

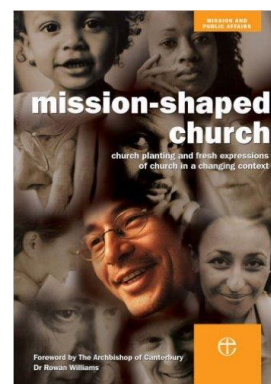
Mission-shaped church

Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context (CHP 2004)

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Report from a working group of the Mission and Public Affairs Council, chaired by +Graham Cray

A short, practical and exciting look at ways of expressing church in the changing culture of the UK.



Preface: ++Rowan Williams

In the short time during which I have been Archbishop, I have regularly been surprised and deeply heartened by the widespread sense that the CoFE, for all the problems that beset it, is poised for serious growth and renewal. Many feel that, as various streams of development over the past decade or so begin to flow together, we are at a real watershed. vii

Introduction : +Graham Cray

A variety of integrated missionary approaches is required. A mixed economy of parish churches and network churches will be necessary...

1. Changing contexts

Social Trends – statistics.

Housing changes : UK population + 5% since 1970; no. of households + 31%. More owner occupancy. More cost, more DIY on Sundays.

Employment changes: more women working, more hours worked – less free time

Mobility: distance travelled and no. of cars on roads has doubled since 1971 – less time, weekend travel, non-local churchgoing

Divorce and family life: 11% separated/divorced; 34% males are single; delay in childbearing – child access on Sundays, implications for service patterns (singles may not like Sun mornings, or child-oriented services)

Leisure: average 3 hrs a day TV; Sunday sport esp for children

Implications

- a fragmented society
- a network society – impce of place is secondary to impce of flows. Globalisation implies a networked world; leads to loss of local and national power. Internet as metaphor for a network society. Networks do not replace neighbourhoods, but they do change them
 - *to live in one place no longer means to live together, and living together no longer means living in the same place* – Ulrich Beck

Consequences : community is increasingly being reformed around networks, and people are less inclined to make lasting commitments (we must respond to the first and resist the second)

Fresh expressions of church

Many of these connect with people through the networks in which they live, rather than through the place where they live – church is being expressed around how people live, rather than around where they sleep.

Consumer culture

Where Westerners might have found their identity, their social togetherness and the ongoing life of society in the area of production, these are today increasingly found through consumption – David Lyon

Core value of society has moved from 'progress' to 'choice'.

Consumerism affects the way people evaluate truth claims. The way people think about shopping also becomes the way people think about 'truth'.

Must distinguish between a consumer society (a term describing the current shape of W capitalist societies) and the ideology of consumerism (the dominant idolatry of these societies).

Post-Christendom

The emergence of a network and consumer society coincides with the demise of Christendom.

From where to how

'The Church will be able to reconnect with both society and individuals through a pattern of diversity and unity, rooted in the triune, endlessly creative, life of God.' 13

Opportunity and repentance

Opportunity – to proclaim the gospel afresh within the new social structures: a challenge to confidence in the gospel and a call to imaginative mission

Repentance – we have allowed our culture and the Church to drift apart, without our noticing. We need the grace of the Spirit for repentance if we are to receive a fresh baptism of the Spirit for witness.

- *If the decline of the Church is ultimately caused neither by the irrelevance of Jesus, nor by the indifference of the community, but by the Church's failure to respond fast enough to an evolving culture, to a changing spiritual climate, and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, then that decline can be addressed by the repentance of the Church - Bob Jackson*

2. The story since Breaking New Ground

1984 – first book on Church planting

1987 first conference, HTB

Breaking New Ground said...

- Church planting is legit
- Parish and network are both valid
- It was permission-giving rather than future-looking

The issue now is not cross-boundary but non-boundary plants.

An explosion in diversity

The reality of church planting has been not quantity but diversity. Common themes within that diversity:

- Church derives its self understanding from the mission of God's love to the world
- Trinity models diversity as well as unity
- Creation reveals diversity
- Mission to a diverse world legitimately requires a diverse Church
- Catholicity is not monochrome oneness
- God is culturally specific within diverse contexts

The planting process is the engagement of church and gospel with a new mission context, and this should determine the fresh expression of church, 21.

