

Editor's Note

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The missionary task is urgent. Healthy churches are an essential component of the missionary endeavor. How do we hold these two together? This edition of the journal addresses the relationship between these two convictions. They each reflect deep theological convictions that undergird this journal. First, the task is urgent. It is urgent because Scripture teaches us that all people on earth are rebels against God who justly deserve condemnation, and the only way anyone can escape that condemnation is to repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul makes clear in Romans 10, sinners must hear the gospel to repent and believe, and someone must tell them if they are to hear. This is a matter of life and death for everyone in the world, which makes it inescapably urgent. Second, healthy churches are an essential component of the missionary task. The IMB is unapologetically ecclesiocentric in its missiology. We share the gospel to make disciples. Disciples are made and nurtured in the context of local churches. The New Testament has no concept of Christian believers outside the context of a local church, and it has a great deal to say about the nature, structures, and functions of such local churches. Both of these convictions are foundational to our missiology.

In recent years, these two convictions have been perceived by many as standing in conflict with one another. We are convinced that they must be

held together. However, there are a variety of perspectives among us on how to engage the task with urgency while being careful to pursue a rigorously biblical ecclesiology. This edition presents a variety of such perspectives. We have a request of you, reader. Please do not read just one article. If you do, you will get a distorted perspective of the full spectrum of approaches taken within our organization. Read widely. If possible, read them all. Our prayer is that everyone who reads this edition will be challenged to hold together what Scripture refuses to separate.