
MOSAIC COMPASS POINTS – DRAFT 1

COMPASS POINTS

The points of a compass indicate the direction people can choose to go; they are helpful for determining whether a group is on the right path, and for making adjustments in direction and trajectory. Compass points are different from *goals* in that goals are achievable ends, while compass points can never be reached. Compass points are different from our mission and vision statements because they mark out the values and pathways we must walk in the fulfillment of our mission which will contribute in turn to the realization of vision.

Compass points are effective when we can ask, “How are we growing in this compass point?” and get a clear answer that increases our discernment. Our compass points are not just *what we believe*, but *how we are called to embody* the things we believe.

MOSAIC’S COMPASS POINTS

1. Inter-Cultural Reconciliation
2. Inter-Cultural Theology
3. Spiritual Formation and Discipleship
4. Christian Community Development

1. INTER-CULTURAL RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is a hot topic in our time and can mean a variety of things depending on who you’re talking with. At Mosaic, we take seriously the hostility that exists between people groups, people and our environment, and people and God. We believe this hostility is a result of sin and that, in Jesus, God has overcome it and reconciled us to himself, to creation and to one another. At Mosaic, we’re still exploring what that means practically, but these **values** shape our approach:

- a. Everyone is called to reconciliation.** Reconciliation is a necessary fruit of the gospel. No matter the differences between people, followers of Jesus are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation and called to embody reconciliation.
- b. Dependence on the Holy Spirit.** We believe that reconciliation is fundamentally spiritual work and that the Holy Spirit is always drawing us deeper into the reconciliation that Jesus has accomplished. We pray for deeper reconciliation, and we act in faith as God leads us to develop relationships and to pursue opportunities to live out the call of reconciliation.
- c. Loving, humble relationships with real people.** We seek to approach others with love and humility, honoring their full identity and story. We are aware that we all have preconceptions about others and that our preconceptions are often wrong. The best correction to our preconceptions is to seek to learn from and to love real people, and to allow these relationships to illuminate and to correct our biases and misperceptions. We want to become family with one another.

- d. **Focused learning.** Real people live in complex communities affected by complicated systems in an incredibly intricate ecological environment. We value learning that helps us discern what is true about our world, that enriches our real relationships with real people, and that leads us to wise concrete action.
- e. **Embracing new habits.** Reconciliation requires us to evaluate what we experience as normal and to form new habits that foster right relationships and better living. Over time, new habits become normal and we grow.

2. INTER-CULTURAL THEOLOGY

Christian Theology Starts with God: Theology is both the study of God and the things we say about God; it includes *what* we believe and *how* we receive and develop our beliefs. As Christians, we believe that theology starts with God's self-revelation: the Father discloses Godself through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit; only God can reveal God.¹ The incarnation of God the Son in the man Jesus of Nazareth by the power of the Holy Spirit is the *sine qua non* of Christian theology; in his body God builds the bridge between God's incomprehensible infinitude and the limited and finite creatures God made. The Bible is inspired by God which means that God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – has overseen all of the dynamics that have brought the Scriptures about so that the Bible effectively serves God's self-revelation through God the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.² Nature also serves God's self-revelation in the Son by the power of the Spirit.

Christian theology always involves cross-cultural encounter. Christ lived in a place and time that is culturally distant from us, the Scriptures came to be in a wonderfully complex cultural milieu that spanned millennia, and the church that discerned the canon was also culturally distant from us. The great theologians of the early church, the ecumenical councils, the medieval church in the East and the West, the Reformation, the subsequent development of Western theology (to stay closer to our theological tradition), the impulse of the missionary movement and the globalization of Christianity, the rise of indigenous theology and the reality of global Christians coming to Canada – interacting with any one of these realities involves cross-cultural encounter. We often are interacting with many of them at once. Even within ethnically and culturally homogenous churches, the dynamics between different generations reflect the quick pace of cultural change that carries theological weight. Cross-cultural encounter is always part of Christian theology. This is simply the reality of life.

