

Editorial – Mission and the local church

Darren Cronshaw

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In the last century the imagination-grabbing doctrine of *missio Dei*, “the mission of God” reminded the church that God is a God of mission who invites the church to cooperate with what God is doing. God is engaged in the world in expressing mercy, advocating for justice, caring for creation and helping people understand what really is good news about Jesus Christ. This represents the holistic mission of God, which God invites the church to join. One way of referring to the Great Commission is as the Great “Co-mission”, for which the church as the people of God have the privilege of being “co-missionaries” with God, called to cooperate with what God is doing in the world.

This **AJMS** edition focuses on mission and the local church. What is the place of the local church in mission? How can local churches be revitalised for mission? What are mission-shaped churches? What is the interface of global mission and local churches? What is the mission of the local church in the Western world, and in Australia particularly? What is the place of evangelism and community service in the mission of the local church? How can the local church empower all of God’s people for mission? How do local churches multiply themselves with church planting? These are broad but relevant and timely questions for mission in Australia today. And these are the questions that this edition seeks to explore. It attempts to celebrate what God is doing in mission in and through local churches.

Andrew Menzies develops a case study in *Forming God’s People in the Local Church*, developing Alasdair MacIntyre’s Aristotelian practices and Alan Kreider’s research on early church catechism and applying them to a local project at Camberwell Baptist Church in Melbourne. This article shows hopeful lessons for holistic formation of disciples, but also offers a model research framework for others interested in congregational studies.

Ruth Powell, Darren Cronshaw and Sam Sterland, with the National Church Life Survey Research team, offer a case study of how the National Church Life Survey shows Victorian Baptist churches expressing mission through word and deed. These findings suggest the need for training and modelling for local churches to make the most of their deeds of service and to be equipped to share their faith in meaningful ways.

Peter Roennfeldt explores the inspiration and networks for new churches of different shapes in *Cultivating a Movement of Fresh Expressions of Local Church in Australia*. Unfortunately Christians who are tired of existing church forms are more often dropping out of church than pioneering fresh expressions. But there are signs of hope with key missional thinkers emerging from Australia and local missionary practitioners to celebrate.

John D’Alton discusses “the Australian Church in mission in the post-modernism context”. D’Alton contends that post-modernism is not as much a threat as an opportunity to help overcome some of the drawbacks of the ‘modern’ church.

Sam Farmilo investigates the issues of “young adult evangelism in contemporary Australian society”. Farmilo points in some helpful directions for fostering young-adult-to-young-adult evangelism, reflecting particularly on her experience of Alpha and its cultural relevance.

Philip Hughes offers a well researched and timely article on *Values and Local Church Mission*. Hughes warns that people are often discouraged from church attendance by the values they see churches accept or reject.

Roger Kemp offers a thoughtful article on *Church and Mission* and his personal journey of understanding mission not merely as a project promoted by overseas missionaries and their agencies but seeing the church as missionary by its very nature. Kemp celebrates how mission is being expressed through the church locally, not just outsourced to agencies.

Adrian Turner discusses his Doctor of Ministry research into *The Dialectical Nature of Christian Mission*. Christians experience transformation themselves through involvement in mission as well as helping to foster transformation in others and in the world.

This edition also offers seven ministry reflections.

Joseph D'souza describes the challenges of outcast slum-dwellers and child slavery in *My Sobering Reality: The Slumdog Millionaire's India*. D'souza advocates concerted efforts to help vulnerable children.

David Williams describes his experience of "urban mission from Nairobi to Melbourne". He learned healthy ministry lessons in Nairobi that apply to Melbourne. We need prophetic voices, and Williams suggests theological colleges are well placed to speak to local churches and to raise issues that need critical attention but may be ignored because of cultural blindness.

Paul Arnott offers some cautionary reflections on short term missions and appeals at least for better preparation and research to maximise their usefulness.

Walt White argues for "revitalising the Church through engaging globally" but suggests the best global engagement will not be people going with a need to minister and "do something". He appeals for those sent, whether short-term or long-term, to go with a primary desire to learn.

David Tolputt argues for "elevating the local church". He reflects on his experience of local church ministry and mistakes in not being clear about the mission, being consumed by church management, becoming enslaved to congregational expectations, and adopting a service delivery paradigm.

At a time when religion in schools is under fierce debate, Naomi Swindon asks, "How is the mission of schools ministry changing in Australian schools?" As a case study, ELEVATE offers a community development approach to schools ministry, serving the school in ways that foster wholeness and help students stay engaged with school and change their world for the better.

Paul Minty narrates his experience of "prayer flags" as a liturgical and outreach tool, inspired by Tibetan Buddhism but designed to help his church Solace offer an authentic Christian spiritual practice to passers-by during street festivals.

Finally, there are eight excellent reviews of interesting and wide-ranging missiological books.

Haylee Freudigmann reviews **Transformission** by Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, which is a positive view of the potential of short-term missions as part of the discipleship of those who go.

Keith Jobberns reviews **Missionshift: Global Issues in the Third Millennium** edited by David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer. This involves seventeen evangelical missiologists discussing three seminal missiological essays on the nature of mission, contextualization and evangelical campaigns to eliminate suffering.

Rob Mackinnon discusses **The Social Entrepreneur – Making Communities Work**. Andrew Mawson tells his dramatic story of revitalising a dwindling church in the East End of London and how they developed significant community ministries by applying business principles to social enterprise.

David Chatelier reviews Steve Addison's **Movements that Change the World** and its analysis of the biblical, historical and strategic bases for cultivating missional movements which multiply churches.

Paul Steffen reviews Felicity Jenz's study of **German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848-1908**, a fascinating account of missionaries who distanced themselves from imperialism and developed insights into Aboriginal culture, but were unable to defend their human rights or bridge Aboriginal and Christian spirituality.

Liz Dumps offers a reflection on Jim Belcher's **Deep Church** which presents views of the traditional church and the emerging church, and argues for a third way forward in regaining practices of the early church and forging new 'deep church' approach to worship.

Angela Sawyer reviews Jamieson, McIntosh and Thompson's book **Five years on: Continuing Faith Journeys of Those Who Left the Church**. This is an important part of a well researched project into church leavers and their ongoing growth in faith and what they need from churches to stay connected.

Jacob Kavunkal reviews **Globalization and the Mission of the Church** by Australian theologians Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton. This is a timely volume on the complexities of globalization and implications for mission.

Thank you to our wide range of contributors, the reviewers who offer constructive feedback to contributors and help ensure the quality of **AJMS**, and especially to our editor Ross Mackinnon, chair of the editorial board Larry Nemer and the editorial board.

The coming two editions for 2012 will feature papers from the recent Australian Association of Mission Studies conference "Mission in a globalised world: A new vision for Christian discipleship".

Forming God's people in the local church: A case study

Andrew Menzies

Andrew Menzies is Principal at the Churches of Christ Theological College, Mulgrave (A Recognised Teaching Institution of the Melbourne College of Divinity). He has been in pastoral ministry for twenty years and was Senior Pastor at Camberwell Baptist Church from 2005 to 2010 where this study was conducted as a part of his Doctor of Ministry dissertation. His studies have included BA (VU), BMin (ACT), MMin (CSU), DMin (Fuller).

The formation of people in the local church is a source of great challenge for the west in the twenty-first century. This article develops Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelian practices and Alan's Kreider's research on the early Church's catechetical methods. It then records a project conducted at Camberwell Baptist Church in Melbourne that attempted to apply them in a local suburban Australian context. This was done through the development of nodes that were to practise four practices: Regular table fellowship and the breaking of bread; deep listening; hospitality to the stranger; and discernment. The three nodes referred to in this project had very different outcomes: one node never actually started; one attempted a practice with mixed success; and one embraced the practices after a long lead time and embarked on a transformative journey towards Christian formation.

Introduction

Ours is an age of rapid, discontinuous change; spiritual questioning; neo-romanticism; anxiety; individualism; and consumerism. There is also profound dysfunction in the search for spiritual depth and community connectedness. People find themselves alienated, directionless and hungry. Many avenues tried, however, simply create deeper experiences of being lost.

Impulse drives much of culture. In Western culture, people dip in and out of activities and relationships often driven by a consumer sense of need for image, feeling or want. The design of suburbs and neighbourhoods facilitates this dehumanising process. The car provides mobility and frees people to drive for whatever or whoever meets their wants immediately. Local neighbourhoods appear to be pleasant places to live; however, fewer and fewer people really live connected lives there.

Church life is no different from this pattern. Local churches contend for survival and watch as their internal systems struggle because of a scarcity of committed people and resources to support them. Pastors, most of whom entered their role with a sense of call to a vocation, are increasingly expected to become chief executive officers of small businesses and all that this entails. Within a short commute awaits another church that will promise people the things that they seek.

Somehow, there needs to be a way that brings wholeness and unity to desperate, alienated and lonely people who do not necessarily even know the state of their condition. Dorothy C Bass says there is a rejection of "the separation of spirituality from action, of theory from practice, and of theology from real life".¹

During 2006 and 2007, a research project was undertaken to examine the readiness and progress of members in a local church in suburban Melbourne in the area of Christian formation. This project developed four Christian practices that were to be expressed in smaller groups or nodes that lived in local neighbourhoods. This project attracted the interest of approximately 35 adherents from Camberwell Baptist Church (CBC) which was approximately a quarter of the regular church community.

Catechetical practices

Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelian practices

Alasdair MacIntyre in **After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theology**,² critiques modernity and argues that many significant Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment moral philosophers, including Kierkegaard, Marx, Kant and Hume failed in their project because they were all victims of the historical era in which they wrote.³

The church is also deeply shaped by these influences of modernity. Consequently, it struggles to comprehend any other imagination or rhythm of ministry. Teleologically the church needs to explore practices in life that can guide it to become an authentic and meaningful sign, instrument, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God in the local and particular.

MacIntyre argues that practices are the only way of embedding people's highest internal meanings. This connection of practices is where the abstract is grounded in the local and particular. Practices are not perfected but are pursued regularly so as to enable continuous reflection, learning and improvement. MacIntyre says, "In heroic society, character of the relevant kind can only be exhibited in a succession of incidents and the succession itself must exemplify certain patterns".⁴

The idea of practice is well known to anyone who has learned a musical instrument or played a sport. It assumes that regular participation helps bring about improvement. Improvement may also be enhanced through theory, mentoring, teaching and coaching. MacIntyre argues that it is the actual act of regular participation that is the sign of an individual's teleological commitment. MacIntyre demonstrates the need for practice rather than romantic intention.

It was the aim of this research project to connect the theory and practice of Christian formation in a local church. It was also the intention of this project to integrate catechesis into the routines of daily life. Rather than being a set of learning exercises in a prescribed curriculum, thorough catechesis will avoid perpetuating the duality of objective and subjective.

This project sought to develop catechetical practices as an ongoing process of holistic spiritual formation. The practices were designed to be pursued in the fellowship of other Christians within the context of a local and particular community or neighbourhood. The definition of these practices is taken from Dorothy C Bass as, "Things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world".⁵

Alan Kreider's triologue of behaviour, belonging and belief

In **The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom**, Alan Kreider summarises the situation for the church in Western culture,

*Throughout most of the West, Christendom is in a state of decrepitude if not decomposition. In many countries shoppers flood the malls on Sundays, while Sunday morning has become a special time for sporting events. And people vote with their feet. In most Western societies, polls show that a majority of people believe in some sort of God, but church attendance has become a countercultural activity.*⁶

Kreider then summarises some of the effect of Christendom for mission in a post-Christendom world,

*Many Western Christians have succumbed to a nostalgic prescription for the future in which God, working through revival or renewal or reevangelisation will once again bring about a world that Christians can rule. It is likely that many Westerners will resist this, as they resist Christianity in general, because they associate it with things that authority figures have forced them to say or do. Because of Christendom, when Christianity is mentioned they will experience boredom or revulsion.*⁷

Kreider visits the first centuries of Christianity for insights we can glean about how the church can faithfully live under the reign of God. Kreider explains the behaviour, belonging, and belief of the early church as a triologue. He then draws three clues (Kreider's term) for followers of Jesus in a post-Christendom era. These three clues are all concerned with the nature of catechesis and informed this project.

Firstly, Kreider teaches that local churches need to become communities who have a deep appropriation for the counter-narrative of God as perfectly self-disclosed in the Son, Jesus. As this process goes on, churches become aware of the competing narratives and messages in their context and can maintain a filtering process in regards to which ones bring freedom and which ones bring bondage.

Thinking missiologically, they asked in case after case whether a given practice was life-giving or whether it led to bondage. And at least some of the catecheses of early Christianity were aimed at forming communities of free people in which the addictions of that blighted pagan society were being addressed and overcome.⁸

Secondly, Kreider unpacks the need for a conversion that transforms behaviour as well as belief and experience. He notes that pre-Christendom conversion involved change in each of these three areas and describes how this changed as Christendom emerged. The shift in the fourth and fifth centuries was that instruction gave attention to correct belief, and concern for behaviour atrophied. The conversion of Augustine, also, powerfully influenced this process and changed the emphasis of conversion from a several-year process to one based on experience that was more immediate.

The early Christians led us to reconsider the balance of ingredients in conversion. They wrote relatively little about experience; there is no extensive literature of interiority before Augustine. They did of course emphasise right belief; already in Justin and Irenaeus this is very evident. But the emphasis in the early Christian liturgies of the believer's sense of belonging – their affinity and allegiance – seems extreme to us. Even stranger to us is the *Apostolic Tradition's* focus upon transformed behaviour as the heart of catechism.⁹

Finally, Kreider makes describes the formative power of the early churches' catechetical process. Early documents in the Church's history suggest that catechesis took years of mentoring under the guidance of an approved sponsor, and powerful things occurred in the life of the initiate during this process. Today when people are converted, emphasis is upon inner experience and cognitive belief. In the early church, conversion was a result of a lengthy process and was celebrated by baptism. Kreider notes, "The teaching and example of the catechists and sponsors and the practical involvement of the catechumens concentrated on transforming the catechumen's behaviours in ways consonant with the churches understanding of truth".¹⁰

So it is with Kreider's analysis and MacIntyre's pedagogy that this project was developed. It sought to curate practices that oriented the Christian's behaviour and belonging as a counter-balance to the already existing emphasis upon belief through an ongoing catechetical process. This project, therefore, paid special attention to belonging and behaviour, given the pre-existing emphasis on belief at CBC, as in most churches.

Modernity and the dysfunction of the modern church

It is not intended that CBC be presented as a dysfunctional church. Compared with most churches, CBC is typical. The issues that are critiqued in this case study are, therefore, signs of a deeper malaise in the culture and of modern approaches (or a lack of approaches) towards the formation of God's people which can be applied in most churches. CBC was selected because I was its Senior Pastor and they were committed to learn. Epistemologically, it will become obvious that modernity is the root of the problem for the local church.

Particular problems experienced in our attempt at Christian formation of people at CBC stemmed from three of the most significant ideas that underlie modernity. It is within these three ideas that a great epistemological challenge awaits the modern Western church, if it truly desires a missional engagement in Western culture.

Firstly, thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, and Newton developed an intellectual foundation that thrived for four hundred years, of which we are recipients. This foundation was centred on a dualism between knowledge and the physical realm.

Says Stanley Grenz,

*The modern, post-Enlightenment mind assumes that knowledge is certain, objective and good. It presupposes that the rational, dispassionate self can obtain such knowledge. It presupposes that the knowing self peers at the mechanistic world as a neutral observer armed with the scientific method. The modern knower engages in the knowing process believing that knowledge inevitably leads to progress and that science coupled with education will free humankind from our vulnerability to nature and all forms of social bondage.*¹¹

Secondly, particularly through the contribution of Isaac Newton, humans have a mechanistic imagination of the universe. It follows logically that the human mind, through scientific method, is able

to explain the workings of the universe in an attempt to ultimately conquer it. "The modern human can appropriately be categorised as Descartes' autonomous, rational substance encountering Newton's mechanistic world."¹²

It is this mechanistic imagination that has brought tremendous influence upon human organisations. Initially factories and consequent *Fordism* reorganised societies. However, the imagination for social systems changed, also, because of Newton. Churches, like other social organisations have adopted this imagination, often with modernist reasoning of how mission can be done better with greater productivity and effectiveness. Few, however, have ever stopped to ask what effect this is having upon the faithfulness of the community they are designed to organise.

Finally, Francis devised the method of breaking things into their smallest parts in order to conquer them. His widely known method for conquering nature was through wrestling it to the ground.

This readiness to conquer through division aided by a mechanical imagination has consumed and formed the Western church's imagination for self-organising and for mission. Consequently, it has also had a huge effect upon methods of Christian formation and often has turned catechesis simply into programs for information transfer.

The cost of this direction has been great. Belief has become a privatised system of information that affects only the subjective. There is little place for holistic catechesis that connects beliefs and objective truth. The area of belonging is also profoundly affected by modernity. Seeing people as individual, replaceable parts of a machine has become a reality in the modern corporatised church. People think that they belong, but they do not know each other.

Grenz summarises,

*The ideals of the thinking self knowing itself and of the mechanistic universe opened the way for the modern explosion of knowledge under the banner of the Enlightenment project... [which] in turn, produced the modern technological society of the twentieth century. At the heart of this society is the desire to rationally manage life, on the assumption that scientific advancement and technology provide the means to improving the quality of human life.*¹³

The four catechetical practices implemented

Christian practices refer to the things that Christians do as a sign of their values and priorities toward becoming like Christ. They are the basic daily practices of how we "live differently".¹⁴ The following four practices were developed as a method of preserving the integrity of the nature of Christian practices that would form CBC people so as to foster behaviour, belief and belonging (Kreider).

Practice One: The Practice of Regular Table Fellowship and Breaking Bread

The place of the meal has been lost in modern church life. As a result of such busy activity and over programmed lives, many church children rarely spend relational time with Christian adults other than their parents. Children are also rarely present when Communion is celebrated because they are out at Sunday school.

The centring practice of regular table fellowship and the breaking of bread within this context is necessary for the development of a Christian's life and formation. It is around the table that a place is set for each guest and where a sacred space is created. The description of regular table fellowship implies that there is an intentional space provided for other human beings with whom we share a common concern for the local neighbourhood.

As Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt observe,

*The table is where you connect and belong. It is a place where the past remains alive in the memory of the very old, and the future sparkles with possibility. It is enchanted. We lean close together, we share a glass, we tell a story. Through this simple human relating, the universe feels as though it is right again.*¹⁵

Practice Two: The Practice of Deep Listening

People are good at offering their opinion however few genuine listen to each other or their neighbours. There is a challenge for Christians to learn to listen to each other as well as the world outside the doors of the church. Says Henri Nouwen,

To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments, statements, or declarations. True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known. They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept. Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves. Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality.¹⁶

There is ultimately no way to become aware of both the discontinuous change of the modern world and also to people's personal needs except through listening. Therefore, people were encouraged, when they gathered, to listen deeply to stories from the Bible as well as to individuals' experiences through the previous week. Over time, these stories helped form and incorporate the group within the Christian story, their context and how they should respond.

Practice Three: The Practice of Hospitality to the Stranger

As hard as a person might try to preserve independence and self reliance, anyone can find oneself in need at random moments. Throughout history, there have been times when people were dislocated and in need of hospitality from strangers. Sometimes people have taken them in and helped them, and other times, no one has.

The stranger has long been a subject of fear throughout history and still is. Ana Maria Pineda comments, "The stranger seems to portend danger – sometimes of physical harm, but also because the stranger represents the unknown, a challenge to the familiar constructs of our personal world".¹⁷

In the Christian tradition, offering hospitality is a moral requirement. There is an ever-present expectation that God's people will offer hospitality to the stranger and treat such a one with mercy and justice. This emerges from the hospitality that God has shown in the first place.

Often a host who initiates hospitality to the stranger is the one who soon becomes a recipient of grace and hospitality. This is the circular, mutual nature of this practice. This is, therefore, a step toward the transformation of local communities. Ana Maria Pineda notes,

*This circle of mutual hospitality can embrace and transform the people who enter it. The early church, which met in houses, grew up turning hosts into guests and guests into hosts. The apostle Paul, whose ministry involved travelling from one house church to another, looked forward to the nourishing hospitality that awaited him in each place, just as the young churches looked forward to the gifts he would bring them.*¹⁸

Practice Four: The Practice of Discernment

Independence is the way we in the West are conditioned, and many would argue it is our right in a free society. We are weak at discerning God's actions and the things that God is calling us to participate in together.

Luke Timothy Johnson describes some qualities of discernment,

*Discernment enables humans to perceive their characteristically ambiguous experience as revelatory and to articulate such experiences in a narrative of faith. Discernment enables others to hear such narratives as the articulation of faith and as having revelatory significance. Discernment enables communities to listen to such gathering narratives for the word of God that they might express. Discernment enables communities, finally, to decide for God.*¹⁹

Johnson argues that any group discernment process must have the aim to edify. His argument is based upon Paul's writings which he summarises as follows, "Paul therefore speaks of edification as that expression of the 'mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16) in which each person looks not to his or her own

interests but to the interests of others".²⁰ He continues, "Indeed, the entire language of our own age, to the extent it speaks of the rights of individuals or groups as absolute and nonnegotiable demands requiring recognition by every assembly, must be recognised as deriving from a spirit of the world and not of God".²¹

Johnson also argues that discernment primarily relates concern to the whole group of believers rather than just the individual's needs or wants. Therefore, if a group member requests something, the group must ask, "Does this build up the whole body or is this a request of self-interest?" When done with time and reflection, discernment can be a rich practice in the formation of followers of Christ.

Outside in the world, background and pedigree and wealth and social status and ambition and power call the tune. In the church, another measure is to apply, one in which gender, social status and race are not to matter either negatively or positively, one in which lowly-mindedness seeks to serve the interests of others, one in which the temple of God is built up in love. This indeed is a daunting standard. But the subject is not getting along in the world. The subject is building up God's people in holiness.²²

The diffusion of Catechetical Practices in a local church

Implementation of the practices in nodes

In December 2006, any participants at CBC were invited to participate in groups (nodes) that would explore catechetical practices. The name "small groups" was carefully avoided in preliminary discussions to avoid pre-existing perceptions. The nodes were designed to participate as a group in the four catechetical practices designed to encourage the missional formation of people.

The church leadership council was briefed and informed about the purpose and nature of these nodes. This was supported and three of the members of the church leadership council participated in the project's presentation morning in December 2006.

Three nodes were commenced for this project. Node A had nine adult participants and three small children while Node B had ten adults and eight children. A third node (node C) was created however the majority of participants in this node were unable to commit satisfactorily to the meeting requirements because of professional travel commitments.

Training Syllabus for Participants

Participants were introduced to the concept and requirements of catechetical practices. A five-week course that was heavily weighted toward group participation and doing the learning throughout the week was employed. The course built week upon week so that, by the end, each member was fully participating in all four practices. It was, therefore, also an introduction to life in a node.

The experiences of the Nodes

Node A

Node A was a group of people that had come together relationally through personal networks. Most of these people had previous employment in churches. They no longer wanted to go to church as they had experienced it, but still had active and reasonably maturely developed faiths and were enquiring as to how to live faith in the world. Of the nine members of this group, four had theological degrees and none in the group was content with the activist model of church that had previously burned them.²³

It was at the second meeting in early April that it became apparent that it might not be easy to implement the practices among Node A. The group was divided. One-third were interested and wanted to commit to the four practices. The second third were hesitant about the numbers of practices and treated the four practices that were recommended as an ambit claim and went about reducing the number to one or two. The final third were against any change to the group and were angry that what had been established was now under threat.

After six months of discussion, the concept of establishing these practices had created a clear division within the group. There was considerable tension as the group faced a choice of risk or of moving towards routine and stability which Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja note inevitably lulls "a company [sic

- group] into equilibrium condition that is tantamount to a death sentence".²⁴ The project needed to demonstrate flexibility and listening skills if the group was to stay unified.

With Node C already being disqualified, the project became more dependent on the future of Node A. If the project was simply about the implementation of a program of activities it would have been natural to follow Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja's principle. However this project was concerned with not only the achievement of change but also the nature of transition. That is, how systems and the individuals that comprise them can traverse dangerous territory positively in as unified and as healthy state as possible. As William Bridges and Susan Mitchell summarise,

*Change requires a state of transition – a psychological reorientation. Transition happens more slowly than change and entails three processes: (1) saying goodbye to old ways that made people successful in the past and are part of their work identities; (2) shifting into neutral coping with uncertainties, and coming to grips with what they are being asked; and (3) moving forward and behaving in a new way. The neutral zone is uncomfortable; it offers the potential for regression or precipitous action. But leaders can employ certain practices to help people through transition.*²⁵

The second half of the year saw this group generally follow the first practice only. This was not a great upheaval and perhaps justified some members' level of interest in the group.

Node B

Node B presented a different and inverse experience to that of Node A. After several attempts at setting dates, Node B met for a potluck meal on a Sunday six months after the initial project had been launched despite initial positive interest. This was a group of people who were far more committed and involved in the life of CBC; whereas, members of Node A were on the fringe.

As Node B discussions developed it became clear that there were two members of the group who were opposed to the project. They argued strongly against it and for deeper inductive Bible studies. Ironically, the harder they pushed their opinion, the more resolved the rest of the group became in trying the concept of practices.

With the exit of the two vocal individuals (who were invited to create a separate Bible study), the group dynamics changed profoundly. Quiet members spoke up more and it became clear how dominant these two individuals had been and, therefore, how anxious the group had become. By September the group was finally moving forward.

For the remainder of the year, members of Node B gathered for a common meal, broke bread, and shared their experiences and experimentation with the practices. There were growing stories of practising hospitality to the stranger. Others were encouraged as they eventually discovered that they had already been doing this during the week. This node had generally been weak at deep listening however it became an established discipline within the group, aided by the stories from the practices.

