Missional Leadership & Growth

A Workbook for the Diocese of Glasgow & Galloway
Produced by the Missional Leadership Development Team

Introduction

This workbook is for ordained and lay church leaders, and for those who are exploring a vocation to such leadership. It aims to equip them as they lead their congregations into spiritual and numerical growth. It is designed for people from all traditions within the Scottish Episcopal Church.

The five sessions in this workbook introduce some theories and practices of missional leadership and evangelism, through biblical and theological studies. The material has been gathered from a range of contemporary sources, all of which are fully referenced in the text. Suggested further reading material for each session is provided separately.

The workbook is written for groups of church leaders reading and learning together. Each of the sessions includes exercises and questions for discussion with suggested timings. However, facilitators are most welcome to adapt these, and to omit certain questions as they see fit.

The Missional Leadership Development Team is exceedingly grateful indeed to Dr Stuart Weir for his help in writing Session 4 and Session 5.

Missional Leadership Development Team
January 2013

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Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes

Session One
Sharing Faith, Finding Faith

Aims of the Session

This session aims to encourage and enhance:

- Reading and reflection on mission and evangelism in relation to contemporary theology and culture.

- The development of participants as practitioners in the fields of mission and evangelism within their local church context.

- Ongoing research in these fields.

Intended learning outcomes

Having completed this session, successful participants will be able to:

- Make considered judgements regarding the biblical and theological nature of Christian conversion and evangelistic proclamation.

- Make critical assessments of historical models of conversion and evangelism and their significance for contemporary mission.

- Analyse and evaluate contemporary strategies of mission and evangelism.

- Communicate these conclusions to members of their congregations.

- Contribute creatively to projects for mission and evangelism within their own churches and communities.

Themes	Sub-themes
The theology of Christian evangelism	Biblical, theological and historical reflections on • finding faith • making disciples
Practices of evangelistic ministry	• Biblical and theological reflection on evangelistic practices including friendship evangelism, service evangelism and process evangelism courses. • Biblical and theological reflection on strategic planning for evangelism in the local church

Session Two
Church Growth: What it is and what it's not

Aims of the Session
This session aims to encourage and enhance:

• Reading and reflection on different contemporary church growth practices.

• The development of participants as managers of change and as architects of mission strategies within their local church contexts.

• Ongoing research in these fields.

Intended learning outcomes
Having completed this session, successful participants will be able to:

• Make considered judgements regarding the biblical and theological nature of church growth practices.

• Make critical assessments of different trans-national church growth practices and their significance for the mission of the church.

- Analyse and evaluate issues regarding the development of church growth strategies and the management of change.
- Communicate these conclusions to their congregations.
- Contribute creatively to projects for church growth within their own churches and communities.

Themes	Sub-themes
The theology of church growth practices	Biblical, theological and historical reflections on global methods of church growth including • Seeker sensitive church • Cell church • Natural Church Development • Mission Action Planning
The management of church growth practices	• Developing church growth strategies • The role of diocesan and other support networks • Managing change

Session Three
Missional and Traditional

Aims of the Session

This session aims to encourage and enhance:

- Reading and reflection on the missional role of the traditional church, in relationship to contemporary culture.
- The development of participants as missional leaders within traditional congregations
- Ongoing research in these fields.

Intended learning outcomes

Having completed this session, the successful participant will be able to:

- Make considered judgements regarding the biblical and theological nature of traditional models of church.

- Make critical assessments of inherited models of church and their significance for contemporary mission.

- Analyse and evaluate contemporary approaches to mission in the inherited church as transferable resources for the renewal of mission and ministry.

- Communicate these conclusions to members of their congregations.

- Contribute creatively to projects that help to transform the culture of their local churches from maintenance to mission.

Themes	Sub-themes
The theology of inherited models of church	Reflecting theologically and historically on themes including: • Traditional church buildings • Worship • Engaging with local communities
The traditional church in mission	• Church buildings and worship as mission in a changing culture • Missional engagement with local communities • Leadership skills including, developing vision, managing change, releasing and developing the gifts of others.

Session Four
The Theology of Work

Aims of the session

This session aims to encourage and enhance:

- Reading and reflection on the theology and missiological implications of the world of work.
- The development of participants' understanding of the leadership skills needed to equip the church for mission in the contemporary world of work.
- Ongoing research in these fields.

Intended learning outcomes

Having completed this session, the successful participant will be able to:

- Make considered judgements regarding the theology of work and the significance of Christian mission in that context.
- Make critical assessments of different typologies of the theology and practice of mission in the workplace.
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary approaches to workplace mission and ministry.

- Communicate these conclusions to members of their congregations.

- Contribute creatively to projects that help to equip the church for missional engagement with the world of work.

Themes	Sub-themes
The theology of work and the workplace	- Theologies of work - Discipleship in the context of the workplace - The ethics of work in contemporary life
Equipping the church for mission in the world of work	- Typologies of workplace mission - Equipping church members for mission in the workplace - Leadership in workplace mission

Aims of the Session

This session aims to encourage and enhance:

- Reading and reflection on Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church in relation to contemporary theology and culture.

- The development of participants' understanding of new and creative ways of being and doing church in contemporary culture.

- Ongoing research in these fields.

Intended learning outcomes

Having completed this session, the successful participant will be able to:

- Make considered judgements regarding the theology of the 'emerging church conversation' and the discourse concerning post-Christendom and post-modernity.

- Make critical assessments of the rhetoric and the reality of FE/EC.

- Analyse and evaluate the different approaches to FE/EC and their relationship to traditional, inherited models of church.

- Communicate these conclusions to members of their congregations.

- Contribute creatively to projects that engage for mission contextually and imaginatively with local communities.

Themes	Sub-themes
Theories of Fresh Expressions and Emerging Church	- Theology of FE/EC - Critical analysis of perceived dominant shifts in contemporary culture - Approaches to the challenge of discerning the missional potential of different local cultures
Emerging Church conversations	- Similarities and differences between FE and EC - Relationship between FE/EC and the inherited church - Practical challenges of planting an FE/EC

Session One

Sharing Faith, Finding Faith

Facilitator's Notes

This session has been designed for use as the programme for a training day for a group of church leaders. This could be a one-off day conference. Or it could be one unit of a longer period of study, such as, for example, a residential weekend.

The session has been divided into three parts.

Part One offers a selection of texts drawn from the work of contemporary theologian practitioners, through which participants in the session reflect critically on themes of mission and evangelism, in relation both to Christian ministry and to present culture.   Participants reflect biblically on the nature of Christian conversion and evangelistic ministry through the medium of a Contextual Bible Study. Suggestions for facilitating a CBS may be found on page 129 of this workbook.

In Part Two, participants analyse and evaluate a variety of practical resources and a strategic framework for evangelistic mission.

Both Parts One and Two include questions for individual reflection and group discussion, together with suggested timings.

These timings may vary according to the size and nature of the group. However, each of these sections requires approximately two hours for completion.

Part Three presents a choice of scenario exercises as a realistic challenge for the participants. Participants could work on the scenarios by themselves or in a small group, with feedback to the full group. Alternatively, the exercise might be set as a piece of homework, to be presented at a later date. Timings will therefore vary; but it is suggested that Part Three may require about an hour for completion.

Session One

Sharing Faith, Finding Faith

The session is divided into three parts. The first offers a definition of evangelism in relation to mission. It examines current thinking about how adults come to faith, both through the published work of contemporary theologian practitioners and through Contextual Bible Study. Secondly, a variety of resources are offered for discussion, together with a suggested framework for evangelistic ministry. It concludes with a scenario exercise.

Part One

Rediscovering evangelism

This session is about church leadership and evangelism. Evangelism is the process whereby people hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and decide to follow him. Mission and evangelism are inextricably intertwined. However, they are not interchangeable terms. In their 2003 book *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* Mike Booker and Mark Ireland explain how mission and evangelism fit together:

> The mission of God is not being undertaken in all its fullness unless people are called to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Mission is not always evangelism, and some aspects of mission (responding to social injustice, for example) are very clearly not evangelism. Evangelism, then, is just one part, but an essential and indispensable part, of the mission of God.

They go on to offer these definitions:

> Mission = God's work of reconciling the whole of creation to himself, in which we are called to participate.

Evangelism = the process by which people become disciples of
Jesus Christ.[1]

Have you ever tried to do some evangelism? Has anyone ever evangelised you? What happened? **(5min.)**

How do you feel, when you hear evangelism described as 'an essential and indispensable part of the mission of God'? **(5min.)**

Look together at the six strands of the Growth Strategy of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway:
- **Prayer and spirituality**
- **Learning and discipleship**
- **Missional Leadership**
- **Numerical growth, welcome and integration**
- **Children and young people**
- **Imaginative outreach into local communities**

Where do you see evangelism here? **(10min.)**

Many Christians are fearful of evangelism. In our culture, it is unfortunately associated with confrontation, coercion, noisy TV preachers and people forcing tracts into the hands of unwilling strangers.

Latterly, however, there have been significant moves to reclaim the work of evangelism for the whole church, in response to a revised understanding of how people come to faith. In the early 1990s, John Finney, then the Church of England Officer for the Decade of Evangelism, wrote a report on a large survey, exploring how adults come to the Christian faith. In his groundbreaking book, *Finding Faith Today*, he offered the churches a practical opportunity to learn from people who had recently made a public confession of faith, many of whom previously had minimal links with any church.[2]

The survey showed that an assumption of 'sudden' conversion as the norm was unsustainable: 31 percent of respondents claimed that their experience was 'dateable,' compared with 69 percent who said it was gradual. The time span of

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[1] Booker, M, & Ireland, M, *Evangelism-Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), pp. 1-2.
[2] Finney, J, *Finding Faith Today: How does it happen?* (Swindon: British & Foreign Bible Society, 1992, repr. 1994), p.viii.

this gradual experience was said to be anything up to 42 years; the average was about four years. Moreover, although all had made a profession of faith in the past twelve months, many of the people surveyed felt that they were part of an ongoing process that had not yet finished.[3]

Subsequent research on this subject has supported Finney. For example, reporting on their 2006 interviews with recently converted Scottish Christians, Nick Spencer and Peter Neilson describe what they found as, 'a variety of meandering journeys'.[4]

Reviewing his findings in *Finding Faith Today*, Finney offered the following analysis:

> It is difficult to talk about a 'normal' pattern when discussing human behaviour, but a very common approach to God by someone feeling their way seems to be:

- Seeing an individual or a group of people with something attractively different
- Hearing why they are different
- Asking questions and receiving answers
- Responding to an invitation to come to church or a meeting

These steps ultimately lead the person concerned to become a full member of the church.[5]

What do you think about the pattern of gradual conversion that Finney describes here?   (5min.)

What implications come to mind, for the evangelistic ministry of the church?   (10min.)

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[3] Finney, *Finding Faith Today,* pp.24-25.
[4] Spencer, N, & Neilson, P, *Journeys and Stories: Finding faith in Scotland today* (London: LICC, 2006), p. 12.
[5] Finney, *Finding Faith Today*, p. 46.

Taking some first steps

In his 2006 book, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, Bishop Stephen Cottrell describes a joyful, positive vision of evangelistic ministry for churchgoers of all traditions. He admits, however, that in many churches, Christians are still paralysed by old-fashioned – and groundless – fears about what evangelism might mean for them. He explains:

> Even though the reality of how evangelism actually happens in the vast majority of churches is a million miles away from these fears, many churches still do not have evangelism on the agenda. Even those churches which have a purpose statement and a mission strategy often let evangelism sit on the back burner. Phrases like 'well, everything is evangelistic' and 'we aren't called to be evangelists' allow the church to avoid doing anything specific.

> A church that wants to move forward in its evangelistic ministry needs to teach its members, and especially those in lay leadership, how evangelism works for most people.[6]

How far does this description resonate with your own experience? (10min.)

What provision does your church currently make, for teaching its members how evangelism works?   (5min.)

Cottrell has a suggestion for beginning to teach church people about evangelism. Not a study course or a programme of heavy reading: rather, simply inviting them to tell each other about what God has done in their own lives:

> One of the best ways of doing this is to ask your [Vestry] or your congregation to reflect on the story of their own faith. You can conduct your own piece of research. Get people to tell each other how they came to faith and then ask them to put themselves into categories, working out who had dramatic Damascus-Road-type experiences – there will be some – and who had gradual Emmaus-Road experiences – this will be the vast majority.

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[6] Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), p. 58.

Once people realise that there is a new way of understanding evangelism, it is relatively easy to start developing the structures and ministries in the church that can enable progress to be made…

It is not insignificant that the primary documents of the Christian Church are *stories* of faith. Christian people in the day-to-day task of evangelism should be sharing two beautiful and unique stories: the story of what God has done in Jesus Christ and the story of what God has done in their own life.[7]

Turn to someone sitting near you in the group. Spend about five minutes telling them your faith story.

Now spend about five minutes as the listener, while your partner tells you their story.

How does it feel, to have shared your stories in this way? **(5min.)**

How many people at your church know your faith story, do you think, and how many have told their stories to you? **(2min.)**

What could you do to encourage this kind of sharing among the members of your congregation? **(5min.)**

Philip and the Ethiopian: a Contextual Bible Study

Spend some time reading the following scripture passage together:

Acts 8:26-38 (NIV)

[26]Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' [27]So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, [28]and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. [29]The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'

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[7] Cottrell, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, pp. 58-59.

³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

³¹How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³²The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
³³In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.'

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?' ³⁷Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The eunuch answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' ³⁸And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him.'

What jumps off the page at you from this passage? **(FG 5min.)**

What can you tell from the text about the Ethiopian official's journey to faith? **(3s 5min, FG 10min.)**

How would you describe Philip's evangelism? **(FG 10min.)**

Where is God, in this story? **(3s 5min, FG 10min.)**

As a church leader, what will you take away from this Bible reading, to challenge and encourage you in your own evangelistic ministry?
(FG 10min.)

Key
3s   work in groups of three
FB   feedback in the full group
FG   work in the full group

A toolbox of resources for evangelism

In Part One of this session, we examined the meaning of evangelism, in the light of the current understanding of the conversion process, together with some implications of this evangelism for Christian people. In Part Two, we shall look at three different resources for evangelism, together with a framework for developing a fruitful evangelistic ministry in the local church.

Process Evangelism Courses

The understanding of conversion as 'process', has allowed evangelism to be reclaimed by the local church, which is ideally placed to offer the kind of continuity of accompaniment needed by those on a gradual journey to faith. But what kind of process might that be? Is it possible, in fact, to design a process for conversion, a 'road' for enquirers to travel, alongside Christian believers? Some think so; and they have produced and marketed a number of very successful process evangelism programmes, based upon the principle of a small group meeting together for friendship and to discuss spiritual issues.

Over the past fifteen years, the proliferation of process evangelism courses has been a striking development of evangelism in the UK. The most famous and influential is the Alpha course, developed at Holy Trinity, Brompton, during the early 1990s and now used by many thousands of churches across the world. Other well known, popular courses include Emmaus, Credo, Christianity Explored and Essence.[8]

The guiding principle underpinning process evangelism courses is that 'belonging comes before believing.'[9]   That is, that the majority of those who become converted are attached to a church, participate in worship, join in church activities

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[8] *Alpha*, http://uk.alpha.org/; S. Cottrell, S. Croft, J. Finney, F. Lawson & R. Warren, *Emmaus: The way of faith* (London: Church House Publishing, 1996). *Emmaus* was republished from 2001 and has its own web page at CHP: www.e-mmaus.org.uk. L. Unwin, *Credo* (London: Church Union, 1996). R. Tice & B. Cooper, *Christianity Explored* (New Malden: The Good Book Company, 2002; 2nd edn, 2005). R. Frost, *Essence* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2002).
[9] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism*, p. 19.

and form relationships with Christians before coming to faith. The small group structure of process evangelism courses meets the need for relationships and fellowship. The groups provide time for reflection and discussion and they meet over a period of time, allowing spiritual growth. Mike Booker, formerly Director of Mission and Pastoral Studies at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, says, 'Such is the impact of process evangelism courses that every church in the country should either be running one, or at least have access to one.'[10]

Nevertheless, some church people have reacted strongly against published process evangelism courses. The Alpha course, in particular, has attracted some harsh criticism. It has been described as 'too prescriptive, too flat-packed', 'the McDonaldization of religion.'[11]   In his book *The McDonaldization of the Church*, published in 2000, John Drane remarked, 'instead of dealing with the real human issues, we create new programmes to mask our own ineffectiveness.'[12]

What are the advantages of using a commercially available process evangelism course in a local church, and what may be the disadvantages?

What alternatives can you think of, to using a published course?   (15min.)

One danger is that the acerbic debate about 'McDonaldization' will discourage some church leaders from trying out process evangelism courses such as Alpha or Emmaus. Discouragement is the handmaid of inertia. Some churches may simply avoid the issue altogether. 'But the really important question is,' says Stephen Cottrell: 'are you doing anything at all?'

He continues:

> In my teaching about nurture and evangelism I liken a church without a place of nurture to a hospital without a maternity ward! No wonder there are no babies being born! It seems to me unthinkable that when there is such a body of evidence indicating the difference that a nurture course makes, churches can still do nothing about it. It needs to become a national – or at least a diocesan policy – that every church should become a place of nurture and put on some sort of course for enquirers on a regular basis.

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[10] Church Times, 26th January 2004.
[11] Church Times, 26th September 2008; Ward, P, 'Alpha – the McDonaldization of Religion?' *Anvil*, 15/4, 1998, pp. 279-86.
[12]Drane, J, *The McDonaldization of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), p. 41.

My basic advice is: find the course that's best for you. But for heaven's sake, do something![13]

What is the 'something' that you need to do, to enable your church to become a more effective 'place of nurture' for enquirers?   (10min.)

Servant evangelism

Process evangelism courses assume that enquirers have reached a stage in their journey towards faith where they are ready to accept an invitation from a Christian friend to come and join the group; or, perhaps they may respond to a poster or leaflet advertising the course. Servant evangelism takes a big step back. It is concerned with the earliest stage of evangelism; that is, making contacts among people beyond the church community.

Dave Earley and David Wheeler, authors of the 2010 book, *Evangelism Is…* explain what servant evangelism means:

> Servant evangelism is a combination of simple acts of kindness and intentional sharing of the gospel. Servant evangelism involves intentionally sharing Christ by putting love in action.[14]

A congregation doing servant evangelism invites the Holy Spirit to show them how they can offer simple acts of kindness to their neighbours in the community as a demonstration of God's love. They also pray that, in due course, their acts of kindness will lead to opportunities to talk about the Good News of the Gospel. With this in mind, they give away small 'connection cards' bearing their church's details. Servant evangelists have a 'Philippians 2 attitude': 'In Philippians 2, we are told to take on the humble servant attitude of Jesus.'[15] The evangelist Steve Sjogren describes what can happen:

> One particular Saturday morning, a female shopper couldn't help but eavesdrop when our team asked permission to clean a store's toilet. She later discovered that one of the engineers at her company attends our fellowship and asked him, 'What kind of

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[13] Cottrell, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, p. 50.

[14] Earley, D, & Wheeler, D, *Evangelism Is… How to share Jesus with passion and confidence* (Nashville TN: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), p. 151.

[15] Earley & Wheeler, *Evangelism*, p. 153.

Christians are you who clean toilets to show God's love? This sort of Christianity sparks my interest!'[16]

Servant evangelism has been described as 'an entry-level way' to involve a congregation in outreach ministry. Earley and Wheeler explain how 'while some people are terrified to witness verbally, they can wash cars, hand out light bulbs, give away balloons or popsicles, mow yards or rake leaves. In doing so, shy people can learn to be more bold and intentional with their faith.'[17]

This approach to making contact with people outside the community of believers is widely practised by churches on both sides of the Atlantic. Here, Mark Ireland describes the servant evangelism project of a church in the UK:

> One church that wanted to reach beyond the network of people who had some contact with church members decided to give away a present to every home in the area. They bought a large supply of bars of 'Divine' fairly traded chocolate, wrapped them up attractively and put one through the door of every house. Inside each package was a small slip of paper containing nothing on it but a web address. Recipients who chose to visit the web site found a simple notice that this chocolate was a gift with love from such-and-such a church. This was a very low-key approach, with no direct invitation to attend a service, yet the church received more positive response to that initiative than to any other evangelistic activity they had undertaken.[18]

How helpful is the servant evangelism model, do you think, as a way of making connections between church and local community?   (10min.)

A golden rule of evangelism is that church leaders never ask their congregations to do something that they won't do themselves.[19] On a scale of 1-10, how enthusiastic would you feel about taking part in servant evangelism projects such as those described above?

I'd hate it.   ①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩   **I'd be really keen.**

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[16] Sjogren, S, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A unique approach to sharing the live of Jesus* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), p. 5.

[17] Earley & Wheeler, *Evangelism,* p. 152.

[18] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism*, p. 61.

[19] Christian business consultant Michael Harvey says: 'As a church leader, you're not asking a congregation to do something that you're not prepared to do yourself!' Harvey, M, *Unlocking the Growth God Has Already Given to the Church: A seminar by Michael Harvey of MJH Associates* (DVD produced by MJH Associates: 2010).

Spend some time reflecting upon your score and the scores of others in the group.   (10min.)

Sharing spirituality

We have noted that newcomers are attracted to the church by seeing the Christian faith lived out in the life of the community of believers. Stephen Cottrell reminds us that evangelism is 'the sharing of spirituality as a way of life as well as the communication of doctrinal truth.'[20] During the past ten years, church leaders have been heartened to discover that, despite the fall in numbers of people attending church, interest in spirituality has apparently increased among the population at large.

The national Soul of Britain survey, carried out for the BBC in 2000, widely quoted by evangelists as well as by sociologists of religion, found that three quarters of those interviewed had had religious experiences.[21] David Hay and Kate Hunt, who conducted the research, reported: 'The figures suggest that slightly more than 76% of the national population are now likely to admit to having had a spiritual or religious experience.' 'Many people,' Hay and Hunt continued, 'feel they have been aware of the presence of God.' And many people, 'including those who are uncertain about God's existence,' turn to prayer for help.[22] Ten years on, a survey conducted by the Bible Society and Christian Research in 2010 found that 31% of people in Britain believe in angels, with 29% believing that a guardian angel watches over them.[23] A growing number of evangelists are endeavouring to meet these people in their search for spirituality and to point them towards Jesus Christ.

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[20] Cottrell, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, pp. 58-59.

[21] For example, Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism,* p. 176; Croft, S, & Frost, R, et al., *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: Communicating faith in a changing culture* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), p. 11; Heywood, D, *Reimagining Ministry (*London, SCM Press, 2011), p. 48; Tacey, D.J, *The Spirituality Revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality* (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), p. 15; Woodhead, L, *Religion in the Modern World: Traditions and transformations* (London: Routledge, 2002, p. 365.

[22] Hay, D, & Hunt, K, Understanding the Spirituality of People Who Don't Go To Church: A report on the findings of the Adult Spirituality Project at the University of Nottingham (spiritualjouorneys.org.uk, 2000), http://www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk/pdf/look_understanding_the_spirituality_of_people.pdf 3.2, 3.3 (accessed 1st November 2011).
[23] Christian Research Blog 23rd December 2010, http://www.christian-research.org/christian-research-blog.html?start=10 accessed 14th November 2011.

Here, for example, are two stories of churches offering a ministry of prayer to their local community as part of their evangelistic outreach.

