

# MISSIONAL INITIATIVES

## Monthly Newsletter

MAY 2024

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### ARTICLE

There is hope through Christ as we look at the journey ahead of us.

As a **local pastor**, I've felt the angst of the "Post-Covid Blues." A few have left our church, and others show signs of weariness and fatigue. They lack hope and joy. As a **Conference VP**, I hear the same from many in the NAB. This is not just an NAB thing. It can be seen in denominations from A to Z, and in countries from England to New Zealand. Yet, what I have been learning of late has brought hope and joy to me and the Missional Initiatives team, and we trust it will to the whole conference.

Here are three foundational building blocks of what we have been learning.

1. The 75-Year story – Since WWII (some might argue even before that), the West has been shaped by a story with different names but the same plot. **More is better.** We press forward with pace and technology, with efficiency and a belief that doing the right things in the right way at the right time will get the right results. The church has jumped on the bandwagon. But there are signs this 75-year story is unravelling as things we took for granted are no longer reality. We find ourselves in a place where we have never been before. But hope is found in recovering the biblical story – living the way of Christ and his Kingdom. We must reflect on which story we are living into.
2. God's Agency – If we have inadvertently been living into the 75-year story, we likely have believed that "all that matters depends on us." Many books and podcasts, workshops and conferences, are built around a strategy for moving forward, getting bigger, and doing more. Look at your inbox or Facebook feed, or all the marketing for "Christian" organizations.

It is not about "Our Agency" but about God's Agency. Paul reminds the church at Colossae that Christ is sufficient. God has done all that is needed. Is there a page in the Bible where this is not the case? We live as if it depends on us, without much reflection.

3. A Set of Practices – God invites us to participate with him. We do this through a life of communal practices. Here are three I have found helpful:
  1. Dwelling – We dwell in the text, and in our neighbourhoods with one another. Through dwelling, we hear God’s voice and our neighbour’s stories. We learn to be with.
  2. Discerning – Through dwelling, we learn to discern the presence and power of Jesus at work in the world. It is in dwelling in Scripture that we learn to hear God speak to us. It is in being with our neighbours that we discern God’s work in their lives.
  3. Discovering – We dwell, discern, and discover by stepping into action. God will reveal when we go off track, or encourage us to keep going and discover his power at work.

Join us as we dwell, discern, and discover how it is we join God at work in the world.

## STORY

Just two weeks ago I had the privilege of speaking in the Eastern Association to a group of pastors in both Toronto and across into the States in Niagara. These two days reminded me of the reality that we have some wonderful leaders and churches in the NAB. I have the privilege of front row seats to what God is doing in these settings.

While in Toronto, I got to spend the day with Rob Cripps and his team from Capstone Community. I had gone to share some of what God had been teaching me, and yet I left feeling like I had learned far more than I had delivered. The story of Capstone is inspiring and reflects the heart of a church that is discerning where God is at work and finds great joy in joining him. I noticed several things of importance during my day:

1. Being Good Neighbours – While we were eating lunch, it was obvious we had too much food. Rob saw a number of school kids who had ventured onto a path at the back of the church property and immediately went to them with extra food and offered it to them. It was his way of continuing to build relationships the church has made with the school and families of the kids there.
2. Discerning and Discovering – Over the past year, as they have prayed for the neighbourhood and sought to discern where God is at work, the seniors home right next to their property came up for sale. As they prayed over this property, they have believed God is inviting them to join with what he is doing, and so they have made an offer on the building, with all kinds of dreams about how it could be used for training and for neighbourhood transformation. It will take a miracle for it to happen, but they know God instructs us in Luke 10:3–4 to trust him to provide for his mission.
3. Seeking the Prosperity of the Neighbourhood – While we were there, volunteers seemed to come out the woodwork and gathered around piles of food that had been delivered. They were helping those who were food insecure in their neighbourhood through providing food. It was wonderful to see the help that was there and to see the way they interacted

with people who needed food. They were trying to erase the posture of power and seeking to be with neighbours instead of just “doing for.”

There were other things to witness to the reality of Jesus that day. Perhaps we may get to hear more of what God is doing through Capstone in the near future.

## RESOURCES

Check out any of the following books and community to engage with the concept of the 75-year story:

1. *Pastoral Song: A Farmer's Journey* by James Rebanks
2. *Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order: Why Nations Succeed and Fail* by Ray Dalio
3. The Commons Network: <https://www.facebook.com/thecommonsnetwork>