

REVISED AND UPDATED

THE
SHAPING
OF THINGS
TO COME

Innovation and Mission
for the 21st-Century Church

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The Missional Church

It is necessary for the Church to rethink its stance entirely and to become a missionary church within the West.

—Martin Robinson

Hope of Post-Christendom

A missional church is the hope of the post-Christendom era. Many of the new Protestant church movements of recent years are simply variations on the old Christendom mode. Whether they place their emphasis on new worship styles, expressions of the Holy Spirit's power, evangelism to seekers, or Bible teaching, these so-called new movements still operate out of the fallacious assumption that the church belongs firmly in the town square—that is, at the heart of Western culture. And if they begin with this mistaken belief about their position in Western society, all their church planting, all their reproduction will simply mirror this misapprehension. When we reflect on the 1990s, the declared Decade of Evangelism, we are given cause for deep concern. For all the flurry of activity across the West, in particular in the US and the UK, church numbers have continued to decline. When once it was assumed that church planting was the strategy for reaching a postmodern West, church-growth experts are now having second thoughts. Church membership has been flagging, and as the Decade of Evangelism proceeded, fewer and fewer

churches were being planted. Stuart Murray and Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, in their booklet *Hope from the Margins*, identify a number of reasons why the church-planting boom has gone bust.

- Most churches which were able to plant another church early in the 1990s have not yet recovered sufficiently to do so again;
- Few newly-planted churches have yet grown quickly enough to plant another church;
- The dominance of personnel-intensive models of church planting has discouraged smaller churches from becoming involved;
- A disturbing number of church plants have failed, have remained small and weak, or have attracted only those who were already Christians;
- Church planting has generally been restricted to areas where churches are already flourishing, leaving many urban and rural areas untouched.¹

The heart of the problem is that we have been planting churches that are (smaller) carbon copies of the already beleaguered, failing Christendom-style church. The Christendom virus is passed on. It's like Dr. Evil, in Mike Myers's ridiculous *Austin Powers* movies, creating a clone called Mini-Me. By duplicating a failing system, we are digging the same hole deeper in our attempt to dig somewhere else. In fact, it's more often than not been the case that Sunday services are planted rather than missional Jesus communities. A missional church on the other hand has abandoned the old Christendom assumptions and understands its role as an underground movement, subversive, celebratory, passionate, and communal. Mission is not merely an activity of the church. It is the very heartbeat and work of God. It is in the very being of God that the basis for the missionary enterprise is found. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed, and healed. The missional church, then, is a sent church. It is a *going* church, a movement of God through his people, sent to bring healing to a broken world. North America is as much a mission field as any other nation or people group on the face of the earth. The existing church, which is invariably static, rooted in one place, institutionalized, needs to recover its *sent-ness* in order to become the missional church.

The overly reproduced Christendom-mode church has at its core a number of fundamental flaws. These flaws occur in the model's very DNA. The way forward is not to tinker with its external features, but to rebirth a new

1. Stuart Murray and Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, *Hope from the Margins* (Cambridge, England: Grove, 2000), 4–5.

movement on different ground. Those flaws can be generally categorized into three broad areas. Although we will introduce them here, we will deal with them fully throughout various sections of this book.

Attractional, Dualistic, Hierarchical

As mentioned, the Christendom-mode church has these three flaws in its DNA—it is attractional, dualistic, and hierarchical. First, by attractional, we mean that the traditional church plants itself within a particular community, neighborhood, or locale and expects that people will come to it to meet God and find fellowship with others. We don't claim that there's anything unbiblical about being attractive to unbelievers. The early church was attractive to the wider community (Acts 2:47), though there is much more evidence that the church was reviled and avoided in its early days. Nonetheless, when we say it is a flaw for the church to be attractional, we refer more to the missionary stance the church takes toward the broader host communities and cultures it inhabits. By anticipating that if they get their internal features right, people will flock to the services, the church betrays its belief in attractionalism. It's like the Kevin Costner character in the film *Field of Dreams* being told by a disembodied voice, "If you build it, they will come." Viewed in this light, we can best call this approach "extractional" or perhaps even "excarnational."

