

The Issachar Project Report

(Abridged Version)



Understanding the Times,
Discerning Our Future

THE ISSACHAR
reveal

May 2019
The Western Canadian District of
The Christian and Missionary Alliance

Introduction

The Issachar Report Summary invites members of the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance to a comprehensive tour of the Issachar Project. It includes a brief overview of the project process, followed by a high-level summary of findings and recommendations. The closing comments are particularly important. In them, Terry Mochar speaks to the undergirding of dependency on the Holy Spirit's leading during the Issachar Project and emphasizes how the Western Canadian District is in a time of unprecedented opportunity. Brent Trask's concluding comments outline the next steps the District Leadership and District Office are taking in light of the findings of the Issachar Project, including eight initiative areas.

The genesis of the Issachar Project stemmed from a motion of the District Executive Committee (DEXCOM) to take a deeper dive into how the Western Canadian District Office (WCDO) was doing in its mandate to serve its churches and pastors. The mission was clear: "to serve Western Canadian District (WCD) churches and leaders as a catalyst in pursuing Jesus for life, church and world transformation." DEXCOM wanted to know specifically in what ways they were fulfilling that mission and to gather recommendations for increased effectiveness. The following questions were asked: "What are we doing well or not well? What should the office do more or less of? What should WCDO start or stop doing?"

The defined purpose of the project was "to ensure the effectiveness of the WCD in leading and serving its church leaders in ways that enable them to have the greatest Kingdom impact in a post-Christian environment."

Seeking the highest quality process and results, DEXCOM sought out and hired a consultant to lead a process of research and evaluation. They chose Terry Mochar, Founder and President of Mochar International Management, who is globally recognized for his ability to assist businesses and institutions in assessing their reality, see the future and better fulfil their mandate. Terry has worked with several corporate and not-for-profit organizations assisting senior leaders in establishing vision, strategy, structure and operating models to create sustainable and productive organizations. He has conducted similar projects with other Christian organizations such as SEND International, the Canadian Conference of MB Churches and International Stu-

dents Ministries Canada. Importantly, he is a devoted follower of Jesus Christ with long-standing roots in the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), including the WCD.

The Issachar Project was guided by the DEXCOM appointed Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprised of Scott Dixon (Chair), Carla Olsen Draper, Henry Tseung, Lorne Fredlund, Brent Trask and Terry Mochar. The name "Issachar Project" was chosen because it spoke to the heart of what DEXCOM wanted to accomplish—understanding the times in which we live and discerning WCD's future in multiplying disciples (see 1 Chronicles 12:32).

Project Scope

The WCDO was already highly engaged and motivated to serve churches and leaders at the time the Issachar Project was considered. It was in the final phase of its 2013-2019 Endorsed Strategic Plan. The WCD was deemed to be on mission and experiencing good to strong movement in its vision and chosen action plans.

At this place of health and strength, DEXCOM felt it was appropriate to seek further insight and direction for the future. DEXCOM sought clarity on the following questions to be answered through the process of research and evaluation. These questions defined the scope of the Issachar Project.

1. How effectively are we seeing movement in disciple making, spiritual renewal and reaching the least reached?
2. What yearnings and longings is the Spirit of God placing in our hearts for something more?
3. How do we serve our churches and leaders to help them understand their place and role as part of a broader Christian movement around the world?
4. How do we serve our churches and leaders to have greater Kingdom impact in a post-Christian environment?
5. Are we clear enough on whom we are serving and how effectively we are meeting their needs?
6. Are our resources—staff and financial—allocated to what is most strategic and important?

7. Are we structured effectively to accomplish our strategies and goals?
8. Are we being effective in achieving our vision and mission through our defined strategies and activities?
9. Are the stated WCD mission and mandate right for us and those we serve?
10. Do we have the right systems and tools to track effectiveness? Do we have blind spots, and are we missing “low-hanging fruit”?
11. How do converging technologies and societal movements impact how churches should function going forward?
12. Are we in alignment and impactful partnership with the Lord’s calling upon the C&MA Canada?

Terry Mochar viewed the research data through the lens of these guiding questions in order to formulate observations and recommendations to submit to DEXCOM. This report includes his general observations and recommendations followed by specific observations and recommendations relating to the following five Issachar Project deliverables:

1. Mission
2. Organizational & Staff Structure
3. Ministry Model Canvas
4. Existing Realities
5. Future Direction

at District Conference; and declaring project implementation response (May 24-Jun 3, 2019).

Throughout this time there were various updates and communications as the project has been unfolding. DEXCOM focused its initial communications on what to expect during the research process as data was collected and then evaluated over a time period which exceeded a year. Once data collection and evaluation were complete, DEXCOM focused on revealing the findings through written content and video communications (WCDTV.com), of which this comprehensive summary is a part.



Terry Mochar and Brent Trask

The Issachar Report – Comprehensive Summary of Terry Mochar’s Work

This comprehensive summary is a synopsis of the original 170-page report, and many of the observations and recommendations have been summarized to make the Issachar Report more accessible to our constituency. Nonetheless, this summary is comprehensive to the scope and import of the entire work and is provided nearly verbatim in Terry’s voice. Additionally, most of the full report is comprised of data pages (100-plus pages) that support the observations and recommendations. These data pages are not included in this summary, but many of them can be found on WCDTV.com on the Issachar Reveal channel.

