

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 



Global Mission Digital Toolkit

History of Global Mission

A Small Group Study Guide

A Glimpse at the History of Global Mission **Small Group Study**

This study can be done in one session or broken up in to two or three sessions

Before we begin to discuss world mission history, it is helpful to start with an understanding of “mission” within the Christian context.

What is mission? “You decide what works best for you!”

In essence, the most traditional and historic understanding of the word mission is “*to send*”. This interpretation comes from the Latin translation of the word “*missio*” which is found in the early Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate). While this is a valid understanding of mission that has worked and continues to work for many, this definition can be seen as a very limited vision of what God’s calling is for God’s children in this world (God’s Mission).

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry gives us one of the best definitions of mission in that we are called to “Practice the Way of Love” with a “Jesus Centered Life”. This vision of what Bishop Curry calls the “Way of Love” within the Episcopal Church expands across both local and global mission engagement. The location is irrelevant when we look to see who is our neighbor, it is only the cultural and social context that changes.

Visit the Episcopal Church’s website for resources on how to follow the [“Way of Love”](#) and reflect upon how these learning can be adopted for use in a global context.

Reflections:

- i) How can the Way of Love provide a framework for your participation in “God’s mission in a global context”?
- ii) What Bible verses help you in your understanding of mission? A few suggestions are Micah 6:8, Psalm 86, Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Luke 4:18-19; Luke 10:29-37; Matthew 28:19-20

With this broad definition of mission let us look at the history of our participation in God’s mission in this world that God has created for us.

Where do we begin?

Where would you begin?

Draw a blank timeline beginning with Genesis all the way through to the present day using either a very large white board or multiple sheets of poster paper taped together across a wall.

Invite participants to add the people, institutions or events that they feel should be on a historical timeline of how humanity has participated in God’s mission around the world.

Bible passages and biblical figures:

Think about passages in scripture that you feel relate to your understanding of mission and how people have lived into that understanding for good and/or bad throughout scripture

Examples of this could include

- Genesis: Adam and Eve and their relationship with one another and with God.
- Genesis: Care of creation, how might this relate to your understanding of mission?
- Micah's words in 6:8 What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- Mary Magdalene, the first to see the risen Christ and share the news with the disciples (Luke 24:1-10). Was Mary the first missionary evangelist?
- Paul. Missionary to the gentile
- St Barnabas (Acts 4:36)

The Lives of the historic “Saints of the Church”

- St Francis, St Augustine, Hildegard of Bingham, Martyrs of Uganda, who else? Share what you know of your favorite saints and why you chose them.

Lives of people who you see as icons of Christian life, and people who have been you admire.

This could include a parent figure who nurtured you throughout your life, the nurse who cared for a sick relative, or those who stood out in history who spoke truth to power such as Martin Luther King. Mother Teresa. When adding each person to your timeline share briefly why you feel they represented what you feel is following God's mission in this world.

Look at mission in the local as well as the global context.

Think about how they reflect the ideals of what it means to be a faithful child of God. For some these figures may not necessarily be those who are seen as “Christian” but followed the best Christian understanding of participating in God's mission in the world, people such as Mahatma Gandhi.

Sit back and look at what you have created on your timeline.

How has the historic understanding of mission changed across your timeline?

Is there a move over time from evangelism to advocacy for human rights, social justice and humanitarian relief?

How has mission been connected to western expansionism and colonialism? What are the positives and negatives related to historic missionary activity?

Read about the [“Doctrine of Discovery”](#), in how colonial expansion and evangelism was justified for many years.

How has mission changed culture and traditional beliefs?

Reflecting on your work:

What can we learn from this history of how humanity has shared its interpretation of God's mission around the world?

How should we live into these new learnings in how we participate in God's mission with our global partners?

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