

Celtic Models for Modern Churches

12 sessions on developing people friendly congregations

from

The Community of Aidan and Hilda



SECOND INCARNATION!

£3.70

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We are now entering one of the greatest watershed periods in human history.

*Creation itself is charged with the electricity of these times
and is beginning to groan and travail for what is about to come...*

*In preparation for this greatest of events the church is about to go through a
metamorphosis.*

She is going to change from a worm into a butterfly.

*A caterpillar is confined to the earth, and its path must conform to the contour of the
earth.*

*Likewise. for nearly two thousand years the church has often conformed
more to the ways of the world than to the ways of the Spirit.*

*Soon the church will go through a change so dramatic that she will seem to emerge
as an entirely different creature. It will be like another birth....*

Rick Joyner The Morning Star Prophetic Bulletin

Introduction

Who is this course for?

An existing or specially convened church group which reports back to the church leadership, which hopefully sets up a task group to put insights into action. Ecumenical and embryo church groups may also profit from it.

The aims of the course

To identify the changing social framework in which the church is set, the unhelpful anachronisms it must discard, and the neglected Scriptural essentials it needs to bring into focus; to draw insight from Celtic and contemporary churches, and to suggest some practical steps forward.

More broadly, to heal the disaffected, disciple and equip people to reconnect with the church; restore biblical/ first principles to the church which were overlooked at the Reformation.

Length

The course is designed to last one term of twelve weeks, though it may meet less often over a longer period. There is an optional extra session on leadership.

Attitude

The attitude of the group should be to cherish the church as Christ cherishes his own body. (Ephesians 5:29). This requires honesty about what is wrong, but not a dismissive approach.

Format

Most sessions should include:

Prayer

Bible study

Meditation or focussing

Teaching

Discussion

A practical appraisal or exercise

Worship and dedication.

This is not detailed in the session notes. The group leader needs to plan this beforehand.

Style

Since church styles vary, this will range from the informal to the formal. The style should be what makes members feel comfortable. We have therefore made no suggestions for worship, but the leaders need to prepare this. Some groups will want to include refreshments before or after the session.

Leaders

It is best if there is a leader and a co leader or facilitator. If possible the leaders should pray and plan together before the group meetings.

Getting started

In churches with groups which are already motivated, the church leaders simply need to talk through the course with the group leaders and announce it. If this is to be a new group, the church leaders need to take time to explain the relevance of the course and to build up expectation. They need to decide who should be in the group. For example it could be an existing leaders team/council etc, or it could be for any church member.

Preparatory meeting

If it is a new group, prospective members might find it helpful to meet briefly after a church service to have it explained and to sign up. At this meeting the church leader should:

- * Outline the course, times, dates, venue,
- * Outline the aims and attitudes mentioned in the Introduction
- * Introduce the group leaders

Follow up

If the church appoints a task group, the group leaders should provide them with feedback or proposals from the study group. If the church has no task group, or if the study group is ecumenical, leaders should try to feed-back to the churches' leaders.

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Humanity is going through a massive shift in its mental framework. As a result, the model of church that has withstood ravages of centuries seems near the end of its shelf life.

The traces of Constantine's Church would seem to be fading, and a turning point as fundamental as the Constantinian one confronts us.

Cardinal Franz Konig

Living churches heed Jesus' advice to understand the context of their time - you can tell the season by looking at the trees (Mark 13:28,29).

Jesus gave a warning. Read Luke 5:36. Jesus told us it is no good trying to tear off a bit of new cloth and sew it on to the old. The mental framework of the emerging society can be likened to new cloth. The old framework is like old cloth. We cannot expect people who are seeking a spirituality in the new framework to find it in churches that are wedded to the old framework more than they are to the living God. The big decline in church-going is a warning. We have to weave new cloth.

This is an age in which the cloth is being unwoven.

It is therefore no good trying to patch.

We must rather set up the loom on which coming generations may weave new cloth according to the pattern God provides.

Mother Mary Clare, Oxford

In order to 'weave the new cloth' we need to distinguish between the divine essence of the church, the rich, living tradition which is God's gift on the one hand, and the now dead man-made traditions, the accretions of fallen human nature, that mar it.

The church, when it is true to its Head, is eternally old and eternally new. It relates to all that has flowed from its Head since its inception with reverence. What is new is the way it relates this to the present.

Its essence is the message, morality and living spirit of Jesus in his followers, ministers and sacraments. The gates of hell shall not ultimately prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18). We need to cherish the heart of the church through perpetual prayer.

But there is no doubt that any particular form of church can perish. The travel writer William Dalrymple describes in his book *From The Holy Mountain* how churches in Turkey, which have survived many trials since the first Christian century, are now in their last decade on earth.

What is the new culture frame?

The Enlightenment culture frame split different parts of life into compartments. It separated:
reason from faith
body from soul,
sacred from secular
masculine from feminine
earth from Spirit
science from religion
work from prayer
organisation from values.

Give other examples

The emerging culture frame is holistic and non hierarchical for example:
The concept of the biosphere views the world as a living, interrelated organism.

The Green movement views humans and earth as partners in the web of life.

New technology replaces hierarchy with networking, and standardised produce with personalised customer service

Feminism balances left brained, male, cerebral domination with intuitive, creative, partnership.

Post moderns mistrust dogma and trust whatever feels good.

Things the church needs to discard.

Millennium 3 churches need to relate to the millennium 3 framework or they will become dinosaurs.

It is a good instinct to draw people into the church by removing barriers. The barriers we should remove are practices, mind sets and structures which do not mirror Christ and his Body. We should not remove the message, morality or living spirit of Jesus because the selfish egos of people resist them, for these are boundaries God gives for the benefit of all people.

Read John 12:24. A precondition of renewal in both nature and spiritual life, is the ability to 'die'. This applies to any one form of church.

Here are some things various church groups think the church should discard. Write this on a flip chart.

Locked church buildings.

Belittling women, minorities or people of other faiths.

Being defined (e.g. R C or Protestant) by a 16th c. protest movement

Bureaucratic denominational structures

'Knows best' attitude

Wordy, status conscious and pontificating ways

Unnatural programmes, jargon and patterns

Wordy and packaged worship

Add to this list.

Bible Study

A Bible episode which illustrates the difference between godly and ungodly barriers is in John 8:2-11. The pharisees had homophobia towards some one, who in this case was a prostitute. Jesus loved her so much that he showed by his loving tones, his absence of condemnation and his presence that he did not wish to reject her. He removed the barrier of homophobia. However, he required her to sin no more by ceasing to have sex outside a marriage relationship. He did not remove moral norms, he did remove cultural antagonism.

Meditate silently and then add to the list of alienating practices that your church needs to discard.

Reasons why we need new models of church

1. Two decades ago the book *Megatrends* predicted that as society grew more technological, people would seek more natural and supernatural experience to restore balance to a plastic world. It also predicted people would be drawn to the past.

In the West there is a falling away from churches. Spiritual thirst draws many towards earth-based spiritualities. Because Celtic Christianity grew in the ferment of a nature religion it retained a soul-deep appreciation of the earth, whereas other expressions of Christianity dismissed the material world as fallen and therefore as worthless.

2. Generation X is fed up with fragmented Christianity. Christians no longer want to be defined by a protest movement four hundred years ago (The Reformation). In Celtic Christianity the great Christian streams flow together as one.
3. Many people now yearn for the mystical. This change in what people seek has reached deep even into the young Evangelical world. According to Wheaton College professor Gary Burge: ‘Say ”liturgy” and my evangelical students have a reflex action akin to an invitation to do a quiz; say “mysticism” and they are drawn, fascinated, eager to see what I mean...’
4. Many Protestant churches dismissed the arts as worldly. Celtic Christianity uses the arts in order to be holy (whole). The prolific artistic, mystical and literary monks of Ireland may encourage life-denying Christians to embrace artistic expression as worship of the First Creator.
5. Sunday only congregations that are separated from life as a whole fail to meet people’s need for holistic expressions of community.

Suggest other reasons why we need fresh models of church.

In the closing time of worship, express sorrow for the things the church must discard, and ask forgiveness.

TASK GROUP

Arrange for the church to dedicate a period (e.g. Lent or a special week) to confessing wrong attitudes or habits. Record these. Hold a service of releasing and receiving. This may use these words: ‘Lord, we release to you this wrong attitude.... Lord, we receive from you this new grace’

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 2. A New Way of Being Church

Many of the historic churches have a parish system.

We are coming to the end of the parish phase of church
Bishop Ian Harland.

In the second millennium both Roman Catholic and Reformed churches reflected the Imperial Civil Service model of the Roman Empire. Even new and missionary churches adopted the top-down, 'one shape fits all' model.

Now many churches are collapsing. Is this because they reflect patterns which are alien to most people today?

A modern parable: A new university received its first intake of students before the paths had been laid. So its wise planners observed the tracks students made across flower beds, and laid the paths along those tracks.

The moral: where modern people bypass our churches we have to observe the tracks they make (e.g. their networks, meeting places and patterns) and plant churches along those lines. For there is no evidence that spiritual quest has decreased.

To do: Anyone may give an example of these modern non church 'tracks'.

There are also patterns of church to which many make tracks:

- * churches in houses (cells or groups)
- * 'Hub churches' (large umbrella congregations, pilgrim centres).
- * Organic and natural, not bureaucratic churches
- * Churches which have shared values and a heart for the people of the area
- * Those with 'spaces' for people of different temperaments

To do: Add to this list.

Objection: 'Surely there is only one proper way of being church. It is sacrilege to let go of this.'

The House that John Built

In fact an alternative to the Imperial way of being church was modelled in Eastern and Celtic lands in early centuries. It has been described as *The House that John Built* because John, perhaps more than any other apostle, modelled church as a large household of love. He wrote letters to seven churches inspired by a vision of the Risen Christ (Revelation chapters 2-3) and disciplined faith communities in the area now known as Turkey, some of whose leaders, such as Bishop Irenaeus, came to Gaul.

Celtic churches felt a rapport with John, and with alternative churches that grew up in the deserts because these were based less on regulation (as in the Latin part of the Roman Empire) and more on relationship, and intimacy with God. At their heart was a holiness that freed people to be themselves.

