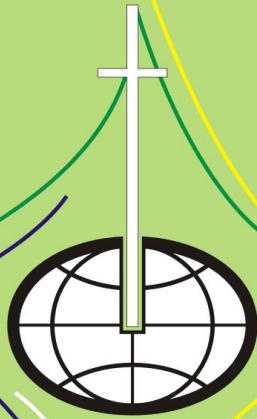
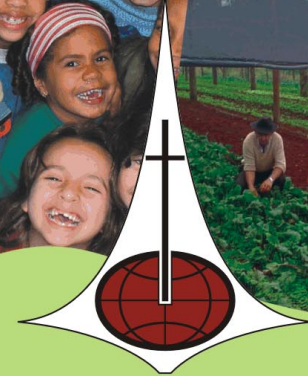


The IECLB Missionary Action Plan 2008-2012 – Base-text



GOD'S MISSION

OUR PASSION



Igreja Evangélica
de Confissão Luterana no Brasil

GOD'S MISSION

OUR PASSION

The IECLB Missionary
Action Plan 2008-2012

Base-Text

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God's mission is our passion...

Let's think a little about this. The mission is God's, it's not ours. It's God who comes to the world to save us. He looks for us, becomes human like us, lives in our midst, suffers the injustice of the cross, and finally overcomes the cross and death and frees the repentant of all sin. God's mission is to love the world in a way that whoever comes to His son, Jesus Christ, and believes in Him, is a new creature, has gone from death to life and lives by the complete hope that God's kingdom is already here, in the form of visible signs and will come in fullness at the end of times. God's mission was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and is lived out daily in the communion of the saints, through the existence of Christ's church in the world. It is God's mission. But it is the church's passion.

What is this passion that unites us with God's mission, which envelops us and enchants us and leads us to proclaim the salvation that God has offered to all people?

Passion, intense love. Passion, suffering due to love. `Pai- Chão' God's love made human in every context of our lives. This is what the base-text for the IECLB Missionary Action Plan addresses. In more objective words, it speaks of the premises that allows us to understand our missionary task in this country and plan our action as a church that feels entrusted to announce the gospel everywhere, throughout the country, in the slum, in the suburbs, in the city and in all states of the Brazilian territory.



GOD'S MISSION OUR PASSION

The Evangelical Church
of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil – IECLB
Missionary Action Plan 2008-2012 – Base-text



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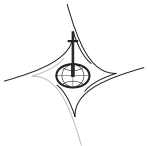
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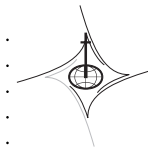
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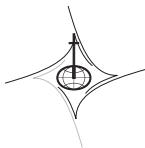


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1. INTRODUCTION

God's mission is our passion...

Let's think a little about this. The mission is God's, it's not ours. It's God who comes to the world to save us. He looks for us, becomes human like us, lives in our midst, suffers the injustice of the cross, and finally overcomes the cross and death and frees the repentant of all sin. God's mission is to love the world in a way that whoever comes to His son, Jesus Christ, and believes in Him, is a new creature, has gone from death to life and lives by the complete hope that God's kingdom is already here, in the form of visible signs and will come in fullness at the end of times. God's mission was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and is lived out daily in the communion of the saints, through the existence of Christ's church in the world. It is God's mission. But it is the church's passion.

What is this passion that unites us with God's mission, which envelops us and enchants us and leads us to proclaim the salvation that God has offered to all people?

Passion is a form of fervent love, an intense affection. It's an enthusiasm, a fire that burns in the heart, which makes our legs tremble, takes our breath away, makes us feel alive and goes beyond all body, emotion and



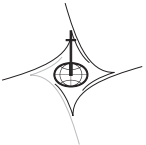
reason. Passion is a delight, going beyond oneself towards a splendid encounter, unique and true with our passion. God's mission is our passion.

Passion is suffering. It's martyrdom. It's sacrifice. It's affliction. Christ, God's son, suffered until the moment of the cross because of His love for us. His disciples, throughout the history of the church, suffered because of Christ. Many were imprisoned, tortured and killed because of their passion for the gospel. But thanks to these people, God's mission reached us. We are part of the community of the 'passion-ridden', those that surrender to the love of God and assume the consequences of this love in our daily lives.

'Pai- Chão' (*Passion -is a play on words; 'Pai' meaning father and 'chão' meaning ground*) is God who becomes flesh in our reality, He who puts His feet on our world to tell us in a way that we can understand, that He is love and loves us more than anything and will not leave us to our own fate. Passion, intense love. Passion, suffering due to love. 'Pai- Chão' God's love made human in every context of our lives. This is what the base-text for the IECLB Missionary Action Plan addresses. In more objective words, it speaks of the premises that allows us to understand our missionary task in this country and plan our action as a church that feels entrusted to announce the gospel everywhere, throughout the country, in the slum, in the suburbs, in the city and in all states of the Brazilian territory.

This text is the result of work done by many people from different places. It's the work of people united by the same passion: to help the IECLB, through all its congregations and members to announce the gospel in word and action where they are found.

But it is also the result of many other projects accomplished throughout the years by many other people from many different places. And therein, we also recognize the transitory character of the base-text. That is, in the same way God's mission through the IECLB does not begin in this document, it also does not end in it. It represents an attempt to organize a reflection on



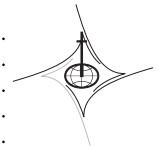
mission in the IECLB with the goal of helping its members to assume this passion and plan its missionary action with some general principles. Therein, this base- text is a way to motivate us towards this.

The motivation of this book, however, refers to what will come. But it also originated from the evaluation that was done in the past few years in regards to mission. The IECLB Missionary Action Plan of 2000-2007 is among one of the main forces of this new stage of PAMI. From this, questions came up that directed the 2008-2012 stage of the Plan. They are summed up in the following:

Today it is already general opinion in the IECLB that it's the essence of the Christian church to be a missionary church. Announcing the gospel is the reason for its existence, its starting point and finishing line. Considering mission, the core of our existence, as IECLB, is to acknowledge that all our community actions go towards bringing the gospel to the ends of the Earth beginning from where we live.

We recognize, on the other hand, that there are differences in the theological comprehension of mission and in the understanding of missionary actions that these theologies support. But these differences can be assumed as complementary in relation to each other. Therein, no theology, and its respective missionary actions, corresponds to the completeness of God's mission, but each one, in its own specificity, makes up this wholeness. Therefore, even in different ways and in several different dimensions, many people have found in the IECLB a place where they can live and grow in their faith in Christ.

Consequently, the IECLB gains new traces, embracing in its congregations, ethnic, social, political, and cultural diversity that characterize our country. Because of this, more and more we must know how to respond to those who ask us, what is the reason and the passion that unites us in this body of Christ. Our tradition remains important as an aspect that characterizes us.



Our ancestors have given us a story that needs to be constantly updated so that other people can give it continuation. This means to say, on the other hand, that to be Lutheran or Lutheran simply because of tradition or ethnic reasons, is increasingly rare.

Therefore, the IECLB performance also, certainly for more than ten years, in growing numbers of cases, no longer restricts itself to accompanying its members. It's necessary that at all levels, our actions seek to reach people to go beyond our geographical, cultural, ethnic boundaries, etc. The challenge, however, is to do this without giving up our IECLB identity, or rather, to learn from the most diverse religious experiences, to know how to read the anxieties of our society and critically integrate our Biblical and confessional tradition. That is what this book points towards as the effort to understand and interpret our tradition.

We hope, finally, that this text be penetrated by the passion that moves us all to be collaborators in God's mission in our country, starting from where we live out all the dimensions of our lives. We hope that each person who reads this text may feel touched by the Holy Spirit of God and join this missionary effort of the IECLB, with passion and compassion. Because our passion is that in God's love and through God's love we see the world with compassion. It is God's love, 'com -Pai-chão' (with compassion) that goes with us to announce the good news of great joy to all people.

Brazil, Pentecost 2008



1st PART:
CONTEXTS

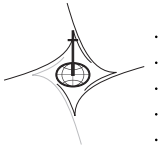
2. Contexts in Transformation

The Church develops its mission within a specific historical and cultural context.

The Church develops its mission within a specific historical and cultural context. It is the spokesperson of the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. The content of Gospel proclamation is the same at all times and places. This content, however, always needs to be updated to the context in which people live. Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, completely assumed His human condition and, therefore, lived and testified the love of God in His own social and cultural context. The Gospel isn't confused with culture, but this is the necessary condition for becoming flesh. Therefore, as the Church of Christ, we need to understand our culture to be faithful to the dynamics of God's Word made flesh.

What is our capacity as a Church to minimally alter the course of events?

In the face of the difficult and permanent task of understanding our society and present culture, we come across an even more significant challenge, to understand: what is our capacity as a Church to minimally alter the course of events? We are brought to recognize that the message of our churches no longer directs society in its fundamental aspects. Or rather, our society has built foundations that dispensed the opinion of the church and the rest of the religious institutions. The economy, politics and culture, in their predominant dynamics, in general, don't need the Church and religion to develop. Religion, to a great extent, was displaced to a subjective sphere, to an existence in the private domain.



Today's society is a result of a long historical process, known as the Modern Age. The previous historical period, called the Middle Ages, had, as one of its main characteristics, a strong influence of religion on the foundation of society. If, on one hand, the Christian churches lost their influence on our present society, on the other hand, today, they can act without carrying the weight of being one of their supports. The great transformations happening today, don't consider in a formal way Christian ethical principles, but there is room for the living out of these values.



In this setting, the Christian churches are called to throw the seed of the Word and place the signs of God's kingdom in the small gaps of the structures of our society. We can even recall the picture of a little flower that rooted itself in a thick wall. It began penetrating its roots in search of water, survived and grew. It became a beautiful plant in an almost impenetrable, lifeless, rock. We can imagine our social-economic, political and cultural system as this thick wall that allows little space for the life that God gave us in Christ.

Even today there is room for the living out of Christian values and principles.

2.1 Social-economic context

Our social-economic, political and cultural system, which we refer to as the thick wall above, restrains power and riches and contributes to social inequalities, creating a multitude of underemployed and impoverished, just as crime and drugs become an activity that seduces a large part of our youth with no prospect of work. Next to this, the wall consolidates itself through the perverse association between political power and economic power, which, in turn, results in a framework of chronic and generalized corruption.

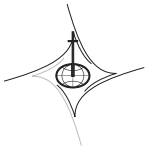
Social inequalities, unemployment, criminality and corruption are some elements of our social structure.



Characteristics of our country are: a market economy, in which big and small businesses live side by side, a greedy State and social programs of income supplementation.

The advances of the 1988 Citizen Constitution is still not completely carried out in practice.

Communities may work in partnership with the government and the private sector in stewardship activities.



Our economic system is based on the principle of free initiative, a market economy in which, in an unbalanced environment, the large transnational corporations and the micro, small and medium national businesses, live side by side. The heavy tax burden associated with high interest rates, that try to maintain the governmental structure and control inflation, penalizes the productive sectors of society, and at the same time, widens the gap that separates the rich from the poor. To make up for the contrasts, the government carries out policies of income distribution through social programs. This makes room for the development of organizations called the `third sector` of the economy, specializing in social projects of all kinds, with many businesses responding to these initiatives with project financing or creating their own social programs.

Cities grow by migration, but the lack of work increases the contingent of the unemployed and underemployed. And although the 1988 Constitution has increased the rights of citizens and the means of their participation in the definition of politics and supervision, these advances in the law are still not completely carried out in practice. The Municipal Council of Rights, like that of Infant or Adolescent Welfare, Social Welfare, Education or Health, are instances where citizen participation can be understood as opportunities for the organized society, like churches, to propose and demand the development of policies that overcome the reality of social exclusion, which is so predominant in our cities.

The results of this model of development are also felt in the environment. Nature suffers and groans with the pain of progress at any price. The pollution of water sources and rivers results also in the damage of wildlife in its habitat. Deforestation obliterates forests, where biodiversity is a crucial factor for environmental balance. Luckily, in this picture, there also emerges proposals of models of sustainable development, where making progress does not mean destroying the conditions of the survival of future generations. Many Christian congregations and their groups have mobilized themselves in this way, based on the divine order that we take care of God's creation.

Therefore, even though the dominant system, this thick wall, submits society to its logic of majority seclusion, faith in Jesus finds cracks to accomplish and be a source of life. Our congregations can work together with the public power systems and the private initiative in stewardship activities that offer nourishment and make the flowers of life bloom in the wall of the dominant system, as PAMI 2000-2007 already designated: "Stewardship action overcomes the internal and external boundaries. It unites ecumenically and cooperates with governmental and non-governmental organizations, in order to promote justice through the cure of social evils". (PAMI, 2000-2007, p.14)

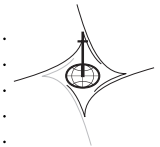
But we have other means to go beyond these signs. The gospel unmasks the preachers of the system that justifies the existence of the wall. "The wall has always been here, it is unchangeable" they say. By faith we know that everything that seems solid can fall apart into thin air. The great wall can be torn down, and its stones may be no longer used to build walls that separate us, but bridges that unite us. It's up to the announcers of the good news of Jesus to deny the proclaimers of the walls, that affirm that our world has already come to an end, which nothing exists beyond what we see, and announce that, by faith, walls are torn down and bridges are built.

Hebrews 11

The examples in Hebrews 11 show us that we have another future, guaranteed by God in Jesus Christ. By faith, we know that the world was created by the word of God; it was made out of nothing. It is not a copy of what we see. By faith, our ancestor Abraham, father of the faith, in obedience, left without knowing where he was going. By faith, he lived in the Promised Land, like a foreigner, living in a temporary manner. By faith, Sara gave birth at an old age, because she believed in Him who guarantees the promise. Finally, by faith, the walls of Jericho fell, after seven days of marching in circles. And also, Rahab, the prostitute, did not perish, because by faith she took in the spies sent by God to observe the Promised Land.

It's up to the proclaimers of the good news of Jesus, however, to undo the declarations of the wall builders.

The disappearance of limits, the excess of imaginary consumerism, the search for pleasure at any price and the high estimation of aesthetics in detriment to ethics are part of our culture.



The traditional family model lives with new forms of relationships between couples and between parents and children.

This world, full of threats to our values, also helps us to question hypocrisy and offers us different possibilities of life with dignity.

