



Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

THE REALITIES OF THE CHANGING EXPRESSIONS OF THE CHURCH

Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 43

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In Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2004

“A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call”

In encouraging the publication and study of the Occasional Papers, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization does not necessarily endorse every viewpoint expressed in these papers.

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was Issue Group No. 14
(there were 31 Issue Groups at the Forum)

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The context for the production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers

The Lausanne Movement is an international movement committed to energising
“the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”

With roots going back to the historical conferences in Edinburgh (1910) and Berlin (1966), the Lausanne Movement was born out of the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974. The landmark outcome of this Congress was the **Lausanne Covenant** supported by the 2,430 participants from 150 nations. The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith. Many activities have emerged from the Lausanne Congress and from the second congress held in Manila in 1989. The Covenant (in a number of languages), and details about the many regional events and specialised conferences which have been undertaken in the name of Lausanne, may be examined online at www.lausanne.org.

The Lausanne International Committee believed it was led by the Holy Spirit to hold another conference which would bring together Christian leaders from around the world. This time the Committee planned to have younger emerging leaders involved and sought funds to enable it to bring a significant contingent from those parts of the world where the church is rapidly growing today. It decided to call the conference a **Forum**. As a Forum its structure would allow people to come and participate if they had something to contribute to one of 31 issues (around which were formed Issue Groups). These issues were chosen through a global research programme seeking to identify the most significant issues in the world today which are of concern in our task to take the *good news* to the world.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) is the report that has emerged from one of these Issue Groups. LOPs have been produced for each of the Issue Groups and information on these and other publications may be obtained online at www.lausanne.org.

The theme of the Forum for World Evangelization held in 2004 was “**A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call.**” This Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. 1,530 participants came from 130 countries to work in one of the 31 Issue Groups.

The Affirmations at the conclusion of the Forum stated:

“There has been a spirit of working together in serious dialogue and prayerful reflection. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world have come together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization. They committed themselves to joint action under divine guidance.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God’s direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges.

In the 31 Issue Groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront.

There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6,000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority.

Secondly, the words of our Lord call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this we have failed greatly. We renew our commitment to reach out in love and compassion to those who are marginalised because of disabilities or who have different lifestyles and spiritual

perspectives. We commit to reach out to children and young people who constitute a majority of the world's population, many of whom are being abused, forced into slavery, armies and child labour.

A third stream of a strategic nature acknowledges that the growth of the church is now accelerating outside of the western world. Through the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, we recognise the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the church in the *South*. Church leaders from the *South* are increasingly providing exemplary leadership in world evangelization.

Fourthly, we acknowledge the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables.

Fifthly, we call on the church to use media to effectively engage the culture in ways that draw non-believers toward spiritual truth and to proclaim Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways.

Finally, we affirm the priesthood of all believers and call on the church to equip, encourage and empower women, men and youth to fulfil their calling as witnesses and co-labourers in the world wide task of evangelization.

Transformation was a theme which emerged from the working groups. We acknowledge our own need to be continually transformed, to continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges of God's word and to grow in Christ together with fellow Christians in ways that result in social and economic transformation. We acknowledge that the scope of the gospel and building the Kingdom of God involves, body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore we call for increasing integration of service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

We pray for those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith and for those who live in constant fear of their lives. We uphold our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We recognize that the reality of the persecuted church needs to be increasingly on the agenda of the whole Body of Christ. At the same time, we also acknowledge the importance of loving and doing good to our enemies while we fight for the right of freedom of conscience everywhere.

We are deeply moved by the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the greatest human emergency in history. The Lausanne movement calls all churches everywhere to prayer and holistic response to this plague.

"9/11," the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel or the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities.

We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers.

We pray for peace and reconciliation and God's guidance in how to bring about peace through our work of evangelization. We pray for God to work in the affairs of nations to open doors of opportunity for the gospel. We call on the church to mobilize every believer to focus specific consistent prayer for the evangelization of their communities and the world.

In this Forum we have experienced the partnership of men and women working together. We call on the church around the world to work towards full partnership of men and women in the work of world evangelism by maximising the gifts of all.

We also recognize the need for greater intentionality in developing future leaders. We call on the church to find creative ways to release emerging leaders to serve effectively."

Numerous practical recommendations for local churches to consider were offered. These will be available on the Lausanne website and in the Lausanne Occasional Papers. It is our prayer that these many case studies and action plans will be used of God to mobilise the church to share a clear and relevant message using a variety of methods to reach the

most neglected or resistant groups so that everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and be able to respond to this good news in faith.

We express our gratitude to the Thai Church which has hosted us and to their welcoming presentation to the Forum. We are profoundly grateful to God for the privilege of being able to gather here from the four corners of the earth. We have developed new partnerships, made new friends and encouraged one another in our various ministries. Notwithstanding the resistance to the gospel in many places and the richness of an inherited religious and cultural tradition we here at the Forum have accepted afresh the renewed call to be obedient to the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to making His saving love known so that the whole world may have opportunity to accept God's gift of salvation through Christ."

These affirmations indicate the response of the participants to the Forum outcomes and their longing that the whole church may be motivated by the outcomes of the Forum to strengthen its determination to be obedient to God's calling.

May the case studies and the practical suggestions in this and the other LOPs be of great help to you and your church as you seek to find new ways and a renewed call to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ

David Claydon

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years new varieties of church have emerged all over the world. This study is based on cases from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. Each of these churches considers themselves to be authentic expressions of the Body of Jesus Christ. Beyond that they might appear to have little in common. We are convinced the wider Christian community will be enriched through closer acquaintance with these new streams of church life.

From Static to Dynamic Understanding of Church

For most of the past two thousand years Christians have understood the church to have a fixed form. After Christianity was recognized as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 375 A.D., the church became a major institution in society. Christendom promoted the notion that the church was society's spiritual mother and, as such, had priority. The church was held to be the visible expression of the Kingdom of God. Functionally, church and kingdom were treated as one. The church was as much a special place of worship as a community of people seeking to follow Jesus Christ. Peter's confession (Matthew 16:18b) was used to confirm that the church was a permanent bulwark against the forces of evil and death, and thus unchanging in its form as well as its function.

The church was held to be the mediator between humankind and God. As a particular territory came under the control of church and state the people would be baptized and that society was then proclaimed to be *Christian*. The church's role was to provide pastoral services and help maintain civil order. The territorial church did not need mission since mission was only one among several functions and the mission task had been completed once the entire society was Christianised. This historical model of church was traditional and a bulwark against change. With the coming of modernity, such a static understanding did not prepare the church to respond to a culture in continual flux. To survive in a dynamic and changing environment, institutions must be responsive, flexible, and adaptable. When evangelists, missionaries and social prophets have challenged the status quo, the church has reacted defensively. But the static view of the church is being challenged from several angles.

First, biblical theology in the twentieth century called into question the traditional Christendom understanding of the relationship between church and kingdom. Recall the steps leading to the founding of the church in the New Testament. According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus began his earthly mission by

- (a) announcing that the Kingdom of God had begun,
- (b) inviting men and women to be His disciples, and
- (c) forming these disciples into a community living out the reign of God (Mark 1:15b-19; cf. Matthew 4:17 and chapters 5-7). The church was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The church did not precede the Kingdom of God; rather the Kingdom gave rise to the church.

Neither Jesus nor Paul addresses the matter of the organizational form of the church or the kind of place where it should meet. Instead, the New Testament writers use metaphors and images to describe the purpose or function of the church as the Body of Christ in the world. The church is to be judged by its continuing obedience and faithful witness to the Kingdom of God. It draws its life from its head, Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:16-20 (with parallel statements in the other Gospels and Acts 1:8) is a key ecclesiological statement in the New Testament. In obedience to its head, the church's vocation is missionary witness to the world.

Second, the early church was marked by variety. The churches addressed in the epistles are usually known as "the church at..." or "the church in..." The Apostle Paul grappled with the issues that each of the churches confronted in their local contexts. He counsels and mentors them but does not impose uniform patterns. Over time, as the churches became established, hierarchical structures were developed and patterns emerged that were regarded as normative. This put a brake on flexibility and creativity.

In the third place, the modern mission movement undermined the traditional understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. In 1800 no church was prepared to engage in the direct sending of missionaries. Such work, it was argued, was not the responsibility of the church. All missionary activity was sponsored by missionary societies that enjoyed no ecclesiastical status. Gradually, as new churches emerged in Asia and Africa, the static view of the church was called into question. Early in the twentieth century the German

theologian Martin Kähler argued that “mission is the mother of theology,” pointing to the fact that the New Testament was written in the context of mission and as an aid in the continuing missionary advance of the church. A church without mission is defective for it is not animated by what is most basic to its being, the *Missio Dei*.

The modern mission movement became an important testing ground for how the church is to be understood. Throughout the nineteenth century missionaries thought that the church they were commissioned to establish in foreign lands should be the same as what they knew in their homelands. Increasingly, this assumption was challenged by these new churches which wished to follow Jesus Christ but to do so using forms appropriate to their own cultures. Indigenous Christian movements began to emerge in reaction to modern missions early in the nineteenth century and increased considerably in the twentieth.

Throughout the twentieth century the church of historical Christendom located in Western Europe and North America showed increasing signs of decline. In response renewal movements that spawned new churches continued to appear. The transition from modern to postmodern culture stimulated new expressions of church attuned to the changing culture.

The Present Opportunity

The Christian movement has experienced unparalleled growth over the past century. This rapid expansion has been mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America so that more than sixty percent of all Christians today are found in these continents. These are the areas where intentional missionary witness and the multiplication of churches were practiced. While the modern mission movement has been used in establishing the church throughout the world, thousands of new churches have been founded through indigenous initiatives that do not belong to the churches of historical Christendom. What they all have in common is that they reflect the particular cultural context in which they are located. The traditional Western forms have generally remained as strangers in these new cultural contexts.

Several observations characterize the opportunity before us at the present time. What has been understood to be barriers to evangelization can be transformed into new possibilities.

- There is no context where the church cannot take root. But wherever it is planted the church is called to be “in but not of the world.”
- New forms and expressions of the church are emerging in order to reach groups of people for whom the conventional church has not been an option.
- Traditional churches can experience renewal and be transformed into effective channels of witness.
- The fullness of the gospel is required to respond to these diverse situations.

The case studies presented here illustrate and document the variety, vitality, and viability of some of these new streams of ecclesial life flowing across the world.

Appendix 2 gives a list of typical new forms of church that are emerging around the world.

The Case Studies

As we met at the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization to consider new forms of the church in relation to world evangelization, we decided that a case study approach would be the most effective way to learn about and report on this phenomenon. We invited the thirty-four participants to tell the stories of their churches or ones known to them. As we listened, we tried to discern “what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” From the wide range of stories from areas as diverse as China, Thailand, eastern and western Europe, Latin America, United States and Africa, fifteen examples were selected for reflection and for presentation in this report.

To enable us to see the key features of these stories, we developed and refined a “taxonomic and diagnostic grid” to help focus our questions and narrative. It proved exceptionally useful and we share it and the process behind it with our readers in the hope that it might not only illuminate the reports that follow, but also prove useful to others who want to replicate our experience in their own context (see Appendix 1).

For each of the case studies below we give the context, challenge, story, values and principles. The reports are edited versions of the original material presented by our Issue

Group participants, whose names are given with each account. At the end, we draw together the most outstanding principles and offer certain reflections on them. We conclude our report with a call and challenge to all churches round the world.

It is our prayer that our stories, reflections and insights will be an inspiration, encouragement and means of guidance for people across the world who want to be part of this move of God's Spirit in the world.

1. The Apostolic Discipleship Model (ADM)

Paz Central Church
Santarém, Brazil

Context

In the early 1990's, when Paz Central Church reached 200 members, Pastor Abe realized that he would no longer be able to provide good pastoral care for everyone in his congregation. Up to that point, he had visited — almost on a weekly basis — all of the church's members. Every Monday he would personally visit all those who had made a decision to follow Jesus the previous Sunday. But with 200 people in the church, and more being added daily, the demands became too heavy. He realized that a single pastor cannot personally care for 200 people and still hope to spend adequate time in prayer, care properly for his family, train assistants, and manage all of the other affairs of the church.

Paz Central Church is located in the city of Santarém, Brazil, in the very heart of the Amazon Basin. With a population of about 175,000, Santarém is a cultural and economic hub for the western part of the State of Pará. Santarém has also become a centre of Christian influence and study, with many visitors coming now from other parts of Brazil—and indeed other countries—to see firsthand the marvellous work God is doing there.

During those challenging days in the early 1990's, the pastoral team began to organize additional prayer meetings, fellowship assemblies, retreats for different age groups, and group discipleship meetings. All of these were beneficial to some extent. But Pastor Abe and his team knew that if they were to meet the need of providing good pastoral care and discipleship in a fast-growing church they needed something more.

Pastor Abe and his pastors spent time studying some of the best-known models of church growth, discipleship, and leadership training. Among the leaders who influenced them most were Reverend David Yonggi Cho, who leads the world's largest church in South Korea, Dr. Ralph Neighbour Jr., who developed Groups of Interest, and Pastor Cesar Castellanos, who founded the Government of the Twelve (G12), in Columbia.

Pastor Abe and the team came to the conclusion that all of these models are rich in biblical principles and values, and they have produced wonderful results in the contexts in which they have been applied. Certainly, they say they would not have hesitated in adopting any one of them there, had that been God's leading, because they don't consider themselves radical or dogmatic or exclusive in their thinking.

But they believed that the Holy Spirit, being always dynamic and creative, had something special in mind for His church in the Amazon Basin, something that would be ideally suited for Brazilians and their culture. Thus, with a sense of utter dependence on the Lord and the sure hope that He would answer, the team prayed for His perfect plan. And they believe that God showed them a model that is simple, practical, adaptable and easy to reproduce!

Essence of the Apostolic Discipleship Model (ADM)

In 1994, the church had only seventeen cells, but they were already developing a strong cell church model. By 1999, when the ADM model had finally been developed, they were already exploding in growth. In essence ADM is a cell church model whose outstanding feature is that everyone is continually discipled one-on-one within the context of the cell group. They developed a variety of evangelical and leadership training tools to promote twin mutually reinforced goals: one-on-one discipleship and strong cell groups.