From the 6th century the Irish churches were peoples' monasteries which turned Ireland into 'a land of saints and scholars'. These were then exported to the English.

* Peoples monastery churches served as prayer base, drop-in centre, library, school, health centre. They offered soul friends, training, entertainment and work to local people. To them visitors brought the news of the world. They were completely open to the world. They were not enclosed as were continental monasteries, which had the 'us and them' mentality which Protestants later rejected. In Celtic monasteries children, housewives, farm workers and visitors would wander in and out and worship together.

Discuss: In what ways can we become natural centres that draw all people of good will? (7 minutes)

* The major Celtic monasteries were built on the main highways of sea and river in order to penetrate the population. Others grew, unplanned, out of places of spiritual retreat. There is need for both types of church today.

* There was diversity - each monastery church had its own flavour in worship and values (Rule) yet each was connected with the whole church through common practices such as prayer, fasting, forgiveness, giving to the poor, keeping the Christian festivals, pilgrimaging to the world Christian centres, and priests ordained in the apostolic succession.

* Celtic monastic church buildings were expendable and expandable. They consisted of wooden huts and meeting places which could easily be dismantled or added to. Name ways in which modern churches which have outgrown their first building have expanded. (2 minutes)

* Irish churches introduced reading and writing to the people. Many druids and bards received this new gift of learning with open arms. Christianity had something to give which the people wanted. Do we have anything to give which the people want? (3 minutes)

* Members of these churches regarded their founders as spiritual fathers or mothers whose authority lay in the mutual obligations of love. Yet they continued to have bishops living with them who were consecrated by bishops from the wider church. How can your local church best express this principle of home grown leaders and a link with wider church leadership? (5 minutes)

Bible Study

Read out 1 Timothy 3:15. Why do you think Paul described the church as a household?

Read John 15: 1-15

Fruit is that which is produced naturally from us being what we are. That which rises to the surface is that which rises to the surface from our rootedness in Christ. Success is to be measured by being who we are - made in God's likeness. Churches are to be communities in which we can be who we are.

The Shape of the Church - from squares to circles

The church has to have a structure, or shape.

The square has been used as a symbol for the millennium 2 top-down, territorial, church which defines itself by external boundaries.

The circle has been used as a symbol of the O millennium 3 church which defines itself by the Presence of God in life's natural patterns .

Brain stormer: Place a square on one sheet and a circle on another sheet of paper. Fill these in with words which describe what the square church and what the circle church of the future will be like.

TASK GROUP

Discern how your church can become less like a square and more like a circle, and act upon what you discern.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Celtic Models for Modern Churches

Session 3. A Journeying people

Post modern people dislike rigid boundaries. To travel is more important than to arrive.

We should frequently recall that the leader of our church is Jesus Christ, who called himself 'The Way' (John 14:6). If our leader is 'The Way' the church must be more like a tent than a terminus.

Bible Study

In *The Acts of the Apostles* people nicknamed church members 'The Way' (e.g. Acts 9:1,2). The church, reflecting its members, gave the impression of being on a journey, on a voyage of discovery with God. Over the centuries the church has accumulated buildings, structures, and mind-sets which focus on maintaining what it has, rather than on moving on with God.

Discuss: What nickname might non churchgoers give to churches today? (3 minutes)

The primary model for the Old Testament 'church' was the People-on-the-Move with God. They allowed God to show them through creation when to move and when to stay put.

Read Exodus 13:20-22 and briefly share any thoughts that strike you.

Later, when they were settled, they recalled God's way of leading them when they faced a new challenge. Moses speaks to the people of God about their fear of a hostile group who were bigger than them.

Read Deuteronomy 1:29-33 and briefly share any thoughts that strike you.

In Celtic society

Celtic churches were anchored but they were not stuck in an outdated mould. They cherished what they had received but that made them responsive to the Spirit who permeated their environment.

- * Prayer and listening to God was built in to their routine patterns.
- * They released members as the Spirit moved them to travel as pilgrims
- * When numbers grew they moved into small, easy-to-dismantle buildings; they were not empire builders.
- * They gave away rather than accumulated possessions.
- * They told stories and meditated on great voyagers of faith such as Brendan the Navigator
- * They went on pilgrimages in order to act out God's call to journey.

Kevin was a tall, attractive young man who dressed in skins and walked long distances. He travelled to the edges of life in order to meet God there, and was led to live in a cave at Glendalough. Over the years many were drawn to live and worship nearby. The 'monastic city' of Glendalough emerged. No doubt the example of their founder inspired them to 'live simply and travel lightly'. They refused to build a large cathedral type church, they just built small churches as needed. If you travel to Glendalough, some twenty miles from Dublin, you can visit the remains of these seven churches.

Examples of churches on a journey

* Brother Roger, prior of the French community church at Taize, refused the gift of a house because, he said, 'it makes everything so complicated'. His church is committed to 'the pilgrimage of trust on earth.' Even their worship building can expand or contract according to changing numbers.

* A congregation in Sunderland gave its large building to local groups who serve the neighbourhood, and divided itself into eight sections which met in smaller venues.

* A visitor to Lindisfarne shared a vision of a Travelling Church across North America of two million people.

Exercise: Describe an existing (or, if this is not possible, an imaginary) church that models some aspect of journey for you.

Ways for churches to get moving

* Cityside Church, Auckland, New Zealand asked each member to return a form with their answers to these these questions: 1. One thing you you've found helpful 2) One thing you've found unhelpful 3) One thing you'd like to see. The responses were photocopied and put on the church web site for all to see.

* Studley church have introduced listening and sharing services once a month.

* A church in Norwich asked each group in the church to draw up targets for the coming year and to decide what activities had run their course and should cease.

* Some churches appoint a person to record the story of God's hand in their history, or a group, or wise outside person, to help them discern where God has led and is leading them.

* One church council begins every meeting with a time of silent waiting upon God, and allows their agenda to be shaped by it.

* Some churches listen to their neighbourhood and draw u p an agenda based on what local people perceive their deepest needs to be.

What's to be done if we feel stuck inside the old system?

Discern what God is wanting to bring about and co-operate with it.

Discern what God is wanting to end and leave it - but with love.

Exercises

1. Moving on in the little things.

Divide into fours. Have a time of silent listening. Then share a) what things in a church group, meeting or service which you are involved in have run their course and should be ended b) what new step should be taken.

2. Moving on in the bigger things

Repeat as before. Then share what clutter the church as a whole needs to leave behind, and what it needs to open its heart to.

A Task Group

Make a display, pamphlet or video of your church's journey since it began, highlighting God's hand in it.

Hold a listening day and highlight where you believe the church should go now.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 4 Friends of the Earth

The Key Issue

*I stopped going to churches because they did not honour the earth.
I stopped going to New Age communities because they did not honour Christ. Where can I find a
church that honours both the earth and Christ? (Judith)*

*My church teaches me to be reconciled to God and to people,
but it does not teach me to be reconciled to the earth (Catherine)*

Ecological awareness is on the increase. Respected experts believe that the earth in its present form will not survive unless the fast expanding human race radically changes longstanding selfish habits. People who seek the good of the earth seek something that God desires, yet few of these perceive churches to be allies. Many of these people recognise that to befriend the earth requires spirituality, yet few of them find creation- friendly spirituality in the churches. Many people seek a spirituality which is natural, and they feel violated if the church puts on unnatural airs, or neglects the earth.

To be creation friendly does not mean that we don't take sin or Jesus seriously. The Bible teaches us to be creation friendly.

Bible Study

Read John 1:1. In the Greek language in which this was written 'Word' is 'Logos', which can also be translated as 'Life-Force'. Read Colossians 1:16,17. Discuss how you understand the phrase 'all things hold together in Christ.'

The Bible's record of God's saving acts is set in the framework of God creating everything (Genesis 1 and 2). God named the first man Earth (*Adamah*). Mr. Earth's first act was to name, and thereby bless, each of earth's creatures (Genesis 2.7). Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul names 'the second Adam' meaning 'the second Mr. Earth' (1 Corinthians 15.47) comes from heaven, yet contains within his humanity the whole evolving earth story, and its groaning in anticipation of its coming total fulfilment (Romans 8. 19-23)

In early and Celtic churches

Maximum the Confessor (d. 662) taught that the Creator-Logos has implanted in each created thing a characteristic ‘thought’ which is God’s presence in which makes it distinctively itself and at the same time draws it towards God. By virtue of this indwelling *logos* each created thing is not just an object but a personal word addressed to us by the Creator.

This creation friendly theology continues to this day in the Eastern Church but in western churches an earth-denying theology took over. Spirit was divorced from matter. *(The leader may refer to briefing notes)*

Celtic churches in the west did not lose a creation friendly understanding. ‘Augustine taught that creation was an act of God’s power, Celtic Christians saw it as an act of God’s love.’
Lesslie Newbiggin

Early British churches ensured new members understood this teaching, as this ancient Celtic catechism reveals:

What is God’s will?

That we should live according to the laws of his creation.

What is best in this world?

To do the will of our Maker.

How do we know those laws?

By studying the Scriptures with devotion.

What tool has our Maker provided for this study?

The intellect which can probe everything.

And what is the fruit of study?

To perceive the eternal Word of God reflected in every plant and insect, every bird and animal, and every man.

Columbanus, echoing St Paul in Romans 1:20, taught church members to live with two books in their hands: the Scriptures and Creation.

How Churches can be Friends of the Earth

1. In their teaching.

Those who teach in the church may contact web sites for information about eco friendly congregations, spirituality and teaching resources.

2. In their prayer and celebration.

Habitual celebration of the earth as an expression of God’s life should

include songs (including newly written ones) and signs of God in creation; prayers for pets and the earth; beautifying and energising meeting places with plants, signs or paintings of creation. Each week members may bring tokens of creation and explain how these speak to them of God. The earth and animals are often blessed, sunrise, solstice and prayer walks are held.

