



Northwest Conference Revitalization Gatherings for Pastors

May 22, 2012- noon

Purpose of Re-Connect:

1. Mutual Learning Opportunities
2. Sharing of Best Practices
3. Extend Connection and Support
4. Prayer Support
5. "Real Time" Peer Consultation and Support

Agenda

- **Opening Reflection-** (Jon) Thoughts from **Transforming Mission** by David Bosch
The Externally Focused Church by Rick Russaw & Eric Swanson
- **Conversation** on "Transforming Communities through Active Compassion, Mercy, and
○ Justice Ministries." - facilitated by the **Redeemer Covenant Staff**
- **Group Sharing**
 - What is going well? What new challenge(s) are you facing?
- **Prayer**

Resources: **Four Characteristics of an Externally Focused Church**
Externally Focused Churches Becoming the New Norm
Wreck the Roof
The Churches Calling to Holistic Ministry

Bring Your Own Lunch...Beverages Provided

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another"...

Proverbs 27:17

Quotes from Transforming Mission

by David J. Bosch

"the church is the only society in the world which exists for the sake of those who are not members of it." - William Temple

"the church is the church only when it exists for others...the church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer from a Nazi prison in 1944

"[The church's] life and work are intimately bound up with God's cosmic-historical plan for the salvation of the world. We are called, therefore, to be Kingdom people, not 'church people'...'Kingdom people seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice; church people often put church work above concerns of justice, mercy and truth. Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world.'" Howard Snyder 1983. (378)

Four Characteristics of Externally Focused Churches

from The Externally Focused Church by Rick Russaw & Eric Swanson

First, they are convinced that good deeds and good news can't and shouldn't be separated. Our good deeds, expressed in service and ministry to others, validates the good news. The good news explains the purpose of our good deeds. (See Acts 10: 36-38) They also believe that you can't have church without being engaged in the life of the community through ministry and service to others.

Second, they see themselves as vital to the health and well-being of their community. They recognize that God has placed them in their community to be salt, light, and leaven to the community. They seek to serve and bless their community, not control it. After all, salt, light, and leaven are agents of influence, not control.

Third, they believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living. They believe that Christians grow best when they are serving and giving themselves away to others- because service and ministry are understood to be critical components to their spiritual formation and growth. Christians can learn through good instruction but they cannot grow apart from ministry and service.

In the typical church, lay people are asked to serve in 5 or 6 capacities:

- Teach a Sunday school class
- Lead a home Bible study or small group
- Sing in the choir- worship team- music ministry
- Be an usher or greeter
- Serve on a board or a committee.

Church leaders lament that only 20% of their members are active. Could it be that the service and ministry opportunities are not broad enough to engage the energies and passions of the fuller body?

Fourth, externally focused churches are evangelistically effective. Less than one half of churches in the US added a member by conversion last year. In fact, conversion growth in the US has dropped from 15% to 6% in the past few years. Much perceived growth is simply transfer growth or re-churching. We often think people just need more or better information in order to believe. What they long for is authenticity. When the people who talk about a loving God demonstrate that love, the gap between doubt and faith is narrowed and they often find themselves wanting to believe.

11 for 11: Ideas That Work

Externally Focused Churches Becoming the New Norm

by Eric Swanson

Leadership  Network®

Connecting Innovators To Multiply BY 100X

Externally Focused Churches Becoming the New Norm

by Eric Swanson

I remember back in the 1970s reading Frank Tillapaugh's *Church Unleashed*—which at the time was a groundbreaking book about externally focused ministry. And I remember thinking, “God bless Frank. He’s sort of a male Mother Teresa.” But I wasn’t interested in ministry outside the church walls—and neither were my peers.

Several years later, after being exposed to some missional pioneers such as Steve Sjogren, Erwin McManus and a few others, I wrote an article about the winds of change we were seeing in U.S. churches. It was 2002, and a few leading churches were beginning to mobilize people to engage their communities in ministry. But it was still mostly early adopters with many skeptics.

Now, less than 10 years later, what we’re experiencing is nothing less than a spiritual movement. Many have observed that it’s easier to catch a wave than to cause a wave. This is clearly *God’s* wave, and we’re seeing it around the U.S. and all over the world. God is clearly at work to make the church missional, putting some of its best talent and most impactful ideas *outside* the walls to bless the community. In the U.S., multiple churches and thousands of people in communities



A Leadership Network group prays to be internally strong (above) and then turns outward (below) to ask for God’s help in becoming externally focused.



are linking arms for one-day community service blitzes, such as “ShareFest” (www.gjsharefest.com) (originating in Little Rock, AR) in Grand Junction, CO, “Step Out and Serve” (www.stepoutomaha.com) in Omaha, NE, and “The Church Has Left the Building” (www.thechurchhasleftthebuilding.org) found in dozens of churches across the continent. As a television news report in Grand Junction put it: “Need help with your to-do list? A massive crew of Christians is ready to assist.”

