

**“Best Practice for Missions for WAGF Churches”**

- 1. Missions Theology Foundations**
- 2. Best Practices for the function and administration of Missions Sending structures/agencies.**
- 3. Best Practices of Missions Engagement among WAGF councils and churches**

## **Part 1: Missions Theology Foundations**

**These 13 points were worked on in Nashville, July 2022, and reviewed by the commission via email during August and September 2022**

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## **Introduction**

# **Missions Theology: Opportunities and Challenges**

**While the ways gospel communication occurs varies from context to context, the God of mission and the core of the gospel never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Paul indicates that “other gospels” abound requiring faithful stewardship of the message of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; I Tim. 6:20)**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Introduction**

Part 1 of the WAGF Missions Commission’s “Best Practices” documents engages the missions theology that undergirds those practices. Organized around three sections, Part 1 addresses: 1) Missions Theology Foundations, 2) Fundamental Missiology for Practice of Cross-cultural missions, and 3) Theological/Missiological Challenges.

### **Justification**

Relying of solid biblical missiology propels the Church forward to maximize contemporary missions opportunities. Missiological drift, the almost imperceptible move from God’s missionary agenda in the world to alternate agendas, practices, and theologies, occurs not only in traditional denominations, but increasingly in Pentecostal churches and missions agencies. The best practices presented in part 1 of this series attempt to address these challenges and present a solid missions theology foundation.

### **Theological/Missiological Opportunities and Challenges**

1. Opportunities
  - A. A solid biblical missiology provides motivation and direction for local and national churches to engage in global mission.
  - B. The growth of the Pentecostal church globally.
  - C. The increase in missions sending from the global South.
2. Challenges
  - A. The rise of pluralism, “inclusivism” and universalism.
  - B. Faulty eschatology, the study of the end times, that deemphasizes the importance of the Lord’s return and the responsibility of the Church until He comes.
  - C. Faulty ecclesiology, the study of the Church, shifting the focus from making disciples through evangelization and the planting of local churches to bringing about the kingdom of God through social means.
  - D. The increase of dependency in missions and a drift away from the sound biblical practices articulated in “Indigenous Church” principles.

### **General Observations to Respond to These Challenges**

1. Each national church and sending agency needs to articulate and propagate a contextual biblical missions theology.
2. Local and national missiological drift should be identified and address in a loving but prophetic manner.
3. The biblical principles of the “Indigenous Church” should guide missions attitudes, decisions, and actions.

### **Best Practices for a National Missions Committee and Teams**

1. Develop mobilization and training programs grounded in sound biblical missions theology.
2. All missions mobilization and training should be based on and emphasize the importance of a biblical missions theology.
3. The national missions committee and teams should periodically and frequently review their standards and practices to verify that no missiological drift is occurring.
4. All mission endeavors and attitudes should be evaluated in light of biblical principles of missions.

### **Conclusion**

God set the agenda for missions sending in His Word. The task of God’s missionary people, the Church, and the missions agencies that serve them, is to obey His agenda in the power of the Spirit. Good missions theology calls God’s missionary people back to a missiology and practice grounded in His revealed Truth, the Bible.

**Section 1:**  
**Biblical Theology of Missions: Foundations**

## **Biblical Theology of Missions: Foundations Why is Biblical Theology Necessary?**

**To glorify and be true to the God of mission revealed in the Bible, missions must be centered in the Word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Introduction**

God is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. His plan for humankind and all of creation revealed in the Bible is for His glory (Eph. 1). It is a plan of revelation and reconciliation. The task of missions is to populated heaven with worshippers.

### **Justification**

Due to the Fall, human hearts wonder as human agendas replace God's agenda. This malady infects not only individuals, but missionaries, churches, and sending agencies. The antidote is to reflect theologically and missiologically, asking, "Is our missions agenda, God's agenda?" and "Are we doing that agenda in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the gospel, or in our own flawed sources of power?" This is the task of a biblical theology of missions.

### **General Observations**

1. Foundational biblical truths that undergird the missions of the Church:
  - A. The Scriptures, the final authority for faith and practice, have the final say in determining the nature and scope of the Church's mission.
  - B. The lostness of [humankind], separated from God and without the ability to save [oneself], is a tragic fact which finds its remedy only in the salvation offered through the gospel of Christ.
  - C. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ as God's Son and [humankind's] Savior. "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).
  - D. All [people] are candidates for salvation in Jesus Christ on the condition of repentance from evil works and faith toward God through Jesus Christ.
  - E. The Church, composed of true believers in Jesus Christ, is God's own possession and His agent for world evangelism.
  - F. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and becomes the source of power and equipment for missions as believers receive of His fullness.

G. The return of Christ to the earth is the hope of true believers and the final solution to earth's ills. The kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdoms of God and His Christ, and He shall reign forever.<sup>1</sup>

### **Best Practices**

1. Engagement with missions theology must be intentional or missiological drift will occur.
2. Each sending church and agency should prayerfully review the Scriptures and sound biblical missiology to evaluate their teaching and missionary actions to maintain alignment with God's mission.
3. Consistently renew the means to communicate biblical foundations of missions theology to constituents.
4. Missionary training should be grounded in biblical missions theology and practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodges, Melvin L. *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective*. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), 19.

## *Missio Dei* God's Mission

**The agenda for missions must be determined by God's agenda in mission as set forth the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, God's plan of redemption unfolds in revelation and reconciliation. In the redemption story God covenants with a man, Abraham, and a people to fulfill His missionary agenda.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Introduction:**

The term *missio Dei* (Latin for "God's mission") refers to God's universal redemptive plan revealed in the Bible is to reconcile all things in heaven and earth to himself in Christ (Eph.1). From creation, God partnered with humankind to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen. 1:28 The Dominion Mandate). Abraham and the people of Israel were set apart to bless the nations (Gen. 12, Ex. 19). With the coming of the Messiah, through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, reconciliation with God and other humans becomes possible. Jesus commissions (Matt. 28:18-20) His people to fulfill His mandate to make disciples of all nations providing empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Motivation for missions is grounded in obedience to the God of mission and an anticipation of the return of Christ. *Missio Dei* culminates in the fulness of the kingdom of God at Christ's return to earth and in paradise restored with redeemed representatives before the throne glorifying God (Rev. 7:9).

