



Ecclesiology: What does it mean to be an MB church?

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Mark Wessner (Westwood Church, Prince George, BC)

Two questions:

How many years of church service?

How many churches served in?



Imagine that you return home to no church ...

If you had to start again, what would your first steps be?
(in groups)



Ideas of “the church” ...

“People don’t go to church on Sundays to support their pastors in their ministry. The pastor goes to church on Sunday to support the people in *their* ministry. And *their* ministry, the ministry that really counts as mission, is *outside* the walls of the church, in the world, being salt and light in the marketplace.”

Christopher J.H. Wright
(The Mission of God’s People, 2010)



Ideas of “the church” ...

“It is, then, in the tradition of the ‘spiritual’ people of God in the OT that the NT believers find their place, and not in the biological, ethnic or national characteristics of Israel. The early Christians thought of themselves as the continuation of the OT saints, not only in that they shared in the faith of Abraham, not only that they too had been redeemed with a mighty hand, not only because they, like Israel of old, were members of God’s covenant, but also in that they, like the ‘chosen race’ of former generations felt called of God to fulfil His great redemptive purposes in this world, to be His instruments of salvation.”

David Ewert
(The Church in Mission, 1967)



Our plan ...

1. Why should I care about ecclesiology?
2. Ecclesiology and Scripture
3. Ecclesiology and our Confession of Faith (Articles 6-9)
4. Ecclesiology and next steps

Interaction > Lecture

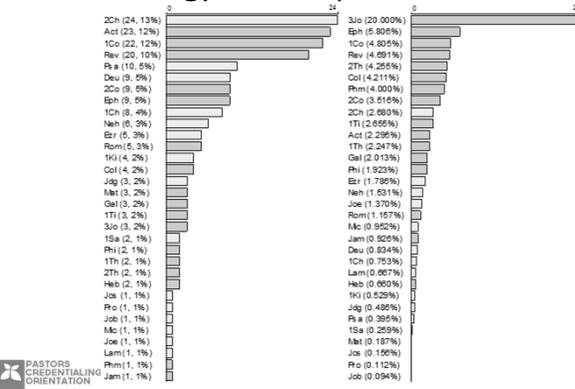


1. Why should I care?

- Influences who we think is “in” and “outside of” the church
- Influences what we do and do not do during a Sunday service
- Influences what we do other than a Sunday service
- Influences our governance, staffing, leadership, budget, decision-making, etc
- Influences how we read scripture (and with whom)
- Influences how we interact with our community, world, and other churches



2. Ecclesiology and Scripture



2. Ecclesiology and Scripture

- Survey of usage in the LXX
 - Observations:
 1. Ecclesia existed almost exclusively in relationship to God
 - No God = no ecclesia
 2. Ecclesia's primary purpose was relationship with God
 - Ritual, teaching, prayer, listening, singing, discerning, etc
 3. Ecclesia's influence extended beyond itself
 - Military, political, and socio-economic impact
 - Side note:
 - Synagogue is localized expression of another entity (the temple), qahal is much broader (any assembly)



2. Ecclesiology and Scripture

• Survey of usage in the New Testament

• Observations:

1. Ecclesia exists almost exclusively in relationship to Jesus
 - No Jesus = no ecclesia
2. Ecclesia has many geographical expressions
 - Local, regional, global
3. Ecclesia is grounded in theology
 - Teaching, wisdom, truth
4. Ecclesia is engaged in the world
 - Persecution, mission, prayer, service



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

The Nature of the Church
(Article 6)



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"We believe the church is the people called by God through Jesus Christ. People who respond in faith are united with the local congregation by the public confession of baptism. Church members commit themselves to follow Christ in a life of discipleship and witness as empowered by the Holy Spirit."

"The church is one body of believers, male and female, from every nation, race and class. The head of this body is Christ. The church, united by the one Spirit, makes Christ visible in the world. The church exists as local bodies of believers and as a worldwide community of faith."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"The church is nourished and renewed as God's people gather regularly to glorify God. The early church gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The worshipping community celebrates God's faithfulness and grace, reaffirms its faithfulness to God, builds up the members of the body, and seeks God's will for its life and mission. As the church observes baptism, and the Lord's Supper, it proclaims the good news of salvation."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"The church is a covenant community in which members are mutually accountable in matters of faith and life. They love, care, and pray for each other, share each other's joys and burdens, and admonish and correct one another. They share material resources as there is need. Local congregations follow the New Testament example by seeking the counsel of the wider church on matters that affect its common witness and mission. Congregations work together in a spirit of love, mutual submission, and interdependence.