Martin Cavender, Director of the ReSource organisation, describes going from door to door, inviting prayer requests from local people:

> One of the most vital evangelistic tools in this culture is prayer visiting – going from door to door in the community, perhaps in twos and with words to the effect, 'hello, we're from the parish church; here's a letter from the minister to prove we're genuine; now, is there anything you would like us to pray for? This can be carrying prayers back into the church, or it can be an offer of prayer there and then. The response can be dramatic and the vast majority of it positive. I have known of people converted on the doorstep in this, and a huge response across whole communities – for example, one street in Liverpool in which the overwhelming request from the majority of homes was, 'will you please pray for my loneliness.[24]

Mark Ireland explains how some churches have chosen to display a large notice board featuring a 'thought for the week', visible to people passing by in the street:

> We started to do this in my previous parish and I remember a discussion at church council as to whether we could really afford the cost of having posters made… and discovering the next day that it was one of these posters which had led the head-teacher of a large secondary school to join our congregation! However, if… the majority of people already accept that there is a spiritual dimension to life, it may be more effective to display simple prayers that people can use as they pass by or wait at the bus stop. How about 'God, please help me get through today' or 'Lord, help me forgive someone today'?[25]

What strikes you about these two case stories of evangelism through a ministry of prayer?   **(5min.)**

What other ways can you think of, to encourage a local community to engage with Christian spirituality?   **(10min.)**

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[24] Cavender, M, The British at Prayer, ReSource article online: http: // www.resource-arm.net/articles/the_british_at_prayer.html (accessed 24th October 2011).
[25] Ireland, M, 'The Local Church Perspective', in Croft, Frost et al., *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age*, p. 81.

The Three Ps: a basic strategy for evangelism

All of the resources for evangelism discussed in this session have enormous potential, but they can only be really effective as part of a carefully planned strategy. That is, a strategy that will enable the congregation to discern the needs of the people in their community and to meet them at the different stages of their faith journey. In this part of the session, we shall look at a way of fitting different evangelistic projects together into a clear and coherent strategy that any church can use.

The Leading Your Church into Growth movement has worked extensively with churches both north and south of the border. 'Most of us,' they say 'probably need to work more at our strategic/objective side.'[26] They suggest a very simple, memorable framework for evangelistic mission, based on their analysis of Jesus' own ministry.

They suggest that Jesus' strategy for evangelism can be described as 'the Three P's':

Presence
Entering towns and villages, healing, teaching and befriending people.

Proclamation
Using pictures and stories that the people would understand, Jesus proclaimed the 'Good News' of the Kingdom and called on them to respond.

Persuasion
Spending quality follow-up time with the few individuals who really did want to follow him, these were the searchers.

(a fourth 'P' is **Prayer**. Jesus prayed regularly, daily about his mission and taught his followers to do the same.)[27]

A church that has an effective strategy for evangelism keeps these 'P's' in balance. The strategy becomes less effective if any one P is neglected, or if one is particularly emphasised at the expense of the others.

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[26] Leading Your Church into Growth course manual (LYCIG: www.lycig.org.uk, undated), section 5.1 p. 2.
[27] Leading Your Church into Growth, *Four Studies and a Party: Vision, evangelism & growth, all in a mission shape* (LYCIG: www.lygig.org.uk, undated), p. 14.

LYCIG invite church leaders to consider the following three questions, as preparation for their 'famous basket exercise.'

- **Where is your church's Presence in your town or village?**
- **Do you as a church Proclaim the Good News in ways that local people can clearly understand, and call upon them to respond?**
- **When and where does the work of Persuasion happen in your church?**

(15min.)

The Famous 'Basket Exercise'

Imagine that all the mission time, energy, resources and prayer that you have as a church, are represented by twelve eggs. Think of presence, proclamation and persuasion as three baskets. Ask yourself the question, how many eggs does your church put in each basket?[28] **(5min.)**

Spend some time reflecting upon the outcome of your own basket exercise with others in the group. **(10min.)**

In what ways could the 'three P's' strategy help you in your evangelistic ministry in the future? **(10min.)**

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[28] LYCIG, *Four Studies and a Party,* p. 15.

Scenarios: what would you do?

Either working on your own or in a small group, try one of the following exercises. In your planning, think about:

- **How your event or activity will meet the needs of the people with whom you are aiming to share the Gospel…**
- **Whether the project will suit the capabilities of the church people who will be helping you…**
- **The materials you will need to buy, whilst staying within your budget…**
- **Which of the Three P's are you engaging with: Presence, Proclamation or Persuasion?**

1.)

About twenty-five worshippers, mostly older people, attend your church, which is situated at the heart of a thriving suburban community. Unfortunately, a busy main road separates the church building from the row of shops and cafes on the other side. Although the ladies' guild keeps the church open regularly, with tea and cakes and a warm welcome for visitors, hardly anyone ever comes in.

Your congregation would like to find a way of connecting with the people they see going about on the other side of the road. You can rely on one very capable, able-bodied volunteer to help you and four or five others who would like to be involved but who are rather elderly. You have £50 available to spend on this new project, which could be a one-off or a regular event.

The small businesses opposite your church consist of a newsagent, grocer, hairdresser, florist, dry cleaner, a bank, two cafes and a vet surgery.

2.)

You are in charge of a church in a country village, very much on the tourist trail. A rota of ten volunteers from the congregation staffs it each Saturday during the summer, and they welcome a steady stream of visitors. The church building is of historic interest and the congregation has produced some good quality notices and guidebooks explaining its architectural heritage.

However, at a recent review meeting, your volunteers have told you that fewer visitors seem to be particularly interested in the architecture of the building. Instead, they have been talking about the prayerful atmosphere and some have asked if they could light a candle. The volunteers are nonplussed. They are ready and able to answer questions about local history, but are quite embarrassed talking about 'spiritual things.'

How can the church begin to offer an experience of real Christian spirituality to visitors? Can you think of a way to help the volunteers to feel more comfortable in their changing role? You have a budget of £100.

3.)

A new housing estate has just been developed round the corner from your church. It consists of 40 two and three bedroom houses, privately owned, and built around a communal garden area. A local estate agent has told you that the people who are moving into these houses are young couples (some with babies), 'downsizers' and 'separaters'.

Your congregation would like to reach out to these newly arrived members of the community. You have a budget of £150 and a team of twelve people who are keen to get involved. Most are active, early-retired people, but one is hearing impaired and one person uses a wheelchair.

Plan an outreach activity or event that will be a practical demonstration of God's love from the congregation to your new neighbours.

Session One

Sharing Faith, Finding Faith

Suggested Reading

Books and articles in journals

Booker, M, & Ireland, M, *Evangelism-Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003).

Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

Croft, S, & Frost, R, et al., *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: Communicating faith in a changing culture* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005).

Drane, J, *The McDonaldization of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000).

Earley, D, & Wheeler, D, *Evangelism Is… How to share Jesus with passion and confidence* (Nashville TN: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2010).

Finney, J, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004)

Finney, J, *Finding Faith Today: How does it happen?* (Swindon: British & Foreign Bible Society, 1992, repr. 1994).

Francis, L, & Yaacov, J.K, (eds), *Joining and Leaving Religion: Research perspectives* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000)

Heywood, D, *Reimagining Ministry (*London, SCM Press, 2011).

Hunt, S, *The Alpha Enterprise* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

Peace, R.V, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999)

Rambo, L, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993)

Sjogren, S, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A unique approach to sharing the live of Jesus* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003).

Spencer, N, & Neilson, P, *Journeys and Stories: Finding faith in Scotland today* (London: LICC, 2006).

Ward, P, 'Alpha – the McDonaldization of Religion?' *Anvil*, 15/4, 1998, pp. 279-86.

DVD

Harvey, M, *Unlocking the Growth God Has Already Given to the Church: A seminar by Michael Harvey of MJH Associates* (DVD produced by MJH Associates: 2010).

Published course materials

Alpha – http://uk.alpha.org/

Christianity Explored - R. Tice & B. Cooper, *Christianity Explored* (New Malden: The Good Book Company, 2002; 2nd edn, 2005).

Credo - L. Unwin, *Credo* (London: Church Union, 1996).

Emmaus - S. Cottrell, S. Croft, J. Finney, F. Lawson & R. Warren, *Emmaus: The way of faith* (London: Church House Publishing, 1996). *Emmaus* was republished from 2001 and has its own web page at CHP: www.e-mmaus.org.uk.

Essence - R. Frost, *Essence* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2002).

Leading Your Church into Growth course manual (LYCIG: www.lycig,org.uk, undated).

Leading Your Church into Growth, *Four Studies and a Party: Vision, evangelism & growth, all in a mission shape* (LYCIG: www.lygig.org.uk, undated).

Online resources

Cavender, M, The British at Prayer, ReSource article online: http:// www.resource-arm.net/articles/the_british_at_prayer.html

Hay, D, & Hunt, K, Understanding the Spirituality of People Who Don't Go To Church: A report on the findings of the Adult Spirituality Project at the University of Nottingham (spiritualjouorneys.org.uk, 2000), http://www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk/pdf/look_understanding_the_spirituality_of_people.pdf

Servant evangelism web site and 'ideas bank': www.servantevangelism.com

Session Two

Church Growth: What it is and what it's not

Facilitator's Notes

This session has been designed for use as the programme for a training day for a group of church leaders. This could be a one-off day conference. Or it could be one unit of a longer period of study, such as, for example, a residential weekend.

The session discusses theories and practices of church growth from three perspectives: biblical, international and national. It is divided into three parts.

Part One offers participants an opportunity for biblical reflection on themes of numerical and spiritual church growth, through the medium of two Contextual Bible Studies. Suggestions for facilitating a CBS may be found on page 129 of this workbook.

In Part Two, participants analyse and evaluate three major trans-national church growth movements: Seeker Sensitive, Cell Church and Natural Church Development.

In Part Three, participants review the development of Mission Action Planning in the UK.

Parts One and Two and Three include questions for individual reflection and group discussion, together with suggested timings.

These timings may vary according to the size and nature of the group. However, each of these sections requires approximately two hours for completion.

Part Three also presents a choice of scenario exercises as a challenge for the participants. Participants could work on the scenarios by themselves or in a small group, with feedback to the full group. Alternatively, the exercise might be set as a piece of homework, to be presented at a later date.

Church Growth:
What it is and what it's not

The session discusses theories and practices of church growth from three perspectives: biblical, international and national. The first section uses Bible study to explore concepts of numerical and spiritual church growth. The second reviews three major, trans-national church growth movements. The final section considers how some Anglican dioceses in the UK currently engage with church growth; and in particular, their use of MAP.

Part One: Biblical

Why do we try?

Church growth consultant and former archdeacon Bob Jackson, is the author of the 2005 book, *The Road to Growth*. He describes the world in which many Anglicans are living, 'where the strains and stresses of diminishing attendance, deteriorating finances and a decreasing paid workforce put us in the grip of a spiral of decline that we may have learned to manage but not to reverse.'[29]

Just keeping things going as they are, takes enormous hard work and effort. Why then are we determined to focus on growth?

As church leaders we are concerned with growth because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus told his disciples, 'I will build my church' (Matthew 16: 18) and the Gospels describe him doing it. The church Jesus builds is a living organism; the New Testament frequently uses images of growth to describe it.

Short Bible Study

Read these short scripture passages together. What strikes you about the images of growth that they describe? **(10 min.)**

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[29] Jackson, B, *The Road to Growth: Towards a thriving church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), pp. 6-7.

Matthew 25: 14-30
Mark 4: 2-20, 26-32
Luke 8: 1-15
Acts 2: 41-47
1 Corinthians 3:6-7
Matthew 9: 36-38

Numerical or spiritual?

The New Testament describes the numerical growth of the early church. The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how a small group of believers grew, by the end of the book, to number 'many thousands.' (Acts 21: 20)   But growing numbers are of little value in themselves. In his 2006 book *Breaking News*, the British evangelist J. John defines what 'church growth' means:

> The growth Jesus has in mind results not just in bigger crowds of believers, but also in people being transformed by the Gospel of the kingdom, so that they make a difference in their communities and in society at large.[30]

What is meant, do you think, by 'people being transformed by the Gospel of the kingdom'? What examples of this transformation can you think of in the New Testament?   (5 min.)

The spiritual transformation of people and the numerical growth of the church go hand in hand. Numerical growth is dependent on spiritual growth, and it is also the catalyst for further spiritual activity. Bob Jackson explains:

> But numbers matter because of what they represent: growth is often a sign of quality not an alternative to it. It suggests that people are finding a Christian faith and a place in the Christian community. It is *their* transformation we seek, rather than *our* growth, but the two are part of the same process. Also, the numbers involved in the life of the Church determine the capacity of the Church to do good in the world – to be an agent of the kingdom of heaven. A growing, confident, secure community is

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[30] John, J, *Breaking News* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2006), p. 16.

likely to have the vision, the opportunity and the human resources to be salt and light in society and make the world a better place.[31]

Have you ever experienced belonging to a growing church? In what ways was numerical growth related to the spiritual life of that church?   (10 min.)

Have you ever been part of a church that was shrinking in numbers? What was the impact of this numerical decline upon the congregation's life and witness?   (10 min.)

As church leaders, says Bishop Stephen Cottrell, 'we care about numbers because we care about people.' We want our churches to grow because, 'For bums on seats read hands ready to serve, ears to listen, hearts to love and minds shaped by the will and purpose of God.'[32]

Yet achieving this is far from easy. In its Strategy for Growth, the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway explains just how painful church growth can be: 'Our congregations are already trying to do this, but often they struggle, because they go it alone, or lack the resources, or don't know where to turn for help. Or try to do too much.'[33]

The Bible study that follows is a New Testament case study of a church struggling to grow, and dealing with the challenges and difficulties that a commitment to church growth can bring.

Extended Bible Study

Acts 6: 1-7
The Choosing of the Seven

> In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the

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[31] Jackson, *The Road to Growth*, p. 33.

[32] Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), pp. xv-xvi.

[33] *Growing with God's Grace in Glasgow and Galloway: Why are we going for GROWTH?* (Glasgow: Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, undated).

ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. [3]Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them [4]and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.'

[5]This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. [6]They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

[7]So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

What jumps off the page at you? (FG 5 min.)

What are the issues affecting the church in verse 1? In what ways are these issues related to numerical and/or spiritual church growth?
(3s 5 min, FB 10 min.)

How does the church go about addressing these issues? What difference does this make? (3s 5 min, FB 10 min.)

What do you think of the leadership shown here by the apostles?
(FG 5 min.)

In what ways does this story resonate with your own church experience?
(3s 5 min, FB 10 min.)

Share with the group any new insights you have received from reading and discussing this passage. (FG 10 min.)

Key
3s work in groups of three
FB feedback in the full group
FG work in the full group

Part Two: International

In Part Two of this session, we shall discuss some distinct approaches to achieving church growth. The session will not champion any particular strategy. Rather, it introduces three major movements that offer models for church growth, but which remain relatively little known in the UK. Each of these movements is presented from a different international perspective: North American, South East Asian, and Western European.

Seeker sensitive churches and the Church Growth Movement: a North American perspective

Pastor Bill Hybels developed the 'seeker sensitive' approach to church growth in the 1970s, at Willow Creek Community Church, a very large evangelical church in suburban Chicago.[34] 'Seeker' churches aim to create a church encounter which will be accessible to people who are 'seeking' faith, but who have little previous churchgoing experience. These events are held separately from the worship services of the believing Christian members of the church. Seeker services are not necessarily held on Sundays, but at times that are most convenient for those whom they aim to attract. At seeker sensitive church services, a spiritual message is channelled through popular culture, contemporary media and creative arts, rather than through sermons and traditional liturgies.[35]

The principle underpinning the 'seeker sensitive' approach comes from the work of the evangelical missionary and leader of the American 'Church Growth Movement', David McGavran. In his 1955 book, *The Bridges of God*, McGavran stressed the importance of cultural accommodation. In particular, he drew attention to the churches built in foreign countries by western missionaries: these, he said, were culturally alien to indigenous people because they were built to resemble churches in the missionaries' home countries. McGavran believed that this was a symptom of a serious problem hindering the advancement of the Gospel. To be successful, missionaries must connect with local people by

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[34] Hybels, L, & Hybels, B, *Rediscovering Church: The story and vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 42.

[35] Olson, R.E, *The SCM Press A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (London: SCM, 2005), p. 285.

contextualising their message in practical ways.[36]   Contextualisation, that is, a church delivering its message 'within the context of the culture,' is the 'hallmark principle' of the Church Growth Movement, according to American sociologists J. B. Watson and Walter Scalen.[37]

In his book, *Starting a Seeker Sensitive Service*, Edward Dobson describes how McGavran's ideas resonate with the concerns of American evangelical pastors:

> We are trapped in an evangelical subculture. As evangelical Christians we are isolated in our own little subculture. That world is basically out of touch with the broader culture. We have our own heroes, books, media, music, language, educational institutions and taboos... We are missionaries in a foreign land. Because we are trapped in an evangelical subculture, we must understand the larger culture and use its language to communicate Christ.[38]

In order to address this problem, Hybels and other church leaders have updated McGavran's ideas regarding contextualisation and church growth. Seeker sensitive churches accept the importance of contextualisation. They pay 'meticulous attention,' say Watson and Scalen, to the cultural contexts of the communities in which they are situated, with regard not only to the content of their worship, but when planning church programmes, and designing the architecture and furnishings of their buildings. Seeker sensitive churches deploy the most up to date marketing techniques to attract seekers, and place a very strong emphasis on measurable numerical growth.[39]

In *Seeker Churches*, published in 2000, Kimon Sergeant describes how cultural contextualisation, 'their strategy to reduce the gap between religious and everyday life,' means that American evangelical seeker churches, 'mirror the convenience, cleanliness and even bland uniformity of shopping malls.' They are designed not to resemble traditional church buildings at all. Rather, they appeal to a particular lifestyle, offering coffee bars, sports facilities, social activities,

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[36]McGavran,D, *The Bridges of God: A study on the strategy of missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955), pp. 1-10.

[37] Watson, J.B. & Scalen, W.H, 'Dining with the Devil: The unique secularization of American evangelical churches,' *International Social Science Review*, (83/3-4), p. 172.

[38] Dobson, E.G, *Starting a Seeker-sensitive Service: How traditional churches can reach the unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), pp. 14-15.

[39] Watson & Scalen, 'Dining with the Devil', p. 173. However, following a survey of his congregation in 2007, Hybels has decided to refocus Willow Creek Church, concentrating less on numerical success and more on developing 'deeper' spiritual growth: Branaugh, M, 'Willow Creek's Huge Shift', *Christianity Today* (June 2008), p. 13.

childcare and counselling – and an opportunity to explore the Christian faith in comfortable, familiar surroundings. [40]

There are no seeker churches in the UK, on the scale of Willow Creek Community Church. However, as the 2002 study *Mission-shaped Church* points out, 'elements of the Willow Creek model and style of worship have had considerable influence in many Anglican churches.' This influence, although widespread, is necessarily limited. Few UK Anglican churches have the resources to embrace a wholly seeker sensitive approach: according to Mission-shaped Church, at least 50 well-trained volunteers are needed in order to sustain a regular programme of high quality seeker services. Nevertheless, numbers of churches have taken seeker sensitive principles into account when designing their guest services. These influences may also be seen in Anglican churches with multiple congregations, and in those offering 'fresh expressions' of being church.[41]

What do you find most appealing about the seeker sensitive approach to church growth? Is there any aspect that you do not like? Why is this?

(10 min.)

Look again at Edward Dobson's description of a subculture. To what extent does your church live in such a bubble? Where and how does it connect with the surrounding contemporary cultures? What is there that prevents such connecting? **(15 min.)**

Either on your own, or with a partner, work on the exercise below and then share your ideas with the full group:

Imagine that you are about to develop a new 'culturally contextualised' church ministry in your own local area. Using seeker sensitive principles, describe the church buildings, times and style of worship and an outreach programme that you think would most appeal to a demographic in that community who are not currently churchgoers. **(30 min.)**

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[40] Sargeant, K. H, *Seeker Churches: Promoting traditional religion in a non-traditional way* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), p. 107.
[41] Cray, G, et al., *Mission-shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p. 70.

Growing churches through the Cell Church model: a South East Asian perspective

In his 2002 book, *The Future of Christianity*, theologian Alister McGrath describes the cell church movement. He says, 'A new approach to "being church" has emerged, especially in the Far East, which offers a radical new understanding of the role of small groups within the life of the church.' These are not the optional Bible study groups and house groups familiar to most UK congregations. In a cell church, the small groups, or cells, are prioritised, rather than the gathered worship of the whole congregation. [42]

Much of cell church theory comes from evangelical and Pentecostal churches in South Korea and Singapore. These churches are remarkable for their rapid numerical growth. McGrath cites an Anglican church, St Patrick's, in East Malaysia, which grew from 700 to 3000 members, after becoming a cell church in 1992.[43] According to the Revd Howard Astin, an UK cell church enthusiast, the largest Presbyterian church in the world and the largest Methodist church, are both Korean cell churches. At the end of the 1990s, almost a million people were reportedly members of the Yoido Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, led by the pioneer of the cell church movement, David Yonggi Cho.[44]

Dr Young-Gi Hong is the president of the Institute for Church Growth in Korea. In his article, *Models of the Church Growth Movement*, published in 2004, he describes how cell churches work: 'in a cell-group church, the cell is the church. All functions of the church (e.g. worship, fellowship, and nurture) are integrated within the cells'. Through the cell, every member participates in the ministry of the church. Cell church consciously models the house church communities described in the New Testament: each cell may have up to 12 members, the number of Jesus' disciples.[45]

Church growth takes place via the cells, as members invite their friends to join the small group. Evangelism is compulsory. 'The cells are prevented from becoming inwardly focused', explains Hong: 'Each cell is expected to multiply within 12 to 18 months by winning people to Christ. If a cell functions for a long time without multiplying or planting another cell, the cell is deemed unhealthy.'[46] Church leaders do not tolerate a cell that fails to grow. According to the Singaporean

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[42] McGrath, A.E, *The Future of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 65.

[43] McGrath, *The Future of Christianity*, p. 65-66.

[44] Astin, H, *Body and Cell: Making the transition to cell church, a first hand account* (London: Monarch Books, 1998), pp. 114-115.

[45] Hong, Y-G, 'Models of the Church Growth Movement', *Transformation: An international journal of holistic mission studies*, 21 (2004), p. 105.

[46] Hong, 'Models of the Church Growth Movement', p. 105.

bishop, Moses Tay, such a cell will be closed down and its members redistributed to other cells that are 'spiritually vibrant.'[47]

Cell church models a 'top down', pyramid-shaped leadership structure. The cells receive oversight and training from ascending ranks of assistant leaders, who report upwards to the church's senior pastor. This highly directive style of leadership supervises sustained evangelism and church growth.

In their 2003 book, *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* Mike Booker and Mark Ireland hypothesise that the tightly controlled, fast growing South East Asian cell church model is underpinned by specific cultural norms. Firstly, evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity is committed to 'non-negotiable truths', and 'the following of those truths by church members is a high priority to leaders.' And secondly, the cell churches of Korea and Singapore come from 'a cultural background that is ordered, hard-working and deferential towards authority.'[48]

However, the cell church movement perceives itself to be of global, rather than regional significance. Leaders from across the world attend regular conferences in Korea to reflect upon the ecclesiology of cell church.[49] McGrath notes that the cell church model has taken root in New Zealand and Australia, where 'several large community churches… are making the transition to cell church.''[50] Cell church also has a strong presence in America, where Ralph Neighbour is its prominent advocate and theorist.[51]

Booker and Ireland review cell church as it presents in the UK. It is a story of mixed success. They find examples of growth, particularly in new churches that have been developed as cell churches from their inception. Elsewhere, they say, 'the picture is more complex'. Churches that have successfully overcome the trauma of dismantling their old organisational structures to become cell churches are positive about the way that their congregational life has developed. For example, when Bradford vicar, Howard Astin, restructured his church as a cell church, he found the biggest change was not numerical growth, but seeing his people develop in confidence through the 'every member ministry' principle of the cells.[52]

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[47]Tay, M, 'Cell Church in Singapore', in Green, M, (ed), *Church Without Walls: A global examination of cell church* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), p. 8.