In Jewish tradition creation is celebrated on the first day of the week, since that images the first day of creation. Churches who have daily prayer have a creation theme on Mondays, the first working day, or a creation theme on the first Sunday of each month. The Iona Community, The Community of Aidan and Hilda, and liturgists such as David Adam provide rich material to draw from.

Emerging churches, like the Jews, mark the seasons. For example, near the end of harvest season (Feast of Tabernacles) by putting tents or shacks in gardens for a period. (See Leviticus) and inviting relatives and neighbours in.

Discussion: In fresh what fresh ways can you mark the seasons and make a habit of celebrating God in creation?

3. In their earth care.

* Use energy saving, non polluting materials, recycled products, buy local, fair trade or organic foodstuffs, donate to ecology projects, improve the ecology of your area, build up eco consciousness in local schools, support local ecology groups or the Agenda 21 Process initiated by the Rio Earth Summit of 1994.

* Get out into the outdoors, cut out over consumption, and practise forgiveness.

* Observe a day of rest on Saturday or Sunday, e.g. by being together instead of all travelling in different directions.

* Make the best of any curtilage, churchyard or garden area: for wild flowers, growth of fruits or vegetables.

* Create connections with wild places, reclaim and guard sacred spaces.

* Create water features (early Christian churches had fountains flowing

by their baptisteries) and creation theme corners, thus bringing together the feminine (wells) with the masculine (square buildings).

* Create roof gardens or peace gardens. The Bruderhof Community has a half acre park near Nonington, Kent which includes life sized statues of a child, a wolf and a lamb, illustrating the prophet Isaiah's vision of peace (Isaiah 11:6-9) For directions call +44 (0) 1304 84 29 80. With other churches provide peace running tracks in the locality .

* Keep allotments. One urban church provides a shed in a beautifully kept allotment for its members to keep and use. Share the produce of members, cells or households who grow their own food.

The Arusha Project is developing a Christian Country Park in Southwell, London.

The town of Almolongua, Guatemala was gripped by acute poverty, violence, and witchcraft. Crop yields were low owing to arid land and poor working habits. Following the humbling and uniting of the town's church leaders, who called the people to concerted prayer, over 80 per cent became Christians. There was a social and agricultural transformation. They have planted more crops and improved the quality of the soil and the work. Now they yield large vegetables which are sold many miles away. Radishes harvest in 40 instead of 60 days, and there are up to three harvests of some crops. The town has been nicknamed America's vegetable garden. US researchers came to learn the secret. Local Christians believe it is the wisdom God gave to them as they become intimate with God. The story of this and other revived churches is told in the video *Transformations*

Exercise

On a flip chart list all the suggestions made in this unit. Tick the ones you think your church could address over the next year. Now number these in order of priority.

Task Group

Plan how to carry out the priority suggestions.

Resources

Eco-Congregation is an environmental programme for churches which provides free resources, networks with interested churches and gives awards for excellent practice. Contact: Environmental Campaigns (EnCams), Elizabeth House, The Pier, Wigan, WN3 4EX Tel/ 01942 612639 <ecocongregations@encams.org> Website: www.encams.org/ecocongregation.

Four Christian organisations (A Rocha, Christian Ecology Link, Encams and the John Ray Initiative) produced an Earth Summit briefing, which was approved by the Joint Presidents of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. See www.churchearthsummit.org.uk or write to Christian Ecology Link, 20 Carlton Road, Harrogate, HG2 8DD.

Session 4 Hospitality
Churches as eating and meeting places

Opening prayer or worship

This may include the following prayer:

You are the caller
You are the poor
You are the stranger at the door
You are the wanderer
The unfed
You are the homeless
With no bed
You are the man
Driven insane
You are the child
Crying in pain.

In David Adam, *The Edge of Glory* (SPCK Triangle 1985)

Bible study

The Bible calls us to be communities of hospitality.

The first household churches ate together. Read Acts 2:46

Remember, the wider church is likened to a household. Read 1 Timothy 3:15

To discuss:

1. Church members were told that many people who had given hospitality to a stranger had welcomed an angel without realising it (Hebrews 13:2) What episode in the Old Testament does this refer to? Does any group member know of a blessing that has resulted from an act of hospitality?
2. Which stories in the Four Gospels which involve a meal can you recall? What do these stories say to us?

Our Celtic birthright

Early community churches in Britain and Ireland outgrew houses, but they still shared meals together and with strangers. They built refectories. One or several community members were set aside for the work of hospitality. Columba's community church at Derry fed 1,000 hungry people daily. Even when David's monks in Wales ate only bread themselves, they cooked appetising meals for the elderly and frail!

Changing Needs

In the 2nd millennium most churches were praying places but not eating places. In the 21st century church buildings that are not used for such activities as eating are ignored or vandalised. Although in a Welfare State there is not always a physical need for churches to be eating places, there may be a social need. Sir Terence Conran, the restaurateur, predicts the emergence of the cafe society: 'Cafes will increasingly serve as outside offices and public spaces in which to do business.'

Examples of what some modern churches offer:

- * Cafes
- * Lunch clubs
- * Soup kitchens
- * Occasional
- * DIY refreshment facilities
- * Cabaret worship
- * Occasional celebrations
- * Picnic areas

Members of the group may mention churches they know who provide any of these facilities.

ACCOMMODATION

In the new way of being church it will be normal for communal churches to provide accommodation in such ways as the following:

- * a back packers' hostel
- * an annexe
- * units built above or beside the main church building
- * turning a redundant church building into a hermitage and retreat centre

- * Establishing a local housing scheme
- * Members buying houses nearby through a Trust fund.
- * Use of space as a night shelter.
- * Church web site info re B &B in members homes

Discuss: Which of these is most viable in your church?

An appraisal of our church - Tick or leave blank

Does the church provide

- Refreshment facilities
- Refreshments after Sunday or midweek worship
- Communal meals for members
- Meals for non members
- A cafe
- A soup kitchen
- A picnic area
- Homes which offer meals to visitors.
- Other
 - Welcomers at church worship and events?
 - Social activities at which locals feel at home?
 - Overnight accommodation for visitors?
 - A hostel?
 - Hospitality for overseas guests?
 - A creche?

No of ticks out of fifteen: _____

Even if all or most of these things do not seem viable yet, what next step can you take?

A key to God's Kingdom

Hospitality is more even than board and lodging, it is a principle for the whole of church life. Hospitality of heart and in the way a church arranges itself is a key that unlocks God's kingdom.

A USA church describes itself as ‘a community of hope proclaiming God’s inclusive love, removing barriers to faith, empowering all God’s people to grow in grace towards wholeness.’ Its web site is www.cathedralofhope.com

You may not wish to follow that church’s example, but you may wish to pray that you will be led in an equally clear way to express hospitality in the way that is appropriate for your church at this time.

TASK GROUP

1. Plan a meal together.
2. Discuss what it would take for your church to become radically inclusive - i.e. to enable people of all ages, genders, races and abilities to enter into the heart of the congregation’s life?
3. Find out about or visit churches which provide all round hospitality.
Some churches with cafes are The Baptist Church, Bath; King’s Church, Cockermouth; The Minster, Dewsbury; St Paul’s Church, Walsall; Christ Church, Woking.
4. Address the risks of hospitality e.g. not being able to cope with the extra demands that will be made? Identify and discuss these.
5. Draw up proposals to extend your church’s ability to offer rounded hospitality.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 6 Churches as Creativity Centres

*The church badly needs a face lift,
because it is God's theatre on earth,
and he should be packing them in.*

Boy George, singer

Bible Study

The first person the Bible records as being full of the Holy Spirit is a man who is into creative arts. The first church it records as asking people to stop donating because it has enough is a centre of creative activity.

Listen as Exodus 35:30-36 is read aloud slowly. Then share what strikes you.

A conclusion: We need to learn how to release the God-given creativity in each church member, and how to make our church a seed-bed of creativity.

Discuss the following statements (4 minutes)

'My denomination is the most left brained organisation in the world.' *Mainline church minister*

'The agenda for the rest of your life is to make it as right- as it is left-brained.' *Church shaper*

Celtic Inspiration

Celtic monastery churches became centres of artistic training. As they evangelised, illuminated Gospels, portable altars and inspiring plates and cups for Holy Communion were constantly being produced. The high Crosses were decorated with Bible stories. Metal work, textile, stone or parchment were used to make artifacts. Poetry was recorded, written and illuminated. Beautiful inscriptions and epithets were carved onto pottery, and jewellery. Folk heritage was recorded, ballads were composed, songs written; there was dramatic re-telling of prophetic messages, story-telling, wine and mead making, and more.

The scope of church- -friendly creative arts

Today these can include art, audio visual displays, banner making, body-soul exercises, child-minding, dance, drama, flower arranging, folk crafts,

gardening, high tec presentations, iconography, landscaping, music, painting, photography, play, poetry, reading aloud, sports, storytelling, walking, web sites, writing.

Add to this list.

An inspiring story - read by one person

Caedmon was an Anglo Saxon farm labourer who could not read, and who had a low self image. At a regular social gatherings hosted by his monastery church at Whitby he slipped out before it was his turn to sing something. That night he dreamed that a visitor asked him to sing. 'I could not sing in front of all those people' Caedmon told him. 'Then sing to me' said the visitor, whose warmth melted Caedmon. 'What should I sing about?' 'Sing about the creation of the world' the friend replied. Glorious melody ensued as Caedmon sang his heart out. On waking Caedmon told his supervisor of the dream, who arranged for him to talk with Bible teachers at Hilda's monastery. They taught him a Bible story and asked him to turn it into a song. Day after day Caedmon remembered a new story and put it to song. He became a lay brother in the monastery, and soon his Bible songs went the rounds of the 'Karaoke' of those days. His gift had been recognised, and he became Christianity's first pop singer in the English language.

Have two minutes silence and share any thoughts this story evokes. One lesson is that churches need to listen to the dreams and provide 'nurseries' for the seed talents of those who relate to them.

An example of what can be done

Before Presbyterian minister George McCleod's transformation he kept 'strict controls on access to his innermost core, where the puritan carefully policed the passionate' (Ronald Ferguson's biography: Collins). Afterwards, through the Iona Community, theatre, art and symbol began to be restored to the church.

