

WEA General Assembly 2019 Our Pledge – Holistic Disciple-making

Preamble

The cry of our hearts is **'Your Kingdom Come'** (Matthew 6:10; Matthew 24:14). We are praying, yearning, longing for God's Kingdom to be manifested on earth.

Evangelicals make up 25 percent of the world's 2.2 billion Christians, and our unified voice can make a great difference. The WEA envisions a decade where the existing momentum of national evangelical alliances and numerous issue networks will be synergized and leveraged to catalyze a spiritual transformation. Shaped by a common love and vision, evangelicals across the globe will pray and work together, empowered by the Spirit in bringing spiritual and societal renewal to their lands.

After much prayer and consultation with evangelical leaders across the globe, we commit ourselves to promoting the following principles as part of our pledge to intentional, holistic disciple-making, fulfilling the call that our Lord Jesus gave us some 2000 years ago.

- 1) **Articulating evangelical essentials in the 21st century.** Evangelical essentials are timeless, but how they are presented to others in society requires careful consideration. Sensitivity, intentionality and boldness are needed to transmit these essentials effectively.
- 2) **Being authentic followers of Jesus.** An authentic follower of Jesus follows Him personally and in community. Every Christ-follower should be engaging with others and inviting them into a journey of Christ-likeness in every area of their lives. Authentic followers reflect the image of God in who they are and all they do, as the fruit of sanctification, for God's glory.
- 3) **Intergenerational leadership.** As different parts of the body of Christ, each generation offers unique gifts to advance the disciple-making effort. Congregations (and other communities and formations of Christ-followers) that incorporate the principle of intergenerational leadership make space for generational differences and capitalize collaboratively on the wisdom of members from each generation.
- 4) **Global focus, national impact.** Following Jesus takes place within the context of His body of believers—the church—locally, nationally and globally. Unity matters to the World Evangelical Alliance. This unity will be demonstrated in a shared focus on holistic disciple-making during the next decade. The WEA is committed to maximizing its effectiveness by establishing and building up National Alliances, strengthening its commissions, task forces, and initiatives, while simultaneously nurturing new and creative networks and movements to accelerate spiritual reformation.

Appendices

Background for Point 1: Evangelical Identity in the 21st Century

Evangelical essentials are timeless, but how they are presented to others in society requires careful consideration. Sensitivity, intentionality and boldness are needed to transmit these essentials effectively.

The challenge

In recent years, our evangelical identity has come under increasing tension from numerous forces: religious extremism, the perceived close link in some contexts between evangelicalism and nationalist politics, an increasingly post-modern climate that rejects absolute truth, and the presence of younger generations of people—including many within our churches—who possess different perspectives, characteristics and mindsets.

Evangelical essentials

We must not compromise our evangelical essentials, which do not change with the passing of time as they are rooted in the nature of the Triune God. Our evangelical faith is deeply rooted in the Trinity: “the revealing initiative of God the father, the redeeming work of God the son, and the transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit.”¹

As a community, the WEA, affirms and believes

“...in the **Holy Scriptures** as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct...

One **God**, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

Our **Lord Jesus Christ**, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His Personal return in power and glory...

The **Salvation** of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit...

The **Holy Spirit**, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ...

The **Unity** of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ...

The **Resurrection** of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.”²

¹ John Stott, *Evangelical Truth* (InterVarsity Press: Nottingham, 2003), 28.

² “Statement of Faith,” World Evangelical Alliance, last modified April 27, 2001, <https://worldea.org/whoweare/statementoffaith>.

Holy scriptures

For Evangelicals, the **Bible has authority and is the primary way that God has revealed himself to us**. The Scriptures are truthful and trustworthy. They have been given to us by God to shape and transform our lives (2 Timothy 3:16). As Evangelicals, we seek to understand and interpret Scripture properly and apply it to our current context.

The person and work of Christ

Christ is the incarnate God-Man. As a human, **Jesus was the perfect example to us** as he shared in our human condition. He experienced what it means to be human, including suffering and death (Hebrews 4:14-16). He realistically communicated to us what it means to be human, to live, act, suffer and pray (John 11). He communicated to us what a growing life in Christ can be like (John 15:1-17; 2 Peter 1:3-7). But he was more than just a good example. In his deity, Jesus' saving work through his death, burial, and resurrection is central to the Christian faith. Through his divine work on our behalf, Jesus paid for our sins with his body and blood. As we have all fallen short of the glory of God, only through Christ can we be saved. We have been justified by faith through the grace of God (Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Holy Spirit

The **Holy Spirit dwells in us** through the new birth at conversion (John 3:5-8; Ephesians 1:13-14). Through the Holy Spirit, we are assured of the presence of God in our lives. He begins the lifelong process of sanctification, working towards holiness in our lives (John 14:16-17, 26; Galatians 5:16-23).