The New Testament guides the practice of redemptive church discipline. The church is responsible to correct members who continue to sin. Congregations forgive and restore those who repent but formally exclude those who disregard discipline."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"Through the Holy Spirit, God gives gifts to each member for the well-being of the whole body. These gifts are to be exercised in God's service to build up the church and to minister in the world.

God calls people to equip the church for ministry. Leaders are to model Christ in their personal, family, and church life. The church is to discern leaders prayerfully and to affirm, support, and correct them in a spirit of love."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

Many models of church governance

- Presbyterian
 - Representative
 - Primary authority is denominational
 - national/general -> province/district -> local
- Episcopalian
 - Hierarchical
 - Primary authorities are bishops
 - Primacy -> Cardinals -> Bishops -> Councils -> Pastors/Priests



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

Many models of church governance

- Congregational
 - Autonomous
 - Primary authority is local
 - Congregation (via vote) -> leadership (elders/staff) -> congregation
 - Single Elder-Led (Senior Pastor)
 - Senior pastor -> elders (and staff) -> congregation
 - Plural Elder-Led (Elders Board)
 - Elders board (with senior pastor) -> staff -> congregation



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

• What is the MB model?

- Various blends
- Semi-Presbyterian (freedom and accountability)
- Local mission on a national landscape
- For example Confession (national), mutual accountability and shared resources (national and provincial), expression (local)



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

The Mission of the Church (Article 7)



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"We believe the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people. Christ commands the church to make disciples of all nations by calling people to repent and by baptizing and teaching them to obey Jesus. Jesus teaches that disciples are to love God and neighbour by telling the good news and by performing acts of love and compassion."

"The Holy Spirit empowers every Christian to witness to God's salvation. The church as a body witnesses to God's reign in the world. By its life as a redeemed and separated community, the church reveals God's saving purposes to the world."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

Christian Baptism (Article 8)



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"We believe that when people receive God's gift of salvation, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of having been cleansed from sin. It is a covenant with the church to walk in the way of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism by water is a public sign that a person has repented of sins, received forgiveness of sins, died with Christ to sin, been raised to newness of life, and received the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of the believer's incorporation into the body of Christ as expressed in the local church. Baptism is also a pledge to serve Christ according to the gifts given to each person."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?
4. Sacrament vs ordinance



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"Baptism is for those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and commit themselves to follow Christ in obedience as members of the local church. Baptism is for those who understand its meaning, are able to be accountable to Christ and the church, and voluntarily request it on the basis of their faith response to Jesus Christ."

We practice water baptism by immersion administered by the local church. Local congregations may receive into membership those who have been baptized by another mode on their confession of faith. Persons who claim baptism as infants and wish to become members of a Mennonite Brethren congregation are to receive baptism on their confession of faith."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?
3. What difference does this make in your life and ministry?



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

Lord's Supper
(Article 9)



3. Ecclesiology and our Confession

"The church observes the Lord's Supper, as instituted by Christ. The Lord's Supper points to Christ, whose body was broken for us and whose blood was shed to assure salvation for believers and to establish the new covenant. Through the supper, the church identifies with the life of Christ given for the redemption of humanity and proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. The supper expresses the fellowship and unity of all believers with Christ and embodies remembrance, celebration, and praise, strengthening believers for true discipleship and service."

"In preparation for the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, all believers should examine themselves. All those who understand the supper's meaning, confess Jesus Christ as Lord in word and life, are accountable to their congregation, and are living in right relationship with God and others are invited to participate in the Lord's Supper. The normal pattern in the New Testament was that baptism preceded participation in the Lord's Supper."

1. What resonates?
2. What causes dissonance?

 What difference does this make in your life and ministry?

Now What?

What is my next step, personally?

What is my next step, pastorally?



More Reading ...

- The Bible
- *Confession of Faith* (CCMBC)
- *Knowing and Living Your Faith* (ICOMB)
- Direction Journal:
 - *The Elusive Biblical Model of Leadership* (Bruce Guenther and Doug Heidebrecht)
 - *Mennonite Brethren and the Gospel: A Theology of Mission on the Way* (Doug Heidebrecht)
 - *Mennonite Brethren Mission: A Brief Assessment of its Mission Theology and Praxis* (Ray Harms-Wiebe)
 - *Theological Foundations for Mission: Do We 'Get' the Big Picture?* (Bryan Born and Mark Wessner)