Bible study

Read or make a resume of Exodus chapter 36. What different skills were used in the building of that temple? (*Any one may answer*) A definition of

creativity is 'Bringing something to birth'. Every person is called to bring something to birth. Spend a minute or two thinking what you like doing. How can the creative energy of it be used to bring something - anything - into being? Now share this with the group if you wish.

How to bring a congregation's creativity into flower

1. Overcome mental barriers. Teach that the Creator designed every one to reflect God's creativity in some way. God is Beauty, as well as Truth and Goodness. People are drawn to God through the beauty of creation, the senses and the imagination. Some people seek God by turning away from these, in case these pull them away from God; and people of certain temperaments use the mind more easily than the imagination. Churches should find a place for all types, and recognise that these are in fact different forms of creativity.

Many things stop us creating. Mrs Pavrach stopped her children from creating. She was always saying 'You can't do that' or 'You'll never do that'. They never did. What are the Mrs Pavrachs in your life? Parents, siblings, society, fear of failure, 'its not a proper job'? *Share for five minutes.*

2. List the creative arts that are given adequate space in your church, and list creative arts you think could now be appropriately introduced.

TASK GROUP

1. In order to value and use the whole Body of Christ find out what gifts each member has, including artistic, musical, contemplative, dance, drama, and poetic gifts. Plan how to affirm, develop and use these gifts.

2. Arrange for members to do the Myers Brigg Personality Indicator tests. This helps people to release themselves and others into their natural ways of creativity. *Retreats Magazine* has information about some of these.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 7 A Rhythm of Prayer and Work

Introduction

Churches rooted in a corporate rhythm of prayer and work provide shade under which travellers may rest, order within which they become calm, nourishment and beauty for the soul.

We either resonate with everything and find discord or we resonate with the deepest things of God and find rhythm

Pastor of a London Community Church

Moslems, who keep a rhythm of corporate prayer, borrowed this from the Millennium 1 Arab Christians. Fitness centres, magazines, and alternative therapies recognise the importance of body-soul rhythm. Tragically, the worship of many churches is too packaged to say hello to the sun's dawning, the rain's falling, the day's dying or the season's sensing. Yet once churches become like peoples monasteries it is possible to create a sense of daily rhythm which touches and inspires a wider number, and which connects them with the ebb and flow of deeper realities.

Bible Study

The Bible sets the entire story of God's saving work for humanity within the setting of a universe of rhythm. A group member reads Genesis 1:37-2:3. Pause in case someone wishes to share something that strikes them in that passage.

The Bible tells how God chooses a people and teaches them ways of reflecting that rhythm in their society, for example through one day in seven and one year in seven rest. A group member reads Exodus 20:7-11. Pause in case someone wishes to share something that strikes them in that passage.

The Bible reveals that Jews prayed in the rhythm of sunrise, midday and sunset. A group member reads Psalm 55:17. What famous Old Testament personality kept this rhythm up even in a hostile land? If no one knows, read Daniel 6:13. Really keen believers punctured each twenty four hour period seven times with prayer, Psalm 119: 164.

In the New Testament Jesus models for us a rhythm of self-giving and

withdrawal to a solitary place. The Saviour arranged for his most significant actions to coincide with the rhythm of the religious seasons.

Acts 2:46 and 42 tells us that the early church in Jerusalem attended the prayers day by day. The first ecumenical council of the New Testament churches saw these churches as a restoration of King David's set-up, and a making good the gaps in it (Acts 15:16). This included the restoration of daily worship.

Daily Prayer through the ages

In Millennium 1 it was normal for every large church to have daily prayers, and these were called 'Peoples Services'. What made them decline? Daily worship in central churches became clericalised, the form became more important than the reality. Monasteries developed long, wordy services which suited celibate monks but which put off the general population. Celtic monastic churches felt more homely, but these were destroyed by Viking invasions. A counter church culture developed which encouraged prayers from pulpits or in groups, but not corporate daily prayer. However, even after the 16th century Roman Catholic/Protestant divide, not only Roman Catholics, but some Anglicans and Protestant churches such as the Mennonites held daily prayer services.

Why bother now?

If this daily offering of total worship does not again become the centre of our life, our world will not be able to be transfigured or united. It will be incapable of surpassing its divisions, its imbalance, its emptiness and death, in spite of all human-centred plans to improve it.

Archimandrite George Capsanis of Mount Athos.

Discuss this apparently far-fetched statement for 5 minutes.

The essence of rhythm

Rhythm itself is more important than any particular form. The word rhythm comes from a Greek word (suthmos) whose root meaning is flow. Physicists are discovering that our universe has an underlying pattern; nature is full of symmetry. Every human being is a microcosm of the universe, and the Creator has built rhythm into the universe. Every human being has a circadian rhythm; our body rhythms are affected by light and dark and need them both.

Rhythm is indivisible. There is a rhythm of the seasons of the year, and a

rhythm of the seasons of life. Emerging churches seek to flow in these rhythms.

In emerging churches the corporate worship follows the rhythm of the natural seasons and of the church year, and observes seasons of fasting or spiritual warfare, of lamentation for the sins and hurts of society, and of joy and celebration of creation. St Thomas Crookes Church, Sheffield has a holiday from activities during July and August, so that it has more energy for the outreach and discipling seasons that follow.

What are the ingredients of satisfying daily worship today?

Different people prefer particular ingredients. Here are some:

Scripture readings * Songs or psalms of praise * familiar prayers * silent reflection * Visual focus (e.g. ikons, a themed prayer corner) * fresh materials for each day or season * music to listen to * topical concerns * flexi times of meeting.

Some main church streams have their own liturgies. Others, within as well as outside these denominations, use simpler, more flexible patterns, perhaps from contemporary communities or from David Adam's *The Rhythm of Life*. Other churches, whether or not they use these liturgies, adopt a simple structure such as Praise, self offering, Bible reading, silent reflection, prayers for others. They may combine this with a breakfast or supper one or more days. Churches that meet just once a day vary greatly in the times when they meet, from early morning to mid morning to early evening to before bed time. .

Some adopt a theme for each day, and transfer these to cards or CD's which every member can use wherever they are.

Mondays: Creation and the world of work

Tuesdays: Incarnation, reconciliation, justice and peace.

Wednesdays: Healing and education.

Thursdays: Unity, community, sacrament and creative arts

Fridays: The Cross and the world's broken people (fast day)

Saturdays: Sports and saints

Sundays: Resurrection and renewal of church and society.

There is a weekly rhythm of daily prayer together, a common meal on Thursday, fasting and prayer round the Cross on Friday, and regular blessings in homes. Each local church should have ingredients that are unique to itself. Some, for example, pray for people in a particular street on

a daily rota basis. Others pick out names from a box containing prayer request slips.

Exercises

Make a list of the ingredients most members of your group think should be in daily services.

Is there something distinctive to your situation which you would regularly include?

What times of day are the best for your church to have prayer together (they might vary from day to day)?

Share ideas for creating visual focal points, or themed prayer corners.

Does/how can your church programme reflect the rhythm of the Christian and natural seasons?

Does/how can your church reflect the rhythm of the week?

Does/how can your church reflect the rhythm of the day?

Does/how can your church provide rest periods and retreats?

Does/how the church sponsor work projects?

Does/how can your church support its members in their work place?

Does/how can your church support the work centres in its area?

Does/how can your church keep Sunday special?

TASK GROUP

Invite feed-back from the church and pilot a planned pattern of daily prayer.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 8 Turning church buildings into spiritual homes

(this session is only suitable for churches who own or manage their own property)

Few church buildings in Britain have the feel and function of a spiritual home; secularising drives have marginalised them. Yet the twenty four hour society has arrived. Church buildings which are closed most of this time are a turn-off. They get vandalised. People do not vandalise buildings which they feel are there for them. Researchers find that the public wants shops etc to be more like homes; hence shops are bringing 'body and soul' facilities under one roof, from cafes to advice centres.

Define a spiritual home

'A place where people of different temperaments and ages can relax amid familiar objects, pray, meet and eat in a relaxing atmosphere, celebrate the important things in life, blow their top, find spaces for privacy, silence, beauty or study.' How would you define it?

Bible Study

Read 1 Timothy 3:15. The New Testament often describes the church as a home or household.

Read Matthew 21:13. Churches should be places where people of all backgrounds and races may be drawn to pray without being got at.

Read John 14:2 It should mirror Jesus' teaching about our heavenly home - a place with many rooms, that is something to suit every temperament.

After a pause share anything that struck you in these Scripture verses.

Celtic churches

Celtic churches were homely centres of community which combined devotional, social, work and study activities.

Features of church buildings that are spiritual homes

*** Warm and accessible.**

How can easy chairs, toilets, car parking , notice boards, loop systems, sign language, wheel chair access , carpets, heating best create this?

*** An eating place as well as a praying place**

What refreshment facilities and eating occasions can be established?

*** A work and creative place**

Vacuum Cleaner inventor James Dyson predicts the new technology heralds the return of the artisan , the gifted creator of desirable goods. Creative artists and artisans will soon have the means to use church premises even in rural areas. What services and activities can bless the interests, work, sport and life of the neighbourhood?

*** A lived in, or at least a safe place - physically and emotionally.**

Can accommodation be built into or near the church building? Can a rota of staff employ their time in pursuits such as cleaning, typing, sewing, studio recording, crafts or study? Can the church office be sited there? Can children and parents be made to feel accepted and relaxed by provision of a play-, nappy changing- or creche room?

*** Conducive to different styles of spirituality.**

Different styles of prayer should be expressed in the one building, so that people of different temperaments feel relaxed. Some churches have removed fixed pews to create spaces for dance, displays prayer postures, candles, ikons, fountains and creation foci.

*** A healing and humane place.**

How can the joys, sorrows, anger, questioning, celebrations, anniversaries, ceilidhs, memorial gatherings be encouraged?

*** Educational and ecumenical**

Are there learning resources, courses, videos, books, a 'church trail' digital interpretations of the church's story, items familiar to members of other church streams?

