that report, the bishop of Lichfield made reference to 'the broad Anglican understanding of the five marks of mission'.⁴⁴ By February 1996, General Synod debated *Signs of Life*, a report that offered a mid-point review of the Decade of Evangelism in the Church of England. In the opening pages of the report is a list headlined 'The Five Marks of Mission', which then presents each, setting them off in large type. As near as it is possible to tell, this is the first time the mission definition appeared in print under this title. But it is not a direct quotation of the ACC definition. As in *A Growing Partnership* the introductory phrase, 'The Mission of the church is...' has been dropped; the marks are simply listed point by point.

General Synod initially planned only to receive the *Signs of Life* report. But during the debate, Canon Paul Brett of Chelmsford Diocese proposed an amendment that the Synod 'endorse the Anglican Consultative Council's understanding of mission as set out on page 7 of *Signs of Life*'.⁴⁵ Brett argued that such an amendment was necessary because the definition reminded Christians of the importance of 'transforming the world out there'; offered a clear mission statement that could be used with congregations; and would help the church find a 'proper balance', moving it away from a focus on revising its liturgy and restructuring 'central machinery' and towards a focus on

41. Cathy Ross, 'Mission', in Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke, and Martyn Percy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 504-16 (505).

42. MISAG II, 'Towards Dynamic Mission: Renewing the Church for Mission', pp. 16-18; <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/108019/Mission-Commissions-MISAG-II.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2016).

43. The Board of Mission of the General Synod of the Church of England, *A Growing Partnership: The Church of England and World Mission: The Report of a Working Group to the Board of Mission on the Church of England's Structures and Relationships in World Mission* (London: Board of Mission, 1994), pp. 8, 9.

44. General Synod of the Church of England, Report of Proceedings 25.3 (1994), p. 786.

45. General Synod of the Church of England, Report of Proceedings 27.1 (1996), p. 208.

'the Kingdom and believers and loving service and justice and God's creation'.⁴⁶ The amendment was accepted without objection, the motion passed, and the synod moved on to a lengthy debate about stipend differentials. For an event that is now pointed to as an important endorsement of the Five Marks of Mission, it is noteworthy that it originated as an amendment from the floor and that there was almost no discussion about the matter.

The Synod debate also indicates a new way in which the mission definition was being used. Although the initial four-fold definition had originated in debates in the evangelical community, by the mid 1990s it had become not only acceptable but welcome to many non-evangelicals in the church who saw it as a tool to correct a perceived over-emphasis on personal conversion in the Decade of Evangelism. Moreover, the mission definition which had originated in thinking about international mission was now also being applied to local, domestic mission. The global and the local were becoming one in a way that had not been true of MRI or PIM. Paul Brett did not identify as an evangelical and never served as an overseas missionary. His background was in industrial mission in the 1970s and 1980s and action on unemployment, issues of mission to be sure but of a decidedly domestic nature.⁴⁷ That someone in his position would see the value of the Five Marks of Mission is an indication of the shift of mission thinking in this period. Communion-wide debate about mission was no longer the preserve of working groups of mission executives but was open to Anglicans at many levels of the life of the church. The shift towards providing an overarching vision for mission and leaving local church communities to sort out the details that originated in the Decade of Evangelism was here again emphasized in the Five Marks of Mission.

Although the English General Synod had endorsed the ACC's definition of mission, the reception of the Five Marks continued to be uncertain and mixed. The late-1990s incarnation of a Communion-wide mission commission, known simply as MISSIO, considered the Five Marks of Mission and offered a decidedly mixed review. In its final report in 1999, MISSIO offers a brief yet clear critique of the Five Marks of Mission. On the one hand, the report argues,

the first mark of mission ... is really a summary of what all mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission. Instead

46. General Synod of the Church of England, Report of Proceedings 27.1 (1996): pp. 208-209.

47. Paul Brett, telephonic interview by Jesse Zink, 16 February 2016.

of being just one (albeit the first) of five distinct activities, this should be the key statement about everything we do in mission.⁴⁸