In the remainder of the time for this project, Node B discerned two major items of note. They discerned as a group that something was beginning. They also helped support two members who were supporting neighbours going through two separate deaths of young mothers from cancer. It was out of this experience that they discerned a need in the forthcoming year for greater commitment to their neighbourhood and they determined that they should implement this concern practically and together.

Conclusion

This project identified some of the real difficulties and opportunities associated with the formation of the People of God in a local church. Node C was not able to meet at all because of the nature of their work-life balance. Node A viewed Christian practices as negotiable. Node B slowly embraced the idea and connected it to life in their neighbourhood and church. Node B's point of tension (between members who wanted expository Bible study alone and those who wanted to connect the faith to daily life) was an example of the dualism between belief and behaviour that this project was concerned with.

This project also identified the patience required to navigate well intentioned people who were prepared to argue against change. Christian formation takes a long time. It is very difficult for people

to adjust understanding, behaviour and imagination. Much of it is concerned with the process of group transition.

Finally, this project demonstrated that there is scope when properly resourced for an influential percentage of a church system to change behaviour. With continued resourcing and the addition of new groups who become attracted to what they saw, a church could develop a culture that is sympathetic towards more holistic Christian formation.

AJMS “Ministry reflection” submission

December 2011 “Mission and local church” edition

“Creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God”

Eastern Hills, an Australian Emerging Missional Church

By Darren Cronshaw

Darren Cronshaw coordinates leadership training with the Baptist Union of Victoria and pastors Auburn Baptist Church. Darren was previously a member of Eastern Hills, and it was one of four case studies for his doctoral research through Melbourne College of Divinity (Whitley College), supervised by Dr Ross Langmead and completed with the help of an Australian Postgraduate Award and published as **The Shaping of Things Now: Emerging Church Mission and Innovation in 21st Century Melbourne** (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009).

Eastern Hills Community Church started in Melbourne in 2003, planted by Toli and Emma Morgan and an eager group of young adults from Templestowe Baptist. They had been dreaming together for a year, reading Rodney Clapp and Tom Sine’s writings on church as a countercultural community and Tom Wright’s teaching on Jesus.²⁶ Claire remembers making a list with two columns: what they hate about church and why, and what the Gospels say about those kind of things. Not all Eastern Hills members were dissatisfied with existing churches, but it is a regular theme at Eastern Hills and other emerging churches. They did not set out to start an ‘emerging church’ but simply to ‘be church’ together, which they interpreted as focused on worship, community and mission. The purpose they dreamed up is summarised in their mission statement ‘creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God’.²⁷ This heartbeat of Eastern Hills pulses in a variety of directions.

Alternative worship at Eastern Hills

Eastern Hills engages people’s creativity through alternative approaches to worship. People sit at tables and have space to write or talk with one another over a coffee in a café-style environment. Someone creates a ‘vibe’ as a visual and environmental experience – often photos, objects and thought-provoking quotations on a table. Sunday gatherings often look like art installations with a strong creative and justice emphasis. There is often space for discussion, and even if not planned people feel free to spice the service with comments and questions. Songwriters in the church have written songs which reflect the church’s journey with students and migrants. It is a creatively engaged community, sometimes including art, dance, short stories, newspapers, yoga and dramatically acting out scenes like creation.

One morning we sang ‘Lord have your way’ and then voiced global concerns. People mention slavery in Uganda, indigenous communities, Iraq, East Timor, ‘my classroom’, local schools, world leaders and people in prison especially a particular friend. After praying for these concerns – people on the margins and troubled regions around the world – the worship leader also prays in a kind of ‘by the way God’ prayer for our families and absent friends. This is a refreshing contrast to prayer focusing on family concerns, and the worship leader’s ‘by the way’ prayer being for the broader world.

Eastern Hills maintains a strong commitment to honour traditions and preaches through a Church Calendar including ‘Inspiring Saints’. When Toli spoke on the Apostle Paul, he preached do not despair in hard times, be patient with times of preparation and pro-actively engage contemporary culture. For example, he suggests the best response to The Da Vinci Code is to ask why people like it and what it says about people’s feelings about the church.²⁸ To conclude he held up one of Emma’s paintings and explained the inspiration he gets from it – that God is delighting in creation. Emma invites everyone to write their name and a symbol of our walk with God as a symbol we want Jesus to meet us ‘where we are at’. Alternative approaches to worship with art and diverse media are eagerly received.

Another memorable service was the Creation service. Claire invited participants to make something with available art and craft material. Then she darkened the room, read Genesis 1, a light turned on for the first day of creation, and then for subsequent days different people placed different items at the front – a brown sheet for land followed by the plants, fish, birds and creatures they had made. As a climax when she pronounced that humans were made in God's image, Krystal concluded with a yoga 'salute to the sun' movement. The whole activity was worshipful and invited participation. Toli then spoke about how God wanted people to enjoy the beauty of what God has given us. Participants said they saw and experienced creation of the world as they had never seen it before.

Community and hospitality at Eastern Hills

Beyond alternative worship efforts, Eastern Hills has always been intentionally 'more than Sunday'. The leaders want the church to counter-culturally confront the individualism of Australian culture and build a sense of community. Relationships are fostered in the Sunday gathering through sitting in circles around tables, meeting before church over coffee and sharing a simple lunch afterwards. Yet the church strives to not have it stop there and they often play and create together too. Leading up to Christmas, for example, as well as an Advent series of sermons they organise a Christmas feast, gift-making day, food hamper collection and berry-picking afternoon to celebrate the season.

Emma and Toli maintain authentic community is an attractive quality in today's culture, but also confronts Western individualism and isolation: 'It is something that is really deliberate and quite foreign to our individualistic culture to commit to being together regularly and being there for each other and celebrating and weeping with each other in really practical ways – that is a mission to our culture.' Their vision for community is to nurture one another and to be a hospitable community which invites others to join them. The group has involved others in sport, cooking classes, working bees for a women's refuge, a nursing home concert, make-a-movie nights, court parties, belly dancing and worship services and helped them belong while they are yet to come to a place of belief.

For example, Justin joined a Big Brother mentoring program and got alongside Titus. Titus was having trouble at school, and first he and then his mother Sophie and younger brother attended Sunday services. The mother was pleased the sons had some good male role models and appreciated being accepted herself. Eastern Hills decided to do something about Titus' schooling difficulties, and hosted a fundraiser to send him to a Christian School where he could receive special help. The leaders have not heard Sophie express a confession of belief, but she has embraced the community which has embraced her family. This is an expression of a centred-set community, welcoming people who are growing towards Christ rather than demanding they cross a line of belief or behavior before belonging.²⁹

Mission at Eastern Hills – Engaging the world

Toli recalls from their first dreaming days they had the conviction that they must engage the world:

There was a bunch of friends really wrestling with those sort of theological questions: how does the gospel touch culture? How do we do church in such a way that it is connected with the world in which we live, with the community in which we live? How do we do this stuff? How do we actually make this connection between our worship on a Sunday and what happens in our world?

One of their values is understanding themselves as the people of God sent into their world to bring life: 'We believe the Holy Spirit sends us to our homes, local community and wider world and empowers us to bring about love, truth, hope, healing, beauty and justice'.

Eastern Hills is developing a culture of celebrating people's mission in everyday life. A regular 'Simon doesn't know' segment introduces people and how their faith relates to their weekday lives. One 'prayer journey' service had prayer stations with CDs and music, kitchen utensils and nappies, sports

gear and tools, medicine and magazines, books and newspapers. Emma invited the congregation to circulate around and contemplate how God is involved in all of this. Then they wrote the people they would spend time with and the places they may go in the week, and people swapped lists so we could pray for each other's 'spaces and faces'. It invited reflection of where people are 'sent to bring life' throughout the week.

Engaging the world for Eastern Hills also means local community service and advocacy. The congregation has attended anti-war and Melbourne Bay channel-deepening protests, promoted fair-trade and run art classes in a prison and nursing home. Members have helped migrants with English, homework and rental assistance, and value what that experience gave them in global awareness and experience of Sudanese hospitality. An SMS prayer ring has included people who have never prayed before. The church adopted a local school where they run a lunchtime program, started a Monday night soup kitchen, casserole bank and emergency fund, and organised an indoor soccer competition particularly for migrant teenagers. Eastern Hills' engagement with the world embraces a longing to help make it more in line with the kingdom of God.

Sally, an Eastern Hills worship leader, wrote this song that integrates a longing for inner peace with a passion for global peace:

Make Peace

Lead us to walk ... with You in mind

Bring us to life every day

Dwell with your love in our dark and crumbled places

Make us know we're not alone.

Make my heart warm through the big storms

Change my mind,

Bring glory to Your name

And teach me,

To make peace

With all the earth,

In Your name.

Shared leadership at Eastern Hills

Part of the founding group's initial dream was to share responsibility for church life rather than be pastor-centred. They involve a broad range of people in leadership and open up their leaders' meetings to anyone to attend. They meet weekly but focus on different topics – money and missions, pastoral care and prayer, children, Sunday Church, refugee assistance or a 'Howzit going and ideas' brainstorming night; and people come who are interested in those areas. There are also specific opportunities each year to contribute to broader vision and direction. One year they fostered creative dreaming about how they could help meet the needs of the world. Sometimes they call 'pow-wow' brainstorming meetings when there are big decisions to explore. Claire comments that as a group which is comprised predominantly of young adults they find decision-making easier and risky change more acceptable. The group tends to be less concerned with 'exactly the right decision' and are more interested in the process of sharing leadership and giving new initiatives a go.

Although the group holds the ideal of shared leadership, Toli and Emma have emerged as the pastors and main leaders. The church recognises their leadership, and they in turn invite others to share the functions of leadership. Toli reflects: 'I contribute theologically and biblically and maybe

philosophically and ideologically to the forming of a vision and then inspiring people to be part of that vision and being able to see how different people can be involved and contribute.' Emma and Toli's leadership style is to listen and draw out people's passions, guide them to appropriate service and help them find people and resources to help.

Empowering leadership is part of the congregational culture. Members say that if you have a passion for something, the church wants to support you. When Claire wanted to start a soup kitchen, other leaders encouraged her and got behind it financially. When Pria wanted to offer to serve the local school community, others offered to sew costumes and paint drama backdrops. The team invited a person with an interest in environmentalism to teach them about it, shaping a program around his interest rather than firstly recruiting him to fill another roster. The group tends to go with people's passions as a guide for what ministries and initiatives to prioritise.

Eastern Hills started by reflecting on how church could be different – not for the sake of being different but to better reflect the kingdom of God. Leaders are pursuing mission and innovation not because it is 'emerging' but out of convictions about what God wants church to be and do. They desire for church to be more authentic and relevant for their young adult generation. The relevance and authenticity of Eastern Hills emerged from its alternative worship and inclusive community mixed with its shared approach to leadership and its emerging missional passion for 'creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God'.

Cultivating a Movement of Fresh Expressions of Local Church in Australia

Peter Roennfeldt

Australians have contributed much to contemporary missional and movements thinking. Now there is a concerted effort to cultivate a viral movement of fresh expressions of local church in Australia. For some, the synergy of the frames being used for these suggests a convergence of inspiration. In this article I will examine these frames for local church planting.

The European term *fresh expressions*, provides a generic description of what is happening and envisioned. The commitment is to simple, organic and reproducible forms of church; meeting in homes, parks and cafes. Some are conversational, while others are liturgical and reflective – but few now identify it with *emerging* or *emergent*.

1.1 Australian Contributions to Contemporary Missional Movements

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch³⁰ are widely recognized for their contributions to missional church; Steve Addison for his research into the dynamics of church multiplication movements; and Dave Lawton for cultivating an expanding movement of missional communities in Melbourne and, now Sydney.

Of course, others have also made outstanding contributions as missional practitioners and thinkers – Mark Sayers (Über), Sarah Deutscher (Über), Tim Scheuer (Church Army), Bessie Pereira (Oikos) and Bill Hodgson (Campus Crusade for Christ), to name just a few. The real heroes, however, are the unknown players – people like Lee and Norman, and Chris and Dean. They represent a growing number of Australians who are cultivating a movement of fresh expressions.

1.2 The Movement Leaders and Thinkers are Practitioners

Lee and Norman: From a New Age and totally non-church background, Lee, was introduced to Jesus Christ by a friend. She first experienced church in a charismatic setting. She enjoyed the enthusiasm but realized that her non-Christian friends would not understand what she was into – and, if they knew, would seek to rescue her! Because she was passionate about her new faith she wanted to learn, and signed up to study at the Wesleyan-Methodist Seminary, close to her home. There she experienced careful Bible reading, and there also she met Norman – another new Christian from a New Age heritage.

At a mission retreat, their shared convictions concerning both the gospel and the injustices of the world converged with their growing interest in each other and their visions of church being accessible to non-church friends. The church planting models they looked at did not appeal. They opened a *fair-trade* shop, JustPlanet, in Sunbury – the dormitory city northwest of Melbourne where they lived. They wanted to address injustices perpetrated in the global south. They incorporated a small café into this venture as an environment to interact more relationally with clients – to cultivate conversations, gatherings or church around food, Bible reading, worship and prayer. Recently they have opened another JustPlanet Café in Bendigo and hope to multiply a movement of fresh expressions in this way.

It has taken sacrifice. Lee and Norman live frugally and have really appreciated (and needed) a small reducing allocation from the Wesleyan-Methodists – designed to encourage while also avoiding dependency. They also value the accountability that comes with such denominational connections.

Chris and Dean: In contrast, Chris and Dean both had church background. They are passionate about Jesus Christ and for many years have sought to address the injustices of the world through a network of children's care homes. Also, they have been involved in new church plants within denominational structures. However, this has not always been a happy experience. So, rather than remaining frustrated, they do church outside denominational input – gathering and multiplying new faith communities. And since they have chosen to actively live by the principle of 'loving the person God puts in front of you' many opportunities to share faith have come – including some that have been inconvenient!

Chris and Dean are convinced that church is 'doing life together' – and the best way to do this is around meals! Worship is a gathering for a meal – and interaction. 'Every gift of food is welcomed, and I make a fuss over the dishes that new friends bring,' says Dean. 'We eat, we share!' Because a house church can be insular – a huddle that does not interact with those around, they alternate between gathering for a BBQ in a park and meeting at their home. The BBQ in the park every second week attracts people. All who walk by are invited to join them for food, games or just to chat. Key people in their community of faith today were first found in the park. The gathering in their home every other week now regularly numbers 15-25 adults and about the same number of children – most without previous church or faith connections.

The fortnightly home gathering also revolves around a meal – which is always followed by a blessing. 'Every time we gather we take our children on our knees - or we kneel before them, and express our thanks for them, telling each child individually what we appreciate about them and what blessing we desire for them,' Chris and Dean explain. 'People without a Christian background quickly catch on - and get involved, blessing their children!' For those who are couples, husbands also bless their wives. The practice is taken from the Jewish blessing of families each Shabbat – 'and children and families love it!' Following 'the blessing' there may be 15-20 minutes exploring the Bible – and people are encouraged to read through books of the Bible in their homes.

Like the higher profile advocates of fresh expressions Lee, Norman, Chris and Dean are practitioners committed to movements. Neither the maintenance of existing churches, nor cloning them in new plants, motivates them. Like the others who are cultivating fresh expressions across Australia, they are passionate about –

- Sharing their relationship with Jesus.
- Addressing the injustices of society.
- Being at the same time skilled and involved in practical missional service.
- Living for others – sacrificially giving themselves, money and time.
- Movements – the multiplication of gatherings to share the gospel.

Their experiences and responses to structured inherited forms of church are varied. Frost and Hirsch have been strident in their treatment of Christendom forms of church.³¹ Many, like Chris and Dean, have decided that working within hierarchical denominational systems – seeking permission, is too difficult.

Others, like Lee and Norman, value the accountability and connection that denominational churches provide – while cognizant of the reality that Christendom is dead and denominationalism is passé to most Australian. All agree with Frost, however, in saying that twenty-first century Christians 'must reposition (themselves) chiefly, first and foremost, as people of the way of Christ.'³²

1.3 The Frames being used suggest a Convergence of Inspiration

There is enormous diversity in the forms and practice of churches being fostered – simple, house, park, community, café, conversational, liturgical, etc. However, there is a surprising synergy in the biblical and theological foundations being explored. *Missio Dei* or all mission flowing from God's heart, is one such frame commonly applied. Another is Trinitarian community – God seeking reconciliation for he is relational.

Then there is the kingdom focus – and the role of church as God's agency to extend his kingdom, rather than being an end in itself. While there are frequent references to pre and post Christendom or Constantinian forms of church, any deconstruction of ecclesiology is informed by the biblical data and metaphors of church, which is taken very seriously.

Frost and Hirsch's three foundational principles of missional churches – incarnational, messianic and apostolic,³³ are shaping these Australian fresh expressions. The old debate over the priority of personal salvation or social action (or vice-versa) has given way to the recognition that the good-news is about both. Eschatology is also a common frame, but 'movements' is the overarching reference. God has called disciples to multiply and reach the world with the gospel.

It all begins with discipleship. That is what Jesus said to do, 'go and make disciples.' (Matt 28:19) When disciples gather you have churches. The frames being used for discipleship, church planting and movements in Australia suggests a convergence of inspiration. Within the last two years –

- *Church Resource Ministries* has introduced practitioners from the movements of China; organized visits by potential movement leaders and practitioners to learn from Ralph Moore; and hosted reproducible T4T (training for trainers) with Jeff Sundell who has worked with movements in Nepal and India.
- *Oikos Australia* has sponsored a series of workshops around Australia with Tony and Felicity Dale of *house2house*, emphasizing the same reproducible principles and using the same basic biblical frames.
- The Crossway conferences of the last two years have explored church planting movements – 2009 with Bob Roberts and Dave Lawton’s teaching, and in 2010 with Gene Appel and Mark Sayers.
- *Campus Crusade for Christ* has made church movements a priority. Bill Hodgson, national director, has introduced *Shift: m2M* – with groups of practitioners identifying with the way Jesus equipped a movement.
- Alex Absalom explored the basics of discipleship – with a special emphasis upon transforming existing established churches into missional communities in the *3DM* summits organized by local church practitioners in 2010.

I observe four essential frames being used in these equipping opportunities and by local planters of fresh expressions in Australia. The first comes from Jesus’ instruction to ‘make disciples’ (Matthew 28); the second from his kingdom parables (Mark 4); the third from Jesus’ training for his disciples on how to do evangelism (Luke 10); and, the fourth from Paul’s ‘master story’ for life and church (Philippians 2).

1. Disciples multiply in relational streams (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus said to ‘make disciples’ of every *ethne*. (Matt 28:19) The *ethne* of Jesus’ time is not the nation or national entities of today. *Ethne* are the multiple relational streams found in each society.

Jesus was calling his followers to reach across into Gentile communities – and into new relational streams. In first century times, the *oikos* – the extended household of slaves, servants, children, spouse and relatives was an *ethne*. In today’s world, there are diverse relational streams - including the social networks of Facebook and Twitter.

Donald McGavran’s thesis in **The Bridges of God**,³⁴ written towards the end of 32 years as a missionary in India, was: the nineteenth century *Mission Station Approach* is ineffective, Christianity has only ever effectively multiplied out through relational streams! This he supported with biblical, theological and sociological evidence. Unfortunately, his message was lost in the popularization of *church growth*, the brand exported to Australia – perhaps hijacked by those with vested interests in maintaining Christendom forms of church.³⁵

These two approaches are contrasted – and the essence of the Relational Streams Approach is summarized, in Figures 1 and 2.

With the *Mission Station Approach* a compound or campus may be established – even with houses for pastors/leaders; and perhaps a church structure built. Individuals from a variety of unrelated streams are converted and a small church is gathered. A school is established – and maybe publishing or media facilities and a community health or life centre. Each attracts participants, but the church remains small and usually a relatively unsuccessful entity on the side.

The educational, media and community facilities become the employers – of the members first, and then others. Employees may connect to the church – but their primary mission is their work and the successful operation of the mission. The tuning of systems and the polishing of policies become the priority.

There is the hope that one-day the school, media-centre and health work will produce followers of Jesus. But, if this does happen, those fostering this *Mission Station Approach* are rarely ready or equipped to facilitate a movement of disciples.

By the mid-fifties McGavran was sure that this approach – an invention of nineteenth century missions, was not working. And, the practitioners and proponents of fresh expressions are convinced of the same. They find their frame in what I call the *Relational Streams Approach*.³⁶

Every society is made up of a mosaic of relational streams. These are the relationships where life is lived, support is found, families are formed and decisions are made. While *oikos* is not found in most global north or western cultures, relational streams are strong. McGavran observed that this is where Christian faith also streams – and multiplies. He argued that the apostle Paul connected to communities where he had relationships. Jesus identified the ‘person of peace’ (pp) (Luke 10:5) as key in each social stream – in each new town (Luke 10:1), *ethne* (Matt 28:19) or *oikos* (Acts 16:15, 31).

New believers from the same social stream, but not necessarily of the same rank or background or ethnicity, are gathered around this person. This is church. Once this person receives the gospel and is given simple reproducible processes, the Holy Spirit can be trusted both with this church and its multiplication.³⁷ The ‘bridges of God’ are those with relationships into un-entered streams. This frame is foundational to fresh expressions today.

The second essential frame being explored in Australian settings is –

2. The kingdom parables – working the four fields (Mark 4:26-29)

These parables disclose ‘the secret of the kingdom of God.’ (Mark 4:11) The ‘good soil’ – full of manure and turned over, produces a ‘multiplying’ crop. (Mark 4:8) The parable of the growing seed suggests ‘four fields’ of activity – the empty, seeded, growing and harvest fields. (Mark 4:26-29) Figure 3 illustrates these.

Fresh expressions practitioners examine new communities and un-entered streams to ask: How do we enter? What do we sow? How do we cultivate growth – ‘all by itself’ (Mark 4:28)? How do we gather the harvest? And, a critical question is: Why do we gather the crop? Farmers in the Middle East harvest to sow into the fields in the next season. They keep the best to plant again – to multiply.³⁸ This is a foundational frame.

The third frame being used in equipping for fresh expressions in Australia provides answers to questions posed by the four fields. It is the frame of Luke 10:1-24 –

3. Jesus taught evangelism, gathering and multiplication (Luke 10:1-24)

Jesus’ ministry formed the foundations for a movement. He modeled and taught how to make disciples. This is the frame for Campus Crusade for Christ’s *Shift: m2M* process. This is the frame for David Lawton’s steps for planting churches – basic to his movements thinking. Figure 4 illustrates the process Jesus taught and the six steps to planting churches that multiply.³⁹

The six steps to plant multiplying churches, in Luke 10, are –

1. **Pray** for the harvest and workers. 10:1-4.
2. **Connect** into the relational streams through the ‘person of peace’. 10:5-7.
3. **Sow** gospel seed into the ‘person of peace’. 10:8, 9.

Regular focused and passionate prayer opens the disciple to God’s intention – and his activity in the harvest. Those praying listen and approach homes and those in shopping centers that God may be drawing them to – to cultivate relationships. Connection is made into relational streams through eating their food and ‘healing’ – and, ‘as you heal’ (10:8, 9 NLT), Jesus said, share the story of God’s grace in language they understand.

It has been found that encouragement to read the Gospel of Mark – using simply discussion questions, opens the way for ‘persons of peace’ to sow the gospel into their relational stream. Five questions: (1) what is new? (2) What do we not like? (3) What do we not understand? (4) What will we apply to our lives? and (5) what will we share with others this week? – provide a simple process for reading through the chapters and stories of the Gospel.

Confidence and faith in Jesus develops – with growth and gathering.

4. **Grow** through service and making disciples.
5. **Gather** people who are part of the relational stream.

Other stories from the life of Jesus can be read to explore ‘the elementary teachings about Christ’ – repentance,⁴⁰ faith, baptisms, ‘laying on of hands’, resurrection, and judgment. (Heb 6:1-3) Other books of the Bible will be explored – Acts, John, the epistles, etc. Those within the relational stream gather for food and grow in their relationship with Jesus. As people become disciples, new churches form. In serving they grow and multiply.

6. **Multiply** into new relational streams (fields) through the ‘bridges of God’.

Those with connections into other relational streams pray, connect and sow the gospel into those – and other ‘persons of peace’ come to know the gospel.

What Jesus taught (Luke 10), he modeled (Luke 19). The apostle Paul followed the same basic movements *relational streams approach*. This can be illustrated from his ministry in Philippi – where he sowed into Lydia’s *oikos* and then into the jailer’s. (Acts 16:11-40) From Ephesus he sent out ‘persons of peace’ into their streams to sow the gospel and plant gatherings (Acts 19:8-10) – multiplying churches in their homes. (See Colossians 4:13-17; Philemon 1-2.)

The fourth essential frame for fresh expressions is –

4. Church is to be ‘the (cruciform) body of Christ’ (Phil 2:1-11)

This is a radical countercultural principle described by Michael Gorman as ‘cruciformity.’ It describes the church that lives in ‘conformity to the crucified Christ.’⁴¹ Gorman sees Paul’s adaptation of the pre-Pauline hymn in his letter to the Philippians as the *master story*.⁴² This is the story of Jesus who, ‘because’⁴³ he was ‘in very nature God,’ chose the humiliation of slavery and ‘death on a cross’ – and is now raised and exalted as our Lord. Paul contends that those ‘united with Christ’ and in ‘fellowship with the Spirit’ will share this same ‘attitude’ (NIV) or ‘mind.’ (RSV)

Gorman argues that Paul’s purpose was not to teach theology but to transform lives and patterns of experience. His focus was upon the One he met alive on the Damascus Road. Figure 5 depicts the story of Jesus – the life cycle of the King of status-reversal, God incarnate!

Born in a manger, welcomed by foreigners, pursued to the land of slavery (Egypt), anointed at the Jordan, led by the Spirit to temptation – ‘glorified’ when lifted onto a Roman cross. (John 12:23-34) Saved by Jesus’ death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:1-5); Paul’s life, ministry and communities were to be a metaphor of this gospel story. His cosmology was shaped by this story of status reversal – a God of mutual subordination. His intention was that people could imitate his life – and know Jesus; that his ministry would reflect Jesus’ ministry; and that his church communities would portray what God is like!