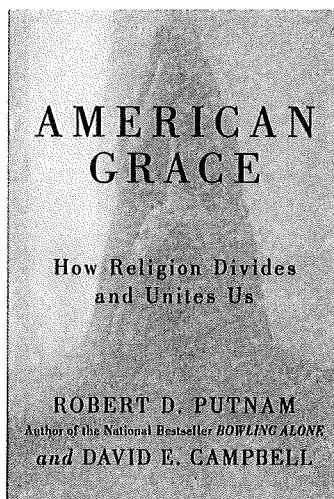
The wave of community engagement is infiltrating churches much deeper than with one-day, en-masse service opportunities. People in the seats are moving out with innovation and spiritual energy to bless the community in Jesus’ name. Whether it’s every small group at Chase Oaks Church, Dallas, TX (www.chaseoaks.org) operating with a service component, or 60,000 Christians in Denver practically loving their neighbor, or a focus at Perimeter Church, Atlanta, GA (www.perimeter.org) on equipping people to minister where they “live, work and play,” external focus is catching on. People in our congregations are dying to do something with their faith that will help them catch the wave and change the world.

Metrics

- Regular churchgoers are more than twice as likely to volunteer to help the needy, compared to demographically matched Americans who rarely or never attend church.¹
- In particular, weekly churchgoers are more likely to help the poor or elderly (40% vs. 15%), to volunteer in school or youth programs (36% vs. 15%), and to volunteer for neighborhood or civic groups (26% vs. 13%).²

In short, church attendance is a significant predictor for most types of volunteering, according to Harvard’s

Robert Putnam in *American Grace*.³ By many different measures, religiously observant Americans are better neighbors and better citizens than secular Americans. They are more generous with their time and money than demographically similar secular Americans, especially in helping the needy and the elderly, and they are more active in community life. Rather than choosing between religious and nonreligious causes, they volunteer and give more generously to both.⁴



American Grace is based on two of the most comprehensive surveys ever conducted on religion and public life in America.

Trends

- External focus is being operationalized in churches through small groups.

If you’re part of a small group at Chase Oaks Church, you also serve the community, as service is part of the package and part of the schedule. Every 4-6 weeks, instead of meeting for coffee and dessert, prayer and Bible study, the church’s group members are in the community—serving the homeless, building a Habitat for Humanity house, helping a single mom and her kids, mentoring students—something that moves them out of the living room and into the street. Small groups commit

for one year to serve an existing, local non-profit agency that already has the connections and structure to link small group members with service opportunities.

Chase Oaks is living proof that good friends (authentic, small group relationships) help turn good intentions (“we should serve our community”) into good deeds. When I am speaking in churches around the country, I often ask, “How many of you have taken a spiritual gifts test, and after discovering your gifts, you went out on *your own* and found your place of service?” I have asked that question thousands of times, and I’ve only had one person raise their hand—and she was just stretching! We’ve all been there. We hear a great message about serving, and we think, “yeah, that’s right. I ought to be doing that.” But there is too much inertia to overcome, and very few people do anything on their own. Robert Putnam’s book referenced earlier confirms that religious Americans are more generous with their time and treasure, even for secular causes. But it has less to do with their faith and more to do with hanging out with people they like who share their value for service.

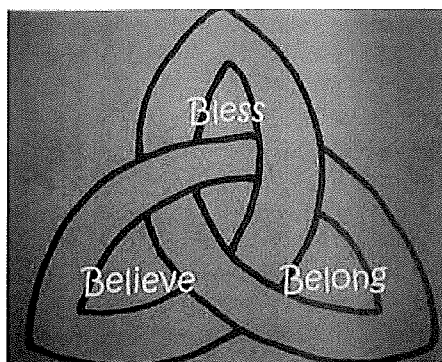
- Community engagement is becoming part of the regular “rhythm” of church.