Yet on the other hand, the MISSIO report echoes concerns of the South African Mike McCoy who was advising MISSIO, and notes the absence of any consideration of context in the Five Marks of Mission, the neglect of worship, and the emphasis on the doing of mission rather than the importance of being people of mission.⁴⁹ The MISSIO report also introduces a subtle novelty to the presentation of the marks of mission: it introduces them with the phrase 'The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ'.⁵⁰ This is different from both the ACC's definition, which did not mention Christ, and the presentation in *Signs of Life*, which did not have an introduction of any kind. The two-fold critique of the Five Marks in the MISSIO report indicates the kinds of pressures that the Five Marks of Mission were encountering. On the one hand, there was a move away from the holistic mission emphasis of Gitari and Nwankiti's generation and back towards an emphasis on personal conversion; on the other hand, other Anglicans were offering critiques of the checklist mentality of the marks of mission. MISSIO ultimately suggested that the Five Marks of Mission be replaced with a 'holistic statement' on mission in context, a suggestion which was never adopted by any Communion-wide body, though was at least by the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia.⁵¹

By the time the Decade of Evangelism came to a conclusion in 2000, the mission attention of the Anglican Communion had shifted in new directions, but not towards the Five Marks of Mission. Instead, there was a new emphasis on international debt, HIV/AIDS, and political violence. The 1998 Lambeth Conference added its weight to the Jubilee 2000 movement for international debt relief. The successor body to MISSIO, the Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Mission and Evangelism (IASCOME), focused on social issues such as HIV/AIDS. Although the final IASCOME report printed the Five Marks of Mission, they are not discussed at length in the content of the report. Instead, the report focused on its proposal for a Covenant for Communion in

48. *Anglicans in Mission: A Transforming Journey: Report of MISSIO, the Mission Commission of the Anglican Communion, to the Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, September 1999* (ed. Eleanor Johnson and John Clark; London: SPCK, 2000), p. 19.

49. *Anglicans in Mission*, pp. 19-20; Mike McCoy, 'Going in Peace, or Breaking in Pieces? Anglican Unity and the Mission of God', *InterMission* 4.1 (1998), pp. 22-33.

50. *Anglicans in Mission*, p. 20.

51. *Anglicans in Mission*, p. 21; McCoy, 'Going in Peace, or Breaking in Pieces?' pp. 32-33.

Mission, a response to the Windsor Commission's suggestion of an Anglican Covenant. IASCOME claimed that its proposed covenant was rooted in the Five Marks, but it is hard to see the connection, and the translated versions of the proposed covenant make no reference to the Five Marks, a clear indication that the Five Marks had not yet transcended the English language.⁵² The Covenant for Communion in Mission was discussed at the ACC meeting in 2005 in Nottingham, England; there was no mention of the Five Marks.

Much of this emerging social concern in Anglican mission was encapsulated in a focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in the first decade of the 2000s succeeded the Decade of Evangelism as a Communion-wide mission slogan. The major mission gathering in this decade was the 2007 Towards Effective Anglican Mission (TEAM) Conference in Boksburg, South Africa. This had a heavy focus on the MDGs, an emphasis that was repeated the following year when bishops at the Lambeth Conference marched for the MDGs in central London.

The Five Marks of Mission also had an uncertain reception within provinces of the Anglican Communion. In the Church of England, the 2003 Covenant for Common Mission between differing mission agencies (who were at last agreeing to coordinate efforts) was written within the framework of the Five Marks of Mission.⁵³ By contrast, when American missiologist Titus Presler published his semi-official volume on mission in the New Church's Teaching Series in 2001, he proposed ten marks of mission, which in some ways are recognizable from the Five Marks but go well beyond, including the call to work with people of other faiths, explore the gospel in diverse cultures, and 'celebrate eucharistic community'.⁵⁴ Presler's use of the phrase 'marks of mission' while identifying ten indicates that the marks of mission idea was permeating Anglican thinking, but in no firm or sustained fashion. As late as the 2010 ecumenical missionary conference in Edinburgh, the Anglican Communion's director of mission, John Kafwanka lamented how little known the Five Marks of Mission were in the Anglican Communion.⁵⁵

52. Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism, *Communion in Mission: Final Report to ACC-13 2005* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2006), pp. 21-40.