[48] Booker, M, & Ireland, M, *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), p. 146.

[49] Hong, Y-G, 'Models of the Church Growth Movement', *Transformation: An international journal of holistic mission studies*, 21 (2004), p. 105.

[50] McGrath, *The Future of Christianity*, p. 68.

[51] Neighbour, R, *Where Do We Go From Here? A guidebook for the cell church group* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990).

[52] Astin, *Body and Cell,* p. 18.

In the UK, however, cell churches generally struggle to achieve numerical growth, because the cells struggle to evangelise. Booker and Ireland observe that, where growth occurs, cells need at least two or three years to multiply, rather than twelve months. 'Britain shares the western European cultural phenomenon of slow church growth,' they say: 'British reserve is a major barrier to small groups becoming the main entry point into church life.' They conclude that UK cell churches simply lack the dynamism for growth displayed in other cultures. Cells allow for a full expression of this dynamism where it is present, 'but it may be that much of the energy for growth is not coming directly from the cell structures themselves.'[53]

Thinking both theologically and practically, what do you think are the strengths and the weaknesses of the cell church model of church growth?
(10 min.)

Choose one characteristic of the cell church model that you think would be helpful for growth in your own church context. Explain the reasons for your choice. **(10 min.)**

How easily could cell church flourish within the traditions of the Scottish Episcopal Church? **(10 min.)**

Natural Church Development: a Western European perspective

Natural Church Development, developed by Christian Schwarz, a German church growth consultant, is an international movement with a Western European base. In 1994 Schwarz and his team carried out an enormous research project. They aimed to discover which principles of numerical church growth were common to all churches, regardless of denomination, size, culture or traditions. Over 1000 churches participated from 32 countries across the world, providing nearly 4.2 million responses. On the basis of this research, NCD claims to offer a set of universal principles that can be applied in any local church context.[54]

NCD identifies eight 'quality characteristics' of a healthy church:

- Empowering Leadership

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[53] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism*, pp. 150-151; p. 154.
[54] http://www.ncd-uk.com/principles : accessed 21st January 2012.

- Gift-oriented Lay Ministry
- Passionate Spirituality
- Functional Structures
- Inspiring Worship Services
- Holistic Small Groups
- Need-oriented Evangelism
- Loving Relationships

According to Natural Church Development, numerical growth is dependent on the quality of church life. Improving the quality of these eight characteristics will have quantitative results. Conversely, the absence of numerical growth in a church indicates qualitative decay. If even one of these eight quality characteristics is weak, the church will not grow. When all eight are given proper care, a church's natural 'growth automatisms' will generate growth spontaneously.[55]

Schwarz draws upon New Testament images of growth, describing the church as a plant which, being nurtured in the right conditions will sprout up vigorously:

> We should not attempt to manufacture church growth, but rather release the biotic potential which God has put into every church. It is our job to minimise obstacles to growth – both inside and outside the church. Since we have very little control over outside factors, we should concentrate on the removal of obstacles to church growth and multiplication of churches, then growth can happen all by itself.' God will do what he promised to do. He will grant growth.[56]

According to NCD, the obstacles to any church's growth are its 'minimum factors'; that is, the weakest of the eight quality characteristics listed above. To illustrate the concept of minimum factors, Schwarz offers the example of an old-fashioned wooden milk bucket. The bucket can hold milk up to the level of the shortest of its vertical slats. When the shortest slat is lengthened, the bucket can carry more milk, but only as far as the next shortest slat. So, a church can realise more of its God-given potential for growth by constantly measuring and strengthening its eight quality characteristics.[57]

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[55] Schwarz, C, *Natural Church Development: A guide to eight essential qualities of healthy churches* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), p. 12 ff.
[56] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, p. 9.
[57] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, p. 53.

NCD aims to be an organic process, based on observations of the natural world. Allusions to planting, fertilising and weeding pervade Schwarz's writing. However, in order to achieve natural growth, participating churches must adopt a highly structured approach. A detailed survey of church life, completed by the church leader and key members of the congregation and analysed by the NCD organisation, identifies the minimum factors requiring attention. NCD literature, workshops and consultants are made available to help churches improve in these weaker areas. Further surveys must follow at regular intervals (every six months, ideally), to review progress and reveal new minimum factors for attention. By sticking to these principles, a church may expect to experience numerical growth. According to Natural Church Development UK, even though the NCD process does not focus upon evangelism per se, 'the growth rate increases by 51% on average.' The organisation claims that, to date (2012), 1.6 million additional people have joined NCD churches across the world. [58]

Natural Church Development has attracted considerable international attention. Schwarz's books, translated from German, have helped disseminate his theories across Europe and beyond. René Erwich, head of the Dutch Baptisten Seminarium, observes that several EBF Baptist Unions have adopted NCD and that conferences have been held in the USA and Canada. Also, he says, theological institutions such as Fuller Theological Seminary include NCD on their curriculum and use its principles.[59] Nevertheless, in the UK, Natural Church Development remains relatively little known.

Mike Booker and Mark Ireland reviewed the position of NCD in the UK in 2005. At that time, just over 500 churches across all denominations had been involved in the process. A quarter of participating churches went on to complete a second survey, and just 16% proceeded to complete a third one. By 2012, the number of officially participating churches had increased to 800.[60]

Among those churches in the UK doing an NCD survey, the most commonly recorded 'minimum factors' have been Empowering Leadership and Inspiring Worship Services. Booker and Ireland remark, 'If there is one thing clergy are likely to see themselves doing it is exercising leadership, and if there is one thing churches are expected to do it's having services. In both cases, many of these are not doing it very well!'[61]

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[58] http://www.ncd-uk.com/results:accessed 21st January 2012.

[59] *Erwich, R, 'Missional Churches: identical global 'plants' or locally growth 'flowers'? Christian A Schwarz's 'Natural Church Development' revisited'*, Transformation: An international journal of holistic mission studies, *21, 2004, p. 183*.

[60] http://www.ncd-uk.com/churchquality: accessed 21st January 2012.

[61] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism,* p. 131.

UK churches seem to struggle with the pace of change expected by NCD. A period of only six months is supposed to elapse between each survey. This 'seems to allow ample time for church life to be transformed in many other cultures, but the great majority of British churches seem to wait considerably longer than this. Eighteen months or even two years are required between surveys in the slower moving reality of British church life.'[62]

However, those churches that persevere with the NCD process have recorded positive outcomes. 'Among the small number of churches that have gone beyond the first survey,' observe Booker and Ireland, 'there is strong evidence that NCD works. Two-thirds of the repeat surveys showed an increase in the recorded quality of church life.' Moreover, although the number of paid-up NCD churches is still small, it is likely that many more have made informal use of some of Schwarz's church growth principles.[63]

What would make you want to use NCD in your church? What might make you not want to use it?   (10 min.)

How do you respond to the suggestion that Empowering Leadership and Inspiring Worship Services may be particular weak points for churches in the UK?   (5 min.)

How far is 'the slower moving reality of British church life' a reality of life in your own church? In what ways does this affect church growth?   (10 min.)

Spend some time reflecting upon your discussion of these three international church growth movements. What new insights have you received, about what 'church growth' means?   (10 min.)

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[62] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism,* pp. 130-131.
[63] Booker & Ireland, *Evangelism*, p. 131.

Part Three: MAP – UK Anglican Phenomenon

What is it?

Mission Action Planning is a structured process of prayer, review, discernment and planning. Through this process, individual churches and Christian groups develop contextually sensitive mission activities within their own local setting. It is strategic planning undertaken as a spiritual exercise. Canon Mike Chew, a growth facilitator in the diocese of Blackburn, describes Mission Action Planning like this:

> MAP guides church leaders through the time-honoured method for getting something done: (1) reviewing and understanding the current situation and opportunities; (2) prayerfully listening to God to sense what God is calling the Church to become – the church vocation; (3) agreeing a few manageable priorities that derive from this vision; (4) sharing out the actions associated with each priority.[64]

A Mission Action Plan is the document that emerges from this process. It outlines the practical mission activities that the church intends to do in the following months. Typically, a Mission Action Plan has a projection of three to five years, with yearly priorities. It is both a framework and a timetable for mission in the local community.

Is it Anglican?

Mission Action Planning has been developed by and for Anglicans, and is a feature of life in many UK dioceses. In the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway introduced MAP in its Strategy for Growth in 2011. MAP underpins the *Casting the Net* strategy used by St Andrew's, Dunkeld and Dunblane. MAP is also used in a number of dioceses of the Church

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[64] Church Times, 12th August 2011.

in Wales. The MAP web site, churchmaps.co.uk has a long list of Church of England dioceses engaged with Mission Action Planning.[65]

London was the first diocese to ask all its churches to produce Mission Action Plans. Bishop Hope put MAP at the heart of his diocesan growth initiative, *Agenda for Action* in 1993. This was part of the Bishop's strategy to move his huge diocese out of a condition of chronic decline and into a culture of mission and growth. MAP called for a new way of thinking: 'in London at that time,' recalls Bob Jackson, 'there were many parishes for which all three parts of a MAP were novelties – mission, action, and plan.'[66]

Mike Chew and Mark Ireland interviewed Hope for their 2009 book, *How to do Mission Action Planning*. He explained how the London diocese agreed upon four mission priorities:

1 Worship and Prayer

2 Care and Service

3 Teaching and Nurture

4 Mission and Evangelism

These four priorities became a framework for individual parish MAPs. The organisational structures of the diocese, including finances and staff, were refocused to resource local MAP projects.

Many London churches are now on their third or fourth MAP. David Hope told Mike Chew and Mark Ireland that mission action planning contributed significantly to reversing the decline in church attendance in the diocese of London. He said, 'It wouldn't have happened without MAP.'[67]

Mission Action Planning emphasises the mission potential both of local churches and of the diocese. MAP helps bishops to plan strategically and realistically for the allocation of resources in their dioceses. Philip Giddings, Chair of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, says:

> MAP sees the parish as especially well placed to relate in mission to local communities. Because the bishop is the leader in mission within a diocese, and because the diocese is best-placed for sharing ideas and initiatives with parishes, MAP at diocesan level

[65] http://www.churchmaps.co.uk: accessed 29th January 2012.

[66] Jackson, *The Road to Growth*, p. 75.

[67] Chew, M, & Ireland, M, *How to do Mission Action Planning: A vision-centred approach* (London: SPCK, 2009), pp. 3-5.

is capable of adding capacity and energy to parochial mission plans.[68]

Local variations:

Examples of dioceses' locally agreed mission priorities for MAP[69]

Carlisle: Maturity in faith; Prayer and worship; Community service and engagement; Evangelism; Quality of relationships

Derby: Spirituality, Discipleship, Evangelism, Engagement

Glasgow and Galloway: Worship, prayer and spirituality; Learning and discipleship; Missional leadership; Numerical growth, welcome and integration; Children and young people; Imaginative outreach into local communities

St Albans: Going deeper into God; Transforming communities; Making new disciples

Truro: Worship and prayer; Care and service; Teaching and nurture; Outreach and mission; Utilising resources

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How do you explain MAP's particular appeal to Anglican churches in the UK?   (10 min.)

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[68]Giddings, P, *Mission Action Planning in the Church of England: A briefing note from the Mission and Public Affairs Council* (London: General Synod of the Church of England, 2011), p. 2.
[69]http://www.carlislediocese.org.uk/discipleship/vision-to-action-2.html; http:www.derby.anglican.org/attachments/821_New%20MAP%20workbook%202011.pdf; http://md.glasgow.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/GGGGG-flyer-2012-version.pdf; http://www.livinggodslove.org/about/mission_action_plans/; http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/diocesan-information/parish-resources/mission-action-planning.php: accessed 31st January 2012.

Look at the examples of diocesan mission priorities above. What strikes you? What might these priorities tell you about how church growth is understood in the Anglican Church?   (5 min.)

Is it Theological?

Philip Giddings observes that the process of Mission Action Planning seems familiar to many clergy because of its similarities to the hermeneutic spiral or 'Pastoral Cycle' which they use when applying theological insights to real-life situations.[70] On the other hand, aspects of MAP are familiar to many lay church members because they reflect the management methods routinely used in strategic planning by some companies, schools and hospitals. MAP is a practical and accessible tool – but is it really theological?

Mike Chew and Mark Ireland asked Bishop Hope whether MAP was 'just a good idea borrowed from the world of business, or whether it had a coherent theological rationale behind it':

> He responded immediately by pointing to the Pastoral Epistles and explaining: 'We are told that in order to be a good steward of the household of God, you have to be a good steward of your own household. It's really a dimension of stewardship – you have to plan and organise things. If we are serious about mission and that is the clear priority, then we've got to be business-like, and some sort of plan is inevitable.' However, Hope also acknowledged that the Holy Spirit has a habit of overturning things: 'Sometimes when you are making your plan, something comes in from the side wind and turns it upside down – that's the work of the Holy Spirit.'[71]

The Bishop argued that methodical planning for mission *is* spiritual. Planning, he said, is 'of the very nature of God, whose character is seen in his plan in creation and in his plan of salvation for the world through Jesus Christ. Furthermore God has a plan or calling for each of our lives in order that we might fulfil his purpose for us.'[72]

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[70] Giddings, P, *Mission Action Planning in the Church of England*, p. 1.
[71] Chew & Ireland, *Mission Action Planning*, p. 33.
[72] Chew & Ireland, *Mission Action Planning*, p. 34.

Chew and Ireland point to the example of Jesus' own ministry, in their theological reflections on MAP:

> In Luke's Gospel Jesus demonstrates a carefully planned mission strategy when he trains and sends out the Twelve from village to village to preach and heal, and them trains up and sends out a larger number on a similar mission to prepare the ground in the places he himself was about to visit.

Chew and Ireland also agree with Bishop Hope that plans often need to change, in response to the Holy Spirit's guidance. For example in Acts 16, they say, 'Paul has a frustrating time trying to discern God's leading', before he is eventually called to Macedonia. But cases like this only strengthen the theological rationale for Mission Action Planning:

> In fact the process of prayer and listening involved in the MAP cycle – as we seek to discern God's will – makes us more receptive to the unexpected guidance and prompting of God. A church which is committed to the MAP process is also one which is more likely to recognise and respond to the missionary work of the Holy Spirit.[73]

What do you think of the theological rationale for Mission Action Planning offered by Chew and Ireland? How would you strengthen it further? Is there anything that might undermine it? **(15 min.)**

How important is it to you, that MAP has a theological rationale? **(5 min.)**

Does it Work?

As we have noted above, Bishop David Hope believed that Mission Action Planning played a crucial part in shifting the diocese of London from decline into growth. Reflecting on London's experience in his book *The Road to Growth*, Bob Jackson agrees that MAP has had a very important part to play in 'the numbers turnaround in London.' However, MAP is not the only reason, he says, for this turnaround. The diocese made other significant policy changes – regarding clergy selection, church planting and church closure, disbanding flagging

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[73] Chew & Ireland, *Mission Action Planning*, p. 36.

committees, introducing 'growth-friendly financial management' – that contributed alongside MAP to the London growth story.[74]

A rich pattern of anecdotal evidence is emerging, from churches that have found Mission Action Planning a positive experience. For example, a 'tiny rural daughter church' described in the *Church Times* that produced its own MAP:

> Six of the 12 regulars in the congregation met to think about how they could grow. One member agreed to make posters for local shops; another drew up a short questionnaire and took it round to the 13 homes in the hamlet; two others organised a harvest supper to coincide with Back to Church Sunday. These were small steps, but together they are raising the church's profile, and several new people have begun to come to church occasionally.[75]

Hard evidence of MAP's performance is also becoming available. In some dioceses, Mission Action Planning is still a fairly recent initiative: its eventual effectiveness remains to be seen. However, in other dioceses, now in their second or third MAP cycle, there is data for examination.

In 2007 two reports assessing the impact of Mission Action Planning were published: by the diocese of York following two cycles of MAP, and the diocese of Blackburn after three.[76] In both dioceses, new spiritual growth was attributed to the MAP process. Of Blackburn diocese, Canon Mike Chew says:

> In my experience, in Blackburn diocese, as a growth facilitator, real growth in faith, discipleship, prayerfulness, and outreach efforts has happened across all traditions: and, yes, this has often led to an increase in church attendance.[77]

In the diocese of York, the Archbishop's Mission Officer, Paul Wordsworth, describes many churches reporting that working on their MAPs, 'they were "encouraged and pleased", "affirmed and helped", "progress was seen", and reviews were agreed to be "useful" and "beneficial"'. He remarks:

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[74] Jackson, *The Road to Growth*, p. 75, p. 101.
[75] Church Times, 29th July 2011.
[76] Wordsworth, P, *MAP Reading: Living the Gospel MAP programmes, York diocese 2001-2007* http://www.churchmaps.co.uk/diocese/York/YORK%20MAP%20Reading.pdf p. 22. Accessed 17th February 2012; *Does MAP Make a Difference?* http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/images/Parish%20Support/Mission/Blackburn%20-%20Evidence%20for%20Growth.pdf accessed 15th February 2012.
[77] Church Times, 12th August 2011.

It is a valuable resource indeed which provides a local church with feelings of affirmation, encouragement and energy for the work to which God calls them. That is the revelation that many have discovered through working with the MAP process.[78]

Both the Blackburn and York reports also investigated the effects of MAP upon numerical growth. In each case, diocesan data revealed that MAP-related numerical growth had indeed occurred, but in very specific conditions.

The reports make an analytical distinction between different kinds of MAPs. Paul Wordsworth describes 'fair to middling' churches: those that 'do not yet have forward planning embedded in their culture' but nevertheless engaged with MAP initiatives in 2001 and 2006. In Blackburn, similar churches are described as having produced only 'Basic MAPs', where some essential elements of the process were missing. No measurable growth could be detected in York's 'fair to middling' churches. In Blackburn diocese, churches with only a basic MAP or no MAP at all, continued to decline numerically.

However, in both of these dioceses, churches that engaged fully with the Mission Action Planning process and produced good quality MAPs did report numerical growth. Wordsworth says that in churches where MAP principles were firmly established and used consistently, there was clear evidence of 'overall growth, often in difficult key areas such as children and young people, or increased male membership.'[79] This pattern was also present in the diocese of Blackburn. There, churches that produced a 'good MAP', fully engaged in the MAP process, with defined priorities and plans, experienced a small but notable increase in numbers, particularly children. The report observes:

> The overall conclusion for the Blackburn diocese is that the Growth/MAP initiative has made a significant difference to the attendance trend for usual Sunday attendance, especially for those churches that have responded positively to the Bishop's call for Mission Action Plans.[80]

Yet the diocese of York's report also reveals the fragility of MAP. Paul Wordsworth notes that, 'Without an outside initiative, reviews will not take place in around two thirds of those churches which responded with a MAP in 2006.' If left

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[78] Wordsworth, *MAP Reading*, p. 21.

[79] Wordsworth, P, *MAP Reading: Living the Gospel MAP programmes, York diocese 2001-2007* http://www.churchmaps.co.uk/diocese/York/YORK%20MAP%20Reading.pdf p. 22. Accessed 17th February 2012.

[80] *Does MAP Make a Difference?* http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/images/Parish%20Support/Mission/Blackburn%20-%20Evidence%20for%20Growth.pdf accessed 15th February 2012.

alone, without diocesan support, a large majority of churches would simply give up on the process of reviewing, discerning and planning for mission. The ongoing encouragement and resources of the diocese is therefore essential, to keep local churches focusing on mission and allow MAP to work.[81]

Either working on your own or in a small group, try <u>one</u> of the following exercises:

1.)

The bishop has asked you to begin Mission Action Planning with your congregation. Most of your church members know very little about it. Two or three strong-minded people on the vestry are suspicious of diocesan interference in the life of their church and don't want a 'top down' initiative imposed upon them. However, one member of the vestry is keen to begin and has had a positive MAP experience at a church in a different diocese.

What will you do in this situation and why?   (30 min.)

2.)

Your church is about to begin a second cycle of Mission Action Planning. However, the congregation is feeling discouraged. Their first MAP was undertaken during the illness of their previous rector; they struggled to complete it, and although one of their MAP priorities – establishing a bible study group – has been achieved, there has been no sign of much longed-for numerical growth.

How will you re-energise and encourage them to begin Mission Action Planning again?   (30 min.)

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[81] Wordsworth, *MAP Reading*, p. 22.

Church Growth:
What it is and what it's not

Suggested Reading

Books and articles in journals

Astin, H, *Body and Cell: Making the transition to cell church, a first hand account* (London: Monarch Books, 1998).

Booker, M, & Ireland, M, *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003).

Branaugh, M, 'Willow Creek's Huge Shift', *Christianity Today* (June 2008), p. 13.

Chew, M, & Ireland, M, *How to do Mission Action Planning: A vision-centred approach* (London: SPCK, 2009).

Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

Cray, G, et al., *Mission-shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

Dobson, E.G, *Starting a Seeker-sensitive Service: How traditional churches can reach the unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993).

Erwich, R, 'Missional Churches: identical global 'plants' or locally growth 'flowers'? Christian A Schwarz's 'Natural Church Development' revisited', Transformation: An international journal of holistic mission studies, *21, 2004, pp. 180-191.*

Giddings, P*, Mission Action Planning in the Church of England: A briefing note from the Mission and Public Affairs Council* (London: General Synod of the Church of England, 2011).

Hong, Y-G, 'Models of the Church Growth Movement', *Transformation: An international journal of holistic mission studies*, 21 (2004), pp. 101-113.

Hybels, L, & Hybels, B, *Rediscovering Church: The story and vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

Jackson, B, *The Road to Growth: Towards a thriving church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005).

John, J, *Breaking News* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2006).

McGavran,D, *The Bridges of God: A study on the strategy of missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955).

McGrath, A.E, *The Future of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

Neighbour, R, *Where Do We Go From Here? A guidebook for the cell church group* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990).

Olson, R.E, *The SCM Press A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (London: SCM, 2005).

Sargeant, K. H, Seeker Churches: Promoting traditional religion in a non-traditional way (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

Tay, M, 'Cell Church in Singapore', in Green, M, (ed), *Church Without Walls: A global examination of cell church* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

Schwarz, C*, Natural Church Development: A guide to eight essential qualities of healthy churches* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996).

Watson, J.B. & Scalen, W.H, 'Dining with the Devil: The unique secularization of American evangelical churches,' *International Social Science Review*, (83/3-4), pp. 171-180.

Online resources

Natural Church Development - http://www.ncd-uk.com/principles

Mission Action Planning - http://www.churchmaps.co.uk:

Wordsworth, P*, MAP Reading: Living the Gospel MAP programmes, York diocese 2001-2007*

http://www.churchmaps.co.uk/diocese/York/YORK%20MAP%20Reading.pdf p. 22. Accessed 17th February 2012

Does MAP Make a Difference?
http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/images/Parish%20Support/Mission/Blackburn%20-%20Evidence%20for%20Growth.pdf

Session Three

Missional and Traditional

Facilitator's Notes

This session has been designed for use as the programme for a training day for a group of church leaders. This could be a one-off day conference. Or it could be one unit of a longer period of study, such as, for example, a residential weekend.

In this session, participants reflect critically on themes relating to mission and inherited models of church. The session is divided into three parts. Each part looks at a distinct challenge - working with traditional church buildings, offering worship appropriately, and serving our local communities. Each part of the session requires approximately two hours for completion.

Parts One, Two and Three of the session all offer reading material followed by discussion questions. Those participating in this session will work by themselves, with a partner, within a small group and as part of the whole group. In all three parts of the session, the facilitator will invite the participants to work with others in a small group to address a challenge, and prepare a short presentation about it to share with the other groups. Each small group will be given a case study of a church, with which to work. Descriptions of three churches have been prepared as part of the session material – an urban, a rural and a suburban church. These descriptions are entirely fictional and do not depict any church in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway or elsewhere.

