



**MISSIO ALLIANCE AUTUMN 2022 SERIES OPEN CALL PROMPT:**  
*“REFINING OUR WRITING COLLECTIVES IN A SEASON OF DISRUPTION”*

Over a decade ago, **Missio Alliance** was slowly birthed over a multi-year period of time, through the thoughtful discernment of an organic network of relationships among Christian leaders across North America. Pastors, seminary professors, non-profit leaders, and Christian community development professionals, let alone countless local church communities, in dialogue together across a wide theological spectrum, came to the following shared conviction:

*“There was a need for a broader fellowship – one that could incorporate not just leaders and churches, but other networks, denominations, schools, and still other groups that shared a desire to engage in dialogue and work around the most pressing theological and cultural challenges facing the North American Church in mission amid its rapidly shifting cultural context.”* (via <https://www.missioalliance.org/history/>)

In the decade since, a **diverse team of writers** have consistently and courageously engaged in five **Writing Collectives**, each with a specific point of reference. They are:

- **Culture:** A space for critical theological engagement with the cultural trends and events of our day.
- **Formation:** A space for reflections and perspectives on the task of forming Christian disciples and leaders.
- **Global Church:** A space to listen and learn from voices outside of the North American context.
- **Theology:** A space for unpacking theological perspectives as they relate to the faithful practice of ministry and mission.
- **Witness:** A space for exploring perspectives and practices that deepen and enrich the witness of the local church.

What we sought to publish was generally marked by a common set of characteristics. They are:

1. A clear articulation of the problem or issue in view

2. A strong biblical and theological frame of reference
3. A meaningful link to implications for Christians and churches “on the ground”
4. Links to additional voices and resources on the topic being addressed.

Fast forward to the end of summer 2022, and *so much has happened*, to dramatically under-sell the past decade. You have lived in this cultural moment and don’t need (or want!) a refresher.

The late **Phyllis Tickle** described the phenomenon we are seeing with startling clarity, writing:

*“About every five hundred years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at that time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur. When that mighty upheaval happens, history shows us, there are always at least three consistent results of corollary events.*

*First, a new, more vital form of Christianity does indeed emerge.*

*Second, the organized expression of Christianity which up until then has been the dominant one is reconstituted into a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self. As a result of this usually energetic but rarely benign process, the Church actually ends up with two new creatures where once there had been only one. That is, in the course of birthing a brand-new expression of its faith and praxis, the Church also gains a grand refurbishment of the older one.*

*The third result is of equal, if not greater, significance, though. That is, every time the incrustations of an overly established Christianity have been broken open, the faith has spread – and been spread – dramatically into new geographic and demographic areas, thereby increasing exponentially the range and depth of Christianity’s reach as a result of its time of unease and distress.*

*Thus, for example, the birth of Protestantism not only established a new, powerful way of being Christian, but it also forced Roman Catholicism to make changes in its own structures and praxis. As a result of both of these changes, Christianity was spread over far more of the earth’s territories than had ever been true in its past.”*

(Phyllis Tickle, **The Great Emergence**, pp. 16-17)

If Tickle’s words are true (and they certainly ring with the prophetic urgency of something to deeply consider), then we are truly living in *a hinge moment of within the Church’s story*.

This begs thoughtful reflection, sober analysis, and prayerful discernment of the pathway forward as the Spirit goes before us.

*But where do we begin?*

As Missio Alliance prepares to enter its second decade of existence, one place we can start is by refining our Writing Collectives. Namely, questions such as:

- Do our five collectives still reflect the focus that our network needs, and our writers speak from? If so, how so? If not, how not? What are we missing? What has the past decade given us new eyes to see? In short, where is the Spirit of God forming us as we look ahead to 2023?
- What cultural trends do we need to pay closer attention to? Which need to be ignored?
- How is the Church forming Christian leaders unto maturity? How is it failing to do so?
- What is the Global Church currently saying, and how are we doing as North Americans in listening to their voices?
- How does robust theological reflection leading to pragmatic engagement still a critical component of faithful ministry and mission? What new practices do we need to address?
- How is our witness as the Church faring in these days? What needs to change?

**Over the course of five weeks in Autumn 2022 (November 1st – December 1st), we will begin to explore these questions and more. This prompt is the first of a series of new initiatives, seeking innovation, creative thinking and analysis, and fresh perspectives to our ongoing mission as Missio Alliance.**

**We warmly invite you to submit an article proposal that addresses any of the questions above, through the lens of one (or more) of our existing writing collectives.**

**PROPOSALS SHOULD BE EMAILED TO [EDITOR@MISSIOALLIANCE.ORG](mailto:EDITOR@MISSIOALLIANCE.ORG) BY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2022.**

Article calendar and actual publication date to follow.

Anticipating your writing to come,

**Chris Kamalski**  
*Editorial Director*  
**Missio Alliance**

P.S. Additional fodder to consider as you craft a proposal/article and plan your year ahead —>

*(See next page)*



**Our signature Missio Alliance National Gathering is returning** (finally!) for a fourth time, the first since April 2019. **AWAKENINGS: DISRUPTION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH** will be held this coming year, **April 27–29th, 2023** at a location TBA in the next few weeks.

The **Cambridge Dictionary defines disruption** as “*the action of preventing something, especially a system, process, or event, from continuing as usual or as expected.*” Doesn’t this definition hit the nail square on its head in describing, well, *pretty much every aspect of life in the Church* over the past few years? As we pray and plan towards this crucial hinge point in Missio Alliance’s own story, our conviction is growing that communities of Jesus followers worldwide are undergoing a similar seismic shift in their praxis, values, and sense of formational approach to the challenges of our day.

Will you begin to prayerfully consider how we are living in a season of disruption, and let that inform your writing for this particular series? *We sense that this series is a small step in faith towards the reorientation that we will press into as we gather together in person this next year.*