53. Janice Price, *World-Shaped Mission: Exploring New Frameworks for the Church of England in World Mission* (London: Church House Publishing, 2012), p. 85.

54. Titus Presler, *Horizons of Mission* (Boston: Cowley, 2001), p. 156.

55. John Kafwanka, 'The Five Marks of Mission and the Anglican Communion', in Cathy Ross (ed.), *Life-Widening Mission: Global Perspectives from the Anglican Communion* (Oxford: Regnum, 2012), pp. 143-52 (145).

And then, suddenly, the Five Marks of Mission were ubiquitous. A 2008 book by noted missiologists Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross invited essays from people around the world on each of the Five Marks. The 2009 General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted the Five Marks of Mission as mission priorities while also recommitting to the MDGs.⁵⁶ American Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who had begun her primacy emphasizing the MDGs, shifted to an emphasis on the Five Marks, using them to frame one of her books and orient budget priorities.⁵⁷ In advance of the 2012 General Convention, the Episcopal Church's Public Affairs office heavily promoted the Five Marks, sponsoring a video competition, producing t-shirts, and even developing a Facebook quiz that allowed a person to decide which mark of mission best fit them (wholly abandoning the sequential nature implicit in the 1984 ACC report).⁵⁸ The Episcopal agency Forward Movement published a pamphlet authored by Jefferts Schori about the Five Marks in 2013.⁵⁹ The new focus and attention on the Five Marks led to revision. At its 2012 meeting in New Zealand, the ACC approved a resolution that altered the wording of the fourth mark to acknowledge the reality of violence and the significance of reconciliation.⁶⁰ It was the first time that an ACC resolution had used the phrase 'marks of mission'.

Critique and Conclusion

Situating the Five Marks of Mission in their historical context and tracing their evolution allows for sustained reflection on what they reveal about Anglican missiology and also what value they have in and of themselves.

56. 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Resolutions D-027 and D-019.

57. Katharine Jefferts Schori, *Gathering at God's Table: The Five Marks of Mission in the Feast of Faith* (London: SPCK, 2012). 'Presiding Bishop's Budget Proposal, 2013-2015', available at: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sites/default/files/downloads/presiding_bishops_budget_proposal_2013-2015.pdf (accessed 13 June 2016).

58. 'The Five Marks of Mission: A Checklist for Mission', available at: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/five-marks-mission-checklist-mission> (accessed 13 June 2016). The Facebook quiz has now sadly been taken off-line.

59. Katharine Jefferts Schori, '5 Marks of Mission' (Forward Movement 2172, 2013).

60. Resolution 15.34 in *Transforming Communities: The Official Report of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, Auckland, New Zealand, 2012* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2014), p. 89.

In the first decades after the 1963 Toronto Congress, no matter how overarching and grand the vision of mission and church might have been, conversation about mission frequently turned to issues of coordination and planning. Mission thinking in this period was underlined by a pragmatism and optimism about what Anglicans could achieve, if only they could get their act together. But several factors began to change this emphasis during the 1980s and into the 1990s. Mission agencies and churches in the Euro-Atlantic world were becoming aware of their weaknesses, as well as the ways in which a history of unequal power relations between Christians colored missionary efforts. At the same time, the proliferation of provinces, dioceses, and bishops in the Global South meant that the goal of coordinating mission work across the entire Anglican Communion was becoming ever more complex. Meanwhile, mission thinking was beginning to truly emphasize the continuity between the global and the local. Insights developed at one level could be applied at another. That it was a priest who had not been involved in overseas mission who recognized the significance of the Five Marks of Mission and urged the General Synod to adopt them in 1996 is confirmation of this. The new context demanded not coordination and planning, but an overarching vision for mission that Anglicans could then work out in their local contexts or with other Anglicans through sub-Communion links, developed in a decentralized fashion. This vision has been variously provided by the Decade of Evangelism and the MDGs and is now offered by the Five Marks of Mission. Indeed, the checklist approach of the Five Marks (and the MDGs) makes them readily suited to an era of decentralized and local-global mission.