The classic Four Spiritual Laws is a great example of the old paradigm of the “rhythm” of church life (*full disclosure here—I love this little resource, and have used it countless times to share the Gospel*). The Four Spiritual Laws strongly encourages new Christians to find a Bible-believing church where they can grow in their new-found faith. It implies we are to *believe* the right things first, and then we have the right to *belong*. For decades, that was the rhythm of church.

Then the Baby Busters (those born 1965 and later) came along and said, “That’s not how we see it. In our community,

you can belong first.” In the process of connecting to the church through friendships, non-Christians may wind up believing—or not. But they still belong.

In the new wave of external focus represented by the emerging Millennial generation, the rhythm can be illustrated by a version of the Celtic knot of faith. A few years ago a member of one of our learning communities used the three watchwords—believe, belong and bless. Tying those words to the Celtic knot gives us three distinct loops to represent the vital Christian rhythms of believe, belong and bless. This adds the vital faith element of “blessing” the community. It’s the regular rhythm of going deeper with Christ, deeper with one another and deeper in service.



Some churches use a version of the Celtic knot with three distinct loops to represent the vital Christian rhythms of believe, belong and bless.

The interesting thing is people are now coming to Christ through all three of these doors. You not only ask your neighbors to visit church with you; they get involved in the church’s food drive and take steps forward on their spiritual journey. They may have no interest in the famous evangelist coming to town; but invite them to stuff 200,000 food packs to go to Africa, and the whole family is now interacting with the “bless” function of your church. All three elements become

points of engagement for people outside your church.

- Churches are beginning to mobilize people to serve in their life “domains.”

Leaders at Atlanta’s Perimeter Church encourage people to serve in an unusual place first: outside the walls of the church. Rather than making the perpetual pitch for ushers, greeters and kids’ ministry workers, staff member Drew Warner says that church leaders want Perimeter’s members to live out their faith most in the “domains” where they live, work and play.

Most pastors are hesitant to operate this way. They have lived with the 80-20 principle (80% of work in the church gets done by 20% of the people), and they’re afraid to release people to external engagement. They’re afraid the church work won’t get done. But what if that’s the way God set it up to work? What if God only needs 20% to run the inner machine of the church? And he wants the other 80% to employ their passions and gifts outside the walls?

If someone has time and a passion for mentoring kids and that’s their passion, encourage them to do it instead of imploring them to work in the nursery. The old way of thinking is to take the most talented people out of the community and put them to work inside the church. So the business guy leads the finance or building committee. The award-winning fourth grade teacher gets recruited to teach Sunday school. What would happen if we released these people to be transforming agents where they live, work, play and learn?

Questions

- How do we engage everyone in some type of external ministry, beyond family and friends?

How do we create an atmosphere where every person in our churches has

an opportunity to change the world? It’s not an insurmountable problem, but we’re still waiting for the first church to crack the code. It will involve devising a simple structure where everybody has a story to tell, and they are given some freedom and help to do it. The great thing is, you won’t have to talk people into doing it, because they’re already motivated. You’re taking advantage of the momentum that’s already by the wave God has already started.

- How do we move beyond “episodes of mercy” to where community engagement is part of the DNA of Christians and the church?

Even if I’ve never been to your church, I know this: There has probably never been a Sunday that someone hasn’t opened the Word of God and spoken truth. There has never been a Sunday that you skipped prayer or didn’t worship in song. You haven’t gone many Sundays without celebrating Holy Communion. Baptism is probably a regular activity. Those things are part of your church’s DNA, and they currently define what church is.

When and if external focus becomes the new norm, it would be just as abnormal if people aren’t living a life of faith and mercy outside the church. How do we make that part of the DNA of what church is and does, rather than it being an annual day of service of sporadic episodes of care?

Predictions

- If churches don’t grasp external focus as a kingdom effort vs. a church growth strategy, it will fail.

Attendance and budget are typically our primary success measures. Ministries become tactical ways to move those numbers up and to the right, or they’re eventually dropped. Community engagement will require a different measure of success. External

focus is a kingdom-building effort that may or may not tip the balance sheet in your church. Authentic ministry outside the walls and in the community will ultimately be done because we are Christian, not to convert you and count you. External focus can never be a commodity—a transaction we engage in to get something in return—or the best efforts will fail.

I've started asking one question wherever I speak or work with churches: "How many people here want to change the world?" Inevitably, everybody will raise their hand. What if the church

became the place where people are regularly given a chance to do just that? And one of your primary success criteria as a church could be that everybody has a story to tell of how they did that.