Timeline and Communication

The entire project was developed over several phases, including PSC recruitment and alignment in project purpose (Sept-Oct 2017); research and analysis pertaining primarily to the WCD organization, strategy and structure (Nov-Dec 2017); constituent leadership interviews (Jan-Jun 2018); project report writing (Jul-Aug 2018); presentation to and response of DEXCOM (Sept-Oct 2018); recruitment and work of the Implementation Committee to serve DEXCOM in forming final recommendations (Nov 2018-Jun 2019); Issachar Reveal series of videos communicating the content of project discoveries (Mar-May 2019); Issachar Moment

General Observations

A Call for Spiritual Renewal. I, Terry, believe there is a “God-breathed” call on the WCD to corporate and personal renewal and dependency on the Spirit’s power in the face of the church as an institution being pushed to the margins. However, this longing for spiritual renewal varies widely across the district. A danger for organizations with high capacity leaders and broad resources is to be self-reliant versus Spirit-dependent. I believe the things the WCD has asked God for and the things He is preparing you to do will not be achieved within your current intellect, experience and resources. While God has given you those things to “make the horse ready for the day of battle,” the “immeasurably more than all we ask or think” will only be achieved through His power at work within us. We need to make room for it.

A Season of Preparation. You have been asking God to do a new thing in you, to make you more Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered and mission-focused. I believe He is answering that prayer. There are three observations suggesting God is positioning and equipping the WCD churches for this moment. The first is a season of peace and unity in the district which allows leadership to focus on mission versus crisis. The second is a deep pool of leaders across the WCD. The third is substantial assets, with a low debt-to-asset ratio, providing financial resources and leverage for innovation and impact. The question that should be pondered is, “Why has God placed the WCD in this position at such a critical time in our country’s history and culture?”

Greatest Opportunities and Risks. Through consultation with DEXCOM, we identified 17 major opportunities of which 4 received significantly higher weighting. Those opportunities include leveraging technology; the world immigrating to Alberta; spawning innovation via entrepreneurial leaders; and engaging Millennials and the next generation. Likewise, DEXCOM identified 13 significant threats of which 3 were of greatest concern. Those threats are mismanaging leadership handoffs to the next generation; not thinking about cross-cultural missions domestically; and the view society has of the church.

Deep Relationships Driving Collaboration. The WCD benefits greatly from an unusually large number of high capacity leaders who enjoy long-standing relationships. These relationships often provide fuel for collaboration, new ventures, mutual goodwill, common DNA and a sense of team. These relationships provide an informal

network of “how things get done.” However, many of these leaders are retiring in the next five to eight years. Are we ready for this? How are we responding to this?

Inflection Point. The WCD is at an inflection point—a time of significant change. It is a turning point where the future direction is one of great opportunity or demise. This inflection point demands WCD move into and embrace a new reality. I believe this inflection point is created by divine design. Contributing internal factors include leadership transition through retirement, Millennials, spiritual renewal and discipleship, changing missiology, resource allocation and a diminishing C&MA culture. External factors include the organized church in the margins, digital age, migration and immigration, changing legislation, rapid growth of religious “nones” and a massive transfer of wealth. To move through the inflection point will mean that the WCD must be willing to let go of former models of ministry; reallocate resources to what is missionally critical; reduce complexity; and go narrow and deep on what matters most. At a macro level, it is about becoming a movement of churches on mission versus primarily an affiliation of churches. The WCD is well positioned by God to make this transition.

Digital Strategy and Platform. We live and minister in a rapidly changing digital age. People now build community, share ideas and learn digitally. The online presence of the church is the new lobby that compels people into physical community. We need a digital strategy that supports the missional opportunities around us. What the WCD and churches are doing today is large-



Issachar Reveal Video Hosts Rebecca Trask and Neil Truong WCDTV.com

ly eclectic and lags significantly behind digital norms that people expect in today's world. Churches are asking the District Office to give functional leadership in technology to create a strategy and platform that can be easily adopted by the majority of churches.

General Recommendations

Implementation Task Force/Committee. It is recommended that a small implementation task force be created consisting of leaders from the district office, local churches and outside experts for the purpose of strategic and administrative guidance in executing the adopted actions stemming from the Issachar Project.

Understanding our Times. The local church leaders often do not have time, capacity or sometimes the skill set to study trends impacting the church. The WCD needs the means to continually see key trends, bring thought leadership, action and resources to the church in order to mitigate threats and pursue Kingdom advancement opportunities.

Continuity of Leadership. I recommend continuity of the current district superintendent for another term in light of the WCD moving through an inflection point; the amount of retirements approaching; the trust, experience, skill and strength of character he has to move the WCD into a new reality; and the time it will take to implement recommendations flowing from the Issachar Report.

Five Project Deliverables

Deliverable #1: Mission

Assess the stated mission for the WCD office/staff. Evaluate if it is a fitting mission for the WCD stakeholders and if the strategies and markers of progress and effectiveness are the right ones.

Observations on Mission

Clarity and alignment of mission. The vision of the WCD is clear and inspiring, captured within the National Vision Prayer. In response, the mission of an organization should state what it does to ensure the desired outcome of the vision—"multiplying disciples everywhere." The opinion derived from the audit findings is the current mission of the WCD is aligned with its

stated vision. However, there is misalignment on how some services (coaching, support, experiences, resources and relationships) function in creating, building and supporting a movement of churches.