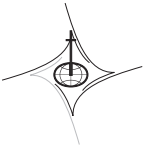
Just as family relationships have changed, so have more extensive social relationships suffered modifications.

The social-economic and political context and the cultural context are mutually involved. The disappearance of limits, the excess of imaginary consumerism, the search for pleasure at any price and the high evaluation of aesthetics in detriment to ethics are part of our culture. The human being, at this moment, is hedonistic (searches for pleasure above all else) and consumerist, and has within the press and media, the substitute for ancient sources of wisdom.

There is a reference crisis that produces a fragile and depressing individual, that always needs external confirmations. The change in social ties, in the context where parents have difficulty in saying 'no' to their children, demands careful watch. The refusal of the loss of satisfaction (necessary to civilization), requires the emergence of a new individual, one that is more adequate to the market than humanity itself.

The family changes. The traditional family model lives with new forms of relationships between couples and between parents and children. Male and female roles have acquired new configurations. There is more flexibility and freedom and the growing vision that all roads are available for individual choice. This, on one hand, is founded on the great delusion, that individual freedom is confirmed in the possibility of accomplishing all your dreams. But our choices are always subject to other people's opinions, by thought processes or by reasons we don't understand, and are not conscious of. Only God is totally free: we always live in conditional freedom. We will not be free, if we are not freed. Therefore, if our choices are not founded on listening to the Word of God, the community of faith or other societies, such as the family, we will live the illusion of freedom without commitment.

On the other hand, this world, full of threats to our values, also helps us question hypocrisy and offers us different possibilities of life with dignity. Where relationships are marked by unavoidable conflicts, violence or by



physical or psychological oppression, the restoration may be possible precisely by the breaking off of the relationship, therefore, being able to experience new beginnings and other forms of human existence, based on love, dialogue and reciprocity.

Just as family relationships have changed, so have more extensive social relationships suffered modifications. The presence of technologies applied to information and communication, like cell phones and the Internet; allow us to establish links with people in any part of the world, at any time. Time and space become relative, just as the line that separates the public from the private frequently breaks. In this context, many people prefer virtual relationships to in- person and communal life. At the same time that this allows people, who can not leave their home, to have caring relationships, it also implies the redesigning of a more traditional community living, for example, the opportunities of gatherings in church celebrations and community groups.

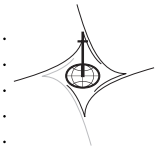
In this way, we can gather in a positive way, a personal and communal existence of our faith in Christ, in a post-Christian, multicultural society. What characterizes the Christian faith is its link to Christ, that is reflected in our relationships with other people and society. It is there that our faith joins with different confessions of faith, political positions, social classes, and ethnic backgrounds in a constant exercise of love and tolerance faced with diversity, as it also took place between Christians and non-Christians living together in the first Christian congregations, that in fact reflected on family relations. The apostle Paul, noticing this in his time, wrote: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy". He understood these relationships from the perspective of Christian freedom, according to which, in the apostle's words, "Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything". This is the foundation of the freedom to which we have been set free in Christ.

1 Corinthians
7:14

1 Corinthians
6:12, 10:23

What characterizes
the Christian faith is its
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Change, in and of itself, is
full of possibilities and
threats.



Based on this foundation we can take stances in relation to the changes that occur in our society. Change, in and of itself, is full of possibilities and threats. An "urban gang", for example, can be a positive reaction to individualism and the formalism of religious traditions lacking meaning. But it may also be an expression of a rigid and closed identity, that threatens individual freedom. The fundamentalists movements may be proof of this, as well as certain tribes formed by fans of rival teams. A traditional religious congregation may be closed and legalistic, but also a place of resistance to mass media influence.

Cultures and their transformation can serve as vessels for God's word, but also may threaten lives.

Cultures and their transformation can serve as vessels for God's word, but also may threaten lives. Everything that is human is saturated with life and death. Only the breath of life, produced by the Spirit of God, creates the diversity restored at the cross of Christ, in contrast to the diversity in competition, much practiced in the market. In this perspective, reconciliation is more than global, it's universal. Because in Christ all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. Christ is not in everything, but everything is in Him.

Ephesians 2:11-22

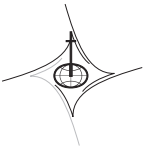
Colossians 1:16

The effects of society's transformation, felt in the political, economic, and cultural fields, etc., also reach the religious context.

2.3 Religious context

The effects of transformation on society, felt in the political, economic, cultural field, etc., also reach the religious context. The idea that you can choose everything, weakens those experiences still marked by tradition. Religion also becomes a choice, whether of a church or religious tendency among many or the search for their synthesis. Even in certain Christian circles, this tendency is present in a dominant way, marked by the cost-benefit relationship of the market logic.

The great change taking place, is that traditional institutions lose strength, inverting a centuries old dynamic. In the traditional societies, the religious institutions made individuals bend their knees; in the contemporary society,



the institutions, marked by individualism, are forced to kneel before the individual's needs. That is how a religious market is created with a diversity, which is many times camouflaged. Religious products are presented like any other consumer product.

Since part of real needs are forged by the illusion of freedom of choice, religious products are not always so distinct. What changes substantially, is the way that people take them in. In this way the sermons try to speak more to emotion and syntonize to the listener's culture, which is not to say, absolutely, that in the new churches there does not exist fundamentally biblical and evangelical sermons. Emotion and culture built-in the 'new' discourse make the difference.

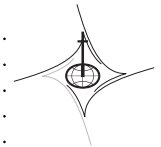
Adapting to the media as a way to present their messages, new churches establish new ways of being religious, where being a Christian is participating in the market of religious products, with characteristics of cultural products in the secular market. Or rather, buy a CD of gospel music, or read a 'Christian' novel, or even, subscribe to a religious feminist magazine, is what makes the believer a "real Christian". And there are, even, publications and fairs that are directed at the "Christian consumer", this slice of the market accumulates billions a year. The churches strategy to conquer and maintain their followers reproduces the means of secular culture, reaching all social segments, from the poorest layers to business people. In this context, belonging to a church is an act of goods and merchandise consumption with a Christian label.

At the same time, the ethics of some of these new churches are based on prosperity theology and spiritual warfare. 'God's will' is that His sons and daughters prosper in life, here and now, in a way that all prosperity is a blessing from God and a sign of faith. At the same time, the believer needs to be faithful and fight against the evil spirits that upset or hinder us from receiving divine blessings. God gives prosperity as a sign of His blessings to the faithful who deserve them, by participating in the religious market and striving to overcome Satan.

The great change taking place, is that traditional institutions lose strength.

New churches establish new ways of being religious, where being a Christian is participating in the market of religious products.

The ethics of some of these new churches are based on prosperity theology and spiritual warfare.



With its strong, diversified, internal tradition, the IECLB must live out the tension between the old and the new.

We should not plagiarize those who have momentary success and become popular at any price. But we must also not ignore other forms of spirituality.

This has a direct effects on traditional churches such as the IECLB. With its strong, diversified, internal tradition, the IECLB must live out the tension between the old and the new. A proposal becomes significant for a society when it articulates two main axles: one fixed and the other movable. The doctrinal issues are a fixed axle, where as their translation to diverse realities should use the people's language. In our ecclesiastical reality, we state that our theological reflection has not yet overcome the difficulties of doctrinal incarnation in the new reality. Soon, we have a translation problem of our tradition. Another problem, in the opposite direction, however, may be the effort to strengthen the axle of proximity with Brazilian cultures, giving up, however, the confessional-theological identity.

Our commitment with proclamation, however, is not synonymous to copying. We should not plagiarize those who have momentary success and become popular at any price. But we must also not ignore other forms of spirituality that grow in our midst and around us. We are called to look at other religious manifestations, in order to see and hear the cry for salvation that is expressed in multiple spiritual languages by the people congregated there. These, independent of creeds, ideologies, gender and ethnic groups are images of God. It is sin that disfigures the divine image and places labels on people that are different than us.

Another aspect that deserves our attention speaks of the loss of members. There exists a population that migrates from church to church. There are people entering and leaving. But this is not the leading question. Our greatest difficulties are in the transmission of tradition, especially in the urban context. Tradition is our spiritual, theological and ecclesiastical inheritance. The idea of transmitting the gospel from generation to generation is no longer automatic. Children do not necessarily follow their parents' religion anymore. The means of transmission of tradition weaken with the growth of individualism and religious pluralism.



The growth of the inability to reproduce our identity, especially in the urban context, forms the central question to be understood and answered through the message and action of the church. The challenge is not only the loss of the church member, but their remaining in the congregation with an identity connection. This can be a silent tragedy, perceivable, eventually, by the testimony of grandparents, when they speak of the difficulty of passing on their tradition. We hear it said, for example: "When I leave this life, my own descendants will not substitute me. That place in the congregation will be empty."

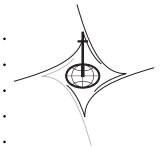
A growing number of people search for a religious experience that departs from the message of a crucified God. New spiritualities look to worship the "I". These spiritualities are caught up in the here and now and do not consider the Christian hope of a new heaven and a new earth, coming from God. They are attracted to magical thinking, predominant in Brazil for centuries: manipulating spiritual forces for immediate and concrete benefits. The "I'll do you a favor, if you do me a favor" (toma lá,dá cá), so strongly present for centuries, is also a result of oppression and misery, which the majority was submitted to for centuries. For this reason, the message and action of the Christian churches need to be articulated with a citizenship that strengthens itself, for example, through social movements committed to an abundant life.

God's mission in the world occurs in different contexts. The IECLB is called to carry out its missionary task in the social, political, economic, cultural and religious Brazilian reality. This implies recognizing itself as part of this reality, as an important role in announcing the kingdom of God. The church needs to look at its country's history, recognize its ecclesiological and theological potential and translate it to the specific place where each member lives and testifies their faith of the Lutheran confession. This requires an analytical effort, of strategy planning and articulate, effective actions.

The growth of the inability to reproduce our identity, especially in the urban context, forms the central question to be understood and answered through the message and action of the church.

The number of people who say they have no religion grows. In the 2000 census of the IBGE, (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), this quota exceeded 7% of the Brazilian population, or rather, more than 12 million people.

We need to look at our contry's history, recognize our ecclesiological and theological potential and translate it to the specific place where each member lives.



We are challenged, as the IECLB, to use all of our capacities, gifts and resources for the common task of translating the richness of our spiritual inheritance to the next generations, in our Brazilian context.

Being aware of this, is the first step to bringing the gospel to the Brazilian nation, without losing ourselves to religious competition or backing away from our own principles. But it is also a decisive step to making our values recognized by everyone that longs for the good news of great joy brought by God in Christ. Therefore, the necessity to translate our tradition to several contexts. Translating to the political sphere, for example, administrative ethics and democratic practices in our congregations. Translating to the economy, the principles of solidarity that guarantee sustainability of our institutions. Translating to culture, the value of education, community life, and the tolerance and respect of differences. Translating and updating to the religious context, the Lutheran principle of salvation only by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ and the centrality of the Bible as maximum authority to orient the Christian life.

Therefore, we are challenged, as the IECLB, to use all of our capacities, gifts and resources for the common task of translating the richness of our spiritual inheritance for the next generations, in our Brazilian context.



3. The IECLB and Mission

3.1 Ecclesial and theological inheritance

The IECLB is a church that comes from a rich and diversified historical process. It has been present in Brazil since the arrival of the first evangelical families that came as immigrants from Europe, establishing themselves in Nova Friburgo (RG) and in São Leopoldo (RS), in 1824. It went through many difficulties until becoming a national church and affirming its identity under the Lutheran confession. We are grateful for this history and for the ecclesiastical inheritance and theology that it has given us.

At the present time, we live in an especially challenging moment. Along its course, the IECLB assumed itself a church with strong communal and associative bases and democratic formation. Even so, we have sins to confess. In the XIX century, even unintentionally our ancestors assumed the social place that could have been occupied by remaining indigenous people and black communities of the colonial period with slave markets. A certain feeling of superiority kept us away from most of the Brazilian population, this fact was aggravated by abandonment and in certain cases, persecution that many congregations, pastors and leaders of German-Brazilian descent suffered under the Brazilian government during the period of the great World Wars of the XX century. These circumstances provoked a ghetto feeling in the

The IECLB is a church that comes from a rich and diversified historical process.

At the present time, we live in an especially challenging moment.



evangelical Lutheran congregations, which made a responsible missionary presence unfeasible in Brazilian society.

3.2 Historical decision: Being Christ's church in Brazil

Fortunately, there were evangelical leaders in the past that knew how to comprehend the signs of the times and made crucial decisions, mainly in the period after 1945. In 1949, when the Synod Federation was formed, that united the four existent synods into a national body, it was decided that the evangelical church would be a church founded on the gospel of Christ, a church that is part of the Christian community in the entire world. At the same time, they defined themselves as a church of Lutheran confession, according to the main documents of the Reformation of the XVI century and the Martin Luther theology, firmly rooted in Brazil.

It was made clear that it only makes sense to be a Christian church if we assume the gift of God as a service of evangelization and solidarity with the Brazilian people, without making distinctions.

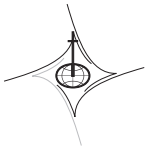
It was made clear that it only makes sense to be a Christian church if we assume the gift of God as a service of evangelization and solidarity with the Brazilian people, without making distinctions of class, ethnicity, gender or religious creed. God has called us to be His church in Brazil and to serve this people, sharing our faith in Christ, that we received by grace, to live in love and solidarity with all the rest of the people on the road in which we are sent as believers and as a missionary congregation to announce hope.

1 Peter 2:9;
3:15

Mission is part of the self comprehension of God's people, of Christ's people in this world.

Since then, the IECLB has realized that the church is much more than an association to meet the religious demands of its members. Increasingly, we are conscious that the church of Christ is essentially missionary. The mission to announce and live the gospel is not a program or task among others. Mission is part of the very self comprehension of God's people, of Christ's people in this world and specifically, in the reality where we are called as a congregation serving the gospel of peace.

John 20:21;
Ephesians 2:17



3.3 Vocation and commitment: Participating in God's mission

Since the 1960's, Brazil has lived an unprecedented process of social, economic and political transformation. Intensive and chaotic urbanization radically changed Brazilian cities. The Brazilian population, mainly rural before, today is an urban population, with more than 83% living in small, medium and large cities. A great part of this population is concentrated in four or five large metropolitan areas, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Recife and Salvador. This social process occurred very quickly. The IECLB stands before a historic challenge: of a well situated church in small and medium cities, with rural characteristics, mainly in southern and southeastern Brazil, that should become a missionary church in urban, modern and extremely dynamic areas.