The material for this session has been offered with three small groups in mind. However, the session can be run with two groups, using just two of the case stories, or with more than three groups with the stories being used by more than one group. It is suggested that the small groups should be of no more than seven participants, and no fewer than three.

Missional and Traditional

Three Churches

St Urban's

St Urban's is a conservative Anglo-Catholic church situated near the centre of a post-industrial city. It was built in the mid-nineteenth century under the influence of the Tractarians. St Urban's is large, a red sandstone building in the gothic style, its stained glass windows protected from vandals by heavy wire mesh. Inside, the church is echoing, dark and smells strongly of incense. Two side chapels are dedicated to Our Lady and St Urban respectively. The nave is separated from the choir by a remarkable carved rood screen, beyond which may be glimpsed the High Altar with its tabernacle and six tall candlesticks.

The church is part of a larger complex of ecclesiastical buildings grouped around a paved courtyard garden. These include a church hall (formerly a schoolroom) and the priest's house. A sisterhood of Anglican nuns used to work with the priest among the poor families in this crowded working-class area. However, post-war slum clearance meant that, for several decades, hardly anybody actually lived near St Urban's at all: the fifty-or-so members of the congregation generally travel to the church from other locations, attracted by its distinctively ritualistic Anglo-Catholic liturgy. For a long time, the only 'locals' at St Urban's have been some mentally disturbed men from the homeless hostel, who regularly drink together in the courtyard garden.

During the property boom of the early twenty-first century, the derelict warehouses near the church were done up as restaurants, bars and apartments. Close at hand, the university has built an enormous accommodation block for students. However, so far none of the students have come anywhere near St Urban's; and, none of the St Urban's congregation (who are getting quite elderly) have shown the slightest interest in patronising the chic restaurants and bars.

St Rustica's

St Rustica's is a picture-perfect little church on the main road in a country village, five miles from the nearest market town. It has a tiny spire, a tiny lichgate, and roses growing round the porch door. St Rustica's was built in the 1900s by a local landowner, whose descendants still live in the area. The church building is well maintained, outside and in. There is no church hall, but the church itself has lavatory facilities and a little kitchenette at the back under the bell tower. Inside, the church is ordered in a traditional way, with its original pews, font, organ and altar frontals. Notable village families, whose names are plain to see in the stained glass windows and wall plaques around the building, have donated all of its furniture and fittings.

St Rustica's is now the only place of worship in the village, which also has a primary school, a tea room, a pub and a post office-convenience store. There is a strong sense of local community: in recent years, the villagers have mobilised to campaign successfully against a proposed wind farm, a new housing development and the closure of the post office. They are currently campaigning for a bypass. The countryside is good dairy farming and a large creamery on the outskirts of the village provides local employment.

The villagers are supportive of St Rustica's church, and give generously to church fund-raising events. The church is always packed for Midnight Mass at Christmas, for Carols by Candlelight, Harvest Festival and on Remembrance Sunday. For the rest of the year, about twenty-five people attend the 10.30am Eucharist, and half a dozen more come to Evensong. A handful of children do come to church – though by no means every week – but the congregation don't run a Sunday School because, as they explain, they haven't got a hall.

St Suburb and St Commuter-belt

The church of St Suburb and St Commuter-belt was built in 1937 to serve a new inter-war housing development on the edge of the city. The church is situated on one of the many residential avenues and crescents fanning out from the main shopping street and the railway station. The houses are generally well built semi-detached and detached family homes with gardens. The local schools are highly regarded. Families occupy many of the houses, but there are also a significant number of elderly people, living alone.

The church is built out of brick in a plain, Romanesque style. Its church hall, dating from the 1960s, has up-to-date facilities and is hired out every evening of the week to local groups, providing steady income. There is a good-sized garden, mostly laid out as lawn, and bold new signage that is clearly visible from the road.

The interior of St Suburb and St Commuter-belt is bright and comfortable. The walls are painted white; the windows are clear glass, the floor is carpeted. The congregation has exchanged their pews for lightweight moveable chairs. Above the altar of this otherwise undistinguished church building, is a large and striking painting of the crucifixion, by a well-known modern artist of national importance. Devotees of this artist's work are regular pilgrims to St Suburb and St Commuter-belt. Not everyone who sees it admires this painting, however. Some people consider it disturbing; others, downright ugly.

About eight or ten elderly people attend the said Eucharist on Sundays at 8am. Between seventy and eighty people come to the 10.30am Sung Eucharist, where there is a good choir and a thriving Sunday school and youth group. Once a month, this service becomes the All Age Eucharist with a children's talk and action songs, but some of the adults and all of the teenagers find it too embarrassing and stay away on those occasions. The Wednesday morning Eucharist attracts about a dozen older members who enjoy tea and cakes after the service. Some of these older women make the cakes, belong to the church Women's Guild, and thoroughly enjoy volunteering together in the charity shop on the high street. It is a grief to them that younger members of the congregation don't seem to have the time or the inclination to get involved in these traditional church activities. However, some of the mothers at St Suburb and St Commuter-belt do volunteer in the local community, at their children's primary school, helping the less able pupils with their reading.

Session Three

Missional and Traditional

This session explores current debates regarding the inherited church and mission. Reviewing the work of contemporary theologian practitioners, it addresses three themes in detail: traditional church buildings, worship, and service in the local community. The session uses case studies to encourage participants to engage their own experience and imaginations in practical problem solving.

The traditional church provokes strong opinions from commentators on Christian mission. On one hand, it has its detractors. Some from the emerging church baldly assert that, 'There is simply no way traditionalists can effectively communicate the message of Christianity to a postmodern world.'[82] Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, authors of *The Missional Leader*, describe hearing at a conference that we need to 'liquidate' the institutions and buildings of the traditional church. 'It was clear,' they say, 'that there was a strong sense that existing congregations didn't have much relevance to God's future.'[83]

The inherited church also has passionate supporters. English theologians Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, for example, offer an outspoken defence of the traditional parish church, 'nested in deanery and diocese… poised to be a vital resource for mission in the future.'[84] 'At the same time' the Bishop of London dryly remarks, 'it is hard to pretend that all our established parishes live by the truth that God's mission is the business of the Church.'[85]

In their 2009 book, *Introducing the Missional Church*, Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren describes how a missional church behaves:

> …listening first to what is happening among people and learning to ask different questions about what God is up to in the neighbourhood. Rather than the primary question being 'How do we attract people to what we are doing?' it becomes, 'What is God

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[82] Belcher, J, *Deep Church: A third way beyond emerging and traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), p 42.

[83] Roxburgh, Alan J, & Romanuk, Fred, *The Missional Leader: Equipping your church to reach a changing world* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), p. 83 (digital edition).

[84] Davison, A, & Milbank, A, *For the Parish: A critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM, 2010), p. ix.

[85] Bayes, P, & Sledge, T, *Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context* (London: CHP, 2006), p. vii.

up to in this neighbourhood?' and 'What are the ways we need to change in order to engage the people in our community who no longer consider church a part of their lives?[86]

Roxburgh and Boren argue that all kinds of churches need to think about what it means to be missional. 'The missional conversation transcends these categories', they say. 'Traditional church, emergent church, house church and megachurch leaders are wrestling with questions about being the church today. In the radically different contexts of suburban, urban and rural congregations, the questions are the same.'[87]

If all churches, of all traditions, sizes and organisation, can be missional, then are there particular strengths or challenges in mission pertaining to the traditional church? In his 2005 essay, *Doing Traditional Church Really Well,* Robin Gamble, then Diocesan Evangelist in the diocese of Manchester, describes meeting a group of clergy, all of whom were working 'in a missionary way' in traditional churches. These priests identified a number of significant challenges facing their churches. These included 'inappropriate Anglican liturgy', 'difficult buildings', 'apathetic congregations' and 'unfruitful evangelistic projects'.

'These are real but overcomeable obstacles,' says Gamble, 'but the overcoming needs hungry desire to provide the motivation.'[88] In this session, we shall take a closer look at three of these challenges – working with difficult church buildings, offering worship appropriately, and making best use of our gifts and enthusiasm in the service of our communities.

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[86] Roxburgh, A, & Boren, M.S, Introducing the Missional Church: What is it, why it matters, how to become one (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), p. 20.
[87] Roxburgh & Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, p. 48.
[88] Gamble, R, 'Doing Traditional Church Really Well', in Croft, S, (ed.), *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century* (London: CUP, 2006), p.100.

Part One: Buildings

Friends

In his 2006 article in *The Expository Times*, Canadian professor Irving Hexham describes what happened when a colleague came with him to Lincoln Cathedral:

> Years ago, after attending Evensong at Lincoln Cathedral, a leading militantly agnostic American sociologist turned to me with the words: 'If there was a church like this in my hometown I would seriously consider becoming a Christian. Although I spent my career studying churches, I never understood the appeal of religion until today. Lincoln Cathedral calls out to visitors. It's amazing.'

Hexham argues that our traditional old church buildings are powerful communicators of the Christian message; 'rich cultural treasures' with such enormous missional potential that – if we only made good use of it – they would 'help revive British Christianity.' [89]

The idea of church buildings 'speaking' to people is an enduring one. The Victorian priest and church builder, Walter Hook, imagined a handsome church building to be 'a kind of standing sermon'.[90] A century and a half later, David Jasper, contemporary theologian and priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church, describes church buildings as 'theology enacted in stone or wood.'[91] For Margaret Visser, writing in her book *The Geometry of Love*, (2000), a church building is 'a recognition in stone and wood and brick of spiritual awakenings'. She argues that the church building is so expressive – 'it stimulates thought, creates sentiment, mood, and emotion' – that no further human intervention is needed: 'the church 'can go on "working" even when there is no performance or crowd'.[92]

Donald Ragsdale is the author of the 2011 book *Architecture as Visual Persuasion.* He argues that churches and all other public buildings communicate rhetorically. Like pictures and sculptures, they use visual techniques to tell us

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[89] Hexham, I, 'Sermons in Stone: Cumbria', *The Expository Times* 117 (2006), p. 319.

[90] Stephens, W.R.R., *The Life and Letters of Walter Farquhar Hook*, (London, 1880), p. 229.

[91] Jasper, D, 'The Arts and Modern Christian Architecture', *Theology* 114/5 (2011), p. 354.

[92] Visser, M, *The Geometry of Love: Space, time, Mystery and meaning in an ordinary church* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 11, p. 13.

their meaning and function and to influence our behaviour. They can continue to repeat their messages for many hundreds of years. And, says Ragsdale, buildings are more effective communicators than pictures or sculptures, because it is so hard to ignore them: 'It is possible to take steps not to look at pictures, sculpture and other visual arts, but architecture constantly touches us and affects our moods.'[93]

A church building speaks persistently and publicly of the presence of God in that community. Bishop Alastair Redfern describes the church building as standing for, 'the dependability of God, and for God's power and presence as located, permanent and enduring.'[94] In his 2007 study of church buildings, *Re-pitching the Tent*, Richard Giles refers to them as 'houses of God'.[95] Theologians Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank refer to the church building as a symbol of God's love, 'a stony sacrament of hospitality.'[96] Mark Torgerson, American academic and evangelical minister, explores how church buildings affirm the paradox that God is both 'transcendent' (wholly other) and 'immanent' (near at hand). The scale of the building, the control of light, the decoration and organisation of the space help to remind people of the nature of God. A large, spacious building, for example, seems to emphasise how insignificant are human beings and suggests the transcendent nature of God. A smaller space that feels more intimate can suggest God's immanence. Through Christian history, says Torgerson, different church builders, by accident or design, have emphasised one of these aspects of God's nature more strongly than the other; yet, every church bears witness to them both, to a greater or lesser degree.[97]

Sara Savage, a social psychologist at the University of Cambridge, believes that the idea of God 'dwelling' in a specific place is still helpful to many people. 'From pre-history,' she writes, 'deeply ingrained in the human psyche is an attachment to a local sacred place, where a meeting between heaven and earth is understood to occur. The church building provides a physical symbol which structures a world view in which it is conceivable – even today – for God and humans to interact.'[98] Writing in 2007, Graeme Knowles, then Bishop of Sodor

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[93] Ragsdale, J.D, *Architecture as Visual Persuasion* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), p. 4.

[94] Redfern, A. L. J, 'Listening to the Anglican Tradition', in Martineau, J, Francis, L. J, & Francis, P, (eds), *Changing Rural Life: A Christian response to key rural issues*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004), p. 243.

[95] Giles, R, *Re-Pitching the Tent: the definitive guide to re-ordering church buildings for worship and mission* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 3rd edition, p. 64.

[96] Davison, & Milbank, *For the Parish,* p. 150.

[97] Torgerson, M.A, *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for worship and ministry today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 9.

[98] Savage, S, 'On the Analyst's Couch: Psychological perspectives on congregations and clergy', in *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century* (London: CHP, 2006), p. 17.

and Man, explains how the halting entries in church visitors' books often point to these sorts of interactions. 'They express that need for peace and calm in our world,' he says, 'they uncover the varied motivations for a visit; they reveal a continuing search for the holy. Our churches have the power to convert and to inspire.'[99]

Enemies

Traditional church buildings are not always our friends. Sometimes they feel like our enemies.

Graeme Knowles opens his 2007 article, *Mission, Ministry and Masonry*, with a quotation from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem*, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

> Instead of the Cross the Albatross
> About my neck was hung.

He argues that for many priests and congregations, their church building seems very much like a dead albatross: 'They long to preach the cross and Him crucified, but feel that the church building which they have inherited is not fit for the purpose.'[100]

Richard Giles, an Anglican priest and consultant in liturgy, paints a stark portrait of what it is like to live with the albatross, for those Christian communities that have inherited it:

> Christians are to be found worshipping in long Gothic tunnels, buried beneath heaving seas of pitch pine, cowering beneath balconies and lurking behind pillars. They use on a weekly if not daily basis, buildings without running water and with practically no heat in winter. They attempt to address God in the language of today amidst the debris of yesterday's church and the preservationist constraints imposed by those who have no understanding of the Christian vocation. They are hampered and hindered as no previous Christian generation ever was by the buildings erected to serve them but which now subdue them.[101]

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[99] Knowles, G, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry: The challenge of heritage buildings for Christian witness', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 9 (2007), p. 159.

[100] Knowles, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry', p. 158.

[101] Giles, *Re-pitching the Tent*, p. 5.

Such church buildings bully congregations into patterns of behaviour that do not help but hinder them in mission. Giles notes, for example, that many of the 'norms of common daily experience' – habits of altering and adapting our environment for our needs, of cleanliness, warmth and convenience – 'are for some inexplicable reason left outside at the doorstep' by Christians coming to church.[102] In many cases, the reason *is* explicable: it is money. Traditional church buildings demand financial support and often more than their congregations can afford. The consequences are profoundly un-missional. 'Let us grit our teeth and admit,' says the Revd Robin Blount, a *Church Times* correspondent, 'that some church buildings are often no more than a millstone, and that a small congregation whose only visible activity is fundraising is hardly an attractive witness to God.'[103]

Moreover, at the same time as congregations are struggling to look after them and service their needs, these church buildings are also speaking – and they sometimes tell people things that we don't want them to hear. For example, as Knowles explains, 'a sad, poorly maintained building only too often speaks eloquently of the spiritual condition of those who worship in it.'[104] Buildings do not always tell the truth about their congregations. A heavy gothic church, for example, can suggest old-fashioned formality; one built of concrete, a more relaxed, contemporary style. Yet these may be quite misleading impressions of the communities that use them.

Companions in mission

Can our church buildings be recruited to help us? The first step towards this, according to theologians Davison and Milbank, is a change of attitude towards them: 'Recovering a positive approach to our parish churches as a resource and a witness to God, allows us to use them strategically as agents for mission.' 'It does not take long,' they say, 'for a building to acquire the sense of tradition and the history of prayer. It has only to be loved, treated decently, and prayed in.'[105] Mark Torgerson agrees that prayer and theological reflection underpin a congregation's effective relationship with its church building. 'Biblical reflection on environments for worship and ministry' are very important, he says. The outcomes will not be the same for every Christian community: 'varying interpretations of Scripture sometimes allow us to draw different conclusions,' but the key thing is that all congregations should do this.[106]

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[102] Giles, *Re-pitching the Tent,* p. 58.
[103] *Church Times* 13th July 2003.
[104] Knowles, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry', p. 159.
[105] Davison & Milbank, *For the Parish*, p. 153, p. 151.
[106] Torgerson, M. A, An *Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for worship and ministry today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 9.

All our commentators agree that action must accompany prayer and theological reflection. This means working with the church building, joining in with it as it 'calls out' to the local community. Jennifer Clark writes about this kind of collaboration in her 2007 article in the *Journal of Religious History*. She argues that a congregation visibly caring for their church building - spending their emotional and physical energy as well as financial resources on 'the physical maintenance, cleaning, decorating, extending and protecting of the property' - speak to the locality about how much their faith means to them.[107] And, in order to be that sacred space where human beings and God may interact, church buildings need to be open to visitors during the week. 'The sacred space must have its doors open wide to the world,' says Graeme Knowles.[108] 'Keep your church building open as often as possible during the day,' agrees Neil Pugmire, a communications officer for the Church of England. If this is not already part of the church's culture, he suggests trying it for an initially limited period of time, 'perhaps with some volunteers available, offering coffee or a chat, and you might be surprised who wanders in.'[109]

'If the Christian faith is about anything, it is about change,' says Knowles. 'It is about the possibility of transformation. It is about new life.' [110] Where congregations are willing to adapt and re-order their liturgical space, the church building can model this transformation for the world. Richard Giles explains that a traditional church building demands this approach. 'Every previous generation in the history of the Christian Church has ruthlessly adapted church buildings to suit current theological and liturgical norms. A Christian generation which suddenly ceases to do this, is unfaithful to its own tradition.'[111] And having the courage to make small, manageable changes can make a great difference. 'I know a church,' writes Bishop Stephen Cottrell, 'which just put some dimmer switches on the lights. For a tiny cost the mood and feeling of the building and the worship could be altered.' 'I don't know a single church,' he goes on to say, 'that having embarked on this journey is not enormously thankful for the benefits it has brought, not just for its worship but to the whole use of the building within the community.'[112]

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[107] Clark, J, '"This Special Shell": The church building and the embodiment of memory', *Journal of Religious History* 31/1 (2007), p. 63.
[108] Knowles, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry', p. 159.
[109] Pugmire, N, *100 Ways To Get Your Church Noticed* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2006), p. 55.
[110] Knowles, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry', p. 159.
[111] Giles, *Re-pitching the Tent*, p. 6.
[112] Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all people* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), p. 108.

Discussion questions for Group One

On your own: Read the workbook material through carefully. **(5 min.)**

With a partner: Look again at Irving Hexham's story. What strikes you? When has a church building ever 'called out' to you or to someone whom you know? What happened? **(10 min.)**

With your group: Look at the description of the church you've been given. What would you do to help the building express more clearly the transcendence and the immanence of God? Prepare a brief presentation about this and share it with the other groups. **(60 min. plus 10 min.)**

Discussion questions for Group Two

On your own: Read the workbook material through carefully. **(5 min.)**

With a partner: Look at Graeme Knowles' description of the 'albatross'. How far does this image resonate with your own church experience? **(10 min.)**

With your group: Look at the description of the church you've been given. What is the building saying about the church that you would rather it did not say? Prepare a brief presentation about how you would solve these problems and share it with the other groups. **(60 min. plus 10 min.)**

Discussion questions for Group Three

On your own: Read the workbook material through carefully. **(5 min.)**

With a partner: Do you pray regularly about your own church building and for it? When do you take time to think about it theologically? **(10 min.)**

With your group: Look at the description of the church you've been given. What practical action would you take to enable the congregation and the building to work better together as companions in mission? Prepare a brief presentation about this and share it with the other groups. **(60 min. plus 10 min.)**

Part Two: Worship

In 2006, in response to the *Mission-shaped Church* report, a group of Anglican parish priests *published Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context*. Writing in his chapter on 'Mission-shaped Worship', Tim Sledge reflects upon the missional potential of the inherited church at the beginning of the twenty-first century:

> Some critics have written off the established church entirely, saying that the gap between the Church and the world is too great. For them traditional models of church and worship are no longer relevant to anyone and can never adapt to the local context and culture where they are placed.

For a large and growing number of the population, Sledge admits, this is certainly true: 'There is no doubt that the profile and influence of the traditional Church has faded.' Yet it is simply too soon to discount the traditional church as an instrument of God's mission. In this 'nation in transition,' he says, there are many people who will still respond to the church, and who can be invited 'through the door of tradition' to find meaning and faith in their lives.[113]

'Worship converts,' declares Bishop Stephen Cottrell, 'Why have we stopped believing this?'[114] In his book *From the Abundance of the Heart*, he describes how traditional catholic Anglican worship can be the 'well-spring for evangelism.' One reason for this is the current fascination with 'all things spiritual.' Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, commentators on postmodern cultures and the emerging church, agree with Cottrell that 'spirituality' is currently a 'buzzword' in western society:

> Such postmodern people are searching for a quiet place with subdued lighting to provide respite from the din of high power amplifiers and the glare of strobe lights. They are seeking to express a form of spirituality that differs from the individualistic therapeutic models, which often reflect a retreat from the world

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[113] Sledge, T, 'Mission-shaped Worship' in Bayes, P, Sledge, T, et al., *Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context* (London: CHP, 2006), pp. 32-34.
[114] Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, p. 127.

rather than provide resources to engage the world. They are retrieving practices that sacralise all space, representing a hearkening back to premodern times, when all of life was holy… Today they can be modified in ways that seem culturally appropriate.[115]

Gibbs and Bolger go on to describe how a number of non-traditional 'emerging' churches in the UK and in the USA are developing a postmodern spirituality using traditional Christian liturgies and texts. People use these ancient texts - among them Compline, the Eucharist and the church's calendar - to express their spiritual 'moods' and feelings.[116] But Cottrell argues that traditional churches too can engage effectively with postmodern seekers, both through our liturgies and our buildings:

> I heard recently of some Anglican churches in central New York where on Friday and Saturday evenings at around 10.00 or 11.00 the doors have been thrown open, and the choir have sung Benedictine chant in the candle-lit church and waited to see what would happen. And people have come. They have been drawn to the authentic voice of worship beckoning from a sacred space… Many nightclubs now have 'chill-out zones' where people go to meditate and relax and often some sort of so-called spiritual and meditative music is played. Some of our churches could provide such a space. It embodies a faith whose first word is welcome and whose roots are deeply planted in a living tradition.

Creative initiatives like this, he says, 'show how we can begin to satisfy the spiritual hunger we find in our society and reveal that the spiritual riches that make up the Christian tradition… are the very things that people are longing to discover and experience.'[117]

The Revd Duncan Dormor, President and Dean of St John's College Cambridge, has seen at first hand how traditional Anglican worship can speak to a new generation of young people. In a *Church Times* article in 2011, he explains that attendance numbers at Cambridge college chapels have been rising, especially at choral evensong. He writes:

> Choral compline or evensong provide an accessible and non-threatening space within which young people can think about their

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[115]Gibbs, Eddie & Bolger, Ryan K, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian community in postmodern cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 219.
[116]Gibbs & Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, pp. 225-226.
[117] Cottrell, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, p. 121 & p. 123.

lives and become accustomed to the idea of worship – to the possibility that worship might actually make sense…

In some ways the Anglican choral tradition may well be entering a golden age – not necessarily a fresh, but certainly a refreshed and refreshing expression of Christian worship, fit for purpose in the twenty-first century.