The **Holy Spirit is the key to the unity of Christ's universal church**, bringing the global community of believers together. Through the Holy Spirit, we are all given different gifts for the building up of Christ's church, this community (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:1-16).

Finally, the **Holy Spirit empowers disciples** from within as they continue to be witnesses to God, carrying out the mission of global disciple-making. This involves witnessing in life, word, and deed, giving an account for the hope that is within us, and teaching other disciples to love as he commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:17-21; 4:31).

Developing this Evangelical Identity Intentionally

Although the evangelical essentials remain unchanged, the context we live in has changed and has led to stark differences in the way these essentials are understood, expressed and communicated by different generations and cultural contexts.

This tension requires intentional focus on the process of transmitting evangelical identity. The process involves more than the rational acceptance of evangelical truths. This identity is transmitted by individuals who earnestly seek to internalize timeless biblical truths

about God as the core identity of who they are and apply these truths to their lives and social context.

Background for Point 2: Commitment to being an authentic follower of Jesus

An authentic follower of Jesus follows Him personally and in community. Every Christ-follower should be engaging with others and inviting them into a journey of Christ-likeness in every area of their lives. Authentic followers reflect the image of God in who they are and all they do, as the fruit of sanctification, for God's glory.

The challenge

In seeking to live daily as Christians, we encounter many competing worldviews or priorities that threaten to undermine our witness: self-centredness, self-fulfilment, isolationism, consumerism, social conformity, and the desire to conform to societal expectations. These and other pressures have tempted many believers to choose experience rather than doctrinal beliefs as their practical guide in daily life.

Authenticity as reflecting God's image

At its core, being an authentic Christian means living a life that, though marred by the fall, reflects the image of God. Created in God's image, we were blessed by him and were tasked to be fruitful, multiply, and rule over the earth. **Authenticity involves reflecting the image of God in who we are and our subsequent actions, as the fruit of sanctification, for his glory.** This requires a discernment process to understand who we are and what our role in this world should be.

An authentic Christian acknowledges life's challenges but consistently **says yes to God** and His gospel truth and relies on the power of the Holy Spirit to persevere. Responding to the gospel, **one becomes convinced of one's purpose** and seeks to use his or her own unique gifts for the sake of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

Furthermore, the authentic disciple **recognizes the presence of the Holy Spirit in his or her life, exhibits the fruit of the spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23), **and finds joy in trials** (1 Peter 4:12-14).

Authentic disciples also participate alongside others in the Christian practices of **prayer, Bible reading and meditation, confession, and other Christian disciplines, all of which are means to abide in Jesus** (John 15:4),

As we abide in him, the **natural result is growth in love** for God, neighbour, enemies and one another (Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 5:44; John 13:34-35).

- **The problem of sin**

Though created in the image of God, we are also characterized by our fallen nature; “**all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory**” (Romans 3:23). We do not do what we want to do, but hate what we do (Romans 7:15). In our authentic Christian self, we continue to fight with our sinful nature, by God’s grace, and through the power of Jesus (Romans 7:24-8:1), without condemnation.

- **God’s grace and our faith**

Only through God’s grace are we saved, through faith. This is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Through God’s grace and our faith, we are justified and are empowered to live as authentic Christians through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

- **Process of sanctification**

While justified, we continue the process of sanctification, or becoming Christ-like. Beginning with justification at the new birth, our journey continues in daily discipleship, in partnership with and in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8). We count it “all joy, when we face trials of various kinds, recognizing that this produces steadfastness, a refined faith” (James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6).

This process of sanctification is **to be shared with others**, to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

Daily discipleship involves intentionally taking up our cross and following Jesus

Following Jesus means being counter-cultural—neither culturally neutral nor a societal adherent. Following Jesus involves **obeying** him and growing in his grace and knowledge (Hebrews 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-3),³ from which **love** and **service** flow naturally (2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 4:7). Whatever worldly success we have is secondary to our daily submission to Jesus. Worldly measures and good intentions are not the same as living obedience. We recognize that many have paid the costly price of following Jesus through suffering, persecution and martyrdom.