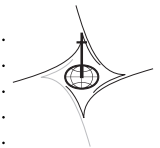
In this new context, in which a plural culture dominates, characterized by a diversified and complex religious phenomenon, the IECLB finds itself before the challenge of renewing its vocation and reaffirming its commitment to participate in God's mission beginning in congregations and diaconal and social projects that have come up along its ecclesiastical course. In light of the new moment that, by God's grace, we are living in, it is important to consider the diverse theological contribution that we receive from sister churches abroad, as well as ecclesiastical and missionary movements. These contributions forged a new dynamism in terms of evangelization, missionary projects and insertion in the transforming social action.

3.4 Missionary planning: PAMI

Placing the challenge of "not one congregation without a mission- not one mission without a congregation", the IECLB Missionary Action Plan (PAMI), launched in October of 2000, on the occasion of the XXII Church Council, in Chapada dos Guimarães (MT), was not merely making a play on words. Behind the slogan was the fundamental objective to make each congregation a missionary congregation and each missionary project the possibility of

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In this new context, the IECLB finds itself before the challenge of renewing its vocation and reaffirming its commitment to participate in God's mission.



creating an IECLB congregation. This way, PAMI 2000-2007 was born with the proposal to "recreate and create congregations together", as is formulated in its general objective:

The objective of PAMI 2000 was to recreate and create congregations together.

"To recreate and revive the IECLB congregations, through the gospel in word, sacrament, prayer and communion, with a vision to engage in mission by living in mutual sharing as well as a view to mission by going beyond the social, economic, racial, religious, national, age and gender boundaries. In this mission we are united as a family with all IECLB congregations, synods, work departments and entities, with all Christian churches as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations committed to this divine mandate. In this dynamic of recreating congregations we want to create new congregations that in turn are characterized as missionary congregations."

As a result of an exhaustive process of conferences, that involved the IECLB grass-roots and national and international partners of the church, PAMI instituted itself as a planning document of the church mission. Its inspiration came from the proposal of the "Ministério Compartilhado" (Shared Ministry), and the process of Administrative Restructuring of the IECLB, reflected in the Forum on Mission, held in May of 2000. Its focus was in the refining of the missionary congregation through planning, which is already made clear in the presentation of the Plan: "to encourage and equip the IECLB congregations, synods, entities, and work sectors, with a look at elaborating their respective plans for missionary action".

The content of PAMI 2000-2007 includes:
a) a theological foundation,
b) a strategic plan and
c) consequent practices.

With a deep theological foundation, a proposal for action and a projection of practical consequences, PAMI constituted itself in the first church document on mission to establish time frames and competencies, to find operative definitions and to point to strategic areas for missionary practice. Luther's Rose, with its five petals, served as a didactic guide for PAMI.



The process of executing the Missionary Plan was put in to action in most of the IECLB spheres. After six years of existence, the church met at the National Forum on Mission, in Florianopolis, from July 13th to 16th of 2006. The evaluation of the whole process was held there, beginning with an itinerary of specific questions related to the main themes and goals proposed by the Plan, which the eighteen synods answered in preparation for the Forum. The itinerary unleashed an evaluative process of the application, the living out and reflections of this Plan in the IECLB.

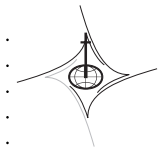
The IECLB organization in eighteen synods tried to approximate the missionary planning to specific contexts in the whole country. In this way, the planning in each area became the responsibility of each respective synod. In this context, and according to the evaluation, PAMI seems to have not been able to articulate a common vision of mission or, if and when it was present, it did not have sufficient appeal to unite synods and congregations in the same direction. Even though the tools for accompanying were not foreseen in PAMI 2000-2007, the feedback given by the synods in the evaluation allowed us to identify some common themes among all synods, from those situated in the context of older congregations, with consolidated work, to the synods that cover vast regions with a small number of Lutheran members in new congregations. Let's look at some points in this evaluation.

3.4.1 - Numerical growth

PAMI 2000-2007 projected a numerical growth of members of five percent per year. But this growth, anticipated with much enthusiasm, in general, was not reached. The evaluation showed that, at present, the small and medium parishes show some growth, but the scenario points to the lessening of members in the medium term. Actual growth and sustainability is reached by congregations that have been formed by the Missão Zero project, mainly in Northeastern Brazil. Congregations started by projects stimulated by PAMI, also begin to show results, and for this it is crucial that the congregation has a project and maintains a clergy person identified with the congregation.

The evaluation of PAMI 2000-2007, seems to show that it was not able to articulate a common vision of mission or, if and when it was present, it did not have the sufficient appeal to unite synods and congregations in the same direction.

The expected numerical growth of members was not reached.

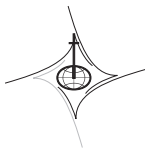


Qualitative growth
is in process.

Synods and congregations
need to capacitate
themselves in the planning
and management areas to
put this potential at work
with intentionality.

The financial question
continues to be a limiting
factor.

The investment in internal
partnerships was
insufficient for the birth of
more missionary
initiatives.



3.4.2 - Qualitative growth

Practically all synods offer leadership training and use the resources and materials offered by the church. The IECLB is able to mobilize a great number of people, many qualified, which assume voluntary work bringing results for the church and making a difference in society. In this way, the qualitative growth is in process. However, in the continuation of PAMI, synods and congregations need to capacitate themselves in the planning and management areas, to put this potential to work, developing intentional and directional actions for the objectives.

3.4.3 - The financial issue

For most synods, the financial question continues to be a limiting factor in reaching the goals proposed by PAMI. Without money or planning, it is difficult to accomplish missionary goals and objectives. But it is a sign of hope and proof that it is possible to change this reality, the fact that those congregations that are working with integrity and commitment to the theme, Faith, Gratitude and Commitment have begun to gather financial results for this work, resulting in new investments in mission.

3.4.4 - Mission fronts

Even though PAMI 2000-2007 points to the necessity of enlarging missionary fronts, in reality, synods confirm that the investment in internal partnerships was insufficient for the birth of more missionary initiatives. The church continues with practices from the 1970's and 1980's, providing services in areas where IECLB members are found.

The "new areas", as were understood in the 1970's and 1980's, are no longer the mid-west and northern regions of Brazil. Today "new areas", are at all congregations reach: they are the city outskirts, the slums, and the downtowns of the large cities. The new territorial borders have given way for ethnic, cultural, economic, and social borders as the horizon of our action as a church has shifted. In these contexts, the church practices some steps, but still walks with difficulty. We must recognize and understand this new reality.

But we must also have the humility to recognize that we need to do networking, look for partnerships with other organizations of civil society that have already worked longer in these contexts and are more politically conscious, aware, and demanding.

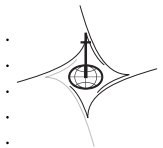
Through PAMI, missionary projects were implemented in all synods, of which a good part was supported by external resources. Very successful projects resulted from these, like the implantation of a second or third field of ministry activities in a parish, and projects of consolidating congregations formed through the detachment from a larger congregation. The challenge that remains for these congregations is to increase their efforts in a way that supports the creation of other IECLB congregations, as has already happened with the partnership that several synods are establishing with the Amazon Synod, to make feasible the quinquennial project of the Synod Mission. This is an indication that the financing of our missionary actions will depend more and more on our own resources.

Even though the goals of PAMI have not been completely reached, there are evident advances in diverse levels and geographic areas, creating a greater awareness for the missionary challenge of the church. It stimulated congregations and synods to create their own strategic mission plan. In many places it served for new initiatives with a missionary face, making possible experiences that today can be useful for debate and the definition of new directions in the immediate future and longer term.

As a PAMI initiative, missionary projects were implemented in all synods.

The help that the churches and partner organizations have offered to the IECLB, for investing in missionary and diaconal projects, helped to stimulate PAMI.

PAMI 2000-2007 brought evident advances in diverse levels and geographic areas, creating a greater awareness for the missionary challenge of the church.



2nd PART:

RENEWING THE IECLB'S
MISSIONARY ACTION

4. Theology and Missionary Vision

God's Passion for the World

4.1 God's passion in creation

God does mission with a loving gaze, since the beginning of history.

To speak of God's passion for the world is to speak of a God that does mission with a loving gaze. Since the beginning of God's history with the world, his gaze was always of kindness, mercy and compassion. God's loving and passionate gaze upon the world starts with creation. It began with his gesture that gave shape, order, light and life to the chaos and darkness that covered the universe. It starts with his act of love that created man and woman in his image and likeness.

Genesis 1:1-2,4

Genesis 1:27

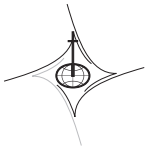
It is God's love that makes us see, with him, that everything that he made is good.

God did not make us in his image and likeness by chance. Doing such, he invites us, as man and woman, to live with one another that which was given us in creation that is most beautiful and marvelous: love. It is God's love that gives life to the universe, which invites us to solidarity, fraternity, sharing and communion with one another. It is this love that calls us to restoration and brings us to contemplate and take care of God's creation with passion and love. It is God's love that makes us see, with him, that everything that he made is good.

Genesis 1:31

Genesis 3:1-6:4

Genesis 6:5-10:32



Genesis 11:1-9 with the flood. However, the human response, manifested at the tower of Babel, shows once again our presumption of being the bridge builders between earth and heaven.

Genesis 11:10-50:26
Exodus 1:1-22 God's loving gaze upon us, however, comes once again, reestablishing the order of creation, organizing human society into families. Unfortunately, our response to God's gesture of love is bondage.

Exodus 2:1; 3:8
Deuteronomy 34:12 Because of this bondage, God looks again to recreate the harmony of creation with a gesture of love to free them and give them a land. A promised land, known as a land flowing with milk and honey. However, it becomes a place to oppress, enslave and suffocate life. Through the prophets, God seeks to call his people back to truth and justice. Nevertheless, realizing that humanity moved towards a much greater chaos, where the very divine law, given by Moses to give freedom, was used to oppress, exclude and marginalize, God performs his greatest demonstration of love for mankind by sending to the world his dear and beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

4.2 God's passion in Christ

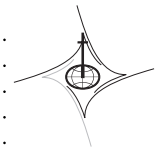
Mark 5:1-43;
10:13-16
John 8:1-11
Mark 2:23- 3:6
Matthew 9:9-13
Luke 7:1-17
John 13:1-20 It is in Christ Jesus that God shows his greatest and most beautiful act of love to all people. It is in Christ that the signs of God's kingdom have already become real in our midst: the sick are healed; children are valued; women are defended against accusing men; laws that harm the love for your neighbor are questioned; sinners and people of bad repute are heard, valued and transformed; strangers are blessed, the dead are resurrected; true servant hood is taught.

Matthew 27:22
Luke 23:34

John 3:16 Our response to God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, however, is: "Crucify him!" Jesus, nevertheless, intercedes for us: "Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing". However, it is on the cross that God reveals his love and greatest passion to the world. The Apostle John affirms: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever

Throughout history, God always tries to reestablish the harmony of creation, broken by human disobedience.

It is in Christ Jesus that God shows his greatest and most beautiful act of love to all people.



It is on the cross, in the resurrection of Jesus, that God frees us from the bondage of sin and gives us the gift of salvation.

It is under the power of the Holy Spirit that our gifts are manifested and put to work for life.

We are encouraged by the power of the Holy Spirit to the witness and the action of passion and the immense love that God has for his creation and humanity.



believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God's passion for the world is love. It is on the cross, through Christ's resurrection, that God frees us from the bondage of sin, and gives us the gift of salvation. It is on the cross that God reconciles himself to us in Jesus Christ and builds a bridge that connects heaven with earth.

4.3 The Holy Spirit and God's passion

Out of love for humanity, God resurrects Jesus Christ and answers his son's request: I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, the Spirit of truth, to be with you forever". It is under the power of the Holy Spirit that all the Christian community – scattered, depressed and frightened by the death of Jesus Christ – is reanimated for life: "However, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". It is under the power of the Holy Spirit that the apostles are encouraged to witness to that which they saw and heard of God's passion revealed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is under the power of the Holy Spirit that men and women, as Christian history goes by, don't allow themselves to be intimidated by people and civil and religious authorities, that usurped and used the gospel for their own interests. It is under the power of the Holy Spirit that our gifts are manifested and put to work for life.

Since Pentecost, we have been encouraged by the power of the Holy Spirit to witness and action. We are encouraged to speak of the passion and immense love that God has for his creation and humanity. We are encouraged to put into practice Jesus' invitation: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember this: I am with you always, to the very end of the age".

John 14:16

Acts 1:8

Acts 2:1

Matthew 28:19-20

4.4 God's passion in solidarity

To speak of God's passion for the world is to speak of a God that does mission with a loving gaze upon us. With a look sensitive to weakness, anguish and human necessity. The following example illustrates God's loving gaze upon us very well. The look of passion that is manifested in solidarity.

Suppose that a boy meets an elderly woman on the road carrying a heavy basket of apples. The boy, upon seeing the delicious apples, feels like eating one of them. He thinks, therefore, that certainly the woman would give him some apples if he helped her carry the basket home. And this is what he does, he carries the heavy basket for her and she gives him some apples in return. So far so good. Even though the motives of the boy are not totally pure, he, after all, does a good deed. Which is much better than if he had not helped at all. His gain, beyond the apples he received, would also be an increase of the feeling of self worth: he was smart and his plan worked.

We contrast now the case of another boy that also meets an elderly woman with a heavy basket. He sees the woman and not the apples. He notices how she heavily drags herself along the road, with her back curved, and how she needs to use all her strength. At this time, the boy perceives the "meaning of the moment", that consists in putting his youthful strength at work for something or someone that needs it. He also offers himself to take the basket to her house, and doing so, receives some apples as a present.

What is the gain of this second boy? He had contact with "self-worth", that which is good and makes sense, which was inherent in his disposition to help, independent of the results of his actions which would come in the end. With this he would increase not only his sense of self worth, but above all, his sense of the value of life, knowing the full meaning of his existence.

To speak of God's passion for the world is to speak of a God that does mission with a loving gaze upon us. With a look sensitive to weakness, anguish and human necessity.