Imagine if we could ask everyone in the church to give a one-minute story from this past year about how they sensed something was broken in the world, how they felt led into that area, what they did about it and the difference it made. Imagine having a thousand stories like that on your website. And when people ask you about your church, you tell them, "We're a church that

will help you change the world." And you have hundreds of stories from the life, work and play domains all over your city about how average people are teaching a third grader to read, leading people to Christ and discipling them, or packing 1,000 backpacks of food for hungry kids every weekend.

If we can help people have a story to tell, you can invite people to come to your church because you'll help them change the world. Nobody else is giving them that opportunity. That's the leadership challenge—making community engagement the new norm.

Endnotes:

¹ Putnam, Robert D., and David E. Campbell, *American Grace*. Simon and Shuster, 2010. pp. 445-446, 627-628.

² Putnam, *American Grace*, 446-447, 628-629.

³ http://100x.christianbook.com/american-religion-reshaping-civic-political-lives/robert-putnam/9781416566717/pd/566777?item_code=WW&netp_id=804809&event=ESRCN&view=details

⁴ Putnam, *American Grace*, 453, 461.

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About Leadership Network

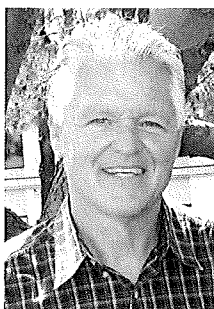
Leadership Network's mission is to accelerate the impact of 100X leaders. These high-capacity leaders are like the hundredfold crop that comes from seed planted in good soil as Jesus described in Matthew 13:8. Leadership Network is a division of OneHundredX, a global ministry with initiatives around the world.

To learn more about Leadership Network go to www.leadnet.org

About 11 for 11

The idea behind 11 for 11 is to profile eleven specific ministry innovations (one per month) during 2011. The total series will also include Global Connections Churches, Rapid Growth Churches, Trends in Collaborative Leadership, Large Church Senior Pastors, Missional Renaissance, Next Generation Pastors, Multisite Churches, Leadership Development, Generous Churches, and Next Horizons.

Externally Focused Churches Becoming the New Norm: is also available in these formats.



About the Authors

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Eric Swanson currently works as Leadership Community Director for Externally Focused Jumpstart Lab, Missional Renaissance and Global Connection Churches. He is the co-author of *The Externally Focused Church*, *The Externally Focused Life*, *The Externally Focused Quest*, *To Transform a City* and numerous articles on churches that are transforming their communities. His bio is at www.leadnet.org/ericswanson

Contact Us

Contact Eric Swanson at eric.swanson@leadnet.org if you're interested in being part of an Externally Focused Groups Jumpstart Innovation Lab. This lab is for churches ready to move beyond a traditional small group model to making a difference in their community.

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Wreck the Roof

Are you willing to take apart the church to bring people to Jesus?

Mark Buchanan | posted 3/11/2008

<http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2008/wrecktheroof.html>

I've never met a pastor who didn't agree in some measure with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian during WWII. From his cell in the Flossenburg concentration camp, he wrote, "The church is only the church when it exists for others."

Every pastor I know speaks well, stirring even, of serving and blessing and winning those outside the church walls. But let's be honest, it's difficult at times to reconcile our speaking with our doing. If action is the fruit of conviction, if "by their fruit you shall know them," then the conclusion is inescapable: many pastors and churches could not care less about their communities.

I call this "Roof-tile Syndrome."

I derive that from Mark 2. Jesus is speaking inside a house, and "some men" bring a paralyzed man to the place, carried by four of them. They're trying to get their friend to Jesus. But a crowd knots the door, creates a barricade of backs. There's no getting past them to reach Jesus. So the men take the building apart. They rip open the roof and lower their friend through the hole. Jesus, seeing their faith (these are *some* men), forgives the paralyzed man, and then heals him.

And, of course, controversy breaks out among the religious folk.

Roof-tile Syndrome is when we are so caught up in the preaching of Jesus, we turn our backs to the needs of those still outside the building. We become barriers and not gateways. It's when we care more about keeping things intact than about restoring lives that are shattered. It's when we're more upset when stuff gets broken than excited when the broken are mended. It's when church gets reduced to the preaching of Jesus so that we fail to notice that we're seeing very little of the forgiveness and healing of Jesus. It is when we are so fearful about upsetting the religious folk (or homeowners) in our midst that we stop taking risks to get people to Jesus.

It's when my program, my office, my title, my privilege, my influence, my comfort takes precedence over others' needs.

It's when the church exists for itself; to hell with the rest of you.