*** A centre for spiritual development, meditation and soul friendship**

The Diamond Award for Your Church Building

Imagine you are an objective and shrewd Inspector representing those who are not drawn to your church building. Award your main church building diamond ratings on a scale of 0 to 5 using the following check list (put a figure in the square):

- Heated and open on week days
- Wide, welcoming entrance way
- Free car parking or easy public transport
- No churchy publicity or paraphernalia off putting to visitors
- Toilets and kitchen
- Telephone and office
- Spaces where its obviously OK to stay undisturbed in quiet
- Has a warm, lived-in emotional feel
- Has carpets and easy chairs
- Refreshment facilities through the week
- Children's play and display area
- Nappy changing room
- Creche
- Space for movement, dance etc
- Places for private study
- Book and video library
- Creation themed corner in building or garden, or a well or fountain
- Services and symbols of healing
- Book of Remembrance (added to by bereaved people)
- Graveyard or Garden of Remembrance in use
- Displays of art, poetry, photography
- Hosts schools visits
- Educationally effective church trail leaflet or guide
- Advice facility, e.g. re local info, helping agencies, guidance on wills
- Educational resources in the building (e.g. videos of what goes on in the church)

Hosts celebrations of significance to a cross section of neighbourhood groups

(Give e.g.'s):

Hosts celebrations of significance to a cross section of families (e.g. anniversaries)

Includes song books, symbols and resources of other church streams

Includes items that connect with ethnic or other local minorities.

Easy access and facilities for the handicapped

Add up your total number of diamonds. The maximum you could get is 150. Now identify five priorities you could introduce.

During the prayer time or later circle the building (physically or in your imagination) and pray for it and for the people for whom it could become a spiritual home.

TASK GROUP

Visit some church building which have become multi-resource centres

St Mark's, Beckton, London has a gym.

Christ Church Community Project, Kingsmead Estate, Nr Hackney Marsh

Christ Church, Woking

Dewsbery Minster Church

St Pauls in the Crossing, Walsall

Kingsway Centre, Liverpool

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 9 Weaving the Strands Together

During Millennium Two the great strands of Christ's universal church became separated. These strands include:

Catholic - the focus is community around Holy Communion

Protestant - the focus is personal conversion around the Bible

Orthodox - the focus is the Living Tradition of prayer in the liturgy and in the heart

There are other strands, e.g. Pentecostal - the focus is the experience of the person and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Name any other strand that is important to you.

Bible Study

The Bible teaches that there is only one church. It likens this to a human body. Christ is like the head of the body. Each local congregation or group is like a limb or an eye. Read these verses aloud: Ephesians 4:4-6, 15-16; 5:29.

Have 5 minutes silent reflection on these verses, and 7 minutes sharing anything in them that strikes you as important enough to require a response.

Now let's jump from the original church to the separated strands of today's church. Many leaders and members of these strands sincerely believe that the one true church of which the Bible speaks is comprised of their strand, and that the way to unity is to convince separated brothers and sisters to return to the fold (their strand).

But what if the fulness of Christ's Body can only be attained if each strand is like a limb that recognises that it does not contain in itself the fulness of Christ's Body? For example, one church strand despises other strands - and thereby ceases to reflect Christ's humble love to the world. Another church proselytises other Christians without a basis of trust - and thereby ceases to reflect Christ's solidarity with others.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20. The fragmentation of Christianity is a sin, and a cause of stumbling to believers and seekers, many of whom now refuse to be defined by a protest movement of 450 years ago (The Catholic/Protestant divide known as 'The Reformation'). Nor by the divide between the Eastern Orthodox and Western Church of 1054.

In the early church in Celtic lands these strands were not separated. The church was catholic - part of the one universal church - sharing the same Scriptures, creeds and forms of ministry. It looked to the focal points of unity going back to the apostles - Peter in Rome, John in Ephesus. It was Bible based, and it was Spirit-led.

Is God calling us to re-unite these strands in the third millennium?
Unity schemes from the top down have made some progress, but not breakthrough.

We need to weave the strands together at the grass roots. This is not just patching together, however, In the Celtic model we understand that God is still 'weaving the cloth'.

To put it another way, The Acts of the Apostles is not just a finished book in the Bible, it is still being written.

In this model, we long that all shall be immersed daily in the precious Triune God - this can be seen as the fulfilment of the ideals of Baptists.

We see Christ in the face of the stranger or foe as well as in the neighbour - this echoes the Quaker insight that 'there is that of God in each person.'
Here are three ways of weaving.

1. A group exercise to get inside the mind of another strand.

The group members stand in a line. Each lays a hand on the head of the next person. The first person represents Jesus ordaining an apostle, the second person represents an apostle ordaining a bishop, and so on. This idea is called apostolic succession and is thought to be Jesus' way of ensuring that his ministry continues.

Now the group members again stand in a line but this time each represents any member of the church. They pass a Bible down from the first to the last.

This idea is the priesthood of all believers, who it is thought can know Jesus directly through the Bible.

Now the group members form a circle, and hold out their arms to invite the Holy Spirit to inwardly reveal to them who should follow the different callings such as apostle, prophet, pastor, healer, teacher.

When you have completed this exercise share what you sensed might be of God in these three ways of being church.

2. Make your own a spiritual treasure from each strand.

This cannot be simulated. It may take the rest of your life.

One person might, for example, learn to contemplate in the way of the Catholic Spanish mystics such as John of the Cross; embrace the Puritan tradition of William Law or John Bunyan; and pray the Jesus prayer in the spirit of Seraphim of Russia. Name classic spiritualities from different strands that you know or would like to explore.

3. Practise accepting yourself as a pilgrim whose companions you do not choose. When we come to accept our vulnerability we become connected with others who are vulnerable. A fellowship of the poor in spirit' spans the denominations and the centuries.

TASK GROUP

1. Instead of adding yet another layer of activity to your church, think out how to deepen trust between your church and others from different strands.
2. Propose ways of incorporating insights from different strands in your worship, programme, teaching.

Session 10 Outreach

Jesus reached out to people who were neglected by the Jewish 'church' of his day. The 5th - 7th century Celtic Mission was unusually effective in winning Irish, British and English pagan populations to God. The top down, packaged Roman model of mission was less effective. Various forms of 'top-down' or 'we know it all' mission were prevalent in Millennium 2 churches. They are no longer effective.

Bible study

Jesus reached out to people, loved them as they were, sat in their shoes and laid down his life for them. He was able to become one with the people in all things except sin because he remained one with his divine Father at all times. Because he was secure, he did not pressurise others. He was able within himself to lose earthly power, and so became king of hearts.

His critics, the pharisees, had big evangelistic campaigns, and would traverse the earth to gain one convert, but failed to turn round the hearts of the people. Why? They imposed their culture on the people, whereas Jesus made himself one with them.

Read Matthew 23:13-15; Mark 9:40 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

After 2 minutes silent reflection share what thoughts came to you as to how you can 'become like' an unchurched section of society.

The Irish way of mission

In 'Celtic' Christianity true evangelism begins within the culture and flows out of love for the whole person. It grows out of relationships. It gives God and people time and space. It is natural.

In Celtic mission there are three elements: 1) Good news to share
2) A model of what this means (churches that help the needy, motivate seekers and offer ceaseless prayer) 3) A fellow feeling for others that enables the Christian to get inside their skin. Without all three elements mission often fails.

Saint Patrick won much of 5th century pagan Ireland to Christ. He shared his vulnerability with the people. He began his mission by accepting an invitation from a good pagan to stay in his home. He

discerned certain Gospel friendly ‘handles’ which he could turn to God’s advantage, such as prophecies by Druids that a new religion would come to their land. He caught the attention of everyone by holding a big bonfire to celebrate Christ’s resurrection. He spent time with God discerning who were the naturally good people who would welcome a good person when they met one. He took prime time to befriend the natural leaders (people who could open doors) and their extended families.

Group meditation: Befriending unchurched people of good will

Take time to become aware of the people in an area of your life. Hold them before God. Which ones stand out as being open to goodness? Visualise spending time with the person who seems most open and accessible, giving them opportunity to share what is important to them, what they long for, and giving time to share what is important to you.

(5 minutes silence; 5 minutes sharing)

A culture friendly church mission statement

Read aloud this mission statement of one church:

Our policy is to offer unconditional love for Christ’s sake to every person within this parish and to every person who is drawn to us. We will maintain nothing that unnecessarily causes their faith to stumble - anachronistic ways, words that alienate or confuse. We will do nothing that makes them feel excluded or inferior. We will aim to be present at their point of need, as far as God gives us resources.

We say to them:

We will bless your babies and homes

The church building is open every day.

We invite you to share food and silence.

Note points to include from this in a Mission Statement for your church.

Modern examples of culture friendly mission

Churches got together in an area of Liverpool and invited people in the shops and streets to a barbecue, free, at the Podium. Two bands were on the shopping streets the days preceding this, giving out invites. 6,600 were fed. ‘At last the church is doing what it should

always have been doing' said a guest.

In another area Churches Together took a daffodil to each patient in the local hospital at Easter.

Justice

Everyone who struggles for justice is working for God's reign. The emerging church values everything that is in tune with its struggle to set up God's reign. A church that tries only to keep itself pure and uncontaminated would not be a church of God's service to people.

Emerging churches tithes their income to give to the needy, build bridges between hostile groups, and speak out for the poor and unjustly treated.

Choose one or more of the following issues to discuss

1. What Gospel friendly trends do we discern in our society?

2. Celtic Christians met at the peoples' natural gathering places.

Some significant gathering places today are cafes, pubs, parks, leisure centres, schools, shopping centres, health centres, airports, .

What gathering places are significant for people today in your area? How can you develop a Christian presence in one of these.

3. Only a minority now follow mainstream religion, but the Alister Hardy Research Unit has discovered that nearly two thirds of the British population admit to having religious experiences.