Assumptions have changed. Part of the shift since BNG is the discovery that fresh expressions of church are not only legitimate expressions of church, but they may be more legitimate because they attend more closely to the mission task, are more deeply engaged in the local context, and follow more attentively the pattern of incarnation.

Insights from other parts of the world

- widen our awareness, expanding our imagination and vision
- offers cross cultural experience and encounter – the resources of people
- offers different ways of doing things
- can open our eyes to traditions within our own history that have disappeared/gone underground
- Anglican mission agencies now resource UK too
- The witness of the world Church

3. What is church planting and why does it matter?

Church Planting is creating new communities of Christian faith as part of the Mission of God, to express his Kingdom in every geographic and cultural context – Bob Hopkins

Church planting that sets out to serve an identifiable group, culture or neighbourhood cannot begin with a clear understanding of what form or expression the resultant church may take.

In the UK of the twenty-first century it may be fair to comment that everything we face in mission is now a cross-cultural task, 30.

Church planting is best thought of as a verb – it's a process. Suggested definition:

- **Church planting is the process by which a seed of the life and message of Jesus embodied by a community of Christians is immersed for mission reasons in a particular cultural or geographic context. The intended consequence is that it roots there, coming to life as a new indigenous body of Christian disciples well suited to continue in mission, 32.**

What is church? It has a sense of rootedness, and is intentionally part of a place. Rootedness embraces culture and network as well as location and territory. Mission must be located within the identity of the church, or the seed is sterile.

Words to describe varieties of 'new' church:

- ✧ new forms of church
- ✧ new ways of being church
- ✧ emerging church – Robert Warren
- ✧ fresh expressions of church – in this report

Church planting and fresh expressions of church matter – to fulfil the Anglican calling, to affirm Anglican diversity, to continue Anglican history, to rediscover the forgotten dimension of mission.

The parochial system can be compared to a vast slab of Gruyere – its nature is to present as solid reality, but by its nature there are lots of holes where there is no cheese. Church planting and fresh expressions of church help to identify and fill geographic and cultural gaps.

Reviewing the mission task in England

Richter and Francis: relationship to church of UK population (excl 6% other faiths)

- non churched: 40%
- closed de-churched: 20%
- open de-churched: 20%
- fringe: 10%
- regular attenders: 10%

The assumption that evangelism is about bringing people back to church can only be effective for a diminishing proportion of the population. *The reality is that for most people across England the Church as it is is peripheral, obscure, confusing or irrelevant, 40.*

We must face our mission to the non-churched : *The task is to become church for them, among them and with them, and under the Spirit of God to lead them to become church in their own culture, 40.* The gap is as wide as any experienced by a cross-cultural missionary; will require a reworking of language and approach – needs church planting and fresh expressions of church.

And there is a time bomb – young people no longer come.

4. Fresh expressions of church

Key themes and ideas.

Common features of fresh expressions of church:

- ✧ small groups for discipleship and relational mission, which
- ✧ do not meet on Sunday morning
- ✧ relate to a particular network of people
- ✧ are post-denominational
- ✧ may be connected to a resourcing network, eg HTB, New Wine, Reform, Soul Survivor, StTCrooks

Some types (profile and examples):

- alternative worship communities
- base ecclesial communities
- café church
- cell church
- churches arising out of community initiatives
- multiple and midweek congregations
- network church
- school based church
- seeker church
- traditional church plants
- traditional forms of church inspiring new interest
- youth congregations

Resourcing networks: it will be essential to develop partnerships in mission between resourcing groups and individual dioceses (eg HTB and London, Soul Survivor and Exeter). Partnership with the bishop is the key. No room for empire building, or for treating major churches/networks as 'unAnglican'. Each diocese needs to include partnership with the major resource churches or networks in its area as part of its proactive mission and planting strategy. The resource churches and networks need to combine faithfulness to their vision with a servant role in the mission of the whole Church. 67.