Paul’s radical cosmology shaped his counter-cultural churches. (See Figure 6) It was counter-cultural in Paul’s time – and is so today. His church communities had no hierarchies – like the religions and political systems of his day. Paul had no place for the *kleros-laos* divide of Greek cosmology. Paul did not use the word *kleros*. In his church communities all believers were *diakonos* (ministers) and *laos* (or *idiotes*) for God!

Fresh expressions are not proponents of a deconstructionist ecclesiology – but they seek expressions of church that resonate with early church. They seek biblical models, and those that positively manifest ‘the body of Christ’. They affirm organization, but most are somewhat skeptical of ‘The Church as Institution.’⁴⁴ Like the apostle, they seek something ‘more organic, more communitarian, more mystical.’⁴⁵

There is a surprising synergy of thought and commitment to these frames among those committed to movements of fresh expressions.

1.6 Conclusion

At this stage there is no indication of a widespread spontaneous movement of fresh expressions in Australia. Those dissatisfied or burnt by church are mostly just dropping out. Rachel and Josh⁴⁶ represent these. 'Church doesn't seem connected to life!' they say. In recent times they have rarely attended church – but are again seeking one that is 'not just a performance, but a church that is participatory, where the Bible is read and applied!' They are now considering cultivating a new community of faith for their de-churched and un-churched friends and acquaintances.

In late 2010 David Lawton – with the vision of planting hundreds of churches across Australia; took a group from new church plants to sit at the feet of movement leaders in India. I asked Dave, 'What did you and your planters see as key factors behind these movements?'

Dave responded, 'First, constant passionate prayer - a hunger for a closer relationship with God and the activity of his Spirit in mission.' 'Second, a boldness in telling the story of Jesus - not good advice, but the story of Jesus and his love, his death and resurrection!' And, Dave made the point: 'In almost 100% of new churches – in the exploding church planting movements of India, miracles are opening the way!'

This resonates with fresh expressions of church in Australia. The inspiration comes from the early Christians who knew how to pray, were filled with the Holy Spirit, and were passionate about Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

The Australian church in mission in the post-modernism context

John D'Alton

John D'Alton has been involved in planting "emerging churches" in cafes and non-traditional locations, with Ravers, New-Agers and Goths etc since 1981, spent several years with his wife and children in mission work in the slums of India, and was on Tabor Victoria faculty for 5 years. He is currently an Antiochian Orthodox priest engaged in incarnational church-planting with various New Age and other sub-cultures, a Monash university PhD candidate writing a thesis on Muslim-Christian interfaith relations and notions of jihad and spiritual struggle, and managing editor of Monash's ERAS history journal.

Postmodernism has raised many issues for Australian churches engaging in mission. New questions of culture, identity, relativism, pluralism, power, community, tradition and mystery are not answered by the modern worldview, and this requires churches to undertake serious study and self-critique. Local church mission that ignores these issues is seen as irrelevant by post-moderns, but churches that engage the current issues stand a better chance of being effective in mission.

Introduction

There are a whole constellation of issues currently facing Australian churches in relation to local mission, most of which are either integral to, or are significantly heightened by, the present situation of post-modernism. These are generally not specific to Australia but exist in most other Western countries as well, but some are particularly problematic given Australians' view of authority. Many of the issues facing local church mission in a post-modern milieu already existed in some form during the "modern" era, however due to the peculiar nature of the post-modern worldview and context, these issues attain a new significance. This paper therefore will discuss these ongoing issues especially with regards their current manifestation as part of post-modernism. It will briefly note some main features of post-modernism *per se* and then explore a range of issues, discussing appropriate church mission responses, including the practical initiatives required to deal with these issues.

Postmodernism

Harris states that post-modernism "is not the AntiChrist", nor a threat to the Christian gospel.⁴⁷ She agrees with Packer who stated that post-modernism is simply the "negation of modernism".⁴⁸ Post-modernism is both a rejection of the modern worldview, and also a label for what is happening in culture after modernism.⁴⁹ As such it is difficult to define, yet contains a number of values and realities that significantly impact on mission. Some of the main defining values of post-modernism are diversity, tolerance, pluralism and relativism, the rejection of all metanarratives, the critique of power, anti-rationalism, and general scepticism. Some major realities of the post-modern situation are globalism, loss of personal identity, dominance by the media, global environmental degradation, and a growing confusion among Christians about a wide range of issues.⁵⁰

While this paper assumes that post-modernism is no better or worse than modernism, but is simply a challenge to face, it is understood that many Christians see post-modernism as a fundamental threat to Christianity that must be rejected in all its aspects.⁵¹ However, some Christians have seen in post-modernism a positive opportunity to undo some of the errors of modernism which hinder mission.⁵² This paper assumes that post-modernism as a social phenomena will not dissipate quickly, and thus the opportunity it brings should be seriously grasped. Local Australian churches need to undertake a major rethink and bravely engage the post-modern context.

Gospel and culture

How the gospel relates to local cultures has become "the burning missiological issue of our times".⁵³ While this issue was addressed recurrently throughout the twentieth century, it has become almost the dominant mission issue since 1970.⁵⁴ Globalisation, de-colonialisation and increased travel have raised many questions about the nature of the gospel and appropriate contextualisation. The loss of certainty and the dominance of relativism associated with post-modernism has accentuated this issue.⁵⁵ Christians are often uncertain about the relative value of one culture *vis-a-vis* another, and the loss of confidently-held reference points has made it difficult to either embrace or reject local

cultural elements. In overseas contexts this has often resulted in over-accommodation to the local culture or to a fearful rejection of local culture.⁵⁶ In Australia, with the growth in social presence of many cultures, some Christian churches also wrestle with these two extremes.

Scherer and Bevans argue that the increased acceptance of “cultural pluralism” as an appropriate response to God’s creation of cultures has caused a more profound re-thinking of church mission strategy than the earlier concepts of indigenisation.⁵⁷ Receptor cultures must now have a place in the contextualisation process rather than simply be the targets of Western mission “adaptation” approaches.⁵⁸ This is true both for overseas and for a local church in Sydney or Alice Springs. The post-modern emphasis on diversity, pluralism and equality of viewpoints pressures Christians to seriously contextualise their faith in active partnership with local Christians.⁵⁹ This is in contrast with an earlier phase of “partnership” from the standpoint of an unstated assumption of Western superiority. Overall this is a healthy development, yet the focus on cultural pluralism without a framework for critiquing cultures can result in over-accommodation. Given that the gospel has often been over-accommodated to Western cultures the continuation of this trend due to post-modern pluralism is a real danger.⁶⁰

While it is generally accepted that there are elements of cultures that are evil and life-denying and hence require rejection or transformation, the post-modern worldview makes it difficult to establish reference points or a framework for discerning which elements these are.⁶¹ As everyone has their own standpoint, and in post-modernism all standpoints are esteemed “equal”, then who can decide what parts of cultures are evil? Walls argues that the two polarities of cultural accommodation and cultural critique must be held in tension, and that this requires global level cultural interaction for authentic witness.⁶² Such mutual critique holds the key to overcoming the relativism and confusion that accompanies post-modernism.⁶³

But it difficult to see how this can be easily applied by a local church in Australia. In a culture where complex issues of consumerism, blurred identity, sexual identity politics, frequent social drug-use etc are becoming normalised, how does the church engage in intelligent mission? Churches need to train their people to engage in this global cultural dialogue and maintain the tension between accommodation and critique. The churches they plant must be likewise trained to “distinguish between the need for a contextualised church and a theological critique of the context”.⁶⁴ Both local and overseas missionaries need to be trained to understand the theological basis for critical contextual mission, and to understand the historic developments around this issue. Major authors and documents from the twentieth century must be essential reading for all mission leaders lest they simply repeat the mistakes of the past. Structures need to be implemented to ensure that healthy inter-cultural consultation occurs to minimise syncretism. This is not an easy task. Churches need to allocate substantial resources to this training and re-training, as the issues are likely to grow in complexity. Some church leaders will also need training in the inherent issues of epistemology and semiotics to be able to follow the cultural debates and formulate Biblical cultural engagement principles.

Other religions

This cultural pluralism has also caused a major questioning of the exclusive claims of the Christian gospel *vis-a-vis* other religions, which has undermined the motivation for mission of some churches. This questioning has led to a number of new theories regarding the relation of Christian faith to other religions, with some missionaries and churches adopting the views of Hick and Rahner etc.⁶⁵ Dialogue has sometimes completely replaced evangelism, and some Christians have often been unprepared to address the questions raised by Hick. This does not impress post-moderns.

Churches need to rediscover a theology of mission that simultaneously embraces the reality of diverse standpoints while affirming the ultimate truth claims of Christ.⁶⁶ Australian church leaders need to be exposed to other religions and trained to understand them from within their own frameworks. It would be valuable to learn how to engage members of other faith groups in non-polemical ways.

Cities

Cities bring specific challenges for mission like poverty, drugs, pollution and crime. Post-modernism has exacerbated these issues and many Western Christians, trained in a worldview that has “modern” and rural roots, are unable to relate to the lives and issues of city dwellers.⁶⁷ When they bring a

“modern” gospel they find it difficult to connect with the plethora of post-modern issues facing a socially-networked world citizen. They do not understand the post-modern concerns with identity, “reality”, community, consumerism, nihilism etc and their mission thus seems ineffective. The typical Australian local church is structured around either rural or 1970s culture issues. Few urban churches understand the desires and identity issues of the “Facebook” generation.

Churches and missions cannot ignore the fact of increasing urbanisation and new forms of social connection. They should not see cities as necessarily evil, but focus on the positive benefits of urban life while clarifying the negatives. Churches need to reflect on the ways in which they unconsciously maintain a rural cultural framework, and then become more urban and “street-smart” in structure, presentation and practice.⁶⁸ They need to train their members to understand how urban social networks can be a bridge for the gospel.

Churches also need to teach Christians to deal with the negative sides of city life like prostitution, drug-use, high crime rates, family breakdown etc.⁶⁹ This will mean focussed training on drug-rehabilitation counselling, training on family counselling and community-building, and training in dealing with the ethical issues of consumerism etc. that are especially characteristic of city life.

Post-modern attitudes to work

In contrast to the previous generation’s strong “work ethic”, post-modern people “work to live”. They do not structure life around their work or mission nor do they follow a tidy schedule. They “multi-task” to fit more into life - for example, using their laptop to prepare a report while waiting at the airport.⁷⁰

In post-modern culture, work is expected to be a flexible, relational, satisfying experience, preferably involving some international travel. Fulfilment is seen as more important than company loyalty or longevity. Post-moderns are likely to completely change “careers” several times over their life. If work can not be made to fit around family and interests, then it is most likely work that suffers, in stark contrast to the situation for earlier generations.

Churches must recognise that post-modern work-styles will clash with the modern approach to outreach with its six week courses and frequent regular commitments. They cannot expect their people to work such long hours in the traditional structured way nor participate in church as before. Churches will need to allow the new generation to create their own flexible patterns of mission and work that includes lots of travel and multi-tasking. Mission teams will need to decentralise and operate with “virtual offices”.

Post-modern leadership and power and the questioning of meta-narratives

Post-moderns desire authenticity in themselves and their leaders, and simply won’t follow modern leaders who don’t rate high on relational authenticity and vulnerability.⁷¹ The authoritarian style of modern leaders doesn’t work with post-moderns. They instead follow leaders who lead by example and demonstrate the kind of truthful, sacrificial yet rich lifestyle that post-moderns desire.⁷² The film “Fightclub” exemplifies this post-modern attraction to authentic highly committed relational leadership, although it does show some elements of cult-like activity which seems more an evidence of post-post-modernism. Modern church leadership, in contrast, has often been tainted with pragmatism and a non-relational style.⁷³ For moderns, power is simply a function of position and leadership, fixed by the church’s organisation chart. For post-moderns, power is questioned and deconstructed, and the hidden agendas of organisational structures are critiqued; indeed, a whole philosophy of power is everyday conversation.

This means that churches will need to embrace a major change in who is given leadership, and how older leaders function. With post-moderns, respect must be earned not enforced, so churches must provide ways for modern and post-modern leaders to work together so each other’s strengths can be seen, and for effective leadership to “emerge”.⁷⁴

The breakdown of the modern approach to power is especially seen in the rejection of authoritative Christian metanarrative. Harris describes how the understandings of Lyotard led to a complete rejection of all metanarratives and a deconstructing of the abusive power agenda inherent in metanarratives.⁷⁵ This scepticism of power and “story” is a defining feature of postmodernism and makes it difficult for churches to assert anything.⁷⁶ Both the metanarrative of “world evangelisation” as

well as the daily maintenance of organisational structures raise issues of power for post-moderns, and moderns find this continuous questioning confusing and threatening.

Churches would do well to learn to understand deconstructionism and respond unthreateningly to this questioning of power and metanarrative. Modern leaders need to be trained in post-modern theory and demonstrate that they understand the nature of power.⁷⁷ Churches must become highly transparent about power and quick to challenge all abuses. An effective apologetic could be developed that is based on Jesus' own critique of inappropriate power relations, which is then lived out by all church leaders.

Tradition and mystery

Many young people today are re-embracing ancient tradition as part of their spirituality. Whether this is more typically a post-modern "selecting from multiple options" activity or evidence of an emerging post-post-modernism is still being debated. But either way it is certainly not a "modern" activity. Modernism usually rejects the past and assumes that the new and innovative is better.⁷⁸ Post-moderns however are keen to discover answers to their search, from any period in history.

Carroll notes that many Christian under-30s are flocking to churches that emphasise tradition and ancient practices, where there is a sense of history and stability.⁷⁹ Even many of the new "emerging churches" are actively introducing elements from the past like labyrinths, candles and even liturgy. Carroll suggests that "orthodoxy thrives in pluralism" possibly because it provides objectivity amidst the flood of relativism.⁸⁰

Modern churches usually have quite a negative attitude to the ancient, as modernism places high value on the new and innovative. Hence it will be very difficult for some Protestant churches in particular to respond to this trend as it directly challenges many of their worldview assumptions. However if churches are to hold post-modern people they need to embrace the best of the past, reintroduce ancient worship and lifestyle patterns, and re-balance the "new" with a healthy regard for the "old". They must train people to plant churches that are rooted both in the present and the past.⁸¹

A related issue is the place of the mysterious and sacred within the post-modern environment. In reaction to the rational, technological, modern era, post-modernism is often characterised by a search for the sacred and supernatural.⁸² Yet most of the Western church is firmly rooted in the modern era and according to Drane may be one of the last bastions of a "rationalist/materialistic" worldview.⁸³ Western Protestant churches generally still place a very low value on mystery, and have been fearful or neglectful of the rise of "New Age" spirituality.⁸⁴

Churches must learn about the post-modern and "New Age" quest for the mysterious and for "everyday spirituality". Christians need to be trained in how to relate to New Agers, and assisted to actually develop for themselves an authentic spirituality that affirms the sacred. The ancient approaches to evangelism and church that emphasised the sacred must be explored and adapted for today.⁸⁵

Community

Unlike the rugged individualism characteristic of modernism, post-moderns have a strong desire for community. They often come from dysfunctional family and community backgrounds and are hungry for deeply relational community.⁸⁶ Yet at the same time they often lack the experience and maturity to create sustainable community. This is an enormous challenge for churches. Churches in Australia have traditionally related to new Christians individualistically, but post-moderns seek an all-encompassing family-like support network they can journey with for years.⁸⁷

Bolsinger suggests that "it takes a church to raise a Christian", and a growing number of post-modern Christians would agree.⁸⁸ Spiritual formation more readily occurs within committed relationships, and post-moderns look for diverse community as a place to be 'at home'. Community is essential for identity formation and as a reference point for interpreting truth.⁸⁹ Community is also important in assisting spiritual growth, and post-moderns are looking for communal engagement in the ancient spiritual practices because they find that they work.⁹⁰ Hence churches need to rediscover the importance of community from a Biblical perspective, and understand the relational needs and aspirations of post-modern Christians. They need to consider reorganising their mission around teams, and create a strong sense of family and community.

An integral part of community is mentoring, which has become a significant trend in post-modern business. Churches that want to be effective need to adopt mentoring processes including the use of spiritual directors, peer mentoring, team coaching etc.⁹¹ Churches also need to train their staff in communal spiritual practices like fasting, vigils, liturgy, scripture memorisation etc.

Moral and theological relativism

Erickson states that “absolute moral relativism ... has become a new kind of dogmatism”.⁹² Post-modernism is built around relativism and “narcissistic hedonism”, which in many cases has led to enormous identity pain and personal grief especially due to sexual immorality.⁹³ Many post-modern Christians also embrace minimal standards, sometimes in reaction to the perceived rules-based morality of the modern generations. Yet in counter-reaction, other post-moderns are returning to strict codes of conduct.⁹⁴

In this context of widespread moral confusion, churches must develop an approach to standards that recognises the issues as seen by post-moderns. This means that standards must be argued for on the basis that morality is good for us, rather than emphasising rules *per se*. This is somewhat similar to the repeated explanation in Deuteronomy that God’s law is for our good (for example Deut 6: 3, 18, 24). At the same time, churches must contend for the existence of cross-culturally valid moral principles that need to be applied in specific cultural contexts.

An increasing number of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians are disturbed by the disunity and fragmentary and contradictory theological positions that characterise genuine godly Christians.⁹⁵ They cannot reconcile such contradiction and disunity with Christ’s concern that the church remain one (Jn 17:21). Yet some “modern” theologians simply dismiss other views and retreat to their rationalist systematic theologies. To the percentage of post-moderns who are searching for “reality” and “answers” this seems to demonstrate a high level of theological relativism.

The endless search for truth and the critiquing of modern positions has led some on a journey back to early church positions on many issues. Oden calls this “paleo-orthodoxy”, and Erickson notes that Oden’s position is a response to modernism and is itself part of post-modernism.⁹⁶ Cooper suggests that “cultural fragmentation, pluralization and globalization have raised the issue of identity in fresh ways” and notes that Christians are increasingly asking what being a Christian really means.⁹⁷

Local churches need to recognise the confusion and idealism of post-modern Christians and develop an appropriate response. Merely answering “that’s the way it is” will no longer work. Churches need to be able to empathically (not argumentatively) explain their theological positions in a way that does not appear relativist to post-moderns. Recovering a sense of history and “roots” is essential for Christian mission. In a country like Australia with its very short non-indigenous history, this may be even more important than in the USA and the UK.

Personal identity in a post-modern culture

While there was a growing questioning concerning human identity under modernism, it is under post-modernism that this has become most profound. Since 1980 virtually all the traditional reference points defining the human have been challenged, leaving post-moderns with a confusing array of media-generated images to select from. Roxburgh notes that “when one is constantly making oneself over anew, one ‘disappears’ ... there is no longer an ‘I’ at the centre”.⁹⁸ Philosophers like Peter Singer have redefined humans as of no more worth than animals, and the nihilism of Camus etc has completely invaded public consciousness.⁹⁹ Movies like “The Matrix” have defined humans as disembodied consciousness somewhat akin to Buddhist beliefs, and the growing number of Western youth attracted to Buddhism demonstrates that this is significant. Post-moderns are confused about who they are and whether their life has any meaning or significance.

Within this context mission is forced to start with very basic philosophical questions before it can begin “traditional evangelism”. Churches cannot avoid dealing with the basic question of what a human really is and what he/she is worth. They need to understand this post-modern loss of identity and train Christians in how to address these philosophical questions. Both local and overseas mission workers will also need counselling help to deal with their own identity confusion before being sent out, and given the time needed to resolve these issues when inevitably they arise again later. Given the sometimes “modern” approach of the churches “using” mission workers, churches need to

modify their beliefs and behaviour about the value of people and what this means for treatment of staff. Post-moderns will not stay with a church that treats members merely as interchangeable “cogs” in their mission machine. Churches will need to challenge the prevailing media stereotypes of “success” and re-educate members in what really makes a person “human”. This may sometimes include challenging the views of some older leaders when they present a model of the person that is more aligned to the “consumer-human” presented by Western media.

Corporate identity

Closely tied to the previous issue is the growing question of what defines the church. In the middle of the growing confusion over whether truth even matters, the loss of personal identity markers, and collapse of many traditional structures, post-moderns ask what exactly is the church.¹⁰⁰ Is it simply another human organisation that can and should be deconstructed? Or is it a divine-human institution carrying unique spiritual energy that will carry post-moderns on their journey?

Some Christians have argued that the church is antiquated and largely irrelevant, even arguing for a “churchless Christianity”. In some ways this appeals to post-moderns who generally reject any absolute reference points. Roxburgh is concerned about the “stunning absence” of serious study of the nature of the church among post-modern emerging churches. He contends that post-modern Christians have largely adopted post-modern ideals for the church and assumed that “new” is better.¹⁰¹

Yet others have seen in the church an essential element in a healthy spiritual life. Bolsinger notes that the church as community is the basic context for real growth.¹⁰² Some Evangelicals have gone further and re-discovered the traditional theology of the church as being pre-eminently an eucharistic organism that provides a locus of identity and of spiritual healing and growth. This rediscovery has led to a reappraisal of the identity of individual Christians and of the whole church.¹⁰³ In this framework, personal identity is directly linked to corporate identity and is contingent upon it.¹⁰⁴

Related to this has been a growing awareness that the church is meant to be a missional community. While not a particularly new insight, within the post-modern context of loss of meaning, this renewed awareness powerfully functions to provide a new metanarrative for confused Christians. Yannoulatos writes that mission is the “essence” of the church, and “in the DNA” of the church.¹⁰⁵ Mission is that central to the corporate identity of Christians, and a responsibility of every Christian.¹⁰⁶ Further, the church is not fundamentally a club nor a democracy, but the people belonging to God.¹⁰⁷

Given this re-thinking of the nature and mission of the church, churches need to grapple with the theological and psychological importance of seeing the church as a missional community. At the same time churches must be careful to maintain an emphasis on being a worshipping community and ensure that mission is neither neglected nor over-emphasised. This requires significant theologising and training of church members.

Postmodernism, globalisation and the response to evil

While global issues like environmental degradation, poverty and unjust trade have been issues before post-modern times, yet the increase in travel and global information explosion means that these issues are extremely significant for post-moderns.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, many are confused about what can actually be done to correct these problems, and move to depression and apathy.¹⁰⁹

Local church mission that ignores these issues is irrelevant to post-moderns.¹¹⁰ A gospel that sees the answer as simply waiting for heaven will not impact post-moderns, but a church that is over-engaged in solving these issues will not be sustainable either. Churches need to clarify their theology of human stewardship for creation and steer a line between the two extreme currents of other-worldly millenarianism and liberation theology.¹¹¹ This means for example reflecting on the theology of *Christus victor* and developing a holistic mission strategy and training that includes topics such as micro-enterprise development, environmental management, critique of unjust global trade rules, use of social networking etc.¹¹²

Conclusion

The wide range of issues raised for churches by the post-modern context seems quite daunting, yet in many ways this is an opportunity to overcome some of the problems associated with “modern”

church. Local churches need to engage in significant study of these issues and initiate many new approaches, but those churches that are willing to do so will be those most able to impact the twenty-first century. The range of elements dealt with in this paper demonstrate that post-modernism as an encompassing phenomena has created new challenges and heightened others. Post-modernism is a phase in history that may last for at least a generation, but if churches implement some of the initiatives outlined above then it need not be a crisis for them. Australian churches that bravely and intelligently understand post-modernism and respond appropriately may even thrive.

Young adult evangelism in contemporary Australian society

Sam Farmilo

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The effect of culture on the faith of young adults is pervasive and dramatically affects the nature of their faith and so requires careful analysis. Churches and evangelistic organisations need to be aware of and understand the implications aspects of culture have on young adult faith and their endeavours (or lack thereof) to evangelise. This article will explore the effects that four specific aspects of culture have on the faith of young adults: consumerism, media, diversity and “nice-faith”. It will state possible ways forward for the church and evangelistic organisations to consider, to ensure vibrant faith is formed in young adults and see them equipped for evangelism. Because of this writer’s experience, the ministry of Alpha will be exclusively focused on instead of those of other evangelistic organisations.

Introduction

Young adults are growing up in a culture and a society where for the first time in human history the structure for their beliefs and values is being conveyed by those who have something to sell, not by the traditional pillars of society such as parents, school or the church.¹¹³ Subsequently the spiritual landscape of this emerging generation is shifting. Although the truth of God does not vary from culture to culture, or generation to generation, words used to convey this unchanging message must always be chosen with deep sensitivity to the reigning culture. As Borgman highlights:

*We often overlook the necessity of an exegesis of culture or world in which we were raised and to which we minister.*¹¹⁴

There is more need now than ever before for the church and evangelistic organisations to have an intimate and growing knowledge of the message of God, but also of young adults and their culture.

As culture serves as a map to the heart of young adult spirituality, this article seeks to explore four defining markers of this “map” and the direct effects they have in dictating and fulfilling the spiritual yearnings of this generation. The four markers are consumerism, media, diversity and “nice-faith”. The article will then examine the kind of faith these markers are forming in young adults, that of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and proceed to explore some ways in which the church and evangelistic organisations can respond. Specifically, the article will focus on the ministry of Alpha and the influence it is having on young adults. It is important to note before we continue, that generalisation is a necessary aspect of diagnosing the cultural influences on a generation¹¹⁵ and the claims made in this essay are broad generalisations that typify the majority, but not all, of young adults in Australia today.