While the first boy could say, with satisfaction: "I made a good deal!", the second could feel fulfilled in thinking: "It was good that I went by that road at that time!" (Elizabeth Lukas, Logo Therapist Assistant)

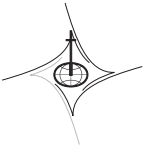
God does not look at what we can give him in exchange for salvation in Christ Jesus.

God's passion for the world is revealed in this loving gaze of the second boy. God does not look at what we can give him in exchange for salvation in Christ Jesus. His gaze is one of love to the other as he is. It's a look without expecting a return. It's a look that is able to reach out a hand without the theology of retribution. It's a look that sees our pain, our agony and our anguish. It's a look that comes to become close. It's a look that comes to relieve our burdens, to free us from guilt and to invite us to be close to one another, which by the way is affirmed by the new commandment of Jesus: "A new commandment I give you: That you love one another: As I have loved you, so you must love one another".

John 13:34

To speak of God's passion for the world is to speak of a God that reveals himself in single, loving gestures just as the children with special needs, in the following example:

Some years ago, at the Seattle Special Games, in the United States, nine participants, each with mental or physical deficiencies, gathered themselves together at the start of the 100 meter relay. At the whistle, each one took off with the desire to give their best, finish the race and win. Everyone, except one girl, that slipped, fell and started to cry. Upon hearing the cry, the rest of them stopped to see what had happened. Then, everyone turned around and went back. One of the girls with Downs Syndrome knelt beside her, gave her a kiss and said: "There, now it will get better". And each of the nine competitors put their arms around each other and walked towards the finish line. The whole stadium stood up and applauded for several minutes."



The mission that God's loving gaze in Christ confides in us is that we know how to hear the cry, the pain, the needs and affliction of people. It's not the mission where each one takes off alone for their own interests and glory. However, it is the mission that knows how to hear, dialogue, reevaluate the course and discover that the victory of life is achieved in the communal and fraternal walk with the other. It is this mission that is able to walk hand in hand with the other person towards the kingdom of God.

God's passion for the world, fulfilled since the beginning of the world until the present day, inspires us to be the IECLB at work for God's mission in the world with this loving gaze that dialogues, recreates, restores, gives dignity and reconciles life under the power of the Holy Spirit.

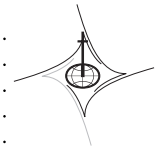
4.5 Building missionary congregations - Dimensions of the missionary church

God is the foundation and the subject of mission that he himself achieves through his creating and sustaining, redeeming and sanctifying work. God includes the church- the communion of those graced by faith – in this movement in favor of the healing and salvation of the world. The mission of the church, therefore, is none other than to involve yourself in the divine mission and make yourself available to be an instrument of God's act of bringing salvation.

As mission belongs to the essence of being a church, it should become perceived in the fundamental dimensions of the life of the church, as well as in the life of each Christian. The whole mission of God, understood as the communication of God's love, reveals itself in the missionary testimony of faith (evangelization), in the concrete living of Christ's body (communion), in the restoring and healing act (diaconship), in the celebration of divine love (liturgy). It is there, however, that God's passion for humanity is revealed to the world through the life of the church.

The mission that God's loving gaze in Christ Jesus confides in us is that we know how to hear the cry, the pain, the needs and affliction of people.

As mission belongs to the essence of being a church, it should become perceived in the fundamental dimensions of the life of each community.



5. Evangelization

The missionary testimony of faith

Evangelization originates with the desire of God to have a complete, harmonious relationship with us.

Evangelization is the explicit exposition of the gospel, aiming at a personal response of faith and the entry into Christian discipleship lived in community.

The announcing of the gospel that happens through the missionary testimony of faith, evangelization, has as its starting point the very Triune God's act. Evangelization originates with God's desire to have a complete, harmonious relationship with us. The proclaiming of the Good News of God's unconditional love awakens faith, and gives birth to the church. Therefore, the church is the creation of the gospel. In this way, it is not the church that promotes evangelization, but evangelization that promotes the church. Many times, the terms "mission" and "evangelization" are used as synonyms. In this chapter, we would like to differentiate them. "Mission" is the combination of actions in which God's kingdom is promoted, in the church and society. "Evangelization", however, does not exclude other dimensions of mission, it concentrates on the explicit exposition and intention of the gospel, aiming at a personal response of faith and the entry into Christian discipleship lived in community.

On the horizon of God's mission in this world, evangelization proclaims the liberating lordship of God. The center of this proclamation is Christ crucified and resurrected and its aim, the complete establishment of God's kingdom, which He Himself will complete at the end of times. It is exactly from this promise, that the Kingdom of God will become reality in this world, which evangelization extracts its motivation. The church, however, does not



evangelize to overcome internal needs, but to correspond to the promise that the word of God announced, lived and testified " will not return empty".

Evangelization begins from the fact that human reality is determined by Christ. Through the crucified Christ, the Triune God comes to humankind, distanced from the source and meaning of life, itself and its neighbor. Through the resurrected Christ, God raises the human being and offers communion. Therefore, even distant and lost, he is not left up to his own fate, but recuperated and restored by Christ. This is, exactly, the content of evangelization: the reality that God loves and accepts humankind unconditionally and desires to have an intense relationship, wholly transforming it.

Therefore, the greatest goal of evangelization is that humankind allows itself to be captivated by God who creates, reconciles and saves. In this way, evangelization takes people back to their origin and their final destiny: to be the image of God and His faithful collaborator in this world. Humankind, however, is not free to, by its own will, to desire this return (metanoia), not even able to accomplish it. When a human being makes the decision to get close to God again, he is being the target of God's creating action. It is God Himself that creates the ears that hear His word, the hearts that receive and the faith that responds to it.

Form and style of evangelistic proclamation should be in conformity with its content and objective: captivate and attract people to God's unconditional love. Appeals and blackmailing aimed at coercing a decision or personal conversion, nevertheless, do not correspond to the Lutheran evangelical comprehension of evangelization.

Evangelization occurs especially through the local congregation as it makes the Word and sacraments available in its midst - the elements that, according to Lutheran tradition, communicate the gospel and God's grace in a preferential manner. It is precisely these elements that make up the local church congregation in its full sense. Therefore, it can not delegate or

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outsource evangelization or permit it to happen only in a casual way. It's up to the local congregation to rediscover the evangelistic dimension of all its programs and events. Everything the church is or does should be evangelization, that is, it should captivate and attract towards faith and trust in God. It's about continuous evangelization.

Naturally, the congregation could promote evangelization as a specific event. But this contingent and specific way should be based on permanent and constant evangelization. The church that evangelizes should, first of all, be continually evangelized, exposing itself continually to the life giving and renewing message of the gospel. Especially for practicing, primarily, child baptism, the IECLB has the responsibility to promote the evangelization of baptized people, in order that the divine grace offered in sacrament be accepted existentially in faith. The responsibility to call to faith, should be added to another: to accompany the first steps of faith. Whoever was awoken to the faith should receive trustworthy and practical instruction concerning how to live one's faith daily. This concerns the teaching of elementary forms of Christian spirituality, especially the practice of prayer and Bible reading and meditation.

The simplest and most effective way to promote continuous evangelization is to invest in the evangelistic potential of the communitarian worship service. The worship service has the capacity to gather, beyond its active members, people distanced from faith and community life in many different occasions and for several reasons. They are strategic moments to expose the gospel in a comprehensive, elementary and creative way. Whoever comes to the worship service for the first time or returns, after a long time, should be able to comprehend the message and feel accepted. According to 1 Corinthians 14, the visitor is the criteria of the church that, as a whole, should be transparent to the content of the gospel.

Luther, upon reflecting on the renewal of the worship service in new evangelical congregations, prioritized precisely the worship service format



with evangelistic emphasis, "to call and attract to faith" (German mass and service order, 1526). In this worship service, performed in the people's language, he expected the people to comprehend the gospel and begin a process of spiritual growth that would transform them into active members and missionaries.

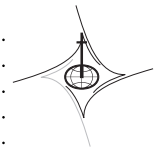
The worship service and the rest of community gatherings should awaken the interest of deepening one's faith and invite to specific evangelistic programs. This way, the specific and contingent evangelization can complement the continuous evangelization. The specific evangelization generally happens by way of projects which, restricted by a determined period, desire to cause a positive impact. Here it is important to invest in ways that communicate the gospel in an effective way for today's world: to hold evangelistic courses (such as Basic Course of Faith and ALPHA); make places available for reflection on subjects which integrate faith and life; and promote evangelization in its classic form. The effect of evangelistic projects depends on many factors: creative, elementary and effective exhibition of the gospel, the use of media, optimization of internal and external communication, engaging of the whole congregation in prayer and invitations, and adequate preparation of the setting where the project takes place (reception, decoration, materials, food and drinks, child care, etc.).

In great measure, however, the evangelistic capacity of a congregation depends on the effectiveness in which its members give witness to their faith through their relationships. International surveys reveal that most church visitors and new members arrive at congregations by way of personal invitations. A biblical example of relational evangelization is found in the gospel of John 1:35, 40-51: after having met Jesus, Andrew invites his brother Simon, and Philip invites his friend Nathanael. They share with people from their primary relationships the discovery that is transforming their lives: "We have found the Messiah". Evangelizing, missionary congregations characterize themselves by the large number of members that invite relatives, friends, colleagues, acquaintances and neighbors to participate in

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Prepare the members to "give the reason for their hope" signifies providing them with the fundamental elements of faith and doctrine, aiming at their articulating in a missionary manner in their everyday lives.

The quality of communion experimented in the midst of a Christian congregation determines, in great part, its evangelizing competencies and its missionary attractiveness.

congregational programs. One caution, however, is necessary: it is only possible to invite where you are sure of being accepted. To invite people to a cold and unfriendly congregation is to immunize them against the gospel.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to recognize that there are many other ways, beyond the traditional programs of the congregation, through which people look for a congregation of faith. It is important to recognize them and promote them, in order that the uniformization of members is not the target of evangelization of the congregation, but indeed, salvation through the grace of God.

If evangelization is the responsibility of the local congregation, then, a priority and strategic task is implied: the capacitating of members for the missionary articulation of faith. It's about responding positively to the challenge of being "always prepared to give an answer to every one who asks you to give the reason for the hope that is in you". Prepare members to "give the reason for their hope" means to provide them with the fundamental elements of faith and doctrine, aiming at their articulating in a missionary manner in their everyday lives. Equally it means, capacitating them for the testimony of the gospel in specific situations – in accompanying the sick, the mourning, people in crisis, people distanced from community life, or in the engagement in movements and organizations of civil society, among other situations.

1 Peter 3:15

In light of the great and rapid social and cultural transformation, today the evangelistic testimony happens, primarily, as a process of fellowship and personal and communitarian accompaniment. The traditional itinerary that consisted in a) discovering faith and b) joining a Christian congregation, corresponds even less to current human needs. More and more people find a welcoming congregation and from the experience of Christian fellowship find Christ and faith. In this way, the quality of participation that is experienced in the midst of a Christian congregation determines in great part its evangelizing capacity and its missionary attractiveness.



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6. Communion

The fellowship of Christ's Body

Every time we refer to God as the Trinity -Father, Son and Holy Spirit- we allude to the fact that God is, above all, living fellowship and dynamic relation moved by his endless divine love. The persons of the Trinity, beyond sharing the same essence, exist for each other, and live an interdependency characterized by mutual giving and receiving. The divine fellowship, however, is not closed, it's not self-sufficient, but it overflows with the desire to include everything and everyone in this loving fellowship. The divine mission that is therefore born has cosmic dimensions, including the building up of the church, the redeeming of fallen humanity, the renewing of the whole creation and the definitive installation of God's kingdom.

God is, above all, living fellowship and dynamic relation moved by his endless divine love.

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 5:42
Acts 20:20
Romans 16:2
Philemon 2
Colossians 4:15
Galatians 3:28
1 Corinthians 12
Romans 12

The church that grows from the missionary and redeeming action of God, therefore, has fellowship in its existence, in its DNA. The image of the life of the primitive Christians reveals communion and fellowship as remarkable characteristics of the church. Upon expanding to all the known world of the time, the new testament congregations conserved the quality of their fellowship as the main missionary factor. They organized themselves as "churches that met in the homes", offering to members and visitors a close, welcoming atmosphere, independent of their racial, cultural or social origin. By being inclusive, they offered equality of rights, valued the person and his or her gifts, the Christian congregations became the place for personal and

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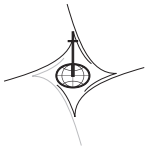
The church is fellowship with solidarity that is reborn and renewed in each celebration of Communion, the sacrament of fellowship.

Communion is the concrete fellowship of Christian priesthood where we mutually become servants one to another, especially to the more needy.

spiritual development for people of all levels and social positions. The "home" churches in the New Testament owe their effectiveness and their missionary attractiveness to these characteristics, making possible, not only their survival in times of severe persecution, but also their growth in an environment of strong religious competitiveness.

Luther, in projecting his vision of community life, was inspired by the reports in the New Testament of Christian fellowship listed above. To him, the apposed, "fellowship of the saints" in the Apostle's Creed explains and interprets exactly what the church is: fellowship with solidarity that is reborn and renewed in each celebration of Communion, the sacrament of fellowship. Luther understands this fellowship as communication and sharing, in the first place, of the grace and divine gifts, and then, everything we are and have, including, material goods, time, gifts and capacities. Fellowship, however, is not a spiritualized ideal of an existence without conflicts. It's concrete fellowship of the Christian priesthood where we mutually become servants one to another, especially to the more needy. The priestly delivery of Christ, totally assuming human form in his incarnation and the cross, however, should also be performed between the members of the body of Christ. Therefore, the fellowship of the priesthood becomes the internal structure of a church characterized by fellowship.

Besides exposing his profound comprehension regarding the nature of Christian fellowship, Luther also outlined a project to put into practice. He wanted to unite those people who "want to be serious Christians and confess the gospel with hands and mouth" (German Mass and order of service, 1526). These should "unite among themselves, in a home, to pray, read, baptize, receive the sacrament, and do other Christian works". Luther considered this the most adequate form of promoting Christian fellowship in the meaning of the gospel. Here, it would be possible to promote spiritual growth and encourage the existence of Christian priesthood in the congregation and society. His project remains alive until today in Lutheran churches, inspiring and challenging towards a community life which is marked by fellowship.