The rebirth of centuries-old ways of church and of Christian spirituality is a cause for celebration. It also helps to demonstrate the importance of offering the widest possible range of ways through which people can explore and experience Christian community, church and worship – a variety of types or styles of church for a variety of cultures, contexts and individuals. Something does not need to be 'new' in order to connect with today's multifaceted world. 74.

Quotes

- › the primary frontier which needs to be crossed in mission to young people is not so much a generation gap as a profound change in culture – Youth A Part, CHP.
- › *Only creative church planting will do in a society where those with spiritual questions naturally assume that the church is not the place to find the answers, since Christianity has been tried and found wanting* – Stuart Murray

Five values for missionary churches

5 'marks of mission' – ACC. A missionary church is:

- focussed on God the Trinity
- incarnational
- transformational – it exists for the transformation of the community that it serves
- disciple-making
- relational

5. Theology for a missionary church

Fresh expressions of church need an adequate ecclesiology if they are to be of lasting value.

Salvation history

- *It is not the Church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a Church in the world – Tim Dearborn*

Church planting should not be church centred; it is to be an expression of the mission of God.

The mutual ministries of the Son of God and the Spirit of God are essential to a Christian understanding of the relationship between gospel and culture. The Son of God became a human being within one culture, but the eternal salvation he won is offered to all cultures. The Spirit inspires and directs the particular form the gospel community takes within each culture.

The work of Christ

Jesus belonged to his own culture and yet was prophetically critical of it. 87

The Spirit of Christ

The church takes its missionary form through receiving the gifts of the past (scripture) and the future (the Spirit who makes known to us the foretaste and first fruits of the coming kingdom).

Christ and culture

Despite the substantial work done on ‘Gospel and Culture’ in recent years, the Church of England has not yet drawn significantly upon the world Church’s experience in cross-cultural mission’ – because assumptions about Christendom blind our imaginations about the form of the Church. 90.

The challenge of syncretism

The Church is designed to reproduce

Theology of inculturation makes use of the biblical metaphors of sowing and reaping

The marks of the Church – it is:

- one
- holy
- catholic
- apostolic

Anglican ecclesiology and fresh expressions of church

6. Some methodologies for a missionary church

Practicalities – see www.encountersontheedge.org.uk.

General methodology

Double listening – to contemp culture and to church tradition. Good planting methodology asks three questions:

- context should shape the church – who is the plant for?
- *as the UK population becomes increasingly post-Christian, so the cultural gap to be crossed in any planting venture will widen. This is the cultural context within which the Church in England now exists, such that missionary cross-cultural training should be an inherent part of ministerial theological education, 108*
- context – who is the plant by?
- context – who is the plant with? Runners, grafts, transplants, seeds

Patterns of worship

Church planting in rural areas

Working for maturity

'Three self' principles – self propagating, self-financing, self-governing

For fresh expressions of church to be regarded as 'experiments' or 'projects' is dangerous and insulting – it marginalises. The challenge to the whole Church is to find ways by which planting concepts and insights can become embedded and normative, rather than added on to its life.

7. An enabling framework for a missionary church

Pastoral Measure. Review of the current legal options.

This report highlights a problem in Anglican methodology. We are an English Church moulded by history and culture to be like the English: in favour of slow evolutionary change. However, that is not the context we face. At present we do not possess the levers that can accelerate the process of mission response to the changing culture of England, 132.

Role of bishop in mission is key.

8. Recommendations

Diocesan strategy

Ecumenical

Leadership and training – ministerial training should include a focus on cross-cultural evangelism, church planting and fresh expressions of church. It should also be part of CME, and part of the brief for first curacies.

Procedures should be developed to acknowledge the work and gifting of leaders in church plants and other expressions of church.

Resources – there is an urgent need to release resources to sustain mission initiatives to the non-churched. The resources of the CofE are disproportionately invested in inherited and traditional styles of church which alone are no longer adequate for mission to the whole nation.

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