The introduction of ADM proved to be a powerful catalyst for growth and a major transition point for Paz Central Church, which by the grace of God has grown now to more than 11,000 members. They have made it a top priority to see that each member of the church—from the senior pastor on down to the newest Christian—is personally discipled. The result is a living, unbroken, self-reinforced chain of disciplers and disciples. Because each member of the church is encouraged to meet with his discipler every week, there is real mentoring and accountability within the body. The one-on-one discipleship has been the main secret for the raising up of thousands of strong cell leaders.

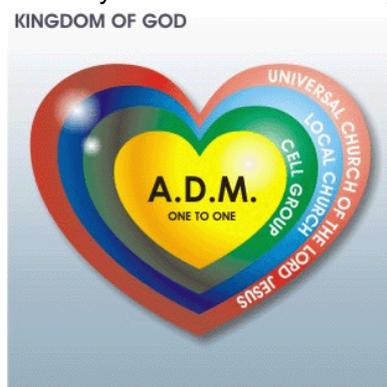
They ask that each member of the church have at least one disciple but challenge members to go further and have three or more. In doing this, they are obeying Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Similarly, each church member is encouraged to participate in his cell group, where he can worship, share, study, pray, and evangelize with other believers in an intimate setting – that is, the home. In this way, the church—even with 11,000 members—is able to provide good pastoral care for the entire body, consistent with the church model described in the book of Acts.

Far from being an isolated and geographical experience, ADM has proven to be adaptable to all sorts of soils. It has been adopted and is working well in 370 other PAZ churches in the Amazon Basin. PAZ (Project AmaZon) is a missions project which has been reaching the lost river villagers living along the Amazon River and its hundreds of tributaries since 1978. ADM has also been adopted or adapted by thousands of churches throughout Brazil and helping leaders and churches in urban mega-cities like Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and in towns, villages and rural areas all over the country.

The Strategy of the Hearts

Perhaps the best way to illustrate how ADM works is through the Strategy of the Hearts. The concept is that of a big square with a heart inside. The heart is composed of four hearts, one overlays the other like the layers of an onion.



1. The square represents the KINGDOM OF GOD, within which the church is located.
2. The external heart is the GLOBAL (UNIVERSAL) CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS as the heart of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, “I will build my church,” thus, any work of the Kingdom of God on earth must directly or indirectly involve the church of Jesus.
3. The second heart, contained within the first, is the LOCAL CHURCH. I cannot

truly say that I am cooperating with the edification of the global church of the Lord Jesus if I am not directly or indirectly vitally involved with the local church, helping it to grow spiritually or numerically. In other words, a parachurch organization only justifies its existence if it is somehow blessing the local church.

4. The third heart, which is the heart of the local church, is the CELL GROUP. Again, any ministry of the local church should be focused on the growth and multiplication of the cells. In other words, any activity that is held within the context of the local church that competes with the cells should be refocused or eliminated.
5. Finally, they believe that the cell also has a heart: It is the ONE-ON-ONE, PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIP, which they call an “Apostolic Discipleship Microcell.” (Notice that ADM stands for the church model—Apostolic Discipleship Model—and also for the ongoing one-on-one discipleship, which is the fundamental basis for the whole church model: Apostolic Discipleship Microcell.)

Currently, the Paz Central Church has 1,500+ cells, which are throughout the city’s neighbourhoods. Each cell has 7 to 15 converted people. Each cell contains many microcells. These microcells currently number more than 7,500, each one composed of two committed Christians: a discipler and a disciple.

Besides Paz Central, there are 22 other PAZ churches in the city of Santarém. All together they have over 3,000 cell groups and over 20,000 converted believers.

Vision and Values

PAZ Central Church is a Christ-Family-centred church. They believe the family is the main cell where one might be involved and so needs to be a priority above all other needs and activities of the church. These are the values that guide the church:

- Pleasing and glorifying God;
- Having a deep and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus;

- Making disciples that will themselves be disciple-makers according to 2 Timothy 2:2;
- Promoting the Kingdom of God through aggressive church planting according to the ADM vision for Santarém, the whole of Amazon Basin, Brazil and beyond.

The discipleship process and the multiplication of the cells take place in three aspects:

- Vertical growth—members grow in intimacy with God and become mature, responsible and committed followers of Jesus Christ;
- Horizontal growth—members grow in fellowship with one another and transfer this growth into their lives;
- Corporate growth—members grow numerically by winning new people for Jesus and multiplying the genetic code of relational evangelism and ongoing discipleship in their lives.

Church motto: EVERY CHRISTIAN A DISCIPLE, EVERY DISCIPLE A COMMITTED LEADER.

Key Features

Five key features characterize the church:

- Relationships—both into and outside the church. The church helps its members and the community with funeral expenses and counselling and support for the grieving family, in disaster situations, medicine, surgery, dental care, digging of wells, food, clothes, water filters, free transportation, etc.;
- Strong passion for Jesus and for people;
- Sacrificial living, especially in remote areas;
- Worship—high impact on the society. The church's influence caused the local three day street carnival to be replaced by a festival or celebration of Jesus called "**Christoval.**"
- Leadership training—Every Christian should be engaged in a personal discipleship relationship, but should also be in ministerial discipleship. One has to be a cell group leader before one can take on other responsibility in the church.

Principles Captured from the Church's Vision and Experience

These are the main insights gained from the church's experience:

- Intentional cultivation of relationships
- Continuous relational discipleship
- High commitment to growth at all levels
- Maintaining balance between cell life and congregational worship; a plane or a bird needs both wings to fly properly
- Empowering leadership orientation through broadly delegated authority
- Ensuring every leader is accountable; no lone rangers are allowed
- Promoting multiplication mentality at all levels
- Assigning priority to prayer
- Creating functional leadership—positions are not to be maintained for the sake of structure

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2. From Traditional to Cell-based Church

First Baptist Church
Santa Fe do Sul, Brazil

Context

Santa Fe do Sul is a town in the northwest part of the Sao Paulo State, Brazil with a growing population of around 30,000. In the Brazilian context the city is well organized, with a relatively low rate of violence and social problems, though with the growth of the city the problems are increasing. Up to a few years ago the region had the lowest rate of evangelical Christians in the state of Sao Paulo, about 2%, but the percentage is rising. The vast majority is born Catholic, but most of the people grow up without much contact with the church. The influence of different types of spiritism is strong in all levels of society.

Challenge

The best-known evangelical church in town has been the traditional Baptist church with almost fifty years of history. About fifteen years ago it went through a difficult division after a period of tension between two groups—one traditional and the other more charismatic. The latter group formed another church that soon had more divisions. Still, the challenge remained for the original church to respond better to the spiritual needs of people and become more relevant to new generations.

Narrative

A new pastor helped stabilize the congregation after the division, and started a process of changing the forms of worship and fellowship. First, celebrations were made more vivid and joyful through worship songs led by a pop/rock-band. The church still tended to be pastor-centred and focused on the gatherings at the church. Most members of the church could be characterized as passive observers rather than active participants, with a little group of leaders “running the business.” The leadership felt a strong need for a new vision that could make the church more focused on discipleship and lay-oriented ministry. At the same time they felt the need for better opportunities to build close relationships. The leadership decided to transform the church into a cell-based community while maintaining the celebration on Sunday as an important expression of common worship and fellowship.

Some of the members were familiar with Bible study groups in the homes, but now all members were expected to participate. Cell-group membership was also made a condition for newcomers who wanted to be baptized. Right from the beginning of the system of cell groups in 2002 there has been a strong emphasis on prayer for non-Christian friends and neighbours, relational evangelism, and multiplication of groups as a goal. This has led to continual growth of participants. The groups normally divide when they reach fifteen members. After about nine months the cell groups will have multiplied and divided into two or three. It is stressed that it is in the nature of a cell to grow and multiply in order to reach new people. In the almost three years since this began there have been three multiplications of cell groups, reaching a total of 32 by September 2004.

The newcomers mainly come from a nominal Catholic background mixed with the influence of spiritism. Some have passed through shorter periods within other churches, as the “rotation” of people among various churches is a problem in the context. Visitors are given time to relate with the believers in the cell, ask questions and be in a process. Depending on their spiritual background, intercession is offered for liberation and renunciation of earlier experiences. Affinities and common interests are considered when new groups are established. There are special cell groups for the youth.

Each cell has a leader and a co-leader in training, with an accountability system for supervisors, coordinators, and pastor. The cell group leader is mainly a facilitator and can be any kind of person with any one or more of a variety of spiritual gifts, as long as he/she has an intimate relationship with God, a good testimony, and relates effectively with others. Over a period of three months the new candidates follow a leadership course on Sunday mornings preparing them to lead their own group; the pastor regularly provides follow-up teaching in ministry and discipleship for the leaders. The emphasis on discipleship and training is geared to the practical level of everyday life within the cell group and between the cell group leader and the members. As far as possible, the leader or other members of the group train newcomers, preparing them for baptism.

After one year of cell groups the participation in Sunday celebrations went from 300 to 400 people, and the congregation had to move from its traditional church building at the centre of town. The pastor points out that the new emphasis on cells made the congregation more flexible in deciding where to meet for fellowship and the members were prepared for the transition to a local tennis club. The attendance at Sunday celebrations is now about 600, and there are preparations for the construction of a new church building. A key to the success of the transition process seems to be that the pastor has stayed with the congregation for many years so that he knows his congregation well and has the trust of its members.

Values

The main change for this church was one of values rather than structure. The leadership was convinced that the most efficient way of evangelising and making new disciples of Jesus was on a personal level, not within a large group of people. The church had to learn that the pastor alone could not do this. They implemented the principle of “every member becoming a minister.” A cell-group strategy with strong emphasis on training leadership was a way of concretizing this value.

Another important value was that of building strong relationships. The church had a long tradition of being activist-oriented. The leadership felt the necessity of giving more priority to small need-oriented fellowships where the members could be—with God, with people—as a basis and a point of reference to their ministry. The cell groups give this opportunity.

The church maintains the celebrations on Sunday, thus reminding the cells of the larger Body of Christ to which they belong. The cell is not a self-sufficient unit but needs the larger fellowship. As the cell groups tend to be homogenous units, the celebrations express the diversity.

Summary of Principles

The transition of First Baptist Church of Santa Fe do Sul into a cell-based church was not spontaneous, but it was the result of a long period of planning and preparing the church that started with renewal of worship. The introduction of cell groups has reoriented the congregation toward lay-leadership, emphasizing personal evangelism, training and discipling with a multiplication mentality at all levels. The broadly delegated authority is balanced with an accountability and mentoring structure where the pastor still is ultimately responsible. The primary focus of the cell groups is relating rather than doing, which seems to meet the needs of many people. There is a balanced interaction between cell and celebration-fellowship to maintain the sense of unity in diversity.

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3. Reaching an Oppressed Minority Group

Salvation Army Church
Brno, Czech Republic

Context

The Czech Republic (Czechia) is a nation of 10 million people with a history of subjugation: most recently seven years of Nazi occupation followed by the communist regime for 45 years. Before this the country was controlled by the Austro-Hungarian empire for two centuries. The population is predominantly white with a growing population (300,000 in 2002) of Roma (gypsies) who are slowly migrating westwards from other Eastern European countries. Brno, Czechia's second city where our work is located, has a population 400,000. 10% are Roma and 0.25% are evangelical Christians.

This people group suffers from racial discrimination from all levels of white Czech society. However, it also has its own internal prejudice between two major groupings and towards non-Roma. Roma self-identify very strongly and define a major part of their identity by their clan and family groups. This is expressed partly in a concept of shared ownership of property and also in the expectation of an instant response when a family or clan member calls for help.

Roma are rarely able to gain employment, but teach themselves to be self-reliant. This means that theft is encouraged from a young age. With other expressions of anti-social behaviour this contributes to the antipathy expressed by the majority population. Also, many Roma are poorly educated, not least because their own orally-based culture is at odds with the surrounding book-based culture and learning systems.

There is a general sense in which Roma live only in the present moment. This shows in a lack of planning in all areas of life and presents problems when integrating with a time-conscious (driven?) culture, both outside and inside the church. Additionally, many Roma are of the opinion that they have nothing to learn from outsiders. This attitude also applies to the church.

In most cases the Czech church has been unsuccessful at evangelising, let alone disciplining this people group.

Narrative

After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the Salvation Army re-established its work in the Czech Republic in 1990. In Brno it operated from a dual-purpose church and community centre in a mixed race but mainly white area on the edge of the city centre. Several Roma families became involved in the church together with white Czechs. However, the Roma left within one or two years. While the church grew, with a mainly under 30's congregation, the pattern of Roma joining and then leaving within a short time kept repeating itself. The various leaders always had a commitment to seeing the two communities worshipping together, but while this occurred for short periods of time, only two young people stayed within the church on anything like a long-term basis. Both of these were seen to have dropped some behaviours from their home culture and adapted to the mainstream Czech as well as Christian culture.

Attempts at traditional Salvation Army worship styles failed, so worship patterns reflected many other Czech churches in the adoption of guitar and keyboard to accompany worship songs and traditional hymns. Personal testimony continued to play a part in worship services alongside prayer, praise and holiness teaching.

In 1999 a community centre plus church was opened in one Roma district of the city. The centre leader was a Roma Christian and the spiritual work grew alongside the social work, leading to a congregation of thirty Roma. However, when the centre leader left to work in another city, the whole Roma congregation (which worshipped with the main church and met for teaching in the community centre) left to join another church.

A white Czech then took over as leader of the centre together with a Roma spiritual worker, and the work of growing a congregation began again. A year later this reached a level of twelve Roma worshippers and three homeless white Czechs. During this period the Roma congregation worshipped only in its own centre. Once again the spiritual worker left the centre, but this time the congregation moved with him and became an independent fellowship. In both cases at the centre, family and clan members were drawn to the leader, but members of other clans were reluctant to attend.

Meanwhile Roma individuals and families continued the pattern of attending the main church and then leaving again within a fairly short period of time. Of the two individuals who stayed over the long term, when one left Czechia to find employment, the second sought community with other Roma and rapidly re-adopted some Roma cultural patterns of behaviour. This person then left the church, citing the precedence of calls for help by clan members as the reason for non-attendance.