Deep hunger amongst young adults

Young adulthood is a distinct phase in human development between adolescence and adulthood.¹¹⁶ It is a phase of life in which questions regarding purpose, identity and belonging, such as “Who am I?”, “What gives my life purpose?”, and “Who is going on this journey with me?” are deeply explored. When one examines the Bible and ancient stories (such as those of Jacob and Esau), it is evident that such questions were answered by the faith of their fathers and the rituals and practices of their communities, showing what it was then to “embody a particular story of identity”.¹¹⁷ Young adults today are still seeking answers to these questions, and have the same hunger for meaning. This hunger remains unmet by the church¹¹⁸ as pop culture now rivals religion “as preacher and teacher, as storyteller, and as identity and community shaper”.¹¹⁹ Society as a whole, and young adults in

particular, are listening to the church less and less because they do not relate to the Word of God. Instead, people are seeing “other solutions; listening to other promises, and to other Gospels”.¹²⁰ It is through the vehicle of pop culture that young adults are expressing their spirituality, interests, dreams, fears, hopes and desires. It is important that evangelistic organisations and the church get to know pop culture and explore how to do mission within it.

In this changing spiritual landscape young adults no longer look to the church, or faith in Jesus Christ to meet this deep hunger swelling within them. In order to change this situation we must seek to understand the cultural forces shaping the head and heart commitments of young adults. Film maker Andrei Tarkovsky warns that:

*...modern mass culture, aimed at the ‘consumer’.... is crippling people’s souls, setting up barriers between [young adults] and the crucial questions of their existence, and their consciousness of themselves as a spiritual being.*¹²¹

To ignore culture is to risk irrelevance.¹²² This paper seeks to recognise the ways in which four aspects of culture are responding to young adults’ desire for meaning and spiritual hunger. Churches wishing to reach this generation need to examine their approach to evangelism to ensure they’re meeting these changing cultural trends.

The tapestry of culture

John Stott describes culture as “a tapestry, intricate and often beautiful, which is woven within a given society to express its corporate identity”.¹²³ From popular culture four markers have emerged to have the monopoly on the worldview of young adults. These markers of consumerism, media, diversity and “nice-faith” unite to form a large part of the tapestry that shapes and dictates the spirituality of young adults. It is these facets of society that demarcate their territory and shape their presuppositions, principles and convictions. They influence most thoughts, decisions, values, attitudes and behaviors of young adults and are replacing the void found in each human life for meaning and significance. The following sections examine how each marker is influencing faith and the sharing of that faith.

Marker #1: Hyper-consumerism

The first, and most prevalent, marker in the lives of young adults is hyper-consumerism. Isolated as the dominant motif of this age¹²⁴ hyper-consumerism is not simply limited to the way young adults shop, but rather forms a worldview which defines their whole life.¹²⁵ Because of this, the meaning, purpose and values of young adults are not found in personhood, religion or relationships but are dictated and defined by the products and experiences they consume.¹²⁶

The effect of hyper-consumerism on spirituality is devastating. As it meets the deep hunger in all young adults for meaning and purpose, hyper-consumerism has not only threatened the place of religion in their lives but has also rendered it void. For young adults, hyper-consumerism is arguably the new religion, with shopping centres as the new cathedrals. This new religion brings with it challenges to evangelism as it renders concepts of sin and salvation irrelevant because meaning and happiness can be found without God through that which can be purchased and consumed.¹²⁷

So pervasive is the attitude of consumption it has also affected the attitudes and behaviours of the church. The brand “Christian” has become distorted and faith is just something else to be consumed, utilised, and then discarded when something else meets that need.¹²⁸ Churches too have compromised on the challenge of the gospel, finding the pervasive voice of culture just too loud. Swapping mission for that which is cool, and discipleship for that which is most appealing, many churches and mission organisations are struggling to maintain the balance between truth and relevance. Some researchers maintain that some churches have sold out to religious marketing and spiritual consumerism. For example, Dean observes that churches have:

*...perfected a dicey codependence between consumer-driven therapeutic individualism and religious pragmatism.... eroding our ability to recognise that Jesus’ life of self-giving love directly challenges the [Western] gospel of self-fulfilment and self-actualization.*¹²⁹

Yet churches cannot make authentic disciples based on a consumerist approach to faith. Evangelism cannot become another “product” to “market” and churches cannot negotiate on truth for the sake of feeding consumer-driven young adults.¹³⁰ Churches that want to help equip Christian young adults to evangelise other young adults need to find their way back to the centre of Christianity and discover how the voice of faith can combat that of culture.

Hyper-consumerism would be nowhere without the direction of the media which feeds young adult's hunger for spirituality and meaning in the place of religion.

Marker #2: Media

The Media's affect on society and ability to define reality

The media is screaming powerful life-shaping messages with increasing frequency and depth into the lives of young adults. Although many advertisements may be seen as mere amusement or moneymaking schemes, their real purpose is education. As one of the major educators in society,¹³¹ the media has been attributed with being an inescapable and unrelenting marker of society that informs this generation as to who they are and who they are becoming.¹³² No other part of society is providing answers, and so this generation is turning to the media. The media is only too willing to respond by interpreting and defining the lives of young people, having developed the masterful ability to provide “maps of reality” that serve to guide young adults through the maze of adolescence into adulthood.

For young adults media goes beyond that of mere entertainment. George Barna has concluded that it:

*...produces a life philosophy for [young adults] to consider and follow; cultural heroes and role models to look up to and imitate; values and lifestyles to embrace; a common language to employ that sets them apart and provides a distinctive identity; and the opportunity to develop community.*¹³³

Media influences every area of their lives. The ability of the media to gratify the thoughts and feelings of this generation means that young adults have little time or desire for waiting, stopping and dwelling because they prefer distraction to depth. This means that any faith requiring time to “be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10), or to “wait on the Lord” (Is 40:31) grinds heavily against the culture that has been educating young people. Consequently, they either ignore faith altogether or accept the messages of the media in place of faith. The truth of Jesus is lost amidst the noise and promises of the media - a reality that the church has to wrestle with when it considers the nature of its mission and evangelism. As Rocker Darrell Abbott asserts, media is:

*...our f***ing religion. It's what drives me from the moment I wakes up to the moment I sleep.*¹³⁴

Undeniably a directive force, media is uniquely situated to fulfill instructional voids in the lives of young adults vacated by faith and the church. Young adults want to be certain about how to live and to understand why things happen the way they do and it is media that is helping them navigate their way through life.¹³⁵ Indeed:

*...whether we are experiencing the world through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera, our media-metaphors classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, color it, and argue a case for what the world is like.*¹³⁶

Rather than the stories of our forefathers, the history of our country or the truth of the gospel, it is the media that is deciding what stories define and shape the lives of this generation. Media substitutes the true gospel for a false gospel, one which is speaking loudly to the lives and hearts of young adults. The message of the gospel struggles to be heard amidst a barrage of voices claiming their product leads to fulfillment and happiness. This makes the task of evangelism a tough one as the media has mastered speaking to the fears and the hopes of this generation, leaving them with very little space or desire to hear what the church has to say.

Media is also profoundly shaping the nature of community - community is defined by how many “friends” you have on facebook. This results in a community that may be numerous and diverse, but contains very little depth, and few people who know the real person sitting behind the constructed online identity. It is these communities that are influencing the worldview and life goals of young adults. If the current situation is anything to go by, they will be adults obsessed with the immediate, the famous, and the materialistic. Staub laments the implication of this consumerist celebrity culture for relationships, recognising that young adults are a generation who know:

*...more about what's going on in the personal lives of celebrities than [they] do about [their] neighbors, coworkers, or even worse yet, [their] own family members.*¹³⁷

Media has become one of the most effective teachers, preachers and evangelists of our time. Even those blaring out these messages to young adults recognise the power of media to define reality. In lyrics from his landmark album *Born in the USA* Bruce Springsteen declared that:

...we busted out of class

had to get away from those fools

*we learnt more from a three-minute record than we ever learned in school.*¹³⁸

The forms of media influencing young adults today are far more diverse and pervasive than the songs Springsteen sang twenty-seven years ago.

Media as teacher

Despite the power of media for fostering consumerism and sub-Christian values, media can also help those wanting to understand and minister to this new “religion” of young adults. For many young adults media acts as a mirror, reflecting their deepest yearnings and desires. It is up to us to watch, listen and observe aspects of media as it echoes and gives voice to the heartbeat of young adults. Hans Rookmaaker comments:

*...if we want to help this generation we must hear their cry. We must listen to them as they cry out from their prison, the prison of a universe which is aimless, meaningless, and absurd.*¹³⁹

Perhaps the question for those interested in evangelism becomes, how do we connect their lives to Jesus in the way they have connected them with the media?

Since media has become a type of theology class for teenagers, we need to be conscious of how the media see God. Media's interest in spirituality is not a distinctively Christian spirituality. Rather, it encourages young adults to “step up to the ‘spiritual buffet line’ where they can fill their own plates according to their appetites.”¹⁴⁰ Media encourages young adults to forget organised religion and the God of the Bible and pursue whatever combination of religious beliefs makes sense to them, based on their own personal preferences.¹⁴¹ It is to this issue of diversity and its affect on spirituality and evangelism that we will now turn.

Marker #3: Diversity

The third marker of young adult culture we need to consider is diversity. For young adults the combination of moral relativism and love of diversity has resulted in faith being seen as a smorgasbord where beliefs can be chosen at random. This can largely be put down to the rise of pluralism as well as to the fact that they occupy a world which is characterised by contradiction and ambiguity.¹⁴² Consequently, young adults have adopted an organic and eclectic approach to their search for spiritual meaning, one that attempts to escape from the limits of recognised institutions and rigid hierarchies.¹⁴³ The quest is not for moral absolutes but is for personal fulfilment and truth on their own terms.¹⁴⁴

Religious pluralism and relative truth creates an environment that sees young adults taking a do-it-yourself approach to spirituality. Young people step up to the spiritual buffet table and load their plates with a personal combination of elements to create a faith system that satisfies their spiritual palates and hunger. They are building personal value systems based on a potpourri of ideas gathered from peers, celebrities and the media. Each individual has the freedom to choose what they want for themselves and change and adapt their preferences on a daily basis. Young adults see no

contradiction with being consistently inconstant and frequently indulge in this freedom.¹⁴⁵ For example, it is not uncommon to encounter a teenager who believes Jesus is the Son of God, believes in the virgin birth of Christ, believes the Bible is the Word of God, but also believes in reincarnation, reads and follows their horoscope and has their palm read. They see no contradictions between any of these beliefs.¹⁴⁶

An example of this acceptance of diversity is found in “Jew-Bu”, a new faith group which is derived from Judaism and Buddhism. More and more young adults are adopting this mix-and-match approach to spirituality.¹⁴⁷

The repercussions of the influence of consumerism and the media mean that young adults are developing diverse expressions of faith. David Kinnaman describes them as:

*...cutting and pasting religious views from...television, movies, conversations with their friends. Popular culture's general approach is this; you can probably put together a philosophy of life for yourself that is just as accurate, just as helpful as any particular faith might provide, so just do it.*¹⁴⁸

Apart from “being nice” young adults do not believe that faith influences “their decisions, choice of friends or behaviours. It does not help them obey God, work toward a common good, compose an identity, or belong to a distinctive community”. Faith is seen as an extracurricular activity competing with the likes of music and sport.¹⁴⁹ Consequently carved into the post-modern spirit of young adult culture is the attitude and behavior of believing *and* living only what we like, what feels good, and what works for us.¹⁵⁰ As a result of this, young adults will be nothing more than moral nomads who are - as Father Richard John Neuhaus has said – “herds of independent minds marching towards moral oblivion with the Frank Sinatra's witless boast on our lips, ‘I Did It My Way’.”¹⁵¹

Such an individualistic approach to faith has seen a death of the meta-narrative and the rise of a mini-narrative as the comprehensive defining element of the lives of young adults.¹⁵² Franciscan Priest Richard Rohr declares that three integrated spheres of meaning are needed to create true meaning and identity - “my Story”, “our Story” and “the Story” (which encapsulates the meta-narrative of God’s saving work throughout humanity). My Story alone is not big enough to create large and meaningful patterns of existence without the other two.¹⁵³ A personal story alone cannot answer the dominant questions in the hearts of young adults of “Who am I?”, “Where am I going?” and “Who is going with me?” However young adults seem all too ready to kill off The Story, denying the collective Our Story for the sake of maintaining My Story. This only typifies what researcher Bernard Salt notes when he declares that young adults today are “the super-me generation. All that matters is me and my friends. I am the centre of my universe”¹⁵⁴. By insisting on the supremacy of self, young adults are sacrificing the opportunity to embrace the fullness of faith and life that true community and belief in God brings.

Marker #4: “Nice-Faith”

The rise of a mini-narrative means that a superficial “nice-faith” is taking precedence over the place of deep spirituality in the lives of young adults and is the final marker we need to examine. One only needs to take the time to look at today’s pop culture to observe that humans “despite our magnificent spiritual, intellectual and imaginative capacities, have chosen to wade in the shallow, but spiritually toxic waters of superficiality”.¹⁵⁵ Stemming from the fact that culture, rather than God, often sets the agenda for the church, young adults are happy to make God superficial and subservient to their lifestyle.¹⁵⁶ Whilst this means that there is not much in their faith that causes conflict with the way they want to live their lives, it also means that there is not much in their faith worth devoting their lives to. Such attitudes lead Smith and Denton to assert that Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself, or “more significantly Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by quite a different religious faith”.¹⁵⁷

The faith that most teenagers exhibit is a loveless version that the National Study of Youth and Religion calls Christianity’s “misbegotten step cousin”, that of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD), which is supplanting Christianity as the dominant religion in Western churches.¹⁵⁸ Characterised by an adherence to a do-good, feel-good spirituality, MTD is marked by an outlook on life which helps people be nice, feel good about themselves and leave God in the background.¹⁵⁹ So prevalent is MTD that Smith and Denton make the strong claim it is the new mainstream religious faith “for our culturally post-Christian individualist mass consumer capitalist society”.¹⁶⁰ Sadly this version of faith, which seems to grip young adults, has little to do with the God of the Bible and even “less to do with

loving Jesus and joining him in his divine mission to the world”.¹⁶¹ If this is true, it will lead to the decline and potential death of radical and robust evangelism. But perhaps what is even sadder is that Dean’s explanation of why MTD is so prevalent among young adults today is that we reap what we sow. Churches have “received from [young adults] exactly what we have asked them for: assent, not conviction, compliance not faith”.¹⁶² The church used to treat its surrounding society as a mission field, yet now it treats it as a model. It does not take long to notice that anyone who subscribes to this “nice”, feel-good version of Christianity is embracing a faith drained of its missional impulse.

Consequential Faith

Standing in stark opposition to MTD is what Dean has titled Consequential Faith. This is faith marked by a profound and intimate sense of God’s story and knowledge of one’s place in it. Certainly the ability to recognise the difference between MTD and Consequential Faith is one Christian leaders should cultivate. The knowledge of what it is to disciple someone so they can stand up against the cacophony of messages society is throwing at them and be devoted to the message and mission of Jesus is precious to anyone interested in seeing young adults evangelise their peers. The challenge is to convert young adults to a faith that demands radical holiness and abandonment to the will of God.

So what is it that helps these young adults with Consequential Faith form a robust faith, where others have not? Young adults most readily express devoted faith when their lives are deeply anchored in community and practices that affirm their identity and integrate their story into God’s. These young adults are adept at using three cultural tools in ways that mark them and make them disciples - they confess a creed, or an articulated God story; they belong to a community that enacts God’s story; they feel called by this story to contribute to it with their own.¹⁶³ Significantly, these three elements correlate directly with Richard Rohr’s circles of meaning – The Story, Our Story and My Story. The role of the church and the opportunity presented to evangelism is to honour and integrate this meta-narrative that is often rejected, and help young adults realise they are part of a much larger dramatic narrative and not just limited to the mini-narrative society sells them.

Behind the wall conversations

When young adults fill the void in their lives with consumerism, media, diversity and “nice-faith”, we cannot respond by shaking our heads in detachment and silence.¹⁶⁴ However this has been the overwhelming response of the church for too long. John Stott comments that:

*...feelings of obsolescence, and irrelevance of Christianity are widespread. The world has changed dramatically since Jesus’ day and goes on changing with ever more bewildering speed. People reject the gospel, not necessarily because they think it false, but because it no longer resonates with them.*¹⁶⁵

Walter Brueggemann¹⁶⁶ argues that the cultural conditions posed by post-modernity require the church to take the role of a bilingual community, conversant in what defines and shapes the church as a community of faith as well as the narrative of the dominant culture. The church risks a miscommunication of its message to young adults if it does not take the time to know their language, their culture and their world. N T Wright encapsulates this notion by declaring that:

*We have to learn how to translate Jesus’ message to His contemporaries so that it becomes our message to our contemporaries...We cannot simply throw at our contemporaries the same language and imagery that Jesus used in His day and hope it will somehow stick. We have to take the difficult, but exhilarating step of working out where our contemporaries are and translating the message into their language and setting.*¹⁶⁷

It is not enough to identify the four dominant markers of culture without developing language and a method to communicate the truth of Jesus with it.

Brueggemann suggests 2 Kings 18-19 is a template of what it can look like when a community finds the balance of being conversant in the language of the prevalent culture without subscribing to their beliefs. The key to this passage is noting what happens on the wall, and what takes place behind it.¹⁶⁸ The “behind the wall” conversations that take place are pivotal for defining what happens on the wall, and provide a guide for church leaders today. Here we see the need to be deeply embedded in the community, conversations, practices and stories behind the wall, and to be fluent in the conversation,

community, practices and stories on the wall. As Nancy Ammerman observes, “Any community that wants to sustain itself must have space behind the wall to tell its own primal narrative” as without this the “language of the empire prevails”.¹⁶⁹

Unless the church can bolster the conversations behind the wall with young adults so that they know who they are (My Story), who they are a part of (Our Story) and the larger story going on (The Story) they will never form a faith robust enough to sustain a conversation on the wall and the empire’s conversation will be the only view of reality that they have.¹⁷⁰ Without the behind the wall conversations young adults have only the dominant conversations on the wall to disciple the world, a world in which belief in Jesus Christ does not seem to make any difference.¹⁷¹ Evangelism by young adults to young adults cannot exist in its truest sense unless we seriously engage “behind the wall” models of faith formation. Clearly our task:

*...is to speak the language they speak, in symbol and story as well as in articulate theory; to offer them the revolution they know they need; and to urge and invite them to follow us as we move forward with the hope that God’s kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. At the same time, in so doing, we must tell them and show them that the revolution, the justice and peace, the restoration of creation, will come about only if we are worshipping the true God of heaven and earth, the one made known in Jesus Christ.*¹⁷²

Churches and organisations that want to help young adults reach out to other young adults need to develop a language and a method which can stand against the distractions the four markers of consumerism, media, diversity and a “nice-faith” provide. One organisation that is addressing these distractions and engaging young adult culture is Alpha.

Alpha

Whilst Alpha does not specifically address any of the four markers in its content, its strength is found in its ability to foster community. Held over eight to ten weeks with a meal and small group discussion, the Alpha Course recognises the journey of faith as a process and emphasises the importance of relationships to that process - two elements John Finney claims are central to the thinking of evangelism.¹⁷³ Defined as “the most significant component for any evangelistic strategy that has emerged in recent years”,¹⁷⁴ Alpha continues to stand up as a strong voice amidst the four markers that are defining young adult faith and worldview. As mentioned earlier, Andrei Tarkovsky declared that consumer culture is “setting up barriers between [young adults] and the crucial questions of their existence”.¹⁷⁵ Yet by fostering community, the belief that belonging comes before belief, and the principle that guests can ask anything, Alpha has created an environment that enables groups to go beyond the barriers created by culture and get to the heart of the questions that young adults have about identity, meaning and faith.

Alpha gives faith the opportunity to grow over several weeks, faith which is anchored in a community. This means the faith formed is more likely to be a consequential faith fighting against diversity and a superficial “nice-faith”. Where the four markers enforce the supremacy of the individual and “My story”, Alpha’s dependency on community means that guests are immersed in “Our story”, the story of the community of faith, and “The story” of God’s salvific work. Booker and Ireland state that a weakness of Alpha is that guests have to sit virtually passive for one hour.¹⁷⁶ Alpha has responded to this by realising Student Alpha, where talks are specifically designed to be shorter, with more multimedia and vox pops to ensure its message is conveyed clearly and concisely.

Although not the only evangelistic tool available, Alpha is an ideal tool for young adults to reach their peers as it provides them with the language and method to do so. In the face of the dominant four markers of culture Alpha presents the Gospel uncompromisingly. Determined not to waver in its message of “Who is Jesus?”, Alpha does not bend the truth of who Jesus is for the sake of accommodation to a

consumer-driven culture. Alpha could continue to sculpt its course and focus on addressing the cultural influences that impact heavily upon the worldview and faith formed by young adults. Despite this, Alpha remains effective in reaching secular, post-modern, post-Christian young adults. The average age of the person coming to faith via the Alpha courses run at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in the UK is in their mid-twenties¹⁷⁷ and the impact of this is felt throughout HTB. Where most other churches are struggling with young adult attendance, HTB is thriving. My small group grew by 50%

when we ran Alpha with them, with most of the young people blown away by the sense of community, which caused them to stay and make commitments to faith.

The Lifelong Faith Associates (LFA) have done research projecting over the next ten years what faith formation needs to look like for young adults to have robust faith. For the growing number of young adults who are desperately seeking spirituality and answers to the meaning of life, but are not remotely interested in the church, the LFA note that one of the elements needed is a “guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community”.¹⁷⁸ They suggest Alpha offers a good process. Although not the only solution the LFA explores, it is clear that Alpha can play a key role in giving young adults a language with which to converse with their friends and invite them to contemplate a larger story, embrace a meta-narrative and explore the impact Christianity could have on their life. Without a language to tell our story, Christianity remains on mute and the church’s missional imagination atrophies.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

It is clear that young adults are growing up in a confusing and controlling culture, where consumerism, media, and the values of diversity and “nice-faith” are not only dictating young adult spirituality, but are also filling the void it leaves in their lives. What is also clear is that young adults are yearning to find purpose and identity. They have consciously embarked on a search for spiritual fulfillment. If the church wants to avoid being abstract and irrelevant, then we are obliged to understand the dominant thrusts of culture and how they are defining the spiritual lives of young adults. The church of today finds itself at a watershed moment. It must exegete and understand culture, in order to speak the powerful, life changing truth of Jesus into the lives of a generation that is like none other that has gone before. The church needs to become “bilingual”, as Brueggemann suggests, and be able to converse with young adults entrenched in culture, without becoming a slave to it. Churches that want to help young adults reach out to their peers should look at adopting programs such as Alpha which creates community and fosters an environment which dismantles the walls young adults put up and allows them to look past the four markers of culture and discover the truth of the Gospel for themselves.

Table 1. The Percentage of Australian Adults Affirming Various Issues as Critical for Human Society Today

Issues	Percentage of Adult Australians Seeing This Issue as Critical for Human Society Today
Family life	44.3
Social justice	35.4
Environment	30.6
Economy	26.9
Tolerance	14.0
Freedom	13.5
Security	12.0
Community	8.2
Meaning and purpose	6.8
Spirituality	2.0

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Values (2009). Note: These percentages add up to more than 100 per cent because people were invited to choose two issues.

Table 2. The Affirmation of Issues as Critical to Human Society Today by Frequency of Church Attendance

Rank Order of Frequency of Affirmation of Issue	Never Attend – Percent Affirming	Attend Rarely – Percent Affirming	Attend Monthly – Percent Affirming
1	Family life - 41%	Family life - 44%	Family life - 55%
2	Environment - 35%	Social justice - 39%	Social justice - 35%
3	Social justice - 34%	Environment - 29%	Environment - 24%
4	Economy - 30%	Economy - 27%	Economy - 18%
5	Freedom - 17%	Tolerance - 18%	Tolerance 14%
6	Security - 12%	Security - 15%	Community - 13%
7	Tolerance - 11%	Freedom - 10%	Meaning - 11%
8	Community - 7%	Community - 8%	Freedom - 9%
9	Meaning - 6%	Meaning - 7%	Security - 7%
10	Spirituality - 1%	Spirituality - 1%	Spirituality - 7%

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009).

Table 3. The Values Seen as Critical for Human Societies Today by Those Who Attended Church When They were 11 Years of Age

Rank Order of Frequency of Affirmation of Values	Never Attended at 11 Years of Age - Percent Affirming	Attended Rarely at 11 Years of Age - Percent Affirming	Attended Monthly at 11 Years of Age - Percent Affirming
1	Family life - 50%	Family life - 43%	Family life - 43%
2	Economy - 33%	Social justice - 35%	Social justice - 39%
3	Environment - 31%	Environment - 34%	Environment - 28%
4	Social justice - 28%	Economy - 25%	Economy - 26%
5	Security - 17%	Freedom- 17%	Tolerance - 15%
6	Freedom - 12%	Tolerance - 17%	Freedom - 13%
7	Tolerance - 10%	Security - 11%	Community - 10%
8	Meaning - 6%	Community - 7%	Security - 9%
9	Community - 5%	Meaning- 5%	Meaning- 9%
10	Spirituality - 1%	Spirituality - 1%	Spirituality - 3%

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009).

Table 4. Change in the Frequency of Church Attendance by Issues Seen as Critical for Human Society.

Issue Seen as Critical for Human Society	Decreased Frequency of Church Attendance	Maintained Frequency of Church Attendance	Increased Frequency of Church Attendance
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Issue Seen as Critical for Human Society	Decreased Frequency of Church Attendance	Maintained Frequency of Church Attendance	Increased Frequency of Church Attendance
Freedom	74%	24%	2%
Economy	67%	33%	1%
Environment	66%	33%	1%
Security	65%	31%	4%
Tolerance	61%	38%	2%
Social justice	61%	38%	1%
Meaning and purpose	56%	41%	3%
Family life	55%	43%	2%
Community	55%	43%	2%
Spirituality	33%	67%	0%

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009).

Table 5. Marital State by Frequency of Church Attendance among the Australian Adult Population

Marital State	Never Attend	Occasionally Attend	Frequently Attend
Married	43%	36%	21%
Widowed	35%	39%	26%
Separated	36%	49%	15%
Divorced	59%	32%	9%
Single	52%	38%	10%
De facto	69%	28%	3%

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009).

