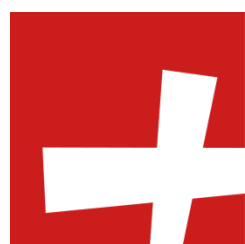


RULE OF LIFE

for The Order of Mission

- Our history, foundation, vows and values



THE
ORDER *of*
MISSION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Order of Mission (TOM) is a global network of missional leaders bound by covenant in proclaiming the Kingdom of God in the world.

This 'Rule of Life' lays out our historical roots and our biblical foundations, and explains our vows and the community values we exercise in our personal lives and ministry for the Kingdom of God. These are shared vows and values that each TOM member works to apply with flexibility in the specific context of mission in which they live out their everyday life.

In the monastic tradition, we find many historical examples of covenant communities. The monastic orders have detailed rules and regulations on everyday life because they live in the same place (the monastery) as an alternative to family and work experience in society. That is not our calling in TOM. We reflect ourselves better in the monastic "lay orders". People who live "normal" lives but are linked to a monastic house and tradition. They are not expected to live the regulated life of a monastery, but to apply the values and principles of that monastic tradition in the fabric of their everyday lives.

Our vows – the way we live:

- Purity – We are pure because of the work of Christ, and we share the commitment to purity in our lives and our missional focus.
- Accountability - We are convinced that accountability in relationships is necessary to live out our missional calling.
- Simplicity – We identify the freedom of a life of simplicity as necessary for our missional calling.

Our community values – who we are

- An extended family
- A generous family
- A family that supports the marriage covenant
- A family that shares resources
- A praying family
- A family accessible for imitation

2. HISTORICAL ROOTS

The roots of The Order of Mission lie in two English churches, Baptist and Anglican, and their desire to take a full part in the mission of God, in the city of Sheffield and beyond. The Anglican congregation of St Thomas' Parish Church in Crookes, Sheffield met in the premises of the local Baptist church while a reordering of their building was taking place. The relationship grew and became formalized as a Local Ecumenical Project (L.E.P.) with an Anglican and a Baptist roll of members.

After the two churches became one, St Thomas' Crookes grew and developed, reaching out in local, national and international networks especially under the ministries of Robert Warren and Mike Breen.

The charism of The Order of Mission developed from the experience, practice and calling of St Thomas' Church over many years. From a church base seeking to move in the power of the Spirit for the salvation of a city, came a desire to develop a pragmatic 'Movement' for mission, which was relevant for the twenty-first century. This call began to find external and institutional confirmation in the discussions that took place in the year 2000 with the then Rector, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Sheffield. On 6th April 2003 The Order of Mission was inaugurated by the then Archbishop of York, David Hope.

As a missional order grounded in the global Anglican Communion we align ourselves theologically with the historic body of Christ, and as such, together with the church today and the saints gone before, we adhere to the Nicene Creed.

Additionally, as a Missional Order, in response to the scriptural call of seeing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) fulfilled in this current age, we align ourselves with the Cape Town Commitment.

3. OUR BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Covenant and Kingdom are two central concepts of the grand narrative of Old and New Testaments, and as such, they play a central role as a theological paradigm in TOM. In covenant two become one. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ fulfilled the covenant promise to Abraham and established the New Covenant for the salvation of anyone who believes in Him. As we through faith and baptism enter into covenant with the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we enter into our God-intended life: all I am belongs to God, and all that is His, has been given to me by His grace.

The Kingdom of God is the expression of the rule of the king, Jesus Christ, in the world, our lives and the lives of those around us. We are called to represent the King in demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel as we participate in God's mission in the world. The Kingdom of God unfolds itself through the power of the Holy Spirit in the tension between now and not yet. Eventually our King - Jesus Christ - will return and make everything new.

As an order of Mission, covenant and kingdom are the two lenses through which we understand mission. We are committed to participate in God's mission to the world. That mission is both something we are and something we do. In the perspective of covenant, mission is a dimension in everything we are as God's people. We are the "sent ones" (John 20,21), and in being sent (Matt 28,18-20), we are intentionally crossing cultural and geographical boundaries in proclaiming and demonstrating the Kingdom of God in the world.

There are seasons in the life of a disciple of Jesus, times with a higher focus on covenant and times with an emphasis on the kingdom. It is vital for any disciple to listen both to the words of Jesus: “Come to me, rest in me, learn from me” (Matt 11: 25-28) and “Go, serve, teach in my name” (Matt 28: 18-20). Both resting and serving are lived out from the words of Jesus “All things have been committed to me by the Father” (Matt 11: 27 and Matt 28:18). This can also be expressed as a rhythm of pruning, abiding and bearing fruit (John 15).

PRAXIS: We can use the ‘semicircle’ as a tool to build healthy rhythms of abiding/work and to help us embrace the different seasons in our spiritual life.



