



The church is the extension of the “missio Dei.” As Jesus was God in flesh, the church is to be the presence of Christ Jesus on earth. The mission of Jesus is now the mission of the Church. Peter Wagner points out that, “The mission of the church is so to incarnate itself in the world that the gospel of Christ is effectively communicated by word and deed...”¹

The missional church understands that Christ has sent us, his people, to our culture to invite people to enter the kingdom of God. We have been raised with the understanding that most of what it means to be a Christian, and most Christian activity occurs in the weekly church service. This is how many people think about Christianity; to be a Christian means that you “go to church.” Being incarnational means that the true work and ministry of the church is seen as being outside of a facility.

Ed Stetzer explains that, “A church that is incarnational is interested more in the harvest than in the barn. We have made sure the barn is clean, made sure it is attractive, made sure it is well organized...”² The missional church is not concerned so much in getting people in the “barn” as it is in sending the “harvesters” into the field, (John 4.34-38). Each Christian is salt and light where they live, work, and play. In the missional church they are led to be on mission in their world. In other words, the church, as the body of Christ, must “embody,” “enflesh,” “incarnate” the good news of God’s redemptive mission in their day to day lives. The Holy Spirit endues the church with the power to be the body of Christ in the world, and the church then “incarnates” or “enfleshes” the continuing work of God on earth³.

Being incarnational means that we no longer see the church service as the primary connecting point with those outside the church. Connecting with those outside happens within the culture as Christians act as missionaries in physically penetrating the world with their Christlike presence. We must live, work, play and minister redemptively in our culture. “The well-intentioned tendency of Christians to withdraw from culture has only weakened our effectiveness in communicating Jesus to the people we want to reach out to”⁴.

[By Timothy Cowin](#)

1. C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 40.
2. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 67.
3. Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 32.
4. *The Gospel Unhindered*, edited by Doug Priest Jr. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1994) Donald S. Tingle "No Distinction Between Us and Them," 101.