Table 6. Change in Frequency of Church Attendance by Marital Status

Marital Status	Decreased Frequency of Church Attendance	Maintained Frequency of Church Attendance	Increased Frequency of Church Attendance
De facto	80%	20%	0%
Divorced	79%	17%	5%
Widowed	65%	33%	3%
Separated	57%	43%	0%
Single	60%	39%	0%
Married	57%	42%	2%

Source: The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009).

Church and mission: A journey of discovery

Roger Kemp

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The importance of the relationship between church and mission has been a journey of learning for me. I was impacted greatly in my teenage years by the leadership of my local church. My formal theological studies helped me to put those early impressions in context. My convictions began with what I call the church-mission model where mission was promoted in the church by enthusiasts such as returned missionaries. Later those convictions developed into the church-missionary society model. In this model, the missionary society approaches churches for support so that it can train and eventually send candidates to specific "mission fields". This was my thinking when I became a missionary in Africa. It was there that I came into contact with David Bosch and my thinking changed. I realised there was a better, biblical model. I came to realise that the church is by nature, missionary, but unfortunately doesn't always realise it. This conviction was supported at Lausanne II in Manila where the terms "gathered community" and "scattered community" were used to describe the local church. This made sense to me.

I believe it is these same principles which underlie the current missional approach to church and I applaud it. I come across pastors in Eastern and Central Europe who are taking these ideas on board and implementing them in their congregations. It is a joy to behold. God's mission is being exercised through the church – as indeed it should be.

Initial personal experience

In the church in which I spent most of my youth there was a very strong sense of mission. Indeed, at one time the pastor was the principal of Adelaide Bible Institute – Rev Allan Burrow who had been a missionary in South America. At another time the pastor was a returned missionary from Eritrea. The sermon illustrations were missionary stories from both South America and Africa. I listened to them all intently. I can still remember being fascinated about the dangers of bilharzia (a worm disease contracted by keeping feet in river water too long). For me, missionaries were next to God. They would not have been able to do so many things in distant places unless they were. I had never come across such active faith in (young) life: for example, at one time the church was in great stress because a missionary family had left Australia to return to Africa without having a visa. I had no idea then what a visa was or how it worked. All I remember was that it was a dramatic step of faith on behalf of the family. Hardly a Sunday went by that we didn't hear about a missionary's work in one country or another. The entire congregation – at least it seemed to me - was interested and involved in some way. It really was a missionary-minded church.

If someone had asked me then what I thought about Church and Mission I think I would have said for me the two were synonymous. This was supported by the fact that my parents were very interested in cross-cultural mission although neither of them had been missionaries. They used our home as a place of rest and relaxation for missionaries on home assignment. So I was surrounded by missionary stories. As I analyse it now, I think what I was experiencing was a church for which mission was a vital part – a mysterious and "spiritual" aspect of church life. Being a missionary was for specialists and super-spiritual people.

That is probably why I never considered becoming a missionary myself. My goal was to become a pastor in the church. It had been the central focus of my life since conversion. Everything was leading

to that. While I saw that the church was mission-minded it wasn't the result of a well-thought out missiology but rather the influence of the pastors.

The issue of church and mission became very real to me when I was courting Barbara who was to become my wife. Barbara had come to town from the country for university studies and attended the same church as I did. She had been convicted several years earlier to become a "full-time" missionary (that was the terminology back in the 60s). Then I asked her to marry me. This was a quandary for her: how could she be faithful to her missionary call while being a pastor's wife? After prayer and thought (and some nervous tension on my part) the matter was settled when she realised that being a pastor's wife was just as much "full-time" ministry as being a missionary. In other words there was no difference between church and mission. I have always believed she made that decision on good theological grounds and not emotional ones!

This was in the 1960s and although I didn't realize it then the church I was attending was rare in its attitude towards mission. I only came to that realisation after I had spent five years in theological college, training for the Baptist ministry. From the beginning of my studies I pastored a church: as a student pastor to begin with and then as a full time pastor for three years.

Throughout my college studies we were faced with mission. The principal was a returned missionary and a number of the students – mostly women – were sent to the college for missionary training. In reality their training was a shortened version of what I was doing. There was nothing especially "missionary" about it. The college did quite a bit of extra-curricular activity relating to mission. We had prayer meetings and missionary speakers each week. But for me it always had the same aura that I grew up with in the church. It was only for the "extremists" – the passionate ones. I wasn't really challenged as to the relationship between the two, and I didn't stop to work it out. I believed that mission was the extra spiritual aspect of church and one into which only the very spiritual would enter. And I thought this despite the very down-to-earth students studying with me at theological college!

However, God knows best. After eight years as a pastor I became a missionary – but not a very spiritual one. The decision to apply for missionary candidacy was more a pragmatic one than spiritual. I had an interest in countries other than Australia (mainly Indonesia) through my university studies. I had been trained as a secondary school teacher and had taught for four years before entering theological college. I had been notified that there were people in other parts of the world who needed some theological teaching and at least one person thought I could fill a gap in that area. So I applied. That was it – end of story. I didn't feel any more spiritual when I left Australia for Zambia in 1977 than I had in previous years as pastor. I believed I was simply doing the same work in another country as I would have been doing in Australia if I had stayed. So in that sense I saw mission and church as one and the same thing although I would not have said it in those words. I had never been challenged to think of the missiological relationship between the two.

The challenge

As I look back now I can see that the model of church and mission which I was involved with can be described in the following way. Mission is seen as an essential part of the church but only for those who have a special passion for mission – whether they become missionaries or not. For most church goers there is little or no personal interest in mission. Let's call this the Church-Mission model

It was, of course, important that as a family we had support from the church – in those days it was more about personal prayer support than finances. It was the "fanatical few" in the church who kept in touch with us by letters and occasional phone calls. Our financial support came from the Missionary Society funds. Apart from the church of which I was pastor, I never really knew who gave money to the missionary society.

In my mind then the diagram would be changed slightly to the following model – we could call it the Church-Missionary Society model:

The church had financial input into the missionary society and it was the missionary society which sent us out as missionaries. It was to the overseas secretary of the missionary society that we had to send annual reports and who ultimately decided on our ministry.

I had the privilege of studying under David Bosch in South Africa. He was supervisor for my ThD. That was a mental challenge in itself. David Bosch was the dean of the department of theology at University of South Africa (UNISA) and I was going to do a thesis in missiology. Bosch made the point very clearly to me that missiology was not the poor brother of theology but in fact was the mother of theology (including ecclesiology). It was a revelation to me. To think that what I had thought was an “added extra” for enthusiasts in the church (mission) was in fact the foundation for what the church taught, was simply unbelievable. My worldview was changing.

It wasn't long before I read Hendrik Kraemer and my mind went into overdrive. Kraemer talked about the church's “essential character” being mission. “The Churches as official institutions have only gradually become aware of their essential missionary character.”¹⁸⁰ Kraemer talked about the church being in crisis. The crisis was based on the tension which the church faced between its essential nature (viz mission) and its empirical condition. Bosch made it clearer for me when he wrote that, “Mission is a permanent aspect of the life of the Church as long as the Church is, in some way or another, standing in a relationship to the world.”¹⁸¹ The revelation which came to me was that mission was not just some added-on part of the life of the church – and then only for enthusiasts. In fact the very nature of the church was mission. And I realised that many good church-going Christians didn't have a clue about this. Kraemer's words were indelibly written in my mind: “Strictly speaking, one ought to say that the Church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it.”¹⁸²

The fact that the church by its very nature was mission was a revolutionary thought for me. It spilled over into my theology of mission. Here I was influenced greatly by Bosch again. Bosch taught me that theology reflected on “what the Church ought to be rather than what she is or in all probability is going to be”¹⁸³.

When I found myself back in Australia I was determined to make this proper relationship between church and mission as widely known as possible and to change the worldview of church members concerning the church and mission. In my position as missiologist for Morling College I was able to incorporate this thinking in my teaching of mission. I also made sure it was in almost every sermon I preached.

But worldviews change slowly as any missiologist will tell you.

Towards an answer

At Lausanne II in Manila in 1989 one of the most impressive presentations for me was given by Eduardo Maling.¹⁸⁴ At the time he was the senior pastor of the Tanauan Bible Church in the Philippines. In his presentation he referred to the local church as a “gathered and scattered community”. Those terms were also used by Pete Hammond in his presentation at Lausanne II¹⁸⁵. Hammond gave two models of the local church: the church upside down and the church the right side up. In the models he talks about the local church as “gathered” when the congregation members come together and “scattered” when those members go into the world doing whatever they do at work and play. Maling had put all his efforts into making his church an example of the model which Hammond described. Maling referred to a message which he gave to his congregation:

*We are not here for ourselves only, but we are here for God and for others. God has given us all the resources we need to bear witness. We have the Word of God in our hands. We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts to dwell in and empower us. The Holy Spirit has given us a variety of spiritual gifts for the building up of the body and to do the work of Christ in today's world. We are to discover, develop and use those gifts in serving God, because God will hold us responsible and accountable to him.*¹⁸⁶

What made this presentation meaningful to me was that it was a description of the local church as it ought to be and an example of what I had been learning about. Here was a local church realising that it as a community was in fact on God's mission. It did not depend on a few activists but involved the entire congregation.

I found few of those churches in Australia.

So I was glad when I began hearing of churches being “missional”. I was a colleague of Michael Frost at Morling College just as this “new” concept was beginning to become popular. I was encouraged as

I read Mike's books talking about the missional nature of the church and what that meant practically. I was interested in his activities at Manly where he was surely putting into practice what he preached about the church and mission. He was engaging the community of faith in its relationship to the world.

It is astounding the way the missional church concept has grown in recent years. It has reached the church in every part of the world. I teach for an interdenominational theological training institute which has over 800 students scattered all over the former Soviet Union countries and also Central Asia. Last year we had to revisit the syllabus for the "church health and evangelism" subject because the professor reminded us that the old syllabus did not come to terms with the missional character of the church. I am sure the same has occurred in other teaching institutions world-wide.

In my teaching of mission I give my students several charts to help them evaluate how their local church measures up in its understanding and practice of mission.

The first is a summary of research of mission agencies as to what they considered to be a healthy mission-oriented church. As far as the researchers are concerned, a local church is "healthy" if:

- 10% of the congregation's members regularly share their faith with non-Christians where they live and work
- 10% of the congregation pray regularly for world evangelisation
- 10% of the church's total annual income is devoted to cross-cultural mission work
- 1% of the adult church membership is involved in cross-cultural mission work or are preparing to do so
- Works with at least one other local church to help mobilize it for world mission

Invariably when I discuss this with my students from Eastern and Central Europe or Central Asia they look astounded. They cannot believe the low percentages. For most of them, as I ask for their estimations relating to their own church state that **at least 85%** of their congregations would regularly share their faith with non-believers. These are churches which have in the main, been established in the last 20-25 years since the fall of the Soviet Union. Most of the believers in those churches have come to faith in that same period.

Another tool that I use is a more detailed self-evaluation chart which a local church can use to estimate its health as far as mission is concerned.¹⁸⁷ Basically it consists of what it regards as five vital aspects of the mission ministry in a local church, each one being divided into two sections. The five aspects are: leadership, strategy, stimulation, sending and support. Each aspect has two sections. The evaluation is done by giving a number from the eight options offered ranging from -2 to +5. For each number there is a description of what that number means. The idea is for a local church – in its own way – to give itself a mark for each of the 10 categories and to then take stock and work out a plan of action to improve the grade in each. The best grade would be to achieve a +5 for each of the ten categories. For example in the sub-section "policy" which comes under the section on strategy, a +5 would be achieved if "Missions ministry is guided by a well-planned comprehensive, workable policy".

It is my opinion that most local churches in Australia would manage a best of "0 or +1" on most of the ten categories and for some would be in the negative area. A "0" is what the researchers believe to be the minimum number which would be acceptable while indicating that a lot of work is still needed.

It must be recognised that these charts are tools only. But when used properly, they highlight to a local congregation what a church ought to be in relation to mission. It ought to help change the worldview of the local church regarding mission. If a local church was to achieve a +5 in each of the ten categories then I would say it had a biblical understanding of mission and the role of the church in mission. Unfortunately I suspect it would be a bold move for the leadership of a church to participate in such an evaluation. It would be a risk – it could expose the deficiencies of the church regarding mission. And not many churches are prepared to take risks.

This all brings me back to the basics.

How is it possible to create a church which reflects the biblical understanding of church and mission?

I think Eduardo Maling had it right. He recognised the challenge before him as he tried to bring into being a biblically (and therefore missiologically) sound local church. He describes what he did.

I began sharing my burden and vision to the people through prayer, training, modelling, teaching, and preaching the Word of God by the help of the Holy Spirit¹⁸⁸

It begins with the leadership of the church and involves all those things Maling mentions. I particularly appreciate his reference to teaching and preaching. If missiology is the mother of theology then biblical preaching and teaching will bring believers to the conclusion that the church's nature is mission and that it needs to be aware of it in its activities.

Bosch brought this home to me even more through my studies with him. One of his favourite statements was: "There is Church because there is Mission NOT There is Mission because there is Church".

He also emphasised that mission was about God – *Missio Dei*.¹⁸⁹

If that is the case we can rightly say that it is the church which has been sent on mission – not the church sending believers out on mission. Mission begins with God not the Church. We could then define mission as *the total task God has given the church for the salvation of the world, or God reaching out to people in love: bringing them to Himself, using His people, the church.*

Diagrammatically it could be represented thus:

The latest statistics indicate that around 30 percent of the world's population is still unevangelised¹⁹⁰ and with the vast majority of Christian workers working in the Christianised world, the task for mission is just as great today as it ever has been.

I firmly believe that the thirty percent will not decrease to any great extent until the church comes to terms with the principles mentioned in this paper. Some good things are certainly happening. But to make any meaningful impact the church needs to rediscover its essential nature, accept it and act on it. Only then will the Mission of God be fulfilled.

The dialectical nature of Christian mission - Have we misrepresented the scope of mission?

Adrian F Turner

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Bosch's concept of creative tensions inherent within the notions of mission being both transformative for its recipients, and being transformed itself over time, is expanded in relation to the twin concepts of Christians experiencing spiritual transformation through their involvements in mission, and further, that personal, communal, and global transformation are, in fact, part of the mission. Dialectic as a thought-form, and the dialectical nature of these realities, are explained as both-and creative tensions, rather than an either-or conflicted dualism, and then applied to a number of practical life situations, revealing that not only Christian mission, but the whole of Christian life being lived in a fallen world is dialectical in nature. This has significant ramifications for the way we should approach Christian mission, and understand its goals, particularly when viewed in the light of Jesus' statements of his mission, and his specific teachings, and discernable methodologies. The reflections of other New Testament writers theologising on Jesus' mission confirm the belief that mission must be seen as both proclamation and inculcation, or in other words, that transforming discipleship is equally an imperative part of the mission with evangelism.

David Bosch alludes to the delightful and intentional ambiguity inherent within the title of his book **Transforming Mission**. He suggests two possible meanings that his title could encompass; firstly, "transforming" being an adjective making "mission" an enterprise that transforms reality; or secondly, "transforming" as a present participle - the *activity* of transforming – "mission" then becoming something that is itself being transformed.¹⁹¹ The contents of his book support his thesis that while the primary purpose of "mission" is to transform the reality of life around its activities, "mission?" itself is, and has been of necessity, continually being transformed. What can be inferred from this is that these possibilities are not a static "either-or" situation, but in fact a "both-and" necessity coexisting in creative dialectical tension.

I propose to add two further potential meanings to Bosch's title, which in reality are extensions of both his initial meanings. In reverse order, firstly, beyond the macro picture of "mission" itself being transformed over the centuries, I am suggesting that we, as individuals, and as church congregations collectively, experience transformational processes as a direct and necessary result of our involvement in Jesus' mission in the world. These *transformational processes* are variously known as "witness", "evangelism", "discipleship", "service", "spiritual formation", and "renewing the mind", among other descriptors, which nurture and develop ongoing spiritual transformation. And secondly, our ongoing spiritual transformation into the image of Christ *is* part of the "ultimate mission" of personal, communal and global transformation.

If this is so, what are the implications?

Understanding dialectical tensions

In order to get where I want to go it is first necessary to revisit an older thought form. Dialectical thinking has fallen out of favour in the past forty or fifty years, but it is very helpful in understanding the inherent tensions within the Christian life being lived in a fallen world.

Dialectic is a slippery term that has meant different things to different people in different eras. Etymologically, it means *to speak between two*,¹⁹² emphasising the dynamic nature of communication within a conversation. It has broadened over time beyond two individuals to include communication between poles of thought. Bloesch gives a helpful historical overview of its use; from Socrates: the art of question and answer,¹⁹³ through Aristotle: a pattern of logical reasoning; Hegel: the dynamic process of universal reality through thesis, antithesis and synthesis; Kierkegaard: a method of holding together affirmations that are diametrically antithetical, and Barth: polar pairs held together in the response of faith, such as infinity and finitude, eternity and time, judgement and grace.¹⁹⁴

In common usage it is most often associated with *paradox*, however, their meanings are not the same. Paradox, from *paradoxos*, having come to mean *incredible* or *glorious* depending on context, expresses the intended reaction of standing alongside of something and saying, "That is incredible; in fact so incredible it seems impossible." Its intent is to "emphasise difference". *Dialectic*, on the other hand, describes a "relationship of creative tension". More explicitly, in the way that I intend applying it, *dialectic* describes the nature of dialogical communication between two persons, poles of thought, or functional roles, which although not necessarily opposite, are certainly different. These roles co-exist in a creative tension that is mutually beneficial but requires intentional engagement by both parties in order to overcome their inherent differences, becoming increasingly inter-dependent and mutually enhanced in the process. Some good examples of this are:

- the integrative relationship between the "whole" and the "part",¹⁹⁵ be that the relationship between a team and an individual team member, or the piece of a jigsaw puzzle that only finds its meaning in the context of completing the whole picture;
- the marriage relationship between a husband and a wife, where two differing genders, roles, personalities, and preferences find complimentary fulfilment in mutual and reciprocal inter-dependence – a creative tension if ever there was one;
- the learning relationship between a teacher and a pupil, in which the teacher creates a learning environment and facilitates the discovery of knowledge within the learner through dialogue and directed exploration, allowing questions and answers that provoke engagement, producing "...critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher",¹⁹⁶ rather than simply downloading information;
- the applicatory relationship between theory and practice: theory being informed by practice and practice being shaped by theory.¹⁹⁷ This brings together the two associated concepts of *praxis* and *dialectics*; *praxis* being the ongoing result of the dialectical relationship between action and purpose. Anderson describes the Aristotelian meaning of *praxis* as "...an action that took into account the *telos*, or goal and purpose of the act".¹⁹⁸ With *praxis*, the ultimate purpose "...becomes part of the action. While the design serves to orient the action toward its goal, the ultimate purpose, or *telos*, informs the action so as to correct the design, if necessary, in order to realise the ultimate purpose",¹⁹⁹
- and finally, the cognitively transformational relationship between action and reflection.²⁰⁰ The genius of action-reflection is best described as the functioning of a feedback loop, much like how a guided missile operates. This clearly reveals the action-to-reflection-to-corrected-action that creates the dialectical tensions inherent within the continual dialogue between *words* of faith and *actions* of faith; or as Paver described it, "reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection, both rolled into one".²⁰¹

Dialectic *utilises* differences creatively rather than simply *emphasise* difference as paradox does. Theologically, its intent expresses the creative tensions within relational differences that become transformational through faith, within the context of God's redemptive action. This is supremely demonstrated in the redemptive relationship between our holy and infinite God and fallen, finite

humanity, through faith in the incarnated, crucified and resurrected Christ;²⁰² *both God and Man*,²⁰³ or as Peter put it on the Day Of Pentecost, *both Lord and Christ*.²⁰⁴

The key to understanding dialectical relationships is seeing their inherent *both-and* nature, rather than as a conflicted *either-or* dualism. Barrett points out that the benefit of Paul's dialectical approach, as he outworks the implications of his "...treasure in jars of clay..." metaphor, is that it maintains the necessary tension between the seemingly paradoxical death-resurrection experiences, while at the same time guards against an over-emphasised *theology of glory* on one hand, and a purely *intellectual abstraction* on the other.²⁰⁵ This is classic dialectical language involving necessary creative *both-and* tensions.

So what does this have to do with mission?

Changing perspectives regarding mission

"Mission" has meant a variety of things to different groups depending on their frame of reference within the panorama of church history, and these are themselves the results of the dialectical tensions between the unchanging Gospel, on the one hand, and the radically changing cultural environments in which the gospel is to be communicated, on the other hand.

For the Apostles and the churches of the first and second generations it initially meant giving Spirit-empowered witness to the life, ministry and resurrection of Jesus, supported by references from Old Testament scriptures corroborating Jesus' self-identification as the Christ, which was totally compatible with their primarily Jewish audiences.²⁰⁶

As the Western Church moved into the Greco-Roman Patristic and Medieval eras, "mission" was understood theologically as the *missio Dei*,²⁰⁷ but outworked practically as the indoctrination of the faithful, and the development of numerous monastic models for spiritual formation.²⁰⁸ However, since monastic life was within a closed community, there does not appear to be any real commitment to external mission into the surrounding society; with the exceptions of the Nestorians in the East and the Benedictines and Franciscans in the West.²⁰⁹

The Jesuits were the first to use the term in relation to spreading the Christian faith in response to the impact of the Reformation,²¹⁰ and coincidentally "mission" became cooperative with the colonial expansion of various European nations.²¹¹ With the later formulations of the great missionary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries however, "mission" became synonymous with being sent to foreign "pagan" nations to convert the heathen to Christ, and simultaneously engender European culture within their converts. It was not until approaching the middle of the twentieth century that voices began to call for a broader and more embracing perspective toward God's mission.²¹²

Sider exemplifies the sentiments of those calling for a more global engagement:

*To spread the Kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families and relationships. It is doing deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God's authority to bring in the blessedness of the Kingdom. The presence of the Kingdom of God is the means for the renewal of the entire world and all the dimensions of life.*²¹³

This perspective clearly incorporates the ultimate goal of God's mission, that of global transformation,²¹⁴ which is consistent with the original pre-fall mandate given to Adam and Eve in the Garden – "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28 NIV).

A biblical framework

An appropriate question at this point would be how do we really define the Gospel? Jesus called it the good news of the kingdom – the message of his mission.²¹⁵ Jesus announced the re-establishment of God's kingdom on earth in his own coming and then proceeded to demonstrate and teach what that meant.²¹⁶ The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus' mission involved redeeming, reconciling, and restoring repentant humanity, and ultimately the created world, into the relationship, image, and environment for which we were originally created.²¹⁷ It equally teaches that this divine destiny must be actively engaged, by believers, through faith implanted by the convicting activity of the Holy Spirit on the Word of Jesus' Good News, inducing a process of transformation.²¹⁸

If we take Jesus' mission seriously, then we also need to take serious note of his methodology. It often appears to be either undervalued, overlooked, or totally forgotten in missiological circles that prior to sending the apostles out into the world with the commission to preach, baptise, teach, and make disciples, Jesus had already called them into a discipling relationship with himself: "...follow me, and I will make you fishers of men".²¹⁹ Jesus' mission involved firstly finding men that he could train, and then training them to the point where when he left them, they knew what it was that they needed to do, once they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' mission inherently involved both proclamation and inculcation, or more simply, both evangelism and discipleship.

The analogy of sowing and reaping and the various activities and stages involved in that whole process is utilised throughout the Bible to reveal this progressive process of transformation. It is evident from God's mandate to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28) to the trees by the river of life in Revelation (Rev 22:1-2), and particularly in numbers of Jesus' parables, communicating what could rightly be described as the DNA of God's kingdom.²²⁰ The notion of "fruit-bearing" is analogous of the organic transformational change that Paul is referring to in Romans Chapter 12,²²¹ when one considers the radical difference between "seed-form" and "fruit-form" in the natural process of fructification.²²² We will pursue this further below.

The parable of the Sower provides an excellent framework for a greater understanding of the mission of the kingdom, when viewed from the perspective of a progressive transformational journey rather than just a freeze-frame snapshot of four "heart conditions".²²³ Yes, it does provide a "snapshot" of four responses from four heart conditions, but there is also a discernable progression within the four categories that commences with new birth and continues through the processes of discipleship development and transformation.

Each "group" equally hears the word but responds differently; the variable being the degree of understanding. It progresses from the *hard-hearted* who have been trodden down on the pathway of fallen-life and have "no understanding" when they hear the gospel, to the *stony-hearted* who hear and actively receive the word, implying faith²²⁴, responding with joy; likely meeting an emotional need in their lives, but evidently they have not taken the time to think through the implications of that faith, and therefore fail to develop a cogent biblical belief system, and having failed to do so, when challenged, cannot stand up. The *weed-ridden* are those who hear and also receive the word, but never prioritise the gospel over their already existing belief systems and thereby have several belief systems "growing up together" resulting in their "faith-plant" not producing fruit – it's there, but fruitless, and in danger of ultimately being useless. Finally there is *good soil* which produces fruit in varying degrees. So, the inherent progression is: from no understanding; to no sustainable root; to no production of fruit; and finally to great fruitfulness.

May I suggest that most Christians have experienced this very progression in their lives many times over. Few respond the first time they hear the word of God – but God continues to call. Many Christians respond with joy many times to God's word, but sadly fail to follow through on those things that God has impressed on their hearts – but God continues to call. Many Christians have experienced the crowding out of God's word in their lives and found themselves distracted by competing "goals" and "ideas" – but God continues to call. And whether it be through cumulative encounters with God through his word, or the encouragement of a small group, or some encouragement from an empowering leader, or some form of missional engagement, or prayer experience, or a Holy Spirit download,²²⁵ along the journey, good soil is discovered, and fruit begins to sprout.