### **Justification**

A clear understanding of God's mission (*missio Dei*) in the world enables God's missionary people to align their missions agendas and activities with His agenda.

### **General Observations**

1. Foundational biblical truths that undergird the missions of the Church:
  - A. Humankind and all of creation were created for the glory of God.
  - B. Beginning in Genesis 1:28, God partners (covenants) with women and men to accomplish His purposes culminating in a partnership with God's missionary people, the Church, to fulfill His mission through the communication of the gospel and the making of disciples of all nations.
  - C. God calls and partners with one man, Abraham, to bless the nations. From Abraham, God separates a people (the people of Israel) to be a missionary people a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6) to bless the nations.
  - D. An introverted Israel fails to fulfill the covenant, but with the arrival of the promised Messiah the first fruits of the kingdom of God entered human history.
  - E. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, He created the possibility that women and men could be reconciled to God and each other (Eph. 1, 2; Cor. 5:11-21).



- F. Jesus commissioned His disciples to communicate the gospel to all people and every person, making disciples of all nations by going, baptizing, and teaching all that He commanded (Matt. 28:18-20).
- G. Through the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), the manifold wisdom of God is made known (Eph. 3:10).
- H. The Church is to be God's missionary people "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).
- I. God, the author of missions, is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), but His desire is that every person and every people be restored to relationship with Him and each other through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- J. Reconciliation only occurs on the condition of conversion that requires repentance from sin and evil and submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the only legitimate king.
- K. Submission to Christ includes participation in local communities of faith. Thus, the importance of planting local churches among all peoples.
- L. The motivation for missions is obedience to the God of mission. The ultimate motivation is the glory of God expressed in love for women and men being reconciled to God and one another.
- M. The purpose of missions is to populate heaven with worshippers of God for the glory of God in anticipation of the redemption of humankind and all of creation.

### **Best Practices**

1. Missions philosophies and practices must be aligned with the agenda of revelation and reconciliation established in the mission of God (*missio Dei*) revealed in the Bible.
2. While multiple motivations (e.g. burden for the lost, personal agendas, social justice, the return of Christ) for missions exist, the most legitimate and primary motivation is love for God and others expressed in communication of the gospel in word and deed to the lost, alienated from God and each other.

### **Conclusion**

The mission of God calls God's missionary people back to a missiology and practice grounded in His revealed Truth, the Bible. God's agenda in missions, revelation and reconciliation, center in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The task of God's missionary people, the Church, and the missions agencies that serve them, is to obey His agenda in the power of the Spirit.

## Eschatology

**Missions should be engaged with the end in mind, eschatology matters.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### Justification

How believers see the end of God’s redemptive plan exerts a powerful influence on how Christians have understood and practiced global missions.

### General Observations

1. Many interpreted the Pentecostal outpouring at the beginning of the 20th Century as a sign of the soon return of Jesus. This created a sense of urgency to proclaim the gospel and at the same time led to neglect preparation, training, and engagement with social issues. The delay in His return has led some Pentecostals to lose the sense urgency to proclaim Christ as Lord and soon-coming King thus focusing on issues of the present realities and social ills in place of reaching the lost. A complicating issue is the wide variety of interpretational systems that Christians hold regarding the end times. Hence, it is wise to hold all eschatological positions with humility and realize that other sincere Christians will hold different views. With the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, people can have many different ways of understanding the return of the Lord Jesus and the end times. Believers can be united on clear biblical witness to the role of God’s people as they conduct their lives before His return.
2. There are three biblical ideas that can guide Christians, no matter how they understand the last days, that helps them live and serve in His presence in the New Jerusalem.
  - A. First, the Bible clearly states that God’s redemptive plan will be accomplished among all the tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 21:24, 26) and that “the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). This means that whenever one talks about the end times, his/her focus always needs to be about the progress of the good news to all diverse humanity.
  - B. Second, the primary focus of all New Testament passages that relate to eschatology is on how followers of Jesus must live in light of His return. People should not speculate on when it will happen or how it will happen, but rather on being the kind of people God wants them to be and what they should be doing now. Jesus talked of the need to be on guard and not deceived (Mark 13:5-6) and to be watchful because no one knows the time of His return (Mark 13:32-37). Peter, after talking about the divine judgment on human achievements (II Peter 3:10), asks his readers what kind of lives they should be living in light of this (II Peter 3:11). He responds that they should live holy and godly lives, and seek to be

found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Jesus (II Peter 3:11, 14).

- C. Finally, the entire Bible shows how the living God accomplishes His plan of redemption by working through His people. This includes both the way that believers live, reflecting the values of God's rule, and also as the instruments that He uses to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the nations. Peter seems to indicate that Christians hasten the return of the Lord through the proclamation of the gospel (II Peter 3:12). He reminds his readers that they should not look at the slowness of the return of the Lord as problematic but rather as the Lord's patience that more may come to salvation, because He is not willing that any should perish (II Peter 3:9).

### **Best Practices**

1. Missionaries, missions agencies, and sending churches need to keep the end in mind when formulating missions philosophy and practice.
2. While developing long term plans and practices, God's missionary people need to continually live with a sense of urgency in anticipation of His coming.

## Biblical Theology of Missions: Definition of Terms

**In the missiological world, terms frequently carry multiple definitions creating confusion. In order to facilitate communication, the WAGF MC recommends the following definitions of key terms.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### Justification

Clarity in the understanding and use of missiological terms will facilitate communication.