Catalyst for a movement of churches on "mission" versus "service provider." The WCD spends significant time and energy providing services to churches and not enough in being a catalyst for a movement of churches to engage the culture with the Gospel. Churches tend to view themselves more as affiliates within the WCD and the WCDO as more of a service provider (fee for service) than a catalyst for a movement of churches for collective impact in our province. The churches see high value in many of these services, such as financing support, networking, developmental experiences and sharing best practices, but not enough energy goes into stimulating Kingdom advance.

Awareness of WCD mission and strategic priorities. Through interviews, I consistently observed that church leaders were unaware of the WCD's "Big 3" missional priorities of making disciples, seeking renewal and reaching the least reached. Also notable is that most lead pastors interviewed are not looking to the WCD to set the priorities for the local church.

The role of the WCD. Without exception, every church leader interviewed highly respected the WCD leadership and valued the relationship they have with district personnel. When asked what they saw as the role of the WCD, the majority viewed the role of the district as providing supportive services to churches to be able to operate effectively in their local context. This is different than looking for strategic coaching on how to be missional in their local contexts. Interestingly, when churches were asked, "What should the WCD be thinking of in the next three to five years?" the responses focused more on leadership of strategic initiatives versus supportive services. It leaned more towards being on mission together. I believe this conflicting view comes from the heavier weighting of the WCD supportive services today that have conditioned churches to see WCD as service provider versus missional partner.

What's working well and what needs to change? Leaders feel supported ("the district always has my back") and find value in prayer retreats, financial services, facilitated overseas experiences, seed funding of innovative ideas, spiritual renewal initiatives and participation in ad hoc committees. Church leaders would decrease district goals, strategies and priorities; increase the development of the next generation of lead

pastors; change or improve the church-coach function and WCD structure; add more thought leadership; delete the transformational tracker; and provide greater discipleship resources.

What do leaders sense the Spirit of God saying? A compilation of leaders' responses forms this narrative: "You have become complacent and trusting in your own resources and capabilities. I am creating a new season for you if you will give me room to move. I am inviting all of you to live in and depend on the Spirit. I am inviting you to reflect, listen and reason together. I am inviting you to a great place of intimacy with Jesus. I will give you a renewed passion for missions, for the lost. I will give you courage to stand your ground with grace and humility. I will give you wisdom and empower you to bring hope and to be life giving to a dark culture." The responses are so consistent within an interconnected theme, that there is no doubt the Holy Spirit is speaking and calling the WCD to a new season of Spirit-dependent ministry.

Recommendations on Mission

Resources for board members and board chairpersons. Develop a portal of easily accessible resources for church boards covering useful training topics and providing templates.

WCD online presence and website alignment. (1) Transform the WCD website from an information site to a resource site and center of thought leadership and excellence. (2) Develop an overarching digital strategy which supports the core strategies of the WCD. (3) Simplify the language on the website around vision, mission and major goals.

Catalyst for movement versus affiliation. Build district language around a movement or family of churches on mission versus being an affiliate of churches.

Innovation and best-practice multiplication. Innovation, acceleration and multiplication of ideas need to become a core functional area of the WCD within a framework that enables innovative ideas to be nurtured, shared and multiplied.

Communicating what the Spirit is saying. Communicate a summary of what leaders are sensing the Spirit of God saying to us collectively at this time and use it as a rallying cry to move deeper into spiritual renewal and disciple making together.

Online sermon series. Create an online WCD portal where key leaders across the district can contribute strategic content and sermon series and be made accessible to all people and churches.

Level the playing field. Create a defined innovation incubator, seed funding and multiplication framework that is clear and equitable for all leaders to access across the district.

Deliverable #2: Organizational & Staff Structure

Assess the current organizational structure to determine if the structure, roles and competencies are effective to achieve the long-term mission and vision.

Observations on Organizational & Staff Structure

Strong culture. The WCD leadership has built what appears to be a very positive and healthy organizational culture demonstrating an ethos of trust, respect, responsiveness and sacrifice for the greater good.

Inflection and focal points. The audit finds the WCD has entered into an inflection point in the last decade and has not made required adjustments in several functions, particularly, in defined land/facility development framework; communications and digital strategy with supporting technology; IT strategy and controlled systems for data integrity; church-coaching model; and operational leadership versus administration. The WCD is highly structured to be a service provider of supportive activities and lacks the strategic functional leadership in areas that fuel a movement of churches on mission.

Structure components (dynamic versus non-dynamic). The finding of the project is that both the non-dynamic and dynamic components of the structure have deficiencies and need immediate attention for sustainability. The non-dynamic functions are mainly operational areas such as finance, HR, IT, communications, project/event management, administrations, etc. There is currently overlap, confusion and inefficiency in aspects of operations which siphon energy from too many people. Dynamic functions are those put in place for a specific season of opportunity to make advance within an organization's mission. Some of WCD's dynamic functions do not align well to the strategic priorities to which God is calling the WCD.

Supporting systems. The WCDO has limited resourcing in this area for an organization of its size. There is no overarching IT strategy with defined business requirements driving what software tools and systems the WCD uses. Resultantly, the District Office is largely a paper-driven organization with redundant systems that do not talk to each other, making data integrity and version control difficult. In today's cloud-based software service age, there are numerous affordable options to address the need for fully integrated systems across all departments.

District missions. The WCD has a strong focus on missions, and there is a lot of good and creative work being done via the district office. However, the future focus needs to expand to function within the broader strategic framework of the district and needs to engage WCD churches into a missiology model that includes church planting, diaspora groups in Canada, new Canadians, international students, ethnic church strategy, marginalized groups and international missions. Churches are asking the district for more thought leadership around missional trends and opportunities as well as how to take advantage of them.