4. THE VOWS – THE WAY WE LIVE

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS REFLECTED IN 2 TIMOTHY 2: 1-6

The TOM vows of purity, accountability and simplicity are adoptions and modifications of the traditional vows of monastic tradition referred to respectively as poverty, chastity and obedience. In TOM we do not demand that members commit to chastity, obedience to each other, or to living in poverty, though some might do so.

Many biblical references can help us to understand purity, accountability and simplicity better. 2 Timothy 2: 1-6 is one text within the richness of Scripture which is helpful in framing our vows missionally in the light of our pioneer calling.

In scripture we find four primary metaphors for pioneer ministry:

- The architect who designs and lays the foundation
- The soldier
- The athlete
- The farmer

Interestingly, Paul does not use the metaphor of the architect in his letter to Timothy, because the foundation has already been laid. He uses the three other metaphors, that mark a movement as it continues to grow on the foundation already laid. We will follow this and let the teaching of Paul inform our way in reflecting on and devoting ourselves to the three TOM vows.

It starts with grace

2. Tim 2 v1: *“But you then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*

This point of entry is essential for any ministry and life in mission. Paul is not encouraging Timothy to be strong in competence or even in character, but to be strong in grace. That is the strength that will carry us on this journey. It’s the “covenant” identity that should be the foundation for any “Kingdom” initiative we take. From this foundation of God’s grace springs our calling, dedication and faithfulness to Jesus.

Entrusting it to others

v2: *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

The framework of missional ministry is expressed in equipping and entrusting the gospel to others across contexts, generations, cultural differences, etc. Unless we all carefully and intentionally entrust what the Lord has taught us through this movement of discipleship and mission to others, who again can entrust it to others, it will not become a movement with a lasting presence and impact. On the other hand, if we do this, the movement will grow and spread even when we are not here anymore.

The praxis of equipping and entrusting others is founded on the word of Jesus who invites everyone to “come and follow me” (Matt 4: 19). Jesus is calling us to continue his work and do even greater things in his name (John 14: 11-14). Paul is asking Timothy to reflect on and look for people who will continue the work of the gospel. We are invited in the same way to reflect and act according to this.

PRAXIS

Helpful questions: “Who is my ‘apprentice’, whom I entrust with what the Lord has taught me? Who am I discipling in their journey as a follower of Jesus Christ?”

A way to describe and summaries the process of apprenticeship is in the form of the square¹. There are different phases and processes involved in learning, maturing and doing and living the words of Jesus.



1st metaphor: The soldier

v3-4: *“Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.”*

The first metaphor of the soldier is not so much related to warfare as to the faithfulness and single-mindedness of the soldier. Civilian affairs are part of life but getting caught up in them interfere with the obligations of a soldier. It is the commander who sets the agenda for the soldier, not the busyness of daily life and our civilian affairs. Timothy is called to be faithful to the calling of Christ.



There is also always an element of suffering connected with doing the ministry of Jesus. Do not be surprised that when we participate in the life of Jesus, we will also experience suffering (2 Tim 2: 8-13).

PURITY – in focus

¹ For an introduction to the Square and other LifeShapes see resource list at www.missionorder.org

As pioneer-leaders we won't allow ourselves to be caught up our civilian affairs. On the contrary: First, we seek the Kingdom of God and pray that our lives will reflect the frontier that the Lord has called us to: "Your Kingdom come!" Moreover, we then ask the question: "How can I live faithfully on that missional frontier and also get my civilian affairs done?". It's a life with purity in its focus, on having one Lord: Jesus Christ, and on participating in His mission. He is our "commanding officer".

PRAXIS

As our "commanding officer" Jesus leads us through "kairos" moments. We can use the "learning circle" to identify what he is saying and respond in repentance and faith. That way we become more and more conscious about who God is and how he is calling us through the works of Christ, the Bible and our experiences.



2nd metaphor: The athlete

v5: "Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules."

Paul uses the metaphor of the athlete across his letters to different communities (1 Cor 9,24-27). There is an emphasis on rules both in training and preparation and in the goal of completing the race and winning. The end goal is not about winning at all costs, but about following the rules with honour both in training and in the arena. For the sake of following Christ, and being sent, Timothy, as an athlete, will discipline himself, sometimes saying no, sometimes saying yes!



ACCOUNTABILITY – in relationships

Power corrupts! It always does. That's the nature of power in a broken world. Moreover, the more influence we get as missional leaders, whether it's a formal or informal role, the more intentional we have to be about accountability.

Many are accountable to boards or managers as part of an employee relationship. This is as it should be, whether it's in a ministry or secular job. Healthy checks and balances are important. We need to play according to the rules.

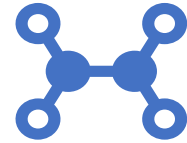
However, we can satisfy our boards or managers by our professional performance without growing in a Christ-like character. Unless we have accountability in relationships, we risk ending up having our own rules, and not those from scripture. Sin and brokenness will corrupt our hearts if we don't play according to the rules.

The accountability-relationships are also our "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12) that reminds us who we are. They encourage us when it's tough on the frontier. It's people that have the permission to ask anything in our lives – especially questions in areas where we struggle.