Years ago I was invited to speak at a small church in a semi-rural lakeside community. I arrived a half-hour before the service, and the building was still locked. So I drove down the town's main drag, which the church was on. There, between the main street and the lake, were thousands of people gathered for a community-sponsored half-marathon. A local band was already playing on a flatbed. Coffee kiosks were doing a booming

business. Runners were stretching, limbering up. The local radio station was giving live color commentary.

It was a festival.

I drove back to the church and found the building open. A church deacon met me at the door, took me to a small office and, before we prayed, told me how upset he was: on Friday, the church's parking lot had been freshly paved. On Saturday, someone ("probably one of those people here for the marathon") had driven an RV into the lot. Turning it around, they'd creased the soft asphalt.

The deacons had called an emergency meeting for Sunday night, and the outcome would likely be that they'd use the church's savings (they had over \$50,000 in the bank) to hang a chain across the entrance of the church parking lot and prevent any further damage.

I decided, there and then, to preach Mark 2. I stood up, read the text, and asked, "What roof tiles do you need to break? What are you willing to suffer the loss of for the sake of reaching the thousands of people right outside your door?"

The parishioners sat unmoving, unmoved.

It was a dirge.

I've never seen a congregation clear out more quickly. I don't think it was to join the festival outside.

What Are You Protecting?

Good story. Problem: it's taken me a long time to heed its lesson. I went back to my own church and happily resumed the business (in my own way) of guarding roof tiles, all the while speaking about how important it is to care for our community.

And then one day I realized: this entire church body could perish overnight, and the community wouldn't notice us missing. It was doubtful they would care.

We were huddled together, a barricade of backs, enjoying immensely the preaching of Jesus, but seeing very little of the bone-deep, heart-turning forgiveness of Jesus, lesser still of the heart-stopping, crowd-stirring healing of Jesus. We were avoiding controversy, to be sure, but by avoiding those who needed the forgiveness and healing of Jesus.

Thus began my own revolution. In word and deed (slowly, slowly), I am changing. In word and deed (slowly, slowly), so is our church.

We are repenting of being a barricade of backs, and training to be a posse of roof-tile breakers.

Here's some of what that means.

We started to ask two questions about our community:

1. What are *their* needs and how might we do good unto them (contra, what are *our* needs and what would make *us* feel good)?
2. What are they already doing and doing well that we can celebrate and thank them for (contra, what are they doing wrong that we should protest and denounce)?

The first question—what are their needs—led us to discover two groups, hidden in plain sight, within our community: low-income families (mostly single moms) and First Nations (Canadian for Natives or Indians).

For a variety of reasons (low housing and rental costs, at least until recently, a year-round mild climate, easy access to health care, etc.), our community has been a magnet for single mothers on welfare and other low-income families.

A few years ago, a lady in our church went, with abrupt suddenness, from being married, owning a new home, taking nice vacations, to being divorced, renting a cramped basement suite, and worrying about having enough gas to drive to church.

She worked all day, then picked up her daughter and used what little time and energy she had left to be chef, housekeeper, bill-payer, faucet-fixer, and both mom and dad. She never got enough sleep. Never had enough time. Never made enough money.

She's happily remarried now, and expecting her second child. But she's not forgotten those days. As we asked people in the church to dream about reaching and blessing our community, whatever the cost in roof tiles, she came forward (at this point, still a single mom), and described that there were two seasons of the year she loved when she was married and dreaded as a single mom: back-to-school and Christmas.

What were once times of excitement and anticipation became seasons of panic and guilt.

She couldn't afford new shoes and backpacks and jeans for her daughter to start school. She couldn't buy her a new bike or doll or dress for Christmas. She couldn't even afford haircuts and basic car maintenance.

So she started something we call JumpStart. We began with the back-to-school season. We set up a large free clothing and shoe store with new or as-new items, all free, in all sizes. We assembled our mechanics and worked out a deal with local auto parts suppliers. The mechanics work on peoples' cars while they and their children shop, get haircuts from our church's stylists, and then, on the way out, receive a new backpack stuffed with school supplies for each child.

We've done that for three years. Though some people abuse it—roof tiles, so to speak, get broken every time—we are also tasting and seeing more and more of the forgiving, healing presence of Jesus in our midst.

Last year we launched our first Christmas Jumpstart, two free stores, one for parents to gift-shop for their children, one for children to gift-shop for their parents. We'll even do the gift wrapping. We'll also provide a lunch, with live music and gourmet food.