How much of the traditional church's energy goes into adjusting their programs and their public meetings to cater to an unseen constituency? If we get our seating, our parking, our children's program, our preaching, and our music right, they will come. This assumes that we have a place in our society and that people don't join our churches because, though they want to be Christians, they're unhappy with the product. The missional church recognizes that it does not hold a place of honor in its host community and that its missional imperative compels it to move out from itself into that host community as salt and light.

When we have consulted with churches that recognize the need to embrace a missionary stance in their communities, we are amazed at the number of times, when asked to discuss specific ways they can recalibrate themselves to become missional churches, they begin talking about how to change their Sunday service. It betrays their fundamental allegiance to being attractional. We believe the development of indigenous, contextualized worship occurs in partnership with new believers from one's host community. The tailoring of worship services is a lot further down the priority list for missional church leaders. The Come-To-Us stance developed over the Christendom period is

unbiblical. It's not found in the Gospels or the Epistles. Jesus, Paul, the disciples, the early church leaders all had a Go-To-Them mentality.

Second, the Christendom-mode church is dualistic. It separates the sacred from the profane, the holy from the unholy, the in from the out. What we have said so far about the sickness of attractionalism finds its roots in the church's dualistic spirituality. We will apply this more fully to the missional church model in the third section of this book. But in brief, we are convinced that the church has so fully embraced its attractional stance because of its dualistic spirituality. We talk routinely about the "world out there." What else can that mean other than that we, the church people, are "in here"! This dualism has over 1,700 years created Christians that cannot relate their interior faith to their exterior practice, and this affects their ethics, their lifestyles, and their capacity to share their faith meaningfully with others. In Robert Banks's groundbreaking book, *Redeeming the Routines*, he identifies the enormous gap between belief and everyday life. He points out that this gap shows up in ten worrying ways:

1. Few of us apply or know how to apply our belief to our work, or lack of work.
2. We only make minimal connections between our faith and our spare time activities.
3. We have little sense of a Christian approach to regular activities like domestic chores.
4. Our everyday attitudes are partly shaped by the dominant values of our society.
5. Many of our spiritual difficulties stem from the daily pressure we experience (lack of time, exhaustion, family pressures, etc.).
6. Our everyday concerns receive little attention in the church.
7. Only occasionally do professional theologians address routine activities.
8. When addressed, everyday issues tend to be approached too theoretically.
9. Only a minority of Christians read religious books or attend theological courses.
10. Most churchgoers reject the idea of a gap between their beliefs and their ways of life.²

Banks quotes occasionally from an old book called *Christianity and Real Life*, written by William Diehl, the sales manager of a major overseas steel

2. Robert Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1997), 50–65.

corporation. Diehl, as a layman (terrible word, but you understand its meaning), writes about the gap between the secular and the sacred in church circles:

In the almost thirty years of my professional career, my church has never once suggested that there be any type of accounting of my on-the-job ministry to others. My church has never once offered to improve those skills which could make me a better minister, nor has it ever asked if I needed any kind of support in what I was doing. There has never been an inquiry into the types of ethical decisions I must face, or whether I seek to communicate the faith to my coworkers. I have never been in a congregation where there was any type of public affirmation of a ministry in my career. In short, I must conclude that my church really doesn't have the least interest whether or how I minister in my daily work.³

This credibility gap between the church world and the real world is, as theologian Helmut Thielicke calls it, a modern form of Docetism.⁴ We believe that it is so endemic in the contemporary church that it has worked its way into the very fabric of all aspects of church life. Remove this Docetism, or dualism, from church and a great deal of what the church has built and developed over 1,700 years will fall away. Because the missional church, by its very nature, exists organically within its host community, it has had to abandon Western Christianity's dualistic worldview in favor of a whole-of-life spirituality.