As missiologial thinking in the Anglican Communion has shifted, so too has what might be called the political balance of power. The four-fold definition of mission put forth in 1984 was, as we have seen, heavily influenced by the global evangelical movement. But the definition soon became more appealing to non-evangelicals. The addition of the fifth aspect of mission in 1990 reflected the influence of non-evangelical, ecumenical thinking. During the Decade of Evangelism, the five affirmations became a helpful counter-point to an emphasis on individual conversion. It was non-evangelicals, such as Paul Brett and later Katharine Jefferts Schori, who brought the Five Marks of Mission into the mainstream of Anglican thinking. As they did so, however, they had apparently little recognition that their preferred mission definition was heavily influenced by a series of debates among evangelicals in the 1970s and 1980s. There was also little apparent reflection as to whether debates and concerns from one era were applicable to a new one.

What this indicates is that mission thinking is a site in which reception takes place in the Anglican Communion. Without a single body to establish norms and set policy, the Communion engages in lengthy processes of 'receiving' novel concepts and ideas. This 'ecclesiastical ping-pong' is often illustrated by reference to the debate over women's ordination and the church's response to evolving understandings of human sexuality and the push and pull between various Communion bodies and provinces.⁶¹ But the lengthy history of the Five Marks of Mission shows that missiological innovations are equally part of the process of reception as well. Indeed, with the Five Marks of Mission, that process of reception is ongoing.

The sudden appearance of the Five Marks of Mission in some Anglican provinces has, to an extent, precluded evaluation and critical reception. Rarely, it seems, is the question asked whether this vision of mission is useful for Anglicans. There is much that can be said in favor of the Five Marks. They are well suited to a Communion that emphasizes the continuity between the local and the global. The definition brings together various strands of mission thinking into a mostly coherent whole: the initial four marks, as we have seen, captures two halves of a debate that once seriously divided mission thinkers; the addition of the fifth mark reflects a welcome evolution in Christian thinking regarding the environment. Moreover, the Five Marks of Mission have inspired creative interpretations, such as one that linked the Five Marks to the stigmata of Christ, connecting mission and the cross.⁶² The Five Marks are, as a Church of England report put it, 'a simple but not simplistic set of images' for mission.⁶³

Yet the history and reception of the Five Marks of Mission raises important questions. One deceptively simple question concerns their introduction. The 1984 and 1990 ACC reports began with 'The mission of the Church is therefore...'. The MISSIO report altered this slightly to 'The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ'. But many listings of the Five Marks of Mission have no introduction of any kind, simply presenting five bullet points. Even the website of the Anglican Communion is confused on this matter: the English version of the Marks lacks any introduction, but the French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swahili versions

61. Gregory K. Cameron, 'A Tortoise in a Hurry: The Ordering of the Anglican Communion', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8.2 (2008), pp. 69-80 (73).

62. Cathy Ross, 'Mission', p. 514.

63. Price, *World-Shaped Mission*, p. 11.

adopt the MISSIO introduction.⁶⁴ This is more than a curious inconsistency. A key question to raise about mission generally and the Five Marks of Mission more specifically is the relationship to the church, to Jesus Christ, and to the God who lies behind both. Without the MISSIO introduction, the Five Marks of Mission have no mention of Jesus; without any introduction, they have no mention of the church. Moreover, mission discourse now routinely takes for granted the concept of a *missio Dei*. How that God is part of the mission envisioned by the Five Marks is unclear. It may be that these matters are so obviously central to mission as to not need stating. But given debates about *missio Dei* language, which can tend to de-prioritize the church in mission, and concerns that mission language can simply be a substitute for secular social action, the role of Jesus and the church in thinking about mission needs to be addressed forthrightly.

As the introductory phrase demonstrates, the 1984 ACC report which gave birth to the Five Marks of Mission originated in a desire to offer a definition for mission in response to an over-emphasis on missionary method and coordination. Yet the Five Marks of Mission are frequently now used in reference to methods of mission. Rather than a definition, the emphasis is on which way Anglicans will choose to approach mission. Questions of definition are again sidestepped. This focus on method, as was recognized in the early 1980s, allows the focus of attention to shift away from the love of God in Christ in which mission originates and which Christians are called to embody in various contexts around the world.