Whenever we do this, I rally our church people with a speech that goes something like this:

"Today, you are Christ's voice, his hands, his feet, his eyes, his heart. If these people see Jesus, it will be in you. And, like Christ, we are doing more than rendering a service. We are loving them as ourselves. We are not just serving, but having Jesus' attitude—being *in very nature* servants.

"Life and circumstances, and often their own bad choices, have taken many things from these people. But what each of them needs most today is not clothes or a new backpack or an oil change. We can give all those things and fail to give the one thing needed, or even worse: we might give all those gifts with one hand, and with the other strip them further of the one thing needed.

"The one thing needed is dignity. It is their sense of being loved and worth loving. It is their sense of their infinite value in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of God's people.

"If we give all those other things today but don't give them dignity, we fail.

"Today, give the one thing needed. Today, we host kings and queens, princes and princesses. Let us act accordingly."

Third World in My Backyard

The other group—and many of these are among the low-income families—is First Nations people. It would take another article to tell the story about how I changed my mind and my ways toward aboriginal peoples. But in the summer of 2005, God broke my heart over this, and then he commanded me to get up and to act.

I wanted to book passage to Tarshish, but I knew that was the way of storm and sea-beasts, with the same results in the end. So I picked up and headed to Nineveh.

Only it wasn't Nineveh. What I discovered was the Third World in my own backyard.

I discovered people with humble hearts and noble but wounded spirits who should hate us but don't. We stole their land (literally: all the land in our community was taken from the tribes in 1862 and, though promised compensation, they never received it).

We stole their languages and their culture—outlawed their dancing, singing, feasting, their traditional garb. We stole their children—removed them by force from their families and sent them to residential schools, where many were sexually, verbally and/or physically abused. We taught them religion, but with a whip. And yet they don't hate us.

If all we ever do in this community is change for the better the lot of our First Nations neighbors, it will be enough. I hope and believe we will do more, but it is clear that, God being our witness and our helper, we must do this. So I am calling our church and other local churches (as I am invited), to this: *Let God break your heart and open your heart to love our First Nations peoples.*

And then use what power you have to make a difference.

We work to create meaningful opportunities for this to happen. Again, that story requires another article. But in just over a year, we have seen the churches of our community go from apathy, inertia, fear and prejudice, all veiled beneath token prayers and pious speech, to a real desire to love, serve, and befriend our First Nations neighbors, regardless of what roof tiles get broken along the way.

I can't wait to see where this one goes, and I'm willing to tear the whole roof off if that's what it takes.

Thanking the Mounties

The second question we've been asking is, *What is the community already doing and doing well that we can celebrate and thank them for?* This has also led us to two groups: the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and teachers. Here are two groups of people who, though modestly paid, pour themselves out, often putting themselves in harm's way. Yet they rarely get thanked and often get blamed.

We decided to do the thanking.

The RCMP are Canada's federal police force, those men and women who are famously depicted in their red serge outfits and wide-brimmed Stetsons, astride tall horses. That's now only their ceremonial garb, not how they dress to go to work, but the icon remains vivid and captivating.

The reality is otherwise. The RCMP perform vitally important work in our communities, yet they're usually recognized only when one of them either fails or dies in the line of duty. Scandals and tragedies make us pay attention, but little else.

A RCMP chaplain attends our church, and so we began to work with him to change that, to express our genuine thankfulness in an ongoing and concrete way. During the summer we launched a barbeque, on site at the police detachment, one Friday a month. When we started, a few wary officers would come out, grab a burger, have a quick but guarded chat, and quickly leave. But repeated effort pays off.

Now, virtually the whole force shows up. Officers off-duty will stop by, and they talk to us and each other openly. We've become friends.

What changed the tone of those barbeques, besides our consistency in doing them, was a banquet we hosted last year for the officers and their spouses. I called up a financial planner from our church and told him I needed several thousand dollars to do this right. He immediately raised the money, and we set up a team, working with the RCMP chaplain, to organize the event.

We invited the entire ministerial alliance of our city to serve the meal. Then we had a banquet to end all banquets—an evening of prime rib and creamed potatoes and deep-dish apple pie. We had our drama team tell, in a fast-paced and funny sketch, the history of the RCMP. We had a taped interview with an RCMP couple, reflecting on how their faith had strengthened their marriage throughout their career (the divorce rate for police officers is very high). We had a slideshow of local officers and office staff doing their job well.

And then I closed, not by preaching, but by thanking them. The closest I came to preaching was when I compared them to the first-century police force, the Roman centurions.

