



(kingdom multiplication) “Start a Fire”



Exploration Essentials Values of the Atlantic District of The Wesleyan Church

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“Start a Fire”

Risking the spark for a fire

Risk, like fire, is often dangerous but powerful – especially when it comes to Kingdom-building. So, we embrace necessary risk and strategic change in order to see the lost transformed and His Kingdom come. Nothing adds more heat to our shared mission than seeing disciples made and churches multiplied as His Gospel presence is advanced.

(kingdom multiplication)

“The Lord... does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” (II Peter 3:9, NLT)

We are convinced that deep within the heart of God is a movement! It’s always been there. And we also believe God has always acted out of this place of movement and called men and women to jump into the flow of His heart with Him. But does movement characterize us?

“Adventure,” says John Eldridge in *Wild at Heart*, “with all its requisite danger and wildness, is a deeply spiritual longing written into the soul of man.” Could it be that at the heart of the Christian church there is room for holy risk? To step where there is no ground as if there was? To see the gold in a person when the world sees dirt and grit and grime? To move when every impulse says stay? We are convinced God smiles when His church acts like Him. When we move, like He moves.

When we read the Scriptures, we see a God who is on the move. There is no denying it, He is moving. But not *alone*. Shockingly, He is calling people to move *with* Him. The great South African missiologist, David Bloesh, suggests that even in the act of creation, when God first speaks, He is *sending* His word into the chaos. The sent Word created order and set the world in motion. When God created man and woman, God was *sending* His breath into them, by which they became a living soul. From the start, God was moving and God was sending, blessing, and multiplying.

However, it is this “sending God” who calls Abram to leave his homestead and sends him “to the land I will show you” says God, “to be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:1-5) But not just Abram, Israel too. Again, this “sending God”, in a vast and despairing wilderness, moves his people from slavery to freedom. Moses narrates it like this in Exodus 13:21, “The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night.”

Do you see it with us? God’s people moved as the fire moved. They were people of the fire. *Following* the FIRE, *moving* with the FIRE, *living* by the FIRE. And our sending God is at work once more. Yet, God is not sending Adam or Abram or Israel, He sends His only Son – Jesus!

Jesus says it Himself in Luke 4:18-20, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favour has come.” That’s fire!

And Jesus embodies this mission of the Kingdom. Movement oozes from Him. He moves through the towns and villages of Galilee, Samaria, and Jerusalem demonstrating this Kingdom inauguration through His teaching, healings, feedings and casting out demons with authority, and He embraces His ultimate mission of the cross. The Kingdom is set in motion, from Heaven to earth. Starting inward, from the heart of God, to outward – to a lost and dying world.



BUT this movement does not stop with Jesus. Yet again, the sending God is at work: As the Father sends the Son, we then see that the Father and Son send together. It's a cooperative effort: They *send* the Spirit. Jesus says, "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." (Luke 24:49)

As we know, the fire comes again. This time on the church. Again, the same God yesterday, today and tomorrow is moving and sending, blessing and multiplying. There it is: That's the mandate. To be sent. To go make disciples. To light the world on fire. This is what the Father envisioned for His people. It's what Jesus prayed for His creation. Jesus' prayer is: "Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world." (John 17:18) It's what the Spirit came for. To send us. To move us. To start a fire.

And so, we invite a Kingdom culture that asks: Do our churches reflect this? Are we described as a people of mission? We believe our faith is actually a God-given adventure. Is all this part of our DNA today? It should be. We believe it can be. It must be. But we've got some work to do. We've got to recapture the spark that once made us a movement.

In *The Wesleyan Movement, Part 1*, Ed Stetzer says, "Movement is part of the great heritage of the Wesleyans, but it is not a current passion." Stetzer continues, "It has been drained from our DNA." We are grateful for the prophetic voice of Ed's ministry, but we are NOT OK with his diagnosis. Sometimes the truth hurts before it sets us free. *IF* the church is missional by nature, then we must simply stop thinking of ourselves as having a mission agenda; according to God, we are the mission agenda. We must stop thinking that we have a missional strategy; according to God, the *Church* is the missional strategy.

Mission and movement and multiplication isn't JUST what we do; it's our essence. It ought to ooze from us the way it oozed from Jesus. Why? Because it is founded in the very heart of God. And it is *this* God who touches us and sets our hearts ablaze. It is *this* God who doesn't allow us to settle down, but commissions us to every nook, cranny, inlet, city, and island of our region.

Are there risks and is it uncomfortable and is it costly? Of course. Does it fly in the face of our culture that is so embedded with a mindset bent toward consumerism and safety and preference? More than ever. Does it create tension in our churches and leadership corps? Yes, and we welcome that tension.

But the question is, what posture will we take? Are we a district of consumers, demanding goods and services OR as Kim Hammond and Darren Cronshaw so powerfully ask in *Sentness*, are we a Church of missionaries and movers, sent and sending in the world? Are we going to be sellers or senders? The Atlantic District has decided on the latter. We will be movers.

We choose to be set on FIRE, to start a FIRE from the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland to the inner-city streets of Portland, Maine. We *are* determined to be those people. With God's help we can do this. We can be this. We can lead this. Eternity demands it. Our moving and sending God inspires and empowers it.

So, as we fan the flames of this value let's commit to dream together. What if local churches started local churches? What if we actually celebrated new church starts? We become what we celebrate! What if instead of only celebrating the number of people in our seats, we celebrated how many of our people we send into the streets?

Larger churches: What if church planting was modelled by you? You have a disproportionate amount of influence. God has given it to you. If you give priority to Kingdom multiplication, then others will find the courage to follow. With the resources that you have, if you want to plant a church, you will. You have influence. If you move, others will follow.

But what would happen if it wasn't just larger churches, but all churches. Let's create new strategies. Let's be holy



entrepreneurs. What if there are ways to launch a movement in the Atlantic Canada and Maine that haven't been discovered yet? What if our part in The Wesleyan Church of Canada leads us to partner in ways that transform the land to which God has called us? What if we became His Kingdom explorers to reclaim the promise of Canada's motto since 1921, *A Mari usque ad Mare*, based on Psalm 72:8 that, "*He shall have dominion **from sea to sea** and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*" And what would happen if we started resourcing local church synergy and strategy, in direct proportion to mission fulfillment and values alignment, because leaders and their churches were risking to start Kingdom fires of multiplication?

We should be afraid of failure. True failure is that we *never* risk at all. We cannot be afraid of unsuccessful attempts to multiply the Kingdom. We will gladly invest both leaders and finances in Kingdom "research and development." It is bound to happen from time to time when we risk. Let's celebrate the courageous spark in these leaders and keep moving ahead anyway. Oswald Sanders once said: "A great deal more failure is the result of an excess of caution than of bold experimentation with new ideas. The frontiers of the kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution."

Every healthy church wants to see the family of God multiply. And a lack of multiplication indicates something is amiss that may require intervention. The growth of transformed lives – like new babies in any family – brings excitement and celebration and in time leads to more babies, who grow up to multiply with more babies... in the faith. And this new life is a great unifier for the Body of Christ. Disagreements over preferences are the plague of barren churches and are rarely the focal point of any spiritual family experiencing Kingdom multiplication.

What if we all agree that "Addition is good, but multiplication is better?" It's God's favourite type of math. And what if we believe that He has built us to multiply? We have the people, we have the resources. But do we have the infilling of the Spirit's courage to take the leap of faith to start a fire?