Cross-Cultural Theological Encounter is Essential to the Gospel: At Mosaic we believe that the cross-cultural encounters intrinsic to Christian theology are essential to the work of God in Jesus Christ. They are not impediments to the truth or power of the gospel, but rather the very fabric of how God joyfully works in the world. The blessing of the covenant love of God has always been for all the nations of the world (Gen. 12.1-4; Mat. 28.19-20; Acts 1.8; Rev. 7). In Christ's incarnation God unites concrete, historical, encultured humanity with the divine nature, rescuing us from the tyranny of sin and death (John 1.1-18; Acts 2; Col. 1.15ff; 2 Tim. 2.8; Heb. 1-4). This communion is available to all people, ethnic groups, and cultural groups without impediment (Matt. 28.16-20; Acts 2, 10-11, 13-16; Gal. 3.28; Eph. 2-3; Col. 3; Rev.

¹ John Webster, *Holy Scripture*.

² John Webster says that God has "annexed" the Scriptures to serve God's work of self-revelation.

1, 7) but it does not lead to cultural uniformity (Acts 15; Rom. 14; Rev. 7). God in Christ through the power of the Spirit stoops to make all human cultural (and personal) particularity and difference display his beauty, variety, complexity and glory; for the limitless life of the Trinity is infinite difference unfolding in infinite beauty, peace and joy.³

Cross-Cultural Theological Encounters are Often Difficult: Writing so positively about cultural diversity can seem idealistic. Cross-cultural encounter is quite challenging, complex, and prone to unhealthy power dynamics. Misunderstanding, confusion, pain, and a sense of ambiguity concerning what is true, along with a host of other uncomfortable or utterly horrifying dynamics are part of the cross-cultural reality. And it is certainly true that many theological traditions and cultural groups own mutually incompatible beliefs and practices. It is tempting to nurture anxiety about potentially developing unhealthy relationships, sliding into relativism or potentially having no clear theological identity.

We own these challenges. They are real. However, they are the unavoidable challenges of relationships in a world where sin has invaded human life on all levels. God's power to redeem is our only hope in all things. The difficulty inherent in cross-cultural theological encounter is not only real; it is also the context of our on-going transformation into the fulness of Christ. Approaching the *Cross-Cultural* realities of Christian theology with *Inter-Cultural* wisdom requires faith that God is at work to bring the church to completion in Christ in each and every Cross-Cultural theological encounter.

Inter-Cultural Theology is the wisdom that guides how we learn and speak about God at Mosaic. We seek to embody the values of Inter-Cultural Reconciliation in our learning and speech about God.

- a. **Dependence on the Holy Spirit:** Theology is spiritual work, not only academic work. The Spirit leads the church into the truth of Christ; the Spirit leads the Church to embody the truth of Christ in our faithful relationships. Doing inter-cultural theology requires attending to the presence, voice, power and invitation of the Spirit to nurture our character and understanding through the relationships and challenges we encounter. We assume the Spirit is at work in the theological traditions outside of our own and that the Spirit has gifts to offer us through them.
- b. **Fidelity to Scripture:** We hold a high view of Scripture and place ourselves and all teaching outside of Scripture under its authority. It is God's chosen means of self-disclosure, and the shared inheritance of all Christians. We seek to heed and to respond with faith and love to God who has spoken – and who continues to speak through the Scriptures.
- c. **Solidarity with the historic and global church:** We confess the faith of the Church as expressed in the Apostles' and Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creeds. We submit ourselves to the definition of the faith as articulated in the Great Ecumenical Councils. We are historically Protestant, but we are open to the Spirit's gifts and correctives brought to us from the other traditions that have flown from the era of the Great Ecumenical Councils. We recognize our need for the insights and teaching of Christians from other times and places; their light illuminates the blind spots and shadows in our 21st Century Canadian context.

³ David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, *passim*.

- d. **Everyone is a Theologian:** Everyone with experiences and ideas about God is to some degree a theologian. Each person has the privilege and responsibility of learning and speaking of God as they are able. We seek to honour, nurture and deepen each person's capacity to do the work of theology within the community.
- e. **Focused Learning:** Within the breadth and depth of Scripture and the historic and global theological discourse there is an infinite opportunity for exploration. We believe each Christian benefits from focused theological learning that encompasses core doctrine that we share with all Christians as well as specific topics that are relevant to our context.
- f. **Embracing new perspectives:** We do not claim that our current understanding of Scripture and the Creeds is complete and without error. We expect that doing theology inter-culturally will lead us to embrace understandings and practices that will be different from those we currently own. We embrace opportunities for reconsidering and reshaping our theological perspectives, trusting that through those processes God will lead us into the fullness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