Discipleship is not a church programme but a paradigm shift (at the personal, local and global levels) of surrendering our own personal will to follow Jesus, who is the perfect God-man. It is a **personal journey** that begins with our relationship with God. He becomes our focus, above our own lives, wishes and desires. Authentic worship deepens our faith as we personally practise the Christian disciplines of active engagement in a local church and following God’s call into society and culture as the fruit of God’s active work in our lives. Through this relationship we become more like Jesus, restoring and redeeming what

³ In his final book, John Stott asserted that his assessment of the global Christian situation can be summarized as “growth without depth” (*The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling*, loc. 275, Kindle ed.). Disciple-makers seek to address this situation.

we have lost. It is a journey of inner growth in repentance and holiness through the gospel.

We have been **given the Holy Spirit who will help us, not abandon us (John 14:16)**. Through the Holy Spirit's work in us, we can become more like Christ. Through the Spirit, we can "discern the will of God, distinguish between right and wrong, desire God's way ardently, [and] determine resolutely to follow God's will and do the will of God."⁴ This happens as we use the Scriptures to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, deepen our prayer experience, and participate actively in Christian community. With the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and Christian community, we are well equipped for authentic service.

Following Jesus together

Though we are on a personal journey, following Jesus is not for our own individual purpose. Love for our neighbours compels us to follow **Jesus together in community, in relationship with fellow disciples**. This is most effective in his church, the community of believers that is intentionally built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and empowered and united by the Holy Spirit. Jesus commanded his disciples to "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" (Matthew 28:19-20a). As his followers, we are **called to participate in disciple-making**.

As fellow disciples meet and point one another to the gospel while growing in holiness, **accountability in personal relationships** becomes more crucial than any strategy or programme. Ultimately, **disciples of Jesus make disciples**, not programmes. From conversion onward, disciples should watch and imitate more mature believers and willingly accept correction. The people, as well as the leaders of the church, are vital to the overall delivery system of disciple-making.

Holistic followers of Jesus

Finally, following Jesus is a holistic process and transforms different areas of life. Yearning for the Kingdom of God includes caring about righteousness in every sphere of this world. There is **no dualism or dichotomy in our witness**. Both the sacred and the profane belong to God. Our witness takes place in all aspects of family, work and society. Our journey of following Christ in the various aspects of life can provoke questions (1 Peter 3:13-16) and inspire others to learn more about who Jesus is and ultimately to commit themselves to following Christ.

Examples of following Christ in different areas of life:

Health (mental, social, and physical) is promoted as believers serve the sick in the healing professions. Others advocate for the well-being of **families**, especially in contexts where the family is threatened. Those working in the **business** realm can exemplify Christ in their

⁴ John Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, (InterVarsity Press: Nottingham, 2003) 115.

workplace behaviour and act in keeping with the economic parables of Jesus, which teach justice and respect of all human beings. Jesus is exalted when we engage **society**, exhibiting and urging acceptance of Jesus' teachings and biblical values in all our discourse and actions. God receives glory when the church engages locally and globally in **activism** in support of the biblical conviction that all people are valuable. Thus we work to bring justice to **creation**, the **oppressed, the poor, refugees** and anyone living on the margins of society.

The WEA has various functioning commissions, task forces and initiatives that address these different areas. The WEA will work with its national and regional alliances to strengthen the effectiveness of these initiatives across the globe.

“Authentic Christian life moves beyond religion, beyond doctrines, beyond rules, beyond rituals into the life-changing experience of being intimately connected with Christ at the very core of one’s being. As a result, a new quality of life is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, and we are alive in Christ.”⁵

⁵ Ray C. Stedman, *Authentic Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Discovery House Publishers, 1996), 9.

Background for Point 3: Intergenerational Leadership

As different parts of the body of Christ, each generation offers unique gifts to advance the disciple-making effort. Congregations (and other communities and formations of Christ-followers) that incorporate the principle of intergenerational leadership make space for generational differences and capitalize collaboratively on the wisdom of members from each generation.

The challenge

The world is changing more rapidly than ever through globalization, digitalization and social media. As a result, younger generations are experiencing the world in dramatically different ways and leading markedly different lifestyles from their parents and grandparents. This disruptive age has made it more difficult for multiple generations to serve God together in a spirit of unity.

Importance of intergenerational leadership

Every generation brings its unique perspectives, all of which are valuable to the overall leadership of the church and its disciple-making efforts.

Leadership is dynamic and diverse in style and purpose, depending on the particular context and on who is being led. As such, **fostering an overall culture of caring between the generations is vital** to the overall success of our global disciple-making work.

Principles of intergenerational leadership

Several passages of Scripture can inform our efforts to respect and work in unity across generations.