"Jesus," I said, "met a lot of religious people he could barely stomach. But he never met a centurion he didn't like. Thank you for being our centurions." To close, and we had gotten prior approval for this, I invited the police chief up to the front and prayed for him on behalf of the entire detachment.

There wasn't a dry eye in the place. Officers who had come in skittish and suspicious left joyful and freshly proud of their calling and their work. The chaplain told me that the next day at work, all anyone talked about was the banquet and the churches.

Turning to the Teachers

Now we're about to do something likewise for the teachers in our public schools. Here's another group that does a vitally important work in our community but who hear more complaints than thanks.

We're gearing up for a banquet for them and their spouses, but we also encourage parents to make it a habit of thanking and helping teachers on a weekly basis. Our personal commitment to do that has earned our church a growing credibility with the schools.

Recently, I've been invited as a "motivational speaker" to address the teachers at two of our city's public schools. There's a possibility I may get to address the entire district at one of their professional development days. At such opportunities, I neither hide my deepest convictions nor crusade for them.

Mostly, I go to bless, trusting, as Jesus taught us, that "if a man of peace lives there," the gospel can take root and flourish (Lk.10:5-7).

Of late, I've been reading Jonah, chapter 1, side-by-side with Acts, chapters 27 and 28. Both are about a God-worshiper aboard a ship with a pagan crew. Both involve a violent storm, such that the crew must jettison the cargo to keep the boat from capsizing.

But that's where the similarities end. Jonah is on board because he's fleeing from God. When confronted by the pagan sailors, he's boastful about himself, disdainful toward them. It turns out, there's only one way for those pagans to survive the storm: *they have to toss the God-worshiper overboard.*

Not so in Acts. There, the apostle Paul is on board precisely because he's been following God. He's a prisoner of Rome, but an *angelos* of heaven. When the pagan sailors panic, Paul is wise, humble, and helpful. He lets them know he cares deeply for them. It turns out, there's only one way for those pagans to survive the storm: *they have to put the God-worshiper in charge.*

We're finding that the more we genuinely care for the people in this storm-wracked community—the less we boast and denounce, the more we bless and serve—the more they let us drive the boat.

These days, by the week, we're seeing single mothers and their children, First Nations people and their families, RCMP officers and their families, public school teachers and theirs—and many more besides—come through the doors of our church.

All it's taking is the willingness to break a few roof-tiles.

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Thinking about how these ideas could take shape in your church?

- Our sister site Christian Bible Studies offers a six-course study to help leaders re-think evangelism.
- Clark Cothorn on how his church broke the tiles with a high-octane event.
- Our Survival Guide Becoming a Missional Church can help you think through the macro-level issues you face.



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MISSION
DEVELOPMENT



THE CHURCH'S CALLING TO HOLISTIC MINISTRY

Everywhere you look, the Bible calls us to combine Good News and good works. Jesus' gospel of the kingdom announced the arrival of a comprehensive salvation that transforms the whole person, body and soul. We are called to witness and work, loving the whole person the way Jesus did. Enthusiastically embracing both evangelism and social ministry is the only way to be faithful to our Lord.

"Evangelism creates the committed people, the concern for the needs of people and the broad community base from which to launch social action. Social action, in turn, fleshes out the lordship of Christ, reaching people's spiritual needs through their felt needs and developing an indigenous economic base for the work." –John Perkins

The root meaning of the word holistic is whole, from the Greek holos. Christians recognize that the world is broken and incomplete, falling far short of the glory God intended. As Christ is making us whole, both as individuals and as a community of faith, God's Spirit works through us to bring wholeness to others. Holistic Christians love not only "in word or speech, but [also] in truth and action" (1 John 3:18). Therefore, living out this gospel in our churches means modeling God's concern for the total well-being of people and communities. It means an incarnational lifestyle of integrity, compassion, and invitation. It means loving neighbors, especially those who are needy and least loveable, with the same joyous abandon that Jesus displayed.

Modeling the gospel in this way, through personal piety, acts of kindness, and the pursuit of justice and righteousness is powerful and can draw people to Christ—if they then learn where "the hope that is within you" comes from. As Christ's followers we are charged with a mission of redemption: "I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as ... a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon" (Isa. 42: 6-7).