Dormor believes that his Cambridge students may have something in common with young American spiritual seekers who have been described as 'Reclaimers'. They are so called because, in their search for religious experience, they are not attracted by contemporary worship styles. Instead, they try to 'reclaim' devotional practices of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, 'finding within them a refuge from the superficiality of much popular culture and the onslaught of the commercial world.'[118]

From what we have read so far, it seems that the liturgies and aesthetics of traditional Anglican worship can attract a self-aware subset of spiritually seeking young people. But does it have any broader appeal?

Stephen Cottrell and Tim Sledge say that it does. Both write from experience as parish priests and as diocesan missioners. Cottrell says, 'For many people worship events can be a way into faith.' He suggests that celebrations marking the seasons of the year, or rites of passage, 'great events in their lives,' are natural opportunities for churches to gather people together. 'At their centre is a liturgical celebration – an act of worship – which needs to be prepared for and conducted in a way that connects with people's longings and communicates Christian faith.'[119] Tim Sledge agrees. He reminds his readers of the enduring appeal of 'traditional' festivals such as Mothering Sunday, Harvest and the Christingle. The success of the Back to Church Sunday campaign shows how many people are open to the idea of coming to a church service, if they are invited along. 'There is a local pastoral exercise to be done here,' he says, 're-establishing a culture of invitation and honestly ensuring that the worship which we provide makes connections, honouring our tradition but not being a slave to it.'[120]

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[118] Church Times, 2nd December 2011.
[119] Cottrell, *From the Abundance of the Heart*, p. 121.
[120] Sledge, 'Mission-shaped Worship', pp. 32-34.

It ain't what you do: it's the way that you do it

The Revd Peter McGeary is vicar of St Mary's, Cable Street, an Anglo-Catholic church in the East End of London. Reflecting in the *Church Times* upon connections between worship and mission in the traditional church, he quotes the 1980s girl band Bananarama: 'It ain't what you do: it's the way that you do it,' as one of the 'most sensible teachings on liturgy' that he ever received.[121] Clayton Schmit, a liturgical specialist at the evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary in California, echoes this advice:

> The most high-church worship may be vivid and engaging, whilst the most low-church or contemporary worship service might be dull and uninspired. One of the things Christians of all traditions have in common is that we can design and execute worship services in any idiom poorly – or well.[122]

Tim Sledge asserts that 'churches grow when they do Sundays better.'[123] These commentators affirm traditional worship, but they are not complacent about it. For them, worship only becomes missional when it is characterised by love: love of God, and love of neighbour. The church listens sensitively to the needs of the communities it serves and makes creative connections with them, so that it worships in a way that everyone can join in.

As Sledge puts it, 'there are no glib quick fixes'.[124] This kind of worship requires careful preparation – time, attention and financial resources. It can seem hard to know where to begin. And ideas that appear helpful may turn out to be a misdirection of energies. In the final section of Part Two, we shall consider three practical ideas that, according to our commentators, seem to help churches 'do Sundays better', and two that they say may not.

Two that may not

1. Changing the liturgy to a more modern version

It seems intuitive to some Christians that changing to a contemporary language liturgy will make their churches more attractive to new people. However, changing the liturgy to a more modern version does not seem to be associated with congregational growth. In his book, *The Road to Growth*, Archdeacon Bob

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[121] Church Times, 10th July 2009.
[122] Schmit, C.J, *Sent and Gathered: A worship manual for the missional church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 13.
[123] Sledge, 'Mission-shaped Worship,' p. 34.
[124] Sledge, 'Mission-shaped Worship,' p. 34.

Jackson analyses factors contributing to church growth in dioceses in England, Wales and Ireland between 1996 and 2004. He notes that:

> Churches that have made such a change show just the same attendance trend as churches making no changes. It may be that churchgoers changing the colour of the prayer book has about as much impact on a group of non-churchgoers as offering brown eggs instead of white impresses a group of vegans.[125]

There may be other very good reasons for choosing a new version of the liturgy. But it seems not to be of discernible assistance in mission.

2. Not having the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the main service in most Scottish Episcopal churches. Some people in our congregations see this as a stumbling block to mission. They worry that the Eucharist is an inexplicable, non-inclusive mystery as far as newcomers are concerned.

Stephen Cottrell's advice is that there is no reason to be embarrassed about bringing new people to the Eucharist: 'I simply don't buy the attitude that says the Eucharist is not appropriate for people who are new to the faith.' He makes the point that *all* church services seem alien to people who are unaccustomed to worship. 'There simply isn't a way of doing it that will be immediately credible and nor should there be,' he goes on, 'what will impress them will be the warmth of our welcome and the authenticity of what we do.' Cottrell speaks from his own experience. He believes that when a proper explanation is given, and when everyone is helped to feel included, then newcomers will find a service of the Eucharist both intriguing and appealing. [126]

Three that can

1. Improving the music

'Good, relevant music attracts,' says Bob Jackson, 'Poor, irrelevant music repels.' He points out that Cathedrals invest heavily in the quality of their music. In his *Church Times* article, Duncan Dormor explains how, in Oxford and Cambridge, increasing investment in high standard choral music by colleges has led to growing chapel congregations. According to Jackson, improved music provision is a significant factor in the life of growing churches. In particular, his research

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[125] Jackson, B, *The Road to Growth*, *Towards a thriving church* (London: CHP, 2005), p. 59.
[126] Cottrell, pp. 119-120.

showed that churches whose music had become more contemporary or varied saw attendance rise between 15 and 27 per cent.

Investing in church music is an Anglican tradition. It is not unusual for even small congregations to spend heavily on organ repairs, choir robes and organists' fees. Bob Jackson invites us to think missionally about investing also in high-quality contemporary music for worship, in order to 'grow the next generation of Christians.' When they are reviewing their church music provision, he advises, all congregations should ask themselves, 'What spending will help grow the community of the people of God?'[127]

2. Providing better for children

Traditional churches can grow when their worship services make better provision for children. Margaret Withers is the author of the 2006 book, *Mission-shaped Children*. In her chapter on children's ministry in the inherited church, she encourages congregations to rediscover their confidence in children's ministry: 'We have the tools for engaging with children and need to find the best ways to use them in today's cultural climate.'

For some churches, she says, this may require 'a paradigm shift', for others, some straightforward alterations.[128] The churches in Bob Jackson's survey that improved their children's provision saw total church attendance rise between 11 and 19 per cent. Some started or developed family services or all-age worship events. Some re-opened their Sunday Schools. Others invested in professional children's or youth workers. Where traditional catholic churches had growing numbers of children, their family services tended to be in addition to the main Sunday morning Eucharist. Some churches had a monthly additional family service of this kind. But, says Jackson, the very best case scenario, 'is to offer weekly worship in the more accessible style as well as the deeper, traditional one.'[129]

3. Starting a new congregation in your church

This is one way that the Scottish Episcopal Church grew during the Victorian era, and, according to Bob Jackson, 'it is the most important way in which churches are growing today.'[130] Holding 8am Prayer Book Holy Communion services and

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[127] Jackson, *The Road to Growth,* pp. 63-64.
[128] Withers, M, *Mission-shaped Children: Moving towards a child-centred church* (London: CHP, 2006), p. 41.
[129] Jackson, *The Road to Growth,* p. 64; Jackson, B, *Going for Growth: What works at local level* (London: CHP, 2006), p2, p. 6.
[130] Jackson, *Going for Growth*, p. 5.

the monthly family service are probably the models of multiple congregations with which we are currently most familiar. Some churches wanting to connect with different groups of people have rejuvenated this model by growing distinct congregations at different times on Sundays or during the week. In his book, *The Road to Growth*, Jackson describes how some have been going about this:

> Around the country the most common planting move relayed to me has been replacing one main Sunday service with two… Usually, there is a deliberate intent to create two services of distinctive style (usually 'traditional' and 'informal') out of the original 'compromise' event. In almost every case reported to me the total numbers have risen.[131]

The presentation of these new congregations is determined by local context and local mission needs.   Llandaff diocese reported to Jackson that new congregations in their churches ranged from 'toddler church', a weekday congregation for the elderly and Celtic evening liturgy, to 'Party church 9pm-2am Sunday-Monday.'[132]   The authors of the 2004 *Mission-shaped Church* report affirm multiple congregations as a 'normal and typically Anglican' pattern of church life. The multiple congregation approach is not a way of trying to keep existing church members happy. Each congregation has a clear missionary focus and seeks to connect with people outside the church.[133]

Discussion questions

On your own: Read the workbook material through carefully. **(5 min.)**

In your group: Look again at the description of your church. Identify the rites of passage that may be significant to people in that local community. Design a liturgy celebrating one of those rites of passage and present it to the other groups. **(60 min. plus 10 min. for each presentation)**

In the full group: Look at the liturgies again. How suitable would each one be, for use by the other groups' churches? **(15 min.)**

In each of the three contexts, where do you see potential for the churches to grow new congregations? **(15 min.)**

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[131] Jackson, *The Road to Growth,* p. 60.
[132] Jackson, *The Road to Growth*, p. 61.
[133] Cray, G, et al., *Mission-shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context*, (London: CHP, 2004), pp. 60-62.

Part Three - Service

Tradition of service

In *Mission-shaped Parish*, Paul Bayes uses historical examples from evangelical, Anglo-Catholic and 'middle of the road' Anglicanism to show how, 'in their very different ways', eighteenth and nineteenth-century Christians took action against social injustice. 'Our mission-shaped Church,' he reminds us, 'has always had a mission-shaped history.' Rowan Strong, a historian of nineteenth-century Scottish Episcopalianism, finds pioneer priests hard at work among Glasgow's very poorest immigrant populations - advising and co-operating with local government to alleviate cholera, organising relief for the destitute, working for slum clearance. The local histories of our own congregations will offer many more examples. Paul Bayes suggests that, by recovering and attending to these stories, we can help our congregations to 'step out more proudly as a church with a history shaped by God's mission.' [134]

Narrative of marginalisation

Paul Bayes invites Anglicans to revisit their mission-shaped past because there is presently a confidence deficit in the traditional church. In his study of the contemporary western church, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, theologian and Anglican priest, John Drane, points out that we are again witnessing rapid, disturbing social changes. 'The gap between those who have and those who have not has widened, and visibly so,' he says, 'with the streets of Western cities now filled with homeless beggars to an extent that our grandparents would not have believed possible.' Yet Christian people are overwhelmed by 'a feeling of helplessness', in the face of these new challenges.[135]

A narrative about secularisation and the marginalisation of the church is persuading Christians that it is no longer possible for them to be effective in serving the poorest in their communities. Social historians describe how post-war welfare reforms have left the churches largely irrelevant as channels for social

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[134] Bayes, P, 'Mission-shaped Values', in Bayes, P, & Sledge, T, *Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context* (London: CHP, 2006), pp. 14- 25; Strong, R, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-century Scotland: Religious responses to a modernising society* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), pp. 138-209.

[135] Drane, J, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, creativity and the future of the church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), p. 63.

services, health provision and education. Some of our prominent theologians talk about 'a Church and a Christianity increasingly disconnected from public as well as private relevance.' Senior clergy including the Bishop of Winchester and a former Archbishop of Canterbury have spoken openly about the marginalisation of Christianity in the UK. 77 per cent of Christians in a recent online survey said that they felt marginalised in the public sphere.[136]

Can marginalisation, however, become a place of strength? Robert Lionel Elkington is the pastor of a Canadian Baptist church. In his 2011 article, *A Missional Church Model*, he theorises about the future role of traditional churches in a secular and pluralistic society. He presents the model of a three-stage journey from 'liminality' to 'communitas', and from 'communitas' to 'emergence'.[137]

In this model, liminality is the state in which a group finds itself when its status or role in society has changed to such a degree that the wider society essentially ignores it. The traditional churches, he suggests, are in this situation: they have become 'largely invisible to the larger society':

> They are now pilgrims and strangers in what has become a foreign land. Their comfort and strength no longer lies in their privileged position, but now in their comfort and strength arise from the richness of fellowship – fellowship with the Risen Saviour and fellowship with one another in a strange land.[138]

The richness of this fellowship experienced in a position of liminality, leads to the growth of 'communitas'. Communitas is a strong sense of 'social togetherness and belonging' felt by a group of people undergoing a shared experience of suffering 'outside' society. 'In other words,' says Elkington, 'you can't have the marvellous experience of communitas without being in a liminal state.'[139] Power is a 'by-product' of communitas: through their shared experience of fellowship with each other and with the Holy Spirit, the congregation feels confident again. They are now in the 'emergent' stage, ready to re-engage with the world as servants of their communities:

> The marginalization of the church, the passing of the Christendom era, the rapid decline in attendance, and the financial struggles of

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[136] Brown, C, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding secularisation 1800-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Reid, D, 'Playing and Praying' in Daunton, M, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain 1840-1950* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 745-811; Atherton, J, Buber, C, & Graham, E, 'A Genius of Place: Manchester as a case study on public theology', in Graham, E, & Rowlands, A, *Pathways to the Public Square: Practical theology in an age of pluralism* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University, 2005), p. 75; *Church Times* 5th March 2010; *Church Times* 7th January 2011.
[137] Elkington, R, L, 'A Missional Church Model', *Sage Open* 1 (2011), pp. 1-11.
[138] Elkington, 'A Missional Church Model', p. 3.
[139] Elkington, 'A Missional Church Model', p. 5.

churches may all be a great blessing, even though perceived as a great threat, because this liminality will lead to greater communitas as people within churches band together to do a greater work for the Kingdom and, most of all, as the Holy Spirit impels the church… to shine in an increasingly dark world.[140]

After all, secular society may be waiting for them to shine in a dark world. Speaking in 2002, cabinet minister Paul Boateng confessed that the state was 'too remote and too inflexible' to be of comfort to people in need. It wanted to work with the churches, where, said Boateng, 'on every day and in every parish, the Christian duty of compassion does go on – a massive commitment to social renewal inspired by the love of Christ.'[141] Richard Farnell, of the Centre for Local Economic Development at Coventry University, explains that government authorities recognise the resources that the churches offer: a presence in every neighbourhood, the local clergy, volunteers from local congregations, and church buildings that are already used by 'a wide range of interests.'[142]

Secular agencies are watching to see how the churches engage with local communities. Social scientists reflect critically on the churches' activities in contexts as varied as offering hospitality to strangers during the London 2012 Olympics, integrating rural immigrant workers into English villages, and engaging with community health promotion programmes in Dundee. So far, conclusions are favourable; because of the churches' 'embeddedness,' and their 'doctrine of social responsibility', these academic commentators recommend that the state should collaborate with them more in the future.[143]

Keeping God's people moving

It is the role of church leaders, says Robert Lionel Elkington, to 'train God's people for works of service', so that they can think of creative ways to act as servants of their community.[144] Stephanie Spellers, an American Anglican priest and organiser of an emergent Christian community at St Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Boston, describes this sort of leadership in action. She says, 'Missional leaders love God's people, and they value the traditions and witness of

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[140]Elkington, 'A Missional Church Model', p. 6.
[141] *Church Times*, 18th October 2002.
[142]Farnell, Richard 'Faith Communities, Regeneration and Social Exclusion: Developing a research agenda', *Community Development Journal* 36/4 (2001), pp. 264, 268.
[143] Cornick, D, 'The Churches and the Olympics', *Theology* 115/4 (2012), pp. 266-272; Andrews, R, 'Religious Communties, Immigration and Social Cohesion in Rural Areas: Evidence from England', *Rural Sociology* 76/4 (2011), pp. 535-561; Fagan, D. M, Kiger, A, & van Teijlingen, E, 'A Survey of Faith Leaders Concerning Health Promotion and the Level of Healthy Living Activities Occurring in Faith Communities in Scotland', *Global Health Promotion* 17/4 (2010), pp. 15-23.
[144] Elkington, 'A Missional Church Model', p. 10; pp. 7-8.

the communion of saints who have brought us thus far on the way. But they are also passionate about keeping God's people moving.'[145]   She offers a methodology that she calls 'relational organising': 'the art of building relationships in order to move groups into action around a common purpose.' She explains that this method – which we shall explore below – links theological convictions with a model of leadership that 'points communities toward the reign of God.'[146]

The process of relational organising moves through these six stages:

1. Building a relational culture
2. Practising facilitative leadership
3. Getting rooted in context and incarnational reality
4. Recalling dangerous memories and envisioning the world-as-it-should-be
5. Moving into action around people's passions and gifts
6. Embracing transformation

1. Building a relational culture

Speller's missional leader initiates a series of one-to-one conversations, where church people are encouraged to share their stories: 'What do they care about and why? What issues keep them up at night? What injustices grieve their hearts and contradict God's will for all of creation?' These conversations build understanding and trust, and help people to discover common ground.[147]

2. Practising facilitative leadership

The missional leader is not necessarily the spearhead of the action or the chief spokesperson. Their responsibility is to grow the leadership capacity of others, to help the group discern its vision and to encourage it to move into action; that is, in Spellers' words, 'to create the conditions for people on the ground to thrive and experience themselves as disciples and apostles.'[148]

3. Getting rooted in context and incarnational reality

The next stage is to hold one-to-one conversations in the community. These are followed by group gatherings where local people share their stories, discern what is needful and decide upon action. Missional leaders familiarise themselves with 'people's hurts and dreams'. They also become aware of how God is already working in the local community, so that the church can join in.[149]

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[145] Spellers, S, 'The Church Awake: Becoming the missional people of God', *Anglican Theological Review* 92/1 (2010), p. 44.
[146] Spellers, 'The Church Awake', p. 38.
[147] Spellers, 'The Church Awake,' p. 40.
[148] Spellers, 'The Church Awake', pp. 40-41.
[149] Spellers, 'The Church Awake', p. 42.

4. Recalling dangerous memories and re-envisioning the world

Spellers explains that 'dangerous memories' are 'haunting memories of the world-as-it-should-be and they stand in stark relief against the pain of the world-as-it-is.' All communities have these memories, of when times were happy, or hopes were high. These dangerous memories help communities to discern their goal: they inspire them with a vision of how things could be. The Gospel story is a dangerous memory for the church: 'We bear the gospel of Jesus and the story of his life, death and resurrection like a dangerous memory, a reminder that God's will has not yet been done, that life and a new order are still actively breaking in.'[150]

5. Moving into action around people's passions and gifts

'If people are driven by other motivations like guilt, obligation,' says Spellers, 'or faddish fascination, they may not stay the course. The commitment is too shallow.' The missional leader helps people to make good use of their own self-interest. Creative and effective action will emerge from 'that place of passion and giftedness.'[151]

6. Embracing transformation

'Organisers never sit still for long.' Even after the culmination of a successful community action or project, the missional leader returns to th e beginning of the cycle, organising further one-to-one conversations and discerning where God will take the church next.[152]

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Discussion questions

On your own: Read the workbook material through carefully. **(5 min.)**

With a partner: Talk about the two models of missional church leadership described by Elkington and Spellers. In what ways do you find them helpful or unhelpful? **(10 min.)**

In your group: Choose one of the following assignments and prepare a presentation for the other groups –
Either design a church history project that will help the congregation of your imaginary church to 'step out more proudly' as a missional community…
Or as part of a wider discernment process, outline a project that will help you learn what are the issues that the congregation cares about most, and why.
(60 min. plus 10 min. for each presentation)

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[150] Spellers, 'The Church Awake,' p. 42.
[151] Spellers, 'The Church Awake,' p. 43.
[152] Spellers, 'The Church Awake,' p. 44.

Session Three

Missional and Traditional

Suggested Reading

Gamble, Robin, 'Doing Traditional Church Really Well', in Croft, S, (ed.), *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century* (London: CUP, 2006), pp. 93-109.

Roxburgh, A, & Boren, M.S, *Introducing the Missional Church: What is it, why it matters, how to become one* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009).

Roxburgh, A. J, & Romanuk, F, *The Missional Leader: Equipping your church to reach a changing world* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

Buildings

Clark, J, '"This Special Shell": The church building and the embodiment of memory', *Journal of Religious History* 31/1 (2007), pp. 59-77.

Davison, A & Milbank, A, *For the Parish: A critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM, 2010).

Giles, R, *Re-Pitching the Tent: The definitive guide to re-ordering church buildings for worship and mission* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 3rd edition.

Hall, M, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and sacramentalism in Anglican church architecture, 1850-1870', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59/1 (2000), pp. 78-95.

Hexham, I, 'Sermons in Stone: Cumbria', *The Expository Times* 117 (2006), pp. 319-321.

Jasper, D, 'The Arts and Modern Christian Architecture', *Theology* 114/5 (2011), pp. 353-362.

Knowles, G, 'Mission, Ministry and Masonry: The challenge of heritage buildings for Christian witness', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 9 (2007), pp. 152-160.

Pugmire, N, *100 Ways To Get Your Church Noticed* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2006).

Ragsdale, J.D, *Architecture as Visual Persuasion* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011)

Redfern, A.L.J, 'Listening to the Anglican Tradition' in Martineau, J, Francis, L.J, and Francis, P, (eds), *Changing Rural Life: A Christian response to key rural issues* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004), pp. 233-50.

Savage, S, 'On the Analyst's Couch: Psychological perspectives on congregations and clergy', in *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century* (London: CHP, 2006), pp. 16-32.

Torgerson, M. A, *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for worship and ministry today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

Visser, M, *The Geometry of Love: Space, time, mystery and meaning in an ordinary church* (London: Penguin, 2000).

Worship

Cottrell, S, *From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic evangelism for all Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

Gaze, S, *Mission-shaped and Rural: Growing churches in the countryside* (London: CHP, 2006).

Gibbs, E, & Bolger, R. K, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian community in postmodern cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

Jackson, B, *The Road to Growth: Towards a thriving church* (London: CHP, 2005).

Jackson, B, *Going for Growth: What works at local church level* (London: CHP, 2006).

Schmit, C. J, *Sent and Gathered: A worship manual for the missional church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

Sledge, T, 'Mission-shaped Worship', in Bayes, P, & Sledge, T, *Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context* (London: CHP, 2006), pp. 26-46.

Service

Andrews, R, 'Religious Communities, Immigration and Social Cohesion in Rural Areas: Evidence from England', *Rural Sociology* 76/4 (2011), pp. 535-561.

Atherton, J, Buber, C, & Graham, E, 'A Genius of Place: Manchester as a case study on public theology', in Graham, E, & Rowlands, A, *Pathways to the Public Square: Practical theology in an age of pluralism* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University, 2005), pp. 63-84.

Cornick, D, 'The Churches and the Olympics', *Theology* 115/4 (2012), pp. 266-272.

Elkington, R, L, 'A Missional Church Model', *Sage Open* 1 (2011), pp. 1-11.

Fagan, D. M, Kiger, A, & van Teijlingen, E, 'A Survey of Faith Leaders Concerning Health Promotion and the Level of Healthy Living Activities Occurring in Faith Communities in Scotland', *Global Health Promotion* 17/4 (2010), pp. 15-23.

Farnell, Richard 'Faith Communities, Regeneration and Social Exclusion: Developing a research agenda', *Community Development Journal* 36/4 (2001), pp. 263-272.

Spellers, S, 'The Church Awake: Becoming the missional people of God', *Anglican Theological Review* 92/1 (2010), pp. 29-44.

Session Four

The Theology of Work

Facilitator's Notes

This session has been designed for use as the programme for a training day for a group of church leaders. This could be a one-off day conference. Or it could be one unit of a longer period of study, such as, for example, a residential weekend.

In this session, participants reflect biblically and critically on themes relating to the theology of work. The session is divided into three parts, each part requiring approximately two hours for completion.

In Part One, participants are invited to reflect upon the importance of work to the mission of the church. This issue is considered from a variety of theological traditions and perspectives.

Part Two offers a discussion of the place and status of workers within church congregations and how the church may best engage with them.

Part Three discusses the role of Christian workers. Among the topics included are some working environments that may present difficulties for some Christians and a way of thinking Christianly about day-to-day working.