So what is "good soil" other than "prepared soil"? The heart of fallen man is not initially good soil; it is dependent firstly on the convicting power of the Holy Spirit acting on the Word of God, the Good News of God's kingdom having arrived and become accessible through Jesus, and secondly on the development of a godly belief system developed over time through the renewing of the mind in alignment with God's revealed word. So "soil preparation" is a dialectic, a creative tension between the sovereign saving will of God and the willingness of people to respond and cooperate with God's purpose, meaning that "heart condition" is something we have some responsibility for, otherwise the parable makes no real sense. Jesus makes this clear in another parable²²⁶ where the landowner comes looking for fruit and having found none demands that the tree be cut down. The gardener, however, offers to dig and fertilise the soil in line with the organic nature of God-created agriculture, reflecting the DNA of God's kingdom. Some, no doubt, will protest and claim that only God can do the digging and fertilising,²²⁷ but in the parable, the soil is merely an inanimate vehicle, whereas in real life, in Christian life, we humans are carriers of God's image and new creations in Christ and by the

organic nature of God's kingdom, must be active and collaborative participants, not merely inanimate vehicles.

Paul utilises this analogy of fruit-bearing when introducing himself to the new believers at Colossae, whom he had not yet met, as a way of describing the organic transformation that he had become aware was taking place in their lives.²²⁸ He develops this idea far more intensely in Romans 12:2-3.

Paul's use of the indicative – imperative dialectic

Paul's combination of the *indicative* and the *imperative* is a device he uses to explain his understanding of the Christian life being lived in a fallen world as a *both-and* dialectic, rather than an *either-or* dualism. This needs to be understood to clearly follow his line of argumentation via the dialectical character of his thinking.²²⁹ Paul considers believers "in Christ" to have already passed into the eschatological new eon – each is "...a new creation in Christ,"²³⁰ but, problematically, they are also still living in the old eon of the fallen creation; they are *both* new creations in Christ *and* still living in the old fallen creation.²³¹ In Jesus' terminology this is "*in* the world" but not "*of* the world".²³²

For Paul, the realm of the *indicative* is the faith-statement of the new reality and identity "in Christ". But since we are also still living in the old eon, we are susceptible to temptations and sin, and therefore need to be "...on guard...with the help of the Holy Spirit",²³³ in order to continually "...live by the Spirit, and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature".²³⁴ This is the realm of Paul's *imperative* – the human responsibility of "...standing firm in the faith",²³⁵ "...staying filled with the Spirit",²³⁶ "...setting the heart on things above", "...letting the peace of Christ rule in the heart", and "...letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly",²³⁷ in order to "...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus",²³⁸ etcetera. However, the *imperatives* of human responsibility can only be fulfilled in obedient, willing cooperation because the *indicatives* of the new identity "in Christ" have already been secured by Christ through his incarnation, death and resurrection, and are implemented by the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit within the collaborating believer. As Fackre points out, "...the indicative give birth to the imperative",²³⁹ and Brunner, "The indicative of grace is never without the simultaneous imperative of discipleship."²⁴⁰

Paul's most comprehensive treatment of this creative tension comes in his letter to the Roman believers, as he begins to apply the rich theological foundation he has laid in the previous chapters to their practical daily living.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given you (Rom 12:2-3 NIV).

In this approach to organic transformation, Paul introduces the concept of mind-renewal, as an *indicative-imperative* dialectic.²⁴¹ The construction of the sentence reveals that the primary renewal of the mind has come about through the regeneration of the Spirit,²⁴² initiating an inner transformation (*metamorphousthe* – 2nd person plural, present, passive imperative). Paul indicates that believers experience a supernatural impartation of the Holy Spirit into the human spirit/soul which is received by faith as a *gift*, and is transformational in its effect,²⁴³ referring back to the *indicative* of God's action of mercy which they had already received.²⁴⁴ This explains the "passive" element of his construction; it is a *gift* which is received by faith. Concurrently, there is also a "present" component which paints the picture of *continuous transformation* towards the full expression of Christ's image within the believer at the resurrection;²⁴⁵ this *gift* has a *goal* in mind.²⁴⁶ However, it also has an "imperative" element attached to the "passive", which implies obedient and collaborative responsibility necessary on the believer's part in order to jointly reach the goal.²⁴⁷

Barth and others relate this responsibility directly to "repentance" – *metanoia* – "...rethinking...in order to prove God's will...", or to change one's thinking to align with Christ's.²⁴⁸ "Conversion means changing one's mode of *thinking* and *acting* to suit God, and therefore undergoing an interior revolution", explains Boff.²⁴⁹ The changes in *thinking* and *acting* are crucial to our understanding, being expressed by all the New Testament authors.²⁵⁰ This is precisely what Paul addresses in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5;²⁵¹ "...we take captive every thought", is a responsibility that only an individual can undertake, nevertheless, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is significant that Paul immediately moves his readers onto the purpose of this transformation – to give believers the capacity to discern

the will of God, which he explains will require their doing some serious thinking, and which in turn, will nurture the fruit of living Christ-honouring lives.²⁵²

This is a genuine *task* element in Paul's estimation, which creates a dilemma for some who do not understand the dialectical nature of Christian life in a fallen world, however, it relates well to Brueggemann's analogy of *spiritual formation* involving the 'descripting' of believers of the "failed-script" and "rescripting" them with God's "counter-script" – the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁵³ Chan expresses this well: "A comprehensive spirituality...recognises that true spiritual growth consists of rightly balanced opposing acts."²⁵⁴ He explains his position by looking at the two extremes of the Pelagian heresy on the one hand, which makes the human will all-decisive, and contrasts that on the other hand with the quietistic heresy, which counsels complete passivity. Reality lies within the dialectic of creative tension between the intersection of God's will and the human will, which Bloesch describes as the two poles of the atonement,²⁵⁵ "...an objective-subjective reality...salvation happened *in* Jesus Christ *for* us and happens *in* us through faith".²⁵⁶ Brunner's assessment, the "...unity of assurance and claim, of gift and task..."²⁵⁷

This dialectical nature of the relationship between God and redeemed humanity best describes the adventure of Christian living as a covenantal, conversational and collaborative relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, within the context of both Divine and human community. This is the arena of *spiritual formation*: the *faith-task* elements of spiritual life and discipline within community, dialectically related to the empowering *gift* of Christ the eternal Word of grace revealed in Scripture and living within. This is outworked through the dynamic communication of the Spirit, and with other believers, inter-dependently collaborating in the ongoing process of *spiritual transformation* climaxing in *the goal*, conformity to the image of Christ at his return.

Schematically portrayed:

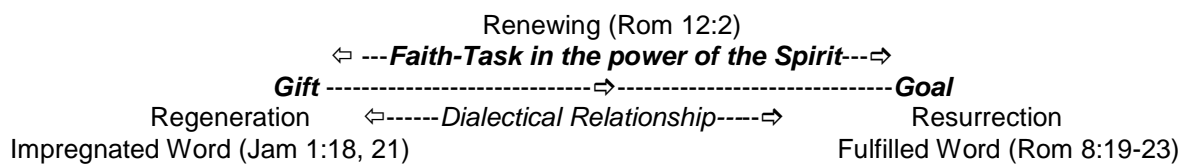


Figure 1: The Process within and toward Adult Spiritual Transformation

So, the process that is continually resulting in *spiritual transformation* is simultaneously a *gift*, a *goal*, and a *task*.

The reception of the Word and the Holy Spirit in regeneration on the basis of Christ's atoning ministry is a powerfully transformative *gift* of God's grace which renews the inner person both *relationally* in believers' capacity to communicate with God, and *perspectively* in how they see themselves in relation to both God and the world around them. The *goal* is the complete replication of the image of Christ within believers, which will only be fully realised in the resurrection. The *task*, a faith-task albeit, inherent within this gift of grace is the need to live repentantly within community through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just as a once-only acknowledgement of sinfulness before God, asking his forgiveness, but a daily renewing of the mind, aligning the thoughts and desires of the heart to the will of God in the context of personal devotion to God among a missional community of faith that is a witness in and to our fallen world. This can only be achieved through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, placing believers within a creative dialectical tension between the Divine will and the human will yielded to his.

This was supremely demonstrated at Gethsemane by Jesus the God-Man: the Word who became flesh in order to reconcile differences and re-establish conversational relationship between God and humanity.²⁵⁸ Passionate dialectical tension is seen in the Garden as God the Son wrestles with his own humanity for several hours, but through a processes of conversation with the Father, he voluntarily surrenders his own will to the will of the Father in order to fulfil his Father's greater missional and redemptive will.²⁵⁹

This is the arena of *spiritual formation* which nurtures the depth of meaning, purpose, and empowerment required to realise the biblical imperative of *spiritual transformation* towards the progressive replication of the image of Christ within believers, to be fully realised in the resurrection.

And further, this transformational community of faith is required to be an authentic missional demonstration of God's transforming grace and life within a society which desperately needs transformation that is only available through the Gospel of his redeeming grace and life. The inculcation of this redeeming and missional Gospel message places significant responsibilities on the teaching and discipling ministry of the Church.

The ultimate goal of this gospel of the kingdom is to present the church, the bride of Christ, to her bridegroom, becoming conformed to his image.²⁶⁰ The ongoing goal of spiritual transformation must be seen as equally part of Jesus' mission – evangelism and discipleship are *both-and* elements of Christian mission – Christ's mission of personal, communal, and global transformation.

Have we misrepresented the scope of Mission?

Reflection - My sobering reality: the slumdog millionaire's India

Joseph D'souza

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The movie **Slumdog Millionaire** and the Booker Prize winning novel **The White Tiger** have highlighted the non-shiny part of "India Shining". Far from exploiting poverty, these are stories about India which demand a global response – especially for the sake of the children.

This is the India of 80% of the population - the India of the slums, the outcastes, the exploited, and of abject poverty. The India where Dalit, tribal, and poor children are sold into the sex trade. Where fully healthy children are maimed into becoming beggars. Where children become victims of religious communalism. And where the elitist classes keep them out of prosperity and development by not being willing to change a system that disenfranchises the children of the downtrodden.

I have worked with the disenfranchised and marginalised for most of my life. I'm a citizen of India who is proud of my country's progress in recent years, yet I must point out the obvious again. The movie is not about selling the poverty of India as a British newspaper alleged ("Shocked by Slumdog's poverty porn", Alice Miles, *The Times*, January 14, 2009). Instead, it is the story about the real India of the majority where children become the primary victims of all that is dysfunctional in society, as a different British newspaper pointed out ("Danny Boyle leaps to defence of Slumdog Millionaire", Ben Child, *The Guardian*, January 21, 2009).

When the movie released in India, there was another barrage of attacks by a section of the elitist Indian media. There was a heavy emphasis on the simple fact that this is a movie made by a white British producer. There were claims that it only shows stereotypes of India and is a collection of the worst things about our country. All this while forgetting that this movie - which won Golden Globes and other awards and was nominated for several Oscars - is far truer to Indian reality than the popular fantasised Bollywood movies.

But isn't this the time for truth-telling about what ails India and our world?

Are not the children of our day the primary victims of caste and racial discrimination, human trafficking, war, poverty, and religious extremism?

The world has about 1.2 billion children - with India and China accounting for more than a fourth - 400 million children. This is according to the excellent UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) report *State of the World's Children 2008*. The vast majority of India's roughly 250 million children are affected by dire poverty, caste discrimination, and exploitation.

In India, we know there is a massive problem with modern day slavery. Usually we call it "bonded labor" or "trafficking". The extent of the problem of bonded child labor and human trafficking is staggering.

There are an estimated 40-115 million child laborers in India today, 15 million of whom are in debt bondage or modern slavery. Worldwide, almost 20% of all trafficking victims are children, says the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime 2009 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. These children work under conditions of servitude to repay the debts of their parents, grandparents, relatives or guardians.

Manjula (name changed) is one such modern slave.

From the age of four, this child accompanied her mother at 5:00am every morning to the matchstick production factory in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India. Forsaking sleep, forsaking safety, she and her mother worked in hazardous, disgusting conditions, for just a few rupees a day. They watched every month as dozens of their "colleagues" received chemical burns and terrible injuries from explosions.

They lived in fear of the work environment and of physical abuse if they did not meet their production quota for the day.

Today, Manjula is 12 years old. Sadly, her younger sister, Kavitha, has also taken up the matchstick trade. Her parents live in a never-ending cycle of debt.

Manjula and Kavitha are the collateral for which those debts will be repaid. With scars on their frail, undernourished bodies to tell the tale, these girls have been denied a childhood; denied a life of freedom. What hope do they have for a better tomorrow?

While boys suffer greatly, India's girl-child is even more at risk. Feticide is a major problem. For the girl-child who survives until birth, the future is risky. Millions of girls and women are trafficked for prostitution and slave labor – both interstate within India, and in neighboring countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The atrocity reaches hundreds of thousands of minor/teenage Tribal girls who work in affluent urbanised areas. There is no enforceable legal consequence to protect such young girls and women. They are resigned to a life of physical and sexual exploitation, a life worse than death.

Premila (name changed) is a modern slave who faces this life worse than death.

She was celebrating her birthday in a small village in rural Bihar. Her parents, desperate to escape their impoverished plight, signed their daughter over to a nightmare. For the paltry sum of 800 rupees, she was sold to a man living in faraway Punjab state. He claimed there were no "good women" in his village and therefore he was forced to buy a wife. "Wife" is a loose term. "Sexual slave" would be more accurate.

For one or two years Premila was used as a modern-day concubine. There was no marriage ceremony. There was no hope of marital love in her future. Her body was used and abused at the will of this man, her "husband", and of any of his male relatives who came to call. It was a living hell. But her days were about to get worse.

Eventually, a new investment opportunity presented itself and Premila was turned out of her new "family" in Punjab and sold to a well-known prostitution ring in the nation's capital, New Delhi.

The sex trafficking trade runs rampant and Premila brought a relatively good price: 5,000 rupees. She joined thousands of other women who exist in impoverished, disease-ridden, dangerous conditions. She was forced to sell or give her body under threat of abuse or death. What else could she do?

Premila was a "good" employee and was traded yet again to the streets of Mumbai for 35,000 rupees. It was here that she was finally rescued. Returned to her hometown in Bihar, she was a broken woman. She will never re-marry. She will likely die young; used, abused and forgotten.

As many people have noted, helping India's women and children is very important. If India does not meet the various Millennium Goals set by the United Nations then the whole world will fail to meet these goals for improving the quality of life on our planet. But this is about more than statistics. When I meet a girl like Premila, my heart breaks because her pain is preventable.

Today we live in a globalised world where we are global citizens. As global citizens of good will, leaders from India have an opportunity to act and change the course of history. It is not only India that suffers from the plague of modern day slavery.

Children around the world are victims of this cruel fate. There are millions of children living in Africa, Latin America, and the Muslim world who suffer the same plight. Their future seems just as bleak. Many of these are in similarly desperate situations with no hope for a brighter tomorrow. To me the conclusion for our generation is crystal clear: The "slumdog" of our generation is the boy or girl less than 14 years old.

Every culture has its dark side. The danger – and the unpatriotic thing – is when we do not acknowledge the reality around us and, because we claim blindness, we do not honestly try to fix the problems with most vulnerable citizens of our beloved country. Any attempt by Indians to look at themselves critically is a sign of our maturity.

That's why the organisations and networks of which I'm a part are focused on preventing slavery. While we need police and NGOs to rescue and rehabilitate victims, prevention is the ultimate solution.

The solution is not simply reducing poverty. The solution is not simply educating all children. Instead, we must primarily help vulnerable kids like Manjula, Kavitha, and Premila. This has practical consequences - where do we locate new schools, what communities are chosen for development projects, what curriculum and interaction will help children view themselves properly? India is a vast, beautifully diverse country. Currently, our efforts – and those of similar groups – are only a drop in the bucket of need.

I have a sobering, recurring thought these days. Is the main sin of our generation what we are doing to children - both born and unborn? What is our part in changing the conditions of the “slumdog” kids of the world? The global audience must rise up and stand against those who claim caste discrimination is dead. Indians of all castes and creeds must defend the vulnerable. Citizens of good will must ban together in solidarity for kids around the world whose existence prescribes them a life of slavery, a life of oppression, a life best described as hell on earth.

Reflection - Urban mission from Nairobi to Melbourne

David Williams

*Originally a medical doctor, **David Williams** worked in the health service in the UK for three years before training for ministry in the Church of England. He then studied mission at All Nations Christian College and served as Principal of Carlile College in Nairobi. During his time in Kenya, David helped Carlile College to establish a specialist urban mission training programme based in Kibera slum, one of the largest informal settlements in sub-Saharan Africa. David has been leading the Development and Training Team for the Church Missionary Society-Australia since 2007.*

Introduction

Since 2007, for the first time in human history, more than half of the world's population live in cities. In the Majority World cities of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, most of those city dwellers live in slums. One sixth of the entire population of the world, over one billion people, live in slums or, more properly "informal settlements". Of these one billion slum dwellers, nearly half of them are younger than 25 years old.

My friend Wachira is typical of these billion slum dwellers. He grew up in a slum in Nairobi, living in a single roomed, mud and stick house with no electricity or running water. His family, along with hundreds of others, shared a single latrine that drained into an open sewer. In the slum where Wachira grew up, there are more churches than toilets. Wachira attended an informal school that charged minimal fees, but he often missed months of education because his mum couldn't afford even the smallest amount. Secondary school was way out of reach. By the time he was a teenager, he spent most of his time with a gang of other youngsters picking rubbish off the huge city trash heap at Dandora, the landfill site for the whole of Nairobi. Wachira and his friends would pick through the rubbish looking for glass bottles, scrap metal, plastic bags, anything that they could sell in order to earn a few shillings. In Swahili these kinds of street children are called "Chokora", which means simply garbage. They live on the garbage tip, they have become garbage themselves. This is life for one in twelve people on our planet.

Challenges faced by the urban poor

People living in slums in the majority world face many challenges. Unemployment rates in informal settlements are typically around 50%. This kind of poverty leads to a sense of hopelessness and despair, evident in social issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence, promiscuity, prostitution, theft, and violence. All of these things are symptoms of a deeper underlying problem that faces many informal settlements, which is the loss of community.

In many countries, cities are a "new" phenomenon – new in the last 100 years. In Africa, as in much of the Majority World, community is based on a strong understanding of kinship relationships from a rural setting. In a typical African village, everyone knows everyone else. Children are raised surrounded by their grandparents, their aunts, uncles and cousins. These extended family networks are extremely powerful and form a system of deep community relationships. But when people move into the cities, they move with their nuclear family, not their extended family. They move into cities that are ethnically and tribally mixed, where all the old familiar structures are absent. The huge slums in cities like Nairobi, Cairo, Lagos, Manila and Mumbai are places with a fractured sense of community, very different to the village communities in the surrounding rural areas. Development organisations have often struggled to make an impact in informal settlements precisely because slum communities are so transitory. How do you do community-based development when there is so little community?

Slum churches

One agency that is often overlooked in the slums is the agency of the church. Churches are often ignored because, apart from the Roman Catholic Church, most mainline denominations find it very difficult to engage in ministry in informal settlements. But many slums around the world are full of churches – full of informal pentecostal and indigenous churches. Slum religion often veers towards fundamentalism, and it's well recognised that slums in Islamic cities are fertile recruiting grounds for extreme Islam such as Al Qaeda. But slum Christianity tends to extremes as well and many slum

churches fall prey to confusions and heresies. In Kibera, one of the largest slums in Africa, there are over 700 churches; most of these are tiny – perhaps averaging twenty or thirty people. Many of them listen to prosperity teaching week in and week out.

Prosperity theology is widespread amongst such a poor group of people because there often seems to be no other answer to the problem of poverty. Churches preach a message that tells people that they need to be born again and that once they are born again they can expect God to bless them in material ways – through finding a job, receiving healing, and so on. Part of my own work in Kenya has been about trying to help churches in slums find a different solution to urban poverty other than prosperity theology. The heart of this solution is about enabling churches to understand themselves as the holistic community of God's people.

Holistic church

Helping informal settlement churches to understand that there are things they can do apart from preaching prosperity theology was a key part of my ministry in Kenya. At its root, this was about equipping local churches to see themselves as a holistic community of God's people, living out his Word in their own context. We set up a training centre in the middle of Kibera slum, with the aim of equipping pastors and church leaders from informal settlement churches. One of the first programs that this "Centre for Urban Mission" offered was training in HIV/AIDS.

Immediately we ran into the challenge of prosperity theology. In the first group of pastors that we trained, all of them thought that HIV was a curse sent from God against sinners. They reasoned that if you were a Christian you couldn't get AIDS, and if you had AIDS the solution was to get converted and be healed. They did not believe that they had a problem with HIV inside their own congregations. This attitude might sound unbelievable, but it combines the problems of poor theology, cultural taboos about sexuality and deeply ingrained attitudes of stigma and discrimination. We struggled to convince these church leaders that the issue of HIV was relevant to their churches. The breaking point came when we invited all of them to take an HIV test. Although they firmly believed that it was impossible for them to be HIV positive because their theology said so, not a single one of them was willing to take the test. Suddenly reality broke through stigma and taboo.

That HIV course led on to a series of grassroots courses that we ran in areas like basic discipleship, understanding the bible, micro-enterprise skills and substance abuse. As we engaged in teaching churches simple Bible truths, we discovered afresh the power of God's word, in situations where God's word had been little understood. Over the years we started to see churches working together to support one another and to find ways to address the challenges they faced. One church helped a group of its women to set up businesses selling second hand clothes. Another church started a business for church members making soap. Yet another started visiting people suffering from AIDS in their homes. From these small beginnings, the College has developed grassroots training that now extends to all the major slums in Nairobi and is equipping hundreds of local congregations to be "holistic church".

Patterns of connection

As I've reflected on the experience of informal settlement churches in Nairobi, I've noticed patterns that I see repeated in many urban contexts in Australia. The first pattern is the fragmented and transitory nature of the communities that many Australian Christians live in. While we do not face the extreme social deprivation of the slums, we nevertheless live with limited sense of community. It is common for us not to know our neighbours and to have almost nothing to do with them or their lives. This limited expectation of secular community is carried into church, where we have low expectations of Christian community. Put simply, our lives hardly overlap with the lives of the brothers and sisters who share our church family. The outcome is that, faced with a personal tragedy, people often suffer alone, particularly if the tragedy is in some sense socially unacceptable, for example a broken marriage. Our challenge, as in Nairobi, is for our churches to provide models of holistic community, rooted and grounded in God's Word, to a culture that is fractured and hungry for true community. Our risk, as in Nairobi, is that we simply mirror the dysfunctional patterns of secular society. Local churches that draw people in to holistic community can provide a powerful witness.

The second pattern relates to the denial of problems that are somehow stigmatised or fall under social taboo. In Nairobi's slums, AIDS was a taboo subject, despite the fact that more than one in ten people living there are HIV positive. In Australia, some subjects are rarely mentioned in church, and yet

social research suggests that behaviour in these areas is widespread. For example, I have lived in Australia for over three years, but have never heard a sermon that has referred to gambling, even as a passing reference. Maybe Christians don't gamble? Perhaps Church leaders here have followed the same thought processes of my friends in Nairobi in relation to HIV: my theology tells me that Christians don't gamble, so there can't be a problem with gambling in my church, so I don't need to talk about it. I suggest that it is far more likely that there is an unspoken taboo that prevents us from addressing such a pervasive social problem. Faced with this silence, the issue remains hidden. We could repeat this story for a range of social issues that are rarely mentioned in church but which are statistically commonplace. Obvious examples would include prostitution and the use of internet pornography.

The third pattern is the difficulty local churches face in working together to address specific issues in their community. Informal settlement Pastors in Nairobi all face the same kinds of problems and are not sure how to address them. The initial experience of the "Centre for Urban Mission" was that these Pastors found it hard to be open about the problems their congregation faced with colleagues from other churches. But once this barrier had been negotiated, Pastors were relieved to discover that theirs was not the only church facing this issue; and that by working together they could develop responses that were not possible alone. The church I attend in Melbourne is struggling with a number of marriage breakdowns in long-standing members of the congregation. I would be very surprised if the Baptist church round the corner and the Church of Christ congregation down the road are not confronted by the same issue. A typical local congregation does not have the resources to run a marriage recovery ministry, but working co-operatively with other churches may create the capacity required to make this viable.

A fourth pattern reflects the fact that local churches find it difficult to recognise these issues without input from a trusted outsider. In Nairobi, it took an outside agency with strong relationships in the community to begin to work on these issues with informal settlement churches. I believe that whether we are talking about Kenya or Australia, this is a role that is peculiarly suited to theological colleges. Colleges that have been involved in training local church leaders should, if they have done a good job, have a high level of trust. This gives them the opportunity to speak with a prophetic voice to local churches – to challenge them about the work that needs to be done but has not yet been contemplated.

Conclusion

Urbanisation provides us with profound and largely unrealised opportunities. Never before have so many churches and their leaders been in ministry in such proximity. Rather than seeing this as a threat, we need to realise the profound opportunities that this offers us – opportunities to be the holistic communities that God intends us to be.

Reflection - Short term mission – some observations

Paul Arnott

*The Reverend **Paul Arnott** is a graduate of Ridley Melbourne. He has served as the State Director of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Victoria since February 2002. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and the chair of Acorn Press Ltd. Prior to working for CMS he spent 15 years in parish ministry in the Diocese of Tasmania and 12 years in ABC radio current affairs. Paul is the author of two books, **No Time To Say Goodbye** and **Live The Moment**.*

Each year millions of young people around the world go on “short term missions”, doing a variety of mission related activities. The average length of these trips is two weeks. There is growing concern within the global cross-cultural mission community about the usefulness of such trips in light of the amount of money they cost and their impact on the national church. However, this is a vexed issue, about which mission organisations are often reluctant to speak out, for fear of dousing genuine enthusiasm for gospel proclamation and of losing the support of such people.