Mike Pilavachi, who has started the Soul Survivor church near Watford, likens the traditional Anglican church, which he says he loves, to a high class French restaurant whose cuisine and menu is entirely French. He likens churches such as Soul Survivor to McDonalds - cheap, cheerful and accessible - where most of the population feel more at home. Assuming that most unchurched children and adults have spirituality, and that more British people are at home in McDonalds than in a French restaurant, what signs of unchurched people's spirituality have you noticed? What meeting place would they find most natural? What would make it easy to meet them there?

Christian presence outside the hubs

1. Give examples of churches you know which have places of Christian presence other than their main building.

2. Tick which of the following Christian presences exist in the area your church relates to:

Poustinias or prayer huts that anyone can apply to use

Christian cafe or shop

Counselling, advice or listening agency

Christian pub, guest house

Christian school

Christian organisations in non church buildings

Chaplaincies in schools, homes etc

Study courses

Meditation

Alternative or family worship

House groups

Routine pastoral visits

Music or singing events

Body-soul exercises classes

Alternative healing service

Cyber cafe or web link up

3. Add to this list of Christian presences that exist in your hinterland.

TASK GROUP

Map the area for which you have concern. Locate the Christian presences on it (including the activities of any Christian church). Note the gaps. Decide what Christian services you can take to the people rather than requiring them to come to the existing church. Put the most achievable of these in order of priority and plan how to develop them.

Draw up a Mission Statement agreed by the church

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 11 Turning Congregations into Communities

This course has explored some key features of emerging churches. The most important feature has been left until now. Unless a congregation becomes a community that serves others it will not be possible to sustain these other features.

But to turn a Sunday-only collection of churchgoers into a community is a humanly impossible task.

Only certain churches are fitted to attempt this task. Therefore the first step is to discern where our church lies on a spectrum. When we know that, we can discern what more limited tasks we can undertake.

Most small and many middle sized churches cannot provide the spectrum of features that people expect of a church, nor the will to finance traditional church structures. (Occasionally, however, a community church can grow out of a small group which shares, e.g. a house.)

If the group that sustains such a 'church' is freed from expectations of 'keeping up church' it can become an effective resource group for a particular purpose. Here are some examples of what ex churches which have become resource groups can provide:

- a monthly all age service in a school
- a monthly alternative service in a pub
- a monthly traditional service in sheltered housing
- a parents and toddlers club
- a household fellowship or cell church.

Add to this list.

It requires clear thinking, courage and humility to make this change.

In denominations it may mean refusing to collude with their inappropriate structures.

To discuss:

Which of these categories best describes your church (tick)?

- Enough energies and resources to evolve into a community hub church
- Is stuck with decline, stress and complaining.
- Would benefit by ceasing to be 'a church' & becoming a resource group.

If your church is not in the first category you can choose either to omit the following material and use the time to talk and pray about how you can best bring your present situation to a close and develop as a resource group, or to continue the course in order to become more aware of possibilities in the wider church. For a former church that becomes a resource agency needs a hub church to which it can relate. This also applies if your church is in category 1 but you are not in its leadership.

Celtic Community Churches

Although it is difficult to turn a congregation into a community, it has been done before. From the 6th century the churches were communities which were the hub of their society's life.

Steps in turning a congregation into a community

Step 1 Lay down their life down your life for the place or community to which God calls you

The Revd. Graham Pulkingham, when called to the inner city parish in Houston, USA, wrote: "' I became so identified with the neighbourhood as to be baptised in its bondage and pain.' This requires unconditional commitment from leaders, not temporary contracts. This can be on a small scale, for example two or three people based in a home.

Step 2 Form a core servant community of daily prayer

The core group should, of course, be authorised by the appropriate church authorities. It should pray together daily and incarnate steps four to seven. Some might move in nearby or share salaries to free others for voluntary work. Discuss examples or possibilities of salary or work sharing.

Step 3- Find and share a vision

Wait on God for a vision. Through due process, when this is owned by the

church, it should be put on a logo, so it can be read at a glance (Habakkuk 2.2).

Step 4- Covenant to keep core values

The core community that interacts through the week needs to covenant to live by some agreed core values, or a rule of life which include ways of building up one another and society (as in session 9)

Step 5 Turn the church building into a spiritual home

Finally, once the praying community is alive and well, the church building needs to be turned into a multi purpose resource centre that is also a spiritual home (as in session 8)

Bible Study

Read Acts 2:42-47. What did those early church members do daily?

What did those in paid employment do? What lessons can we learn from this?

Exercise

1. Tick or leave blank

Does your congregation have public prayer?

If not, what next step could it take to provide worship more than one day a week?

Is there a group of people (besides the minister(s) who service the prayer or work at the church building during the week?

If so, have they undertaken to guarantee their service (full or part time) as far as is possible?

Has this group been publicly commissioned or affirmed by the congregation's leadership?

Is this group (core community) bound together by a shared Statement of Values, Mission or by a Rule of Life?

Is this core community recognised and released by local and/or wider church authorities (e.g. Deacons, Diocese, Circuit) so that there are not conflicting lines of accountability?

If there is no such core group, how do you assess the potential for developing this?

Today some congregations seek to restore the household church, e.g. through cells, or through household celebrations such as a Friday Shabat meal.

Does your congregation have cells? Home groups? Regular household celebrations that are common to more than one household?

2. Where the answer is 'no', decide what you can do about this.

Draw up a pattern for your church of a) daily corporate prayer, b) regular hospitality, c) discipling of others and d) seasonal outreach, allocating members of the group to one of these.

Task group

Using the insights gleaned from this course, bring a community hub church into being.

Note about session 12.

This final session is about the spirit and skills of leadership, and applies to any who help to lead in any sector of their church.

If the course group does not include leaders or potential leaders you may choose either to end the course now, or to use the final session to share ways in which God has spoken to you through the course and to plan and pray for the future.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Session 12

Cells, Households and Villages of God

If possible this should be in the setting of a household shared meal, however simple, and a house blessing. Create a good ambience, e.g. with the use of music, flowers or candles. After the first course, proceed with the course material below. After any dessert, bless the house you are eating in. Follow this by worship if desired, and pray a blessing on the homes of each person present.

An example of a Shabat Meal is included in Celtic Night Prayer (HarperCollins). An example of a house blessing is contained in Ray Simpson's Celtic Blessings for Every Day Life (Hodder and Stoughton 1998) The Community of Aidan and Hilda prints an outline of a Shalom Meal for any times.

Introduction

A bird's eye view of churches in Britain looks like a pole. Cells and household groups at one end of the pole and hub churches at the other end show potential, but many congregations in the middle look set to die unless they adapt.

Systems. Projects. Meetings - that is church. Lord, how I long for church to be family, presence, meeting.

A church member

Cells and households

Several forms of cell church are growing at the present time. In some forms, a cross section of Christians commit to meet weekly for sharing, worship, Bible study and welcome of others. The cell is responsible for pastoral care and witness. In some cases the cell's priorities override those of a larger Sunday congregation which sponsored them, in other cases they subserve the congregation. In many cases the cell commits to pray for non Christian friends of members and welcome them to their meetings. Thus the cell commits to subdivide when it reaches a maximum number.

The benefits of cells are obvious. They can meet the need for real, intimate relationships and discipleship which a larger congregation cannot provide.

Since ample literature on cell church is available, this course does not explore cells further. The web site of Cell UK (part of Youth With a Mission) is www.cellchurch.co.uk

The 'Celtic' understanding of church embraces many cell church principles but it stresses two further dimensions:

1. Cells are not sufficient to themselves.
2. Organic patterns are better than contrived ones.

Cells need to relate to a hub because:

- * A finger fulfils its purpose only if it's connected to the body
- * Cell leaders are often overwhelmed by the stress involved in such responsibility
- * Contemplatives and other types can thrive better outside cells
- * Some Christians are called to resource hubs
- * Christians and the general public need a hub to refer to.

Those churches that conclude that cells are not for them, or are too pressurised may consider the household church an option.

Households

Often loyal church helpers get run down, like a machine. Both their work and society create overload, and church, instead of redeeming this, imposes yet more overload. Some cease to attend an organised church, others become frustrated church 'props'. Is there a third way?

In the Jewish and Celtic traditions the household becomes a main expression of 'church'. Members can follow natural patterns of praise and reflective sharing which does not involve committees, rehearsals etc.

St Patrick's Church, Hove, blesses the home of each church member every year. Households meet for a weekly or monthly meal when each person is present to the other, listens to their journey since the last household meal. The Bible or the life of a saint may be reflect upon. There maybe silence and singing.

Households develop prayers and rituals for significant daily and occasional happenings.

This is more natural, and organic than cells, yet the household may become an extended spiritual family, or may invite a different guest whenever it meets.

Links with a Sunday congregation are continued, for example, though participation in Holy Communion or in other worship services.

Hub churches

Many mobile Christians, cells, and small churches cannot flourish unless there are also centres of stability, prayer, resource and hospitality to which they relate. A hub church is a multi resource centre, but it is more than that. For its members do not live private lives away from their church centre. A hub church is:

1. A prayer centre serviced by some whose main calling is prayer
2. A multi resource centre - serviced by some whose main calling is hospitality and others whose main calling is discipling existing or new church members
3. A covenanted, organic, relational community.
4. A resource for mission groups, cells, church plants which relate to it.

In the Church of England there are calls for the return of the Minster Model. But this is a coming together of clergy. It is still top-down, not growing out of the natural people patterns.

An alternative is the Celtic Monastery Model. This refers to faith communities where there is a coming together of people who are vulnerable and open to God, whether they are from the top or the bottom of the social pile, ordained or in other jobs, married or single. Many different activities go on each day as people come and go, and at heart is a core of people upholding a rhythm of prayer. Warehouse churches are beginning to emerge. Some people prefer the title Villages of God.

Exercise - creating a momentary monastery

In the following exercise each person places themselves in one of three circles, not according to what they presently do, or what their conditioning tells them they ought to do, but according to their deepest, innate desire. The three circles are represented by hearts, hands and legs. Those whose dominant desire is to use their hearts, to be available daily for prayer, rather like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42), kneel in the centre. Those whose dominant desire is to serve others through the

ministries of Christ's church (from pastoral care to making cups of tea) stand around the kneeling group, with their hands lifted to God. Those whose main calling is to serve God in the world outside the monastery, though valuing the support and the link with the monastery, walk in a circle around the people with their hands raised.