Similar patterns of church attendance were noted in a survey by the Czech Ecumenical Council of Churches (ECR) in 2003. Most responding churches (from several denominations and areas in Czechia) reported that they had “bad” experiences with Roma. Comments included: “Roma are only coming if they have any material gain from the visit,” “It is hard to place them in traditional church,” “They are unstable and they are not coming for the services regularly.” This usually resulted in the end of work among Roma.

However, it was also reported that if there is someone who appeals to them, Roma will follow - everything depends on personal relationship and there is little regard for theological factors. This appears to be borne out in the experiences at Brno Salvation Army. Another factor noted is that Roma are extremely sensitive and will leave altogether or move (often en masse) to another church at the slightest offence, real or imagined.

In June 2004 the Salvation Army in Brno moved its small congregation into its newly extended community centre in the Roma area of the city. This decision was imposed to some extent by outside factors, but the present spiritual leaders have a strong desire to bring the gospel into this community, as they see it as the most natural place for The Salvation Army to be, given its historical roots as a mission bringing the gospel to the poor and marginalised. Fear has been expressed by some members of the congregation, but also a realisation has come that in the past they may have tried to give themselves rather than Jesus Christ to Roma visitors. This realisation has helped clarify the need for a changed response to those who come in from the surrounding community.

As the move has taken place and new contacts are made, awareness is growing within the congregation that there is a need to adapt to the surrounding culture to build relationships there. The visible vulnerability of being a minority whose mission is to reach out to the surrounding majority is also bringing about a realisation that “we” must be willing to change to accommodate “them” rather than expect “them” to become like us. Another issue being addressed is that of a very distinctive Salvation Army culture having been imported to a post-communist culture where some of its identifiers hold extremely negative connotations. This is now having to be adapted into yet another culture which views even that first level of culturally-adapted Salvation Army life in a negative manner.

Practical Principles

These are some of the lessons we are drawing from a generally unsuccessful history of outreach to the Roma:

1. We are unable to reach Roma successfully by asking them to fit into existing patterns of worship, be they denominational or majority-culture specific. We should therefore avoid any kind of cultural imposition that creates unnecessary barriers to faith and discipleship, and be willing to adapt our worship and teaching styles to forms that are appropriate for those we hope to reach.
2. We must study and understand the culture that we are hoping to reach, adapting to it wherever possible and making ourselves vulnerable in the process. Thus we must be intentionally incarnational just as Christ was.
3. We must be willing to disciple all the way through life and give understanding and support as people in this culture struggle with “hating father and mother...and brothers and sisters” as commitment to Christ takes priority over commitment to clan.
4. In a culture where people attach themselves strongly to individuals, we must find ways of making multiple connections and relationships to help anchor new converts in the Body of Christ.
5. We must be aware of the inferiority complex felt by an oppressed and marginalised culture, and the many ways in which that may express itself, and respond patiently in love.
6. Denominational expressions among the minority Roma may be significantly different from their expression in the majority white-Czech culture, which also differ

from the traditional expression in sending countries such as the United Kingdom and Holland. No denomination can simply replicate its forms and methods across cultures without adaptation, but each must be willing to accept the loss of outward forms while ensuring that core values and principles are maintained, not confusing the two.

7. We must love those we are trying to reach more than we love our own comfort.

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4. Danish Free Evangelical Church

Context

Denmark is an old “Christian” country, with a Lutheran State Church (Folkekirke) of which 84% of the population are members. Three to four percent of the members regularly attend a Sunday morning service. Within the State Church, different groups have formed their own societies and organisations with different profiles—including a group of evangelicals. Other denominations in Denmark, named Free Churches, are: Baptist, Methodist, Covenant Church (Free Evangelical), Salvation Army, Pentecostal, and Catholic Church, among others. In the last 10 years Islam has been growing rapidly because of immigration. Today the number of Muslims in Denmark is far higher than those who would call themselves evangelicals.

Most significant, however, is the influence of New Age which has entered our thinking through “evening-schools.” This is an educational system for adults in every city and area. Through teaching in transcendental meditation and yoga—promoted not as religion but as practical techniques for relaxing and better living—and other philosophies, a lot of Danes have come in contact with the spiritual universe of New Age. The impact is shown through the fact that, according to various studies, more than 30% of all Danes believe in some kind of reincarnation. The good news however is that this growing spiritual interest also causes people to reflect on their Christian faith. Also, meeting—and sometimes confrontation—with Islam has caused many to rethink their own religion.

Inside the churches we see the same growing tendency as in other countries: several energetic younger Christians seem to draw back from the traditional church — the State Church as well as the Free Churches. They keep their faith in God, but they have had enough of “church.” They don’t feel that the traditional church can offer a relevant framework for their faith and spiritual life.

Challenge

The task for the church in this case has been to find a church model for postmodern society with the context described above. The vision has been to change the expression of a traditional evangelical church into a form which takes the seeker and the spiritual traveller seriously and to create a fellowship which is not bounded but open and dynamic. This change was important not only for those not yet participating in the church, but also for those already in the church who are open to the questions which come from the New Age thinking and a postmodern society, i.e., what is spirituality all about?

Narrative

In 1970, two small congregations (founded in 1886 and 1925) in the northeast part of Sealand with a combined total of 25 members, decided to become one church in a town, Espergaerde, which was geographically between them. A new building, in a highly visible location in a town with 10,000 inhabitants, together with a salaried pastor was the beginning of growth. In 1990 the number was just under 70. Thirteen years later (2003) the number of adult members is approximately 120. Through these years we have been working with new forms and expressions. The following changes are especially from this period.

From the mid-90’s, as the leaders of the church, we began seriously to work with new models for worship, a new framework for how we view ourselves and the community, and how the community and visitors view us. One of the decisions we made was that the Sunday morning services should be the open room, that is, the meeting place for the church and the primary forum for evangelisation. This is the event to which members of the congregation invite non-Christians.

The focus of the service should be on two things:

- (a) A good and open atmosphere, with worship that allowed emotions to be shown and gave space for spontaneous interaction.
- (b) A reflective sermon, relevant for modern life. These changes almost doubled the number of participants in less than two years and brought a lot of energy into our gatherings. The new members coming from other free churches (66%) and from a non-Christian or State Church background (33%) have had very different reasons for joining the fellowship, but younger couples especially have been attracted to the church.

In the late 90's we worked with our "mission" and "vision." This created a new focus and gave the fellowship a much clearer identity (See vision and values).

How has this affected the leaders? We do not speak to the audience as if they were the congregation—the saved ones. We identify our guests as spiritual seekers and we have decided to show our respect for their journey. We put it this way: In fact, we are all travellers seeking the truth. For us it is obvious that the truth we find is in Jesus. But nobody—including the Christians—have the right to proclaim that they have found all truth. We define ourselves as an open fellowship. We want to lead people into a relationship with the Lord, but gently and without manipulation. Acceptance of others' ways of doing things is most important.

Areas we did not change: The work with children, teenagers and youth has remained largely unchanged—with continuing good results. Bible studies and prayer meetings during the week as well as cell groups continue as they have in the past. In the Sunday services, we include the traditional sacraments: the communion, and baptism. We normally practise adult baptism.

Summary

These were the areas where we worked for change:

1. The Sunday morning services where
 - the program and atmosphere encourage joyful worship as well as dialogue and reflection
 - we do not talk about us (who are saved) and them (who are not), but about we who are on the road together searching for the truth—which in a Christian context means Jesus
 - preaching is a lifestyle-orientated reflection with the Bible as the basis, but not a Bible study. The aim is to be helpful both to Christians and non-Christians who do not yet accept the Bible as their authority.

We notice the popularity of silent services and "Thomas masses," dedicated to all the "Thomases" who are not yet ready to believe that Jesus is the Resurrected One and who need to touch and find out for themselves, without having a preacher to tell them, what is right and wrong.

2. The goal setting and profile, where
 - the MISSION and the VISION have words like 'open,' 'relevant,' and 'fellowship for people on the road,' etc.
3. The idea of a Christian fellowship, where
 - seekers know there is welcoming space for them
 - we do not focus on membership, but on being each others' travelling partners
 - the traditional activities centred round the church are reduced in number and replaced with more personal "friendship-building activity" like cell groups and café.
4. The evangelistic outreach, where
 - we try to show our love, care, and interest before the gospel is told
 - respect is shown for each one's stage of faith.

Mission, Vision, and Values

The mission we try to fulfil is: *To lead people into an encounter with God's life-transforming love in Jesus Christ.* It is important that we take on the responsibility to actually lead people to meet with God's love. We believe that this love is a transforming love, and we make it clear that it is the kind of love we see in Christ.

The vision for the church is: *To be a living and relevant congregation, where God reveals himself in an open and caring fellowship for people on the road.* The values shown in this are: "relevant," "revealing of God," "open and caring fellowship," "people on the road".

Practical principles

- Acceptance of, and respect for, those who have either no faith or another faith.
- Believing in Jesus as the Truth, without thinking that we own the truth
- Sharing Christ requires sharing life—practically and spiritually.
- Being process oriented, not event oriented

The theological wrestling focuses on: When is a person a true seeker? When is he/she "saved"? When is he/she part of those who follow Jesus? The dialogue is with the old

evangelical idea of a fixed time for “getting saved” in contrast with a process-orientated understanding.

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5. Spontaneous Church Planting via Supernatural Revelation

Ethiopia

Context

Churches in Ethiopia are functioning and serving in a country where the needs are very pressing. The needs include a lack of infrastructure in the rural setting. Because of limited resources and limited numbers of pastors and evangelists, the churches are struggling to send ministers to rural areas, and so there are still large areas which are unevangelised.

Wherever churches have been established, there are needs to be attended to, including poverty, unemployment, health problems, and education. The Lord of the harvest has His ways to reach those who are to be saved. The story of Bizunesh shows how God is filling this gap. Her story is not yet widely told, nor known in the seminary and throughout the church, but soon it will be.

Stories like this are told and witnessed mostly in home prayer groups and fellowships. These are operational at the grass roots level and have nothing to do with the church structure. In these home prayer groups, lay evangelists and committed Kingdom workers are arising in these days, and they travel on foot through many difficulties to preach to the rural people. Many such committed and obedient servants are found among the evangelical Christians of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church (Lutheran). They have been working with the rural people for many years and tell stories of miraculous conversion.

Vision and Values

God is at work in our time and in many ways beyond our limitations. The Spirit of truth is leading the people of God to all truth, even through difficulties, cultural barriers and in different contexts.

Bizunesh's story demonstrates God's unfailing love and faithfulness. Openness and obedience will help us get closer to His abundant grace and mercy. In this story we see God's hand. The human element is listening, obeying, and serving even through suffering and persecution. This is how the churches survived through the Marxist regime some years ago. Relationships among the people in this area and trust and belief in what is being told are contributing to the spread of the good news all over the area. Needs are met through healing and prayer ministry as well.

Narrative

Bizunesh, a nine-year old girl lived in Gida district, a very remote area, near the River Nile in Ethiopia. The people were animist and bound in traditional religion, with no knowledge of Christianity. Bizunesh had a visitation from a large bird-like creature descending from heaven with the message, "The Lord is going to change this area for His glory and give them life." This figure was surrounded by light, full of love and kindness. Soon after being touched by the heavenly Visitor, Bizunesh fell down dead. She was taken somewhere and shown many things which she would encounter in her future ministry.

Meanwhile, family and friends had gathered to mourn her death. But she lived and on her return, Bizunesh, using the name of Jesus, cast out a demon from a relative. For the next twelve years Bizunesh became the channel of communication between the bird-like form and the people. When instructed by the Visitor, she would lay hands on the sick and those with evil spirits. She was instructed to pray in the name of Jesus. On one such occasion, seventy people received Christ through the instruction given to her.

News began to spread and people came from far and near to see what was happening. Everyone agreed to build a house for Jesus, where Bizunesh could be based, and could tell them about Jesus.

Finally, with the approval of the Visitor, they were introduced to a church under charismatic influence. Bizunesh continued to be a volunteer evangelist of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church (Lutheran). As a result of this miraculous visitation, eight congregations and four preaching places have been established and organized within the Gida Kiramo Parish. These congregations and preaching places have endeavoured to meet the tremendous needs of the people through a holistic ministry. In many cases entire villages have been converted and the district at large impacted. In mid-2004, fifty Muslims accepted Christ through her ministry.

In September 2004, Bizunesh began a one year course at a Mekane Yesus (Lutheran) Theological Seminary. She still experiences these visits which for her are a source of happiness, freedom, and healing ministry. However, because of this ministry she has experienced much suffering and persecution.

Practical Implications

- We cannot organise God to intervene according to our wishes and plans.
- We have a responsibility to respond to and follow up where God is moving and to be open and obedient to God's sovereignty.
- We need to be a people with supernatural expectations who expect God to act in His own way.
- The fruit of revelation must be tested against Scripture.
- We pray believing God answers prayer, but realizing that God is not limited to human resources.
- It will be useful to track how institutional education affects such evangelization over a period of time.
- This highlights the need for prayer and power evangelism.
- We must be willing to suffer.
- People's needs must be addressed.

Theological Questions

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last" (John 15:16). Does not this emphasize that in the Bible the Lord Himself does the choosing, the calling, and the appointing?

Does not God's call in the Old and New Testaments vary from one person to another? Jesus called His disciples while they were conducting their own businesses, e.g., Matthew the tax collector, Peter and Andrew the fishermen, Saul the persecutor, Cornelius was visited by an angel in his own home, and the Ethiopian eunuch unexpectedly encountering Philip on the road. Is it strange if God chooses revelation, vision and dream to call a child to a great mission of converting the whole area in Gida?

Is not the call, the choice, and the appointment for bearing fruit to be tested by the fruit it produces?

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6. Marzahn Youth Church East Berlin, Germany

Narrative

Since the Fall of 2000, a team of youth workers and church planters (7 full-time and 5 volunteers; Americans and Germans) have been involved in planting a cell-based youth church in a far-eastern district of Berlin, Germany. It is a church planting project of a German Free Church denomination with the Lukas Church of West Berlin serving as the mother church. This is a section of Germany which is thoroughly and emphatically atheistic (as high as 90% in some areas) which has been immunized against religion. Into this environment God has called us to plant a church.