Today, the building of missionary congregations in our midst goes through the awareness that the clarity of verbal gospel proclamation should find correspondence in the quality of community fellowship. The body of Christ also communicates through its body language. In general, body language says much more than verbal language. According to research, the impact of a message on the listener is related, 7% to words (what you say), 38% to tone of voice, inflection (the way you say it) and 55% to body language (expression and gestures of body, eyes, hands, arms, legs, fingers, etc.) The fact is we are always communicating, sending positive or negative messages.

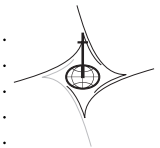
Body language of Christ's body is the quality of its fellowship. The way you are-welcome, integrate, include, value others, care for- has, for this reason, a high missionary impact. Body language that is expressed by the congregation in its fellowship reveals how it thinks in regards to itself and the world - for example, if it is interested in including those distanced, different or non-members. A congregation aimed at the goal of making its fellowship attractive and with a mission emphasis, should develop therefore, self-criticism when it comes to the standard with which they receive and serve people.

When we are visitors and arrive somewhere for the first time we have a very sharp sensitivity, when it comes to the receptiveness of the place or group and we know instinctively if we are welcomed, if we are accepted - or not. These experiences can become useful for the developing of an accepting culture in the congregation. We may begin with the questions: what impression do we cause on the person that visits us for the first time? What impression do the places where we meet and receive people cause? This critical reflection will allow the congregation to positively respond to the biblical commandment of hospitality, an essential characteristic of the missionary congregation. In this way, the elaboration of a hospitality theology and considering its practical consequences in community life, should be one of the priorities of the IECLB in the next years.

Hebrews 13:2
Romans 15:7

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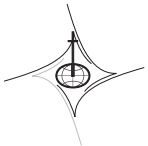
The elaboration of a hospitality theology and considering its practical consequences in community life should be one of the priorities of the IECLB in the next years.

The most impressive characteristic of a positive community atmosphere is the valuing of its people.

Another effective way to evaluate and stimulate the quality of fellowship is to ask about the community atmosphere. Is it positive, encouraging active participation? Is it negative or marked by indifference, generating passiveness and distancing? Part of the atmosphere of the congregation, for example, is its way of interacting with people, its way of making decisions, its way of making member participation available, in summary, the rules of fellowship that regulate the relationships within the congregation.

The most impressive characteristic of a positive community atmosphere is the valuing of its people. It's about taking people seriously and respecting them and their wishes, experiences, potentials, needs, and encouraging them to contribute voluntarily with their time, gifts and wealth. In this way, gifts and potentials are awoken, accepted, qualified and put to work for God's mission in the world. Congregations that are able to include and value members and non-members, that invest in a good atmosphere and in small groups, contain high attractiveness and missionary efficiency. People should feel and perceive that their presence, participation and help are valued and welcomed.

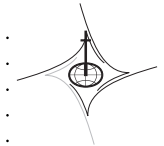
This valorization has positive consequences for the atmosphere in the congregation. It always brings with it mutual trust and frank communication. This valorization should also extend to the participation in decisions that affect community life. In this way, it is useful to ask some key questions: Do people feel valued as citizens of community life? Do they take part in making decisions, share in the power, are they heard and respected? Are they co-responsible for the formulating of the church vision and goals? Do they receive all the relevant information concerning community life? It seems evident that the answers to these questions are linked to the style of leadership that is performed. If the exercise of leadership is understood as service, the power will be shared, the potential of each person will be valued, community gifts will be enabled, work will be delegated and new opportunities of participation will continually be created.



Therefore, the great challenge that comes from the question of the quality of fellowship is to provide places of fellowship, acceptance and mutual valorization in our community life - places where God's grace determines the relationship of people, providing the fellowship of the body of Christ.

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The great challenge that comes from the question of the quality of fellowship is to provide places of fellowship, acceptance and mutual valorization in our community life.



7. Diakonia

The restoring and healing action of the congregation

Jesus' mission is the living out of love, serving in a humble, loving, accepting and inclusive way.

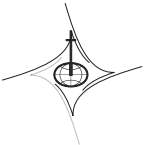
It is God who, in his mission, comes to the world, in Jesus Christ and serves us- "Because even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many". Jesus' mission is the living out of love, serving in a humble, loving, accepting and inclusive way. Jesus' actions transformed lives. He met with the sick and marginalized, rescued them from isolation, neglect, and made reconciliation and healing possible. Jesus' attitude of acceptance and inclusion before foreigners, sinners or the excluded, warmed the overburdened hearts of guilt and returned dignity and the love for life. Jesus spoke of God's love and lived out this love daily, through concrete attitudes. Jesus hugged, forgave, included, helped, talked, questioned and healed.

Matthew 20:28

Our serving and all our actions are fruits of God's love in us.

God serves us, therefore we serve. Our serving and all our actions are fruits of God's love for us. The missionary congregation is the one which serves people and the world in gratitude to God for his love and acceptance, and because Christ calls us to give continuity to this service of love – "As I have done, go and do likewise". Everyone, starting at baptism, is called to take part in God's mission through love and service. In the missionary congregation all are called to place the whole body – hands, feet, ears, feelings and reason – gifts and wealth to serve people and the world, since their goal is to place themselves next to people as a sign of God's love. The

John 13:15



missionary congregation that serves is the one that gets close to people, that fights for a life of dignity, not only for their community, but also for the world's. Their service goes beyond boundaries.

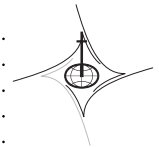
There are many examples of IECLB congregations that serve. Generally, this service begins at the perception of people's reality, with their problems and hopes and may arrive at the creation of diaconal institutions, like hospitals, child day care centers, inns, nursing homes, etc. Children, youth and teenagers in risk and their families, elderly or ill, people with handicaps and those that live with Aids, among others, may find in congregations or diaconal institutions a place where it's possible to feel at home and be valued, experience acceptance and healing, because there they meet people that believe that a better future is possible. Because there they find dignity and respect from people that are compelled to contribute to a better life in every way. Starting with the Christian living of people that serve, many others end up closer to the Lutheran congregations and come to take part in them. Where diaconal work starts, because people suffer and need attention, there God moves toward creating community, making God's action visible in favor of human dignity.

The missionary congregation that serves is the one which promotes effective actions and questions injustices, oppression and exclusion. The actions are manifestations of faith in response to God's love, as in the example of people with deficiencies that find in the IECLB a church that accepts them and engages them in the movement for the rights of these people. It is through this partnership in looking for better conditions for life and inclusion of people with deficiencies, through services that the church renders to the world, that many people opt to become Lutheran.

The missionary congregation that serves is the one that places itself along side, which lives life and experiments, which teaches to walk, which frees for autonomy and that, through this service, provides healing.

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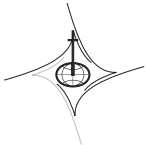
Through visitation, the power of God's love to transform the church, society and life is manifested.

It is the act of service, starting with Christian identity, that is given in a context of suffering and injustice with the purpose to transform, which we call diakonia.

To recognize the material needs of a poor population and put yourself at work there to transform, is a way to assume the diaconal and missionary vocation of the congregation. Just as it is missionary action to engage yourself in the defense of fundamental rights for people, like people with deficiencies, that can feel accepted and valued in Lutheran fellowship. In light of sicknesses and mourning, that provoke suffering in many people, to dedicate yourself to consolation is also a way of showing God's love and of valuing solidarity living in the congregation. They are examples of diakonia, of the manifestation of the restoring and healing action of the missionary congregation. They are examples of mercy and justice that are manifested through assistance, solidarity, political action and partnership. Or in other words, it is faith and spirituality that become active in love. They are predisposed to diaconal practice, voluntary solidarity, engagement in God's mission, promoting an abundant life in this world through serving our neighbor and society. It is the act of service, starting with Christian identity that is given in a context of suffering and injustice with the purpose to transform, which we call diakonia.

Therefore, diaconal engagement is a privileged place for the living out of the priesthood to which we were anointed through our baptism. The growth of IECLB congregations and parishes will depend in great part on the diaconal relevance that can be won in the society in which we are placed. In this way, society places many challenges on the work of the missionary congregation together with people in situations of psychological, spiritual, economic and physical suffering. It will depend on the willingness to become a solidary, therapeutic, healing congregation - a church for others.

To be a church for others is to look with God's loving look at people and families that suffer with chemical dependency. It is to notice people that suffer with solitude and depression, and carry out a healing and restoring ministry, offering fellowship and hope. It is to be alert to conflict situations, helping with mediation and searching for reconciliation between people. It is to assume an accepting posture for and with people living with HIV/Aids. It is to promote places of forgiveness and healing, of justice and peace, of the



practice of love and fight against every form of oppression, whether between children, with youth, in families and with elderly people, in any situation of suffering and want.

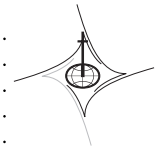
Many times, diakonia is characterized by spontaneous actions, faced by very specific situations, like, for example, campaigns for humanitarian help or visitation to a church member who is sick, etc. But the restoring and healing act of the congregation can establish itself in a more effective witness of God's love when the congregation understands servanthood as a strategic dimension of its mission. So, it identifies and values the gifts of each member and helps to develop them in light of servanthood. The congregation realizes the importance of planning its diaconal actions, because in this way it optimizes its human, financial and structural resources which its action demands. At the same time, it contributes more effectively to the social transformation which results in the well-being of everyone. The congregation that feels called to diakonia, also recognizes and promotes groups such as the OASE, (a women's ministry) whose goal is to put into practice fellowship, witness and service. Great social significance today have the services to people in suffering situations and in need. It's important to develop sensitivity to the needs and pain of society and acquire mutual competence. It's still important to establish partnerships with organizations, with businesses or with the public power in a way that unites forces in the fight for human dignity.

We recognize, understand and believe that it is God's mission. Therefore, the growth of the church, as a consequence of mission, is also divine work - "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow". In this way, the missionary congregation that serves is the the one which understands its service of planting and watering, through practical actions and gestures, visible and palpable, that touches people's lives, that rescues them from suffering and motivates them to live out God's love. It's the one that gives itself to service of justice and peace.

1 Corinthians 3:6

The restoring and healing act of the congregation can establish itself in a more effective witness of God's love when the congregation understands servanthood as a strategic dimension of its mission.

It's important to develop sensitivity to the needs and pain of society and acquire mutual competence.



In this way, the missionary congregation that serves is the one which understands its service of planting and watering, through practical actions and gestures, visible and palpable, that touches people's lives, that rescues them from suffering and motivates them to live out God's love.

Growth is God's present to the congregation that serves. Serving the world, engaging themselves in social life, standing next to people in conflict situations and social, cultural, economic, spiritual and psychological suffering, is to serve God and provide opportunities for his action with people. It's to bring help and a hug, which all of us need. People look for a congregation to have fellowship and where they can be protagonists, contributing with the gifts they have, where they are valued and loved for who they are and what they do. The Missionary congregation that serves according to God's calling, acts in this direction. We live, therefore, the joy of serving.



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8. Liturgy

The celebration of God's love

There are different concepts of the worship service filling our minds. Some of them are depreciative: a place of tradition preservation, a place of communicating doubtful pedagogy, a difficult exercise of conciliation of languages from different generations.

There resists, nevertheless, a positive view. As much as the worship service is threatened by liturgical vices, garbled communication and the lack of care and creativity, there still exists something beautiful and transforming. It's as if a powerful seed always breaks through the hard and dry soil making a lush and fertile plant grow. Which seed is this? What makes the worship service something intense and revitalizing? What gives us the feeling, that even though the worship service "went by apparently with no impact", it affected our lives in some way.

Every time we suspect that our practice seems to be lacking in theological sustenance or that we have become lost in our priorities, it is time once again to reflect on what is fundamental. What is worship service? What is of central importance in the worship service? What conceptual formulation can help us to guide our view of the worship service without losing ourselves to academicism? It is very safe to affirm that, behind the worship service, there is a loving God who wants to meet us. It is an encounter in which God's basic intention for us is fulfilled.

What makes the worship service something intense and revitalizing? What gives us the feeling, that even though the worship service "went by apparently with no impact", it affected our lives in some way?

Behind the worship service, there is a loving God who wants to meet us.



God's love goes through
the main parts of the
worship service.

This love goes through the main parts of the worship service. In love, God welcomes and accepts us in our guilt and fragility. This acceptance strengthens and encourages us in our walk. When we celebrate baptism, we understand his unconditional love reaching us. We remember that the church is the result of his paternal and maternal love. In love, God guides us through his word, making us understand his will for our lives. In love, God gives himself to us in the celebration of Communion, therefore we feel connected and nourished by him. In love, he hears our prayers and the intercession for those that suffer uniting ourselves in a congregation of solidarity. In love, God sends us to serve the cause of the kingdom in our daily lives. He himself goes with us on this walk strengthening and guiding us.

The original meaning of the church comes from the understanding that God serves us in the worship service. There is no other way of understanding it without considering the different dimensions of God's love, as much in the individual as in the community dimension. It is a dimension that is so present that, at times, it escapes our awareness.

To comprehend and live
the worship service is to
feel oneself infected by
God who loves the
church – who loves
the world.

A story will help us understand this concept: On a visit from her pastor, a lady from the congregation admitted with embarrassment that, upon arriving at home, she couldn't remember almost anything from the sermon at church. The pastor, then, asked her to get an old basket, go to the well and bring back water in it. Annoyed, she ended up doing the pastor's wish. She went back and forth several times without being able to bring any water in her basket. When she decided to question the pastor's dumb idea, she heard him say: "It's true that you were not able to bring even a drop of water, but notice well that your basket is clean, like new".

The Lutheran worship service, compared to many forms of worship in the Christian sphere, is full of details and aspects that make it rich and profound. However, this richness has a basic theological center. To comprehend and live the worship service is to feel oneself infected by God who loves the church - who loves the world. The worship service is central to



the contact and sympathy of sons and daughters with the Father of love. To be a child of this Father is to be nourished by the same love. If our life suffers with so many negative inspirations, in the worship service we are renewed by a love that frees us to see the world with different eyes and to serve in love, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

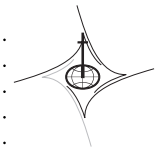
The community life in the Lutheran church is born from the worship service, in which the word of God is announced and the sacraments are ministered according to the Gospel. In this way, the worship service is also the center of community life and of each Lutheran person's faith, of which comfort and new incentives for life are received. The worship service always takes place "in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Therefore, the worship service is a privileged place of God's presence in the world.