Spiritual renewal. The WCD has a strong focus on spiritual renewal, allocated resources and a well thought out strategy for implementation. There is a good supporting framework around this area with a Renewal Wisdom Board to help guide the movement within the WCD churches. Church leaders greatly value this area of focus and service by the WCD. There is a strong relationship between spiritual renewal and discipleship; these two need to be integrated.

Church coaches. The current Church Effectiveness Coaching (CEC) model has been in place for 12 years. Without exception, Church Coaches are highly respected individuals across the district. The consistent view from church leaders is that they are highly responsive and available when needed. However, it is also a common view that Church Coaches are so busy in the breadth and diversity of their roles that they do not have time to actually coach churches on strategic focus and ministry impact in their local contexts. The constituency is asking for this to be addressed.

Church planting. Church leaders feel it is the role of the churches to plant churches by multiplying themselves, and that the role of WCD leadership is to help catalyze church planting initiative and work with churches on how to effectively plant. Partnership organizations

can and should help with this. The perception in the constituency is that church planting movement in the district is weak.



Recommendations on Organizational & Staff Structure

Operational Matters. (1) Revise the Development Consultant position to be a permanent, functional role in the WCD. (2) Designate a single operational lead (COO) for all support functions of the district. (3) Outsource the IT function under the direction of the WCD operational lead. (3) Separate the office manager role from the DS's administrative assistant role with the office manager reporting into the COO and being responsible for human resources. (4) Create the role of Director of Digital Strategy & Platform to focus on developing a comprehensive digital strategy. (5) Develop a digital platform to be made available to all churches across the district.

District missions. Develop a broader strategy and framework for district missions that focuses on a "Canadian Global Missions" missiology model that includes how to engage new Canadians, religious "nones," international students, mono-ethnic churches and overseas missions, positioning the WCD as a thought leader, resource center of excellence and catalyst for churches to engage the nations in their neighbourhoods.

Church effectiveness. Move to functional subject-matter leaders at the district level to oversee strategic fo-

cus areas to be a catalyst for a movement of churches: (1) Spiritual Renewal and Discipleship, (2) Canadian Global Missions, (3) Digital Platform, (4) Innovation and Thought Leadership, (5) Development and (6) Finance and Operations.

Regional hubs. Consider developing two regional centers of excellence in Edmonton and Calgary that focus on the deployment and implementation of the functional strategic focus areas of the district (the above six church effectiveness areas) to bring resources closer to the frontlines of local church leaders. The hubs would function as incubators for innovation and multiplication, fostering further support networks for pastors.

Spiritual renewal and discipleship. Move discipleship and spiritual renewal functions under one leader.

Diversity of leadership. As leadership transition occurs within the WCDO, greater consideration needs to be given to diversification of leaders including ethnicity, age, gender and geography.

Deliverable #3: Ministry Model Canvas

Identify a renewed ministry model that ensures activities are aligned with the mission and vision. Examine whether the stated priorities meet the needs of the WCD stakeholders. Is there too much activity/complexity? Are resources allocated to the most strategic initiatives?



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Observations on Ministry Model Canvas

2017-2019 strategic plan. DEXCOM reported their sense of God's voice speaking to the WCD at the District Conference 2017 in the following statement, "You are on the right path, I am in it, I am with you, I am transforming you, you have not yet fully matured to where I am taking you, stay the course." I believe this is God breathed and a timely word for WCD leadership.

The macro goals of the strategic plan accurately reflect the transformation path to which God has called the district. However, below these macro goals is high complexity of activity that is not aligned fully with what God has asked the WCD to focus on. I believe that "stay the course" is not a message to continue this way but to stay a course of transformation that will take the WCD into a new reality of how it is structured and how it serves its churches.

High complexity: mission strategies and goals. The WCD has high-capacity leadership with decades of experience and vision coupled with financial resources—a great combination, but has led to a lack of focus with too many priorities and wide-ranging initiatives not effectively supporting its mission.

Ministry methods and markers. The WCD has a well thought out strategic plan, but it is too broad with too many goals and strategies to be executed effectively. As a result, the WCD has an extensive Methods and Markers report that tracks a total of 141 items for the WCD and DEXCOM. This needs to be streamlined to support and track progress on WCD's mission.

Awareness amongst churches. The interview process explored local church leaders' awareness of the strategic plan and priorities of the WCD. Over 90% of church leaders interviewed were not aware of what the priorities of the district are. All those interviewed did not know what the "Big 3" meant. However, almost without exception, discipleship was a top priority for lead pastors. Churches are looking for more direction, resources and leadership from the WCD in this area.

Transformational tracker. The findings indicate challenges around this tool from churches' points of view. Churches are not able to accurately track some of the information required in the report. In addition, there is not a common understanding or definition around some of the terms in key questions—many questions are too subjective and thereby invalidate the integrity of data. Overall, church leaders do not see value in this survey and do not want to participate in it.

Resource allocation. The WCD runs allocation routines to categorize expenses into four focus areas: district operations, life transformation, church transformation and world transformation. As the WCD considers the findings of this report and the opportunities that exist within the Future Direction section of the Issachar Report, reallocation of funds should be considered to areas such as a Canadian Missions Strategy, digital platform, thought leadership, regional centers of excellence, research and discipleship.

Recommendations on Ministry Model Canvas

Develop an “Executive Dashboard.” Move away from the Ministry Model Canvas and develop an “Executive Dashboard” that can be maintained and brings into focus the key indicators of progress around the main objectives and goals of the WCD.