Looking around Berlin, especially the eastern part, it is a fact that church growth among adults is exceedingly slow. There have been some encouraging signs among the ethnic German-Russians where a couple of churches have grown quickly in the last several years. However, church planting amongst the German people living in East Berlin has been a difficult and tedious process.

For this and other obvious reasons, such as the fact that youth are in the midst of transitions and much more open to new ideas than adults, we deliberately decided to focus on young people.

We are not unaware of the problems and challenges associated with a youth church, as we will show below. We view the youth church as a bridge into the community, as a beachhead or an arrow which can penetrate the hardened souls and hearts of a post-communist mentality. It is an initial approach, an attempt to reach this area for Christ. The jury is still out on the question of its long term effectiveness, but we are trying something a little bit different in an area which sees little church growth.

The question we are asking ourselves is: "What must happen so those youths of East Berlin, who are still greatly influenced by their parents' atheistic philosophy can become believers?"

Here is an attempt to answer that question:

- They must hear the gospel in their culture.
- They need the examples of changed lives.
- They need the loving and inviting community of the body of believers.
- They need to experience God.
- Their old atheistic and materialistic worldview must die.

(From a fellow youth church planter in East Berlin)

Thus, we have designed our programs with an emphasis on relationships, community, personal discipleship and small groups. We have weekly mid-week cell group meetings which we see as the heart of our church. The cell is a living, dynamic organism. During the cell meetings we 'hang out' together, prepare meals and eat together, worship God in song and in other creative ways, study the Bible, and pray and minister to one another. The sacrament of communion is practiced either in the cell or in the celebration worship services, which we hold twice a month. The sacrament of baptism is administered in these celebration services. One-on-one discipleship is offered weekly.

In order to meet young people and build relationships, we are offering a variety of after-school extra-curricular activities such as a "Gospel Choir," a basketball club, an English-language club, a Kids' club, etc. Through these activities we have the chance to build relationships which provide plenty of opportunities to share our faith in God.

By now we have seen twenty young people make commitments to Christ and we have 40-50 people in attendance in the celebration worship services. We would like to see a national pastor in place by the year 2007, and an average attendance of 200 individuals.

Questions and Challenges

The youth church concept is an attempt to deal with our present situation in Berlin. Several questions or challenges remain. These are issues with which we continue to wrestle and for which there are no easy answers.

- *Incompleteness* — Some consider a youth church to be an incomplete, truncated expression of church as it does not reflect the demographical realities of a given region. A bishop of the Anglican Church responded to the presentation of the

youth church concept by saying: “I find it reprehensible that you want to start a church for just one segment of society, one generation.” The youth pastor shot back, “Well, is that not what we have in most of our churches today?” If we want to develop a multi-generational church, there is a better chance of young people maturing and growing older than for older people to grow younger! Paul says that in Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female. But that great unity is found in the universal church, not necessarily in every local expression.

- *Self-reliance* — Only in rare cases can a youth church exist independently of an existing (mother) church, especially in the beginning stages. It needs to rely on the wisdom, experience, prayer and financial support of the mother church until it has matured enough to become independent.
- *Leadership* — Probably the biggest challenge and the most important task of the youth church is to develop effective leadership training. Young people need to mature and to be trained. This takes time, especially in reaching spiritual maturity.
- *Transition* — How does a youth church develop into a “normal, multi-generational church”?
- *Relationships* — What is a wholesome relationship between the youth church and the mother church?
- *Evangelistic strategy* — Can the youth church concept be viewed as one strategic possibility of church planting, especially in areas where the adult generations are especially resistant?

Vision of Marzahn Youth Church

Vision statement: *A multiplying, locally-led cell church movement for young people which will change the spiritual climate in Marzahn (district of Berlin with a population of 150,000).*

We assume that a healthy church will grow and multiply. These church plants will be turned over to national leadership as soon as adequate leadership is available or trained. We are convinced that a church should consist of cells in which intense discipleship and community is experienced. We intend to plant churches by reaching the youth, leading them to Jesus and integrating them into the church. We are aware that these young people will grow up, and hence youth churches will become “normal” multi-generational churches, which will have a positive effect on the spiritual climate of the entire district.

Values

We are convinced that

- our main motivation should be to worship and adore God;
- people are very important to God — especially the lost;
- only through prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit can spiritually effective and eternally significant things happen;
- youth must be reached in their cultural context;
- we have to follow Christ passionately and with full devotion;
- the local church should be a place to identify and practice spiritual gifts;
- leaders should serve, lead, and act according to Jesus’ example;
- the local church should serve to expand God’s kingdom locally and globally;
- God’s kingdom is expanded most effectively in co-operation with other churches and missionary groups;
- change and spiritual growth in our lives happens through exposure to God’s word, experiences with Him, and community with Christians: this happens most profoundly in cells; and
- young people get excited about Jesus through relational, evangelistic youth ministry.

Practical Principles operative in our youth church:

- Love — high personal care
- Intentional relational evangelism and on-going discipleship
- Balance between cell group and congregation
- Multiplication mentality at all levels
- Lay-leadership oriented — delegated authority

- Functional leadership (no leaders simply filling positions)
- Every leader is accountable (no lone rangers)
- Clearly communicated vision
- Meeting practical needs
- Act on God's sovereign leading
- Priority of prayer
- Always seeking better contextualization
- Flexibility—desire to grow and change in order to accomplish the Great Commission and solve problems in the process
- MAWL: Model, Assist, Watch, Leave.

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7. 'Rashtriya Susamachar Parishad' Church Planting Movement

Uttar Pradesh, India

Context

Uttar (Northern) Pradesh is the largest state in India with a population of 166 million; there are only six nations in the world which have more people. Christians are a tiny minority (230,000 or .012% of population). The church, which has been in existence for 200 years, is largely traditional, nominal and is often unwilling to be a witness in the community.

Mission agencies and some independent churches do most evangelistic outreach and church planting. Until recently, most of the mission agencies which sent out church planters to Uttar Pradesh were located either in the South of India, North East of India or outside of India.

Origin of RSP

Rashtriya Susamachar Parishad's (RSP) humble beginning came about when a few Christian leaders answered God's prompting in 1992 to initiate a North India-based indigenous mission with a vision of planting churches in North India, primarily focusing on Uttar Pradesh. The underlying theme was to "Launch out into the deep." Our intention was to identify "unreached people" living in "deeper areas" and "launch out" to reach them. We adopted the "old mission model" for our ministry.

The missionaries were sent to identify areas. The whole ethos was to see a church emerge in that area. The missionary lived in the area, made friends with the people and slowly shared the gospel. As people experienced the Lord Jesus Christ, they were grouped as local churches. The worship services were conducted in the homes of the missionaries and usually consisted of worship, message, Holy Communion (once a month) and prayers for healing. Besides the Sunday service, the missionary conducted meetings in villages. Typically a missionary will conduct five to six fellowships on weekdays. In about ten years there were about 700 believers in ten different fields.

The growth was slow and it was felt that the missionary was tied down to his church and the burden of conducting meetings in villages. After a period of time he had no time for more outreach.

Change in Strategy

An evaluation of the ministry was carried out after about ten years that led to a change in strategy; this has resulted in growth in the ministry.

The theme was changed from "launch into the deep" to "stand in the gap." The goal now is "A church for every pin (zip) code, a fellowship for every village and a house church for every neighbourhood in cities." There are about 2,000 PIN code areas in Uttar Pradesh, each covering about thirty villages and each having a population of 30,000. The aim is to have a fellowship in all thirty villages in three years and a central church in all the PIN code areas that are unreached. In the first year the church planter will plant fellowships in ten villages, train a leader for every village fellowship and hand over that fellowship to him. The missionary moves to another ten villages in the following year. The fellowships are also trained to reproduce another fellowship in another village in about a year.

Training is an integral part of the new strategy, which is done at all levels, including in the field and at a central place. The strategy has resulted in the doubling of the number of fellowships from 65 to 130, and the number of believers from 700 to 1500 in just eight months.

Vision Statement

To plant self-supporting, self-multiplying and self-governing churches among unreached peoples.

Definition of the Terms as we use them

- *Church*: A body of at least twenty-five adult baptized believers, with local leadership (church committee) and having regular meetings every week in a pre-determined venue.
- *Emerging church*: A body of at least fifteen-plus adult baptized believers led by the church planter/missionary and having regular meetings every week in a pre-determined venue.
- *Fellowships*: Meeting of at least five believers and seekers, usually once a week.

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8. A House Church Among Japanese Nurses Japan

Context and Narrative

In 2002, the RAC (Rethinking Authentic Christianity) Network was re-launched to provide resources and a network for house church planters in order to encourage and foster house church multiplication in Japan. We have a strong desire to see New Testament Christianity actualized in Japan. We believe that churches where direct access to God is encouraged and which have a flat and personal relationship structure, rather than hierarchical structures, reflect the lives of people most contextually and have the most potential for exponential growth.

Although there have been many difficulties and challenges here in Japan, several mentorees have already completed a grass-root training seminar (called “catalyst training”) and have started house churches in homes, school campuses, and Starbucks coffee shops.

One of the segments of Japanese society that is increasingly open to the gospel is nurses. Three interesting characteristics of this group are:

- 1) They want to be healed. Due to the stress of always serving others and being constantly surrounded by the sick and dying, they are tired and in need of both emotional and spiritual healing.
- 2) Many are involved in the New Age movement. They know the limitations of medical science. Some of them care for those who are dying and/or suffer from hopeless conditions. So, the nurses tend to search for spiritual answers to questions about our finite human existence.
- 3) They give serious thought to the wellbeing of life. They are scientific people and are good at analyzing their psychological problems. But they have not been able to find the answers to the pressing questions in their lives. They are seriously seeking hope, purpose, happiness, and acceptance.

One of my mentorees is a nurse. After finishing the training for church planters, she began with friendship evangelism and led a nursing school faculty member who was a devout new age practitioner to Christ. It touched off a chain reaction. Another faculty member was baptized just three days later. And then in quick succession, three students and one single mother who is a friend of the second faculty member accepted Christ. This is very unusual for Japan, where typically it has taken people much longer to become Christians. In fact, the whole conversion process was very different from what we see traditionally.

My mentoree led the faculty member through some steps to visualize her past experiences. Because she was familiar with visualization from new age practice, she was very good at it. She saw an image of herself and her ex-boyfriend. Although he had once made her angry and had wounded her, strangely enough she saw herself hugging him, and they were weeping together. She did not understand why she did such a thing. After awhile, she understood the whole picture. Jesus approached them and then hugged both of them with His warm hands.

When she saw Jesus in her imagination, He was bathed in tender light and she understood supernaturally that He would never leave her or abandon her.

For her, conversion and healing came at the same time. The experience was so real that she could not stop testifying about it to her friends. Just three days after her baptism, she shared her experience with a friend who had been a partner of hers in reading tarot cards. She led her friend to experience Jesus and the same thing happened in her friend’s life. They began meeting weekly for prayer and accountability, and they started a church in one of their homes where they previously read tarots. They have experienced God directly and are bold enough to share their experiences with other nurses.

Theological Issues

Headship of Christ in the midst of a family-like small group. It is necessary to allow people direct access to God through Jesus Christ. No one should be between God and His people except one mediator, the man Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus builds His church. It is not we but Jesus who releases the church. In Matthew 16:8b, Jesus said to Peter, “*I will build my church on this rock.*” It is heretical to think that Jesus will build our church. There is no “my/our church”, but only Jesus’ church. Many people make a commitment to “their” own empire, thinking that they are committing themselves to God’s Kingdom. In this case, their

assumption is "I will build Jesus' church." No one can build Jesus' church, only Jesus can. The church cannot be manufactured. There can be no man-made movement. Trust Jesus in the midst of small groups.

Priesthood of all believers. Ordinary people can hear God's voice and do the extraordinary work of God without a hierarchical administrative system. On average, Japanese churches have about 35 people attending their Sunday worship. Many Japanese Christians think that their churches are too small and look to overseas mega-churches as models. But in reality, the problem of most churches in Japan is not that they are too small, but that they are already too big. As a result, Japanese churches have lost their attractiveness. If the church is small enough to maintain the dynamics of a family of God whose head is Christ, the Holy Spirit will lead the members to use their unique gifts to edify each other in the Body of Christ.

Meeting felt-need of seeking spiritual power. Japanese have a desire for spiritual power. It is part of the underlying strata of this culture that reveals itself in many ways. But the fact is that much of Christianity has failed to deal with this deep felt need of the Japanese people.

The nurses we have been working with have experienced spiritual power through visualization where they clearly met Jesus. This may raise the question for some about the validity of adopting visualization techniques that are widely used by New Age practitioners and about how to avoid deception. The strong influence of the New Age movement has found root in the Japanese traditional magico-religious worldview. When Japanese Christians employ the visualization and other new age practices, is there a danger of syncretism? To discuss this issue, I believe there are at least five points to be considered:

Supernatural intervention can be found in Scripture. For example, mission to non-Israelites was initiated by some supernatural intervention. An angel visited the Centurion Cornelius, Peter saw a vision, and the Holy Spirit disturbed Peter's preaching. Why cannot God visualize Himself to a wounded New Age practitioner and heal her using familiar cultural forms? Visualization should not be understood as a "tool" that we can use to get access to the spiritual world; but we need to recognize that the wind of the Holy Spirit blows where it will and be open to the work of God whose name is "Wonder."

Taking back the power of imagination from the enemy. The logical grid of knowledge-oriented Western Christianity is not useful for helping these kinds of people to know Christ. We should expect supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in peoples' lives for winning the lost. Jesus appealed to His disciples' imagination when He showed them a flower in the field. Paul described Jesus on the cross for Galatians in a pictorial way. The power of imagination was created by God, but it has been abused by the enemy. Christians can use visualization techniques to help introduce supernatural-oriented Japanese to Jesus.

Judge the fruit in each case. A tree should be evaluated by its fruit. In this case the woman confessed Jesus joyfully and could not stop testifying about Him to her friends.