The worship service is also a fellowship experience - With the Triune God and with each other and with Christians throughout the ages. It's an event in which God speaks to us through His word and sacraments, and we speak to him through our prayers and worship with psalms and hymns. In the worship service, God confirms his love for us, he guides and exhorts, consoles and blesses. Beyond this, we confess our faith before the world and manifest our search and ardent plea for peace and community reconciliation.

The sermon is the word of God announced and interpreted to our current reality. Whoever preaches looks to, beyond explaining the biblical text, create in the congregation the experience that the text promotes, whether of teaching, comfort or challenge. The hope is that the faith experiences contained in the biblical reports make the words come alive and relevant to today, by the Holy spirit. The Lord's Supper is the open table for the participation of all baptized people. Children also make up this table of God's family.

There are many formats of worship services. Each one has its own characteristics. There are baptismal services, in which we celebrate that

If our life suffers so many negative inspirations, in the worship service we are renewed by a love that frees us to see the world with different eyes and to serve in love, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.



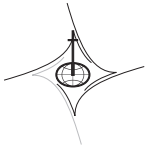
Opening our churches and service locations permanently to offer various possibilities of cultivating spirituality, as much for the individual as the community, is a way to understand the worship service as an opportunity of evangelization and mission.

The worship service, in its liturgy, symbolism, music and sacraments, should provide the experience that the loving God wants to meet us there.

God meets us and receives us in his great fellowship of love and, at the same time, the congregation opens itself to welcome new members in its midst. There are prayer services, where we seek to bring to God our requests and gratitude, remembering also people with needs and affliction. There are even worship services that are festive celebrations, like devotionals that take place in small groups, in retreats, special services, or os oficios/church functions like funerals, marriage blessings, reconciliation services, rites of anointing of the ill, ordination services or, even, in the way of silent meditation and so many other forms of contemplation of the holy.

People seek to relate to God in a personal and close way, looking for orientation and answers to existential questions and coming from the context of exclusion and lack of meaning. To develop the missionary potential of the worship service means, above all else, to discover this potential in each form of worship service that the congregation holds, perfect it, with the intention to become accepting, participative, encouraging, involved, significant to people and contextualized. Opening our churches and service locations permanently to offer various possibilities of cultivating spirituality, as much for the individual as the community, is a way to understand the worship service as an opportunity of evangelization and mission.

The liturgical elements, the way we accommodate ourselves in the church spaces and the gestures we make need to contribute so that each participant feels and understands God's love. In this context, music also has an important role as expression of faith and manifestation of our confession. It is a way to express our thankfulness and adoration and to understand and interpret the gospel in the culture in which we have been placed as a Christian community. In summary, the worship service, in its liturgy, symbolism, music and sacraments, should provide the experience that the loving God wants to meet us.



3rd PART

SHARING THE
GOOD NEWS

9. Education and Christian priesthood

Educating people for a missionary life

Education is part of God's history with his people.
The life experience of God's people has learning and teaching characteristics.

Education is part of God's history with his people. The life experience of God's people has learning and teaching characteristics. God educates people, in a continuous way, through the experience of liberation, that began with the exit from Egypt, goes through the desert, through the organization in the promised land and comes to our present days. His people learned through living and reflection, of correct choices and mistakes. His people also taught. Parents teach their children to keep firm and confident in the liberating God.

Exodus 16,18,20

Deuteronomy
6:1-25

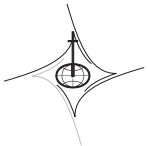
Education follows its course in history. God always concerns himself with orientating his people. That's why, during the time of Israel's kings, he sent prophets, who alerted and called to repentance and a change of life.

9.1 Jesus as educator

Jesus taught through gestures and words.

Within the prophet's teachings, is the announcement of the coming of the Messiah, God's son. This prophecy is fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ and is brought up to date and renews itself with the promise of the second coming of Christ. All of Jesus' life, from his birth to his death, is God's educational action in favor of people. Jesus taught through gestures and words. From life experiences; told stories, questioned laws, traditions and

John 4:1-30 Mark
4:2



John 8:1-11
Mark 10:13-16
Lucas 19:1-10,
24:13-35

Mark 7:24-30,
10:46-52, 5:25-
34, 2:1-12
Matthew 28:18-20
Acts 8:26-40

established positions; received marginalized people; would meet with them; walked with his disciples and was open to dialogue and learning from other people. His healing also had an educational aspect. He let people manifest their desires; tore down prejudices; valued people's faith attitude. As he parted from his disciples, Jesus gives them the task of educating. The first Christian congregations took on this mission with a lot of courage and creativity. Since then, the church prioritizes Christian education, enabling people to cooperate with God's mission in the world and to fully carry out the priesthood of all believers.

9.2 Luther and education

The concern with education is also at the origin of the Lutheran church. Martin Luther gave much importance to education. For this reason, he wrote the catechisms, so that parents and children could teach and learn. He also advised the princes to create schools. Luther was worried about his personal and continual education. he said: "Even though I am an old doctor of the Scriptures, and still do not understand the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer; I can not study them in depth or even learn them completely, so I learn the Catechism day after day and pray with my son John and my daughter Madeline".

By Luther's example, that nourished his faith daily through the study of God's word, education in the church is permanent and continuous. The church orients its members to live their baptism daily through the priesthood of all believers.

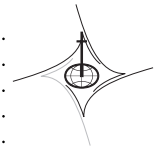
9.3 Orientations for Christian education

Education is part of life and takes place in different spaces and in different ways. In the Church, educational practice offers its members continual education in faith, beginning with the Lutheran identity, enabling them for the missionary life of the Christian priesthood.

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The church prioritizes Christian education because it aims to enable people to cooperate with God's mission in the world and to fully carry out the priesthood of all believers.

By Luther's example, that nourished his faith daily through the study of God's word, education in the church is permanent and continuous.



Education is part of life
and takes place in
different spaces
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To dialogue about daily
life contributes to the
comprehension of
God's word.

Christian education
involves the whole being
and goes through
all senses.

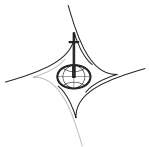
People look for answers to their doubts, comfort for their afflictions, and orientation for their lives. They learn in various ways. There are several methodologies that can orient the educational process. There is not a single method to be followed by everyone, or that serves everyone. Each context demands a methodology. It is necessary to plan educational actions beginning with each one's reality. Some principles can orient the process of education and learning. They are:

Valuing the life experience of people: To dialogue about daily life contributes to the comprehension of God's word. Reading and studying a biblical text in groups, can motivate people to speak about their personal experiences. In this way, the knowledge of God's word is not transmitted from one person to the next, but is built through dialogue and sharing, where everyone can contribute with his or her life experience.

Concretely, the valorization of life experience happens when people have space and feel comfortable in the group to talk about what is happening with them: their joys, sorrows, dreams and worries. The challenge is to relate these experiences with the study of God's word, looking for life orientation in it.

Involving the whole body: Christian education involves the whole being and goes through all senses. Education also takes place through gestures, symbols and corporal expression. The different forms of communication can be used in gatherings, celebrations and worship services to enlarge and diversify the possibilities of reflection on faith content. The Lord's Supper is an example where the whole body is involved in the teaching that God comes to meet us. The reunited congregation, the movement to go with others to the altar, the smell, the color and taste of the grapes and bread, the sense of fellowship and inclusion reveal and express God's love and grace.

Awakening the creative capacity of each person: God created us in



his image and likeness, giving us the capacity to create. Christian education awakens the creativity of people when they work from different languages. Music, theater, plastic arts and other artistic activities contribute to the educational process. These forms of teaching and learning make it possible for people to discover and develop their potential.

Humanizing education through joy: people like to be in happy places that give them pleasure. These places provide creativity, freedom, solidarity, group and individual growth. In these places, the content is interpreted and explained by gestures, expressions, manners, singing and dancing. Playing allows people self-awareness and the awareness of others in their true essence. In this way, playing and happiness make education more human. Playing enlarges human capacity to live collectively.

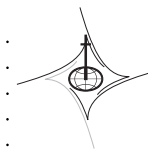
Dialoging with freedom about doubts and questions: During all of life, there are different situations that worry and cause doubts and questions. One of the fundamentals of Christian education is to open spaces, at home as well as in the congregation, so that people can express their doubts, talk about them and look for orientation in dialogue with other people, such as the reading and studying of the Bible. When children sense an atmosphere of trust and respect, they ask questions, because they know they will be heard and answered. These questions bring adults to reflect on the questions raised, motivating dialogue and the search for answers. In this educational process, everyone contributes, learning and teaching.

Serving your neighbor: Diaconal action contributes to Christian education, and Christian education strengthens diaconal action. The study of God's word gives foundation to the practice of serving your neighbor and, at the same time, diaconal experiences enrich the reflection around God's word. God's word strengthens and encourages people to go to places where the weaker and marginalized are, where suffering compromises life, where no one wants to go. But God is there and calls people to serve. This service that buds from God's word also transforms. It transforms those who serve and those who are served.

Christian education awakens the creativity of people when they work from different languages.

People like to be in happy places that give them pleasure.

One of the fundamentals of Christian education is to open spaces, at home as well as in the congregation, so that people can express their doubts, talk about them and look for orientation.



9.4 Christian education and mission

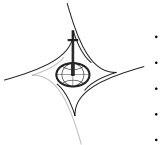
The study of God's word gives foundation to the practice of serving your neighbor.

There is no mission without Christian education nor Christian education without mission.

Mission and Christian education are full of God's love for the world.

Christian education and mission are inter-related. There is no mission without Christian education nor Christian education without mission. Positively speaking, there only is mission when there is Christian education and there only is Christian education when there is mission. The biblical experience of God educating his people and the educational practice of Jesus justify this affirmation. Upon giving the manna in the desert, God satisfied hunger and taught how to trust daily in him. The diaconal- missionary action of Jesus in healing a person is also marked by educational action. Healing reestablished health and, upon reintegrating a person in social life, this action teaches that God wants a life of dignity for all people.

Mission and education are carried by love. Love gives meaning to teaching and learning. Love moves us to want to learn more to serve better. It is God's love for the world that teaches us to live in community and teaches us to answer those who ask for the reason that we still have hope. Mission and Christian education are carried by God's love for the world.



10. Creative Administration of Resources

Sustainable church planning

The IECLB congregations and parishes have extensive experience in providing its sustainability. For more than 180 years of history, the IECLB leadership has learned how to administer its financial resources with responsibility and faithfulness. At the present moment, however, the

importance that the theme "Faith, Gratitude and Commitment" has taken on in the IECLB agendas in all levels, points to the urgent need to discuss and reflect on new models of resource captivation, which correspond, at the same time, to the demands of faith and the needs of the church. It's not only about establishing ordinary budgets and guarantee institutional survival. It's about, above all else, providing all of the IECLB with its necessary resources for the effective execution of its mission as is formulated in its constitution, 3rd Article. Since, the effective execution of its mission depends on the growth of our church.

THE IECLB CONSTITUTION

3rd ARTICLE: In obedience to the Lord's commandment, the IECLB, through its congregations, has as goal and mission:

- I - to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ;
- II - to stimulate the personal, family, communal evangelical life;
- III - to promote peace, justice and love in society;
- IV - to participate in the witness of the gospel in Brazil and in the world.



10.1 What is sustainability?

Sustainability is the capacity of a system to create favorable conditions for its survival and development in the present and future, avoiding the draining or overburdening of resources which uphold it.

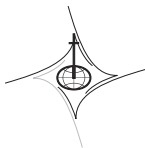
Sustainability is the capacity of a system to create favorable conditions for its survival and development in the present and future, avoiding the draining or overburdening of resources which uphold it. The history of the concept of sustainability is linked to the growing concern of reaching the balance between economic activity, environment and the well-being of humanity. In the midst of the environmental crisis of our days, the promotion of sustainable development has become decisive for the future life of our planet. Meanwhile, the concept of sustainability is also fundamental to the administration and the management of organizations in all sectors, especially in the management area of civil society organizations, the so called third sector, to which belong the Non-governmental organizations, foundations, associations, churches, etc. It is the general opinion that sustainability is the result of a process of institutional development and strength.

10.2 The Lutheran tradition

Theologically, church sustainability is linked to the action of the Holy Spirit, which creates faith and community where the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

Frequently, the concern with church sustainability finds resistance in the context of Lutheran theology. That which creates and sustains the church is not available to it, neither can it be manipulated or managed. Theologically, church sustainability is linked to the action of the Holy Spirit, which creates faith and community where the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel. Early Lutheran Church history, however, reveals that the reformers fulfilled concrete actions aimed at assuring and developing sustainability of congregations and parishes.

The visits organized by Luther, from 1527 to 1529, for example, beyond consolidating reformation theology, had the function of organizing the material survival of parishes, pastors and teachers. In the following years, the sustainability of the Lutheran evangelical church was guaranteed by territorial princes and national governments, the model that Europe maintained stable throughout history. Only with the transplant of Lutheranism to the New World



new concepts of sustainability arose, adapted to the new context and situation. The concern with sustainability has become a permanent task of Lutheran churches in the American continent, finding themselves challenged to permanently recreate their models of survival and institutional development.

10.3 Strategic participative planning in the church

There is a wise Holland proverb that says: "for ships without a port of destination there are no good winds." This is also true for the "ship" called church. All human and financial resources, all programs and activities, lose a great part of their constructive dimension when utilized in a parish or community without planning. Fortunately, the opposite is also true: where there is planning, there is concentration and effective application of all possibilities that the parish or community has available, helping it to reach its goals and cooperate in an effective way with God's mission in the world.

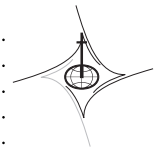
In the IECLB parishes, we don't have the tradition of planning for the medium and long term. There is still resistance to the fulfilling of strategic planning in the church and in its parishes. In fact, at first sight, strategic planning seems interesting just for businesses and secular institutions. The church, on the contrary, deals with non-measurable "products", like faith, love and hope. And these, actually, are fruit of the Spirit of God's divine action, and not our strategies and plans. Nothing is truer.