Parts One, Two and Three all include questions for individual reflection and group discussion, together with suggested timings. These timings may vary according to the size and nature of the group.

Part Three concludes with a time of corporate prayer.

Session Four
The Theology of Work

This workbook is intended for leadership reflection on the workaday lives of congregation(s). Suggestions will be made about the importance of work for a thoroughgoing Christian spirituality today. Also, it will be explored whether work can be further integrated into Christian gatherings to aid this aspect of our spiritual lives.

Part 1 – The Theology of Work

Should Work be of any Importance to the Church?

Why should we give the subject of our everyday work any space in our services? On the one hand, it is easy to sideline the subject of work during our Christian gatherings. Many believe that we are gathered because of the unmeritorious grace of Christ. Others believe that work contravenes such a notion. On the other hand though, shouldn't the issue of everyday work be prominent in our reflection by virtue of the fact that most people spend the bulk of their waking hours doing it? In short, how should our work express our God-given nature?

This same problem can be looked at via a different question. What should the main purpose of the Church be? For many, this can be answered by quoting the final message of Jesus from Matthew's gospel: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (28.19). But what of humanity's original commission by God: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' (Gen. 1.28)? Compared with the previous command how does this rank in importance? R. Paul Stevens states:

> One concerns creation, the other salvation. … Separating these mandates has been tragic. When so separated mission becomes disconnected from life and becomes a 'discretionary-time' activity. Further, social action and evangelism become separated and prioritized. The Christian life is essentially unbalanced and fragmented when God intends it to be unified.[153]

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[153] Stevens, R. P, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1999), p. 89.

Discussion (20 minutes):

Has your church, in any way, found itself to be siding with the Great Commission over the Cultural Mandate of Genesis?

How far do you think that this is connected to your view of the spiritual importance of work?

For those who feel their church has a more balanced approach to this, what are some of the practical ways you maintain equilibrium between these two mandates?
How is this reflected in your services?

Work as a Means to Significant Ends

In order that work be not ignored and neglected from our spiritual lives it is helpful if we take a look at Genesis 1-2 which talks of the 'cultural mandate'.

Depending on your reading of the opening chapters in Genesis, different things can be gleaned. One is the fact that there is a main character – God – who is revealed as a creator, or dare we say it, as *the* Great worker. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep…" (Gen.1.1-2a). Throughout chapters 1 and 2, God the creator worker is at work bringing things into being which never before existed. The subject of work, then, is very much to the fore at the beginning of the bible.

Sustenance

We read in chapter 2, once man is created: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden…'". Ecclesiastes, too, conveys something similar: "This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; this is our lot" (Ecc. 5.18). It may be said then that work is a critical part of God's original intention for us as humans.

Discussion (10 minutes):

How do you respond to the notion that earning a living to put bread on the table is a spiritual activity, an activity of God's command? Is this a new way for you of looking at working for a living?

Sanctification

The latter part of gathering food for sustenance, however, concludes with the warning: "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2.17). Following this, the Genesis 2 story reveals man's co-working with God in the naming of the animals and the recognition of the fact that none of them were suitable to co-work with him in the garden (vv.18-24).

The prohibition of that particular tree, the positive outworking of naming the animals, all while God creates them, paints an idyllic picture of the way work was always intended to be. Working in this way was formative for man. By working in the garden according to God's parameters for life (by avoiding a certain tree!) man grew into a more wholesome person. Pope John Paul II puts it,

> [I]n the final analysis it is always man who is the purpose of the work, whatever work it is that is done by man - even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest "service", as the most monotonous even the most alienating work.[154]

Leyland Ryken adds to this:

> The call to be followers of God in the spiritual life of salvation and sanctification may seem a long way from the subject of work, but it is not. It reminds us of the primacy of the spiritual in all of life. It puts work in its place.[155]

Discussion (10 minutes):
Do you view the act of working as a key part of the sanctification of the saints? Give reasons for your answer.

Mission

Continuing to focus on the Genesis story, what if we shift the subject and object around? What if part of our mission, indeed our commission, is also to shape and reshape the earth responsibly? The Psalmist conveys this point,

> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you
> have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also
> the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
> whatever passes along the paths of the seas? (Ps. 8.6-8)

The Apostle Paul seems to highlight this point again in the letter to the Ephesians when he says: "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for

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[154] Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Excercens (On Human Work)*,http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html, p.6.

[155] Ryken, L, *Work and Leisure in Christian Perspective* (Leicester: IVP, 1987), p.138.

good works, which God has prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph. 2.10). Herman Bavinck summarises this:

> If now we comprehend the force of 'subduing' under the term culture … we can say that culture in the broadest sense is the purpose for which God created man after his image … [which] includes not only the most ancient callings of … hunting and fishing, agriculture and stock raising, but also trade and commerce … and science and art.[156]

Discussion (20 minutes):
What is your reaction to mission being part of our responsible stewardship and careful shaping of the earth?

Looking at it as described above, what might you consider reshaping in your ministry in order to introduce this aspect of mission to your congregation?

Work is Relational

With a degree of overlap with the previous section, it is seldom the case that a worker never encounters another person through their work, whether that is an interaction with a delivery service or the fact that certain innovations eventually serve those they are intended for. In short, work should be understood as a relational task.

Mission

In conjunction with mission as a form of responsibly shaping the earth, work can also be understood relationally in the sense of making new disciples of Jesus. Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…" (Matt. 28.16a). If we are to take this seriously, surely this should apply to the workplace? Mark Greene explains thus:

> We are being called on to look for common ground with non-Christians when, in the workplace, we already share it. We are being exhorted to build bridges when, in the workplace, the bridges are already built and have been crossed. We are exhorted to go and develop relationships with people but, in the workplace, the relationships already exist. We are encouraged to go out and fish in pools and puddles when we are sitting on a lake full of fish.[157]

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[156] Bavinck, H, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1977), pp. 206-207.
[157] Greene, M, *Thank God it's Monday: Ministry in the Workplace* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2001), pp. 14-15.

The Holy Baptism liturgy (2006) already speaks of this:

> Will you work for justice and peace,
> honouring God in all Creation?

> *Answer: With the help of God, I will.*

> *The president addresses the whole congregation*
> This is the task of the Church.

> *All:* **This is our task:**
> **to live and work for the kingdom of God.**[158]

Discussion (20 minutes):
As a church leader, how can you help encourage your congregation in this task of mission?

Are there practical things that you could implement in this regard? (See the website below for some suggestions.)[159]

Do you feel as if the members of your congregation are making disciples of their colleagues/clients/bosses? Why/why not?

Serving the Common Good

Work is also relational in the sense that the outcome of most of our work should foster the common good. This has long been a key part of Christian thinking on the spiritual meaning of work. For example, the seventeenth century Puritan Richard Baxter said,

> It is action that God is most served and honoured by: not so much by our being able to do good, but by our doing it. Who will keep a servant that is able to work and will not? Will his mere ability answer your expectation? The public welfare, or the good of the many, is to be valued above our own.[160]

These thoughts build upon the ideas of John Calvin who says, "we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the divine Spirit, which he distributes to

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[158] 'Holy Baptism' 2006,
http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/liturgy/holy_baptism_2006.pdf, 5
[159] http://www.missionscotland.org.uk/Articles (scroll down to the second item called '21st Century Disciples')
[160] Baxter, R, *A Christian Directory or, A Sum of Practical Theology or Cases of Conscience* (London: George Virtue, 1846), p. 376 (see http://www.ccel.org/ccel/baxter/practical.toc.html to read this seminal volume).

whomever he wills, for the common good of mankind."[161] Calvin goes on to illustrate this from Exodus chapters 31 and 35 where God's people build the Tabernacle together for the first time.

In the present day, Miroslav Volf suggests that serving the common good in a pluralistic society in the West involves being "an internal difference" wherever Christians find themselves.[162] In other words, Christians should say a confident 'no' to accommodation of the world's practices if they contravene following Jesus. Separating oneself from the world should also be avoided; because, how can the common good be served by that stance? But by actively engaging the world where you already are, there may be opportunities to serve the common good.

Discussion (20 minutes):
Is it easier to encourage people to participate in this relational work than to make more disciples? Why/why not?

In what ways does serving the common good through work counter individualism?

How might you encourage your congregation to be an "internal difference" in the world they inhabit?

Work is an End in Itself

Until recently, Christian theology has ruled that work is solely a temporal action; i.e., something which only pertains to life here and now and not to the new creation. Consequently, as we prioritise that which more directly pertains to eternity, work has not played an elevated part in our theological thinking. Darrell Cosden has challenged this notion when analysing the new creation picture in Revelation. This biblical passage relates:

> I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the
> Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon
> to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the
> Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth
> will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day – and
> there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and
> the honour of the nations. (Revelation 21.22-26)

In chapter 21 verse 25, says Cosden, the picture suggests that heaven:

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[161] Calvin, J, *Institutes of the Christian Religion (trans. Ford Lewis Battles)* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), II.2.16.
[162] Volf, M, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), pp. 89-93.

… will be forever open to include the best of human culture (achievements past and possibly ongoing). And although this is not in any way limited to our work, it will thus include what we have accomplished through work. For what we have done, our "splendour", will be brought and put on display as part of the "glory and honour of the nations" (vv.24-26).[163]

This compounds other words in Revelation which state, "Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes', says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours, for their deeds [ta erga] follow them'" (Rev. 14.13). Note here that the term used for 'deeds' is the actual Greek word for 'work'. Again, there is a suggestion that the work of the saints will transfer with them from this age into the new creation as part of their salvation. Work, in other words, does have eternal value according to the book of Revelation.

Moreover, Cosden argues that our personalities are shaped by work and this is so significant to our personal make-up that it will also be transformed into the new creation. This is what it means to be "transformed into the same image [of Christ] from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3.18).[164]

Discussion (20 minutes):
If work does have some eternal value as it passes through God's judgement to the new creation, what place should work have in our thinking, preaching and preparation as the church?

Discuss Cosden's argument that work is so significant that it will be "transformed into the new creation."

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[163] Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press 2006, p. 75.
[164] For a detailed analysis of this, see Cosden, D, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), pp. 144-156.

Part 2 – Church Life for Work

Work may be viewed Christian-ly as a means to certain ends; relationally; and, as an end in itself. This definition of work has significant implications for the local church. Serious consideration of these matters can equip ordinary members of the church to engage the world with further authenticity and intentionality.

In Part Two of this session, we shall explore how we might add some tools to already well developed skills, to enable congregations to engage with the world of work more effectively in Christ's name.

Your church is made up of many workers. They gather together on Sundays and perhaps more often than that, but then scatter into the world to engage it directly. The percentage of time spent scattered, far outweighs that of gathered time. Are there ways in which you can train, develop and prepare people in your gatherings for the time they are scattered so that they can be the fragrance of Christ to all whom they encounter and in all that they do?

Unemployment or Retirement

To claim that your church is entirely made up of workers can be jarring because some may be unemployed and some retired. So then, is the notion of a church of workers flawed from the outset? Not necessarily.

When coming to these issues it is vital that the definition of work, which has been outlined in Part 1, is revisited. If not, the unemployed and retired become obsolete; they become second class Christians. If work is solely understood as paid employment, then obviously the unemployed and retired are excluded.

If, however, we look at this issue pneumatologically, or from the perspective of the Holy Spirit, we come to a different conclusion. Most Christian notions of work or vocation fall into the trap of conflating work into the term 'paid employment'. But it ought not to be so. An unemployed person is endowed with spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit; each and every person continuing to have the God-given ability to contribute to the shaping and reshaping of the world. "To be unemployed need

not mean being without work, but can mean being free for other significant kinds of work."[165]

Similarly, being a retiree need not mean someone who no longer works. A retiree can be, and very often is, active in multifarious ways that s/he could not have been previously when employed. Sometimes being retired allows them to align their active lives around their spiritual gifts more harmoniously so as to contribute meaningfully to the world in Christ's name. This understanding of work as it pertains to the unemployed and retired, sails closely to the significance of the work of housewives. Pope John Paul II says,

> Thank you, women who are mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child, the one who guides your child's first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.
> Thank you, women who are wives! You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life.[166]

In this sense then, the unemployed and retired can wholeheartedly be included in the notion that the church is a community of workers. One does not have to have paid employment to contribute meaningfully to God's world. One only has to live the *vita activa*, the active life, in order to achieve this.

Discussion (15 minutes)
How far do you feel encouraged and/or convinced by this understanding of the unemployed and retired?

How might this liberate or help those of your congregation who are currently unemployed or who have recently retired?

The Bible
In order for transformative change to take place in people's workaday lives, a continual feeding from the Bible is required. It is well documented that, when people 'switch off' during sermons, this is because they feel as if they do not relate to reality, to the challenge of their work lives. Sherman and Hendricks claim in this regard:

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[165] Volf, M, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), p. 156.

[166] Pope John Paul II, 'A Letter to Women', http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women_en.html, p. 2.

> I am utterly convinced that in the Scriptures God has given us an inexhaustible wealth of resources for dealing with the circumstances we face on the job. Yet so few seem able to extract these truths and apply them meaningfully to everyday situations.[167]

Even at a quick glance one can see the great potential in Scripture for preaching/teaching about work:

- God's mandate for work in Genesis
- The narrative of Joseph in the workplace
- The Exodus is initiated by Israel crying out for justice in the workplace
- The story of Ruth[168]
- The Saul & David narratives
- The stories of Ezra and Nehemiah
- Psalm 8
- Many Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- The life of Daniel
- Jesus' parables which use workplace scenarios
- The work scenarios in Acts
- Selected statements from Paul about work
- Philemon
- Engagement with culture in the book of Revelation
- The many discussions of works in the New Testament

Many, if not most, biblical narratives are played out in a workplace scenario. This by itself might cause us to consider the workplace's importance to God.

Discussion (20 minutes):
Discuss the significance of the fact that so much of the biblical narrative takes place in the workplace.

Does this compel you to consider greater concentration on work in your preaching?

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[167] Sherman, D, & Hendricks, W, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1987), p. 224.
[168] There are many helpful resources, often found in short spurts, on the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC) website. See this one on Ruth: http://www.licc.org.uk/engaging-with-the-bible/word-of-the-week/word-for-the-week-2007/the-road-to-recovery-675

Do you think that if more sermons/homilies were frequently tailored towards workplace application this would have a positive impact at your church?

Do you think your congregation would identify with this emphasis?

Eucharist

The Eucharist is an essential component of our spiritual reflection upon all that Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us through his cross and resurrection. It is right and good that we reflect upon sins committed and come to Christ's sacrifice to appeal for his continued grace in our lives.

However, in the midst of this profundity, it is easy for our minds to escape the fact that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are items from human culture which Jesus has chosen to represent, or trans-signify, the means of salvation. The bread and wine of the Eucharist also demonstrates the necessity of each to sustain humanity. Furthermore, it signifies celebration. The work of vineyards, caskers and bakers is that which Christ has elected to use for our continual worship and understanding of himself as God crucified. This is already indicated in the liturgy when it says, "Blessed art thou, Lord, God of all creation; through thy goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands: it will become our spiritual drink. Blessed be God for ever."[169]

Discussion (10 minutes):
Should Christ's choice of bread and wine, the work of human hands, encourage us to consider the secondary role of human work in his way of salvation in the Eucharist?

If so, why? If not, why not?

Are there other ways in which the Eucharist and a workaday week can be helpfully connected? The phrase "the work of the people" literally comes from the Greek work *leitourgia*, the place where we get our word for 'liturgy'. Armand Larive says,

> In Greek culture, leitourgia primarily connotes an act of public service done without pay by one or more individuals as a contribution to the common good; then, derivatively, the word was used for public worship.[170]

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[169] Scottish Liturgy 1970, 'At the Offertory',
http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/liturgy/scottish_liturgy_1970.pdf, p. 16.
[170] Larive, A, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 144.

Instead of simply feeling as if Eucharist is a performance 'done unto us' or something that we observe, what if Eucharist can be understood as "the work of the people" led by its leaders and with God as its audience? Since the nineteenth century, the Liturgical Movement of the Roman Catholic Church has viewed the Eucharist as a performance by the whole congregation.[171] For the Christian worker, how might this work out in practice at the Eucharist? How might a Sunday Eucharist serve as a motivator for Monday to Friday?

This finds a degree of meaning when ordinary workers realise,
> the undercurrent of sustenance that supports their efforts, in the Sabbath grace that precedes, in the ever-developing promise of new things proleptically prefigured by God's Son and dramatized in the Great Thanksgiving of the Eucharist.[172]

(i) If this is so, we ought to consider that all people work out of their God-given blessings through the Eucharist. This indicates that working in the world is about serving others beyond ourselves, serving the common good, seeking first the kingdom of God.

(ii) Secondly, coming to the Eucharist should encourage us to consider that we come *collectively* to it. In so doing, it can be discovered that collectively a wide array of God-given gifts and skills are possessed to serve the world. We must resist denying that others also have important abilities with which to serve the world.

As they come to Christ in the Eucharist, then, perhaps people could be encouraged to bring an item that represents their everyday work to put near or on the altar. By this act, the prayers of the faithful can connect Sunday with last week *and* the week to come. When the accountant brings his spreadsheet, the mother her bag of nappies, the businessman his briefcase, the chef his hat, the student her textbook, each person can be seen to be offering to God all that they have accomplished, by his grace, prior to the Eucharistic act. If this act is appropriate for our Eucharistic worship, might it also be seen as a plea for the power of the cross to live more consistently like Christ in our week to come?

If this extra emphasis on the Eucharist has any merit, might this be more truly "a work of the people"?

Discussion (10 minutes):
What do you think of Eucharist being something that the whole Church performs before God?

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[171] http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2011/09/fr-guy-nicholls-on-chant-and-mass.html
[172] Larive, *After Sunday*, p.144.

In light of this notion, do you think there is potential in your congregation bringing items that represent their work to the altar to and for Christ as part of their Eucharistic worship? Why/why not?

Prayer

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, commonly known as the 'Lord's Prayer', is a prayer that is recited by Christians when gathered together. Sometimes it can be easy to say such a well-known prayer and the words disappear without much thought. Familiarity can sometimes breed lack of engagement.

In light of a theology of work there are two clauses in this prayer which may be worth drawing attention to: (i) 'give us this day our daily bread' and (ii) 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'. Jonathan Pennington and Alice Mathews state in this regard:

> Immediately before this request for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer, we read, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). In God's kingdom, receiving our daily bread is a certainty, but in our world marred by sin, daily sustenance is questionable. Although God has given humanity everything we need to produce enough food to feed everyone on earth, we have not ended hunger. Thus Jesus' first word about wealth or daily provision is this petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." We turn to God for the bread we need.[173]

Discussion (25 minutes):
What should churches expect to happen in our work in light of the requests in the Lord's Prayer?

Does your view of the kingdom of God include that which might be wrought by human hands this side of heaven in the power of the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?

Could you reflect upon this prayer in church to encourage your congregation to view work in such a way; i.e. to pray for grand kingdom happenings through their work?

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[173]http://theologyofwork.mindtouch.us/New_Testament_Articles/510_Matthew_and_Work

Interviews

A straightforward way to increase awareness in your congregation about the Holy Spirit's movements at work is to interview people during services. This can increase expectation and anticipation about God's purposes for our everyday work. Questions from the Rector to interviewees might include:

- What work do you do?
- What sort of joys and satisfaction do you experience through it?
- What challenges does your work bring?
- Do you ever experience God in your work? If so, in what ways?
- What kingdom practices are you trying to implement at work and need prayer for?
- How can we as your Christian family pray for you and your workplace?

Darrell Cosden recommends this approach when he says,

> …we will also want to be more focused and careful in our Christian gatherings to pray purposely for each other with regard to the specific work/mission related issues we face. We will want to pray not just that our colleagues come to faith, but also that the job we are currently working on might reflect God and his ways (God's kingdom) as we serve others and creation.[174]

Even taking ten minutes to do this on a regular basis in a service can have surprisingly positive results. Apart from people feeling as if they know their fellow Christians better as a result of such sharing, giving place to work issues in a service indicates a healthy resistance to a faulty sacred/secular divide.

Discussion (15 minutes):
What is your response to having interviews in a service?

What additional questions would you include/omit to suit your context?

In what part of your services would this work best? Why?

Visiting

Another related approach to engaging more effectively with the world of work, might be to get permission to spend a morning or afternoon with one of your congregation at their work (if indeed they are in paid employment). This will help

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[174] Cosden, *Heavenly*, 139

you grasp better what it is each one is faced with on a daily basis, will help you pray more specifically, and will perhaps initiate new friendships.

Discussion (10 minutes):
Discuss any potential advantages and/or drawbacks of this approach.

Commission

As a follow-on from these interviews it might be considered whether the worker(s) interviewed, plus those from a similar profession/field of expertise, could be commissioned to go out and serve in the name of Christ with a commissioning prayer by the Rector. It would seem that the benediction of "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" has particular potency and applicability for church members in light of such sharing. Perhaps asking particular people from a profession to stand up or come to the front for a commissioning prayer would give this extra significance. Any act in a service is given heightened importance when done in front of the congregation rather than in the privacy of one's heart.

Discussion (15 minutes):
How valuable might commissioning your members to love and serve the Lord in this way be?

Is there extra importance given to something when people are called out to the front at a service and commissioned?

Do you think it would coincide well with the benediction?

Part 3 – Christians at Work

Until now we have seen an outline of a definition of work from a theological point of view (Part 1) and how some of this theology could be further employed in our church services to help people (Part 2). In this final section, several areas of practising faith at work will be highlighted for further reflection for both the worker and for preaching and pastoral work of the Rector.

Are there some forms of work Christians shouldn't perform?

As with any area of life, there are differing views on issues that pertain to Christians and work. There is so much for workers to reflect on with so little time. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon Christians at work to reflect so as to practice their faith well. I shall briefly introduce some examples for consideration.

Capitalism

How should Christians engage capitalism, if at all? This is an important question because this economic philosophy is embedded in Scottish society. Should we wholeheartedly accept it, critically put up with it, or completely reject it? How would we practice any of those?

(i) Regarding those who wish to critically accept capitalism, John Atherton (Canon Theologian Emeritus at Manchester Cathedral) asserts that religion can potentially *transfigure* capitalism.[175] Without the sanctifying powers of religion, capitalism is unbridled and out of control. But if 'faithful capital' such as Fair Trade equity and Interest-Free Banks are employed, this provides one step forward to engaging the workplace Christianly. A second step would be the integration of an overarching biblical story into economic life, something Atherton calls 'spiritual capital'. Capitalism without the guidance of God's story will always go awry. Good ethics, then, are essential for the economy itself despite many economists' indifference to them. By continually promoting grace, capitalism can be reformed, argues Atherton.

(ii) Peter Sedgwick's approach to capitalism is the least critical of the four mentioned here. Concerning capitalistic enterprise and the market, Sedgwick

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[175] Atherton, J, *Tranfiguring Capitalism: An Enquiry into Religious and Global Change* (London: SCM, 2008).

argues that these market dynamics and wealth-creation "mirror the nature of God (enterprise) and his activity (wealth-creation)." He can claim this because he interprets the inner relationship of the Trinity as inherently innovative and creative, spawning new ideas and existence, "so that the most fundamental form of wealth-creation is the wealth of all creation, nourished and sustained by God."[176]

(iii) John Hughes is highly critical of capitalism and admonishes Christians to resist engaging with it.[177] How are Christians to accomplish this? Hughes appeals to the Christian Socialist tradition that is chiefly exemplified by English Romantics John Ruskin and William Morris (albeit Morris was not a Christian). Ruskin and Morris sought to bring about beauty through art in the working context of guilds.

