



Oxford
Centre for
Mission Studies

Research Forum for Faithful
Witness:

Research Interest Groups

Global Missional Leadership Research Group

The Research Forum for Faithful Witness is a new initiative of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies that seeks to research and report on critical topics related to the understanding and praxis of faithful witness (mission) by the global Church. The ultimate aim of this endeavour is to provide rigorous, timely and relevant research, made available through accessible scholarship that will encourage and enrich the church's witness to the Triune God and her participation in the Kingdom of God. For fuller details on the vision and work of the Research Forum, email pbs@ocms.ac.uk.

As a part of this Forum, the **Global Missional Leadership Research Group** is a cohort of Research Associates focused on themes specifically chosen to contribute to the growth and well-being of global mission leaders. This effort is of primary importance because such leadership seeks to understand what it means to be part of a global community, to work and pray, live and serve with one another in God's mission. This is a process that is ongoing, refined and informed through openness to and discernment from the Holy Spirit. Such leadership must be ethical, authentic, courageous, equipped spiritually with a biblical and theological mindset and coupled with the ability to understand the changing cultural context around them.

This research will serve the community of global mission leaders who:

- want to better understand their changing contexts through the lens of unchanging theological and missiological principles for leadership.
- are too busy to delve deeply into existing research but need to continue growing in missional leadership capacity and understanding.
- are currently hindered because of language barriers.
- would like greater exposure to global voices in leadership thought and content.
- Would personally benefit from and/or desire to mentor others through a curated collection of resources for ongoing growth and development in global missional leadership.

This cohort of 4-6 people will be led by Dr Kirk Franklin and Dr Susan Van Wynen. The starting point of this effort is the exploration of the needs and contexts of global mission leaders and exploration of existing work to make important research more widely accessible and available. Through this process, gaps in research will also be identified and further research will be initiated into the areas of the greatest relevance.

In the initial phase, we welcome researchers who want to be involved in:

- Interviewing mission leaders to learn more about current practices, changing contexts, expressed needs, and preferred styles of learning and information

processing (including preferred mediums, formats, and organization and length of content).

- Exploring existing research on leading in global mission. This research would include identifying, reflecting on, and processing journal articles, PhD theses, blogs, etc. with the goal of distilling the research into academic and practical ideas, insights, seminars, curriculums, and new works.

Becoming a Research Associate

OCMS invites scholars and practitioners to make application to join a cohort of researchers around the theme of Global Mission Leadership. The position of OCMS Research Associate is a volunteer position open to senior and junior scholars, graduate students, practitioners, pastors, and lay persons from around the world. Persons selected will be designated as OCMS Research Associates and serve for a period of eighteen months. Senior Researchers, Dr. Kirk Franklin (Australia) and Dr Susan van Wynen (USA), will serve as the lead researchers for this theme and will facilitate the research cohort.

If you are interested in being involved please use the application form and submit it on the website.

Mission language and Faithful Witness Research Group

The Research Forum for Faithful Witness is a new initiative of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies that seeks to research and report on critical topics related to the understanding and praxis of faithful witness (mission) by the global Church. The ultimate aim of this endeavor is to provide rigorous, timely and relevant research, made available through accessible scholarship that will encourage and enrich the church's witness to the Triune God and her participation in the Kingdom of God. For fuller details on the vision and work of the Research Forum, please see the OCMS website.

The work of the Research Forum will be advanced through cohorts of Research Associates focused on specific themes under the direction of a Senior Researcher. In this document, we introduce the first research theme and issue an invitation to apply to become a Research Associate.

Faithful Witness

The inaugural topic for the Research Forum centers in Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 – “You shall be my witnesses.” In this declaration, Jesus tells his disciples who they are and what they are to do. They are to be faithful witnesses. Faithful is the measure of what it means to follow Christ and witness is the manner in which faithfulness is demonstrated. While Jesus promises to take care of fruitfulness in the life of the disciple, he calls us to faithfulness in abiding, obedience and following his model ‘as the father sent me, so I send you’.

While mission, missionaries, and the modern mission movement have been ways in which the church has described its engagement with the world, this language has become mixed with notions of power and domination, and thus burdened with unhelpful baggage. The word mission continues to convey notions of church sending and travel, reducing the participation of the church to special agents and certain activities. Because of the need to reframe Christian identity, practice, and faithfulness, some are looking the language of “witness.” New language is need that empowers the whole church to participate in the wholeness of God's purposes for all peoples and the whole of creation. This topic assumes that the global church needs multiple ways to express the participation of the people of God in the purposes of God and sees the language of faithful witness as one potential contribution. Questions raised include:

What is faithful witness? What does faithful witness include and exclude? In what forms and by what means does faithful witness occur? What are the biblical and theological resources that substantiate and support faithful witness? What is the difference between “faithful presence” and faithful witness? Is faithful witness an appropriate shift away from ‘mission’ language? How does the term ‘faithful witness’ translate into other cultures and contexts within the global church?

What does it mean for the church to be a faithful witness? In what ways can the church form the people of God to be faithful witnesses through their callings and giftings, work and social lives? As the church and her people become increasingly marginalized in societies around the world, how must faithful witness look and sound?

The topic of Faithful Witness might include research on a host of related topics, such as witness and suffering, the relation of the church to power, the Holy Spirit as witness, socio-political involvement as witness, the place of institutions and agencies, vocation and work, and virtue as foundation for witness.

Becoming a Research Associate:

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Application

Should you have interest in pursuing this topic as an OCMS Research Associate, you are invited to submit a research proposal on the topic of Faithful Witness. Your proposal should be approximately four to five pages in length and include a title, description of the proposal’s focus, research plan/design, argument for the importance of this research, and current CV or resume. Priority will be given to proposals that are collaborative in nature (co-investigators, co-authors).

If you are interested in being involved please use the application form and submit it on the website.

Research Forum

Research Associates will make presentations on the topic of Faithful Witness at the January 2022 OCMS Research Forum. The plan is to make these presentations available via a number of mediums and possibly published in an edited volume.

If you have questions regarding the OCMS Research Forum and Research Associates please use the contact form on the OCMS website.