Every spirit should be tested. We must pray for discernment and test each case as we work with people. If the person does not prove his/her growth by obeying God in daily life, we should stop his/her ministry, at least temporarily, and provide more training.

If felt-needs are not being met, Christianity is perceived as irrelevant to people's lives. Jesus demonstrated His care and power in a prophetic way. In response to Jewish power-oriented needs He demonstrated God's power. He dealt with their felt needs so that He could lead them to a deeper perception of need. If we ignore the Japanese supernatural felt-needs, they will have no interest in Christian faith. Even if they accept the rational message of Christianity, there is the danger of developing a dual allegiance.

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9. One Church in Mexico

San Luis Potosi, Mexico

Context

San Luis Potosí, México is a city of one million inhabitants located in the high plain desert area of central Mexico, 380 miles north of Mexico City. It is a very Catholic city defined by the religion that was forged by combining Roman Catholicism with the religion of the Aztec and Mayan Indian worlds. The city is about 2% evangelical and most of the population is antagonistic to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Latin culture is one where relationships are very important and one “works to live” rather than “lives to work.” Additionally, a Mexican Catholic will not come to an evangelical church or even step inside the door. Evangelicals are regarded as evil and the enemy.

When a Mexican pastor was called to another church, I was asked to pastor a one-year old church plant. It started in our home and within eight months moved to a building that the church rented. When the pastor left the church all but three families withdrew — two Mexican and one American family, but several youths along with a single American missionary who was born in Mexico and worked with youth stayed. She is culturally very Latin due to her upbringing in Mexico.

Due to my work outside the church — which is opening church planting training centres throughout Latin America — and philosophy of ministry, we announced at the outset that the church was theirs, not mine, and that they were to do the work. Our goal was to create a “Mexican” church that would break a lot of the habits they had learned, which were based on what the missionaries brought in. Also our goal was to create a church where the members are ministers and hence, minister to one another.

The tradition of worship in our part of Mexico is very “western” inside a Latin culture. Many churches, especially in our traditional Presbyterian circles, are traditional in nature with a mix of Catholic habits seeping in. The pastor is the “pope” of the church and must be at every activity and delegates little to the membership. Worship can last up to three or four hours yet, sadly, in many cases, the time is a mix of business meetings and dry habitual routine. Many years ago when missionaries exported not only the gospel but also western culture, various traditions were brought into the church. These Christian practices do not speak to the Mexican people outside the church. Thus, the church has its own sub-culture which unbelievers find strange and uninviting. In many places the evangelicals are known as the ones who, “don’t drink, smoke, or dance,” (i.e., they have no fun and are legalistic) rather than the ones who love the Lord and share His saving grace.

Narrative

Our first goal was to “exegete” the culture. We wanted to find out what is important to the Mexican community and how we could engage the people so as to introduce them to Christ. Second, as the pastor, I was intent on making worship more relevant (in its forms) without compromising on the “functions” of what God requires.

First, knowing that the culture is very relationship oriented, each Sunday, we introduced “compañerismo,” or fellowship, before the services and then again after the services, with coffee and cookies. So we started and ended the day with fellowship, creating community within the church body.

Second, the worship service became more Latin or lively in nature. We sang, clapped, shared, and enjoyed being together worshipping our Lord and Saviour. In this culture people are visual, so I used PowerPoint when I preached, engaging them in the sermon. We introduced “sharing of lives and tithes.” When we collected the offerings we also shared our praises and prayer requests, creating a family atmosphere where we can be honest and open with each other and share in carrying each other’s burdens. Our worship went from the traditional three hours to just over one hour, giving us more time to fellowship and create community. The goal was to have everyone say, “I can’t wait to be in worship, and I have to invite my neighbours and family.”

Third, knowing that the average person in San Luis Potosi will not come to an evangelical church, we started cell groups. They were started with the lost in mind, but also knowing that the church was young, we had inductive Bible studies. We had several months of training and opened two cell groups. The goals were to grow in Christ as believers (discipleship) and show Christ through word and deed (relational evangelism) to lost

neighbours and friends. As noted before, the Mexican Catholic generally won't enter an evangelical church but will respond to a friend's invitation to come over, have coffee, and talk about God.

We soon saw the personalities of the two cell groups taking shape. In one we saw neighbours coming to the group, particularly women, and then to church. We found that there was a curiosity from the neighbours as to what we were doing and what we were about. So the church expanded as did this cell group. Leadership of this group started with me but over time I handed over to the Mexicans.

The second cell group started in the home of a poor Mexican family about five miles (eight kilometres) from the church. This cell took on a quite different personality than the other, yet God also blessed it. In a short period of time there were not just one cell group in this area but three and plans for more. This being in a poor area, many of the new believers and "seekers" could not come to our church because they could not afford the bus fare. After some time we decided to ask the cell group leader to plant a new church among these cell groups. We also started a women's Bible study/cell group with my wife as the leader; through this they were able to grow in faith and share Christ with unchurched woman. After some time, she handed over the leadership to a Mexican woman, more than capable of leading the group.

We believe that cell group ministry is vital to a church because it meets the needs of the members in a way that the church cannot, and by being a witness to the lost in a comfortable, inviting environment. We also believe that the cell group ministry must be reproductive and outward looking, willing to multiply itself over and over.

Fourth, we added time before and after the Sunday worship for fellowship. We serve coffee or flavoured water with cookies, inviting members to come early and stay afterwards for conversation, creating community, and enjoying one another. Also we have many "pot-luck" dinners after church where members bring food and we eat together.

Lastly, as a church we have adopted several poor areas in which to minister by bringing a holistic ministry to the community. By adopting these areas we are able to give food and clothing to the poor in a remote village and help with a Salvation Army-run orphanage by helping with some children's ministries and doing some basic repairs to the facility.

A year later when we turned over the leadership and left the church, the original nucleus of three families had grown to over 55 people in our last worship with them.

Vision and Values

The vision and values that this church learned and has accepted is that of being more "real" and living by grace. In doing so, we have been able to see the lost not as sinners who do worldly things but people like us who need Jesus. By becoming real and using cell groups and other methods to reveal God's love we are becoming an influence in the community. Our "headline" on our welcome screen (using PowerPoint) states that all members are ministers and as such we have learned to minister to one another and to the lost who live around us.

Practical Principles

This case study highlights the following practical principles:

- The value of intentional relational evangelism
- The need for discipleship
- A church that is cell-driven
- Meeting genuine human needs
- Showing love for lost
- Ensuring that every leader is accountable
- The necessity of exegeting and understanding the culture
- Celebrating God's goodness and grace
- Showing love for the church community
- Ministering to body
- Maintaining flexibility in structures and activities
- Having fun.

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10. Men of Issachar: Redemption Faith Church

Ojoo, Ibadan, Nigeria

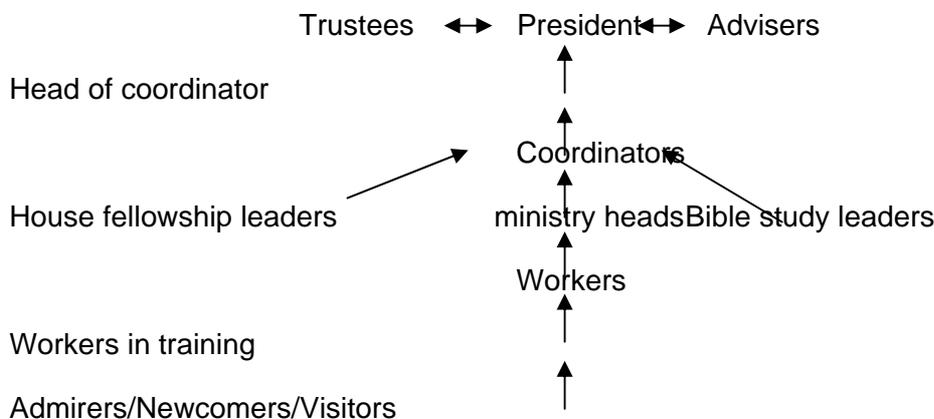
Context

This study is situated in Ojoo, Ibadan, Nigeria, a place dominated by Muslims. There are many local hotels that harbour sex hawkers and Senegalese who trade in precious stones. These are the people that will not go to church, so they drew our attention to that area. We average in our congregation about 280 with about forty Muslim background believers.

Structure

Like the men of Issachar in the Bible (1 Chronicles 12:32) who understood the times and knew what had been left undone, the MIV (Men of Issachar Vision Inc.) in the same strength, have two focii: to REACH the unreached at all possible cost (Mission) and REAWAKEN the church to her responsibilities (Reawakening strategies). The structure is depicted below:

REDEMPTION FAITH CHURCH: Church arm of Men of Issachar Vision Inc.



Note: Care for newcomers is a priority.

MISSION

Searchlights
Mobilization
Training
Recruitment
Church Planting

REAWAKENING

Ministers/leadership conferences
Family life conferences
Mission Conferences
Crusades and Church Revivals
Publications

Redemption Faith Church

The end product of our church planting is the formation of new churches, especially in the rural areas (among the unreached) and urban (neglected areas).

Strategies

Win your "type" through friendship approach. The Church is grouped according to age with each group having its leader.

Ages 1–12 = children; 13–19 = Teens; 20–25 = Youth;
26–35 = The Blossom; >35 = The Splendour.

House fellowship: This is neighbourhood care fellowship. Every member belongs to the nearest fellowship. You are to bring an unbelieving friend with you when you attend meetings. This fellowship divides when the number reaches fifteen.

Need-based approach

- organizing free health program

- family matters in hotel outreach
- youth dinners
- financial empowerment program
- career talks
- free summer lessons
- counselling
- specially publicized miracle outreaches etc.

Other plans being considered: establish good schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centre for sex hawkers.

Note: none of these projects are done without earnest prayers. Every August we go on a thirty-one day fast over our programs and strategies, and by October we have reviewed what we have done and previewed future action. Throughout the year, everyone from coordinators upwards meets to pray every other week. The people in the intercessory ministry central meet every Tuesday, while the other division (men of valour, men in the upper room, women in the closet, the nobles) spread themselves within the weeks in a month to hold night vigils once a week. Prayer is paramount and central in whatever we do.

Discipleship

We strictly use need-specific based approach to get the believer established before joining the group.

New converts—discipleship—workers class—school of ministry—mission training.

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11. An Established Church Regains Missional Relevance

Chrischona Frauenfeld, Switzerland

Context

By 1997, the Chrischona Freechurch in Frauenfeld, Switzerland, was frankly on its way to die out within a matter of some years. It is a historic church of 120 years in a town of about 20,000 inhabitants which had grown to 200 adults attending Sunday morning service. However, during the eighties and nineties, virtually 100% of the children who grew up in the church would leave by the age of sixteen. The congregation was becoming significantly older in age and decreased to 150 adults. I have the privilege of telling you an exciting thing! We have seen a turning of the tide by means of becoming relevant to youth culture. Our vision is that Chrischona Frauenfeld will be filled with young people thoroughly enjoying to be in church!

Narrative

What happened? Four of us remaining “young people” developed a strong sense of dissatisfaction about the overall situation. After a month of prayer in January 1998 we decided to start a monthly youth-service on Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. in a venue outside the church building. This was an interactive service with a rock band, and we young people preached about things that interested us, using multi-media and lots of freedom to move our bodies to the music!

We found that young folk enjoyed coming even when they were not interested in church. People tend to feel lonely on Sunday evenings. Our event gave them a place to go and people to meet. They were willing to listen as we explained the gospel message to them. Soon, we saw people committing their lives to Christ at virtually every meeting. The development of this youth service far exceeded even our wildest expectations. We now regularly attract between 700 and 1,000 mainly young people at each service. In the Swiss context, this is a rare thing to see!

We felt that the New Testament puts emphasis on the unity of the Body of Christ (e.g., John 17 and the Epistle to the Philippians). So we wanted the fruit of the youth service to flow back into the church rather than to develop into a youth-church of its own. With this decision taken, an important responsibility fell to the established church: it had to change in such a way that young people would start to enjoy coming again! The church employed a new pastor who helped the church go through this process. This pastor was in his forties and turned out to be very mission-minded. His basic vision was to lead the church into living out these five biblical callings: worship of God, meaningful community, growth as followers of Christ, servanthood within and outside the church, communication of the gospel to all Frauenfeld in such a way that people are able to make a decision whether or not to respond to Jesus Christ.

In the book of Acts (e.g. chapter 15), we see how the early church affirmed the difference between the *form* of the church and its *content*. Jewish churches were to be different in form from the Gentile churches, but both remained church in terms of content and were valid expressions of church! We soon understood that, over time, *Chrischona Frauenfeld* had begun confusing form and content. We wrongly clung to the forms as essentially important and became negligent of what *is* essential to being church (our calling). *Chrischona Frauenfeld* wrongly thought that being faithful to God meant clinging to forms like organ music, the building, religious vocabulary, and a certain type of liturgy. The new pastor's task was to help the church stop confusing form and content. We had to become radical in two ways: radically *creative* in changing our forms and radically *faithful* with respect to the content. Changing our mindset on these issues made us more capable of discerning in which areas we could embrace and even enjoy change, and in which areas we needed to be conservative.

Six years later we have changed a lot as a church. We have declared many aspects of Swiss culture our friend. Most Swiss people listen to pop or rock music. So our organ is no longer played in our Sunday morning services. Instead we have four pop and rock bands which lead us in worship. The lay leaders of the service lead through all the different elements of the service. The sermons are shorter, thematically more relevant to people between 25 to 40 years of age, are interactive, and illustrated by means of PowerPoint presentations. Not all

that goes on in Swiss society is our friend, however. In some areas of personal ethics, we seek to be counter-cultural. We are proactive in challenging values in the area of marital and gender relationships, consumer mentality, use of money and dependence on drugs. Furthermore, we have installed and are coaching a system of weekly small-groups into which approximately 60% of the church members (all ages) are now integrated. By 2004, the result of these changes have so far been these:

- The congregation has grown to an average of about 260 adults attending the service each Sunday morning. The average age has gone down from about 50 to 30. As the monthly youth service has developed into a regional event, not all of the 700 to 1,000 come to our church.
- Only about 20% of our young people currently leave our church.
- About 20% of the young converts with a completely non-Christian background find their way into our church.
- About 90% of the young converts with a Christian background find their way into our church.
- Some 7-8 adults from completely non-Christian backgrounds have found their way into the church independently of the youth service.
- Three families have left the church because they were unhappy with the changes.

Evaluation

Two things were important in this whole situation. First: the church leadership was willing to *grant a large amount of space and freedom to the youth work*. The development of a largely independent service was encouraged; it was not perceived as a threat to the Sunday morning service. The church leadership had a large amount of trust in the youth-leaders. Second, there had to be a *mission-minded leadership with the know-how to lead through change*. Intentional leadership of this kind is needed if an historic church wants to regain and/or retain relevance and missional impact on its surrounding culture.

Let me tell you what was helpful for us regarding this since leading a church through change is a difficult enterprise. As pastors we therefore had to develop skills in the area of change management. Understanding how to prepare for change before actually making the change has proved helpful. There are various standard tools which can be used here. For us, three principles were important.

First, we had to find ways of letting the church experience what we wanted to introduce before introducing it. People often reject something they have not experienced themselves.

Second, we changed the church bit by bit rather than all at once.

Third, whenever possible we tried to introduce what we called a "pocket." In a pocket, we would seek to compensate to some degree the loss people experienced. For example, the old hymns which we did not want to sing any more in the main Sunday morning service were re-allocated to a smaller event during the week.

The mission focus of leadership is what motivates and gives direction to the changes of form. You can change for all kinds of reasons, but we wanted our changes to contribute specifically towards the young generation, our children, *enjoying church* and *coming to know Christ*. It was this missional desire which gave the older generation the strength and willingness to put up with new elements of worship that they did not like at all! This missional desire grew especially in the parents who were hurting because their children were not becoming believers any more. We also had to teach the church about the missional God we have.

God has blessed our efforts and we praise His name for all that has become possible in Frauenfeld!

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12. Bolton South Community Church

Bolton South, UK

Context

Bolton is an industrial town in the north of England with a heritage in cotton milling and coal mining although this is now absent. The Bolton South area is made up of three major people groups: White British, Pakistani and Indian—predominantly, although not entirely, of working-class origin.

The immediate area around the Church is characterised mainly by low-income families, living in Council or rented accommodation. There are areas of more affluent housing but these cannot be considered affluent by national standards. If you own your own house it is mainly because there are two incomes entering the household. The area exhibits many issues synonymous with the British inner city: a high rate of broken and blended families (in our Children's Church over 60% do not live with both biological parents); a high incidence of teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse and dependence, debt, social isolation (especially amongst the youths), and racism. It is true to say that the vast majority of people are unchurched and in many cases this has been for several generations. Our closest church neighbours are traditional and have elderly and declining congregations.

Narrative

The background of the existing church is fairly complex. The original Salvation Army Citadel in the area closed in the 1980's and was sold off. However, in 1993 the central leadership in Manchester felt that the area was a suitable location for a church plant. For the next few years the church plant, which was situated in an old wooden Mission Hut, experienced three sets of leaders, none of whom stayed at the church for more than two years. During this time the Salvation Army built a brand new church building and community centre on the site hoping that a new building would attract people. This didn't happen; by 2000 the Church consisted of twelve ladies over seventy years of age and one family.

At the opening of the new building the church had no leadership. This situation continued for eighteen months, punctuated by a three-month training placement in the summer of 1999. To all intents and purposes there was little to define it as a church—there was no outreach, no small groups, no Bible study or prayer groups. There was a small community programme with no spiritual content.

The first two years of our church's story reflects a two-fold experience. On one hand there was an obvious need to disciple and bring to faith the remaining members of the church. On the other hand, an intentional attempt was made to build a sense of community focussed around the church. This was in essence the initial building block of the vision, which was to develop a church that was not only a gift to its community but was an expression of the community in which it existed. This involved staging community events such as street parties, football tournaments and big screen events just to change the perception of the community towards our local church and towards the church in general. The community programmes, which had been requested by the community, such as the youth club and parent and toddlers' groups, were also enhanced. Behind these outward events there was also a conscious attempt to build relationships within the community by entering pub quizzes, playing football and generally just being visible as the local "pastor."

As friends were gathered and relationships built, opportunities to perform "priestly duties" such as funerals, weddings and especially dedications (christenings) came about. These became great opportunities to develop once again relationships with the community; the creative and sensitive ways we performed these duties also greatly helped us find our place within the community. They also started to have an impact on the church as a few people began to join us for worship.

As relationships and friendships deepened, we undertook our first Alpha Course with the help of three young people on a "Timothy team" (a youth leadership development programme). This was a great success and led to the formation of the Church's second house group. We have run three Alpha courses since, using the same principle of people attending by personal invitation and deliberately keeping the groups small, never more than ten people. We have also run a youth Alpha, which we called fast-food Alpha, and are implementing the "Journeys" Course as a pre-Alpha introductory tool.

The second two years have been characterised by steady growth through relational evangelism, constant evaluation and enhancement of our contextualisation, as well as growth and development of a leadership team. Numerically we have gone from fifteen attendees (albeit non-Christian) to approximately seventy. Although an average Sunday attendance is approximately fifty, we have many irregular regulars, i.e., twice monthly attendees.

The Church's short history and the challenge of integrating Alpha-ites into Sunday worship have shown us that the traditional forms and expressions of the Salvation Army were just not attractive or relevant to the people we were in relationship with. Whilst we continued to have great support from, and are well resourced by the Salvation Army Headquarters in Manchester, the form and style of our Sunday worship is evolving further away from the traditional Salvation Army expression of church. We aim to stay constantly relevant. Nothing, other than the word of God and its counter culture-nature, is beyond evaluation and abandonment. This has also led us to reconsider positions held by the Salvation Army regarding the Lord's Supper, which we occasionally celebrate in a non-ritualised form, and Baptism.

Our services now include more dialogue than monologue, our worship is contemporary and culturally relevant and there is a high degree of TV, video, drama and art and craft used within the services. We try to create space for people to respond to God individually but also recognise the need for togetherness. We have found that the more creative we can be, the better people of all ages feel engaged. This is especially true with our use of art and crafts since people love making things. We are trying to respond to all the senses and to include all learning channels, i.e. visual, auditory, practical, etc.

We also have a children's church called "Oyster" which has 45 regular attendees, and a Toddler Church called "Tiddlers." We have secured a local nightclub to bring all these "congregations" (along with parents) together. We have called this "Aquarium" and believe it to be the next context of our church that God is calling us to develop using creative worship, games, arts and crafts, puppets, story and response.

Values

As we have journeyed over this past four years, a number of values have emerged. These are outlined briefly below.

<i>Relationship</i>	Relationships are at the heart of all we do. This communicates value and grows trust and develops community.
<i>Community</i>	We want everyone to be part of an authentic community whether they are Christian or not yet Christian. This is reflected in our church and in our church programmes. We believe the community we create in and around our church is our mission field. This has often developed as we have assessed local community needs.
<i>Relevance</i>	Everything that is culturally unhelpful or redundant is filtered out. This impacts style of worship, language, meeting structure (e.g., monologue to dialogue), location, etc.
<i>Journey</i>	We recognise that in our postmodern context people need the freedom to investigate, search, and ask questions without pressure, ridicule or condemnation. We encourage people to journey with us towards Jesus and ultimately with Jesus.
<i>Intimacy</i>	Once in relationship with Christ, we call people to greater intimacy with Jesus through small group prayer, worship, and accountability. We believe every Christian should be a disciple.
<i>Leadership</i>	We believe every member has at least one spiritual gift. Our vision is that every member of our Church works 75% of their service in their predominant gifting.

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13. Zac's Place – Church in a Pub?

Swansea, Wales, UK

“Of all the places I've performed around the world in the last decade or so, Zac's Place stands out as one of the most unique and effective outreaches into the community I've seen. It is unpretentious and non-exclusive, which are two traits I believe characterized the early church. Moreover, it has proven to be a refuge for both believer and those still seeking, the strong and the weary, young and old, rich and poor. This, to me, is true church.”

(Rick Elias, Songwriter and Producer from Nashville, Tennessee)

Narrative

Zac's Place began as an intentional pub-based mission initiative in 1998, as a result of ongoing ministry among bikers, musicians and other fringe groups in the Swansea area of South Wales. Although the mission field itself was requesting opportunities to gather and find out more about the Christian faith outside of traditional expressions of church, it was very much a 'shot in the dark' with little guarantee the risk would prove worthwhile. Zac's Place takes its name from the story of Zacchaeus, where Jesus met an outcast on his home ground and made a genuine connection (Luke 19:1-10). The visionary behind the project is Sean Stillman whose background includes fifteen years of ministry among the biker community and associated groups. Much of this ministry involved serving in a priestly role – conducting funerals, weddings, prison visits and the like.

Regular gatherings began in a city-centre bar under the name of “Zac's Place—church in a pub?” This received the support of several local ministers and the wider community. It grew not as a counter mission against the church but as a positive mission to marginalized groups within the community who were otherwise unreached. Many of the methods Sean has put into practice have been learnt at the sharp end of mission whilst leading the UK chapter of God's Squad (a motorcycle club started in 1972 in Melbourne with chapters in Australia, New Zealand and U.K.) He has also learned the need to earn the right to speak and to look for “men of peace.” This is a term he uses for non-Christians who do not understand what Christians believe, but who like what they do [cf. Luke 10:6].

Ministry

1. Leadership

Sean had long been working in isolation, but was accountable to a board of trustees (Exousia Trust). His initial 'sending,' dating back to the late 1980's, was from his home church in Reading, which served as 'permission givers' giving their blessing to this new avenue of work. The *preservers* of the developing work, Care & Communication Concern, Australia, has become in more recent years the wider movement of which God's Squad is part. This organisation provides a theological framework and a certain amount of additional accountability. There have been some 'protestors' whose background, as traditional Welsh Christians, is in several denominations and they have been concerned about using a pub as the meeting place. However, over time some protestors changed their minds when they discovered the productive nature of the work. Significant local support came from a variety of leaders within the mainstream church, including those from the Salvation Army, Methodist, Baptist and Anglican Churches.

Although the UK has seen other pub-based works, this was a first in Wales; since then a similar work has developed in Cardiff as a result of becoming familiar with Zac's Place; this initiative continues to be fruitful.

Sean is responsible for Bible-teaching and the majority of the hands-on work at present, but the intention is for those being disciplined to take on more responsibility so that it is less dependent on one or two people.

2. What kind of people are involved?

Everyone is welcome — diversity is important. Tramps, rough sleepers, academics, artists, musicians, addicts are among the range of different people who pass through. Many are misfits or people who had given up on church (*“Jesus OK, but the church - no way!”*).

An alcoholic with a real Christian faith visits many churches in the area and didn't feel accepted, but in Zac's Place he found his home; one day he wanted to be baptised—he was taught, advised, baptised and obtained ongoing help for his addictions. Although now living in a different city, he is employed and involved in a vibrant Christian community of faith.

Zac's Place is not only a biker church. Over the years the age range has been 18-60 with a gender proportion of 50:50. Average guest-numbers vary, from as low as 12 guests and up to 150 guests. An intentional move to the roughest pub in Swansea saw most of the 'Christian tourists' disappear; at present the heart of Zac's Place community of faith would be about twenty people with a lot more pre-Christian contacts.

For some people Zac's Place has been a bridge into the mainstream church. For others Zac's Place is their sole expression of Christian community. Many people are dysfunctional and slipping through the nets of both church and welfare services. Neurotic people with little self-dignity and unemployed folk with little hope of finding work come to Zac's gatherings. Providing help and support for these people is important and continues to be a priority.

3. Worship

At the outset in 1998 meetings were held in a function room in a pub. They featured top quality live music, topical based biblical talks by Sean and others, stories and poetry. A *Prayer Book* was on the bar which was available for guests to record their requests and comments:

- *"Thanks God for Zac's Place which has helped to reaffirm my often lacking belief in God and given me the opportunity of making some fantastic friends."*
- *"Thank you for Zac's Place for teaching me the beauty of not fearing my faith."*

Currently the gatherings have moved to a public bar, where not everyone who comes through the door is necessarily coming for Zac's Place. This move was at the request of the management who saw value in our contributions to the life of the pub. Sunday night is now well established as "Jesus night" in the pub, and is held in high regard by the management and staff.

Whilst the pub is the best place to meet new people, it is not the best place to do everything. So there grew a desire from many involved to have our own 'sacred space.' To broaden the work, Exousia Trust raised funds from within its existing support base and purchased a closed Brethren church in the city centre at the end of 2003. In October, 2004 refurbishment work continues to be in progress. But initial refurbishment by the Zac's regulars themselves have seen them start a soup kitchen and meet for weekly Bible teaching on Wednesday lunchtimes. Discipleship has a strong emphasis on Bible teaching and putting that teaching into practice – hence the soup kitchen. The emphasis on worship has focused on "worshipping God in all you do" —especially serving the poor. This explains the current name, "Zac's Place - a Church for Ragamuffins."

The biker work is linked with God's Squad. More non-Christians have come through the door of the chapel than came in the last twenty years because the venue has been used for infant dedications and weddings for families within the biking community. Further work planned includes a drop-in centre in partnership with the local drug projects and prison community chaplaincy team, providing space for the nurse who works with the homeless, and creating more opportunity for artistic expressions of faith and hope. Corporate singing is an alien concept to most Zaccers. Sacraments of communion have been used at Easter time and will be introduced more, as will baptism. Sean continues to be called upon from the wider pre-Christian community to conduct funerals, weddings, and dedications.

4. Underlying doctrines and values

Inclusion is important; being a friend of people, not a moral critic; honesty and grace; and human stability. Dramatic conversions without stability often do not grow into maturity. Partnership with other churches and with secular organisations, including the prison and drugs projects is necessary. The pub gatherings continue to connect with many ordinary people removed from traditional expressions of church. Good partnerships give us more opportunities for serving and all of this with an underlying emphasis on "taking the road with Jesus." This means helping people to follow Jesus and being part of a supportive community rather than just "churching" people.

"Without those apostles who left the safety of tradition to traverse the Roman Empire, embracing the gentiles and establishing a relevant faith in an environment of alien beliefs and life styles, you and I would never have heard of Jesus."

(Dr. John Smith, Founder of God's Squad, Australia)

5. Relationship to sub-culture

Zac's Place continues to be seen as a refuge by its regulars and many others connected with it. It is a place to belong and grow in community regardless whether they are "saved" or not. Whatever their social standing or appearance, the mission field knows that they will receive an open hand of friendship, especially during a time of great need. There is genuine mutual trust and respect and these two treasures are treated as just that, to be guarded and protected.

6. Missional outreach

The whole church is mission-driven. Even non-Christians help in the soup kitchen. Most of the mission activity would be best described as friendship and relational based. The arts are an important part of the wider mission. The voice of the artist as a vital nerve end in our culture is taken very seriously. Eight pieces of art have already been commissioned, based on the Beatitudes, with the specific objective of defining a follower's journey with Christ. Sacrifices have had to be made along the way, whether financial or physical abuse, but all of these colour a determination to stay true to goal of looking outward. A big shift was made from being involved in itinerant mission to becoming locally focussed since Zac's Place began.

7. Relation to the larger Body of Christ

Officially, Zac's Place is a mission project of the trustees associated with a wider movement based in Australia. The local church-networks remain important though – some see Zac's as a mission, some see it as a "church" (hence the use of the question mark in the original title). Sean and the trustees have been fully aware of the importance to have the endorsement of senior mainstream church leaders as this mission activity could easily be misunderstood as being too off-centre. However, isolation and misunderstanding is a cost of the work even when there continues to be substantial support from the wider body of the church.

Conclusion

Has there been fruit? Yes! Folk otherwise removed from usual expressions of church have found Jesus and are finding a place to belong and grow. Frail faith has been rekindled, dignity and self respect has been restored, folk with addictions have been supported, some with the open wounds of demonic influence have been healed, relationship have been built and artists have been given an opportunity to express themselves when there were none.

What is the future? It is essential to continue to lay a good foundation, to enable dysfunctional people to become stable and to find some value in serving others where possibly in the past this opportunity has not been given. It is very much a work in progress still relying on Sean, the trustees and a handful of reliable volunteers. However, there are signs of growth which may well give birth to a lasting "street level" missional church plant, providing necessary services among the marginalized in a needy community. Swansea is often referred to as "the graveyard of ambition." Zac's Place is kicking against that, continuing to desire to be an outpost of hope.

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www.zacsplace.org www.godssquad.org

14. Cornerstone Community Church Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.

Context

Columbia, Maryland, is a planned community located in the tenth wealthiest county in the United States. The average household income is approximately \$85,000. Planned in the 1960's by the Rouse Company, Columbia was designed to be a racially diverse community whose design lent itself to inclusive interaction.

The focus of Cornerstone is to reach the Post-Christian, postmodern subculture of Columbia for Christ. A brief description of this project follows.

The prevailing question of the *modern* generation seemed to be: What is truth? The prevailing question of our *postmodern* subculture appears to be: What's the point? This subculture is dominated by a pervasive cynicism and scepticism of most things organized and of most people.

- In the 1970's Watergate taught us not to trust politicians.
- In the 1970's and 1980's our parents' obsession with a "better life" materially left us essentially to raise ourselves—we were predominantly "latchkey children."
- In the 1980's the labour strikes of our sports heroes taught us not to trust professional athletes, because money was the issue, not love of the game.
- The Savings and Loan failures of the late 1980's taught us to not trust financial institutions.
- The TV evangelist debacle of the early 1990's taught us not to trust ministers.
- By the late 1990's Arthur Andersen, Enron, Merrill Lynch, et al., taught us that greed and corruption were the defining "qualities" of our society.

Because of these experiences, and many more, there appear to be three prevailing questions that our subculture intuitively asks:

Are you for real?

Can I trust you?

Do you care about me?

Our subculture is open to, even sensitive to, things spiritual, but not things Christian. It is in this context that Cornerstone ministers.

Narrative

Pastor Bruce Hopley and his wife Terri received direction from God to begin a new church - a church that would be truly part of the community; that would be simple yet effective; that authentically cared about people; and that sought creative ways to encourage people in their journey with Christ, regardless of background or spiritual heritage.

In March 1994, Cornerstone Community Church held its first public corporate worship service. In the beginning, only a handful of people could be counted as regular attenders. Rather than attempting to glean members from other churches, the people of Cornerstone continued reaching out to their un-churched neighbours, inviting them to visit and share in God's love. We believe that this has enabled Cornerstone to be truly representative of our community.

The people of Cornerstone worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We seek to express our faith incarnationally. We value authenticity, healthy relationships, the mystery of the Trinity, supernatural life change, community, and the Bible. We are committed to building real, lasting relationships with each other. We are committed to helping each other as we journey together in our life with Christ.

In 1999, after having held corporate worship events in rented elementary schools for five years, Cornerstone leased a warehouse in Columbia. Refurbishment took nine months and was accomplished by the sacrifice and work of the church community. The building is not mistaken for the church, but rather is seen as a ministry venue for the church.

What We Believe

- In essential beliefs, we have unity.
- In non-essential beliefs, we have liberty.
- In all of our beliefs, we show love.

Cornerstone's statement of faith is derived from the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Baptist Faith and Message (1963). The three above statements give direction for the forms of our beliefs' statements dissemination.

Challenges

For Cornerstone's community to demonstrate effectively the love of God through Christ in our area, we must first find effective ways to answer the prevailing questions noted above. Before we can help people experience the truth that God is for real, that He cares about them and that they can trust Him, we first have to demonstrate the positive answers to those questions within our community.

As George Hunter suggests in his book, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* (2000), we must approach our subculture with the same philosophy that St. Patrick applied. We must create a community environment in which people feel that they belong, that they are welcomed and accepted, not judged, but are treated with honesty, respect, and dignity. It is only after they sense that they belong that they will then believe that Christ died for them.

Our corporate worship services, spiritual events, Life Groups (small group ministry) are all designed with this philosophy at the fore. Our worship events are created to provide a non-threatening, authentic environment in which space is created for participation, interaction, contemplation and challenge. The elements of any given worship event may include (but are not confined to) the use of art, community-produced multimedia and video, symbols, stations of confession, prayer, the Lord's Supper, reading of the Bible, music and teaching in various formats.

Evangelism is recognized as part of the process in discipleship. It is more developmental and journey-oriented than strictly observing given forms. Baptism as an ordinance plays a central role in our spiritual journey; it provides a mile-marker of sorts with a specific date and time that is celebrated, honoured and remembered. People are discouraged from participating in baptism immediately after some powerful spiritual experience. Rather, candidates for baptism are spoken with individually, discipled and given opportunity to have their faith in Christ "fleshed out" to avoid rash decisions or emotionalism.

Our Life Groups constitute the smaller community environment where we focus on building authentic relationships, growing in our journey with Christ, wrestling with questions of living out our faith, prayer and experiencing the Bible together. It is the environment in which we live life together, as well as ministry. The Life Group leaders receive encouragement, direction, mentoring and oversight from the Ministry Area Coordinator of the Life Groups.

The Church's structure consists of three primary bodies. The Board of Trustees handle issues of facilities, lease, building maintenance, and legal matters. The Pastor's Council is charged with overseeing the spiritual health of the church, which includes holding the pastors accountable for their leadership and actions. The third body is the Ministry Council, consisting of leaders of leaders. Their primary responsibility is to coach, equip, and oversee the ministries within their area. This group currently consists of ten leaders. The Ministry Council meets once a month to evaluate ministries, address logistical issues, and insure healthy, effective communication amongst Cornerstone's ministries.

Cornerstone's building has become the home of Habitat for Humanity. We are also the home of Living Water Fellowship, a Korean church plant pastored by Rev. Samuel Lee. We also provide space for a pastoral counsellor and office space for church planter/pastor of CrossLife Community Church in Elkridge Maryland. Cornerstone supports three other area church plants with financial, spiritual and physical resources.

Though Cornerstone once affiliated exclusively with the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Mid-Maryland association and the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, we now have expanded to affiliate with numerous groups and networks.

Cornerstone is currently co-pastored by Bruce Hople and Ron Willoughby. Their team approach to pastoring began in November 2003. For the co-pastorate to work Hople and Willoughby invest a minimum of four hours per week together to insure healthy communication, accountability, and relationships. The two pastors share the teaching responsibility. This oftentimes includes the two teaching together in a dialogue or "tag-team" format. The congregation grew by 50% in the first nine months of 2004, and has cast a vision for giving away 51% of its annual income by the year 2010.

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15. Glad Tidings Fellowship

Harare, Zimbabwe

Context

Today the Church in Zimbabwe is undergoing a powerful transformation. Older traditional churches are being quickly eclipsed by fast-growing independent churches. In a society traumatized by HIV/AIDS and socio-political turmoil, old ways of “doing church” are proving to be no longer effective. Churches which insist on doing business as usual, with feet firmly anchored in the past, are at best struggling to keep up with population growth. Churches that focus on the needs of the unchurched are flourishing.

Glad Tiding Fellowship represents one new wineskin emerging on the African scene. Following its founding in 1982 by Richmond Chiundiza, this “apostolic network” grew to twenty-five churches by 1991 and onward to sixty-one churches by 2000. During this time, the membership of these churches grew to 8,500. In the Zimbabwean context, it offers a relevant and innovative approach to “church,” and as a result is experiencing strong growth.

By “apostolic network,” I am seeking to describe a vision-driven group of churches sharing a common identity based on trusting relationships, mutual accountability and a commitment to express New Testament Christianity in vibrant, contemporary forms. Such congregations voluntarily align around missional leaders and manifest a compelling passion to reach lost people, empower members for grassroots ministry, and multiply reproducing churches.

The Birth of an Apostolic Network

Richmond Chiundiza was born in Zimbabwe in 1941. Growing up in a nominal Christian home, he came to a personal relationship with Christ at age twenty-three through a power encounter in which he was miraculously healed of a grave illness. From that point onward he knew that his life would be given to sharing the good news with others. Richmond was shaped as a leader during times of great turmoil in Harare and the nation. He endured years of guerrilla warfare during which Robert Mugabe wrested power from the racist government of Ian Smith and declared independence in 1980.

In 1982, Richmond and his family set out to plant the first Glad Tidings church in the high-density township of Highfields, Harare, where he had grown up. Following the conversion of a witchdoctor, the Chiundizas began to see dramatic growth and soon membership surpassed 200. In 1985, he launched a program called “*Action 85*” with the goal of planting churches in the various communities from which their members were commuting. Multiple church planting teams were formed and soon Glad Tidings churches were springing up in major cities and towns around the country, with ten churches planted from 1982–1987.

In 1987, the *Discipling Zimbabwe Congress* was held in Harare during which Richmond sensed God giving him a vision to plant a large church in the centre of Harare, Glad Tidings City Fellowship (GTCF). By faith, he rented a 500-seat movie theatre. Within months it was filled to overflowing, much to the chagrin of the manager of the theatre as the overflow crowds were breaking fire codes. So the manager began to lock the doors when the maximum limit had been met, leaving scores of members outside. This size restriction led to a strategy of hiving off new congregations from the mother church. After a few years, the congregation moved to a larger theatre with a seating capacity of 800. This too quickly filled to overflowing. New churches continued to be hived off. By 1999, there were 17 Glad Tidings churches in Harare alone. Most had been spun off from Glad Tidings City Fellowship.

Glad Tidings churches have deliberately functioned as an apostolic network for a number of years. These churches relate together on a voluntary basis. Their association is motivated by a shared need for relationship and the recognition of a common identity. They do not consider themselves to be a denomination. There is no central office and no channelling of local church funds to a central pool. The apostolic team is comprised of church planting leaders who have developed regional influence. Authority is vested in the apostolic team from pastors and members in the network. Authority flows from the bottom up, rather than top down, as seen in hierarchical structures.

Each of the churches birthed by Glad Tidings is deliberately implanted with a vision for reproduction. Church multiplication is written into their spiritual genetics. Mother churches are forced to take primary responsibility for the oversight and care of their own daughter

churches. This lessens the burden carried by the apostolic team and opens the way for new trans-local leadership to emerge.

Richmond has launched a ministry training school designed for pastors and church leaders that focuses on spiritual formation, character formation and practical ministry skills. Priority would be placed on the 'how to' rather than theory. Richmond sees this model as a departure from the traditional Bible School model where persons aspiring to the ministry are sent away for theoretical training by people who may not be familiar with Glad Tidings and who often are not ministry practitioners themselves.

The Anatomy of Glad Tidings City Fellowship

With 1,000 members, Glad Tidings City Fellowship has become the flagship church of the network. It is a regional church, drawing commuters from across the city of Harare. This is clearly a young congregation drawn by worship that is exuberant, spontaneous and contemporary. Most have joined the church through conversion. The congregation has four distinct levels of leadership: the leadership team, the under-shepherds, the zone/interest group leaders and the home cell group.

Compelled by Values

Leaders at GTCF manifest an attitude of eschatological optimism which emphasizes that they can partner with God to shape the future. They are compelled by a sense that they are on the front lines of God's kingdom advance, pushing directly into enemy territory to set captives free. Their ecclesiology is Kingdom-driven and focused on rescuing people taken captive by the enemy.

There is a pronounced developmental bias at GTCF. Members are expected and enabled to continue growing as disciples and to involve themselves in ministry according to their gifts. Leaders teach that God has a specific vision for every member—a vision that integrates with His corporate vision for the church. Leaders are oriented to observe newcomers in ministry and to help guide them toward an accurate assessment of giftedness.

GTCF believes intently that the Bible provides meaningful answers to the questions of contemporary life. There is a decided orientation toward the New Testament, and the expectation that God wills to restore the dynamism of "Early Church" body life and witness to the present day, while strict in their understanding of faith, GTCF members are culturally sensitive in their application of the gospel to their community contexts. Unchurched young people are welcome to come just as they are. Earrings and hip clothes are not considered barriers preventing secular people from coming to church. In this and a host of other ways, GTCF demonstrates a pragmatic attitude.

A core value that is woven throughout the fabric of GTCF is the degree of trust placed in people. Trust flows both ways. Leaders are trusted and followed by the people - and people are trusted and empowered by the leaders to carry out the ministry. This attitude of trust and empowerment filters down to the grassroots levels. Such trust creates a powerful climate in which people unite together around a common vision, with each person encouraged to make his/her own contribution to the accomplishment of that vision.

Mobilized for Ministry

The senior pastor at GTCF sees himself as a leader first and foremost, and not as an "employee" of the church. He is considered the leading elder and serves as the central visionary for GTCF. Richmond is quick to point out that on an organizational chart he is not above the elders, but is rather one of them. The team concept is deeply valued and there seems to be an aversion toward anything that would lend itself toward ecclesiastical hierarchy. While the corporate vision comes from the senior pastor, responsibility for the actual implementation of the vision is delegated to leaders throughout the church structure.

At GTCF, it is clear that regular members are envisioned, excited and mobilized for hands-on ministry. Ministry belongs to the people and is delivered through two primary ministry structures: home cell groups and ministry teams. Church leaders encourage members to continually identify needs in their communities and initiate ministries to meet those needs. This creates unlimited options. Ministry is initiated from the bottom up and is based upon a free enterprise model.

Fresh Hope for a Troubled Land

New wineskins, such as Glad Tidings Fellowship, bring fresh hope to Zimbabwe. Nimble and responsive to the needs of a changing society, they are geared for growth. Their influence will increasingly shape Africa and the world as they radically live out the apostolic nature of Christianity.

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Themes Running Through These Case Studies

These cases demonstrate that mission involves change for established churches and innovation in initiating new ministries. There is no template that can be used. At the same time, as we worked through the wealth of material and thought about the great variety of new expressions of church, we noted that the following principles were common to most of the case studies:

- Intentional outgoing mission is characteristic of the church, expressed in contextualised ministries, worship and church forms.
- A powerful vision of God's love and redemption with an attitude of continual openness to His leading and an explicit expectation of His intervention in our ministries of evangelism, church planting and compassionate service.
- Confidence in the gospel, its necessity, and its power to transform lives, churches, and communities.
- The necessity of dynamic and vital Christian discipleship for individuals and healthy churches.
- Needs-based and holistic evangelism and structures and programs which take full account of the actual situation and circumstances of the lives of people in the community so as to present a loving, gracious environment for ministry and witness.
- Recognition of evangelism as both process and event, with sensitivity to the pilgrimage of people who are at different stages in their lives and have differing attitudes and perceptions of the church, the gospel and God Himself, including those who may have been hurt, puzzled, or misled through their contacts with Christians and the church.
- A radical commitment to the importance of the church as the Body of Christ and its reproduction and multiplication as a strategy for and an outcome of evangelism.
- Empowering of leaders for ministry through trust, training, and the establishment of relevant structures and forms of ministry.
- The privilege of the priesthood of all believers, especially through the principle of every member evangelism, supported by practical systems of mentoring, training, and accountability, typically as small group or cell and one-to-one basis.
- Ecclesial streams and patterns can become archaic; openness to change in response to changing context should be cultivated.

Theological reflection

It is evident that new expressions of the church which we heard about and described do not involve merely innovations or changes in methods or other practical matters. Instead, profound questions of basic understanding about the nature, life, and mission of the church are under review — and in many cases, there is a renewal of our understanding of the gospel itself. We are hearing afresh the message of Scripture and Lord of the church.

So we are called on to re-examine our theology of the church. However, as the case studies show, the forms and ministries of churches emerging in new and changing contexts raise issues not clearly or completely covered by the convictions of classic ecclesiology which focus on the “notes of the church” or governance, structure, ministry and sacraments. In fact, the normal applications of these definitions may fail to capture the dynamic of the church in biblical terms, or they may lead to uncritical endorsement of structures and ministries which can in many respects be contrary to the gospel.

We welcome the urge to develop innovative and flexible forms of church in order to maximise evangelism and church planting especially in unusual situations. But even while doing this, it is necessary to call for careful reflection on what is happening in the light of Scripture as the normative and empowering word of God.

Newer forms of church should not ignore the value of drawing insights from the two thousand-year heritage of the Church's theology and life, nor should the older forms be tempted to think that they have a monopoly on the truth simply by virtue of their age and tradition. Already we can see varied patterns and developments in the New Testament, as the primitive church took up forms that were appropriate to the diverse cultures in which the early Christians sought to fulfil the different facets of the mission of Christ including fellowship,

worship, service, and witness (Acts 2:41-47). So the Jerusalem church was organized along the lines of the Jewish synagogue with a head (Peter and after his departure, James) and a team of elders, but Paul founded churches in Asia with a *collegia* which was more appropriate to the culture of the Hellenistic world.

Obviously in the New Testament period, it was a pilgrim and underground Church. Thus it would be expected that forms would change as the church became a more settled part of society in later centuries. Today, emerging churches in both the developing and western world are often more like the primitive New Testament situation than the rather static one which has characterised the history of the church in the West for the succeeding fifteen centuries or more. However, these situations themselves may change as the gospel becomes more pervasive in particular societies.

Because of this ever-changing situation, we may need to be more sensitive to the potentiality that lies in a developing Church (a church "in the making"), rather than thinking of its character and form at any one point in time. Yet this is not to attribute the status of church to temporary forms or ministries which are limited in scope and which have been established by an existing body of believers for outreach, fellowship or other similar purpose.

Some of the factors that are important to note as we observe emerging churches are underlying doctrines and values, leadership, social structures, worship, relationships to local structures, mission outreach, relationships to the wider Body of Christ and ethic transformation of the Church and its members.

Under whatever name it may be known, we understand the Church to be a community of disciples renewed and transformed by faith in Jesus Christ, who come under His lordship as head of the church (Ephesians 4:15-16) and who are committed to one another in Christ as a group for the purpose of worship, fellowship, service and evangelism under recognised empowering and gifted leadership and are in spiritual unity with other parts of the Body of Christ.

Although the Church as a visible organization must have forms and structures, its most fundamental characteristic is that it draws its life and identity as a community of believers from Christ and is in a dynamic process of living out its calling to share in the mission of Christ who in turn is the "Apostle" of God (John 12:44,49; 20:21). That is, we look for the life-giving presence of Christ in His Church, as its Lord and the authentic fellowship and unity created by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14), issuing strongly in sacrificial love bringing the believers together as one and energizing them for mission (2 Corinthians 5:14-20; Romans 5:5; Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 14:25).

Especially in mission outreaches and innovative ministries, it is important to consider the identity of the Christ who is preached and the nature of the gospel proclaimed and embodied. This is critical in areas where the emerging church may have had minimal exposure to biblical teaching, just as much as it is in areas where the gospel message may have been overlaid with extraneous content, or been narrowed or diverted from apostolic truth by tradition or culture.

It is also necessary to maintain cultural relevance so the church can be truly incarnated, but it is also important to be sensitive to the need to be counter-culturally faithful to the Word of God and to realize that suffering for Christ and in His name is also part of the gospel.

To approach the church in this way as the Body of Christ and the pilgrim people of God calls for fresh and careful thinking. In doing so, there is opened up the possibility of a creative praxis which is faithful to the will and purpose of God and His mission in the world and also empowering for the church and its people. This approach to the nature and identity of the church means that many of the issues which the emerging church raises in the context of traditional and classic understandings can be much more easily resolved.

Some of those raised by the case studies which have not already been mentioned are:

- the role of each believer in carrying forward the ministry of the church within its fellowship and according to God's grace and gifting rather than leaving this ministry to an elite clergy, a professional group or an employed staff;
- the relationship of the local, visible church to the universal church, recognizing that the boundaries may often be blurred in new and developing situations;
- the relationship between smaller cells or units of the church developed for outreach, fellowship, pastoral care and teaching on the one hand, and on the

other, the larger body of the church locally or regionally gathered for worship and celebration and organized for ministry and service;

- unity and diversity in the church local and universal as equally valid gifts of the Spirit, thereby reflecting comprehensively the fullness of God's character and empowering those of any group (irrespective of age, gender, race, social structures etc) so that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28);
- the nature of baptism and the Lord's Supper in relation to the church, evangelism and pastoral care;
- the nature of evangelism and discipleship as an ongoing process of drawing closer to God in Christ with the expectation that there will be decisive steps along the way, and the role of the believing community in providing a context in which this pilgrimage may be welcomed and encouraged;
- the development of the church as being engaged fully in the mission of God, not only reaching out evangelistically and in church planting but also witnessing to and embodying the fullness of God's plan for people and His creation.

Conclusion: Message to the Churches

We are confident that the Spirit of Truth continues to guide the people of God in these matters as well as in other areas of Christian life if they remain open to the Lordship of Christ. So as we conclude this report on our study and reflection, we wish to bring this message to the churches round the world:

The Holy Spirit is leading the Body of Christ into many new and creative works resulting in expansion and fresh expression of church today. Furthermore, engaging new generations, unreached peoples, and rapidly changing cultures with the gospel *necessitates* new expressions that are both contextually relevant and biblically counter-cultural.

Therefore,

- We call established churches and mission movements to acknowledge, understand, support and bless creative expressions of the church that are missionally motivated.
- We call emerging church movements to value the experience, history and theology of established churches and seek expressions of unity as well as diversity in the Body of Christ.
- We call established as well as emerging churches to engage in the *ongoing* task of contextualising of their ministries in light of their continuously changing culture.
- We call for the launching of creatively contextualised church planting movements amongst the unreached people groups, emerging subcultures and minimally reached populations of the world.

Appendices

1. Taxonomy and Diagnostic Grid

Taxonomy

The motivation behind developing a taxonomy was not to identify the distinguishing marks of emerging or new expressions of church. It was rather to provide a helpful framework to those who were telling the stories of their work at 2004 Forum for World Evangelization. A small group identified the main areas which seemed likely to be helpful and constructed a simple grid of headings for questions. They then listened to the case studies and noted the answers to the questions in the grid as the answers came up in conversation. This was in no sense a linear process and sometimes it was not straightforward working out which question the story being told was answering. Some of the stories being told did not fit easily as answers to any of the questions and so new questions were created. It also became apparent that through a process of prompting the storyteller, the questions on the grid helped them to tell their story in a more complete way.

After working through this process with the presenters of fifteen case studies, the taxonomy group re-examined the questions and re-drafted them in the light of their observations. This list follows. It is hoped that the questions will help those involved in mapping or researching new expressions of church to build a more complete picture of the groups they are studying.

Listening to these stories is an exciting process and those who participated were left with a deep sense of gratitude to God for those who had the courage to step out into the unknown and try something new so that the His Kingdom might come. There was sometimes the sense that even when all this information had been shared and reflected upon that the very essence of what was happening remained beyond our reach. The group came to see that this was itself the result of the mysterious moving of the Spirit and reminded us of the necessity for humility because, however useful a tool the grid had become for us, the wave of the Spirit will not be captured in this bottle.

Diagnostic Grid

These questions are capable of several layers or levels of answer. They are designed to facilitate an open and explorative process rather than a prescriptive one. Those sharing case studies must be encouraged first and foremost to tell their stories. This grid is designed to facilitate the process of reflection and ordering the material.

Focus

- Tell the story of how your project/group/church began.
- What is your most exciting and distinctive feature?
- What sacrifices have you had to make along the way?
- What is your vision?

Mission

- Are you responding to a need of your community? (Need may be perceived in many ways – physical, educational, spiritual, societal etc)
- How do you share the good news of Jesus?

Cultural Context

- Describe your cultural context.
- What is the historical presence of the church and/or other religious movements where you are working?
 - Are there any other churches in your area?
 - How do you relate to them?
- How is your culture changing and how are you responding?
- Would you say that your local community is responsive, indifferent, resistant or hostile to your group?

Nature

- Describe the nature of your Christian community (network, household, cell, congregation, celebration etc).
- Who belongs to your community:

- What sort of people join?
- To what extent is your community multi-ethnic and multi-generational?
- What is the proportion of males and females?
- To what extent is the social make-up of your Christian community reflective of the wider community?
- Describe what happens when you gather together:
 - Where and when do you meet, how often and for how long?
 - Describe a normal act of worship, how many people would be present?
 - Do you celebrate the Lord's Supper and Baptism? How often?
- How are you financed?

Affiliation

- Do you have external relationships (sponsoring body, denomination/stream, informal network)?
- To what extent do you identify with your religious tradition?
- How supportive do you find them?

Leadership

- Explain how leadership is exercised.
- Who decides who leads:
 - How are they chosen, trained and equipped?
 - By whom and how are your leaders recognised and authorised?
- What are your leaders called?

Values

- What are your main values?
- What are the key doctrines and beliefs of your Christianity community?
- Is there anything you consider non-negotiable?

Transformational Process

- How do you encourage/help people to become mature followers of Jesus?
 - Nurture, accountability, discipline.
- Are there moral/lifestyle expectations on members of your Christian community?

Fruit

- What have been the results of your mission so far?
- What are your expectations over the next few years?

2. New Expressions of Church

This list includes new ecclesial expressions found on several continents. It is illustrative and suggestive rather than exhaustive. It has been compiled from various sources.

- Intentional communities
- Base ecclesial communities
- Followers of Jesus who remain within their community-family context yet are committed disciples
- House churches
- Café/pub church
- Cell church
- Cell-based, large-scale church
- Churches arising out of community initiatives (that arise from community projects or restructured existing church)
- Multiple and midweek congregations
- Network-focused churches
- School-based and school-linked congregations
- Seeker church/Purpose-driven church
- Traditional church plants
- Traditional forms of church that inspire new interest
- “Ancient-Future” church: eclectic combining of traditional and contemporary elements
- Alternative worship geared to a particular age group
- Youth congregations: Generation-X within existing congregation; student church
- Emerging Church: post-congregational, deconstruction of previous forms of church
- Church of the poor/marginalized
- Dream- or revelation-originated
- Cyber church
- Market place or company-based churches
- Churches in prisons.

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- www.emergingchurch.info. Promotes exchange of information about emerging churches.
- www.next-wave.org. A webzine offering variety of articles about emerging churches.
- www.run.org.uk. Sponsored by Reaching the Unchurched Network.
- www.theooze.com. Provocative articles about emerging churches around the world.

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