Third, the traditional church (Christendom) is hierarchical, deeply indebted to what we see as an overly religious, bureaucratic, top-down model of leadership, as opposed to one that is more structured around grassroots agendas. While some denominations are ideologically committed to a very top-down hierarchical model that includes archbishops, bishops, priests, and parish councils, others (who call themselves low church) are equally indebted to top-down approaches via regional superintendents, senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, and deacons. From Pentecostals to the Orthodox Church, from Baptists to Episcopalians and Presbyterians, the hierarchical

3. William Diehl, *Christianity and Real Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976), v–vi, quoted in Banks, *Redeeming the Routines*, 59.

4. "Docetism is in essence a Christology heavily influenced by basic Greek assumptions of both the Platonic and Aristotelian varieties. Plato taught the idea of gradations of reality. Spirit or mind or thought is the highest. Matter or the material is less real. With this distinction of ontological gradations of reality, there came to be ethical gradations as well. Thus, matter came to be thought of as morally bad. Aristotle emphasized the idea of divine impassability, according to which God cannot change, suffer, or even be affected by anything that happens in the world. These two streams of thought have significant differences, but both maintain that the visible, physical, material world is somehow inherently evil. Both emphasize God's transcendence and absolute difference from and independence of the material world." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 713.

model seems to be universal. For how much longer can the church ignore Paul's radical dissolution of the traditional distinctions between priests and laity, between officials and ordinary members, between holy men and common people? Says English pastor Rob Warner:

The first Christians radically reshaped the language of "priesthood" and "sacrifice." In one sense all are priests; believers are their own priests for all have immediacy of access to God's grace in Christ. What priests have performed for others before, believers can now do for themselves. In another sense, none can be appointed priests in the Christian church, for Christ has fulfilled the priestly role once for all.⁵

Some younger leaders are discovering that in the emerging global cultural context the hierarchical model has little to say to a generation that values egalitarianism and community. Dan Mayhew, who works with Summit Fellowships in Portland, Oregon, has come to understand that to minister to an emerging generation of young people with authenticity, he has had to completely flatten his organization's leadership style. He says, "I make a distinction between hierarchy and 'heir-archy.' We are to be fellow heirs with one another. It's a bit of a play on words, but I think it conveys something very real. We are used to the systematic approach to things, so we create hierarchies. But the organic approach is more to create heir-archies where you are all fellow heirs to the grace of God."⁶

What Should We Do Instead?

Gerard Kelly, in his timely book *RetroFuture*, takes issue with the current conception of church when he says, "I believe the church must change. The church is not trend-driven; it is God's family and lives by other rules. But it is also a cultural and social institution, rooted in a given place and time. If we have any concern for the rising generations—and for those who will follow them—we must look with urgency to the future shape of our church."⁷ He goes on to quote Tom Sine's oft-rehearsed warning, "Every denomination and religious organization I have worked with does long-range planning. Ironically, they do long-range planning as though the future will simply be an extension of the present. . . . As a result, we are chronically surprised by change. In the future, we can no longer afford this luxury."⁸

5. Rob Warner, *21st Century Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), 131.

6. Dan Mayhew and Brad Sargent, *Summit Fellowships Update* (October 1997): 67.

7. Gerard Kelly, *RetroFuture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 17.

8. Tom Sine, *Wild Hope* (Crowborough, England: Monarch, 1992), quoted in Kelly, *RetroFuture*, 17.

So, what will the future shape of the church look like? If it takes the form we propose for the missional church, it will look vastly varied in its many different contexts. But we can be sure that there will be some common values across the board. It will place a high value on communal life, more open leadership structures, and the contribution of all the people of God. It will be radical in its attempts to embrace biblical mandates for the life of locally based faith communities without feeling as though it has to reconstruct the first-century church in every detail. We believe the missional church will be adventurous, playful, and surprising. Leonard Sweet has borrowed the term "chaordic" to describe the missional church's inclination toward chaos and improvisation within the constraints of broadly held biblical values. It will gather for sensual-experiential-participatory worship and be deeply concerned for matters of justice-seeking and mercy-bringing. It will strive for a type of unity-in-diversity as it celebrates individual differences and values uniqueness, while also placing a high premium on community. Bishop Gladwin, expressed in his book on the postmodern church, believes that the emerging missional church will have these four features in common:

1. focus on the journey of faith and the experience of God;
 2. desire for less structure and more direct involvement by participants;
 3. sense of flexibility in order and a distinctly nonhierarchical culture;
 4. recognition that the experience of church is about the sustaining of discipleship.
- ... disciples forming disciples forming disciples*

He concludes, "So the church will focus on core faith, on minimum essential order, on people and their gifts, on flexible patterns of life held together in communion and on a shared sense of community."⁹ And this from a bishop!

We appreciate that working models are often more informative than theoretical ones. What follows are a few case studies of the missional church around the world.

Church in the Missional Mode

When Tim and Kristy Cobillas set out to begin a church in the northern landscape of Saint Louis, Missouri, in 2001, they had no idea that it would evolve into an outlaw biker haven. Joshua House began as an informal worship gathering around a backyard bonfire on a two-acre plot of suburban

9. John Gladwin, *Love and Liberty: Faith and Unity in a Postmodern Age* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), 209.

wilderness that included Tim and Kristy's house and a converted two-story garage that served as a sort of clubhouse and worship sanctuary all in one.

Tim's "real job" as a motorcycle builder kept him connected to the biker culture throughout the years, and as Joshua House began to develop into a community of faith, more and more of Tim's clients began showing up around the campfire. The presence of so many bikers caused Tim to eventually found and lead the Faithful Few, an outlaw Christian motorcycle club.

The Faithful Few is not a collection of middle-age suburban dads living out their Wild Hogs fantasies on the weekends. Far from it. These guys are the real deal. Tim shared with us that just a couple of days before we visited with him, he had baptized an outlaw biker he had been cultivating a relationship with for five years. This particular biker was known as an *enforcer*. We will leave the definition of that title to your imagination. Tim points out, "When these dudes come to Christ, they do so radically. They are radical cats, and just as radical as they were in the outlaw biker lifestyle, they go just as hard for Christ." One of his hardest jobs in discipling outlaw biker converts is for them not to "enforce" Christ upon their unconverted buddies. The objective is to create a circle of relationships among guys who have lived the outlaw biker life and want to become faithful and committed followers of Christ while still living in the biker culture.

Tim stresses that Joshua House is not a biker church per se. "We don't look at bikers as tokens for us to claim or highlight. But they have found a refuge and a community here." Joshua House is made up of an eclectic mix of straight-laced college students, middle-aged couples, single moms, and the biker crowd. It would be a gross understatement to say a Sunday morning at Joshua House is not your normal church service. Depending on the season, folks gather either outside nearby the organic garden and campfire or inside the downstairs clubhouse for pancakes, bagels, or other breakfast fare. Eventually the whole troop makes its way to the *upper room* for singing, prayer, and a typical sermon type of teaching.

Joshua House has no website or advertising other than the lives of its people who live to incarnate the message of the gospel in the midst of a culture that is somewhat hostile to the Christian idea. Speaking of the combination of Joshua House and the Faithful Few, Tim says, "We are an armpit in the body of Christ. We are not just an *everybody* church. We are an *anybody* church. Jesus went out and invited the tax collectors and outcasts to join him. We do the same thing."

This is missional church thinking. Instead of planting a traditional, attractional church, Tim and Kristy engage in the very rhythms and life of a host culture to genuinely listen to their hopes and fears. A similar experiment

is the Hope Community in Wolverhampton, England. Three Roman Catholic sisters were asked by their parish church to conduct a community survey in Heath Town, an impoverished public housing project comprising nine high-rise buildings. They began simply by listening to the voices of the community. What they heard was a litany of despair, pain, and great social need. Unable to continue the "survey" and then return to their comfortable chapter house in a nearby middle-class suburb, they rented an apartment on the third floor of one of the bleak towers. There, they continued their regular life of community and prayer, making themselves much more available to the local people. The missional church assumes that proximity to a host community is essential.