What does this model of work offer us today? One key hallmark is of creating things of aesthetic beauty because beauty alone relates what is True and Good. This will always stem from liturgical worship as God himself is the locus of all beauty. In the resisting of industrial and urban labour through seeking beauty in art, one is necessarily forced, Hughes argues, to reflect upon God's works. This, in turn, demands that we turn to worship through liturgy in order to reflect rightly upon this.

 (iv) Michael Northcott views global capitalism as entirely heinous. "[C]apitalism turns all that human beings count worthy into exchange values."[178] Consequently, Christians should seek an agrarian and rural ethic away from cities and towns. Urban life contributes to the all-pervasive problem of the destruction of all things natural. He says, "Modern humans are the only species to regularly take more nutrients from the earth than they return to it."[179] Thus, Christians should consider an agrarian lifestyle where one grows their own food, which keeps the body fit and which undercuts the snares of capitalism. By local trading, ideally exemplified by the Swiss canton, a fully Christian life can emerge apart from the urban whore of Babylon (urban life generally).

Discussion (20 minutes):
How do you respond to the four arguments outlined above? What assistance or handicaps might they present a) to you, and b) to the members of your congregation?

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[176] Sedgwick, P, *The Enterprise Culture* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 145ff., p. 150ff.

[177] Hughes, J, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[178] Northcott, M. S, *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007), p. 65.

[179] Northcott, *Moral,* p. 132.

The Armed Forces

Picking out the military or war as an ethical issue helps us to illustrate two contrasting ethical approaches. In Argyll, the Vale of Leven and the Moray Firth, our churches will daily encounter those employed by the Services, so this issue is also a pertinent one. How are Rectors to pastor, direct, and guide on this issue? Here are two common approaches:

(i) The Just War Theory is the dominantly held position in Christian Ethics. It justifies participation by Christians in any part of the Armed Forces. One of its foremost proponents is Oliver O'Donovan who makes very clear what he means by 'Just War Theory'. He says the 'Just War Theory', "is a misnomer, since it is not, in the first place, a 'theory,' but a proposal of practical reason; and it is not, in the second place, about 'just wars,' but about how we may enact just judgments in the theatre of war."[180] Not all protagonists of this position take O'Donovan's stance here.

O'Donovan's justification of this ethic is further outlined:

> First, God's peace is the original ontological truth of creation. We must deny the skeptical proposition that competition and what metaphysicians call 'difference' are the fundamental realities of the universe, a proposition which the creation, redemption, and preservation of the world make impossible to entertain. Secondly, God's peace is the goal of history. We must deny the supposed cultural value of war, its heroic glorification as an advancement of civilisation. For war serves the end of history only as evil serves good, and the power to bring good out of evil belongs to God alone. Thirdly, God's peace is a practical demand laid upon us. We must deny any 'right' to the pursuit of war. . . . For the Gospel demands that we renounce goods that can only be won at the cost of our neighbours' good.[181]

In summary, O'Donovan's default Christian position is peace, but he is also a realist in the sense that he concedes that war is sometimes inevitable. In such cases, the manner in which one theologically and practically works out how war will be engaged, is critical.

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[180] O'Donovan, O, *The Just War Revisited (Current Issues in Theology)* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 6-7.
[181] O'Donovan, *Just*, p. 2.

(ii) The counter position to the 'Just War Theory' is a pacifist ethic. One of the main proponents of this Christian Ethic is John Howard Yoder. Yoder concentrates his ethical reflections in the four Gospel narratives as instructive and normative for a Christian position on violence, war and service in the Armed Forces. The fact that Jesus doesn't retaliate to his oppressors during his passion, his teaching on turning the other cheek and his refusal to take up the sword as the zealots of his day did all confirm, asserts Yoder, Jesus' commitment to non-violence. Yoder states,

> If what we have said about the honor due the Lamb makes any sense, then what is usually called 'Christian pacifism' is most adequately understood not on the level of means alone, as if the pacifist were making the claim that he can achieve what war promises to achieve, but do it just as well or even better without violence.[182]

In short, the main difference between this ethic and the 'Just War Theory' towards working in the Armed Forces hinges upon what should guide our behaviour here and now. Behaving like a colony of heaven in the here and now, should always shape what we do on earth. If in heaven all swords and spears and all arsenals will be reworked into peace-loving tools, we ought to live in this way now so as to promote the kingdom of God as much as possible.

Discussion (20 minutes):
How do you respond to the two Christian ethics regarding the military outlined above?

Discuss or note down other ethical dilemmas in the workplaces of your congregation that may helpfully be viewed through either of the two ethical approaches here.

Industrial Mission

Traditionally, mission in the workplace has taken the guise of Industrial mission through the presence of Christian chaplains. This was not a role for evangelism *per se*, but one of relationship building, developing links between employers and employees, and being a formal bridge between the Church and the workplace.
This engagement with the workplace has slowly been decreasing over the past two decades or so but there are those who are still very active in promoting and

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[182] Yoder, J. H, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 239.

practising this approach to workplace engagement.[183] *Industrial Chaplaincy Scotland*, in particular, is active in workplaces.[184]

Discussion (20 minutes):
What experience is there in your group of Industrial Chaplaincy as an approach to engaging the workplace?

Where do the strengths and weaknesses of this approach lie?

Faith and Working Practices

An alternative approach to living out one's faith while working can be found in R. Paul Stevens and Alvin Ung's recent book, which they present as a discussion of the nine fruits of the Spirit outlined by the Apostle Paul.[185] In the first instance, Stevens and Ung set out nine sins that typically sap Christians in the workplace. They then pair up each sin with a spiritual antidote from the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, they indicate the potential practical outcome of overcoming sinful behaviour with the fruit of the Spirit.

- *Pride > Joy > Continuous Prayer*

From being imprisoned with pride within yourself, fostering joy by putting God as number one will result in continuous communion with God in prayer.

- *Greed > Goodness > Persistent Gratitude*

Instead of desiring to have more things, cultivating goodness can release you into freedom of knowing that all things come from God.

- *Lust > Love > Beautiful Purity*

Moving from viewing people for self-interest to caring for others in practical ways can result in wholehearted love for God and neighbour.

- *Gluttony > Self Control > Joyful Relinquishment*

Instead of the search for satisfaction through consumption, being led by the Spirit can lead to eating more simply.

- *Anger > Gentleness > Surrendered Contentment*

Rather than utilising anger to manipulate people, empowering others with meekness and instilling belief in them can bring about satisfaction regarding what you are, have, and do.

- *Sloth > Faithfulness > Life-Giving Rhythms*

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[183] Cope, P, and West, P, *Engaging Mission: The Lasting Value of Industrial Mission for Today* (Cambridge: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2011).
[184] http://www.wpcscotland.co.uk/
[185] Stevens, R. P, & Ung, A, *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

Doing as little work as possible can be countered by persisting in vital tasks that can result in good outcomes.

- *Envy > Kindness > Neighbour-Love*

Jealousy because of someone else's advantages can be countered by rejoicing in someone's achievements. This should lead to wishing the very best for someone and contributing to that person's well-being.

- *Restlessness > Patience > Vocational Confidence*

Instead of feeling that there is always something better out there, having the ability to find hope and meaning where you are, brings contentedness in the knowledge that you are doing God's work.

- *Boredom* > Peace > Practical Heavenly-Mindedness

Being bored can be countered by fostering harmony in all circumstances. This can result in certainty that all work matters can relate to eternity's purposes.

Discussion (20 minutes):
Discuss the merits or potential difficulties of this approach to Christian living while at work.

Conclusion - Prayer Time

Thank God for the workplaces that your congregation inhabit and for the forms of work they all do. Thank God for all the unique workers who make up your congregation.

Pray that those who are seeking employment will find meaningful work.

Ask for wisdom to be able to equip each one individually and collectively to work effectively in the world for Christ.

Session Four

The Theology of Work

Suggested Reading

Books and Articles

EPISCOPALIAN

Cope, Peter and West, Mike, *Engaging Mission: The Lasting Value of Industrial Mission for Today* (Cambridge: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2011).

Larive, Armand, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (London: Continuum, 2004).
Volf, Miroslav, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011).

Volf, Miroslav, *Work in the Spirit: Toward A Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: WIpf & Stock, 2001).

http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/

EVANGELICAL

Catherwood, Fred, *The Creation of Wealth: Recovering a Christian Understanding of Money, Work, and Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002).

Coffey, Ian, *Working it Out: God, You and the Work You Do* (Leicester: IVP, 2008).

Cosden, Darrell, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press, 2006).

Cosden, Darrell, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

Greene, Mark, *The Great Divide* (London: LICC, 2010).

Greene, Mark, *Pocket Prayers for Work* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

Greene, Mark, *Supporting Christians at Work* (London: LICC, 2001).

Greene, Mark, *Thank God it's Monday: Ministry in the Workplace* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2001).

Higginson, Richard, *Questions of Business Life: Exploring Workplace Issues from a Christian Perspective* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Life, 2002).

Hood, Neil, *Forgotten Agenda?: Money, Work and Discipleship* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2006).

Ryken, Leyland, *Work and Leisure in Christian Perspective* (Leicester: IVP, 1987).

Sherman, Doug & Hendricks, William, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1987).

MENNONITE

Yoder, John Howard, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

ANGLO-CATHOLIC

Atherton, John, *Tranfiguring Capitalism: An Enquiry into Religious and Global Change* (London: SCM, 2008).

Hughes, John, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

Northcott, Michael S., *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007).

Sedgwick, Peter, *The Enterprise Culture* (London: SPCK, 1992).

ROMAN CATHOLIC

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women_en.html,
http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/

REFORMED

Bavinck, Herman, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1977).

Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion (trans. Ford Lewis Battles)* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960).

O'Donovan, Oliver, *The Just War Revisited (Current Issues in Theology) (*Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

Stevens, R. Paul & Ung, Alvin, *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

Stevens, R. Paul, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

Stevens, R. Paul & Ung, Alvin, *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

OTHER RESOURCES

Faith in Business Quarterly – This journal encourages individuals to apply Christian values in their work, and help them to resolve the moral dilemmas they often face. (www.fibq.org)

Business in Glasgow (BiG) – They offer a series of stimulating and helpful lunchtime seminars covering topical issues for workplaces on Tuesdays in Glasgow. (http://www.businessinglasgow.net/)

Business Matters – They are a charitable trust set up by a group of people who want to be of service to their neighbours in the world of work in Edinburgh through lunchtime seminars, a listening ear, Business Alpha and more! (http://www.businessmattersedinburgh.com/)

WEBSITES

http://www.theologyofwork.org/
http://www.acton.org/
http://www.worktalk.gs/
http://www.licc.org.uk/
http://www.ccel.org/ccel/baxter/practical.toc.html
http://www.yale.edu/faith/downloads/x_volf_godwork.pdf
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html
http://www.missionscotland.org.uk/Articles (scroll down to the second item called '21st Century Disciples')
http://www.lausanne.org/issue-business-as-mission/overview.html (Essays outlining how mission might include a kingdom view of business)
http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org/Web/ (It applies its relational thinking framework to family and community, to public policy and business.)
http://www.transformworkuk.org (A comprehensive resource for articles, news and links to profession-specific help groups (Scottish Vet & Police Fellowships etc) to equip the ordinary Christian worker)
http://www.wpcscotland.co.uk/ (Industrial Chaplaincy Scotland website)

Session Five

Fresh Expressions/Emerging Church

Facilitator's Notes

This session has been designed for use as the programme for a training day for a group of church leaders. This could be a one-off day conference. Or it could be one unit of a longer period of study, such as, for example, a residential weekend.

The session has been divided into three parts.

Part One outlines a number of theological motifs of Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church. It offers an introduction to the thinking behind these two movements, drawing on the writings of some of their well-known exponents.

In Part Two, participants review and evaluate some of the practical out-workings of these theologies.

Part Three makes some practical suggestions as to how these could be taken up and made use of by the Scottish Episcopal Church.

All three parts include questions for individual reflection and group discussion, together with suggested timings. These timings may vary according to the size and nature of the group. However, each of these sections requires approximately two hours for completion.

Part Three also presents a choice of scenario exercises as a challenge for the participants. Participants could work on the scenarios by themselves or in a small group, with feedback to the full group. Alternatively, the exercise might be set as a piece of homework, to be presented at a later date.

Part Three of the session ends with a time of corporate prayer.

Session Five

Fresh Expressions/Emerging Church

This session is divided into three parts. Part 1 will outline a number of theological motifs of Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church. Part 2 will flesh out some practical distinctives as a result of these theologies. Part 3 will then make some suggestions as to how these could be taken up and practised by Scottish Episcopal Churches. The session ends with a time of prayer.

Part 1 - Emerging Church Rationale

The Revd Ian Mobsby, priest in charge of St Mary's, Aldermary, and a founder member of the Moot Community in central London explains how Fresh Expressions and Emerging Church are intrinsically part of the Anglican tradition. 'There is a quiet revolution going on,' he says in his 2007 book, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church*, 'one where emerging churches only a few years ago were seen as the eccentric fringe, but now find themselves as a key focus of Church policy and practice concerning contextual mission.'[186]

An initial word must be said about the definition of Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church. Fresh Expressions of church almost speaks for itself. The authors of the Church of England's 2004 *Mission Shaped Church* report described it like this: "We expect there will be more expressions and … under God it is right that a variety of ways develop in which different sets of people can connect with Christian community."[187]

This report identified a number of categories of experimental gathering which it described as 'fresh expressions' of Anglican church: alternative worship communities, base ecclesial communities, café church, cell church, church plants, churches that emerge out of community projects, multiple and midweek congregations, churches connecting with specific networks of people, school-

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[186] Mobsby, I. J, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church* (London: Moot Community Publishing, 2007), accessed as an electronic book, January 17th 2013.

[187] Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p. 43.

based congregations, seeker church, traditional forms of church being reborn in a fresh way, including new monasticism, and youth congregations.

'Emerging Church' on the other hand suggests something that has not yet fully come into being. It describes an entity or movement that is yet to blossom fully. What it will become has yet to be made clear. The Emerging Church movement is notoriously difficult to define: 'a constantly moving target,' as Glasgow based theologian the Revd Doug Gay describes it.[188] Some characteristics shared by some emerging churches are as follows:

An awareness of and a desire to reach people in the contemporary postmodern culture, a broad, experimental approach to worship, an emphasis on building up personal relationships, a concern to re-evaluate the place of the church within society, a de-emphasis on doctrinal absolutes. A significant number of leaders and thinkers within the movement describe themselves as 'post-evangelical', having moved away from their roots in the traditional conservative evangelical denominations.[189]

Missio Dei

Almost all FE/ECs are under girded and shaped by a notion called "the mission of God" (*Missio Dei*). What is this concept, this mission? It is an understanding of mission that is not primarily orientated upon the Church reaching out to those in need, but of mission being part of God's very being in the first instance. In other words, our mission to the world should only ever follow God's mission to His world. Jesus himself describes this dynamic when he says, 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (Jn. 20.21). God acts first, then we follow.
'Tall Skinny Kiwi', an Emerging Church blogger, says:

> Mission is no longer a program of the church. It flows from the missional heart of God. God's mission is all encompassing. It impacts every area of life - economic, political, environmental, social.[190]

God's mission then is something that needs close discernment. If we don't know exactly where He is at work, how can the church imitate Him and get involved in His endeavours? It is precisely this order of mission – God acting first, then us

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[188] Gay, D, *Remixing the Church: Towards an emerging ecclesiology* (London SCM Press, 2011), p. xi.
[189] McKnight, S, 'Five Streams of the Emerging Church: Key elements of the most controversial and misunderstood movement in the church today', *Christianity Today*, February 2007, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html?paging=off accessed 17th January 2013.
[190] 'WHATEVER and Missio Dei' found at
http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2006/01/missio_dei.html

following - that guides many FEs of church in the UK today. Here, Christian people have set themselves the task of identifying or simply perceiving where God is at work in the world. What results is the discovery of God at mission in surprising places and among unlikely people. In turn, ministries are directed towards these unusual circumstances: thus, the term *Fresh* Expressions.

A further consequence of this is that there are no set patterns to ministry. Adaptability is required dealing with new forms of outreach. Tall Skinny Kiwi says about this:

> Because it is God's mission and not ours, and because we are just participating with God in what He is doing, our load is light and bearable. That's good news.[191]

Discussion (20 minutes):
Have you considered mission from this perspective before? Reflect upon the dynamic of mission described in John 20.21.

How might this inform the way your church does mission?

mDNA

Following the missional God in mission, seeking to get involved in what God is already doing, is enabled by our 'mDNA.' What is mDNA? Well, the better known DNA is the "… organic chemical of complex molecular structure that is found in all organic, living cells and in many viruses. DNA *codes genetic information for the transmission of inherited traits*."[192] mDNA means *missional* DNA. Similarly to DNA, mDNA is built-in to every true follower of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The US based missiologist Alan Hirsch, founding director of Forge Mission Training Network, explains further:

> As DNA carries the genetic coding, and therefore the life, of a particular organism, so too mDNA codes Apostolic Genius (the life force that pulsated through the New Testament church and in other expressions of apostolic Jesus movements throughout history).[193]

When the church faces great cultural and oppressive challenges, it needs to adapt for mission. The 'Apostolic Genius' that Hirsch speaks of is the God-given ability to convey the good news of the kingdom of God to new and changing

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[191] 'WHATEVER and Missio Dei'
[192] *Encylopedia Britannica (standard edition)*, CD-ROM, *s.v.* "DNA"
[193] Hirsch, A, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), pp. 76-7.

cultures effectively, so as to grow new churches. These are manifest in a melée of (i) phenomena, (ii) impulses, (iii) practices, (iv) structures and (v) leadership models. mDNA is the hardwiring that is activated when people commit their lives to Christ and seek to convince those around them, as the New Testament apostles did.

Discussion (15 minutes):
What do you think of the notion of mDNA as described by Alan Hirsch above?

Share some experiences of 'activated mDNA' in your own life.

Postmodernity & Postmodernism

What makes Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches stand out is their willingness to interact with and assess the usefulness of postmodern culture and thought. What is postmodern culture and thought? The best way to illustrate this is to contrast these with those that they succeed – modernity and modernism. Modernism is characterised by belief in the goodness and progress of humanity through human achievement. It also promotes logical thinking and a universal narrative. Modernity refers to the culture of modernism. Two world wars went some way towards dispelling this optimism. Nevertheless, modernism persists as a frame of reference.

Postmodernity (culture) and postmoderism (philosophical thought), by contrast, promote scepticism of human altruism, pay heed to and elevate minority reports and stories, and find meaning in eclectic and unusual places.

What this means for Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches is that forgotten voices in the Bible are revisited. Voices from the margins, stories of difficulty, and exceptional episodes, are selected as formative and significant for the life of these new churches. For example, what might Obadiah have to say to the church today? What of Lamentations, Revelation, Jesus' parables, stories of exiled Israel?

Brian McLaren, a postmodernist thinker and leading figure in the Emerging Church movement in the USA, says the Bible is '[t]he Story We Find Ourselves In'.[194] As people's stories intersect with and identify with the stories in the Bible, a

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[194] McLaren, B. D, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

synergy is created and people find a home in the Christian faith. Individual people's stories are taken seriously as they find solace in stories from the Bible.

Discussion (25 minutes):
Do you identify more with modern or postmodern tendencies?

How far do you feel that 'postmodern' thought is a culture that the Church should engage with for the Kingdom? Do you feel that there are aspects of this culture that Christians should avoid?

Are you already friends with people who have a postmodern outlook on life? How might you seek to persuade them for Christ in a way that they would understand and that is wholeheartedly Christian?

The Ruins of Christendom

A number of contemporary commentators describe a paradigm shift that has been taking place in the West, connected to the non-activation of mDNA and to the shift from modern culture and thought to its postmodern equivalents. Stuart Murray, Oasis Director of Church Planting and Evangelism and a lecturer at Spurgeon's College, London, describes it here:

> The end of Christendom and transition into post-Christendom in Western culture is a paradigm shift. Many Christians are resisting this shift and employing familiar tactics of defending the old paradigm, denying its demise, dithering on the cusp of a new era or delaying their commitment to this new reality. But Christendom is fading.[195]

What does 'Christendom' mean? Christendom means that Britain (indeed, Western Europe) is in essence Christian; that Christian principles underpin civil society; that there is a close partnership between the church and the state. Conforming to correct doctrine (orthodoxy) marks Christendom.

Stuart Murray argues that a 'Christendom mindset' has profoundly affected the way Christians in Europe have 'interpreted the Bible, done theology, thought about mission and church, made ethical decisions and understood discipleship.' 'Among other things,' he says, 'the Christendom mindset operates as though the church is at the centre of culture, responsible for the way history turns out,

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[195] Murray, S, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004), p. 7.

exercising a top-down influence… But in post-Christendom, the churches are not at the centre but on the margins; any influence we have is likely to be bottom-up.'[196]

Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches operate within a post-Christendom frame of reference. They are principally concerned with the transformation of people so as to impact society from the grass roots. The phrase 'belonging/believing/behaving' exemplifies this. FEs seek to influence their friends who are not yet Christian by encouraging them to belong to the Church well before Christian belief is fully and firmly held. The hope is that through their acceptance by the Christian community, an uncovering of the beauty of Christ is revealed. In other words, by belonging, belief can be made possible. But belief is not the final goal; behaving like a true disciple is. Without Christian praxis, forgiveness, love and justice would never transpire. This is why values and practices are given such a prominent place in FEs. Belief without living fruit in people's lives is considered empty.

So can a dying Christendom be counteracted by taking on board the mission of God in the activation of mDNA?

Discussion (30 minutes):

Choose <u>one</u> of the questions below and spend time discussing it, either with a partner or within a small group. (15 minutes' discussion within the small group followed by feedback from the small groups to the full group):

1. **According to the brief definitions above, are you still operating with a Christendom mindset? If so, how far are you convinced that this should be surrendered?**

2. **Is it shocking news that some consider Christendom to be in ruins? Should you consider adopting a Post-Christendom view of the West so as to engage the world around you more faithfully and effectively?**

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[196] Murray, S, *Christendom and Post-Christendom*,
missionalchurchnetwork.com/uploads/2010/04/christendom-murray.pdf p. 5.

Part 2 – Fresh Expression & Emerging Church Practice

It must be said at the outset of the second part of this session that FEs and ECs should not be the monopoly of 'young folk'. To assume such undercuts any person or group choosing to activate their mDNA in view of the mission of God. So what does being missional as a FE or EC look like in practice?

Incarnational rather than Attractional

What does 'incarnational' mean? We may be familiar with the term 'incarnation' from explanations of the Gospel narratives and it is precisely from this term that we get the notion of being 'incarnational'. To be incarnational is to be physically present in a situation just as God the Son became physically present in our world as a man.

What does this have to do with the mission of the church? What does it have to do with FEs? Much of the church designs its mission to those who are not yet Christian by seeking to attract people into their church building via certain events. This approach to the church's mission is formed around what Alan Hirsch calls being "attractional".[197] On the other hand, FEs seek to be incarnational in the sense in which God the Son was. The church individually, in twos and threes, or collectively, goes to where they believe the missional God is already at work; physically present in places which do not consist of a church building.
'Mission' means to be sent, not to attract. Consequently, says Hirsch, the church should *go* and be present in places where people are, rather than seeking to draw people into its ecclesiastical buildings:

> When God came into our world in and through Jesus, the Eternal moved into the neighbourhood and took up residence among us (John 1:14). And the central thrust of the Incarnation, as far as we can penetrate its mystery, was that by becoming one of us, God was able to achieve redemption for the human race. But the Incarnation, and Christ's work flowing out of it, achieved more than our salvation; it was an act of profound affinity, a radical identification with all that it means to be human[.][198]

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[197] Hirsch, *Forgotten*, p. 129.
[198] Hirsch, *Forgotten*, p. 132.