CIRCLE 1 - HEARTS AND HEADS

CIRCLE 2- HANDS

CIRCLE 3 - FEET

Divide the 'hearts' the 'hands' and the 'feet' into three groups. Invite the 'heart' members to suggest ways in which they can become more available at the church's main place of meeting - to be, to pray, to listen. Invite the 'hands' members to suggest ways they can be set free to serve in harmony with the hearts and the other hands. Invite the 'feet' to suggest ways they can regularly, even if infrequently, relate to the hub. Come together to share conclusions.

Task group

1. Does your congregation have cells? Home groups?
Regular household celebrations that are common to more than one household?

Where the answer is 'no', decide what you can do about this.

- 2 Arrange a person to person appraisal with each willing member of the congregation who has regular duties. Find out which duties are preventing them from 'just hanging out with God' in their homes.

3. Make contact with embryo warehouse churches or villages of God. Identify lessons you can learn and proposals you can implement.

4. In the light of your findings, make proposals for simplifying church activities and reshuffling those responsible for them.

5. Using the 'Village of God' plan below as a guide, draw up your own.

A. Values

Ninety five per cent of the church is about producing. It can't conceive of a life style based on spaces for solitude and hospitality .

A church leader

When we are not surrounded by family - and nature - we (and churches) make decisions in a fragmented way.

A church leader

Bible Study

Jesus called people to live by a set of values which have become known as the Beatitudes, or Beautiful Attitudes. Read Matthew 5:1-12. If churches had taken the Beatitudes as seriously as the Creeds, what would be different?

Five minutes silent visualisation followed by five minutes sharing.

Celtic churches

Each Celtic church did live by a set of Gospel values which they called a Rule. The core (married and celibate lay and ordained) committed to the Rule. Others met with a soul friend from this core, and adopted elements of the Rule for their own lives.

The following are paraphrased items from a Rule Columbanus drew up. One or more persons reads each item followed by a pause:

- * Let our bearing towards one another be that of Christ, honouring and listening intently to one another.
 - * Never grumble or hit back.
- * Only speak when God gives you something to say.
 - * Avoid mindless or boastful talk.
- * Eat and drink nothing that overloads the stomach or confuses the mind.
 - * Possess only what you need or what you can offer as love gifts.
- * Live simply in order to purge vices and foster perpetual love of God.
 - * Cultivate humility and purity.
 - * Follow the rhythm of the seasons in prayer.
- * Pay heed to the season of your life, to your temperament, ability, and energy levels.
- * The ceaseless prayer of the heart, not external uniformity, is what binds everyone together.
- * Develop wisdom, balance, wholeness, the fruits of the Spirit, discernment of good and evil and of what justice requires.
 - * Never judge another.

Have five minutes silence during which any may write down any item they feel is important for their church to adopt. Share these.

Building up a church values statement

Some churches draw up a statement of values as well as of mission. This is sometimes called a Covenant.

Before engaging in this process it is wise to learn from other faith communities. For example, from **L'Arche communities** we may learn about forgiveness, providing emotional space, quality of listening which respects everything that is most beautiful and true in the other.

One minister occasionally reads this extract from the Rule of the **Taize Community** at church meetings: 'Express in a few words what you feel conforms most closely to God's plan, without imagining that you can impose it'.

The Anamchara Community Church, Adelaide, has woven together the values of the Vineyard Church with those of The Community of Aidan and Hilda. After each section is read by a reader, briefly discuss and list any items you think your church should adopt.

Pursuit of God

The Community Church is a body of Christians who, before all else, are wholly available to the Holy Trinity and wholeheartedly committed to the way of Jesus as revealed to us in the Bible. The Bible is at the heart of our study.

Discipleship

As disciples of Jesus we are committed to on-going learning, therefore we commit ourselves to study the Scriptures, the great teachers and saints of the church, and to learn from the experience of the Holy Spirit at work in God's people.

Journey

We see ourselves as 'a church without walls' a community called to live by faith. Therefore we regularly wait on God to show us what we should let go and what we should make our priorities. We encourage members and the church to discern these things with the help of a soul friend.

Rhythm

We seek to follow a rhythm of prayer, witness, study, work, hospitality and leisure which safeguards spaces that enables us to be fully human.

Spiritual Initiative

We wish to be alert, through constant intercession and reflection, to those things that undermine God's kingdom in our part of the earth being as it is in heaven, and we wish to take initiative for good.

Simplicity and generosity

We seek to be simple and natural in our life style, and to give away what is surplus to our needs, not drawing attention to ourselves.

Earth care

We seek to have a loving relationship with the whole of creation, seeing it as an expression of God, and exercising self restraint in our use of created things. In our worship we will reflect the seasons and celebrate God's presence in creation.

Wholeness

In a society and church which is fragmented and selfishly individualistic we seek to relate sensitively to the web of life, to the web of human community, and to seek the healing of the land. We seek healing and a balance of mind and body.

Openness and risk

We are willing to be vulnerable, to listen deeply to God in the Scriptures, in the cries of the people, in prophecy and in ourselves as we sift what is heard. We expect members to learn through trial and error and are patient with their weaknesses while they learn.

Unity

We commit ourselves to be in solidarity with the human race, and with the world-wide Body of Christ on earth and in heaven. We will be humble and loving towards all fellow Christians, and be attentive to those in oversight of other churches. We seek to weave together the strands of Christianity which have become separated such as the biblical, the catholic and the charismatic, for we believe that the church is never one or the other of these aspects, but always all three.

Mission and Mercy

We stand with the poor and against injustice. We offer hospitality to those in true need, and take trouble to share our faith with those who lack it. Care for people is our highest priority after submission to God. We seek to integrate biblical truth into everyday life, and so impact our society.

An emerging church is likely to include such core values as these:

1. Integrity. C.f. 2 Corinthians 4:1-2

Share weaknesses and fears, live in the light.

2. Respect.

Aidan did not fear to speak out on behalf of the marginalised when he was with the wealthy or powerful.

3. Love.

The Rule of Columba which Aidan and Hilda would have adopted may have included 'Forgiveness from the heart for everyone' which is part of a Rule from the following century which is attributed to Columba.

4. Welcome

Because the core were committed to the Rule, every neighbour could belong and feel welcome without their unredeemed values taking over the church. 'He who is not against me is for me.'

Discuss what you think might be God's distinctive call for your church.

Exercise

A person appointed by the leader groups together the above core values and others that the group believes should be put forward for consideration by the church. This is later given to the church leadership.

TASK GROUP

Using this list as a basis, engage the whole church in a similar process and produce an agreed values statement.

A statement is useless if it is not lived. Appraise church meetings in the light of these values and seek to motivate church members to live by them.

This is a pilot project. Please let us know what elements we should save, delete, clarify, or add to.

Optional Extras

2. Inspired Leadership

*Good leaders grow people, bad leaders stunt them.
Good leaders serve their followers, bad leaders enslave them.*
Sir Adrian Cadbury, former head of Cadbury Schweppes

Some quotes about uninspired church leaders

(tick any that ring a bell)

‘Jack or Jill of all trades’ ‘They hide behind desks’
‘They cling to their own establishment’
‘They live on overdrive.’ ‘The spiritual depth born of stillness evades them.’ ‘Pastors confuse loving people with meeting their expectations.’ ‘Leaders who are not secure in their own identity in God become hostage to what is not of God in their people.’ ‘Stipendiary clergy who try to follow the flow of God in the hearts of their people feel strangled by the machine; Overseers, who should be fathers to their flocks; sink under mountains of paper.’

What factors dispirit church leaders?

(tick any that ring a bell; add others)

A congregation whose mind set is to preserve the past rather than reach out to the unchurched .
The post- modern supermarket habits of our regular members, who come to church when it suits them, but expect the minister to be always there for them. The bureaucratic Diocesan/other system
Colleagues who are too threatened or busy to listen
Distant bishops/overseers

Advice to leaders from people ‘out there’

‘Visit factories, nursing homes, schools.’ ‘Go talk to the Job Centre.’ ‘Read *The Sun*.’
What are people were looking for? ‘Basically for spiritual wisdom to deal with the pressures and relationships of day to day life’.

Researched by Mark Green Vice Principal of London Bible College, in Anvil, Vol 14, No 4 1997

‘I am looking for leadership which is earthy, masculine, real, motherly and has a deep love which is reliable. An awful lot of godliness is up in the air. If you lean on it it falls flat. Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.’

Bible study

Read Exodus 18:17-27.

This passage illustrates four principles of good leadership:

1. Be governed by God's calling not career (v19).
2. Reproduce God's life and callings in others (v 20)
3. Learn to build teams and to delegate (v 25)
4. Be holistic - don't artificially separate family from work (v 24)

What else do you learn from this passage?

Learning from leaders in other walks of life

A shift is beginning from maintenance of an unviable system to disciplining those who ask to be disciplined. In order to do this the leader needs clarity to identify priorities, courage to say 'no' to things that are secondary, skill to manage change, and love.

The American psychologist Daniel Goleman, in his ground breaking book *Emotional Intelligence* concludes that emotional rather than rational intelligence marks out the true leader. Leadership skills researcher Des Dearlove suggests someone who failed school exams, like Richard Branson, can make a better leader than an Oxbridge don because his 'emotional intelligence' is more keenly developed.

Ex Olympic yachtsman Tony Morgan, now Director of The Industrial Society, says 'liberating leaders' establish trust and good flow between fellow leaders, managers and employees; they 'create a culture where people realise it is OK to own up to a mistake or breakdown and to learn from them.'

The Industrial Society's Survey, *Liberating Leadership 1999*, identifies the five weakest areas of leadership as insensitivity to people's feelings, failure to recognise others stress, failure to develop and guide staff, failure to encourage feedback on their own performance, and failure to consult before making decisions. The leaders in the top half of the rating show more humility and awareness of their own shortcomings.

Exercise:

Recall one time when you failed. Share this if you wish.