### General Observations

Due to the lack of uniformity in the definitions of terms like missionary, mission, and missions, the WAGF MC proposes definitions to facilitate communication among WAGF sending churches. The WAGF Missions Leadership recommend the following definitions of key missiological terms to the missions community:

1. **Cross-cultural Evangelism**—the communication of the gospel across cultural barriers. In a technical missiology this does not refer to a believer who testifies to a person of another culture who lives in his/her community, though this is witness and vitally needed. It refers to those called to set aside their own culture and to take on the culture of a specific people group (missionary identification and acculturation) in order to communicate the gospel and plant the church. It can include both missionaries who cross geographic and political boundaries and those who do not (the latter are sometimes referred to as cross-cultural workers or as “home” missionaries, this term is often confusing and misleading because “home” missionaries can also refer to workers supported to plant the church in other geographic regions without crossing cultural boundaries).
2. **Evangelism**—the communication of the gospel in the power of the Spirit to those who are lost without Christ. Evangelism should constitute an ongoing cycle that includes: The establishment of a Christian **1) presence** in a community as a witness to unbelievers (Matt. 5:13-16). This presence must be accompanied by the **2) proclamation** of the good news (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48) whose objective is the **3) persuasion** of women and men to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord (Acts 26:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:11). Having received Christ, **4) participation** in the body of Christ should follow including service, good works, and the building up of fellow believers (Matt. 5:16; Gal. 6:8-9; Eph. 4:16). The cycle should come full circle when the convert becomes an additional evangelistic presence in the **5) propagation** of the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Melvin Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), 77.

3. **Least Reached**—Those nations with people/ethnic groups where the presence and presentation of the gospel is almost or completely non-existent.
4. **Mission (*missio Dei*)** (Latin- mission of God)—the purpose and activity of God for the redemption of humankind and all of creation. (It should be noted that for some missiologists *missio Dei* refers to everything God does for the salvation of humankind and mission is everything that the church does to point to the kingdom of God).
5. **Missions**—the activity and program of the Church to communicate Christ through word and deed, resulting in the establishment of the Church among a people of another language and/or culture in the power of the Holy Spirit.
6. **Missionary**—a person called and empowered by the Holy Spirit, commissioned by the Church to go to another people and place, to communicate the gospel, and disciple and establish the Church of Jesus Christ among a different language and/or culture.
7. **International Cross-cultural Missionary**—defined as a worker intentionally sent or recognized by his/her national council missions (or local national churches) sending structure(s) to a country other than his/her own, to work among a people group culturally different.
8. **Cross-Cultural Domestic Home Missionary**—defined as a worker intentionally sent or recognized by his/her national council mission (or local national churches) sending structure(s) to a people group within the borders of his/her own country, to work among a people group culturally different.
9. **Missionary (Missional) Church**—a local community of believers who are equipped by leadership and empowered by the Spirit to live in service and worship of God, in the mutual edification of its members, and in witness to the world. This witness includes simultaneously communicating the gospel in word and deed to the people of their own community (Jerusalem), to other communities of their own culture (Judea), to other geographically nearby cultural groups (Samaria), and to all the cultural people groups of the earth (ends of the earth).
10. **People Group**—an ethnic community within which the gospel can spread before encountering a barrier of language, culture, religion, or geographical limitation.
11. **Reached People Group**—a people group with their own unique language, culture, and worldview that has enough indigenous Christians that these believers, with their own resources and initiative, are able to evangelize the remainder of their people.
12. **Unreached People Group**—a ethno-linguistic community among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people. Therefore, ambassadors for Christ must come from the outside with the purpose of learning the language and culture to contextualize and propagate the gospel within this group, make disciples, and establish indigenous churches. The original Joshua Project editorial committee selected the criteria less than or equal to 2% Evangelical Christian and less than or equal to 5% Professing Christians.<sup>3</sup> Increasingly the definition is shifting to qualitative (do the people being

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<sup>3</sup> Lausanne Committee “AD2000 and Beyond Movement and Joshua Project” (paper presentation Lausanne Conference, Chicago, 1982).

reached have the capacity to reach their own) rather than simply quantitative (has the people being reached passed the 2% evangelical threshold).

13. **Holistic Missions**—the word, *holos*, comes from the Greek, meaning “whole” or “complete.” A holistic ministry cares for the whole person, intentionally ministering to a person's spirit, body, emotions and mind using words, loving deeds, and supernatural signs. The insertion point is arbitrary, (sometimes witness begins with words, sometimes with deeds, sometimes with a miraculous sign) but witness is not complete unless word, deed, and sign complement each other. Biblical holism is a way of thinking that intentionally recognizes the Lordship of Christ over every aspect of life.

### **Best Practices**

1. Missions agencies and missionary training centers should create awareness in their spheres of influence that brings uniformity in the use of missions terms. The WAGF Missions Leadership recommend the use of the above definitions.
2. In the preparation of mobilization and training resources, missions agencies and missionary training centers should clearly define key missiological terms.
3. If confusion arises related to missiological terms, consult with likeminded missions entities (e.g. the WAGF missions community).

**Section 2:**  
**Fundamental Theology for the Practice  
of Cross-Cultural Missions**

## **Vision of World Evangelization: Taking the Gospel where Christ is Not Known**

**God's redemptive plan embraces all peoples. The challenge for God's missionary people is to create access to the gospel for all peoples and every person.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

When one looks at the arc of God's redemptive plan in the Bible, he/she sees that from the beginning to the end it embraces all the diversity of humanity. God promised Abraham that through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 pictures multitudes from nations, tribes, peoples, and languages before the throne of the living God. Therefore, the priority of missions is to plant the Church among all peoples to create access to the gospel for every person.