So how might this be achieved or practised? Again, Jesus is our prototype and pattern. In the same way in which He fostered friendships among Samaritans, women, lepers, morally dubious persons and those whom were considered undesirables by the Jews at the time, so Christians should identify with and be present among those whom they know and are in contact with. We should *go* to them. We should seek to influence them in their cultures and sub-cultures.

Discussion (15 minutes):

Choose <u>one or two</u> of the questions below and reflect upon them with a partner or within a small group:

1. **Which groups or types of people who have no connection to the church are your congregation friends with?**

2. **How do you respond to the notion that being incarnational may mean fewer attractional events being organised by your church, but rather giving people the time and space to develop friendships for kingdom purposes?**

3. **How might this change your role as an ordained/lay church leader?**

4. **What problems or tensions do you see in this approach to mission?**

Persuading those seldom associated with the church

Who are the people the church is already friends with, but who are not usually associated with the church? It has been suggested that like attracts like, and that all this has achieved is to homogenise the church. Theologian John Drane states in this regard, "the ways of being church that we now have match the concerns of only a certain kind of person, at a time when the culture is more openly diverse than it has ever been."[199]

FEs and the EC are unmistakably distinct in their intention to bring the message of the kingdom of God to those who aren't typically found in the church. John Drane highlights several sub-groups as examples:

- The desperate poor

Drane has in mind here beggars and the homeless.

- Hedonists

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[199] Drane, J, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), p. 59.

These are people who live for themselves. "They can cope only by escaping from it all, and are likely to spend every spare moment in activities that will anaesthetize them to the pain."[200]

- Traditionalists

These are people who are presently happy with the way things are. This group is the group that makes up the majority of current church-goers.

- Spiritual Searchers

These are those who identify with values, enjoy experimentation, and who are nonconformists.

- Corporate Achievers

People whose lives are dominated by their careers. This group are perhaps the most lonely of all the people groups mentioned here because of their competitive individualism and their drive to earn all they can.

- Secularists

These may be least likely to be able to hear the gospel message due to their cynicism towards anything religious, while at the same time being highly influential in society.

- The Apathetic

These often live for their work, but not in the same manner as the corporate achievers. They are committed to this only because it creates a rhythm to life, a rhythm which should never be interrupted – not that this would create any inconvenience if it did!

Brian McLaren suggests that the context of friendship will be the way of convincing some to follow Christ.[201] By taking the time to journey with friends and acquaintances through doubt, misunderstanding, distrust, unbelief, frustration, McLaren argues that the bounds of a true friendship can stand these stern tests so as to eventually persuade those who are not yet Christian. There is no formula to follow as such. There will be lots of bumps in the road and there might even be u-turns. There will be many questions, not all of which can be answered. Not having all the answers is not problematic; this merely serves to show that Christians themselves are on a journey that is not yet complete. Patience is required. One characteristic shared by FEs and ECs is that they do not panic about this.

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[200] Drane, *McDonaldization*, p. 63.
[201] McLaren, B. D, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001). See also McLaren, B. D, *More Ready than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

Discussion (20 minutes):
What friends do you have who are hard to imagine being part of the church?

Could you envision a Fresh Expression of church emerging among friends of yours who simply don't fit the traditional model of church? What might that look like? What might you have to approach differently?

Patronage

Implementing a FE requires keen organisation. Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches that are not an extended arm of an existing church, struggle to sustain themselves financially. This independent model often hampers the executing of a missional vision. There is a precedent in financial sustainability, however, in the model of patronage. This is exemplified in the following case.

Sanctus 1 is an Emerging Church in Manchester that meets in an art café. This initiative, that aims to help people explore the Christian faith through the medium of contemporary urban culture, was funded by Manchester Cathedral until it became self-sustaining.[202] This model can allow freedom to shape an initiative specifically to the situation at hand while at the same time having accountability in place if pastoral support is necessary. To have finances in place to initiate a plan is more than half the battle.

A significant report by the Church of Scotland Ministries Council concluded that EC initiatives that have taken on board the patronage model want more "recognition of their work" by supporting churches. They needed a closer relationship to the institution than they initially thought.[203]

Discussion (15 minutes):
What is your response to the idea of funding and pastorally supporting a fresh expression that may not share much likeness to a traditional church?

What potential challenges do you foresee?

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[202] Read here a brief history of this group: http://www.emergingchurch.info/stories/sanctus1/index.htm
[203] Drane, J, & Drane, O. F, *Reformed, Reforming, Emerging and Experimenting* (Church of Scotland Mission and Discipleship Council Report, 2009), p.34.

Simple and Sustainable

Stuart Murray has outlined several qualities that will characterise FEs and ECs if they are to be a sustainable and sustaining church in a Post-Christendom era:

(i) *Church after Christendom will not be uniform*. Glasgow-based Doug Gay expands upon this theme. He points out that the development of the EC, or the 'Church Emerging' as he prefers to call it, can be followed through a hermenutical spiral that contains five phases of reflection and action. These are 'Auditing' (hearing one another's experiences particularly the experiences of those outside our own traditions), Retrieval, Unbundling, Supplementing, and Remixing key elements of Christian traditional practice.[204]

With regards the second and fifth of these motifs, Pete Rollins, one of the establishers of a Emerging Church group in Belfast called *Ikon*,[205] has retrieved aspects of Christian mysticism and remixed them into a postmodern urban context so as to retell the Christian story. Ikon's "services" are held publicly in a pub in the centre of Belfast. Ikon's services, says Rollins, "themselves can be described as a form of 'theodrama' insomuch as they employ a cocktail of live art, poetry, prose, ritual, liturgy and music so as to immerse the individual in a sensually rich environment that is designed to draw out an openness to the incoming of God."[206]

This 'retrieval' is an example of how freely FEs and ECs dip back into different Christian traditions and use them in a 'remixed' manner. This is done in order to contextualise them in a new way. As far as FEs and ECs are concerned, not everything associated with a retrieved spiritual practice or theology needs to be adhered to for it to be meaningful.

(ii) Murray also argues that Church after Christendom should be *less concerned about its shape and more concerned with its ethos*. "The main challenge of emerging churches is not their reshaping of church but the different ethos some of them embody."[207]

(iii) *FEs and ECs should not be seen as bolt-on ministries or extra agendas*. Rather, churches after Christendom should be marked by the organisation of fewer activities and doing them differently.

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[204] Gay, *Remixing The Church*, p. xiv.
[205] http://ikonbelfast.wordpress.com/
[206] Rollins, P, *How (Not) to Speak of God* (London: SPCK, 2000), p. 6, xiv.
[207] Murray, *Church*, p. 219.

(iv) *All proposals are provisional and tentative*. It is acceptable to conclude that certain ideas and experiments have simply not worked. Ascertaining what kind of church is emerging is critical, so flexibility in planning is necessary.

Discussion (30 minutes):

"Practices and processes are not vital to the church, but healthy, worshipping missional communities are." Discuss this question with the other members of your group.

How effective is your church at assessing whether particular activities are fruitful or not? Are you flexible enough to pull the plug on some activities?

Part Three -

Further Hallmarks of Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches

In this final part of the session, we shall look at a number of key characteristics that are shared by many Fresh Expressions and Emerging Churches.

The Use of Culture in Worship and Reflection

This is not a new approach. Using culture to contextualise the gospel was employed by the Wesleys, for example, who designed their church buildings in the style of the theatres of their day and composed hymns to contemporary tunes. In like manner, FEs and ECs employ aspects of contemporary culture, (music, film, art, literature,) that aid reflection upon God from whatever their origins.

This approach to culture speaks of two things: (i) the belief that God can reveal himself in mysterious ways through the work of those who do not formally belong to him; (ii) and the conviction that Christ will ultimately transform that culture which he has mysteriously inspired.

The New Testament speaks of interacting with culture in this way: "So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds" (Acts 7.22). 'Wisdom' is used positively here highlighting the fact that scripture elevates some of Egyptian culture from Moses' day. His Egyptian education helped him to develop as the leader he became for God's people.

Interaction and Participation

FEs and ECs are typically interactive. They often encourage people to participate kinaesthetically, which means using their bodies in worship. FEs and ECs often appeal to multiple senses and to the body as a whole. FEs and ECs don't tend to leave people statically to sit in their pews.

For example, a Fresh Expression in Glasgow's West End spent one Sunday gathering a month cleaning up the River Kelvin in partnership with a local environmental group. There were no songs, no sermons, no Eucharist, no

(formal) prayers. For many in this FE who had belonged to a more traditional format of church all their lives, this was very difficult to view as worship. Eventually, however, it became one of the FEs most successful gatherings in persuading people to follow Christ. It also brought home with considerable force the message of stewarding the earth shown in Psalm 8.6-8:

> You [God] have given them [humanity] dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Creativity

FEs and ECs are notable for their creativity. Often participants contribute by writing their own prayers, sharing their prophecies, giving insights, and these may be done in creative ways. Consider the following description of a service in the UK at an Emerging Church called *Grace*.

> The service opened up with a business as usual space. In this space there was a café with cups of tea and chocolates (the English love to have a cup of tea to cope with everything), movies of cheesy happy adverts and the opening to Blue Velvet, posters with Keep Calm and Carry On. it was a satiated, numb space in which we have got used to the old order of consumption. But the space began to be disrupted by handing out cotton wool for people to put in their ears and eye masks to put on - the lack of seeing and hearing began to be named...

> Then a loud alarm clock went off and there was a call to worship, a call to wake up! Which went like this...

> *Unplug your ears*
> *Unbind, open your eyes*
> *That you may hear*
> *That you may see*
> *Wake up!*
> *God is here*
> *God is doing something new.*
> *God is inviting you into a journey to discover a new world, a new upside down kingdom.*

There is a restlessness in our society, in our culture and in many of us at the moment. The old ways of doing things seem to be broken, or at breaking point.

The theme of tonight's service 'another world is possible' comes from the Occupy movement. It was a slogan etched on barrier tape around the encampment. In Grace this really caught our attention like an alarm, like a wake up call. For about 6 months we have been exploring and thinking about what it might mean to move from an old world in which we are satiated and numb and co-opted by the gods of consumption, where we have got used to the poor begging and bankers earning several million pounds in bonuses to a new world which might be imagined and run on very different lines. The prophets of Israel and Jesus the prophet seem interested in just such a journey, just such an adventure, just such a new world and kingdom.

[prayer]
God of justice, peace and righteousness come into our midst this evening
Breathe your breath,
your Spirit of prophecy,
your energy,
your enlivening,
your imagination on us.
Wake us up
Open our eyes
Unplug our ears
That we might hear
That we might see
That we might grieve
That we might dream
That we might follow the ways of your extraordinary kingdom
Amen"[208]

Community[209]

The reality of true community is certainly not exclusive to FEs and ECs. It is nevertheless a characteristic of theirs that they seek to reinvigorate community life in a serious manner, as a reaction to cultural and religious individualism. Moreover, some groups are further committed to community because of their view of the Trinity. Following Jürgen Moltmann, some are convinced that the

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[208] http://jonnybaker.blogs.com/jonnybaker/emerging_church/
[209] 'Community' here is meant as church as community, as opposed to one's locale.

triune God is the ultimate form of community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – thus they should in a human way emulate this. This, Moltmann's followers insist, is what the early Christian communism of Acts 2 and 4 refers to.

Some groups, in more radical cases, have even committed themselves to residential life together.[210] The British journalist and travel writer Tobias Jones discovered this as he visited several communities of faith in an attempt to understand the dynamic of faith and community. He says, "No community exists unless it is able to live out an interpretation of the sacred." Further, he continues,

> I certainly felt – again, not a particularly promising proposal for a writer – that the only way to show people what you believe in is by living with other people, rather than by lecturing them.[211]

Irrespective of whether community life is residential or not, most, if not all, FEs and ECs take community very seriously and seek to practice it satisfyingly.

It is still not clear what Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church will become. It is still unclear as to the long-term outcome of their efforts for Christ. They certainly have their naysayers.[212] Nevertheless, they are breaking new ground missionally for Christ.

Discussion (2 x 40 minutes):

Working with a partner or a small group, choose <u>one</u> of the imaginary communities described below. Design a FE/EC event that would be suitable for that situation. As you do so, bear in mind particularly the characteristics of Fresh Expressions/Emerging Churches – culture, creativity and community.

Offer your imagined FE/EC event in a short presentation to the other groups and spend time hearing and discussing theirs.

1. A group of affluent businessmen (no women are in this group). They all work in offices and chambers in the city centre. They know each other well and have many shared contacts. Some of these men are occasional churchgoers; most are not and feel alienated from the traditional church. They have heard Christians in the media 'speaking out against capitalism' and have the impression that they would not be very welcome in the church. However,

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[210] Jones, T, *Utopian Dreams: In Search of a Good Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007).
[211] Jones, *Utopian*, p. 201, p. 204.
[212] Carson, D, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

among their number are a couple of Christian barristers who tell you that their friends are probably open to hearing the good news of the Gospel. They all enjoy eating together at the best restaurants and at each other's clubs, and are intelligent and amusing company.

2. The members of staff at a secondary school. There is an ordained chaplain working at the school, who is keen to collaborate with you. She has a flourishing ministry among the pupils, but among the staff, not so much. She has found it very difficult to persuade them to come to events: they are too busy during the day and, when the bell goes at 4 o'clock, they just want to go home. A number of staff members belong to churches at home, and there are others who have described themselves as 'spiritual' people. Due to changes in government policy, members of the teaching staff have felt under pressure lately and some have been looking tired and stressed.

3. A group of pre-school aged children and their families. A number of these babies and little children were baptised at your church, but they do not attend Sunday worship there. They are not attracted to the time and style of worship at your traditional Sung Eucharist, but the families do want their children to grow up knowing the Christian story. They would like a worship service for children, not a playgroup or a Sunday School. Not all the adults in the group are young mums and dads; a significant number of the children are cared for during the day by their grandparents.

Conclusion – Prayer

Pray for open eyes and ears as to what the Spirit might already be saying and doing among and with your church people.

If the Spirit already is at work, might there be opportunity to try to shape a FE around where God is already working? Pray about this.

Pray for an ability to assess the challenges that FEs and ECs bring to the Church involved in God's mission.

Session Five
Fresh Expressions/Emerging Church

Suggested Reading

BLOGS

http://jonnybaker.blogs.com/
http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2006/01/missio_dei.html
http://www.emergingchurch.info/stories/sanctus1/index.htm

BOOKS

Carson, Don, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

Drane, John & Drane, Olive Fleming, *Reformed, Reforming, Emerging and Experimenting* (Church of Scotland Mission and Discipleship Council Report, 2009).

Drane, John, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003).

Gay, Doug, *Remixing The Church: Towards an Emerging Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 2011).

Hirsch, Alan, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

Jones, Tobias, *Utopian Dreams: In Search of a Good Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007).

McLaren, Brian D., *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).
- *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

- More Ready than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

Mobsby, Ian, *Fresh and Emerging Expressions of Church* (London: SCM, 2007).

Murray, Stuart, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004).

Rollins, Peter, *How (Not) to Speak of God* (London: SPCK, 2006).
Smith, David, *Mission After Christendom* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003).

FE & EC CHURCH WEBSITES

http://ikonbelfast.wordpress.com/

www.freshexpressions.org.uk

www.emergingchurch.info

http://www.ianmobsby.net/

http://www.sanctus1.co.uk/

Notes on running a Contextual Bible Study

Contextual Bible Studies form part of the content of Sessions One and Two of this workbook. These notes offer suggestions and advice about how to run a CBS session, outlining the separate stages involved. It is divided into four sections. The four sections are as follows:

- Setting the scene
- Praying and reading aloud
- Discussing the Bible together
- Facilitating the group

1. Setting the scene

The CBS process can be adjusted to work with any size of group. The process works most easily if you have enough people to break out into groups of three and re-form into the full group. It is important that the facilitators create an atmosphere that will be helpful for the session. Regarding the group dynamic, this means establishing a sense of trust and mutual respect amongst the participants. It also includes creating a welcoming, positive environment where the study can take place. Here are some suggestions for preparation, before the study begins.

- A CBS session is straightforward to organise and requires few resources: chairs to sit on, the scripture passage and questions, and a flipchart and pens for the facilitators.

- It is helpful to arrange the chairs in a circle, with a clear view of the flipchart.

- A prayerful atmosphere can be created by setting up a visual focal point on a low table or on the floor in the middle of the circle – an open Bible, a candle, a piece of coloured cloth.

- Always start on time; latecomers can quietly join the circle as they arrive.

- Give a very brief introduction of yourself, what the session will be about and, if the participants are new to each other, invite them to introduce themselves in turn to the others in the group. This can also be a good time to remind everyone that their sharing during the session is confidential to the group.

2. Praying and reading aloud

Opening and closing prayers
Each study begins and ends with a short prayer. Facilitators are encouraged to choose prayers that will suit their group; the sessions can be enriched with different texts and styles of prayers from across the Christian tradition.

The Scripture passage
It is very helpful to provide each participant with an identical copy of the Bible passage being explored, preferably on one A4 page. This encourages the group members to focus on the chosen passage rather than becoming side tracked by other passages, related or unrelated.

There is no right or wrong version or translation of the Bible to use for a CBS session. You could choose a version with which your group will be familiar; or, sometimes an unfamiliar version can prompt fresh insights into a well-known passage.

However, it is most useful to explore the text using only one version of Scripture at a time. This helps the group to focus on the meaning of that passage, rather than upon the differences between various translations.

Reading the Scripture passage aloud
It is helpful to read the text aloud together at least once, perhaps twice, before beginning to discuss the questions. There are numerous different styles of reading, which can enhance the session:

- The text is read by a single voice, and repeated by another.
- The passage is divided into sections for two or three readers.
- The group reads round the circle, taking a verse at a time.
- The whole group reads the passage together in unison.
- The text is separated out, like a drama, into the characters and a narrator.

Remember that not everyone feels comfortable reading aloud in public.
Always give participants the choice not to read aloud. If you are asking someone to read a longer or more complicated passage, it is good to allow them time beforehand, to prepare.

3. Discussing the Bible passage together

The Bible study sessions offered in this workbook may be reproduced as many times as required. Some groups work best when each participant has a copy of the question sheet; it can be helpful for members of the group to see in advance how the session can be expected to progress. However, with some groups the facilitators may need to adapt the material as the session unfolds; in this case, it would not be useful to hand out the questions at the beginning of the study.

The process works most easily if, at different times in the study, people are invited to break into groups of three for discussion, and then to re-form into the full group to feed back. This is a pattern which allows maximum participation to all those attending the study. In these Bible studies, there is an indication beside each question regarding when to ask people to reflect on their own, when to work in threes and when to work as a full group. However, this is merely a guide; you are welcome to adapt the plan as best suits the needs of your group.

The Bible study sessions offered in this workbook share a common pattern; that is, the questions for discussion generally follow this sequence:

- Opening
- Close Reading
- Reflecting on the text and its context
- Resonance between the text and the contemporary context
- Seeking transformation

The opening question begins the conversation within the group. It simply asks for the initial thoughts and feelings of each participant on hearing the text. This question is as open as possible, 'What jumps off the page at you?' Participants are invited to share their reactions to the passage: single words, theological insights, comments about the characters, personal experiences. Everything is welcome; nothing need be discussed in depth or analysed further at this stage.

Close reading questions are designed to slow down the reading of the group, to allow the participants to discover more of the details and the richness of the text. For example, 'naming' questions ask readers to list the scenes, characters or

emotions that may be found within the passage. Later in the discussion, some of these may be explored further.

Questions reflecting on the text and its context invite people to consider in more depth some of the key ideas, themes or characters. These questions might also ask participants to share what they know about the historical, religious or social context of the passage. Often, there will be considerable knowledge available within the group; with judicious questioning, group members will be able to offer this, rather than being 'taught' directly by the facilitator.

Questions seeking resonance between the text and the contemporary context allow the focus of the session to move from the Bible text into the present experience of the group members. These questions often ask the group to think about ways in which their shared reflection on the passage might shed light on particular contemporary concerns.

Questions seeking transformation affirm and challenge the group in its faith-in-action. For example, such questions ask what difference their reflection might make to their personal, church community and wider local community life. Spending time together on this part of the process may help the group to discern practical, communal action for their good and for the good of those around them.

4. Facilitating the group

The facilitators have an enabling role. It is their responsibility to create an accepting, non-threatening atmosphere for the study, so that everyone can take a full part in the session according to their own ability. Facilitators encourage respectful listening and sharing; they discourage disputation, aggression or conflict. It is also up to them to keep participants focused on the topic and to prevent the discussion from being dominated by one or a few people in the group.

Facilitators think in terms of inviting people into the discussion; they are not expected to know all the answers themselves. Open questions encourage dialogue and exploration. Listening can be more valuable than talking. Not everyone has had experience of group discussion; not everyone feels comfortable talking aloud. Yet all will be reflecting and participating with the group at some level.

One of the challenges of this approach to reading the Bible, is how to encourage the exploration of a text and manage the dynamics of the group, without 'setting the agenda' for the participants. Although there cannot be such thing as an

unbiased reading of scripture, facilitators actively try not to impose their own issues or interpretations on others. However, this does not mean that they must not ask searching questions; on the contrary, sometimes the group may need their help to clarify particular areas of difficulty or challenge.

Here are some recommendations of good practice, for CBS facilitators:

- **Working in teams:** Working as a pair or a team of facilitators is strongly recommended. It allows the facilitators to share the responsibilities, the difficulties and the joys, of running the study. In particular, it is much easier for two people to monitor the progress of the session and to make any necessary adjustments.

- **Being sensitive to the group:** Continue to observe the group, being aware of people's body language as well as what they say. Remember to refer back to the group: are they ready to move on to another question? Is clarification required, of a point that has been made? Invite people to join in the session continually, with encouraging words, expressions and gestures.

- **Using open questions:** These are questions that do not presume an answer. They solicit a personal response, and require that response to be respected – even when it may be gently challenged or developed further by the group. Open questions may ask, 'What do you know about…? What do you feel…? Why do you think…?' By contrast, 'closed' questions look for the 'right' answer in the mind of the questioner; they may simply be 'yes' or 'no' answers. Closed questions reduce the level of participation in a group, especially if members feel that they lack some expert knowledge.

- **Hearing all contributions:** The CBS process aims to encourage all the members of the group to participate as best they can, without any one person dominating – including the facilitators. It may be that some people have some wider or more specialist knowledge, Biblical or otherwise, which is relevant to the study. Their input should be welcomed as a gift to the whole group. The facilitators need to make sure, however, that this does not overwhelm the session; that other participants do not feel disempowered by the expertise of a few.

- **Affirming the members of the group:** The best sessions are those where the facilitators have confidence in the group and enjoy their company. The facilitators should never hurt anyone with a critical put-down; indeed, the most feisty and talkative participants may be especially vulnerable. Honour their contributions; then widen the discussion to the whole group, 'What do others

think…?'   Everyone should leave a CBS session feeling valued and worthwhile.

- **Keeping to time:** This is an important consideration; the facilitators' care over timekeeping is an expression of their respect for the group. Before each session, plan how much time will be allotted to each of the questions. If you do not trust yourself to stick to the plan, appoint someone in the group to be the timekeeper for each exercise.

- **Recording on the flipchart:** Using a flipchart to record the discussion during a CBS session means that ideas can be revisited and explored further as the study progresses. Try to capture each participant's exact wording: people respond well to seeing their contributions honoured in this way. The completed sheets can be displayed on the walls or spread out on the floor for all to see. Sometimes, however, it may not be appropriate to write up; for example, when personal stories are being shared. If in doubt, consult the group about whether they would like their sharing to be recorded or not.

- **Writing up after a session:** some groups find it useful to have their flipchart feedback typed up and distributed to them for reference, after the study. This would particularly assist a group involved in a long-term project or discernment process. The facilitators and the group would agree on the purpose and value of such writing up, during the session.