Interestingly, as Sister Margaret Walsh reports it, none of the sisters set out to initiate anything.¹⁰ They simply lived with and listened to their neighbors. But their gracious presence catalyzed many social changes. Housing project church services have begun, planned and led by local people. The sisters offer computer courses and literacy training, and have hosted holiday events—all contributing greatly to an improved quality of life for the residents. The integrity of their community and the power of their sense of mission have been salt and light in the public housing community. While the sisters resist calling what they're doing "church," the rest of the community clearly identify the nuns' apartment as their chapel. Like Tim and Kristy, the sisters have not come to impose anything on their host community. But by being Christ in the midst of their respective people groups, they make the assumption that God is already present and already touching people's lives. They don't presume to "bring" God to St. Louis or to Heath Town, but they do desire to be used by the Spirit to transform individuals and cultures for Christ's sake by the God who was already there.

Proximity Spaces

With these two working models as background, we are able to identify some of the shared traits that we observe in various missional churches. Four characteristics deserve special consideration: proximity spaces, shared projects, commercial enterprise, and emerging indigenous faith communities. By proximity spaces, we mean places or events where Christians and not-yet-Christians can interact meaningfully with each other.

Located in the small midwestern town of Newton, Kansas (population 15,000), is Norm's Coffee Bar. Robert Palmer began it as a place for people of a multiplicity of backgrounds to gather and experience community. He also

10. Margaret Walsh, *Here's Hoping!* Urban Theology Unit, New City Special No. 8, 1991.

pastors Stone Creek Community Church, which meets in the same building that houses Norm's Coffee Bar—but unless you knew the church also meets there, you would never know it. There are no church advertisements in the space. This is to say, the space has not been *Christianized*. It is neutral territory.

Dreaming of a space that would promote the type of community evoked in the mythical *Cheers*, a Boston pub from the 1980s television show by the same name, Palmer's team named the place Norm's, after *Cheers* patron Norm Peterson, whose entry to the pub is routinely met with a group greeting of "Hi, Norm!" Robert said, "A bar is really a counterfeit for the church. Everybody is welcome. Everyone does know your name. They're accepting. It doesn't matter what your background is or where you've come from. And there is always someone to talk to who doesn't judge you but just listens to your story. And the idea for us was to create Norm's Coffee 'bar' and to see if that could happen. And it has. Here, people come to us. And they just share their stories. I stand behind this counter and people open their hearts up." Norm's has become a public space being used by groups and organizations throughout the city, including the Chamber of Commerce.

Around the world, Christians are developing cafés, nightclubs, art galleries, design studios, football teams, etc., to facilitate such proximity and interaction. If the church service is the only space where we can meaningfully interact with unbelievers, we're in trouble. In Birmingham, England, Pip Piper, the founder of a design studio called One Small Barking Dog (great name!), runs a monthly gathering in a local café, the Medicine Bar. He has negotiated permission from the landlord to deck the premises out as a "spiritual space." Using incense, projected images, and ambient religious music, he designed a spiritual zone he calls Maji, where artists who would normally patronize the Medicine Bar as well as invited friends can hang out, experience the ambience, and talk about faith, religion, and spirituality—it's a classic proximity space.

Shared Projects

Second, missional church thinking values the development of shared or joint projects between the Christian community and its host community. Proximity spaces are excellent for casual interaction. Shared projects allow the Christians to partner with unbelievers in useful, intrinsically valuable activities within the community. In the context of that partnership, significant connections can be established. The church can initiate these shared projects though presented as a community-wide activity. Or the Christian community can simply get behind existing projects. The important thing is to find joint projects that put Christians and not-yet-Christians shoulder-to-shoulder in a lengthy partnership.

Time is an issue here. We need to find or develop projects that allow the time for important friendships to form.