### **General Observations**

1. The goals of the five commissions in the Gospels and Acts (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:4-9) show that God's people are to make disciples of all the *ethnē* (every ethnic group or nation not allied with and trusting in the God of Israel) proclaim the gospel to every creature, preach repentance and forgiveness in Jesus' name to all the *ethnē*, and bear witness to Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
2. One does this as God's people sent into the world by the Father, proclaiming good news, calling people to repentance and faith to receive forgiveness of sins, incorporating those who believe into the family of God through baptism, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness across cultural boundaries to the uttermost parts of the earth, sent into the world as Jesus.
3. The task is of immense complexity and global in scope, embracing all the diversity of humanity, requiring cross-cultural efforts, and the need for abilities in evangelism, discipling, teaching, and planting faith communities. It is clear that as the gospel is rooted among a people, God mandated the faith community to the work of domestic missions to evangelize and disciple every person within that people group. At the same time, Jesus mandates the whole Church to ongoing cross-cultural mission (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10).
4. The mandate given from the Scripture means that the primary focus of cross-cultural sending must be to bring gospel access to peoples and places that do not have it. Two things provide one with clear guidance in this matter.



- A. In Acts 1:8, Jesus sets the agenda for the Church by indicating that it will move not just across geographic boundaries, but cultural ones also. The book of Acts, with its movement from Jerusalem to Rome, shows that this is not a serial progression where one starts in Jerusalem and when that is completed goes to the next place and so on. The church in Jerusalem continues to work in evangelizing their society while the gospel moves out to new places and peoples. This means that in participating in God's redemptive plan there is always going to be evangelism and church planting within a person's own culture, and the need to send workers to do cross-cultural evangelism and church planting in places where the Church does not exist.
- B. The book of Acts shows that the cross-cultural dimension in taking the gospel to the world spawned a distinct structural response. Ralph Winter's seminal article on God's two redemptive structures shows how in Acts one sees the local church and apostolic mission band.<sup>4</sup> The Acts narrative shows the Spirit working through already existing structures of synagogues meeting in house and Jewish proselytizing bands and repurposing them. Robert Banks points out that Paul's task group did specialized work which involved a common task and their gifts were aimed at the evangelization of outsiders rather than edification of the body. While the churches all had multiple authority figures, in the mission band it was Paul who was in charge.<sup>5</sup> It is crucial to note that each of these structures, local churches and cross-cultural missionary bands, do different things well and have different strengths in God's redemptive mission. The narrow work of the Pauline apostolic band was to plant churches who would then be able to participate in the mission of God.
5. Paul's understanding of his calling shows us that cross-cultural labor focuses on the planting of the Church where it does not exist. Luke was not just a historian but also a theologian. Roger Stronstad argues that Luke's narratives fall into a combination of four categories: episodic, typological, programmatic, and paradigmatic.<sup>6</sup> By the latter he means that the episode shows normative features for the mission and character of God's people living in the last days. Luke's focus on the Pauline band shows it is paradigmatic for the conduct of the cross-cultural transmission of the gospel both structurally and in terms of goals and practices.<sup>7</sup> Paul's reflections on his calling shows that he understood it as proclaiming the good news of Jesus to places "where Christ was not known" (Rom. 15:20) and not building on another's foundation. Paul did not see his work as going to places where the church existed that he did not help

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 220-30. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, revised edition ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 159-162, 169.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Alan R. Johnson, "The Apostolic Priority: Why Long-Term, Culture- and Language-Competent Workers doing Church Planting Among the Unreached is Still Our Highest Missions Priority," *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* 7:1 (2020): 101-102.

found. His letter to the Romans again shows him in movement, not avoiding the church, but wanting to share mutual encouragement (Rom. 1:11-12) and more importantly to have them assist him on his way to evangelize in Spain (Rom. 15:24). This trajectory of seeking to take the gospel to new ground is confirmed by the Acts narrative where there is movement from Cyprus to evangelization in Asia Minor, the direction of the Spirit to not evangelize in Asia or Bithynia (Acts 16:7), and the resulting call to Macedonia on the western Aegean. In the third journey, Paul plants the church in Ephesus in the province of Asia where he had previously been forbidden to work by the Spirit (Acts 19:1). Even when Paul is interacting with a church he helped to start, his hope is to see his team's area of influence enlarged "so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you" (2 Cor 10:15-16).

6. The World Assemblies of God Fellowship with its millions of believers and hundreds of thousands of local churches finds itself in a world where nearly 40% of the people have very limited access to the saving message of Jesus Christ. These are people who have no near neighbor who can share the story of Jesus, no culturally relevant church they can visit, in many cases not a single verse of Scripture in their language, and no Christian media. Over a billion people live in societies with one or less than one Christian per thousand people. Christian demographers say that among the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim blocs 86% of the people do not know a single Christian. Missions researchers explain that less than 3% of all personnel and finance flow into places where people have limited or no access to the gospel. While there are people among every nation-state, tribe, and tongue who are eternally lost, cross-cultural missions efforts need to follow Paul's example of planting the Church where Jesus is not known or named.

### **Best Practices**

1. WAGF sending structures must prioritize creating access to the gospel among every people and to every person by planting local and national churches.
2. To accomplish this complex task requires the sending of career long-term workers to incarnate the gospel establishing local and national churches.
3. Prayer and the allocation of human and economic resources should prioritize creating access among those without access to the gospel.

## **Holy Spirit and Missions**

**The fulfillment of missions is only accomplished through the agency of the Holy Spirit. As the missionary people of God surrender the direction and empowerment of the Spirit, the gospel is communicated to the world creating the possibility of humans being reconciled to God and to each other.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Introduction**

After the resurrection before Jesus ascended to heaven, He entrusted His disciples with the task of making disciples of all nations. However, the task was too great to be accomplished on their own. Jesus directed them to wait until they were endowed with power. With the Pentecost event and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit-filled disciples were empowered to fulfill the promise: “You will be my witness...” (Acts 1:8).

