There are two writing areas that have mushroomed in the last twenty years – spiritual formation and missional church. They are not just latest fads, but two significant frameworks for renewing the church. How can we foster genuine spirituality with proven practices? And how can we revitalise the church around mission? A unique contribution of Missional Spirituality is its integration of both streams. They demonstrate that the church needs both contemplation and action together. Just as effective mission is resourced from spirituality, genuine spirituality always includes outward missional implications. Inspired by Dallas Willard, NT Wright and Robert Webster, the writers propose a missional spirituality that is framed in the Great Commandment: “A missional spirituality is an attractive and active engagement of embodied love for God and neighbour expressed from the inside out.”

The writers are Canadian church leaders passionate about walking intimately with God and communicating the love of God relevantly with their communities. Roger Helland coaches pastors of the Baptist General Conference in Alberta in missional leadership and church planting. Leonard Hjalmarson is Adjunct professor of Ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. Both have both sought to calibrate their neighbourhood involvement and spirituality around mission and reflect on their experience.

Helland and Hjalmarson explore missional spirituality from a number of key directions. They outline the disenchantment of the Enlightenment and its secularism and dualism. They tackle challenges of missional spirituality, including consumerism, entitlement, church programism, extraction from the world, and nave-gazing tendencies. They unpack theological foundations for missional spirituality in the Trinity, incarnation, priesthood of all believers and the Jesus Creed or shema of the Great Commandment. They offer inspiring case studies of missional spirituality in the early church, Moravians and Methodists, and they interpret all their chapters with stories of engaging missionality with their neighbours.

The central chapters of the book outline various contemplative and missional practices. Inner devotional practices include prayer, worship, Sabbath, gratitude and humility. They appeals for openness to reenchantment and attentiveness to wonder, to “pay absolute unmixed attention to God and the world around (p. 124, quoting Simone Weil). And they urge ‘faith thinking’ or theological reflection, especially about suffering. “Where is Jesus in this situation? How does Scripture address [it]? ... How do I let Jesus live through me to touch the lives of others around me who are hurt?” (p. 152). The freshest contemplative framework is missio divina, drawing heavily on Wesley’s framework for biblical meditation and application. They declare some inspiration also from lectio divina, although disappointingly they say they do not know anyone who does lectio divina much.

The main strength is in its explanation of outer and missional practices, notably service, generosity, hospitality, neighbourliness and incarnational presence. The encouragement to be a good neighbour is to be a stakeholder rather than service provider in local communities, to adopt a missional interest in networks and to be present in recreational ‘third spaces’. Moreover, there is strong encouragement to seriously engage culture as well as Scripture. Missional spirituality has to engage with the everyday life and challenges of our society and its fixations. Watching movies and understanding what lies behind reality TV is as important as church history.

The book points in helpful directions for leading local churches in missional spirituality and reshaping college curriculum to prepare spiritual missionaries. I plan to use it as an ideal textbook for a missional spirituality course. With its discussion questions and relevance for local mission and everyday spirituality it is a valuable small group discussion guide for churches. It inspires creative ideas for modelling, mentoring and teaching missional spirituality in church and classroom.

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