Craft new metrics for the Transformation Tracker tool. The recommendation is for the WCD to put a short-term, ad hoc committee together made up of local practitioners with the mandate to help craft the set of metrics that indicate becoming a movement of churches towards spiritual renewal and disciple making.

Simplify the Transformational Plan. The recommendation is to have three simple objectives focused on each of the main functions to deliver the mission of the WCD: (1) inspiring the movement; (2) catalysing the movement; and (3) supporting the movement. Inspiring the movement relates to spiritual renewal and discipleship. Catalysts for the movement include digital strategy, innovation and Canadian Global Missions. Supporting the movement focuses on finance, development, licensing, orientation, conferences, etc. Each of these three objectives should have simple, measurable goals, and each goal should have defined strategies.

Place the Methods and Marker report below the strategic plan. The report should be used as an internal operational tool to assign objectives to departments and individuals for execution on the defined strategies. Methods and Markers is not something for DEXCOM to focus on; it is operational not strategic. DEXCOM should focus on the Executive Dashboard which needs to replace the current Ministry Model Canvas.

Resource allocation. For the WCD to move into a new reality, it needs to reallocate resources to areas of op-

portunity and strategic focus. Areas that require more investment are discipleship, digital platform, innovation/thought leadership, regional hubs and Canadian Global Missions.

Deliverable #4: Existing Realities

Identify issues leaders are facing within the WCD’s day-to-day realities that need to be addressed in the near-term.

Observations on Existing Realities

The previous 10 years (2007-2016). What is most obvious from the statistical data review is that growth in the number of churches within the WCD and increased worship service attendance are marginal as compared to increases in ministry expenses, church assets and population growth in Alberta. Increase in worship service attendance was +17.4% over ten years compared to Alberta population growth of 22%. Meanwhile, operating expenses increased +57%, giving +59%, asset increase +149%, debt +147%. Capital costs of church buildings, maintenance and operating expense remain the largest allocation of the WCD. While it is difficult to draw a straight ROI conclusion of dollars investing into buildings and operations versus growth in attendance and other ministry indicators, the question to explore is how our current church building and utilization strategy fits with our existing realities: organized church in the margins of society; rapid growth of religious “nones;” immigration expansion of new Canadians; Millennials leaving the church; legislative changes; and the lack of a digital platform. We must consider how Albertans, new and old, are engaging with the Christian evangelical church. Does our resource allocation indicate a come to us strategy versus a strategy of taking the Kingdom into the mainstream of society? The data would affirm the strong focus the WCD has today on making disciples who can go and make disciples in the spheres of society where God has deployed them.

WCD’s Largest Churches. These six churches represent approximately 40% of main-service attendance in the district and 34% of membership. With the data for the “Big 6” churches removed from the 10-year review, to see how they impact the overall district, the same gap remains between increases in financial indicators versus increases in ministry factors.

Challenges facing churches. Church leaders were asked, “What is the greatest challenge you are facing as a church in a post-Christian society?” The data support an interesting conclusion. The greatest challenge is not the church in the margins or a secularized society, although these were clearly identified as challenges. The greatest challenges are inside the church, which ultimately create the inability to engage the culture redemptively. The issue is related to the church not being willing to be the church. They identify the following issues inside the church: lack of disciples making disciples; unwillingness to go into a “messy world” to bring truth to it with grace; consumer mentality of believers wanting to be served versus serve; very casual faith experience; lack of preparation of next-generation leaders; not engaging Millennials in the church; biblically illiterate generation inside the church; and diversity of voices on theology. I believe the passion and focus on spiritual renewal and discipleship is God breathed, God initiated and of no coincidence at this moment in the WCD’s history. If spiritual renewal does not take place on scale within the church, the church will not only remain in the margins but could move beyond the margins, out of culture altogether. The question needs to be asked whether the district is busy doing too many things and not placing enough focus, resources, strategy and energy on spiritual renewal and disciple making.

Opportunities & Threats. Please see identified opportunities and threats which were already captured at the beginning of this report under General Observations. This is a significant aspect of our WCD existing reality.

Leadership Transition. During the interview process, senior leaders consistently expressed concern over three main areas related to the large upcoming “sunsetting” of pastors in the C&MA due to retirement. The first is the lack of leaders being intentionally developed to fill the lead pastor positions. The second is they do not see Ambrose as the primary institution for training up the next generation of C&MA church leaders as they once did with CBC/CTS. They perceive the next generation of leaders coming into the Alliance via a variety of streams without a strong understanding of C&MA history and distinctives. The third is that Millennial generation leaders have less interest in leading within the traditional “brick and mortar” church model. They have greater focus on engaging culture and the marginalized where they are and seeing resources focused less on property and more on frontline ministry.

The “4-14 Window.” Luis Bush, the same missiologist who coined the term 10/40 Window has also popularized the 4-14 Window language to draw attention to the fact the world’s children ages 4 to 14 are the most vulnerable, least reached, yet most reachable age group on earth. The Issachar Project did not examine how WCD churches are currently ministering to children. However, the WCD has over 3,000 children in grades 1-6 (roughly ages 6-11) and another 3,200 youth in grades 7-12 (ages 12-18). Children in this age group represent 11.8% of Canadian population. A Southern Baptist study showed that 71% of Christians in the US made a faith commitment to Christ before age 14 and are more likely to hold onto their faith as they age. It would also suggest that once kids reach junior high and high school, they are much harder to reach with the Gospel. Whose responsibility is it to reach children for Christ? Both the book of Deuteronomy as well as research state that if churches want to reach children, it begins with ministry to parents. The question the WCD should answer is not, “How much children’s ministry is taking place in our churches?” but rather, “How are we coming alongside parents—singles and couples—to equip them to disciple their children?” This continues to underscore the importance of these two God-breathed focus areas for the WCD of spiritual renewal and disciple making.