### **Justification**

To fulfill the missionary mandate, God’s people must depend on the Holy Spirit in all aspects of the missionary enterprise.

### **General Observations**

1. Core affirmations of a Spirit-driven missiology:
  - A. The Lord fulfills mission through His Church by the direction and power of the Holy Spirit.
  - B. All members of the Church carry the responsibility for the apostolic mandate to reach all peoples with the good news of the kingdom.
  - C. Church leadership create environments that guide people in contextually appropriate ways to encounter the Holy Spirit that are held to the standard of the Word in order to empower them for holiness and service that gives credibility to their witness to Christ.
  - D. Effective missional praxis requires the Church to paradoxically exert great effort while relying fully on the power of the Spirit.
  - E. Reliance on the Spirit requires a commitment to prayer and waiting in His presence to seek His guidance and power both individually and corporately.
2. The Indigenous Church Principles Revisited: An indigenous church is a community of sinners saved by grace and birthed in a specific context who are Spirit-driven (Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered) to accomplish God’s purposes for and through that community. Like the various churches described in the New Testament, particularly in Acts, these local and national communities of faith are to be Spirit-governed, Spirit-supported, and Spirit-propagated.

- A. Spirit-governed—God, by His Spirit, calls and equips local leaders to disciple and mobilize believers in the faith and guides them in discerning and fulfilling the will of God for their community.
  - B. Spirit-supported—As a responsible community, the indigenous church turns to the unlimited resources of the Spirit for its sustenance so as not to depend on the missionary, institutions, ministries, or agencies.
  - C. Spirit-propagated—As a community of faith, indigenous church members are impassioned and empowered by the Spirit to reach their neighbors, their nation, and their world with the gospel.
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers God’s missionary people to give witness to the nations of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the redemptive power of the gospel through lives lived in community, in holiness, and in service.

### **Best Practices**

1. Saturate every decision and action in prayer guided by the Holy Spirit aligned with Scripture and the biblical principles of the indigenous church.
2. Develop the discipline of prayer for the nations in sending church.
3. In selection of missionary candidates, evaluate their prayer life and history of dependence on the Spirit for direction and fruitfulness.
4. In the training of missionaries, all aspects of the training process should be saturated in prayer, modeling for the candidates Spirit dependence. Training content should emphasize the importance of prayer and Spirit dependency in missionary endeavors and all aspects of life.
5. Intentional times should be set aside by the missions agency and training structures to wait upon the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
6. Frequently communicate progress and plans to likeminded, Spirit-driven agencies and leader (e.g. WAGF, PWF) for evaluation and encouragement in order to have confirmation of direction and activities in missions.

## **Balance in Missiology: Integrating Evangelism, Discipleship, Church Planting, and Compassion**

**Many missionaries and missions organizations work on specific dimensions of missions in a compartmentalized fashion. However, in Scripture the work of evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and compassion these dimensions are integrated holistically in the fulfillment of missions.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

The Pentecostal focus on the establishment and development of not only indigenous local churches but fully indigenous national church movements guides the AG to an integrated and holistic approach to missionary practice.

### **General Observations**

1. Pentecostal missionaries place a priority on the Spirit-driven, biblically directed work of evangelism, discipling converts, planting churches, and showing compassion to the hurting and marginalized. Global workers endeavor to transmit these biblical functions as the founding DNA in the establishing of indigenous churches and indigenous national church movements.
2. Passing on that spiritual DNA to nurture fully indigenous churches and church movements requires that cross-cultural workers incorporate all four of these biblical activities during the planting and establishing of churches to move these movements toward maturity to ensure that they are fully capable of thinking theologically and prophetically in their social contexts.
3. In order to pass on biblical DNA to the new church, missionaries must teach as well as disciple the believers to help them discern the needs in their context, hear God's voice, develop models of ministry, and equip members to do the work of the ministry.
4. Everything cross-cultural workers do must be done with a view to building the kind of church that takes ownership of the care of the poor and vulnerable and at the same time not hinder their development along indigenous lines of self-governance, finance, evangelism, theological development, social concern, and sending their own missionaries.
5. These new church movements in turn were to participate in the mission of God as the new community of righteousness and thus become the vehicle that the Lord uses to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

### **Best Practices**

1. Global workers should respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit and be intentional in the integration of evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and compassion in all missionary activities.

2. All churches should be planted and established contextually in alignment with indigenous church principles integrating the dimensions of evangelism, discipleship, church planting and compassion.
3. All compassion ministries should be able to establish a direct link to the other three dimensions of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.

## **Ecclesiology and the Importance of Planting the Church**

**The Church, as God’s missionary people, plants local communities of faith to fulfill the missionary mandate. Therefore, the study of missions becomes the study of the Church. A weak theology of the Church will produce a weak sense of mission.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

What is the Church? What is the mission of the Church? The Church is not in itself the source of missions. One must go farther back. The Church is the result of God’s redemptive purpose and plan. The Church is the object of Christ’s love. The Church is the body of Christ through which the eternal purpose is carried out. The Church is of Christ and Christ is of God (1 Cor. 3:23). The study of missions then becomes the study of the Church. A weak theology of the Church will produce a weak sense of mission.<sup>8</sup>

### **General Observations**

1. Missions takes people back to the heart of God. When they go back to the source of sending of God’s people into the world, they come to the heart of the plan and purpose of the living God. God’s redemptive plan centers on human beings and His redeemed followers always live as a new community under His rule.
2. One sees in the book of Acts that the early church interpreted the commission of Jesus to make disciples of the nations and proclaim the good news in all the world as meaning not just the evangelism of individuals but the formation of local communities of faith. It is local churches that bear witness to their societies.
3. The local church is at the front line of global missions for two reasons. First, local churches are the seedbed for the development of the cross-cultural missionaries that will take the gospel to new peoples and places. Second, when global workers go out, they plant new local churches who will bear witness to their society and produce new cross-cultural workers for the world.
4. These congregations and national organizations are to be patterned after the New Testament church—Spirit-supported, Spirit-governed and Spirit-propagated. This means that it is the Spirit that provides for the needs of the Church, the Spirit that directs and leads the congregation, the Spirit that enables their apostolic witness to the world. The New Testament indicates that churches that are contextually organized preserve the fruit of Spirit revival; the goal should be to have the dynamics of Spirit power and a Spirit directed organization.