Allan Tibbels was a 26-year-old quadriplegic in the mid-1980s when he moved into Sandtown, one of the toughest neighborhoods in Baltimore. He and his wife Susan were inspired by the writings of evangelist and civil rights worker John M. Perkins to live incarnationally by moving into the ghetto. What they found in Sandtown was nothing but overpriced rental units, every one of them a firetrap leased by an absentee landlord. Transience, homelessness, and the constant threat of eviction were everyday experiences there. And yet the neighborhood was pockmarked by vacant lots. Even though he couldn't move his arms or legs, Tibbels believed he could build affordable housing for his neighbors on this land. He turned to Habitat for Humanity for help.

Although he knew nothing about housing and couldn't swing a hammer himself, Tibbels scrounged enough donations and local volunteers to get a Habitat house built in 1990. Such was the response to this minor miracle across Baltimore that the funds for more houses began to flow and soon Tibbels announced he would build another hundred houses, with mortgages of about \$300 a month, less than half the typical rent. Committed to partnering with the residents of Sandtown, Tibbels only hired from the neighborhood, which meant his staff grew to include ex-cons, addicts, and dealers. It also meant that he lost something in building efficiency and excellence, but in its place grew love. Maybe it was Tibbels's own brokenness that inspired the broken men and women of Sandtown to trust him in this foolhardy venture.

As a result, over two decades, a man who couldn't lift his arms built 286 houses. He also helped plant the New Song Community Church that grew out of the relationships Allan and Susan had built with their neighbors. One thousand people attended his funeral there in 2010, a service that saw politicians sitting next to drug dealers. The *New York Times* reported, "Someone once described Tibbels as 'saving Sandtown,' which made him wince. God saves; neighbors share."¹¹

While in San Francisco, we had the opportunity to take a walk through the Hispanic mission district with Mark Scandrette, a bohemian artist who moved to the Bay Area to plant a church. He has discovered that by joining the neighborhood mural co-op (one of the oldest in the country), he literally stands shoulder-to-shoulder with non-Christians as they apply paint to murals across the city. He can also have input into what shape public art takes in San Francisco. In cities without a strong culture of public art, a Christian

11. Obituary, *New York Times*, cited 24 December 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/26/magazine/2010lives.html#view=allan_tibbels.

community might want to initiate such a cooperative. The missional church doesn't immediately think in terms of strategies, but in terms of people and places. As Bono from U2 says, "If Jesus were on earth you'd find him in a gay bar in San Francisco. He'd be working with people suffering from AIDS. These people are the new lepers. If you want to find out where Jesus would be hanging out it'll always be with the lepers."

Commercial Enterprise

Third, commercial enterprise is important. Bringing positive and tangible change speaks volumes to the host community. If we come to plant a church in a particular area, we're not perceived as doing anyone any favors. But if we're starting a café, an internet laundrette, or a day-care center, we're seen as bringing some intrinsic value to a community. We're serving those to whom we're sent.

In Sheffield, England, a woman named Jane Grinnoneau has established a community-based business called the Furnival in a derelict English pub of the same name. Her story is one of sheer hard work as well as the miraculous provision of God (a great combination). The Furnival pub had been stripped, vandalized, and abandoned by the time Jane came across it while wandering lost in the notorious Burngreave public housing project one day. How she acquired the building and fully fitted it out to meet the needs of the local community is a story of God's miraculous grace. Now the Furnival is a skills center for local young people, with a training kitchen and café. There are plans for a laundrette and a multiagency health and advice center. Burngreave was so nefarious that formal Christian witness had ended there when the Methodist Church finally pulled out years before Jane got there. If anyone had announced that they were planting another traditional church in the project, the local community would have wondered why and the denominational churches would have questioned the waste of resources. But the Furnival is a Christian community serving the host community and seeing the kingdom being extended in ways a conventional church could never have seen.

Even at a denominational level, people are beginning to see the incarnational value of planting service industries within a host community. As Robert Palmer has discovered, the right local business can create significant and intimate relationships with people not normally interested in church-based programs.