The fruit of being reconciled with God in Christ is that the life of God becomes ours in the power of the Holy Spirit. We become people who share in the divine nature (Romans 8, Galatians 2, Ephesians 1-2, Colossians 2-3, 2 Peter 1, etc.). The life of God tangibly transforms every relationship we have as human beings. This transformation is an infinite journey; it begins in this life with our new birth in Christ and ushers us into a never-ending life of repentance, desire, exploration, learning, discovery, joy and love that continues beyond death in the resurrection and life in the new heavens and the new earth. **Spiritual formation and discipleship** are the practices and ways of life that open us up to God's loving presence and lead us to be transformed into the likeness of Christ with ever-increasing glory. At Mosaic, these principles shape our spiritual formation and discipleship:

- a. **One Spirit, many Streams:** We believe the Holy Spirit has given the church many ways to receive and embody the life of Christ while each individual and each community within the church has a particular history in the Spirit. It is important to be rooted in the ways the Spirit has been at work in those who went before us, and to be open to the many ways the Spirit is at work in people or communities that are new to us. The demonstration of the Spirit's presence and power is in a community where the love, life and lordship of Jesus are visible in increasing measure. We currently welcome the charismatic, contemplative, pietistic and liturgical expressions of the Spirit at Mosaic.
- b. **Spiritual Disciplines:** We learn and practice spiritual disciplines that have been passed on by generations of God's people, including worship, prayer, study, meditation, intercession, fasting, journaling, service, secrecy, attending to nature, etc. We practice spiritual disciplines as a community and as individuals. We draw from the wisdom of various Christian traditions of spiritual formation and we celebrate the unique practices of various cultural communities. The goal for all of us is life united with God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit; the specific practices that lead to that are varied and diverse.

- c. **Faithfully Engaging Scripture:** God has “annexed”⁴ the Bible so that it is a place where he reveals himself to us. When we come to the Scriptures humbly, seeking to meet with God, he meets us there and transforms us. We engage in the Scriptures in a variety of ways, but we always consider them essential to knowing God in Christ and receiving the life for which he created us.
- d. **Taking Responsibility in Loving, Honest Relationships:** Genuine positive transformation happens in the context of loving relationships where people practice telling and living the truth. We each need loving, honest relationships with people who are helping us grow and whom we are helping to grow. We celebrate as people take responsibility for our own growth and the growth of others. Our teams, Bible studies and individual friendships are places where we seek to build these kinds of relationships.
- e. **Embracing Complexity and Suffering:** We acknowledge that the texture of each person and each community’s life is complex; we are, after all, made with eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3). And with that complexity come uniqueness and suffering. At Mosaic we aspire to be wise and loving companions to each other as we walk with God through suffering and complexity. There are seasons of life when God seems particularly close, visibly active and radiantly good; there are other seasons when God seems absent, his work hidden, and his goodness shrouded in gloom. We recognize that we are walking with the Living God and these seasons are part of the on-going process of living in communion with him. We aspire to discern the seasons of life wisely and to respond to God faithfully in each season.
- f. **Long Term Faithfulness:** We aspire to be faithful to Christ over the long term and recognize that, because we are given eternal life with the hope of infinite joy and change, transformation will happen at a different pace for different people. Nonetheless, being made complete in Christ is God’s good promise and gift of grace for all of us.

4. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Reconciliation and Spiritual Formation are essentially communal. As we enter new relationship in Christ with God, with one another and with God’s creation, God reveals the harmony and flourishing that God has brought about in Christ and that God intended for God’s world from before creation. In the ministry of Jesus, the narrative of the Exodus and the Torah, the life of the early church and the life of the church throughout history, we see the practical impact of the kingdom of God in the community of believers and the neighborhoods, cities and rural areas where they lived. This is the deep work of justice, of mercy, of sharing skills and building shared capacity; it seeks to embrace both the place and the people where we live and worship. It is the work of community development.

At Mosaic, we have been blessed by the thinking and practice of the Christian Community Development Association in the United States. Its deep roots in the gospel, its origins in the margins of US society, its legacy of transformation in many difficult contexts, its conceptual richness, and its engagement with a wide variety of practitioners, activists, theologians, clergy and others inspire us. The CCDA is not a Canadian movement, but its example is worth taking seriously.