Recommendations on Existing Realities

“Next 100” leaders. Identify and develop the “next 100” pastors. Create a leadership development framework that prepares these leaders to lead in a post-Christian, secularized society. Additionally, the WCD needs to consider how to instill relational integrity, Alliance DNA and common missional vision among these leaders that will serve as fuel for collaboration and new venture activity.

The 4-14 Window. Reaching the 4-14 Window needs to be done as part of the discipleship initiative within the WCD. We need to be thought leaders on programs specifically focused on helping parents disciple their children. As part of Innovation and Thought Leadership, examine best practices for children’s ministry across the district and distribute them through an online resource center. Make children and youth resources available through WCD’s digital platform.

Church assets. \$385 million is deployed in church assets. It is recommended that the WCD be a resource for aggregating best-practice learning on effective utilization of church space to serve their communities. It is also recommended for the proposed Development Consultant to lead the creation of a church asset development strategy reflecting the realities identified in the Future Direction section of this report and taking into account the long-term realities of building-fixed assets such as building repair, maintenance and equipment replacement.

WCD's largest churches. It needs to be explored how large churches can have greater influence within the district toward the WCD achieving its mission.



Deliverable #5: Future Direction

In a post-Christian environment and digital age, what does the church need to be doing differently to have Kingdom impact and to reach the unreached in Canada in the coming decades?

Observations on Future Direction

Church in the margins. It is a common thought that the Christian Church has been pushed to the margins of society and no longer plays a moral or spiritual voice in mainstream sphere of influence. This is true in the context of the Church as an institution but is not true of the Body of Christ, which is not bound. God has called

and placed fully devoted Christ followers in all spheres of influence to demonstrate the Kingdom of God with power, grace, authenticity and redeeming love. Societal secularism pushes the Church to the margins. Its influence in Canada is captured by Dr. Marv Penner who writes, "This is the challenge of the post-Christian Church. There is no longer an assumption of any shared common values. The inevitable outcome is a constitutional commitment to personal rights as the highest arbiter of truth without a sense of responsibility to the good of others."

The WCD has two great opportunities for Kingdom impact from the margins. The first is to reiterate the important focus of spiritual renewal and discipleship across the Body of Christ and to deploy one another into all spheres of influence. The second is for the local church to move away from a come to us mentality to a take the Kingdom to the local communities posture—multiplying ways to serve neighbourhoods and cities outside of church programs.

New Canadians: Churches reaching the nations locally. The nations coming to Canada through immigration and international student movement has created one of the greatest missional opportunities of our generation. Many people groups from hard to access countries are now in our neighborhoods and have been coming to Canada at an increasing rate. As of 2016, 23% of Alberta's population reports a mother tongue other than English or French. The top non-official languages spoken in Alberta are Tagalog, Punjabi, Cantonese, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Urdu and Vietnamese. In the last five years (2011-2016), Alberta took in 207,000 immigrants, which is a 57% increase from the previous five-year period.

The general finding is there is limited informed awareness across WCD churches to the opportunity that exists in the province. Some churches, which find themselves in neighborhoods that have become highly multi-ethnic, are engaged in active ministry with new Canadians. In addition, a number of WCD churches are involved in refugee sponsorship. However, the overall ministry emphasis in our WCD churches on reaching the nations among us is weak across the district. There are at least three noted barriers contributing to churches failing to engage the nations locally. (1) They do not see it as the responsibility of the local church—it should be handled by those called and gifted to reach the nations. (2) There is a lack of understanding of the opportunity, resources and expertise on how to engage the nations.

(3) A hostile view by people in the church exists towards the nations coming to Canada and the resultant changing Canadian culture.

Today the WCD has several partnerships with organizations focused on new Canadians such as PALM, Love New Canadians, Encompass and Milbourne Community Life Center. Interestingly, reaching the nations locally was not identified when asking church leaders what the WCD should be thinking about in the next three to five years. It was, however, the second highest opportunity identified by DEXCOM. Perhaps it is an indication of the lack of awareness across district churches in how significant an opportunity this is, and how we should respond to it.



Issachar Reveal Video Series WCDTV.com

Digital age of opportunity. New technologies continue to change the way people live—the way they build community, learn, share ideas and transact. It is now critical for denominations and churches to have functional expertise in this area leading to a digital strategy for driving appropriate adoption of technology to minister effectively in a digital age. Without the appropriate use of technology, the church removes itself from engaging the culture and further moves itself to the margins and beyond.

Within the WCD and its churches, several technologies are being embraced such as the use of Facebook, websites, live broadcasting, online media, online giving, etc. However, on average, most of our churches have very limited online content. They are not taking advantage

of the powerful digital tools to reach people with their message and the Message; make disciples; foster community; and mobilize the Body to be on mission. For instance, 20% of our churches do not have a website. Less than 7% of WCD churches provide online video of their worship services. Less than 5% have a live broadcast. Only two churches have an introductory video to the church or welcome message from a pastor. Fifty percent of websites provide no information about the church leadership. Overall website navigation and quality need to be addressed. Twenty-eight percent have YouTube channels but subscription and viewership rates are very low. Nearly 10% have a church app. Six percent are using Right Now Media. And, 33.6% use an online giving tool.