But, even so, we have several indications that planning is also recognized by the Bible—understood as a highly spiritual activity. This way, Moses receives the advice from his father-in-law, Jethro, to better organize the care for the people in Exodus 18. In Ecclesiastes 10:10, we hear the wise counsel: "If you let the ax lose its edge and don't sharpen it, you will have to work much more. It is more intelligent to plan before you act". Jesus, on speaking about discipleship, recommends calculating the exact costs of such task and the future developments: "For, which of you, planning to build a tower, will not first sit down to estimate the cost and check if he has enough money to complete it?"

Lucas 14:28

Where there is planning, there is concentration and effective application of all the possibilities that the parish or community has available.

There is still resistance to the fulfilling of strategic planning in the church and in its parishes.



Steering the ship called the church, assuming the task of ecclesiastical leadership, is to assume the responsibility of sensible planning.

Strategic planning is implied as a useful and necessary tool in the building of a new future.

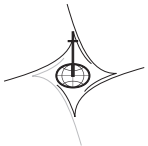
The apostle Paul, in his turn, lists among the charisma of the Christian congregation the gift of "kybérnesis", originally the "art of piloting or steering a ship". It's about the gift of the "government" or the "leadership" of the congregation. However, to steer a ship in the New Testament times, a lot of skill, knowledge and capacity for planning was needed. The sailing needed to be carefully planned. Of great importance was the knowledge of the sea, the geography of the coast, astronomical orientation, the strategic utilization of the winds and the ocean currents. All of this aimed at reaching the port of destination. Not just by chance, the "ship" or "boat" became the church symbol. Steering the ship called the church, assuming the task of ecclesiastical leadership, is to assume the responsibility of sensible planning and by the sure sailing of God's people in the direction of the performance of its mission and eternal future.

In times of insecurity, when we ask ourselves about the resources that make feasible the fulfillment of tasks that belong to the IECLB, strategic planning is implied as a useful and necessary tool in the building of a new future. To plan is to (re)learn to dream together- with which church, parish, congregation do I/you/we dream of?

Planning begins when we start to share these dreams and go on to build a vision of community in which we want to live, witness, serve and celebrate. The road towards this vision will be treaded step by step. Small goals and partial objectives will help to maintain perseverance and direction. The important part is that along the road we become happier, more grateful, more engaged, have more solidarity, and are more fraternal. Planning is also always a process of personal and communal transformation, a process that gives back the capacity to inspire and captivate people. The result of this process is the development of church sustainability.

1 Corinthians
12:28

Matthew 8:23-27
Matthew 14:22-33
HPD 98



10.4 Christian stewardship

A church that wants to develop its sustainability, will necessarily, have to implant a stewardship program. Decisive for a stewardship program is the conviction that individual gifts, material wealth and time are no less than God's property entrusted to humans. And its up to them to administer this divine property according to God's will, collaborating with His mission in the world. It's about fulfilling the challenge given by 1 Peter 4:10 : "Serve one another, each one according to the gifts he has received, as good stewards (administrators) of God's grace in its many forms".

Promoted by the Lutheran World Federation beginning in the 1950's and practiced in the IECLB with much effect in the following decade, the conception of stewardship needs to be reevaluated as a useful instrument for the encouragement of faith which, in gratitude, is also expressed through financial commitment. The success of stewardship work in the IECLB in the past owes itself to that which concerned a community development program with a clear structure, with previously defined steps and chronograms, adequate training for people involved, material and literature, experienced coordinators, besides clear identification with the Lutheran confession.

Another positive fact to be high-lighted, is the performance of stewardship work as evangelization. The acknowledgment of gifts and God's faithfulness permitted the members to give their faith response in their personal life and involvement with the congregation. Furthermore, it dealt with evangelization performed by the congregation itself, through visiting lay people that reestablished the communication of the congregation with its members.

It's a sign of hope that, after the national forum on the 2005 theme, in all synods, initiatives are coming up around the theme "Faith, Gratitude and Commitment". The effect of a stewardship program, however, depends on some fundamental decisions:

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Decisive for a stewardship program is the conviction that individual gifts, material wealth and time are no less than God's property entrusted to humans.

Christian stewardship programs result in participative evangelization in congregations when duly planned and performed.



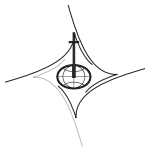
a) To promote the theme "faith, gratitude and commitment" is to evangelize beginning with the first article of the Apostle's Creed. It's necessary to captivate the members hearts to the fact that God has blessed us so that we can become a blessing to others. "...I will bless you - you will be a blessing".

Genesis 12:2-3

b) The positive impact of a stewardship program depends on the elaboration of a coordinated program, that contemplates theology, materials, training and methodology. Without this infra-structure, congregations, parishes and synods would not have the strength necessary to implant the program, whose results should be expected for the medium and long term.

c) A very important pedagogical factor is to connect the disposition of giving and contributing with the support of missionary and diaconal projects. The Christian stewardship movement in North America was born precisely from the involvement of missionary projects. Only after a while was it channeled to church sustainability. It's fundamental to overcome the temptation to use the theme, "faith, gratitude and commitment" only for the goal of self- maintenance. The perspective that has a promise of a blessing is another: the IECLB missionary and diaconal vocation. It is necessary to sensitize ourselves to the fact that the IECLB needs more financial resources to reach sustainability of its missionary, diaconal and educational projects, etc.; equally, to guarantee the survival and development of our small churches in the north, northeast, and center of Brazil; and equally, to assume a more significant portion in the financial support of Lutheran sister churches in Latin America or Portuguese speaking countries in Africa.

A very important pedagogical factor is to connect the disposition of giving and contributing with the support of missionary and diaconal projects.



11. Mission and Communication

Sharing the Good News

Communicating is not a problem for the church. Communicating is the very nature of the church, that is why it is not a problem. You can't create congregations without communication, nor maintain congregations without communication. The church is born from communication processes: a divine communication process, of God with us, and a communication process among us, one with another.

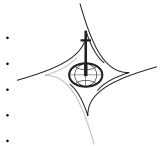
Acts 4:20

It is part, however, of the church essence to be communicative. The apostles have already courageously affirmed that they could not help speak of what they had seen and heard, because the mouth speaks of that which the heart is full of. If we have been marvelously reached by God's grace, as in fact we are every day, we cannot be satisfied until we can speak of this to whoever it may be.

On the other hand, if something saddens us deeply, if something worries or frightens us, if something makes us suffer and tremble, it is also impossible to keep these things from transmitting to others, whether in the form of opening one's heart, of indignation or a transforming action. We are made of communication, from when we are in our mother's womb to the rest of our life.

Communicating is not a problem for the church.

We are made of communication, from when we are in our mother's womb to the rest of our life.



But why speak about communication in the church, in the execution of mission, if communicating is not a problem for us?

It's because our personal, face to face, communitarian, familiar, everyday communication is crossed by another kind of communication, a communication that, at times, even upsets our more fundamental intimate communication. It is monopolized communication by applied technologies and communicational processes, from the innocent telephone to the world of Internet, going through the radio, TV, newspaper, among so many other forms of long distance communication. And that is when communicating becomes a problem for the church.

The means of communication change the way we integrate with other people, through time and space.

And it is a problem because the communication that was so natural to us as a church now seems to be transformed into something else. And in fact it is. The means of communication - the media, as we have generically named this universe of technology, means and languages that cross our daily lives - change the way we integrate with other people, through time and space. It changes time because, even though our part is a live transmission, like live TV or a radio program, the answer of our interlocutor is not simultaneous nor direct. It changes space because we don't know where the person who receives our message is or what he or she is doing.

This complicates our life as a church, precisely because we know how to communicate well in the communitarian way, eye to eye, which is part of our Lutheran way of being. But, we must also recognize that it is not all means of communication that disturb our communication. We know how to communicate through writing. Our Lutheran tradition helps us when we print newspapers, magazines and books. The Reformation of Martin Luther moved forward in Europe thanks to the printing press. And we have learned how to use it well, producing printed matter of quality and promoting the alphabetizing of people to be able to read with the Bible.



But times are different, as we have already seen in the chapter of contexts. There are many more literate and learned people, but, in compensation, there are many more people still watching television, listening to the radio, etc. And there are many churches that take advantage of this because they were born in this multi-media world, as us Lutherans were born in the printing press world. And that is where our communication problems start.

11.1 Communication in the church's mission

Our problems with communication, however, shouldn't discourage nor intimidate us. Rather, on the contrary, they should be faced as a challenge for the qualification of our missionary action. In this perspective, we would like to propose some thesis or principles to overcome our difficulties with mass media communication beginning with three main objectives: a) spreading values; b) gaining public visibility and c) establishing links, of which should be taken as complementary and interdependent.

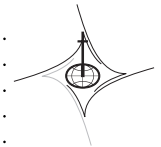
Every missionary action implies a communicative action. When we proclaim the gospel, in word and deed, we are making public a set of ethical, theological, communitarian, etc. values, with an aim to bring people to faith in Christ Jesus. This announcement becomes much more effective when it is in person. The answer is perceived right away, and the interaction is facilitated. It prevails in our communicative intention to establish links. Therefore, every missionary action is a communicative action and its Biblical accounts tell us more concerning this.

Communicative action can be intermediated by the media. When we use the means of communication to proclaim the gospel, our missionary objectives (worth, visibility and links) remain the same, but the means of interaction is modified. Generally speaking, we give emphasis to the message, the content, or in other words, our values. Sometimes, we are able to give visibility to our church, speaking about the things we do. The kind of link that is established is modified because the link with the faith community is no

Communication aims at spreading values, gaining public visibility and establishing links.

Every missionary action implies a communicative action.

Communicative action can be intermediated by the media.



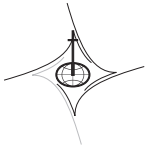
longer at stake, but with that kind of media (or rather, with a radio program, a newspaper column, etc.). That is where it's important, as missionary strategy, to invite the receiver, our public, to the local community, where they can find the ties that link them to our church. Our missionary objectives aim at a "contract" relationship, or rather, we want people to commit themselves to our church, become members. The mass media religiosities look for, on the contrary, to "infect" or rather, establish an adherence to products without institutional commitment.

To think strategically of communication in all its senses is to establish the course of the congregation to the public that we plan to reach and from the public to the congregation.

The use of one means of communication may be more effective with one type of public than with another. Therefore, the strategic importance of circulating through different means, the same message.

Communitarian communication as well as mass media communication should be part of the strategies of missionary action. In recognizing these two dimensions of communication for the purpose of missionary strategies we are taking into account that both are interrelated. For example, little will be gained, in terms of missionary action, to hold a large publicity campaign in the city about our congregation if our communicative action of welcoming is a failure. On the other hand, even though we have a welcoming congregation, if people don't know that it exists, if they can't find it on the map or in the phone book, etc., our missionary action will become innocuous. To think strategically of communication in all its senses is to establish the course of the congregation towards the public that we plan to reach and from the public to the congregation, guaranteeing that at the end of the course people will want to come back and join our church.

Different publics ask for different communication strategies. The public is the group of people of whom we seek to establish an interaction. We can divide them into internal public (members of the congregation) and external public (non-members). But we may also separate them by age, income, location, and so on. What is important is to recognize that different publics ask for different communication strategies. This means, for example, that the use of one means of communication may be more effective with one type of public than another. In this way, our strategies should be able to recognize this diversity of access to information. In practice, not everyone



reads the church bulletin, just as not everyone listens to the church radio program and not everyone has access to the Internet.

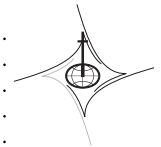
Different communication means, ask for different strategies. Everyone knows the difference between the radio and the television. Everyone knows that a newspaper is different from the Internet. But when we think about using them to proclaim the gospel, we generally don't worry about the differences because we think that, if the content is good, the form doesn't matter. It's just as important as the difference between a baptismal service and a funeral service. Our communication strategies should take into account the means of communication with their differences, because the public is "alphabetized" for that specific means. This makes us selective when it comes to contents if these are not adequate to the form.

Amateurism and volunteering has its limits. One of the remarkable traits of our church is its capacity to mobilize people to serve in the congregation with their gifts. The priesthood of all Christians is a Lutheran conquest that should always be remembered and valued. However, we also need to recognize that all volunteering has its limits, just as community service done in love for the cause. The world of religious media circulates in the economy billions of reals. This industry is not moved by volunteers and militants. There is a very high level of professionalism that has implications in our everyday community life. To face this competitor demands more than our good intentions. Whenever possible, our congregations should seek assistance from people in the area of communication to help in the planning and execution of media strategies and even in the education of people to perform these tasks. To count on qualified labor can represent a qualitative leap in the mission of our congregation.

Mass media communication is a partnership relationship concerning interests. One of the characteristics of the relationship between institutions and means of communication is the making of partnerships concerning interests. We don't take "interest" in its negative sense. It's an exchange. For

Communication strategies should take into account the characteristics of various means.

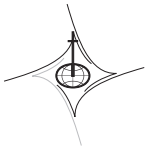
The media world circulates billions of reals (Brazilian currency). This industry is not moved by amateurs with good intentions. There is a high level of professionalism. It's important that congregations look for advice from professionals in the area of communication.



Partnerships with communication institutions concerning mutual interests can help to build strategies of church presence in the media.

It is important that the investment in communication is contemplated in the church budget.

The means of communication like jars of clay can be used to serve to the glory of God, or to inflate human pride.



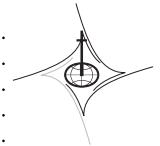
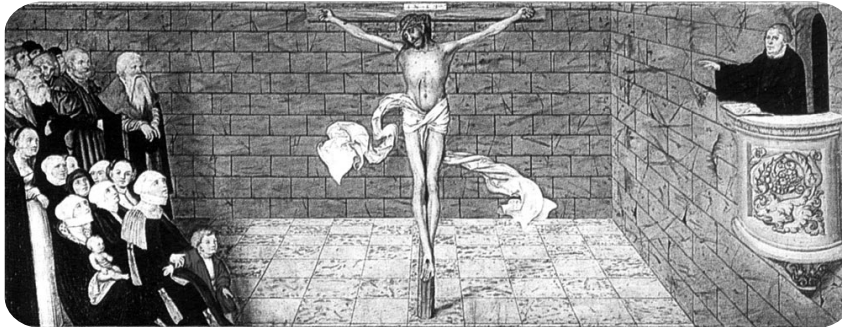
example, if one means of communication concedes space to publicize material about our church, it does so, because it has an interest in the public that this information will reach, whether because they could be subscribers, or because they make up consumers of products of their advertisers, or because they gain credibility together with the congregation and its members. On the other hand, the church is interested in seeing itself in the news because that means of communication has credibility or because it gives credibility to the church actions. Many times, this relationship concerning mutual interests also brings work partnerships and the purchase and sale of publicity space. To understand and recognize these multiple interests helps to build strategies of media presence without being manipulated or harmed in their values.