The relative priority of the Five Marks of Mission is another disputed question. As we have seen, the MISSIO report, still the most sustained examination of this mission definition, emphasized the first mark above the other four and equated it with evangelism. Those words from the MISSIO report are now quoted (without attribution) on the Anglican Communion website.⁶⁵ Similarly but separately, efforts to encourage people to think about which mark of mission best suits them can give the impression of a pick-and-choose mentality. But these approaches raise at least two problems. Elevating any one mark above the rest seems to defeat the purpose of Five Marks of Mission. And while the connection between 'proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom' and personal evangelism may seem obvious to some, doing so short-circuits an important conversation about the many ways to proclaim the good news of the kingdom – in Christ's ministry and our own – beyond personal evangelism. Elevating the first mark in this way, in effect,

64. Anglican Communion Office, 'Marks of Mission'.

65. Anglican Communion Office, 'Marks of Mission'.

returns the Communion to Lausanne-era debates which were thought resolved in the very definition itself.

There is much else that could be adduced in critique of the Five Marks of Mission. In the 1996 General Synod debate and the MISSIO report, the absence of worship from the definition was noted, a curious omission given the historical Anglican emphasis on liturgy and prayer, and the clear and consistent message in reports from Lambeth Conferences and in ecumenical thinking that worship and mission are integrally related. The 1984 ACC report highlights the importance of the church being a community in which the kingdom of God is present. Yet the Five Marks of Mission can separate mission from this important emphasis on community, and turn mission into simply an activity of our Christian communities, rather than something that originates in their essence. There is no mention of mission in relation to people of other faiths, nor the way in which context shapes all Christian mission. These and other critiques emerge from the very documents that have formed and shaped the Five Marks of Mission and yet which are absent from any discussion of the issues today.

There have been no shortage of reports on mission produced by Anglican bodies in the last several decades. It is unclear why it is that of all this material it is the Five Marks of Mission, which originated in one section at one ACC meeting, that are now in wide use 30 years later. Many other mission reports contain rich material for reflection and guidance. Resolution II.6 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, for instance, offered a clear, holistic statement of mission, calling on Anglicans to

share in and show the love of God in Jesus Christ – by worship, by the proclamation to everyone of the gospel of salvation through Christ, through the announcing of good news to the poor and the continuing effort to witness to God’s Kingdom and God’s justice in act and word and to do so in partnership with Christians of all traditions.⁶⁶

One could also look at the work on *koinonia* that was expressed in the Virginia Report for important reflections on the relationship between mission, the church, and the world.⁶⁷ The MISSIO report itself is another valuable reflection on Christian mission. The privilege given to the 1984 and 1990 ACC mission definition could be justified by the inherent value of the report. But as this paper has demonstrated, there are good reasons to question that.

66. *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), p. 391.

67. *The Virginia Report: The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), pp. 10-13.

It seems likely that the Five Marks of Mission will soon be eclipsed. The new Presiding Bishop in the United States focuses on the 'Jesus Movement'. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has made reconciliation a personal theme. Talk of discipleship now features at Anglican Consultative Councils and many other places in the church. From MRI to PIM to the Decade of Evangelism to the MDGs, Anglican mission slogans have historically lasted about a decade, though PIM held on in one form or another for nearly 20 years. Ordinands in the Church of England who are now asked about the Five Marks of Mission will in a few years likely be asked about something else. This may be a good thing. It may well be time for the Communion to let go of a 30-year-old definition of mission.

But the history of the Five Marks of Mission offers reasons for hope. For all the division and discord in the Anglican Communion in recent decades, mission thinking has in the past been a place where Anglicans from different cultural backgrounds have been able to come together and reach consensus. Anglicans continue to be in need of cross-cultural mutual discernment about what it means to be God's people in the world. It may not be possible to express the results of that process in a pithy slogan or a bullet-point list. But the importance of the process remains all the same.

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