Celtic style leadership traits

The leaders of the early Celtic Christian communities were the natural leaders of that people. They were spiritual fathers or mothers whose leadership styles reflected their personality, honed in sacrificial love. They worked with a soul friend to strip away what is false, and thus learned to be themselves. They developed discernment of spirits. If a leader is not true to themselves, they are modelling falsity to their members.

Some principles of church leadership

1. Pray until you discern God's priorities; discard, delegate, or minimise all jobs that do not further these priorities.
2. Disciple the spiritual family. If your church is small, you disciple it as Jesus disciplined the twelve apostles. If it is large you disciple the leaders and pastors who will disciple the members. Make sure that the strongest are stretched and the weakest are guarded.
3. Allow yourself to be vulnerable. 'Never trust a leader who walks without a limp' (John Wimber)
4. Have the courage to act. The true servant leader is strong, not weak. Leaders in the retreating church postponed the painful decisions which were necessary to turn things round, for fear of the short term pain and controversy. Emerging church leaders grasp the nettle first of all, and then enjoy the fruits.
5. Acquire the skills you need to realise these priorities.
6. Be accountable. All church leaders are prone to confuse their own ego with the will of God, and to impose the agenda of their own ego in the guise of religion. In the Celtic Church leadership was often given to those who renounced personal property and who were accountable to another.
7. Love your people for who they are, not for what they do. A new minister brought his exciting agenda to its members; they intuited that he did not love them for themselves, but only if they were fodder for his plans. The minister realised this. He decided that, instead of laying 'his stuff' on to his congregation, he would love them for themselves, and help to draw out what was of God in 'their stuff'. It was not long before the members realised that this was 'a new deal', and started to love him. That congregation is

now a community.

The final worship is an opportunity for members to rededicate themselves to God and to pray for one another to be filled and equipped by the Holy Spirit.

TASK GROUP

Invite a suitable person to be a soul friend or consultant to your leadership group and to appraise and facilitate it in the light of these principles.

APPENDICES

1. Examples of churches that are 'breaking the mould'.
2. Spiritual audit of a neighbourhood
3. The church as a stool with three legs (diagram)
4. Networking the neighbourhood
5. The Church as a boat yard - a Retreat Exercise
6. Recommended further reading

1. Some examples of churches that are modelling something new.

St. Thomas Crookes, Sheffield is a hub church linked to some thirty smaller churches which is developing a monastic missionary order.

The Soul Survivor Church, Watford heads up the Soul Survivor youth movement.

The Warham Community is a resource and worship network linking up those who have completed alpha courses across villages in Berks and Hants.

St. Mary's, Thame is a missionary family of congregations.

Information about Anglican network (i.e. non-parochial) churches may be obtained from Anglican Church Planting Initiatives www.acpi.org.uk

2. A spiritual audit of a neighbourhood

3. Diagram of the Church as a Three-legged Stool

4. Networking the neighbourhood

5. The Church as a boat yard - some Retreat Exercises

We recommend that members of churches that desire to move forward with God go away for a retreat which includes some creative visualisation. In the following exercise the image of a boat represents our individual faith journeys, and the image of the boat yard represents the church. As with Jesus' parables, the metaphors should not be followed too rigidly.

1: Visualise yourself as a boat on a sea. What kind of boat are you? ...

Now visualise the church (whatever the church may mean for you) as a boatyard.
How does it relate to your boat? And to boats who have not known of the boatyard?

LISTEN TO SOME OF THE BOATS

A The boatyard has not changed since olden days. It has no idea what sort of boat I need or how to repair the boat I now use.

B The boatyard is covered in barnacles and stinks. It has misused us. All its interested in using us for their own selfish purposes.

C It is only interested in the boats it made.

D It won't attend to other boats.

E It even declares that they are not boats.

W

6. Recommended further reading

4. Recommended further reading

Being Human: Being Church by Robert Warren (Marshall Pickering)

Challenges churches to turn into missionary congregations and laboratories for becoming more fully human beings.

Changing World: Changing Church by Michael Monagh (Monarch Books 2001). A vital, well researched, practically illustrated guide to how the church can be transformed.

Church Next by Eddie Gibbs (Covenant Publications)

Colonies of Heaven: Celtic Christian Communities by Ian Bradley (DLT 2000). An insight into Celtic monastic peoples churches and lessons for the church today.

Dying Church: Living God! A Call to Begin Again by Chuck Meyer (Northstone Publishing Canada)

A barnstorming hit list!

Natural Church Development Book by Christian A. Schwarz (British Church Growth Association)

New Springtime of the Church by Christopher Donaldson (Canterbury Press) proposes a reshaping of the Church of England that reflects insights of Martin of Tours.

New Way of Being Church - this series of booklets can be obtained from Pauline Lamming, Lodge Farm House, Groton, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 5EJ.

New Tasks for a Renewed Church Tom Wright (Hodder & Stoughton 1992) urges churches to find focal points of the emerging new paganism, and ways of honouring Jesus as Lord within these. He calls for Christian 'shrines' to be established in various areas by: coming alongside those in pain as a result of war; proclaiming in liturgy and deeds that the powers of Mammon shall be brought low; celebrating sexuality; cherishing the earth; developing forgiving and respectful friendships with people of other faiths within which witness becomes authentic; restoring a sacramental approach to church life; rescuing from eastern monopoly the mystical and contemplative traditions of prayer; and restoring holism to intellectual endeavour.

Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the Post Christian West by Michael Riddell (SPCK 1998) This gives examples of churches in his native New Zealand which are pioneering new ways of being church, from *Parallel Universe* to *Spine*.

NOTES

If the inherited church is going to resource the emerging church it has to do so with conviction.

EXTRA DRAFT PAGES

CHURCH OF THE PEOPLE

The Labour Party in 1980's Britain became unelectable. Why?

It did not represent the aspirations of most of the people. It was perceived to be in the pocket of minority pressure groups.

All that changed when it set up focus groups who reported what were the concerns of the different sections of the population.

However, during its second term in office, the perception gained ground that its motive was to manage the people's concerns rather than to represent them.

There are two key principles here for the church.

First, it must listen deeply to the concerns of the people - the unchurched as well as of the churched.

It is perceived to be in the pocket of minority interest groups. E.g. heritage group, middle class group (bookish liturgies) status (titles)

How

The Isaiah agenda

The second principle for the church is that it must represent the people.

In the truest sense. If it lives for short term popularity it will sink. It may in fact have to go through waves of unpopularity./ It is not in the pocket of any interest group, not even the electorate.

But it is, in the truest sense the representative of the people's deepest aspirations and well being.

It is the guardian of the community of communities.

ADD CHART OF GOD'S VILLAGE

FEEDBACK

Dear Ray,

As promised, the Celtic Models course feedback. Sorry you didn't receive the last feedback; just in case would you kindly acknowledge this one.

We ran aspects of the course in two groups; one a Bradfield bible study group comprising mainly over 50s; Their leader studied the course himself and then extracted the key issues and then led a group discussion on the subject, which thoroughly excited them. Although a little unsure about the subject matter; there were, afterwards, really glad to have worked with the material. It raised all manner of issues associated with how we 'do church'. I'm sure that will be fruitful although they didn't treat the material as a course, as was intended.

The second group comprised people from the two benefices of Bradfield and Basildon; the Bradfield group were members of an already active group which we call 'Food for the Journey' and the Basildon folk simply gathered as a Lent Course. The group was quite large; i.e. about 15-20. As it was a Lent course the Basildon folk only did 5 of the sessions; whilst our group did 8 sessions.

General: In general we found the course stimulating; it led to some vibrant discussions and provided a useful forum to discuss new church models.

The course as a whole comprised a great deal of useful and edifying information and would make a good foundation for a study course for church leaders. As a course for the laity, some aspects were really helpful other aspects seemed only to be of interest to those in leadership roles. As a result, some of the laity opted out of the course part way through; it simply didn't resonate with them. It was a highly detailed course which I, personally, found very useful; however, a regular comment from lay members of the group was that there was too much to take in from one session in one evening.

Details: One or two detailed comments:

-Terms such as 'emerging church' are not generally understood

- Do bear in mind the fact that rural churches have far fewer resources to work with than urban churches. Only simple and low-resource models are workable. In general the workers are overloaded and would value any way of 'doing church' that was simpler (and more effective).

All in all, we found the course material very helpful, stimulating and detailed. I wonder if it might be better in shorter sections and each section being placed into a category so that the course structure is a bit more evident? For instance:

1. Reasons for new models of church.
2. Identifying the core purpose(s) for the church in our day.
2. A new mindset for the Christian in Britain.
3. Core values for the 21st century Christian.
4. New Models.
5. Ways we can change/evolve.

As far as we are concerned the concepts of rhythm of prayer, households, centres of creativity and cell /hub models are all developing naturally and in partnership with our neighbouring benefice of Bucklebury. I expect Basildon will end up being in partnership also; at least, that is my prayer.

Many thanks for involving us in the process; I have found your input encouraging and affirming in the direction we are moving as church here.

Thanks also for the info re Bamburgh, as well as St Brelades; they both are attractive options for us but it would mean being along way from my mother and Jenny's dad, both of whom are increasingly frail and I'm the only one of my mother's sons who live in the country. I have a sense that the Lord is saying 'Wait!'. The way could well open up to establish s monasterium here as a diocesan experiment. If I am the right person for the task then Jenny and I would be at peace about that.

With my prayers and love in Christ
Hugh

HOW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES CAN BEGIN

C.f. Ciaran's vision and Clonmacnoise and Columba's later visit to a boy there.

REACHING THE YOUNG

The key is for the church to be the church.

Moore in his 'Field of Dreams' says if you build it, they will come'. They have a baseball field in a community farm.

COMMENDATIONS OF COURSES

Many were stimulated. One lady even suggested that we sell our old fashioned church hall and demolish the vicarage in order to create a purpose built parish centre in the heart of the village. So you can see some radical seeds have been sown.

Having returned we are encouraged to think further about our ministry of hospitality and our rhythm of daily prayer, and in these two areas at least we hope to look at things with fresh eyes....

May God continue to bless your unique ministry.

Revd Jonathan Baker, Scalby March 2003