Good strategies of communication may not cost anything. But to have an item in the budget for investment in communication is better than only depending on good ideas. Most organizations that have well adjusted communication policies include in this policy a percentage of its income for investment in communication. It may be 1% or 20%. What's important is that the expenses and the revenue with communication are in the church budget.

11.2 Final comment

We can think of the means of communication as jars of clay. Just as they can gather the words of salvation, they may also go back against them. Just as they can promote peace and tolerance, they can provoke anger and discord. Just as they can serve to the glory of God, they can inflate human pride. They are fragile and may break. The Christian community and its leaders are not exempt to the temptation of glory that the means of communication may provide. That's why, it is worth it to always have in mind the image of the artist, Lukas Cranach, in his painting of Martin Luther preaching about Christ. On the right side of the picture, on the pulpit, is Luther pointing to the cross in the center of the figure.

The image tells us that it is not Luther nor the pulpit - it is not the communicator (pastor, lay person or whoever it may be) nor the means of communication -, but Christ, crucified and resurrected, that occupies the center of our missionary and communicational strategies. Everything else is temporary. Christ remains. It is He that should be noticed in our actions and it is around Him that we should establish community links. It is Christ, that made God's love visible to us and around whom it matters to live in the fellowship of love, that is in the center of God's mission which is our passion.



12. Creation of New Congregations

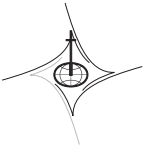
Our commitment with God's mission foresees, beyond the renewal of existent congregations, also the creation of new congregations. When we think of creating new congregations we should necessarily look at the Scriptures. They describe the beginning of the first churches and in them we find the report of the apostle Paul's missionary activity. In the beginning, without a doubt, he established a basic model of implantation for the new Christian congregations. In the book of Acts and Paul's letters, we notice that he was an impassioned missionary. His evangelical passion took him to go beyond geographical, ethnic, cultural and religious barriers to share the Good News of Jesus. The book of Acts describes the apostle's untiring pilgrimage. When a new congregation was born, we see him taking care of his spiritual children so that they would grow in faith. The letters to Timothy reflect this. Lastly, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he systematized the foundation of Christian teaching, as we see in his letters to the churches. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul preached the gospel in different places, took care of the new congregations and gave more defined contours to the principles of Christian faith.

1 Corinthians
10:11,
Galatians 4:4,
Ephesians 1:10

When we think of creating new congregations we should necessarily look at the Scriptures.

We must also emphasize Paul's missionary strategy. He always had as a goal in his missionary activities to spread the gospel and form churches. He targeted hub cities of his time, with the hope that the churches that arose in

1 Corinthians
3:10-12,
Ephesians 2:20



1 Corinthians
9:20-23

them, in their turn, would evangelize to the neighboring towns. This shows an urban emphasis in his activities. He helped form new congregations in at least four provinces of the Roman Empire. (Galatia, Macedonia, Acaia and Asia) in a ten year period (from 47-57 A.D.)

When we look at the apostle Paul's intense activity, we can be taken by a feeling that this model is too elevated and is far from our reality. Actually, the convictions that led him to form Christian congregations can inspire and motivate us to orient and critically evaluate our missionary motivations today. For this, we need to notice the bridges that unite us with Paul and his reality.

The first bridge between the apostle Paul and us is the eschatological motivation: He, like us, understood that the kingdom of God was inaugurated with Jesus' life, death and resurrection and will complete itself with His glorious return. Whoever reads Paul's letters sent to the churches notices that he expected that Christ would soon return. In Christ, the end of times is anticipated and has arrived in full. This fact made the apostle have a very strong sense of urgency, that made him not waste time: with out a doubt, that was the time to announce the gospel. To form new congregations was the answer to this urgent mission. He didn't have time to lose. Jesus was knocking on the door. Paul himself was graciously reached by the gospel and for this he untiringly sews the good seed and establishes churches before Christ's return.

The second bridge is that Paul believed that the gospel was (and is) the "essential" instrument for the edifying of a new congregation. Upon building a new congregation Paul had a basic concern with its foundation. The foundation, the base, the corner stone had to be Christ, God's power for salvation to all who believe. This concentration on the gospel allowed the apostle to be very flexible to do "all things for all people, so that, by all means, I might save some". That is why Paul became an apostle to the gentiles, since he was able to adapt to the most diverse cultural contexts. He didn't negotiate the basic content of the gospel, that the Son of God came to

Ephesians 2;
Ephesians 1:23;
Ephesians 2:15;
Ephesians 4:24
Colossians 3:10

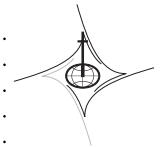
1 Corinthians
1:18;
1 Corinthian 9.22

75

Paul had as goals in his missionary activities to spread the gospel and form churches.

The convictions that led Paul to form Christian congregations can inspire and motivate us to orient and critically evaluate our missionary motivations today.

The gospel is the "essential" instrument for the edifying of a new congregation.



This is the result that we should also long for: churches established in Christ and at the same time, flexible in relation to diversity of customs and cultures in its midst.

When Paul planted a new church he believed that Jesus' presence was made concrete in this world.

the world to rescue us, with His death and resurrection, from sin and death and to overcome the power of the devil. Founded in this divine value the congregation grows. No method or philosophy can substitute this gospel. It is the gospel that enables us to plant, water and help the new congregation of Christ grow. The message of New Testament Christians is Christ-centered. The apostolic standard of church doesn't gather people around anything other than Christ alone. This is the result that we should also long for: churches established in Christ that don't give up the good news that Jesus came to save and at the same time, are flexible in relation to diversity of customs and cultures in its midst.

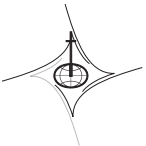
The third bridge to be highlighted is a profound ministerial conviction: the apostle knew he was called to edify the church of Jesus Christ. God had promised, in the past, that He would restore Israel and create a new people. This people would live in holiness, in a different way, under God's values. In the church, these promises were fulfilled, since in them they had community fellowship of Jews and gentiles, men and women, free and slaves. There were no longer barriers in Jesus' church, that personified Christ Himself. In the church that lives the gospel this way, the resurrected Christ is present in history. Therefore, when Paul planted a new church he believed that Jesus' presence was made real in this world. That's why, we must also be just as focused in planting, edifying, building, watering, helping the church grow, to which Christ wants to make Himself present in this world.

The fourth bridge that connects Paul's ministry to ours is the dimension of the local church. The new Christians gathered in local congregations, homes, in which they continued to hear the gospel, grow in faith and the knowledge of the things related to the Father. It's important to observe that these congregations didn't live only from charisma, or spiritual things, but tried to create a small, flexible structure that helped them in community life. We see this in the election of the leaders. It was within this reality of local congregations, many of which were composed of small groups meeting in homes, that Paul found leadership. Thus, these churches soon began to walk

Acts 14:21-23

Acts 15:36
Acts 16.4-5
Acts 18.23

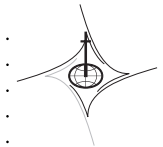
Lucas 1:75



on their own two feet, in a way that freed the apostle for his next task. Whenever possible, Paul returned on his trips to supervise them, or otherwise wrote them letters to teach and correct them or sent his helpers.

The comprehension of Paul's four convictions has connection with us and with our reality. They can help us as a church in the task of creating new congregations, in our distinct contexts. For example, it remains a current IECLB challenge to be present in all Brazilian capitals, in cities with more than 200 thousand inhabitants and in different regions of the country. But it is also necessary to look at the neighborhoods and slums of our cities, small and medium, to bring the gospel there. In the same way, it is a current challenge that parishes with a large number of members, structure themselves in a way that no church minister has more than approximately a thousand members under his or her care. It remains equally current the challenge to increase our presence and community action in schools, hospitals, businesses, associations, etc. These are only a few examples of possibilities of creating new congregations, that by faithfulness to the gospel and commitment to our context, we are also called to assume.

It was within this reality of local congregations, many of which were composed of small groups meeting in homes, that Paul found leadership.



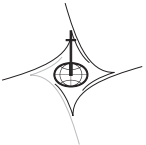
13. CONCLUSION

Now it's as if we were on a trampoline, members and IECLB leaders, preparing the leap of faith for the encounter with our passion, God's mission.

We have arrived at the conclusion, but this chapter is not exactly conclusive. It is the floor of a trampoline in which all of us as IECLB are, preparing the leap that will bring us to the encounter with our passion, God's mission. Faith has been compared to a leap into the unknown, into the imponderable and unexpected. To follow our passion, God's mission, is an act of faith. It is to follow the heart in gratitude for the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

But a church, Christ's ship in the ocean of the world, is not just its navigation, as mission is not just a leap. A ship is everything that makes it look like a ship: its structure, its hull, its navigation instruments, its helm, its mast, etc, or rather its materiality. In this way, the church is its structure, its image, its theological foundations, its tradition, its way of leading, etc. But as a ship in navigation it is more than its materiality, it is also its crew and captain, likewise the church in mission is more than its organogram.

These two comparisons, the leap and the navigation, tell us that, on one hand, it is faith that moves us to action and, on the other hand, that action implies knowing what we do, how we do it and with what objective we do it. In an institution as the church, this means knowing how to plan. In our church, the culture of planning is still little developed. Most of our congregations



have already learned to do annual budgeting, which is already an important step. But to this it would also be good to add the planning of its actions, not only in terms of a calendar of events and services, but in the form of a coordinated and organized investment in mission, with clear objectives, defined actions and traced strategies.

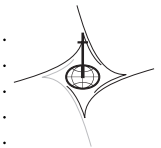
Learning to plan is a process in which PAMI wants to give its contribution. In this book, we try to help in this sense. Starting from a summary description of more ample contexts of our action, going through the biblical-theological foundation and its unfolding in four great axes- evangelization, communion, diaconship, and liturgy- and finalizing with reflections on transversal themes such as mission- Christian education, sustainability and communication- we try to give indications of the place, the foundations and the general implications of our missionary action. We have come a long way. But now the most difficult task is left: planning the actions and performing them, taking into account what was written in this book and the reality closest to the congregations, parishes and synods.

The Missionary Action Plan of 2000-2007 projected that no IECLB congregation would be without a mission and that, on the other hand, no mission would be without a congregation. It's a principle that remains present, because a local congregation, with its groups, is the place where people can live their faith, experience fellowship and celebrate. It is beginning with the local congregation that people can help other people, witness the gospel and live God's passion for the world. It is through the local congregation that the IECLB becomes present in the various contexts in Brazil. However, it is in the local congregation that missionary planning assumes its greatest relevance and is able to become more effective for church growth.

In this sense, we are facing the leap: the qualitative leap towards the fulfillment of the mission that was confided to us by God Himself. This does not mean that our missionary action up to now was not qualified. It just means that the context in which the church fulfills its mission today has

The task of planning actions and performing them remains, taking into account what was written in this book and the reality surrounding it.

The principle that gives value to the local congregation is still true: *No congregation without a mission – no mission without a congregation.*



changed, and this change requires from us, new postures, new forms of presence in the world, a way of doing things that articulate the spontaneity of our missionary initiatives with strategic planning, aiming at, in last instance, to fulfill the third article of the IECLB Constitution:

The context in which the church fulfills its mission today has changed, and this change requires from us, new postures, new forms of presence in the world, a way of doing things that articulate the spontaneity of our missionary initiatives with strategic planning.

"In obedience to the Lord's commandment, the IECLB, through its congregations, has as goal and mission:

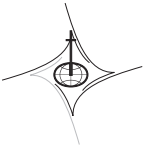
I - proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ;

II - stimulate the personal, family, communal evangelical life;

III - promote peace, justice and love in society;

IV - participate in the witness of the Gospel in Brazil and in the world."

As we can see, the missionary tasks that are up to us don't end here. It is starting here that they should have continuation. After all, if God's mission is our passion, then, we must live it out fully in all our actions.



Attachment:
The PAMI logo mark

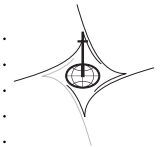
1. Logo mark:

The logo mark is the visual identity of the IECLB Missionary Action Plan and expresses the singular character of this church initiative just as the commitment of all IECLB Christian members with God's mission in the world. The PAMI logo mark should be used exclusively in all material, projects, action and products related to PAMI.



2. Description

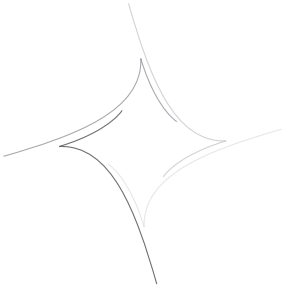
Inspired by the IECLB symbol, the PAMI logo mark maintains the main elements of that symbol and its significance. In this way, the **CROSS**, placed over the globe, reminds us that Christ is the Lord of the world. He is above everything and everyone. Everyone owes him obedience. The empty cross reminds us that Christ died for us, but is alive and his teachings want to be lived daily. The cross over the globe is the visible expression of God's passion for the world.



The **GLOBE** shows us that Christ's teachings should be announced in all places on earth. We are part of this world and , therefore, we are also responsible for what happens. The globe under the cross expresses our passion in the world and for the world.



The **LINES** around the globe and the cross have several meanings. They remind us of the **COLUMNS** of the Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, but also indicate the four cardinal points. With this, it shows that Christ's message wants to be lived in Brazil and announced in every part of this country, from north to south, east to west, covering the whole territory. The lines, in blue, green, yellow and white (or black) accentuate the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes us as Brazilians.



The fact that the lines form a defined space, want to indicate that the Christ's presence in the world creates fellowship. This fellowship has outward effects. At the same time, this space is shown permeable, or rather, it permits the passage of what is inside to the outside and what is outside to the inside. It alludes to the fact, therefore, that the treasure of the gospel, there contained and expressed in the form of the cross over the globe, transcends the limits of our church; it is not our property. On the other hand, this treasure, of which we understand and in which we believe, is also perceived starting from the context in which we live, possessing, therefore, characteristics of our culture.