- **Our God is the God of all generations**

Genesis 17:7 ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Joshua 1:5-7 ⁵No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

- **It is good to have mutual understanding amongst the different generations**

Malachi 4:6a He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents

- **We are all part of the body of Christ**

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 ¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

- **We should work together from a posture of humility**

Ephesians 4:2-6 ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Philippians 2:3-4 ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.

Recommendations to strengthen intergenerational leadership

A united intergenerational leadership team is vital not only to reach different groups of people today, but also to foster understanding among leaders regarding the church's future.

- **Develop a culture of intergenerational leadership**

Because the generations have been socialized in different cultural contexts, a broad range of diverse behaviours have emerged. An intergenerational leadership team requires a team culture that **makes space** for these differences. This culture should foster a **sense of true community** that **nurtures trust** and cultivates a **deep belief** that all generations bring value to the overall leadership.

- **Investing in the process of developing intergenerational leadership.** Key steps include the following:

- Awareness that each generation's different journey is valid;
- Recognizing that God is eternal and not limited to linear time or space. He has worked in previous generations, across contexts, and will continue to work in future generations across all contexts;
- Identifying the core aspects of one's ministry and being able to differentiate which aspects are negotiable;
- Fostering regular, vulnerable and honest communication between different generations of leaders;
- Investing in mentoring or coaching opportunities for different generations.

Background for Point 4: Global Focus, National Impact

Following Jesus takes place within the context of His body of believers—the church—locally, nationally and globally. Unity matters to the World Evangelical Alliance. This unity will be demonstrated in a shared focus on holistic disciple-making during the next decade. The WEA is committed to maximizing its effectiveness by establishing and building up National Alliances and strengthening its commissions, task forces and initiatives, while simultaneously nurturing new and creative networks and movements to accelerate spiritual reformation.

The challenge

The explosive expansion of Christian faith in the last hundred years has led to the multiplication of denominations, independent churches, mission agencies, and NGOs. In the past, often driven by strong institutional traditions and charismatic leaders, these entities have tended to operate independently, losing the wider impact that spiritual unity could have brought. Recent decades have seen a strong impetus towards partnerships and movements promoting unity. Although some of these have borne lasting fruit, often our unity has been merely symbolic.

Call to unity around holistic disciple-making

In light of today's challenges, the need for unity has never been stronger. **Unity is valuable both biblically and socially and can result in fruitful collaboration and productive outcomes.**

Often, the evangelical approach towards our surrounding society has been predominantly evangelistic, calling individuals to personal salvation. While important, this is not the complete picture of evangelicalism. The biblical vision of illumination and preservation, expressed in powerful metaphors such as salt and light, provides an important complement for societies trapped by corruption, poverty, polarization and ineffective leadership.

We must **cultivate a more holistic understanding of evangelicalism.** This includes nurturing people of faith to bring strength, resilience, and healing in Christ's name to their sphere of influence, be it government or civil society.

To advance holistic disciple-making across the globe, the **WEA is committed to encouraging evangelical believers to develop the skills, personal character and spirituality that will enable them to serve people groups and nations in transforming ways.** The WEA's strategy to make this happen highlights the pursuit of the following common goals.

I. Advocacy for religious freedom

Holistic disciple-making is enabled in a space of religious freedom. The **WEA holds a unique advocacy position at the intersection of sacred and secular halls of power.** We must bolster its unique ability to speak to global platforms of power at the United Nations and to national governments on matters that affect religious liberty.

II. Encourage dynamic Regional and National Alliances

Regional and national alliances are critical networks. **We must recruit and equip called, competent people to serve in centres of influence, developing national movements that effect spiritual and societal change.** With councils trained in governance and staff equipped to lead, national alliances can become centres for cooperative action. The WEA will support the development of an organization effective at all levels and one in which local initiatives and organizations are locally sustained.

III. Link global, regional, and national initiatives to Regional and National Alliances

The WEA seeks to leverage the existing momentum of numerous issue networks, drawing on proven ideas, resources, and praxis. In so doing, the **WEA will maximize its effectiveness, strengthening its commissions, task forces and initiatives while simultaneously nurturing new and creative networks and movements to accelerate spiritual reformation.**

IV. Secure a vital and effective communication centre to accelerate service for the whole organization

Empowered indigenous National Alliances, operating in the realities of globalization, need the WEA to be a vital and global service agency. **Facilitating a common agenda, sharing effective reinforcing activities, measuring united outcomes, and ensuring connectivity are critical performance goals for a flourishing global evangelical community.** The WEA will build multi-language, multi-format information platforms to share across its constituencies and will seek to foster the unity and collaboration of Evangelicals worldwide, helping to catalyse this worldwide resurgence of Christian witness and impact in the midst of 21st-century realities.

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