GOOD WORKS/COMMUNITY MISSION:

- Provides a vehicle or foundation for spiritual nurture.
- Draws in people (both as recipients of ministry and as ministry volunteers) who would not otherwise meet Christians, thus creating new opportunities for friendship evangelism.
- Meeting felt needs may help recipients become more aware of their spiritual needs and more receptive to the gospel.
- Lovingly caring for people's felt needs puts flesh on the message of God's love, helping hurting people grasp the meaning of Good News.
- Good works help overcome barriers of mistrust or cultural differences by building a credible foundation of compassion and trust.
- Community outreach programs or services make Christianity more attractive to others in the community by showing that faith is relevant to contemporary problems or issues.

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MEET WHOLE PERSON NEEDS?

- A significant contact is made.
- That significant contact has a high potential for converting, with the help of the Holy Spirit, into a close relationship.
- Significant contacts and close relationships are "fertile ground" for planting the seed of the gospel!

EVANGELISM:

- Offers people new hope, motivation, dignity and self-esteem.
- Extends healing of scars from past negative experiences and relationships.
- Teaches new moral principles and guidelines for healthy living.
- Introduces people to the Holy Spirit's miraculous power that enables people to live differently, to overcome obstacles, and to persevere.
- Transforms the status of people from "victims" to "overcomers in Christ," empowering them to give back to their community as part of the solution.
- Leads people toward fellowship in a church for emotional, physical, and spiritual support and can expand the community of dedicated Christian servants.
- Allows people who have experienced God's transforming work to enthusiastically offer hope and help to others.
- Provides opportunity for testimonies of new people coming to Christ through outreach ministries and can revitalize and energize a growing commitment to community ministry.
- Sets a stage for social barriers to be broken down as the congregation comes to see those being served not only as "recipients" but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus told his followers, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). As the Father is loving and compassionate, forgiving and merciful, so too we should model these qualities in our relationships with others. Evangelism divorced from social ministry and concern for the whole person robs the gospel of the full implications of Christ's lordship.

About Rethink Mission: What is a missional church?

A pastor told me the other day, "I realize that we are not a missional church." What did he mean? Simply that, at some point, the church let something get in the way of actually bringing the transformative message of the gospel into contact with people.

Mission drift happens when a church lets something else take over: a building project, an unstated theology of "people should come to us," or sometimes simple laziness. Often an unspoken attitude hangs like a cloud over the entire church; an attitude that those who don't look like us, dress like us, vote like us, have the same skin color, or come from the same socioeconomic background are not really welcome here.

And the church stops. Reaching. People.

People.

Real, living, sweating, broken, sinful people.

People need hope. They need God. They need the light of the gospel. And we won't forget this if we understand something simple yet surprising: God was a person (and still is!). The incarnation – God as a person – helps us understand and relate to people.

The cross provides the framework for our theology (what we believe about and how we relate to God). But it's the incarnation, that provides the framework for our missiology (what we believe about and how we relate to culture).

The cross is our message. The incarnation shapes & informs how we communicate that message.

And what do we see in God as a person? We see Jesus.

And we see him loving people. Spending time with people. Sharing his life with people.

We see an outcast ministering to outcasts. We see grace offered to a prostitute. An adulterer. A tax-collector.

And he looks out at them and he is absolutely moved with compassion because he sees that they are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." And he says I am here. I am here to "seek and save that which is lost." A missional church sees that people and culture are not enemies of the church, but broken treasures that God is restoring.

Because of this, a missional church is committed to:

- Cultural exegesis – becoming humble students of the varied people & cultures surrounding the church.
- Faithful contextualization – communicating gospel truth in ways the culture understands.
- Producing missionaries instead of consumers – equipping people to live out the gospel through their daily lives and work.
- Building a great city, not just a good church – the goal being more than a full church, but a transformed city.
- Social justice – healing real wounds and righting injustices in the community around them.
- Church planting – multiplying to new towns, cities, states and countries by starting new local churches.

These are the themes that we are committed to fleshing out together in greater detail at Rethink Mission.

Interestingly, however, Philippians 2:5-8 indicates that God came in human form so that Jesus could humble himself "by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." The man who was God was headed somewhere. The cross. It is not enough simply that God lived among us. He also died for us.

Being "missional" is not enough. Mission fails if it does not point to the cross. The message that we are translating for culture must be "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Of course, many churches that supposedly "get the gospel" fail to properly live out that gospel for their context; for them it is gospel in theory, not gospel in practical reality. Because Jesus' death has bought us life, we are now messengers of a new reality. We will faithfully proclaim and lovingly incarnate this new reality: to tell & live it for the hope of the world around us. This is the essence of mission.