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<sup>8</sup> Melvin Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), 10.

5. Pentecostal missiology recognizes that the missionary mandate cannot be fulfilled unless the entire Church community (the priesthood of all believers) both local and global is empowered and directed by the Spirit. Therefore, the most important competency for ministry and missions is to be able to discern the voice of the Spirit and in obedience yield to Spirit empowerment both supernaturally in miracles, signs, and wonders and naturally through the gifts and fruit of the Spirit in the lives of God's missionary people.

### **Best Practices**

1. Missions agencies and global workers must prioritize the planting and establishing of local churches patterned after the New Testament that result in the formation of indigenous national movements.
2. Local churches should be a seedbed for the development of the cross-cultural missionaries and a center for missions mobilization and missionary formation.
3. Missions agencies and training programs should develop global workers able to discern the voice of the Spirit and in obedience yield to Spirit empowerment.



## **Ministry Sensitive to the Context: Balance and Avoiding Extremes.**

**All churches and church movements are embedded in culture. Believers versions or modes of faith, the way they live out following Jesus as Lord, are of necessity combinations of both the Bible and their local culture.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

The mandate to take the gospel to all the peoples means that followers of Jesus in one sociocultural context must cross into a new cultural setting to root the gospel in that context. The missiological discipline that addresses the gospel crossing into new cultural settings is often referred to as contextualization.

### **General Observations**

1. While in one's own social sphere, his/her version of faith may be very effective at seeing people come to faith in Jesus. When cross-cultural workers take their "version" of faith into another culture, they may find that some of their practices actually hinder people from being able to respond to the message. When versions of faith are exported into a new cultural setting, the receiving people often feel that it is foreign.
2. To contextualize, cross cultural workers should seek to do ministry that is sensitive to the local context. This is a communal process where one works with local people, both non-Christians and Christians, to find appropriate local forms to express biblically mandated functions.
3. Ministry that is sensitive to context involves an incarnational dimension, which is the missionary's identification with the local culture; an ecclesial dimension, in which the community of faith fleshes out what it means to be under the Lordship of Christ in that context, and finally a theological dimension in which leadership of the community of faith articulates theological tenets relevant to their own issues.
4. A helpful process for working on contextual issues is suggested by Paul Hiebert. 1) Begin by deeply understanding the cultural issue in question. 2) Exegete Scripture and build a bridge to see how the truth of the gospel applies to the local issue. 3) Develop a critical response to the issue by evaluating local customs in light of new biblical understandings. 4) Develop new contextualized practices that express biblical teaching.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July 1987): 104-12.

5. Ministry sensitive to context encourages the formation of a Jesus-based identity for new believers rather than retaining their previous religious identity. “Insider movements,” that began with people working with Muslims, advocate that “Jesus followers” should continue to identify with their “birth” religion (e.g. a Muslim follower of Jesus, a Buddhist follower of Jesus, a Hindu follower of Jesus). However, a Buddhist cannot continue to identify as a Buddhist when entering their new life under the rulership of Christ. The gospel prophetically challenges religious rituals and practices and elements of local culture that are not in alignment with the truth of revelation.
6. Contextualization is a complicated task for an indigenous community of faith requiring biblical skills and spiritual discernment as cultures are dynamic, constantly changing. Use of local rituals and cultural patterns facilitate the communication of the gospel and the formation of local communities of faith but done without a critical view results in syncretism that distorts the truth of the gospel.

### **Best Practices**

1. Missions agencies and missionary training structures need to equip global workers with capacity to exegete Scripture and local culture in community in order to minister and develop local and national churches in cultural appropriate ways.
2. In order to avoid the extremes of “Insider movements,” new believers should be empowered to communally discern culturally appropriate expressions of their identity in Christ under the direction of the Spirit.
3. Indigenous churches should engage with the global church and church history as a safeguard in avoiding syncretism.

## **Section 3: Challenges/Threats to Global Missions**

## **The Threat of Universalism and the Uniqueness of Christ, the Savior of the World**

**The threat of universalism denies the uniqueness of Christ,  
the authority of the Bible, the need for conversion, and global missions.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

If cultural expediency leads to the rejection of the uniqueness of Christ and the authority of the Bible, the Church has lost its core identity and its reason for being. The Scriptures reveal that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, humans who are alienated from God and each other because of sin, can be reconciled to God and each other on the condition of repentance, conversion, surrender to the Lordship of Christ, and participation in God's mission in the world.

### **General Observations**

1. Overview
  - A. The Bible presents a grand story of the living God who creates humanity in His image for the purpose of living in intimate relationship with Him and multiplying the human family to worship and serve Him. When humans attempted to usurp God's role and become like God, this relationship was broken. The first and primary condition of spiritual lostness is a broken relationship with God caused by the idolatry of making oneself god which leads to deliberate disobedience to God's commands. This rebellion and disobedience shattered the harmony between God and humans, between man and woman, and between humans and God's good creation.
  - B. The Bible's view of humanity as lost and separated from God and in need of salvation and deliverance from judgment is at the heart of God's redemptive project and the fundamental standpoint for understanding the whole of Scripture.
  - C. The story of the Bible and the apostolic message is about how reconciliation with God can happen and how humans can know God personally and have access to the living God. The good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ to redeem humanity, forgive their sins, abolish death, and bring light and immortality to them (2 Tim. 1:10) is the message that God's people proclaim to a broken world in word and deed.
  - D. There are many voices today both in the Christian and secular worlds that see the Bible as a human document with little or no authority, that find the idea of God's judgement repulsive, and see no need for salvation in Jesus. In their view, all religions are equally salvific, there is nothing to be saved from or converted to,

and the ultimate goal is not God's being known and glorified among the nations but for all humans to get along with each other.