At the end of the day, unless we decide in our hearts that we will be personally accountable to a specific person and that he or she can ask us the tough questions, it's difficult to stay on the course and fulfil the race set before us.

PRAXIS

The athlete is concerned about what it takes to win, and live life in a way that makes this possible. All of us must have at least one other person of the same gender who encourages us and holds us accountable. Where possible, we use "huddle" as a place for encouragement and accountability.



3rd metaphor: The farmer

v6: *The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.*

The hardworking farmer illustrates two points; living off the land, and living sustainably to save seed for the following year. The diligent farmer is an image of working hard, similar to the single-minded soldier and the disciplined athlete.



In the teaching of Paul, the notion of 'a share of the crops' or 'receive the victor's crown' has both an eschatological and material focus. As human beings we have both physical needs which are met by material goods, but our motivation to keep up the hard work is also connected to sharing in the hope of the coming Kingdom.

SIMPLICITY – in lifestyle

Farming builds on a fundamental principle: you take a certain portion of the harvest and save it as seed for the following year. The rest you can sell or use to produce whatever product you make. Thus, you have a sustainable model of living.

The questions we take from the metaphor of the farmer are: How do we build simple enough resourcing around our mission to keep it going for the long haul? And how do we avoid operating out of a model for our mission where our personal needs aren't met?

The metaphor of the farmer is Paul saying to Timothy: Don't burn out! Don't build a model of missional leadership that isn't sustainable or healthy. Make sure that you take out some of the harvest to put bread on your table so that you can keep investing the rest in the fields for the coming seasons.

PRAXIS:

Consider important decisions in light of these questions: Does this decision make my life more complex or simpler? Does it release me in mission or hinder me from mission?

As we resource for mission, we can use the “Person-of-peace” approach (Luke 9-10) to help us develop mutual relationships in mission rather than models that exhaust our resources.

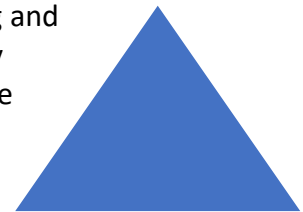
5. THE VALUES – WHO WE ARE

OUR COMMUNITY VALUES REFLECTED IN HEBREWS 13,1-8

TOM is a global community with members in many different cultural, denominational and geographical contexts. We share a deep conviction about living in communities whether we call them “missional community”, “Oikos”, “household” or “extended family.” We express that in a variety of ways, but intentionally building community is part of who we are.

Jesus is our model for how to build community. From his way of serving and leading the community around him we see that any healthy community lives in three relationships: UP to the Father, IN into the members of the community, OUT serving the world around us.

The Bible elaborates on this in many ways. For us, a key text is Hebrews 13,1-8. Here we find the values that we want to mark the communities that TOM members are building and belonging to.



An extended family

Hebrews 13 v1: *“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.”*

Loving and caring relationships are at the core of any healthy family. However, Scripture extends the family language (brothers and sisters) beyond the realm of biological and nuclear family. In Scripture, any believer is part of “God’s family” whether single or married, young or old.

To “keep loving one another” requires that we have access to one another regularly and in the long term. Some TOM members will live in the same place and form a household; others will orbit around a household on a regular basis. Some may connect online to share the blessing of the extended spiritual family.

As sinful human beings we will inevitably hurt each other and be tempted to stop loving each other. Following Jesus’ model in Matt. 5: 23 and 18: 15-20 to address interpersonal conflicts and to walk in reconciliation, is vital to the integrity of our community life and mission.

A generous family

v2: *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

Our love should extend to our neighbour as a sign of the ever inviting King we represent. An extended family will build the capacity to host a stranger at their table.

A family that supports the marriage covenant

v4: Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

An extended family may have one or more married couples. In a time with an epidemic of broken marriages, we should do whatever we can to strengthen marriage and the safety of children. Our mission will lack integrity if it operates at the cost of marriage. Similarly, those who are single, should find support in having full and flourishing lives in our extended families, following Jesus' example.

A family that shares resources

v5: Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

*“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”*

Our heavenly Father shared his only Son with us. We should be marked by sharing whatever resources we have been given with each other. That will be a sign to our neighbours of who is the true Father of our households.

A praying family

v6: So we say with confidence,

*“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?”*

Prayer is foundational for any Christian community. Our heavenly Father is the one we should seek before we shift our focus to anyone or anything else for help. “The prayer of the morning determines the day,” wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A rhythm of prayers throughout the day is central for any household in TOM. In doing this, we can use the Moravian daily texts that are available in the TOM App.

A family accessible for imitation

v7-8: Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Talking is one thing, living the talk is another. Everybody knows that. The book of Hebrews refers to leaders who were accessible enough so that others could consider what they saw in their lives and learn from them. It takes close proximity to do that; it can't be done from a desk or a pulpit. Our confidence in doing this does not come from ourselves, but from Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever.