

Alan Hirsch: The Forgotten Ways

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AJM notes Dec 09

Another excellent and forward thinking analysis of the church in the current context, based on research and experience.

Introduction

A church which pitches its tents without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, is being untrue to its calling... [We must] play down our longing for certainty, accept what is risky, and live by improvisation and experiment. – Hans Kung (The Church as the People of God)

A hidden missionary potency lies in the heart of God's people. The shift from modern to postmodern (or whatever) has been hard for the church to accept. 'We find ourselves in a perplexing global jungle where our well-used cultural and theological maps don't seem to work anymore. It seems as if we have woken up to find ourselves in contact with a strange and unexpected reality that seems to defy our usual ways of dealing with issues of the church and its mission. All this amounts to a kind of ecclesial future shock, where we are left wandering in a world we can't recognize any more.. The problems raised in such a situation are not merely intellectual but together amount to an intense spiritual, emotional and existential crisis.' 16 The inherited formulas will not work any more.

Even much of the thinking about the so-called emerging church leaves the prevailing assumptions of church and mission intact and focuses on the issue of theology and spirituality in a postmodern setting – reworking the software while leaving the hardware and operating system intact. It won't do – we need a new set of tools, a new paradigm. We need to engage with missional ecclesiology – the church, when true to its real calling, when it's on about what God is on about, is by far and away the most potent force for transformational change the world has ever seen.

Examples of church growth:

- Early centuries. Rodney Stark - in AD 100 there were 25,000 Christians. In AD 310 there were up to 20 million. How did they do it? Bear in mind they were mostly illegal, had no buildings, had few scriptures, had no professional leadership, had no seeker sensitive services, youth groups, worship bands, seminaries, commentaries; and that they made it hard to join the church. If we can answer that, we can do it again.
- China – same pattern. When Mao began the purge of religion from society there were 2m Christians. He banished missionaries, nationalised all church property, killed or imprisoned its leaders, banned public meetings, and began to torture Christians. When missionaries were let back in in the 80s, they found 60m Christians. They had no clergy, no official leadership structures, no central organisation, no mass meetings – and grew. How?
- Wesley – by the end of his lifetime 1 in 30 English adults were Methodists. In 1776 <2% of the US were Methodists; by 1850, 34% were.
- Pentecostals – from none to 400m in 100 years; by 2050 there will be 1 billion Pentecostals.

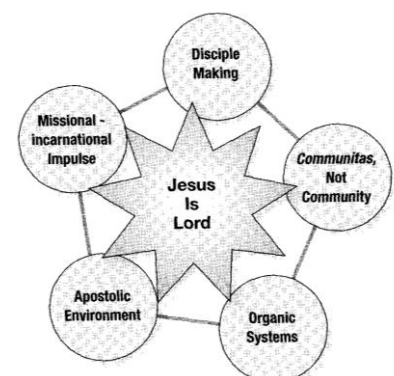
The phenomenon present in these stories he calls Apostolic Genius, and the elements that make it up he calls mDNA. Persecution keeps Christians true to their faith and reliant on God; by being true to the Gospel, Apostolic Genius is unleashed. Key ingredients: passionate love of God, prayer, incarnational practice; Eph 4 modes of leadership, recovery of radical discipleship, relevant forms of organization and structures, right conditions. All God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energised the early Christian movt and are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. We can all do it – we've just forgotten. NB – we do need organizational structure, but not institutionalism, which is impersonal.

Overview of book:

Section 1 – a missionary reading of the situation of the Church in the West, through his own experience

Section 2 – the elements of Apostolic Genius:

- Jesus is Lord - At the centre and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists a very simple confession ... the claim of the One God over every aspect of every life, and the response of his people to that claim (Deut. 6:4–6ff.). The way that this was expressed in the New Testament and later movements was simply "Jesus Is Lord!" With this simple confession they changed the world.
- Disciple making - Essentially, this involves the irreplaceable and lifelong task of becoming like Jesus by embodying his message. This is perhaps where many of our efforts fail. Disciple making is an irreplaceable core task of the church and needs to be structured into every church's basic formula
- Missional-incarnational impulse – the twin impulses of remarkable missionary movements are the dynamic outward thrust and the related deepening impulse, which together seed and embed the gospel into different cultures and people groups.
- Apostolic environment—apostolic influence and the fertile environment that this creates



The Structure of Apostolic Genius

in initiating and maintaining the phenomenal movements of God. This will relate to the type of leadership and ministry required to sustain metabolic growth and impact.

- Organic systems - the idea of appropriate structures for metabolic growth. Phenomenal Jesus movements grow precisely because they do not have centralized institutions to block growth through control. Here we will find that remarkable Jesus movements have the feel of a movement, have structure as a network, and spread like viruses.
- *Communitas* not community - the most vigorous forms of community are those that come together in the context of a shared ordeal or those that define themselves as a group with a mission that lies beyond themselves—thus initiating a risky journey. Too much concern with safety and security, combined with comfort and convenience, has lulled us out of our true calling and purpose. We all love an adventure. Or do we? This chapter aims at putting the adventure back into the venture.

1. The Making of a missionary

1. Setting the scene – confessions of a frustrated missionary

If you want to build a ship, don't summon people to buy wood, prepare tools, distribute jobs, and organize the work, rather reach people the yearning for the wide, boundless ocean – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

A great deal more failure is the result of an excess of caution than of bold experimentation with new ideas. The frontiers of the kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution – J Oswald Sanders

Our stories are vital because they are perhaps the only thing we can say with absolute authority – they are *our* stories. All great missionary movements begin at the fringes of the church, seldom at the centre. In pursuing missional modes of church we need to get out of the stifling equilibrium of the centre of our movements and denominations, move to the fringes, and engage in real mission there. The result will be increased life at the centre.

Research shows all over the West that the average non Christian population reports a high interest in God, spirituality, Jesus, prayer; but a high degree of alienation from church. 10-15% of them are attracted to the seeker sensitive middle class family churches with middle of the road music. Most evangelical churches compete for this small segment of the population, reaching out to those who share their cultural values. The remaining population (85% in Australia, 65% in US) reject this form of church. If we are going to reach them, it won't be by more of the same.

Story of a missional community he led in Melbourne – a declining middle class church transformed by 50 ex drug addicts who'd given their lives to Christ. They began to ask questions like, what is good news for this people group, what would church look/feel like for this people group. We can't know the answers till we ask the questions in a missional context. It's a café culture so they set up a café, offered interactive engagement.

What's a church? The way we define it is crucial. *A covenanted community, centred on Jesus, engaging in worship, discipleship, mission.* They realised if they didn't make disciples they would not be fruitful in mission, but rather become a worship club for trendy people.

Churchill said we shape our buildings, and then they shape us. Pulpit ministry produces 95% passivity. Programmed ministry produces 90% passivity. Alternative church produces 80% passivity.

Church growth models urge you become strong in a number of defined areas – fine till someone else in your area is stronger. Most growth comes from people switching churches.

So they decided that cell groups should be the primary experience of church, reducing the active: passive ratio; that they would have a covenant and core practices rather than values; that each group would be engaged in a healthy set of spiritual disciplines (community, scripture, mission, worship/prayer, personal transformation).

1. Setting the scene 2 – denominational and translocal practices

To encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of truly being the Church – David Bosch (Transforming Mission)

Critiques of Christendom from a missional perspective – Stuart Murray and DJ Hall.

Illich – to change society you have to tell an alternative story. So in church – changing the programme consumes vast energy but doesn't, in the long run, work; things settle back as they were. Jesus initiated an organic people movement, not an institution. 'A prophetically consistent Christianity means that we must remain committed to a constant critique of the structures and rituals we set up and maintain', 55. We need 'holy rebellion'; our challenge is to discern the will of God for our time, to recover a biblical imagination.

Post Constantine – the shift to Christendom, 59. The implications were disastrous for the Jesus movement – Constantine destroyed all its attractive and dynamic aspects and turned a high intensity grassroots movement into an arrogant institution controlled by an elite (Stark).

The average church in Christendom mode tends to be effective only within its own cultural reference. You can measure cultural distance in ms – it can reach m0 and m1 but never through to m4 (across cultural barriers). Outreach and indrag only works with those from the same cultural background, and this includes seeker sensitive approaches. People will come to faith in small intimate

communities of friends but generally don't want the organized-religion part of the deal. Recruit them to the first (Alpha) and then dump them in the second is a 'Bait and Switch' strategy – considered unethical in the commercial world! 3m people have done Alpha in the UK, but there certainly aren't 3m new church members – Alpha shows how we don't reach far beyond ourselves at all.

The organisational structures of the Church are worlds away from that of the early church – as far removed as the UN from Al Qaeda (institution with centralised structures, policies, protocols vs a reticulated network operating around a simple structure with a focussed cause). If Church is central to society it can be attractive – but it no longer is!

EMC – emerging missional church, ancient and creative, similar to apostolic church – new movements and communities are emerging, mostly not in church buildings – dance clubs, cafes, theatres, pubs, bars, sports clubs, homes, businesses. See Gibbs and Bolger on characteristics of emerging churches; the first is that they identify primarily with Jesus.

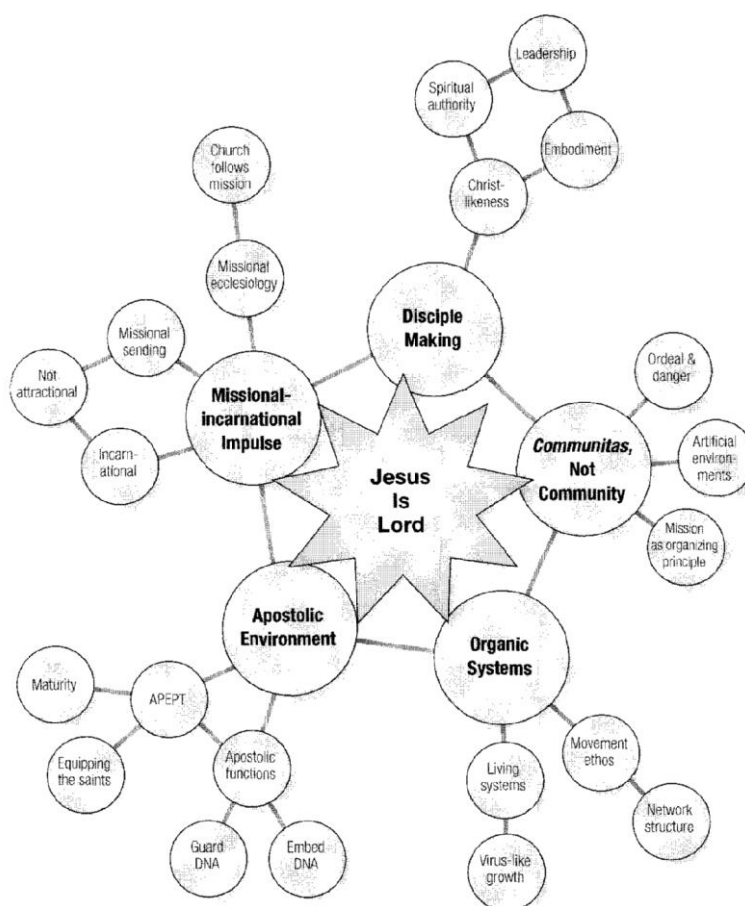
World Christian Encyclopaedia 2001 – there are 111m Christians without a local church...

2. A Journey to the heart of apostolic genius

mDNA. In biological systems each cell carries the full coding of the whole organism. In China they intuitively seemed to know what to do when all external support structures and expressions were destroyed; they didn't even have bibles, let alone leaders – they must have found it within themselves. This coding is placed in them through the world of the Spirit and by the power of the gospel in the community. True wherever the church faces threat or an opportunity that compels it to the rediscovery of its true nature. It's always there – mostly latent.

Diagram summarises what he means by Apostolic Genius. Rest of book expands it.

Missional church – term coined by Gospel and Our Culture Network, based on Newbigin's understanding that the West is a mission field, and the church needs to adopt a missionary stance to it. Word missional often used nowadays as trendy substitute for seeker sensitive, cell church etc. A missional church is 'a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world', 82.



3. The heart of it all – Jesus is Lord

Persecution drives people to live close to their message. In order to survive, people have to jettison all unnecessary impediments. An underground church has to travel light: faith is linked to Jesus.

The original Hebrew context was polytheistic. The message to them was, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength. (Deut 6.4-9). Torah relates all aspects of life to God – from the temple to what you do when your donkey falls into a pit.

The early church proclaims 'Jesus is Lord' in the same way; the gods were different, but still many, as indeed they are today. They refused to keep the pantheon and the overlordship of Caesar; Jesus is Lord. We have adopted christocentric monotheism. So genuinely messianic monotheism rejects separation of sacred from secular. The alternative worship movement often doesn't – it sets up a new sacred space. But our task is to make all aspects of life sacred, and not to limit the presence of God to spooky religious zones. God is not only encountered in special places, requiring a priestly paraphernalia to mediate our experience of him. God, Church and World are three overlapping circles (not God and World separate with Church in the middle linking them!). Our task is to integrate all aspects of life under the lordship of Jesus – leave one out (eg apartheid, or work) and disaster follows. In Rwanda, 'Christian' served as a brand name, but not a commitment to a common Lord, which would have stopped Christians killing one another.

In our religion there is so much clutter that this central claim is easily lost. 'At the heart of the church's call and mission lies a challenge to respond to God with all that we are and all that we have and so complete the meaning of our lives', 100.

4. Disciple making

We can only live changes: we cannot think our way to humanity. every one of us, every group, must become the model of that which we desire to create – Ivan Illich

Discipleship is the most critical element in the mDNA mix – it's the strategic element. CS Lewis said the purpose of the church is to draw people to Christ and make them like Christ; 'if the Church is not doing this, then all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible, are a waste of time', 102. The founding of the whole Christian movement was initiated through Jesus investing his life and embedding his teachings in his followers and developing them into authentic disciples. Stephen Addison has shown that the key to Methodism's success was the high level of commitment required; once it moved away from its missional ethos and disciple making it degenerated. 'For the follower of Jesus, discipleship is not the first step toward a promising career. It is in itself the fulfilment of his or her destiny'. And yet we do little about it; we have a language of discipleship but no consistent practice for it. In the W church we have lost the art of disciple making, partly because we've reduced it to the intellectual assimilation of ideas, partly because of the assumptions of Christendom, partly because consumerism pushes against it. It's now too easy to be a Christian – the first converts not only had to face up to persecution, they had to prove why they believed they should be allowed to become part of the Christian community in the first place; many were turned away!!! Not exactly seeker-sensitive stuff!

What do we need for a great movement:

1. White hot faith – a direct and transforming encounter with God
2. Commitment to the cause
3. Contagious relationships - ideas travel like a virus through networks of existing relationships
4. Rapid mobilisation – effective leadership and organisation
5. Dynamic methods

The major threat to the viability of our faith is consumerism, which offers identity, purpose, meaning and community – advertisers deliberately co-opt religious ideas and symbols. If they can link their products into the unfilled void, they will sell them. Most advertising has little to do with the products themselves. We, the Church, are left competing, and easily become little more than a vendor of religious goods and services. Even services are like this – 90% of attendees are passive consumers, recipients of the religious goods and services being delivered by professionals in a slick presentation and service. We cannot consume our way into discipleship; and yet consumerism has become the driving ideology of the church's ministry. Consumerism is pagan – Matt 6, the pagans run after all these things – food, drink, clothing. We cannot serve two masters and run after things. If we don't disciple people, the culture sure will! Disciple making has to be central. Consumerism represents a culture of searching – and we have the answers. The Church, Pete Ward suggests, should radically reorganise round consumerist principles but maintain its missional edge. The alternative is to initiate a prophetic challenge to consumerism's overarching control on our lives. Hirsch inclines towards the latter – it's dangerous to flirt with the devil.

The context for discipleship is not the classroom but the world. It's our lifestyle practices, not our thinking, that matter. 'Jesus' strategy is to get a whole lot of little versions of him infiltrating every nook and cranny of society by reproducing himself in and through his people in every place throughout the world.' 113 Mother Teresa: 'we must become holy not because we want to feel holy but because Christ must be able to live his life fully in us'. 2 Cor 3.1-3, we are living letters whose message is constantly being read by others. The medium *is* the message. Discipleship is about both *imitation* and *embodiment*. See 1 Thess 1.6-9, Phil 3.17, 2 Thess 3.9, Titus 2.7-8, 1 Cor 11.1. Movements have to take root in the lives of their followers if they are to ignite.

Leadership is an extension of discipleship. If you can't reproduce disciples, you can't reproduce leaders, and if you can't reproduce leaders you can't reproduce churches (Cole). Missional leadership comes from the seeds of discipleship – which is why Jesus organises discipleship round mission. We, on the other hand, take leaders out of the context of ordinary life and ministry and fill them with complex information – the information's fine, but they get socialised out of ordinary life and into a language and thinking which is not understood outside the seminary. We take flight into a world of abstraction, and often never land again. In the seminary, the in-tray of information is piled high while the out tray of obedience and action is empty. The Hebrew concept of knowledge doesn't do this – acting leads to thinking. The Greek concept, that thinking leads to acting, doesn't work.

5. Missional-incarnational impulse

It should not bother us that [during different epochs] the Christian faith was perceived and experienced in new and different ways. The Christian faith is intrinsically incarnational; therefore unless the church chooses to remain a foreign entity, it will always enter into the context in which it happens to find itself – David Bosch, Transforming mission.

Mission is not merely an activity of the church; it's the result of God's initiative, rooted in his purposes to heal and restore creation. We suppress it by measuring its effectiveness through numerical growth, better programming, and increase of plant and resources – all of which require the attractional model. An incarnational lifestyle requires presence, proximity, powerlessness and proclamation. 'The fact that God was in the Nazarene neighbourhood for 30 years and no one notice should be profoundly disturbing to our normal ways of engaging mission'... He took time to become part of the fabric of a community. He mixed with people from every level of society. He did it through servanthood and humility. He proclaimed a message – we are a 'message tribe'.

Making babies is fun – and churches are meant to do it. only 4% of S Baptist churches in the US will ever plant a daughter church. If we discovered 96% of women were infertile we'd realise both that there is something wrong with their health and that our future was in serious jeopardy.

How to be incarnational:

- Move from attractional model to incarnational community
- Limit transfer growth and build momentum from a spiritually curious culture
- Learn how to en flesh the gospel in ways that make sense to saints and sojourners
- Bring big values to a valueless culture – no need for seeker services!
- Structure our lives as leaders, our money and our people in ways that propel missional activity.

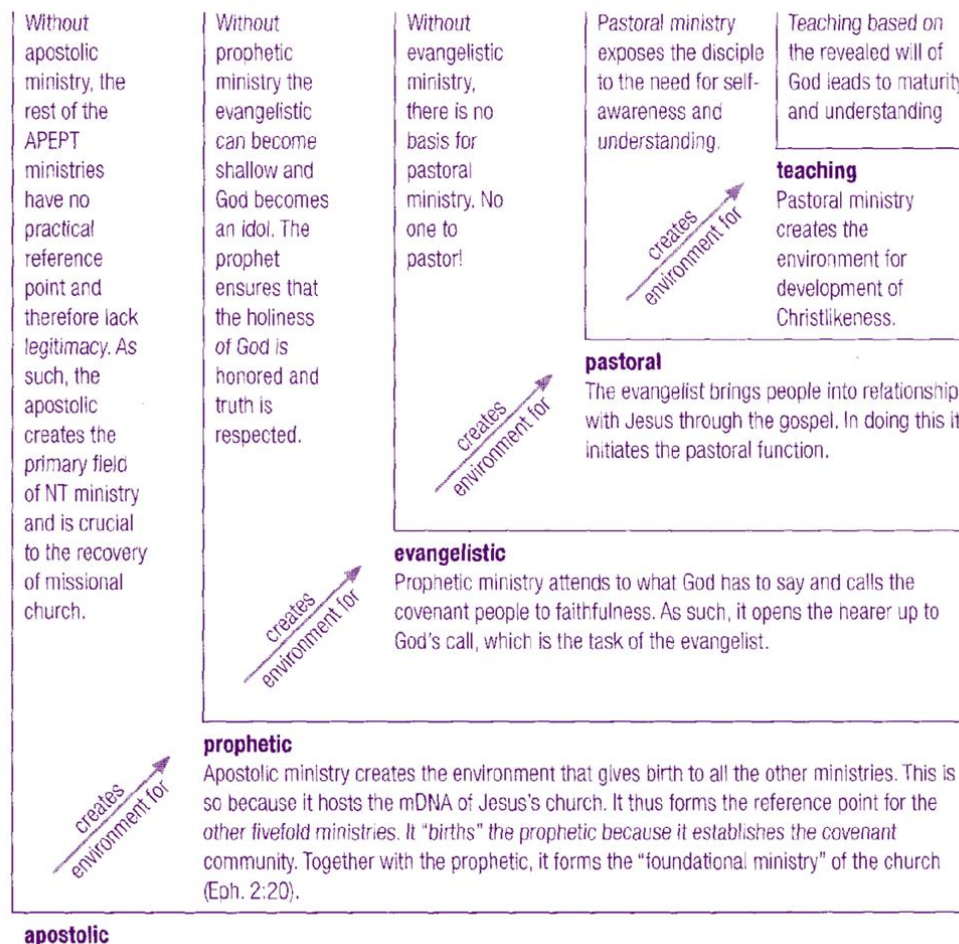
It goes Christology→missiology→ecclesiology – ie church follows mission not vv. Incarnational mission should produce incarnational church. If we accept that mission is an activity of God and not of the church, that we participate in God’s mission and not the other way round, then it follows that we must engage in ways that mirror God’s engagement with the world. It means allowing Jesus to lead us into the third places, marketplaces, homes of the people in our lives, and teach us there about how to engage in Christ like ways.

6. Apostolic environment

Purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated, and commonly shared, are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that you hold purpose and principles in common among you, you can dispense with them, and they’ll do it in thousands of unimaginable, creative ways. The organization will become a vital, living set of beliefs. Dee Hock, *The Birth of the Chaordic Age*.

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality – Max DePree, Credibility.

Apostolic leaders can lead 260,000 Christians in cells and networks (a Chinese leader called Brother Shi does) – contrast megachurches which require sophisticated organisations to sustain 1,000-2,000 people. Such people may not call themselves apostles but there’s no other word for their catalytic influence. A pastoral conception of church and ministry is now a major hindrance to the church – perhaps ordination will have to go. Apostolic ministry is a function, not an office – it’s about the expansion of Christianity physically (missionary effort and churchplanting) and theologically (integration of apostolic doctrine into the life of the individual Christians and the communities they are part of); the apostle is the one who provides the personal reference point and spiritual context for the other ministries of God’s people. The apostle creates a web of meaning that holds the movement together, by reawakening people to the gospel and embedding it in the organizational framework in ways that are meaningful. Apostles are theologians as well as entrepreneurs, exercising not institutional but inspirational/moral leadership.



The apostle is one of the 5fold APEPT ministries of Ephesians 4.

Paul himself is not a ‘charismatic’, dominant leader – these ultimately *hinder* growth. It seems rather he actually lacks charismatic presence, and is perhaps more parental in the way he works. Apostolic leadership seems to have little to do with personality, charisma, or style; he senses dormant energy and catalyses it.

The NT does not teach hierarchy as the principle of either authority or organization in the church – Jesus seemed consistently opposed to it. Midwifery is a better image – assisting at a birth.

Mike Brean – the Order of Mission grew out of the belief that ‘institutional forms of Christianity are hollow, boring, irrelevant and have little bearing on the real issues in the lives of most unchurched people’, 167.

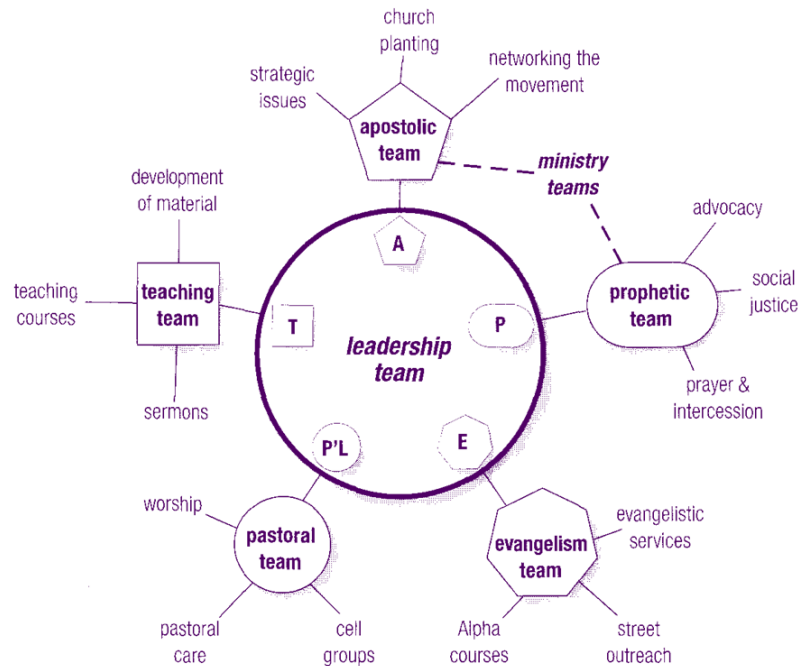
APEPT – the historical marginalisation of the apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic ministries and leadership styles has damaged the church. We need:

- **Apostle** – steward of the DNA of the church, ‘sent’ to transmit the faith from one context to another
- **Prophet** – truth teller to the believer; person with an ear to God, acts as mouth of God, speaks for God, often in tension with dominant consciousness
- **Evangelist** – truth tell to the unbeliever, recruiter, calls for personal response to Jesus
- **Pastor** – cares for and develops the people of God
- **Teacher** – clarifies the revealed mind/will of God

People seem to have these ministries in combination. Visit www.theforgottenways.org to find your ministry profile.

How do these ministries relate to the gifts of the Spirit – they all draw on them as needed and as God graces. Different ministries rely on different groups of gifts – eg teaching on teaching, wisdom, revelatory gifts. APEPT is a living system. It parallels what seems to be recognised in most human leadership systems – entrepreneur, questioner, recruiter, humanizer, philosopher.

An APEPT leadership team – the apostolic person would talk about the need to galvanize the community around mission, the prophetic people would challenge everything and ask irritating questions about God; the evangelist would emphasize the need to bring people to faith, the pastors express concerns about how the community could healthily engage the issue sustainably, and the theologians discern the plan’s validity from scripture and history.



7. Organic systems

Makes sense to look to creation for clues as to how God intends authentic life and community to manifest – all of life bears his creative fingerprints, and he has filled every aspect of it with intrinsic vitality and intelligence. Gen 1, Col 1.16, John 1, Heb 1.3, Ps 19.1-4. An organic image of church and mission is theologically richer than any mechanistic/institutional conceptions we might devise. It seemed to become harder and harder to find God in the midst of the progressively more machinelike apparatus required to ‘run a church’. Numerical growth seemed to draw us away from the natural rhythms of life and from direct ministry, into managerial roles; and the people themselves were increasingly being programmed out of life and less engaged in active relationships with those in the community. A ‘living systems’ approach seeks to structure the common life of an organisation round the rhythms and structures that mirror life itself. The task of leadership includes managing meaning – focussing the flow of information in order to motivate people from inside out – needs a good handle on theology and psychology as well as sociology.

OT and NT are based on an organic world view – with a bias toward salvation history rather than institutional viability. We need to build a movement that goes far beyond institutional survival – cf Bill Easum, *Unfreezing Moves*. To start with, structure exists solely to support the grass roots; then it becomes a governing body and the problems begin.; outsourcing to the structure things which are essential to the function (eg education) deprives the local church of the ancient art of discipling and educating for life in the local setting, and transfers responsibility/power to the new centralised body. This is why genuine Jesus movements are essentially networks.

China – its underground church leaders in 2005 asked for prayer for 3 things:

- They were not allowed to gather in groups of more than 15
- They were not allowed to have church buildings, but forced to meet in homes, cafés etc
- They were forbidden to develop external training organisations – they had to train leaders in the local church, and no resources except the HS. It seems the HS is doing just fine!

A movement is a group of people organized for, ideologically motivated by, and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others; and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated. 191.

Book includes a bell curve of the life cycle of movements (as in Frost&Hirsch) and Snyder's list of the characteristics of movements, p193:

- Thirst for renewal
- New stress on the work of the Spirit
- An institutional/charismatic tension
- Concern for being a countercultural community
- Non-traditional leadership
- Ministry to the poor
- Energy and dynamism.

When institutionalism comes, mission → strategy, roles → tasks, teams → structure, networks → organization, recognition → compensation. Institutions have a codified belief system; movements seek to embody the way of life of the founder. Other differences are spelt out, p 196. See also Pete Ward, Liquid vs Solid Church.

Networks come in three types: chain, hub, all-channel. The governing structure of a network is not chain of command but a framework for dialogue. The time has come to rediscover church as network. We can even learn from Al Qaeda... We can't take it out because it has no centralised structure. It's made up of small self contained cells which can recruit and multiply easily. The church in its most exceptional form – early church, Chinese church – is more like Al Qaeda than it is the W church. If we were to do evangelism, discipleship and church planting by multiplication (metabolic growth) we'd get the job done in no time. Consider the chess game story – the inventor of chess was offered one free wish by the king of India as reward. He chose, a grain of rice on the first square, multiplied by itself on each subsequent square. There are 64 squares. It worked out at 153 billion tons of rice – more than the world can harvest for the next 1000 years. Multiplication begins slower than addition, but it is infinitely more effective in the long run. Ideas travel like viruses. Seth Godin coined the phrase ideaviruses to apply to marketing – an ideavirus is a big idea that runs amok across the target audience. Hotmail is the prime example – it was never advertised.

The whole world is profoundly interconnected. An American sociologist tested it – he asked people in the mid west to send a packet to a stranger in Massachusetts, knowing his name and occupation but not address. They were asked to send it to someone they knew who might know him. The chain averaged 6 people.

We have reproduction through sex not through cloning – sexual reproduction maximises diversity. It's healthier.

8. **Communitas, not community**

Material from Frost's book on Exiles. Communitas – the type of communality or comradeship that enables people to find each other and their own humanity. Anthropologist Victor Turner coins the term liminality to describe the transition process accompanying a change of state/social position – eg boys in African tribes, ejected from the community into the bush, returning with a bond of comradeship and communality forged in the testing conditions of liminality. They come back different. This is communitas – it happens when people are driven to find one another through a common experience of transition/marginalisation. For Christians, this means resisting the urge to huddle and cuddle, and instead to form themselves round a common mission that calls them into unknown places. It involves adventure, movement and togetherness.

His view is that communitas and liminality are normative for God's people. For many, Christian community has become little more than a quiet and reflective soul-space (Alt Worship) or a spiritual buzz (charismatic circles) for people trying to deal with a busy consumerist lifestyle. We are not meant to be a refuge of work addicts and experience junkies, a spiritual hospital or entertainment centre! People may not want to hear a message about liminality and engagement – but it's biblical. If you look at the bible you find the main clusters of revelation come in times of extremity/liminality, when people were out of their comfort zones – Abraham, the exile; Samuel, Elijah, Samson, David; Jesus, Paul. Liminality and communitas are normative for the pilgrim people of God in the bible and in the Jesus movements of history.

Liminality today – in extreme sports, short term missions, tragic events. Bosch: 'strictly speaking one ought to say that the Church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it.' 226. When we remove it from church we become a club – eg 80% of kids from Christian youth groups lose their faith at uni in NZ and USA; they have been entertained and sung with, cocooned in an artificial environment.

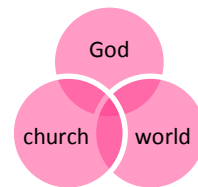
Living systems theory – laws which keep natural ecosystems healthy – says:

- Equilibrium is precursor to death. Same with church, where the mission of the church has become the maintenance of the institution. *Our primary aim is not to perpetuate the church as an institution, but to follow Jesus into his mission in the world... Mission is, and must be, the organizing principle of the church*

- Faced with threat or opportunity, living things move toward the edge of chaos
- They then self organize, and new forms emerge from the turmoil
- Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path; unforeseen consequences of inevitable.

‘The role of leadership within the church is to cultivate environments wherein the Spirit of God might call forth and unleash the missional imagination of the people of God’ – Roxburgh and Romanuk, 233.

Overlap area in diagram – incarnational church, missional engagement, communitas. Worship should be done in the context of engagement with the world, so it becomes culturally meaningful to outsiders. Such a pattern has missional edges because open to all; we engage in communal evangelism and social action, joining with God in redeeming the world; our spirituality is the all of life variety.



Conclusion

The challenge of constant adaptation and reshaping along missional lines remains a fundamental part of what it means to be faithful to the idea of church as Jesus intended it in the first place.

‘There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle’ – Einstein.

List of ‘trend’ websites:

- EurekaAlert (www.eurekaalert.org/)—Comprehensive summary of scientific breakthroughs, research press releases
- New Scientist (www.newscientist.com/)—Another decent summary of things as they happen
- Wired (www.wired.com)—A pop-tech smorgasbord
- Fast Company Magazine (www.fastcompany.com/homepage)—‘Next big thing’ type of business magazine.
- The Futures Lab (<http://futures-lab.com/news.htm>)—Page of emerging issues and the like
- Salon.com (www.salon.com)—Opinion on the intersection of society; and culture with politics, technology, business
- Disinformation (www.disinfo.com)—Offers sometimes edgy information on current affairs, politics, new science, and the “hidden information” that seems to slip through the cracks of the corporate-owned media conglomerates
- Ethics in the News (www.ethics.org.au/things_to_read/ethics_ir_the_news/index.htm)—Operated by the St James Ethics Centre, an N based in Sydney
- Red Herring (www.redherring.com/IndexArticle.aspx)—As the s:e says, the business of technology
- Financial Times (<http://news.ft.com/home/asia>)—Although sometimes a little staid, a pretty solid survey of economic happenings
- Signs and Wonders (www.wnrf.org/news/blogger.html)_Monitors trends and events affecting the future of religion; affiliated with the World Network of Religious Futurists (www.wnrf.org/cms/index.shtm)
- Arts & Letters Daily (www.aldaily.com)—A look at philosophy, aesthetics, literature, language, trends, history, music, art, culture, criticism, disputes, and gossip)

Addenda

Bill Easum, church consultant – you have to change a church’s systems story, not just revamp this or that aspect of its work. If people see it as an institution rather than an organic movement/living system, everything will revert back to default once the pressure of change is off.

Adaptive vs operational leadership – Ronal Heifetz. Operational leadership is the norm in churches – management, technique, programmes, church growth, pastoral care. it assumes the leaders are the head, the organisation is the body. Adaptive leadership would help us transition to a different, more agile model of church. Many leaders, esp. those with strong caring/teaching gifts, can avoid conflict and soothe tension – produces equilibrium, which leads to death. Warning – adaptive leaders can be frozen out by followers who don’t want to face bad news. People preferred Chamberlain ‘peace in our time’ rather than Churchill ‘impending conflict’. Adaptive leaders have to regulate distress and channel it into action. See Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja, *Surfing the edge of chaos*: 4 headings

1. Equilibrium is death
2. Surfing the edge of chaos
3. Self organisation and emergence
4. Disturbing complexity

Discontent among Christians of all ages and classes. ‘Has it all come down to this? Attending church services, singing songs to God, and attending cell groups? Is this really what Christianity is all about?’. The result – a mass exodus from church. There are 111m Christians without a local church in the world today. (Barret & Johnson)

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