- E. The following points briefly explain why the Church remains committed to the authority of the Bible, a biblical view of the living God, and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the peoples, nations, tribes and tongues on the earth.
2. Why is the Bible important?
- A. Religions and philosophies create accounts to explain fundamental questions as to the nature of the world, the essential nature of humanity, what has gone wrong with humanity, and the solution to that problem. It is popular to say that all religions lead to the same place; the problem is that the accounts of the various religions have radically different solutions and ends. The account of the Old and New Testaments resonates with the experiences of all that is known about humanity.
  - B. The Bible offers a solution to the human dilemma that can deliver and transform people, give purpose in life, conquer death, and bring them a future in God's presence forever.
  - C. The Bible not only speaks to the human condition, it also resonates with the experience of millions of people who have met the living God through Jesus Christ and found a changed life. The testimony of eyewitnesses in the Bible to Jesus Christ raised from the dead who is Lord of all continues to be confirmed in the Christian experience as He is proclaimed among the nations.
3. If God is a God of love, how can He send a person to hell?
- A. The idea of God's wrath and anger makes some people very uncomfortable; they see it as incompatible with the Bible's emphasis on His love. Three things will help one to understand that God's love and His wrath and judgment of sin are not at odds with each other.
  - B. First, God's love means that He loves humans so much that He will not force them into His presence. The Bible's picture of humanity without God is clear that humans love darkness more than the light and do not come into the light lest their wicked deeds be exposed (John 3:19-20) and that they refuse to love the truth and take pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:10-12). When Paul says people are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:6), it is because, as one writer expresses it, they would not want to be in heaven as He is, and as they are.
  - C. The Bible affirms that the living God will judge every human with truth and justice; no one will be treated unfairly and in the end, he/she will get what he/she has sought and desired.
  - D. Finally, God's wrath is inseparable from His love. God's merciful and gracious love that humanity experience as they enter into a covenant relationship with Him through Jesus, is, as C. S. Lewis reminds us, "something more than mere kindness."<sup>10</sup> God's love for human's as revealed in the Bible is what Lewis calls

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<sup>10</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing, 1977), 41.

“an awful and surprising truth.”<sup>11</sup> God loves people too much and too intensely to simply leave them in their broken state, but He also loves them too much to force them into His presence when they spurn His love. There is a very real sense in which God does not send people to hell, but they choose it.

4. Why do we proclaim Jesus as the only way and the necessity of conversion?
  - A. Romans 1:18-32 indicates that humans suppress the truth that can be known about God from general revelation. All humans have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and are accountable to God (Rom. 3:19). Humans are incapable of saving themselves.
  - B. In Acts 4:12, Peter declares that God has provided an answer for the human dilemma in Jesus Christ. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to humankind by which we must be saved.”
  - C. Salvation is the free gift of God. Conversion requires that humans repent (turn away) of their sin, surrendering their self-sovereignty to Him, live in a way that honors God, and serve Christ as the rightful king of their lives and head of the community of faith, the Church.
  - D. In response to the questions, “Why not just make the world a better place?” Conversionary evangelism declares that good intentions do not resolve the issue of sin, only repentance and belief in and surrender to Christ resolves the human dilemma of sin.

### **Best Practices**

1. Missionaries and missions agencies should not surrender to the pressures of culture that affirm that all religious paths lead to salvation undermining the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.
2. The Bible must be held as the standard of truth where God’s redemptive agenda and the agenda of the mission of the Church is revealed.
3. Salvation, provided in the work of Christ, requires each person to repent from sin and convert from self-rulership to the rule of Christ demonstrated by love for God and love for each other.
4. The Church must reach out in love and truth to those who deviate from the truth of the gospel.

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 46.

## The Challenges of Managerial Missiology and The New Apostolic Reformation

**The dual theological threats of managerial missiology and the new apostolic reformation undermine a Spirit-driven missiology.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### Justification

The rise of managerial missiology and the new apostolic movement undermines the need for Spirit-direction and Spirit-empowerment, grounding missionary philosophy and activities in human agency (i.e. relying on human resources rather than depending on the Spirit in missions).

### General Observations

1. Managerial missiology
  - A. The intent of missiologists identified as promoting a “managerial missiology” is to seek closure to the unfinished task of global evangelization. Seeking to reach the unreached through analysis and strategic deployment, they focus on human agency and strategies.
  - B. If one follows the patterns of managerial missiology, missionary vision becomes limited to human ingenuity, efforts, and resources. Biblical missiology affirms that missionary vision and practice is limited only by the direction and empowerment of the Spirit. The God of the Bible is the God of the impossible. The fulfillment of the missionary mandate is the impossible made possible by God through the Church in the power of the Spirit.
  - C. “Make no mistake, the missionary venture of the church, no matter how well planned, how finely administered and finely supported, would fail like every other vast human enterprise, were it not that where human instrumentality leaves off, a blessed ally takes over. It is the Holy Spirit that calls, it is the Holy Spirit that inspires, it is the Holy Spirit that reveals, and it is the Holy Spirit that administers... I have long since ceased to be interested in meetings where mission leaders are called together to a room filled with charts, maps, graphs and statistics. All one needs to do to find plenteous harvest is simply to follow the leading of the Spirit... The essential optimism of Christianity is that the Holy Spirit is a force capable of bursting into the hardest paganism, discomforting the most rigid dogmatism, electrifying the most suffocating organization and bringing the glory of Pentecost.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As quoted in Wilson, Everett A. *Strategy of the Spirit: J. Philip Hogan and the Growth of the Assemblies of God Worldwide 1960-1990*. (Carlisle, U.K.: Regnum Books International, 1997), 136-137.