Two challenges appear in the Issachar Project findings. The first is a disparate use of technology across churches and varying degrees of quality. As a whole, the WCD and churches' use of technology is lagging behind the mainstream culture and what the average individual would expect from a church/denomination who desires to engage with them. Secondly, there is no central, experienced technological leadership in the district to drive a defined digital strategy and provide central thought leadership to churches on resources and best practices. A common request in the audit findings is for the WCDO to take functional leadership and provide a digital strategy and platform churches can adopt.

Least reached. Churches are quite varied on awareness and levels of active ministry to least reached groups. Churches with high awareness and active ministry are typically situated in close proximity to least reached groups. There are three barriers that seem to be present in reaching the least reached. (1) There is a limited fact-based understanding of the least reached: who they are; where they are; etc. (2) There is low skill and confidence in how to effectively minister to them. (3) Churches see ministry to the least reached as a specialized ministry and not the broader responsibility of all Christ followers.

Church leaders are looking for central thought leadership on fact-based understanding as well as effective ministry models on how to reach the least reached. The reality is that ethnic diversity is outpacing thought leadership within the district on how to effectively minister to the nations in our neighbourhoods.

Religious “nones.” Religious “nones” is the fastest growing “religious” group in Canadian society comprising 24% of the Canadian population (~8.5M people).

Alberta has a significantly higher percentage of the population identifying as religious “nones” at 31%. Religious “nones” are predominantly Millennials. Christianity is losing ground as religious “nones” are rapidly on the rise, now comprising the second largest religious category in all of Canada.

Millennials. Millennials are defined as being born between 1984 and 1998. They are the largest living generation in Canada at 9.1 million (27% of population). Millennials are the most ethnically diverse generation. This inherent diversity leads to tolerance, in that, Millennials focus less on demographics and focus more on unique experiences and differing opinions emerging from it. Millennials were born with technology. Millennials are increasingly breaking away from traditional cultural narratives.

During the interviews, church leaders frequently identified Millennials as a generation the church needs to understand and engage with. Millennials were also noted in the top-four opportunities identified by DEX-COM. Creating a digital communication strategy and platform will be a critical part of engaging Millennials in discipleship and spiritual renewal.

International students. Students who come to Canada to study are one of the greatest missional opportunities the Canadian church has to reach the world for Jesus. Canada hosted a record number of 495,000 foreign students in 2017. This represents a 41% increase of foreign students studying in Canada since 2015 and a 120% increase from 2010 to 2017. Foreign students make up to 40% of graduate students at the University of Alberta engaged in master’s and doctoral studies. In other words, future thought leaders from across the globe, including from hard-to-access countries, are here in Alberta on the churches’ doorstep.

The WCD leadership has a strong understanding of the opportunity to engage with international students. Several WCD churches have engaged with the Home Away from Home program (Power to Change). While it has been effective, it is not well developed from an infrastructure/scalability point of view. International student ministries should be a key part of a Canadian Global Missions strategy going forward.

Recommendations on Future Direction

Canadian Global Missions Strategy. A large number of the recommendations for future direction sit under

this one recommendation to rebuild the current district missions into a broader Canadian Global Missions Strategy. The rationale for this broad recommendation is that the current district missions’ stream is built on an older missiology model which does not address the shifts that have occurred with the nations coming to Canada. A broader strategy addressing our current realities for the Canadian Global Missions would include immigrants, refugees, international students, religious “nones,” Millennials and indigenous Canadians. Inspiring, equipping and mobilizing for mission would be accomplished via a center of excellence on a Canadian Global Missions strategy, including the development of online resources and training modules to educate and empower churches to engage the nations in their neighborhoods.

Digital Strategy and Platform. Technology needs to become a major function within the District Office under a gifted functional leader who can create a digital strategy/platform, digital resource development, etc. for both the WCD and churches. In addition to improving the WCD website, the district should develop a WCD-branded portal that functions as an online resources center with broad enterprise functionality including channelization for various functions such as spiritual renewal and discipleship, Canadian Global Missions, parental resources, youth channel, special events and sermon series. The WCD should consider developing a “plug and play” digital platform for churches that is easily self-managed, affordable and branded to each church, allowing churches to live stream church services and events as well as create a simple library of online resources.

International Student Ministries. This recommendation is a subset of the Canadian Global Missions Strategy. The WCD should leverage their resources alongside organizations like Power to Change to further develop their Home Away from Home program to make it sustainable and scalable so as to seize this tremendous opportunity. Today there is no appropriate response by the Canadian church that equals the opportunity God has created.

Act local, think global. This recommendation falls under digital platform and strategy. With global internet infrastructure and internet users on the rise, the Canadian church has the opportunity to reach audiences all over the world with the Gospel. This is already being done by other ministries such as YouVersion Bible App

and Global Media Outreach. The WCD could create online discipleship resources that can be accessed anywhere in the world, including into least reached people's language groups.

Future technology. New technologies continue to emerge at a rapid pace changing the way people function. WCD needs to continue to monitor emerging technologies and their application to the local church and should do so under the direction of a WCD Director of Digital Strategy.