There is an elephant in the engine room of global cross-cultural mission. It is called “short term mission.” The massive increase in the incidence of “short term mission” over the past decade is giving missionary organisations pause for a great deal of reflection and thought. The explosion in the numbers of young people around the world engaging in “short term mission” now sees two million young North American believers aged 18-24 spend two to three weeks every northern summer in another country. They do everything from visiting orphanages and AIDS programs to digging wells and helping to build houses. While the numbers in Australia are far smaller, the percentage is similar. Most commentary on “short term mission” focuses on how to make the experience a more valuable one for both participants and recipients. But very little research on the overall value of “short term mission” has been done. I put the term in parenthesis because it is something the Bible knows little of.

What is biblical mission?

Biblical mission, by its very nature, is long term. The models of mission in the Bible are largely long term. The bible knows almost nothing of “short term mission”.²⁶¹ The mission of the early Church was all long term. St Paul didn't teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus for two weeks (Acts 19.9). He taught there day in and day out for two years. Effective mission is inextricably linked to meaningful relationship and meaningful relationship takes time. Even when the apostles visited a town briefly, they left behind them disciples who engaged in long term mission and evangelism. Another thing which muddies the waters is use of the term “Missions”. Mission and Missions are two entirely different animals, but are often used interchangeably. Mission is God's mission to our world, which the Bible records from Genesis to Revelation. Missions are short term sorties into another culture, which may have very little to do with mission. As the late David Bosch points out there is only one mission, and it is the *missio Dei*: “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”²⁶² Missions, as distinct from mission, have sometimes been described as baptised tourism on the part of Christians.

“Just another experience”

US Missions Mobiliser Paul Borthwick tells the story of meeting a young student who had done a short term missions trip twelve months earlier. He asked him how his passion for mission had grown and how his relationship with God had deepened over the past year. The young man paused and thought for a moment. Then he replied, “To be honest Paul my life has been so busy over the past year I just don't remember much of what happened on that trip.” Paul Borthwick goes on to say he believes that many young people live such full lives that “a short term mission's trip may be just another experience for them”. Unless there is proper preparation for a mission trip and thorough debriefing afterwards the trip may be just another experience. In fact, such trips may do real damage to the ministries of national believers. The few surveys done to assess the impact of short term missions on participants indicate that only a few percent of those who do them end up serving as long term missionaries.

Mission organisations and “short term mission”

The reason cross-cultural mission organisations remain largely silent over their concerns about short term mission is that we want to do all we can to help deepen the passion of people of all ages for biblical mission that leads to those who don't yet know Jesus as Lord and Saviour coming to faith. The last thing we want to do is to dampen the excitement of young people to follow Jesus with the whole of their lives. But there are real concerns about the effectiveness of this kind of “mission”. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) seeks to avoid using the term “short term mission”. From time to time we run or assist others to run Mission Awareness trips or Mission Observations tours. In my experience such trips are often able to give people the experience of another culture and the opportunity to observe firsthand how God is at work in that culture. At worst however, they are a misuse of money and resources.

Better preparation and debriefing needed

A well known international mission leader who visited Australia several years ago related a conversation she had with a leading African bishop about missions trips. She asked him how he felt about missions trips to his country. He asked, “Do you want the politically correct answer or the truth.” She opted for the latter. He said, “These trips can do far more damage than good. Very often the young people on them have few clues about cultural differences and offend the people whose country they are visiting. Our people on the ground here need to spend a great deal of time looking after the people on these trips, who are often suffering major culture shock. If the young people stayed home and donated the thousands of dollars they spent on their trip to the church or local Christian organisations it could be put to far better use for the kingdom of God.” I believe that mission organisations need the courage to express more publicly our concerns about such trips. We need to do more to help people engaging in such trips to better understand what they are doing and why they are doing it and to assist them to more effectively prepare for the experience and to debrief afterwards. CMS has people do so-called short term mission placements for periods from three months to two years, but there is a great deal of preparation for them and thorough debriefing afterwards. This hopefully maximises the potential for short term mission to be far more effective for the sake of the gospel and the extension of the kingdom of God than they currently are.

REFLECTION - Revitalising the Church through engaging globally

Walt White

Walt White is jointly appointed by Global Interaction (the cross cultural branch of Australian Baptists) and International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches, and has just celebrated 35 years of this partnership. For the past 18 years he has worked as a Global Consultant with cross-cultural workers, churches and denominations in a variety of countries focused on a more effective witness especially to those of the major historical religions. He and his wife have three daughters and six grandchildren. He has a Bachelor degree from San Jose State University in psychology and a Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary.

“Can involvement in global mission revitalize my congregation?” While the concern for one’s congregation is commendable, the question is a contradiction in terms. We should be concerned about the health of our congregations, but the very definition of mission is that it is for others, and not oneself or one’s own. If the motive is ultimately to serve one’s own needs, then it is not truly “mission” and it is probably doomed to failure.

This is a recurring theme in the teaching of Jesus. “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:35 NRSV) One finds their life through giving their life for others. This is as true on the corporate level as on the individual.

So, when we ask, “How can my congregation be revitalized through global mission?”, we are asking the wrong question. But let us nevertheless consider how to put a commendable concern for one’s own congregation together with a commitment to do genuine mission. How is that best achieved? I would suggest it is through enabling the revitalization of the mission receiving congregation. How, then, is that best achieved?

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Again, our desire is a good one: to bless others. But we usually fail to realize that the biggest blessing we may be able to give another is the opportunity to bless US!

I constantly encounter people who want to go on a mission trip and say, “I do not want to go simply as a tourist. I want to DO something. I want to MINISTER.” While this sounds great at one level, it may not be, for three reasons:

1. This statement assumes the person expressing this desire has something to share. They may not. Indeed, one may have vast quantities of doctrine and Biblical knowledge to dispense, but Jesus seemed much more interested in what a person lived rather than what a person knew. That is ordinarily what people in host cultures are interested in, too. It may well be that the people you go to cannot articulate the nuances of Western theological disputes, but they are much more dependent upon the daily grace of God, live with a much more faithful heart, be much more dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, see God’s power being manifested in signs and wonders in their lives and the lives of others, and be loving and serving their neighbors in a far more profound way than the visitor! Indeed, they may have much more the faith of a little child than the “teacher”.

The fact is that a theology defined by Greek philosophical categories is not only irrelevant for other philosophical constructs, but it also incomprehensible. For example, when a Westerner tells a Buddhist, “God is love” there are at least two major problems. First, many Buddhists do not believe there is a God at all, and even if there is, the idea is irrelevant. Secondly, love is an attachment, and evil comes from attachments. So, our belief that love is central to God’s nature means to a Buddhist that there is evil within God’s nature. I trust that no one wishes to communicate that! If one wishes to make any sense to a Buddhist, one must first learn, at the very minimum, what our words mean to a person whose reality is defined within that worldview. In fact, the same is true for those who do not have so radically different a worldview, as well.

2. The statement also in practicality often assumes that the other has little to share. This is always a profound mistake. Missionaries often joke among themselves, "I went to take God to the Wup Wup, but discovered God had gotten there long before me." When one takes the opportunity to listen to the faith experience of another, and to listen to the unique insights of that person and how he or she has been radically changed by giving his or herself to Jesus Christ, whole new windows onto our own experience of the presence and power of Christ in our own lives are often opened.
3. Our mission trips often do for others what God wants them to do for themselves. This robs the host of the privileges of discipleship. This makes us feel good, but the long term results are dynamics that are not healthy for the local body of believers to which we go. Our primary interest should be the health of the body of believers to which we go. Careful evaluation of much of what we do indicates that often what we call meeting the needs of others actually is done because it meets our own needs. We may act out of guilt for the abundance we have been given. We may act out of our need "to do something." Or we may act out of true compassion and love, but with no understanding of the local culture, local church politics or regard for the results. I recall a discussion between two missionaries. One said, "When confronted with such profound poverty and such extreme need, it is wrong not to do SOMETHING!" to which the other correctly replied, "Unless it is the WRONG thing."

"God is more interested in what He wants to do IN you than THROUGH you." This has become a cliché. Why? Simply because so many people have found it to be true. And yet as activists, we tend only to be concerned with what WE do, rather than on what God may be wanting to do, particularly in our own lives.

What is the biggest gift that one can give on a mission trip? It may simply be "the ministry of presence". Often, it is more of a ministry to BE rather than to DO! We Westerners often fail to recognize, because of our extremely individualistic worldview, that for new believers in communal cultures our mere presence may be the most important thing we can "give". In communal cultures where an individual's faith in Jesus makes that person or even a small group an oddity, little is more significant than communicating to those people that they are part of a larger family and that family recognizes them, accepts them with whatever differences they might have, prays for them and stands with them.

I do not mean by a "ministry of presence" merely a silent witness. We are to be like Jesus, who both acted and spoke. But remember, Jesus took roughly thirty years to learn the culture before He began what we term his ministry years. So, what should we talk about? We should focus on what Jesus means to us in our daily lives: at work, at play, in our families, in our community and in our local fellowship of believers. Remember, Jesus calls us NOT to yet another religion, but into a relationship. Focus on that relationship, rather than attempt to teach another religion, and most importantly, listen to how our brothers and sisters in the host culture live out their relationship with Jesus.

I have watched many people come and go on missions, from a couple of days to a lifetime career. Some people have been dramatically impacted and report that it was a life-changing experience. I believe the key factor is the same for the short term visitor and the long term

cross-cultural worker. I have observed that those who have been most profoundly changed came first to learn. They have been willing to give up things they have considered precious, including even some of their strongly held opinions. In other words, they have been willing to give themselves up for the sake of the other. And indeed, they are also the ones that have had the most profound impact on their hosts and are the ones that can give back to their own local fellowship the deeper relationship with Jesus and vitality that they have discovered. In giving up their own lives, they have both found life and have been able to give that life in Jesus back to others.

Reflection - Elevating the local church

Dave Tolputt

Dave Tolputt has been in ministry leadership since 1985, when he trained with the Salvation Army. Dave's pastoral experience includes small country churches, rural church planting and pastoring a large regional social/congregational integrated missional church. Dave is currently the State Director of Scripture Union in Victoria, which recruits, trains and deploys around 1000 volunteer missionaries to the state per year. He has a special heart for rural and regional church ministry, and believes that anything is possible for the local church. He is married to Deb, and participates in the Brimbank Salvation Army. He loves the euphonium.

The first church appointment

My wife Deb and I started our pastoral ministry life in a little church in Seymour, Victoria in 1987. In our tradition, the first church appointment was sight unseen, like a blind date. The drive up was both anxious and exciting, both of which peaked as we pulled up to the little church meeting hall to look at what God had sent us to. "Cookie" (Mr Cook) was mowing the lawns in preparation for our induction service the following Sunday, and warmly welcomed us, pumping my hand until it nearly fell off. The buildings were modest. Clad in untreated asbestos, uninsulated and the outdoor toilets had no interior lining... oh, those toilets! The youth hall was listing by about 10 degrees, and, as we stepped inside we were confronted with piles of jumble and that unmistakable church hall mustiness - you know, that lovely mixture of mothballs, wet wool, mouldy paperbacks and mouse poo. But here we were! We were consumed with excitement, couldn't wait to lead the church and work into the community.

Within 8 months, the gloss was gone and we were feeling spent and looking for a way out! We couldn't seem to please anyone, no matter how much we visited it wasn't enough, and we were working enormous hours and couldn't see any fruit for our labour. I look back now and wonder how a congregation of about twenty mostly elderly people, and a Sunday school with about a dozen kids could unravel two full time ministers. But there we were, in our mid twenties...and SPENT! What we learned out of that and subsequent experiences helped us to stay the journey and grow new paradigms for church, but first we had to address three clear mistakes we made.

Three common mistakes

1. Not being clear about the mission

For many church leaders, managing the affairs of the church clearly takes up the majority and sometimes all of the time. Sorting out leadership of this ministry or that, organising the worship, preparing the sermon, sitting in committees, attending functions, burying the dead, and on top of all that producing the church newsletter. The daily grind of church management can dull the missional edge of both church and leader so that managing the church routine becomes the mission.

Church management is by its nature generally a tactical matter, mostly task focussed and revolving around a weekly cycle of regular events. But mission focus is strategic and focuses around long term identified Kingdom objectives which are usually beyond the current practices ... which is why some prefer managing church. Church management, though sometimes time pressing, can be relatively safe for those who love routines and system. Emil Brunner remarked though, that "the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning".²⁶³ In other words, a church community that inverts is not fulfilling its purpose. Church leaders must identify and attend to the mission of God in the world and keep that central to their work and before their church or they risk a second mistake.

2. Becoming enslaved to congregational expectations

One of my mentors in the early days challenged me. “David, there is never an absence of leadership. If you don’t lead, someone else will. You might not like the destination or the journey.” Of course, this is not suggesting that effective leadership is centralised or autocratic, but there is a truth here that needs to be observed. When church leaders lose their way with the mission, the *needs* of the members of the flock begin to take centre stage and become the mission. It is not a massive step for congregational members to then expect that their *wants* will get equal attention and ultimately an unspoken but nonetheless palpable expectation arises that the church leader’s primary ministry is to meet the church members wants and needs. When this happens, church leaders often feel like slaves to church member’s expectations.

This situation seemed to be developing in the early church where we read in Acts 6 about the dispute between the Hellenistic and Hebrew members regarding the care of their widows. It appears that the apostles were being pulled into church management and the needs/wants of the widows. Regardless of the merits of their respective cases, the apostles recognised the danger of the apostolic mission being subverted, and appointed deacons to take care of the issue.²⁶⁴

Clearly, the church should see that people receive justice, but often, over supplying the needs/wants of congregational members diverts the church from addressing a deeper need, stretching and growing into authentic faith through self denial and sacrificial living. Being enslaved to congregational aspirations also makes church leaders hypersensitive to congregational discomfort, generally lowering expectations and opportunities for deeply transformative experiences and fuels a fear of challenging members for change. The status quo rules! This in turn subconsciously redefines the work of laity in mission and ministry downward, and the workload of the church leader upwards. It’s a pernicious cycle, but one which, curiously, many church leaders seem to embrace as desirable and appropriate.

But even more deadly, this hypersensitivity to church member comfort subverts the mission by turning the mission of the church into becoming a centre for the delivery of user friendly services, the third great mistake.

3. Adopting a service delivery paradigm

On the surface, this doesn’t look like a mistake. Surely the church is here to serve the world’s needs. Didn’t Jesus serve the needs of people? Raymond Fung challenges the service mentality that has become the mainstay of the church.

*... whilst we as Christians might describe ourselves as servants of God, we are not servants to other people and to the world... To describe the church as servant to the world is clearly inadequate. It sounds as if the church does not know what it is about, where it is going or what message it has for the world. This may be true unfortunately, for some certain churches, in which case there is all the more reason to do away with the “servant” language.*²⁶⁵

These are difficult words to grasp because for decades, servanthood has been the predominant language of church mission. The service delivery paradigm that has become the mark of church leadership *within* the church has helped create an unhelpful parallel for community engagement *outside* the church. This paradigm manifests in many ways including:

- Churches “retailing” their worship services to attract people from outside.
- Creating dependency and unhealthy aspiration where there wasn’t before.
- A culture of pleasure and personal happiness being the measure of church life.
- Proliferation of programs to attract more and more people without any clear idea or intention to train and equip for authentic discipleship.
- Over emphasis on numbers attending over disciples engaged and deployed

Don’t misread this. Serving the cause of the Kingdom calls us to love and serve the world. However, even as Jesus was serving suffering humanity his actions were “signs” pointing to the deeper purposes of God. Notice that when people came to him seeking a sign, he withheld. Further, Jesus seemed less interested in large crowds than much of the church today. He would not give them what they wanted. The words of Jesus in Matthew 11:16-17 carry this thought vividly

*To what should I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another, 'we played the flute for you, yet you did not dance. We wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.'*²⁶⁶

An uncommon approach

If adopting a “service delivery” paradigm is not healthy, then what? Indeed, how do we avoid these three mistakes?

It begins with being clear about the mission

We address the first mistake by starting with embracing God’s mission, not the mission we want, but the mission we have been given. One of the first questions we should ask is “What is God up to?” Ephesians 1:10 provides perhaps the most complete response to God’s ultimate purpose. The “mystery of his will”...

*which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*²⁶⁷

This is what God is accomplishing in Christ, and our part is to announce the reign of God in the world, call people to embrace God through Christ, and to make disciples. Many will be uncomfortable with the lack of emphasis on social justice and action, or on worship and devotion in this statement. In response, I make the case that one cannot be under the authority of Christ’s reign, embrace God through Christ and be a true disciple without these emphases being displayed in fruit. One cannot be “in Christ” whilst living selfish, disconnected, unconcerned, spiritually, morally and socially dead lives. As individuals and communities submit to Christ, they are reconciled, and they become agents of reconciliation with a new desire to take grace in word and action to the broken.²⁶⁸ This is why Jesus calls the church to make disciples as the priority work.

A renewed church

The first place for this mission is within the existing gathered community. This is how we address the second mistake. With the mission clear in our minds, by training and equipping the saints, we address the disabling self focussed behaviours that so often debilitate the life and witness of the church. Neither is this determined by age, race or gender, but all believers are called to be disciples. In discipling an existing community, the core objective is to develop a love and passion for God’s people, God’s Word, God’s purposes, and participating in God’s mission in the world.

This then should translate into a confident, committed, externally focussed faith community that embraces humanity in order to bring them into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Armed with purpose, passion and modest skill, a relatively small group of Christians can make an enormous difference to the world and especially to a local community. This brings us to addressing the third mistake.

An intentional approach

In 1 Corinthians 9:26, the Apostle Paul says...

*Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.*²⁶⁹

Much of what happens in church both internally and externally seems to lack the intentionality and permanency to which the Apostle points. In one of the churches my wife and I led, there were nine children’s programs operating for ten children. Clearly, the church was over programmed in this area, but no-one else thought so. Further, there was no evidence that the programs were producing spiritual fruit. They just kept adding more and more programs until it was almost impossible to think beyond running the program. Let’s understand that programs are not the problem. Failing to work out what the program is trying to accomplish and how it helps to fulfil the purposes and mission of God is the problem. A helpful approach is to change the thinking from *program* to *mechanism*.

When we think *program*, all that matters is getting the program itself right. We might spend enormous resources both financial and physical to deliver slick well polished programs, like playgroups, sports clubs, youth groups or seniors clubs, replicating activities readily available in the broader community,

but accomplish nothing eternally worthwhile. But when we focus on the program as a mechanism, we begin to think about the objective the program is trying to accomplish. We always held two key objectives for church programs:

1. How is this program helping the recipients to develop as disciples?
2. How is this program helping the deliverer to develop as a disciple?

Programs are as much about recruiting, developing and deploying the leaders and workers as they are for the benefit of those who are cared for. This way of thinking has been a feature of Scripture Union Missions over many years, where mission is about both developing young leaders and the witness to the broader community. We addressed the third mistake by focussing on mobilisation rather than membership.

A change that must take place

As I look on the horizon of church life, I see a shortage of ministers, and many who are in ministry showing signs of stress and fatigue. I see ministers who giving up on the dream that brought them into their calling in the first place. I see local churches missing opportunities to engage God's mission, and many ceasing altogether.

This scenario won't be addressed by digging deeper into the old paradigms, but by courageously changing the way church is done. It's a change that must take place.

Reflection - Prayer flags

Paul Minty

Paul Minty has worked in missions to the people of Melbourne for twenty years, focusing on younger Australians with a post-modern sensibility. He has combined mission work with a career in technology innovation and small business, skills and experience that have enhanced his skills in mission. Finding connection with his peers' natural inclination for spiritual seeking and being creative with ways of communicating and creating authentic shared spiritual experiences has been a common thread in his mission work, encompassing carnivals, underground publishing, social action and the performing arts. Paul currently works with Solace Emerging Missional Church, based in Alphington Victoria.

A point of connection with inner-urban, professional families is their expressed desire to be spiritual. These families are suspicious of religions that seek to be culturally dominant and insensitive to local community. A means of working within the point of connection was found by adopting the mechanics of a Tibetan spiritual practice, prayer flags, and developing an authentic Christian spiritual practice using the same mechanics. Prayer flags were well successful in communicating, initiating dialogue and enabling authentic spiritual connection.

Solace, the emergent and missionary organisation that I work for, used a traditional church building located on Station St, Fairfield, a busy and fashionable shopping strip located in inner-city Melbourne. Every year this street has a fiesta, with street stalls, music, rides for the kids and lots of people. Along with the church's own congregation, we had been developing a vibrant mid-week presence in the church building based around hospitality for mothers and children as they shopped and relaxed on the street. Come fiesta time we wanted to extend our presence by participating in the fiesta. My challenge was to come up with a street stall that made the most of the church's imposing architectural presence, was accessible for all kinds of people and was a genuine expression of us as a Christian community and mission. My solution was inspired by something from outside the Christian tradition. I used prayer flags.

Our use of prayer flags was inspired by a practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Prayer flags are a common sight in Tibet, where long strings of them are mounted on high places of buildings and hillsides. In Tibetan practice, holy texts are written on the flags and are believed to bring good things to other people, not to the creator of the flags. The natural deterioration of the flag, under the action of wind, rain, birds and other creatures is believed to take the goodness of the text out into the world. My research indicated that Tibetans are happy for other cultures to use prayer flags, as long as it is done respectfully and the desire to bring peace and harmony to the world. Prayer flags are a common sight in the inner-city of Melbourne and are a well-understood symbol of spiritual seeking, even if the underlying belief system and culture is not fully appreciated.

The method is to create simple small flags and hang long strings of them outside, to deteriorate naturally. The flags themselves are squares of coloured cotton, about 20 centimetres long on each side. We use fabric pens of various colours to draw and write words, symbols and sketches on the cloth. Into this method we incorporated Christian beliefs. In our belief, God listens to all prayers, and that prayers written and left out in the wind (no matter who creates them) will be heard by an all-loving creator God. Our belief is that the wind and cotton are created by a God who is present with creation, so the returning of the prayer to the creation from which it came is entirely appropriate. In addition, our imagination of God as a wind and breath finds expression in the sight of prayers fluttering in the wind. While our understanding of prayer is different from the Buddhist one, in this case there is a harmony which can be celebrated.

Using prayer flags is a practice of prayer that we do as a congregation, it is a genuine expression of our faith. Over time we created many prayer flags, which we hung from the internal rafters of the traditional church building. In this way they were visible to all comers through the week.

The natural deterioration of the flags challenges us to allow our religious impulses to result in events outside our control: and to be very visibly outside our control. The prayer flags present to us a stark contrast to the traditional Western ecclesiastical architecture and art, which, by contrast, appears monumental, controlled and permanent. We have found this visible contrast helpful in forming our missionary activities as actions that are visible and can result in uncontrolled outcomes: actions that are beautiful, meaningful and hopeful.

Solace has operated in the suburbs of Fairfield, Kew, Alphington and Clifton Hill: inner-northern suburbs of Melbourne. It is a region that is very urban, multi-cultural and is late in the process of gentrification, with established professional families sharing the streets with older migrant households. In our region it is highly-valued to be respectful of other beliefs and cultures. Our personal, educational and business networks are full of people from many different cultures and belief systems. The diversity of culture is valued. Protestant churches are poorly attended; older migrants tend to be Roman Catholic or Islamic and younger residents are either nominal followers of their parent's traditions or are non-churched Anglo-Australians. There is a strong sense of community in the area and few expressed needs for new churches or missionary activity.

Any mission we undertake needs to communicate that we are respectful of the local culture and values: we respect the local social institutions that provide cohesion and identity; we respect other faiths and are keen to engage in mutual dialogue; we respect the passage of cultural practices through generations and do not wish to disconnect family relationships. The region has many residents who are moral and active in their community. We cannot honestly claim that morals, community or even justice are in short supply in our region.

What we have found is that many people express a general wish to be "spiritual" but do not know how. In general, local people are wary of being manipulated by cults and lack a broad knowledge of religious traditions. Like any group of urban people, the possibility of disconnectedness is strong, due to the pressures of competitive work and business environments. In moments of crisis, many people do not have resilient beliefs and practices to assist them. In this need we have found a mission - helping people engage with the central teachings of Jesus and helping them find practices that will help them grow as whole-hearted people. The practice of prayer flags is one of a number of ways we undertake that mission.

We first took prayer flags to the Station Street Fiesta in 2008. We set up a stall outside the front of the church, directly on the main street. The stall was equipped with all the materials and tools needed to make prayer flags (squares of cloth, pens, string), had examples of prayer flags at street level and had a large number of prayer flags mounted on the high walls of the church behind us as an attractive and authentic display. Several members of our faith community volunteered to take turns manning the stall.

The volunteers would keep a look out for people passing by who showed any interest. We were cheerful, energetic and friendly, calling out, "would you like to make one yourself?" at any slim opportunity. Some of our volunteers were quite shy about sharing their own spiritual practice with strangers, but all grew in confidence as the day progressed. In the end, all the volunteers expressed satisfaction in being able to share in this way.

The participation rate among passers-by was high. While a small portion of the thousands of people passing by took notice of us, about a quarter of the people we invited actually took part. Compared with my personal experience with commercial marketing, this is a high participation rate, especially for a novel and unsought opportunity. Most people wanted a brief explanation before they participated. Our simple explanation of the method, the Tibetan beliefs and our own beliefs was very well received.

Participants created a diversity of flag designs, all of which we gratefully accepted. Participants mainly wrote short texts and drew simple drawings, though we were blessed with several highly skilled drawings demonstrating great spiritual insight and graciousness. Children enjoyed the activity and their parents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to do something simple, creative, generous and free! The contrast of what we were offering to the expensive junk food and wild rides offered by the fiesta was seen as positive by many parents passing by. Children tended to pray for the wellbeing of wild animals and friends. Adults tended to pray for peace and the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in Australia and in developing regions overseas. Reconciliation with indigenous Australians was also a common theme.