- D. Pentecostals rightly reject a managerial approach but affirm that data about the status of world evangelization, strategic planning, implementation, and organization are vital in the missionary enterprise if submitted to the guidance and empowerment of the Spirit and aligned with the principles of Scripture.
- 2. The New Apostolic Reformation
    - A. In order to evangelize the world, participants in the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) advocate for the establishment of a church leadership hierarchy, based on the “doctrine of five-fold ministries” identified in Ephesians 4:11, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.
    - B. While the majority of Pentecostals advocate for the function of these ministries to equip the people God for ministry, the claim of unique supernatural and ecclesial power for these offices undermines the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the need for all Christians to participate in God’s mission in the world.
    - C. Other tenets of the NAR include spiritual warfare and dominion theology where spiritual authority has been granted to “kingdom-minded people” to exercise dominion in the world and in the spirit realm (i.e. establish the kingdom of God on earth). Pentecostals affirm that with Jesus’ advent, the first fruits of the kingdom entered the present age empowering the Church to give witness to the world. However, the fullness of the kingdom will only occur when Jesus Christ returns. In the interim, the mission of the Church is not to establish the kingdom but proclaim in word and deed the gospel of the kingdom with signs following. To do otherwise is to usurp the authority of Christ.

### **Best Practices**

- 1. Missionary sending agencies and global workers need to be aware of the ways in which the theological perspectives and actions of managerial missiology and the NAR undermine a biblically based, Spirit-dependent missiology and practice.
- 2. Missionary vision and action should never be limited by a theology or philosophy of missions that limits the possibilities of what God can do through his missionary people.
- 3. Within missions structures, safeguards need to be established that place all levels of leadership in accountability to the Church. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21).



## **The Amateurization of Missions: The Challenge of Untrained and Short-term Workers.**

**In recent years local church members (amateurs) have increase their participation in on field missions work. When done with training and preparation, these experiences can mobilize the church to increased participation in mission. However, these often short-term experiences should not de-emphasize the critical importance of long-term incarnational ministry of career missionaries and the establishment of local and national churches.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

Opportunities for lay persons from local churches to have missions involvement should not cause agencies to distract from the importance of prioritizing the sending of full time career workers and the preparation and training of everyone engage in missions.

### **General Observation**

1. Circumstances today allow local churches to be involved in missions in a way that was not accessible in past decades. There has been rapid growth in missions involvement over the internet and social media and through short term trips. Local churches become involved in their own project in another country without sound missiology or missiological training and without input from those experienced in missions leadership. There exists a temptation to bypass training and preparation and send people direct to the field.
2. To have “Amateurs” involved in missions can be a very positive thing as it mobilizes the church to missions and creates the possibility that additional members of the church can have a hands-on experience in missions. If done with training, “amateurs” will be increasingly mobilized to give, pray, and participate in multiple ways in missions. Amateur engagement in missions should not lead the church to undervalue career missions and training. An overemphasis on amateur missions may impede the production of an indigenous mature product on the receiving end.
3. Ironically, the churches who lack preparation and training for missions and short-term workers, often insist on preparation and training for their pastor and staff. To be consistent, both local leadership and participants in missions need to value and participate in training programs. When done with training and intentionality, the missionary involvement and participation of laity in missions will bless the missionary enterprise and will no longer be a threat to long-term missions results.

### **Best Practices**

1. The church should affirm the involvement of lay persons in missions opportunities that lead to missions commitment through the local church (e.g. prayer, finances,

service).

2. The church should not allow the involvement of lay persons to diminish their commitment to supporting long term career missionaries.
3. The church can use short term involvement to be a “pipeline” to identify those that might be called and encourage them towards further training and preparation.

## **Eschatology: Restoring the Urgency of Bringing Back and Announcing the King**

**In historical Pentecostalism, the urgency in fulfilling the Great Commission emerged from the conviction that Jesus was coming soon to rapture His Church.**

Original prepared in July 2022, by WAGF Best Practices Task Force Part 1

### **Justification**

Increasingly in evangelical and Pentecostal circles, eschatology is shifting from the urgency of the return of Christ, the King, to bringing about the kingdom of God on earth resulting in a de-emphasis on global evangelization.

### **General Observations**

1. In recent years, modern Pentecostalism has had less of a focus on preaching, teaching, and emphasizing the second coming of Christ. Though some of the emphasis in decades past on the second coming of Christ might have been at times “faddish,” it was almost always tied to an urgency around the Great Commission. As the Church has de-emphasized the second coming of Christ, it results in less of a conviction of the importance of reaching the least reached.
2. An overemphasis on the details of the return of Christ (e.g. assigning dates, signs, apocalyptic interpretations) distracts from the biblical emphasis in Scripture on the responsibility of the Church to evangelize the world in the power of the Spirit until He comes.
3. Peter indicates that God is patience with the Church in the fulfillment of its mission because, from the human perspective, the day of the Lord and return of Christ, is “sped” by “holy and godly lives” that give witness to the gospel (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

### **Best Practices**

1. Believers must preach with conviction on the second coming of Christ.
2. Followers of Christ must connect that conviction to the urgency of the Great Commission and respond with missions vision.
3. A church lacking missionary vision needs to consider the possibility that preaching on the second coming of Christ has been neglected.
4. One way to sow a missionary vision is to preach on the second coming of Christ and connect it intentionally to the responsibility of the Church to fulfill the Great Commission.