



(spiritual foundations) "Go Off the Map"



Exploration Essentials Values of the Atlantic District of The Wesleyan Church

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"Go Off the Map"

Our foundations inform our future

We proudly stand on the accomplishments and shoulders of the explorers of yesteryear and courageously pioneer uncharted territory. Our past is a trustworthy foundation to engage and embrace the new thing God is setting before us.

(spiritual foundations)

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have – Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11, NLT)

A Zambian proverb poignantly states, "If you see a child in tall grass, know that he is on the shoulders of his or her father." These words have never been truer than on the Atlantic District as we elevate the value of our spiritual foundations. To be clear, these Exploration Essentials are all about taking new ground for His glory, not resting on the laurels of selective memories of the past. There has never been a more important time to "Go Off the Map!" And the power of our spiritual foundations is in how they provide both "a map to go by" and, just as importantly, "a map to go off."

This value raises us above the present on the shoulders of the past as we explore the future. And because of the spiritual foundations God has established in this corner of the Kingdom vineyard we call the Atlantic District, there are some waypoints which are common to all people of faith and some which are convictional on our particular map. Celebrating these foundations as an end unto themselves misses the point entirely. The greatest impact of these foundations comes as they leverage a new day of Kingdom reality. We "go by the map" of the past to "go off the map" into the future.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews provides an excellent metaphor for the perspective of God-directed exploration inspired by our spiritual foundations, *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* (Hebrews 12:1)

So, what exactly are these spiritual shoulders upon which we stand?

At the very core is our shared belief regarding the nature of Holy Scripture and how it informs our personal experience with Jesus. Biblical authority is superior to any pronouncement of human wisdom. It is irrefutable as the inspired, infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in the original manuscripts and has been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. We are irreversibly committed to expose and resist the subtle attempts to soften and shift the bedrock of this spiritual foundation. It is one of the very few non-negotiables over which we will shed all the blood required to sustain. Anyone who questions the nature of God's Word will not be welcome to remain in the ranks of our leadership. The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God. The Bible IS the very Word of God, living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

Another cornerstone of our spiritual foundations is found in the teaching and pursuit of holiness. To be like Jesus – Holy Spirit empowered Christlikeness in character, attitude, words and action is the unquestioned hallmark of spiritual maturity. In 1888, five Free Christian Baptist Ministers were disfellowshipped from their denomination because they had come to believe in the promise of Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit to bring purity in love and life to the Bride of Christ. In forming the Reformed Baptist Alliance of Canada, 130+ years ago, the broad shoulders of these Godly leaders



formed a convictional foundation which continues to inform our future.

Another key component of this foundation is our belief and practice in prayer. As one of our pastors in Egypt proclaimed, "Prayer is the key that unlocks all places." And we would add, all power and all purpose. It is not the alignment of God's will to ours, but instead of ours to His good, pleasing, and perfect will. This foundation is often only aspirational in the lives of our churches and leaders to the great detriment of the Kingdom. Lip service to this foundation out of the hollow, prayerless reality of our private lives is perhaps the greatest victory of the evil one in our midst. While the active presence of authentic corporate and personal prayer is subjective, intangible and difficult to measure, it is and must continue to be an irreplaceable cornerstone in the spiritual foundations upon which we stand.

While there is some overlap in many of these components they each represent important aspects of these spiritual shoulders which must not be missed in how we as district leaders stand above the tall grass of our times to see the new territory God is calling us to explore and claim. Our core doctrinal statements in the orthodoxy of the historic Apostles' Creed and in the 22 Articles of Religion found in The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church serve as both sideboards and springboards in the faith we exercise to see His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

And while these components are foundational in our Wesleyan-Arminian corner of the Kingdom vineyard, our understanding of and engagement with the Church is not limited to one denominational tribe. We celebrate the capital "C" Church, and as opportunity is created or seized we seek to synergize Kingdom purposes and efforts with all those who bear the uncompromised Name of Christ. We acknowledge and embrace the tensions we must navigate to achieve unity and impact with the greater Church. The glory this Kingdom synergy brings to God is far greater than an isolated commitment to the distinctives of district and denomination. We do not believe these are fundamentally in opposition as the common ground of our shared mission is far greater than the minor points of difference we have in things that are insignificant in the face of eternity. The Great Commission and the Great Commandment bind us as one Body, under one Lord, because of one faith through one baptism.

The cultural artifacts of our heritage have value only in direct proportion to alignment with their impact on eternity. The "why" behind the history of our Reformed Baptist Alliance roots still matters as much today as it did then. As one of our pastors has said it so well, "A church whose present looks a lot like their past doesn't get to its future."

As the "why" of the past informs the present it births the new things God wants for our future. Someone once said, the past makes a great classroom but a rotten living room. As our pastors and district board wrestled with identifying these values, we agreed not to honour heritage as an end unto itself but to honour the Kingdom effectiveness of our heritage when it was evident as foundational for our present reality and future vision.

We who call the Atlantic District home, share the song of King David when he penned the lyrics in Psalm 16:6, "*The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.*" And while we share a sense of loyalty, deep respect, and admiration for our denominational movement, we must protect ourselves from the temptation to shift value from the timeless message of the Gospel onto the effective and celebrated methods of a given chapter in our history. The "why we did it" is always more important than the "how we used to do it." Cultural artifacts of our heritage do not have intrinsic Kingdom value apart from the Kingdom principles they sought to achieve. We must value our spiritual heritage but guard against the past holding greater importance than the future. That being said, it is **because** of the building blocks of the past, we embrace a bold faith that the best is yet to be.

Spiritual foundations matter and we are a people whose foundations inform our future. Let us unpack these Exploration Essentials as we "go by the map" of our spiritual foundations so that we "go off the map" to explore and claim new territory together for God's glory!