We thanked each participant warmly for sharing their prayers with us and quickly, clearly and respectfully added their flags to our display. Each flag represented not only their heartfelt prayers, but a moment of mutual vulnerability and respect.

This stall was judged a success by our faith community, and a worthy addition to the activities we offered during the fiesta (which included a sale at the op-shop, a jumping castle set-up inside the

church, free tea and coffee, free play areas for children and access to toilets and water). The prayer flags opened up our faith lives to our neighbours, an important complement to opening up our buildings and resources because it showed our true motivation was spiritual, not just a random generosity. We repeated this stall the following year.

Over the course of the next two years, the collection of prayer flags grew into a sizable display high in the rafters of the church building. We continued to add flags as part of our regular liturgy. The building was open during the week, with an op-shop and free play area for children happening underneath the display. The display served as a constant reminder to all users of the building that we were a practicing faith community that regularly prayed and wanted good things to happen in the world. This was a valuable and frequent topic of conversation for our volunteers and staff working in the church building during the week. The fact that we welcomed non-church people to contribute to the display was appreciated by all our visitors.

In reflecting on our experience with prayer flags, I have come to appreciate two important points. Firstly, prayer flags communicate a set of important facts to the participants and the broader community. Secondly, this is an authentic act of sharing our faith journey with people in the local community.

To expand the first point, prayer flags communicate that we as a faith community:

- are willing to engage with other cultures and learn from them respectfully
- are willing to create fresh expressions of our own faith, transcending culture
- are active and visible
- regularly do things, not just believe things
- care deeply about others, and wish to express that care
- express our hopes and wishes to God
- find God, not only in a transcendent sense, but present around us

These are facts that we are convinced must be communicated to establish an authentic dialogue with people in our region. Not only do these facts establish the basis for the dialogue, but they communicate hopeful, authentic and surprising truths about the Kingdom of God.

The second important realisation I had was that prayer flags are an authentic act of sharing between our faith community and those around us. By inviting others to participate, we had genuinely included them in our practices in a way that is comfortable and accessible for them. Where there is discomfort, it is for reasons we believe are justified on the basis that it provides opportunities for personal growth. For many people, spontaneously participating gives the opportunity to share a genuine moment of connection and shared vision.

Our sharing of prayer flags implicitly poses an important question to the participant - if we can create prayer flags together, what other spiritual practices may we do together? Raising this question with people in our region is an important objective for using prayer flags as a missionary activity. We hope to communicate that we do not insist on orthodoxy or orthopraxy before we begin a genuine and authentic engagement between the participant's spiritual journey and our corporate faith journey. We are convinced that this is an important fact to communicate in our mission to a multi-cultural and urban context.

In conclusion, by using prayer flags we have invited a large number of people (outnumbering our regular participants) to briefly journey with us and we have implicitly invited them to consider journeying with us further. We have also used prayer flags for several years as part of our own liturgy. Using prayer flags has been a worthwhile addition to our missionary activities because:

- it has communicated important facts about our beliefs and values that create opportunities for further mission
- it has led to authentic and rich moments of spiritual journeying and connection with many local people

We continue to use prayer flags in our own liturgy and look for opportunities to create prayer flags with others.

Book Review

TRANSFORMATION

Making Disciples through Short-Term Missions

by Michael S Wilder & Shane W Parker

Published by: B&H Academic, Nashville, 2010, pp 247

ISBN: 978-0-8054-4774-3

Reviewed by Haylee Freudigmann, the National Young Adults Consultant for Global Interaction. While being a proud Queenslander, she and her husband now call Melbourne home.

Short-term mission (STM) has seen rapid growth in the recent past, with young people from around the world packing their bags and traipsing across the globe to work, learn and share in other cultures. With the advent of globalisation and cheap(er) airfares, mission in cross-cultural settings is more accessible than ever before and in many cases being the highlight of a church youth program. It is within this context that Wilder and Parker write **Transformation: Making disciples through short-term mission**. Much more than a how-to-guide, **Transformation** addresses the wider question of how to disciple young people through STM within the broader framework of their Christian walk. In three parts, Wilder and Parker dig into the theoretical, historical and biblical understandings of STM, discipleship and life transformation, encouraging the reader to think critically about how and why they do STM in order to bring about life-long change in participants.

Wilder and Parker open with a snapshot of global mission; the growth of the church to the south and east of the globe; the classification of people groups and the trend away from life-long or career mission to mid-term and short-term mission experiences. Yet within this picture there is the recognition that mission is grounded in and woven throughout the entire Bible with a brief overview given of the missional nature of God as revealed in God's word. The role of students and youth in this vital mission work is in no way discounted, but rather upheld as ones "standing in a long line with those God has been raising up to establish His church and exalt His name all over the globe." With a summary of major missional movements of young people like the Moravians, the Cambridge Seven and the Student Volunteer Movement we see the immense role that young people have played in reaching out to the far corners of the earth. Yet Wilder and Parker point to a seismic shift at the end of the 20th Century when short-termers were recognised and included as not only having practical value but also biblical validity.

As part of the ramifications of this shift they note that young people today *are not waiting for the world to change* but rather their boldness and enthusiasm is reminiscent of those of bygone eras. They also find that young people *are not taking their coffins* to the mission field but are instead choosing short-terms of service over a life-long commitment. The focus of Wilder and Parker is the transformation that STM can have on the lives of the individuals that go rather than the impact that these trips have on sharing the gospel or the world of those that are visited. While STM can have a massive impact for good on the field, there is a clear sense that in today's environment STM's main goal is developing and discipling mission-minded young people with the intention that the experience is more about those who go rather than those who receive. This leads to an examination of a number of problems and possibilities of STM experiences and a review of current research into STM. While giving time and credence to the problems found in STM, Wilder and Parker continue to highlight the power of first hand experience of cultural awareness and understanding in developing mission-directed believers. In places where young people "cannot turn the channel", they are confronted by the realities of the world that we live in and if done well, can develop a "compassion permanence" (Haugen) that will be life transforming. How then to ensure that your STM is one that allows these positives to take place in your team? What makes the difference between positive or problems? Wilder and Parker suggest that it is about doing STM *well*, and use the rest of their book to examine the philosophy and practice needed to do just that.

It would seem that churches are picking up STM as a valid means of fulfilling the Great Commission and understand the role that these experiences have as a part of a deliberate discipleship process. I think the key word here is “deliberate” as much of what Wilder and Parker put forward is encouraging youth leaders and pastors to be deliberate in their understanding and practice of discipleship (which includes STM) for true life transformation of students to occur. A major idea discussed is that of Cognitive Dissonance. When applied to STM this dissonance theory highlights the need for students not only to engage with concepts for themselves but to seek resolution through a directed critical thinking process. These STM experiences do a great deal in compelling students to assess who they are and who they want to become, when preparation is given prominence, when on the field relationships are the first priority followed by bible study, prayer and debriefing, and when follow-up with individuals once home is continued and valid next steps are identified. In examining how and why life transformation occurs in some depth, Wilder and Parker advocate for a synchronised involvement between the church as a whole and the student ministry so that missional concepts can be reinforced in this community through teaching and action. They also discuss the role of curriculum (encompassing the whole of one’s development to maturity) which when deliberately thought through and implemented provides “an integrated mission emphasis that prevents students from ducking and dodging their global responsibilities”.

The work of Wilder and Parker in **Transformission** is extensive and detailed thus this review does little justice to the extent of their thinking. This is an important read for a youth pastor or leader who is grappling with how best to disciple their students for life transformation and how short-term mission can be affective in realising this goal.

Book Review

THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Making Communities Work

by Andrew Mawson

Published by: Atlantic Books, London, UK, 2008

ISBN 13: 9781843546610, ISBN 10: 1843546612

Reviewed by Rob Mackinnon, Assistant State Director SU Victoria

This book is a direct challenge for those that think “business” is a dirty word and should not be mixed with community service, much less the church. If you believe governments and philanthropists funding service providers will make the world a better place, this book will come as a rude shock. Andrew Mawson makes an unyielding argument against such thinking and practice. In the mission of developing high functioning healthy communities, he relentlessly advocates for the application of “business principles” to “social enterprise”.

Some readers (especially those engaged in social policy work) may find Andrew Mawson’s confident, even prophetic voice, a little hard to stomach. But he’s certainly not pulling any punches. In fact Mawson opens his book stating unequivocally that it was deliberately written as a polemic against “the prevailing approaches and attitudes of policy makers, politicians, social commentators, journalists, civil servants and the charitable sector”.

You might conclude with an opening like that, Andrew Mawson is creating for himself a long list of enemies. His appeal is desperate and determined, but once you come to terms with that, I am confident you too, like many of those he challenges, will recognise there is value in his argument.

Whether you like his message or not it’s hard to argue with his results. Andrew Mawson began work in 1984 in the dilapidated buildings of a 200 seat United Reformed Church in the equally run down and socially failing area of Bromley-by-Bow in the East End of London. He was greeted at the church by twelve people, all over seventy years of age. From these humble beginnings Andrew Mawson chose to take control of his circumstances and applied pragmatic business principles in the mission of building a vital community from the despair of generational poverty.

Andrew Mawson was hands on from the start, and through his entrepreneurial strategy of engaging in small practical projects with local members of the community, he was able to build momentum and create opportunities for future endeavours. Don’t be mistaken, Andrew Mawson’s story is far from a charmed existence of favour upon favour. Instead you will find the tale of a gutsy leader who immersed himself in the plight of his community. Andrew Mawson has a deep regard for humanity and a heart fuelled by compassion. He shares many moving stories that will amuse, disarm and engage you to his frustration with the system and his deep regard for poverty stricken people. Andrew Mawson would simply not give up on them. He refused to accept his community as “unpromising material” as some clergy and social commentators had concluded. Instead he applied a desperate sense of urgency to lift neglected people out of the futility of their isolation and into a community of hope, energy, power for goodness and sustained change.

On the cost of change, and as a direct challenge to the impotence of policy makers, Andrew Mawson writes, “Real change is not a soft option: it is costly and does not come easy. It demands real personal sacrifice. It requires a lifetime commitment, not a government cycle.”

Andrew Mawson’s sustained effort over 20 years has created radical change in the Bromley-by-Bow community. Together they developed “the first fully integrated health care centre in the UK, bringing together GP’s, nurses, arts, education, a three acre park, sheltered housing, support and care in one fully unified unit at the hub of the community”. Andrew Mawson’s influence continued to grow and he became a key influencer in the decision to site the 2012 London Olympics in the East End unleashing

untold new opportunities and wealth into the once derelict community he moved into. Andrew Mawson's work has won great acclaim; he was made a Lord by Prime Minister Tony Blair and in 2007 was named by London's Evening Standard News as one of London's most influential people.

This triumphant tale will touch your heart, challenge your thinking and, I hope and pray, infuse you with the vision and energy to tackle social dysfunction with the same entrepreneurial determination as Andrew Mawson. The more people influenced by Andrew Mawson the better our world will be. He is one of whom I can confidently say follow him as he follows Jesus Christ.

Book Review

MOVEMENTS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD

Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel

by Steve Addison

Published by: InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2011

191 pages including study guide.

ISBN: 978-0-8308-3619-2

Reviewed by David Chatelier, New Churches Co-ordinator for the Baptist Union of Victoria.

I have been a regular reader of Steve Addison's blog for many years, and most of the material in this short and readable book first appeared in his blog.²⁷⁰ This is evidence that Addison, who is the Australian director of Church Resource Ministries, has been consistently thinking about movements for many years. This passion led Addison to not only read widely, particularly histories of the expansion of Christianity, but also to travel to locations where movements were evident so that he could see and research the factors that led to them. Through observation and dialogue, Addison has synthesised his findings into five key factors that are essential in spawning a Christian mission movement: white-hot faith; commitment to the cause; contagious relationships; rapid mobilisation; and adaptive methods. Addison reads these back into the Scriptures and Christian history, showing how all five factors were present in past dynamic, missionary movements. Today these factors can be seen in the rapid expansion of the church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

I long to see the movements of which Addison speaks birthed in Australia. Addison points to isolated examples in the West and sees hope. I am more pessimistic. If he is correct in speaking of the five essential ingredients, then I fear that movements are unlikely to be seen in institutional churches and denominations, or fanned into flame by most long-term Christians. The level of discontent, vision, action, change, and risk in these movements is much too high for most bureaucratically driven churches. Apart from a wonderfully transforming renewal by the Holy Spirit, our best hope of seeing a movement in Australia will be through those who are not yet followers of Jesus. If newly evangelised people with a white-hot faith in Jesus are committed to His cause and are released into their relational networks with the Good News, if they are mobilised for mission as their prime focus and if they are allowed to develop outside the walls and constraints of the institutional church – perhaps we will see a fresh movement.

When I became a follower of Jesus in the mid-1970s, I first heard theories of evangelism that urged multiplication rather than addition. The maths made sense. Make disciples who make disciples who make disciples and the world would be won to Christ in X years. But theory and practice have proved to be vastly different; particularly in the West. A decade ago, I was captivated by Dale Garrison's booklet, **Church Planting Movements**²⁷¹. The steps and principles were clearly articulated and seemed reproducible, but I have failed to see them actioned either in my life or the life of others. Going back to a few years before I was born, the founder of the modern Church Growth Movement, Donald McGavran, articulated similar principles in his small but influential book, **Bridges of God**.²⁷² This was developed and expanded in McGavran's **Understanding Church Growth**²⁷³ and while the latter has arguably been the key text for the Church Growth Movement, it seems that while some of the principles were readily embraced and applied in established churches others, particularly relating to reaching the lost and multiplying through their networks, were abandoned because they did not fit with an attractational model which aims to grow a large local church. Each time I read books like these my heart pounds faster as I imagine what could be. Addison's offering on movements is such a book.

Addison, who is an Evangelical Baptist and writes from a standpoint of viewing evangelism as the primary component of mission, sees his role as an encourager of practitioners rather than as a practitioner himself. He observes, records, articulates, encourages and challenges with great energy. He tells the story of others. He is an excellent communicator. But it is only following the publication of **Movements That Change the World** that Addison, spurred on by his wife Michelle, has sought to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. For me, this gives him greater credibility and, in time to come, I will be interested to read his reflections on his personal journey to live out the principles that he so coherently articulates. For those of us who read Addison's book and embrace his vision, the key will be not in adding to what we are doing but in our willingness to release, let go, renounce, in order that

we may start afresh as the people of God and as effective missionaries. Perhaps, for this reason, the book is most suited to those followers of Jesus who have a holy discontent with the state of mission, particularly evangelism, in the West and who are prepared to allow the urgency of mission to reshape their ecclesiology and, indeed, their whole way of life.

¹ BASS, Dorothy C [ed], **Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), piii

² MACINTYRE, Alasdair, **After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theology** (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)

³ MACINTYRE, **After Virtue**, pp204-225. MacIntyre argues for an Aristotelian approach to moral philosophy which is freed of the modern influence of the failed enlightenment project. Crucially, this Aristotelian approach, in terms of teleology, is grounded in practices that connect the abstract with the concrete.

⁴ MACINTYRE, **After Virtue**, p125

⁵ BASS, [ed], **Practicing Our Faith**, p5

⁶ KREIDER, Alan, **The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom**, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999), p99

⁷ KRIEDER, **Change of Conversion**, p100.

⁸ KREIDER, **Change of Conversion**, p101

⁹ KREIDER, **Change of Conversion**, p103

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¹¹ GRENZ, Stanley J, **A Primer on Postmodernism** (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), p81

¹² CARRELL, Brian, **Moving between the Times: Modernity and Postmodernity: A Christian View** (Auckland: Deepsight Trust, 1998), p35

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¹⁴ BASS, [ed], **Practicing Our Faith**, p65-66. Bass describes Christian practices as follows: they emerge from engaging the narratives of the congregation's tradition—both the larger Christian tradition and the denominational tradition; they resurrect, re-appropriate, redefine, rework, or recover older Christian practices; they lead to a deeper understanding of congregational identity and vocation; they are relevant in their cultural setting yet are not blurred with the culture; they are spiritually authentic, congruent between inner experience and outer expressions; they provide accountability in the community; they demonstrate seriousness in devotion and commitment; they are shared; they foster community; they "cost something" in terms of Christian discipleship; they are not privatized, but have public expression and consequences.

¹⁵ HOMAN, Daniel, and PRATT, Lonni Collins, **Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love** (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2002), p108

¹⁶ Select Daily Meditations from the Henri Nouwen Society Part 1, Daily Meditations of the Henri Nouwen Society, <http://michaelguth.com/myblog/meditations.htm> (accessed January 6th, 2011).

¹⁷ BASS, [ed], **Practicing Our Faith**, p31.

¹⁸ BASS, [ed], **Practicing Our Faith**, p34

¹⁹ JOHNSON, Luke Timothy, **Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church**, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p109

²⁰ JOHNSON, **Scripture and Discernment**, p116

²¹ JOHNSON, **Scripture and Discernment**, p132

²² JOHNSON, **Scripture and Discernment**, p132

²³ "The predominant activist model of church meant that the church was all about attending, working, teaching, visiting, participating, performing, measuring, evangelising, watching, committing, reading, memorizing, volunteering, joining. Church was all about performance, and if you didn't perform, the church had no place for you. The minister was the mediator between the congregation and God, the hub of the church wheel. The minister had the vision and the church existed to fulfil that vision. Participation in church activities determined one's value." YACONELLI, Mike, **Stories of Emergence: Moving from Absolute to Authentic**, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p15

²⁴ PASCALE, Richard T, MILLEMANN, Mark, and GIOJA, Linda, **Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the Laws of Business**, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), p25

²⁵ HESSELBEIN, Frances, and JOHNSON, Rob, [eds], **A Leader to Leader Guide on Leading Change: Insights from The Drucker Foundation's Award-Winning Journal** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), p33

²⁶ CLAPP, Rodney **Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society** (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996); SINE, Tom **Mustard Seed Versus McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); WRIGHT, N T, **Jesus and the Victory of God** (London: SPCK, 1996).

²⁷ <http://www.easternhills.org.au>. For a fuller explanation of Eastern Hills and other emerging churches, including methodology and interview sources, see CRONSHAW, Darren **The Shaping of Things Now: Emerging Church Mission and Innovation in 21st Century Melbourne** (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009). This article draws on chapter 3, pages 70-88, and other relevant sections.

²⁸ BROWN, Dan, **The Da Vinci Code** (New York: Doubleday, 2003) depicts an alternative life of Jesus, including his marriage and family line, and the supposed cover up by Roman Catholic patriarchal systems.

²⁹ FROST and HIRSCH, **Shaping**, 47-51, 206-210.

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³¹ FROST, Michael, **Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture**, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), pp7-8; Hirsch, Alan, **The Forgotten Ways**, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), p16

³² FROST, **Exiles**, p27

³³ FROST, Michael and HIRSCH, Alan, **The Shaping of Things to Come**, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), pp11-12

³⁴ McGAVRAN, Donald A, **The Bridges of God**, (New York: Friendship Press, 1955)

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³⁷ ALLEN, Roland, **Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), Author's Preface 1927, pvii

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³⁹ David Lawton identifies five steps of church planting, while I work with six.

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- ²¹⁶ Mk 1:17-39; Matt 5; 6; & 7; 26:36-46
- ²¹⁷ Jn 3:16; 10:7-18; 17:1-26; Acts 3:19-21; Rom 8:29; 1Cor 15:42-57; 1Pet 2:24-25; Rev 21:1-7
- ²¹⁸ Rom 12:1-3; 2Cor 3:18; Gal 4:19; Col 3:1-10; Heb 10:8-14; 1Pet 1:3-9
- ²¹⁹ Mk 1:17
- ²²⁰ Gen 1:26-31; Is 5:1-7; 61:11; Hos 10:12; Jesus’ parables of the sower; the growing seed; the mustard seed; the seed dying before it can reproduce; the vine; etc.
- ²²¹ Rom 12:2 Be being transformed by the renewing of your mind
- ²²² Mk 4:26-29; 1Cor 15:35-36
- ²²³ Matt 13:1-23; Mk 4:2-20; Lu 8:4-15
- ²²⁴ Matthew, Mark and Luke each record the “hearing” in the active voice, and the “receiving” in either the active voice or the present indicative tense/mood, and Luke adds that they “believe” for a time. Therefore there is no reason to suggest anything other than a genuine faith response that simply does not have a strong enough belief-system to support it through the inevitable challenges that come against faith.
- ²²⁵ These six potential instigators reflect the “six transformational themes” which emerged from my doctoral research with 25 interviewees from four local church congregations in the outer East of Melbourne and recorded in my thesis - *Developing the Ministry of Adult Spiritual Transformation – Andragogy meets Theology*. They are: personal Bible engagement; small group interaction; empowering leadership; missional expressions; conversational prayer; and Holy Spirit encounters.
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- ²²⁸ Col 1: 6-12
- ²²⁹ FURNISH, Victor Paul, **Theology and Ethics in Paul**, (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p217; LADD, George Eldon, **A Theology of the New Testament**, rev ed (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), pp536-537, 563, 565, 568-569; BULTMANN, Rudolph, **Theology of the New Testament**, 2 vols, (London: SCM Press, 1955, Vol. 2), pp203-207; KÜMMEL, Werner Georg, **Theology of the New Testament**, (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp224-228
- ²³⁰ 2Cor 5:17; LADD, **A Theology of the New Testament**, p568; FEE, Gordon D, **God's Empowering Presence**, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p602
- ²³¹ FURNISH, **Theology and Ethics in Paul**, pp215-216, 224-227; he explains this dialectical tension very clearly and cogently
- ²³² Jn 17:11, 16
- ²³³ 2Tim 1:14
- ²³⁴ Gal 5:6
- ²³⁵ Gal 5:1
- ²³⁶ Eph 5:18
- ²³⁷ Col 3: 1-2, 15-16
- ²³⁸ 2Tim 2:2
- ²³⁹ Cited by WELTON, Michael, "Seeing the Light: Christian Conversion and Conscientisation," in JARVIS, Peter and WALTERS, Nicholas, eds, **Adult Education and Theological Interpretations**, (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing, 1993), p111
- ²⁴⁰ BRUNNER, Emil, **The Christian Doctrine of the Church**, Vol III, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), p297
- ²⁴¹ LADD, **A Theology of the New Testament**, pp568-569. The *indicative* premise has been stated in Rom 11:30, "Just as you...have now received mercy", and referred to again in 12:1, "in view of God's mercy", laying the foundation for the *imperative* charge.
- ²⁴² This gives the same sense that Paul indicates in Tit 3:5; "he saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit". See also, JEWETT, Robert, **Romans – A Commentary**, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p733
- ²⁴³ Jewett makes the important point that the 2nd person plural indicates that Paul's thought is "corporate rather than individual," JEWETT, **Romans**, p733. While it is true that the Christian life is always intended to be experienced in community, he surely is not inferring that regeneration does not first occur within each individual life. On this see FEE, **Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God**, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), pp74-75
- ²⁴⁴ Rom 11:30; "received mercy" – *ἡλεήθητε* – 2nd person plural aorist 1, indicative passive. He goes on in Rom 12:1, making the connection back to this mercy that has already been received by saying, "in view of God's mercy..."
- ²⁴⁵ See the parallel 2 Cor 3:18
- ²⁴⁶ Paul's immediate *goal* in this context is fulfilling God's will for worshipful behaviour, but the logical extension, based on what he says elsewhere, is the progressively full expression of Christ's image in believers, completed in the resurrection.
- ²⁴⁷ CRANFIELD, C E B, **Romans – A Shorter Commentary**, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), pp295-298; also HENDRIKSEN, William, **Romans**, NTC, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), p406; BEHM, Johannes, *μεταμορφωο*, TDNT, 609; and, LIGHTNER, *Salvation and Spiritual Formation* in **The Christian Educators Handbook on Spiritual Formation**, pp41-43
- ²⁴⁸ BARTH, Karl, **The Epistle to the Romans**, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp436-437; *metanoia* is a compound of *nous*. BRUNNER, Emil, **The Letter to the Romans**, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1959, 1961, 2002), pp101-103; BARRETT, C K, **The Epistle to the Romans**, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), pp232-233
- ²⁴⁹ BOFF, Leonardo, **Jesus Christ Liberator – A Critical Christology of our Time**, (Philip E. Hughes, trans; London: SPCK, 1978), p64
- ²⁵⁰ Jesus and the Lawyer; Lu 10:25-37; Col 3:1- 4:1; Jam 1:22-25; 1Pet 2:11-12; 1Jn 3:16-17; Jude20-23
- ²⁵¹ Through "...divine power...we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ".
- ²⁵² CRANFIELD, **Romans**, p297; NIEBUHR, H Richard, **Christ and Culture**, (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), pp162-164; See also, Rom 12:2-21; he uses the same line of reasoning in other letters; Eph 4:17-32; Phil 2:1-18; 4:6-9; Col 3:1-17
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- ²⁵⁵ BLOESCH, Donald G, **Jesus Christ – Savior and Lord**, (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1997), pp162-167
- ²⁵⁶ BLOESCH, **Jesus Christ**, p163
- ²⁵⁷ BRUNNER, **The Christian Doctrine of the Church**, Vol. III, p297
- ²⁵⁸ Jn 1:1, 14; 1Tim 2:5-6
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- ²⁶¹ Certainly the mission of the disciples under the tutelage of Jesus was sometimes short term – the experience of the 72 in Luke 10 comes to mind.
- ²⁶² David Bosch, **Transforming Mission**, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991, 390. Even John Piper seems to equate mission with missions. He writes, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” **Let The Nations Be Glad**, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003, 17.
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- ²⁶⁴ Acts 6:1-7
- ²⁶⁵ Raymond Fung, **The Isaiah Vision**, (Geneva: WCC Publications, World Council of Churches, 1992), p33
- ²⁶⁶ Matthew 11:16-17 NIV
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- ²⁶⁹ 1 Cor 9:26 NIV
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