⁴ John Webster, *Holy Scripture*

Our Canadian society has a well-developed social safety net, including our medical, financial support, charitable, law enforcement, newcomer settlement and community development sectors. These social services contribute significantly and positively to the quality of life here in Canada, and we give God thanks for them and for the privilege of enjoying their benefits. At the same time, we know each sector has deficiencies and there is inequity among demographic groups in their access to service and in the impact upon them of the services they are able to access. We believe that advocacy leading to improved access and impact for all people is an important and vital work of justice here in Canada; we also believe that God in Christ is offering a deeper shalom, a shalom that both calls our program- and service-providers to their fullest good and ushers in the kind of personal and communal life that is genuinely eternal, lastingly good and whole.

In our community we have observed that programs and social services, whether offered by churches or by other groups, have been unable to bring about lasting spiritual and whole life transformation in individuals and families. In many cases a spiritual malaise, a form of despondency or lack of deep purpose and life, a sense of entitlement, and an entrenched sense of shame and isolation attend people after participating in programs and receiving services. We believe that some of the factors that have led to this outcome are the following:

- (1) Churches, including ours, provided programming to children without long-term, life-giving relationship with their parents.
- (2) Mentoring-type relationships have ended prematurely, leaving a sense of abandonment among those being led. This is particularly the case with the African diaspora young adults.
- (3) Mentors and/or program-providers have not been able to lead others to a growing relationship with God in Christ that extends to embrace and lead a second and third generation.
- (4) The church congregation gathered on Sunday for worship has been unable to integrate people involved in community development and programs.

This assessment implies the following priorities of change:

- (1) A group of leaders at the core of the local neighborhood church who embody community development practices, spiritual formation and reconciliation in long-term relationships.
- (2) Strengthening the spiritual vitality of our core teams and their members for the long-term so that they embody reconciliation, spiritual formation and community development.
- (3) Growing the congregation's commitment to the neighborhood and our skills in providing a place of belonging for all and welcoming in the newcomer.

At Mosaic we seek to embody the values of Christian Community Development in the following ways:

- a. **Embodying the holistic gospel:** Jesus Christ is the source of all life, and the *shalom* he brings leads us to right relationships, harmony, and flourishing in every dimension of our existence. This means that our mentorship, discipleship and spiritual formation include financial, relational and practical skill-development.
- b. **Long-Term Citizens, Newcomers and First Nations:** All people who inhabit this land of Ontario are part of the treaty relationships that were established between the First Nations and British in

the 1760's whether we are aware of it or not. At Mosaic, we believe God has given us the privilege of enjoying growing relationship with indigenous brothers and sisters, and this is integral to our calling as his people.

- c. **Being Rooted in North East London:** We believe that, because God is infinite, limitless love, God has an infinite and particular love for North East London. We are committed to the flourishing of the people and the neighborhood of North East London. This is like the *Relocation* value of the CCDA, but we do not require all of our congregation to live in North East London.
- d. **Building Skill and Capacity:** As we build relationships, leadership structures and practices, we aim to build one another's skills and capacities. This involves humble and honest relationship-building, seeing the gifts, skills and capacities in others, and cultivating certain practices that enable us to pass on our wisdom and take on the wisdom of others. This is like the *Redistribution* value of the CCDA; it is the redistribution of wisdom, skills and capacities.
- e. **Embracing the Margins:** Throughout Scripture see God's gracious love and action on the margins of society and human spheres of authority – among those who are egregiously sinful, poor, sojourning, bereaved and abandoned. It is not the case that those who are on the margins are more virtuous than others; however, life on the margins exposes the truth about broken shalom in ways that are necessary to understand. Embracing the margins involves compassion, pain, long-suffering, lamentation and engaging complex realities. It is possible and worthy because of the presence of God there.
- f. **The Ten-Year Principle:** Some friends of ours have commented that, in the world of global partnership, it takes at least ten years for relationships to mature and deepen to the place where deep trust ushers in mutual transformation and inspiring work. There is value in staying engaged for long periods of time if we are committed to good relationships that bear good fruit.
- g. **Collaboration and Partnership:** Mosaic must develop healthy partnerships with people and organizations in our neighborhood and elsewhere for the sake of building shalom.