Education, cultural sensitivity, engagement. The WCD should take the lead on educating its churches in Alberta on the data points around immigration and the opportunity to reach the nations locally. Tools need to be developed for churches to understand cultural sensitivities; how to engage/disciple people from other religions; and how to partner with mono-ethnic groups looking to establish a local faith community.

Concluding Comments from Terry Mochar (Issachar Project Lead)

What sits at the heart of this report is a deep desire within the Western Canadian District Leadership to understand our times and to discern the future of how it serves its churches and leaders. It was agreed from the outset that this project would not be dependent solely upon good rigor and due diligence but a dependency on the Spirit's direction and leading. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) met at regular junctures throughout the project to pray together, review findings and listen to what the Spirit had to say. What I trust you have found in the previous pages are insights that reflect the heart of a God who is at work on earth in such profound ways creating unprecedented opportunities for His church to live out His mission. A God who has been equipping and preparing the WCD churches and leaders for this unique moment in time. A God whose church is not confined to the margins, but who has dispatched His people to demonstrate His Kingdom in every sphere of society with humility, grace and power.

Over the course of the Issachar Project, a substantial amount of data was collected beyond what is submitted in this report. My hope is this summary report reflects the essence of all the research and will be both affirming and challenging. That it gives the WCD insights and clarity on the opportunities in front of them. That it instills passion and courage to "make the horse

ready for the day of battle" (Prov. 21:31) and creates opportunities for God to do immeasurably more than all we ask or think.

I have had a unique opportunity that most people will never get. I have spent time meeting with leaders across the province looking deeply into the vast work God has been doing in and through the WCD for many decades. You get both a sense of what God has been preparing us for as well as a deep sense of the giftedness and beautiful complexity of His church—the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. It feels very sacred as you look on things that have been established since the foundations of the world (His church) and could only be orchestrated by a God who operates in the fullness of time (Kingdom opportunities). It is an appropriate place at the end of this report to express my thanks to Brent Trask, Scott Dixon, the Project Steering Committee and the DEXCOM for allowing me to be part of the Issachar Project. I pray that I have served you well through the work that has been done.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mochar



Concluding Comments from Brent Trask (Issachar Project Sponsor)

As you finish reading this comprehensive summary of the Issachar Report, you might be wondering, "Where do we go from here? How will our District Leadership and our District Office respond to all that has been written here?" Those are great questions!

The Issachar Report contains more than 70 formal observations and recommendations. It was prepared for DEXCOM, and it has been their responsibility to prayerfully weigh what has been discovered and the many recommendations made in similar manner to the Berean Christians who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if

these things were so” (Acts 17:11). DEXCOM believes it is critical to clearly understand the WCD’s current reality in order to discern how to move forward in a focused manner to fulfill the mandate to advance the Gospel in an increasingly post-Christian culture. The heart of DEXCOM is to lead the WCD effectively under the Lordship of Christ using the observations and recommendations from the Issachar Project as both lighthouses and guideposts. Most, but not all, of the Issachar Report observations and recommendations have been affirmed.

Next Steps

- DEXCOM, with the assistance of the The Issachar Implementation Committee, was able to group the many observations and recommendations into eight Initiative Areas and affirm the general direction we will take in each of these areas.
- Further detail on these plans and intentions will be included in the written Report of the District Superintendent to District Conference 2019 (May 24-25 in Calgary; May 31-June 1 in Sherwood Park; and June 2-3 in Grande Prairie). For this reason, we are calling the District Conference ~ The Issachar Moment ~ focusing on our call to action.
- The District Conference will also contain a verbal report on the Issachar Project and response plan with presentations by both Terry Mochar and myself.
- There will be a Q & A time at the District Conference.
- The Eight Initiative Areas are
 1. Thought Leadership & Development;
 2. Strategic Planning, Operational Framework and Tracking;
 3. Digital Strategy, Platform and IT Infrastructure;
 4. Communications Strategy;
 5. Leadership Development;
 6. Restructuring – Aligning Structure to Mission;

7. Asset Development & Management; and
8. Canadian Global Missions.

On behalf of DEXCOM, I extend our heartfelt thanks to each person who participated in the Issachar Project. We appreciate your time, input and honesty. We want our leadership across the district to feel heard, understood and supported. We trust God to enable us to utilize the results of the project to move us forward in His plans as individuals, as churches, as a District Office and as a movement of churches on mission together.

On behalf of DEXCOM, I also recognize and appreciate the efforts of each individual on the Project Steering Committee—Scott Dixon—Chair, Carla Olsen Draper, Henry Tseung, Lorne Fredlund, Terry Mochar and Brent Trask—and the Issachar Implementation Committee (Lorne Fredlund—Lead, Jason Fan, Karen Schenk, Cyndy Ingram, Wayne Regehr, Terry Mochar and Brent Trask). Your availability, your guidance, your responsiveness to hundreds of emails and your wisdom were integral to this project.

And finally, on behalf of DEXCOM, I particularly want to thank Terry Mochar for availing his expertise to us and giving himself to this project—heart, mind and soul. Terry, you have been God’s gift to us in the WCD. You have served us with excellence and all with an attitude of giving all to the glory of God and expansion of His Kingdom. May God bless you richly for the blessing you are to our district family through this labour of love!

We from DEXCOM and the WCDO are called to serve our churches and leaders as a catalyst in pursuing Jesus for life, church and world transformation. Together with all members of the Western Canadian District, we are trusting God to enable us to understand the times, discern our future and move forward in confidence as He did for the Sons of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32.

Together in mission,

District Superintendent | C&MA Western Canadian District

Brent Trask





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