



North American Missional Collaborations: Study Process to Commemorate the Centennial of the International Missionary Council Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the mission study process?

The mission study process is a global project designed to capture the ways in which Christians are crossing boundaries to participate in God's mission together. The process is organized by geographic region. The study process will provide a snapshot of major issues in mission around the world in 2021-2022.

Who is organizing the study?

The study is an international effort launched by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. At least seventeen different mission study centers throughout the world are coordinating studies in their regions. Each region will approach their process in a unique fashion to fit their context. The Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology is coordinating the study for the United States and Canada with the support of an Executive Committee that includes more than 20 professors of mission studies and mission leaders throughout North America.

Why is there a mission study at this time?

The study celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the International Missionary Council in 1921, the pioneer cooperative agency for Protestant missions around the world. The IMC merged with the World Council of Churches in 1961 and became the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Much has changed about cooperation in mission since that time, but Jesus' hope that his followers be one is still important today. Since 2010, all major branches of Christianity around the world have written theological documents affirming that Christians should work together for God's mission. In this study, we hope to capture some of what is happening in mission cooperation in order to be faithful to what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world.

In the global study, what is the particular focus of the North American region?

The North American region has decided to study the ways in which North Americans are cooperating in mission across divisions that separate people. We are calling these “missional collaborations.” Christians are partnering with others in mission across denominational, organizational, ethnic, geographic, generational, theological, racial, political, and other divisions. We see missional collaboration as a sign of faithfulness and hope. Thus it is important that we share our experiences with each other.

Is anyone paying for the mission study? What will I get from participating in the study?

The mission study is purely voluntary. Nobody is being paid to be part of the study. People are participating because they care about the present and future of Christian mission. No study center is being funded to organize the mission study. Participants in collaborative mission efforts, along with scholars of Christian mission, are donating their time and resources to make the study happen.

Does my church need to be a member of the World Council of Churches in order for me to participate?

No. One of the exciting things about mission today is the way it bridges the divisions people have created. You do not need to be a member of any particular denomination or organization for your experience to be included in the study.

What do I need to do to participate?

There are three main ways to participate in the study. First is to fill out an intake form identifying the collaborative mission efforts you know about. The names of these mission efforts will be put into a free data base. Second is to participate in a two hour online discussion group to discuss your experiences. Information from discussion groups will feed into a report that will influence future mission practices. Third is to fill out a survey that helps us learn in more detail about your personal views on collaborative mission. In addition to these three ways of participating, a few people may wish to write a full case study for publication.

I don't have much time. Do I have to participate in all three of the activities?

No. You may do what most interests you, and participating in one activity does not require participation in the others—though of course the study would benefit from you doing all three activities.

Will I be identified in the study?

No. Your name and other identifying information will be kept confidential. It will not be included in the final report.

What if I know about several good examples of mission collaboration?

You may fill out as many intake forms as you wish, each on a different example of mission collaboration. You may participate in more than one discussion group if you wish to organize them. We ask you to fill out only one survey form to discuss your personal experiences.

What is the timeline for the mission study?

The entire mission study process will extend through 2022, but it occurs in several phases. The first and most urgent phase is to organize discussion groups and submit the results by September of 2021, for the sake of creating a preliminary draft report to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the International Missionary Council in November of 2021. The second phase is to continue organizing discussion groups and submitting surveys through the end of 2021, so that they can inform the final report. The third phase of the project will occur in 2022, when results will be compiled and case studies developed for presentation and publication in 2022/2023.

May I see the report once the study is complete?

Yes. The North American study process will include a report submitted to the WCC in preparation for their Assembly in the summer of 2022 and a book that describes some examples of collaboration in detail. We will also be sharing examples of collaboration in mission on our website <https://www.bu.edu/cgcm/imc/>.

Who may I contact if I have questions?

Documents about the study process and other background information is posted on the website of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at <https://www.bu.edu/cgcm/imc/>. If you have questions about the study process, please email us at cgcm@bu.edu. We are encouraging involvement through social media as well. Please consider organizing a discussion group, and invite your friends to participate!