Emerging Indigenous Faith Communities

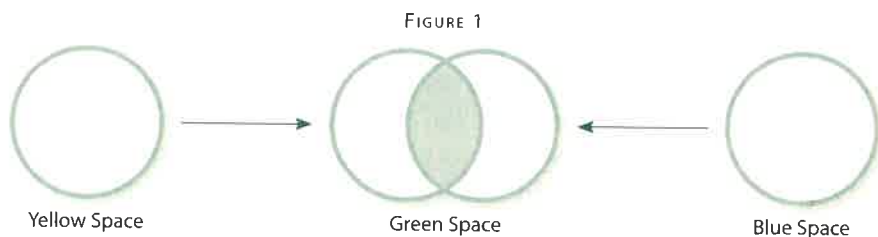
Fourth, indigenous faith communities ought to emerge from all this interaction with a host subculture. While it is a noble and, indeed, a godly activity

for a Christian businessman to run a shoe shop and to try to be Christ to his customers, something is missing if a Christian faith community isn't part of the equation. The Christian businessperson can engage colleagues, clients, and customers in a discussion of faith questions, but the best hermeneutic of the gospel is a community of Christians living it out. Robert Palmer, Margaret Walsh, Allan Tibbels, Jane Grinnoneau, and Pip Piper have developed their proximity spaces and their commercial ventures as missionaries. Their desire is to see the kingdom come and to see lives transformed by the power of Christ. Some have already developed faith communities from their incarnational activities, while for others it is still in the early days.

Some critics of the missional church ask, "When is the Bible taught? How do people learn doctrine?" We recognize these as valid questions. But we believe such learning takes place much more effectively when the Christian faith community is involved in active mission. Too much existing Bible teaching happens to passive groups of Christians, many of whom are not involved in any kind of risky missional activity. A missional church mobilizes all its members to be sent into the community. Like Jesus' first followers discovered, learning occurs when we need to draw on information because a situation demands it. This isn't to say that there shouldn't be formal teaching times, but these formal occasions will allow the teaching to be related to the missional experience gained by the church itself. It is important to note that the missional church combines the concern for community development normally characterized by the liberal churches and the desire for personal and community transformation normally characterized by the evangelical movement. This blurring of the old lines of demarcation between theologies, doctrine, and ideology within the church makes the way open for much more integrated mission to occur. It's like saying that we want to prepare like an evangelical; preach like a Pentecostal; pray like a mystic; do the spiritual disciplines like a Desert Father, art like a Catholic, and social justice like a liberal.

In fact, we have found that among many missional church leaders and thinkers there is a concern to balance ideas that are normally considered opposites. It is called both/and thinking and has been a feature of the emergent postmodern culture. Missional church thinking allows the dialogue between liberation theology, which says *context* is everything, and the post-liberals like Hauerwas and Brueggeman who say we need to get our *story* right. The missional church will take context seriously, but will also work on recovering the biblical narrative with its richness and potency for today's world. When story and context are equally embraced, we are beginning to think and act missionally. In San Francisco, a group calling itself ReImagine has been meeting to explore how this dialogue works itself out practically. To do so, ReImagine

refers to different colored spaces. Yellow space refers to a Christian spirituality that is only concerned with the personal, interior world of faith. It characterizes the classic individualized form of faith that focuses on personal quiet times, Bible study, church attendance, and personal moral/ethical behavior. Blue space refers to an exclusively other-focused form of Christian spirituality, one that takes context seriously and features such activities as social concern, justice-seeking, activism, and public moral/ethical behavior. It is only in the dialogue between them, says ReImagine, that we come close to biblical missional activity and spirituality, as illustrated in figure 1.



Since the combination of yellow and blue on the color chart does make green, it's a clever way to think about missional spaces. They are *green spaces*. And missional Christians might rightly be referred to as *green people*. In a green space, story and context, the individual and the communal, the interior world and the exterior world, the religious and the non-religious, find genuine meeting. At ReImagine references to green people and green spaces are common.

Getting It Right

In sleepy suburban Pomona in Los Angeles, the front lawns are freshly cut and their edges trimmed. The streetlights glow a warm amber hue throughout the quiet evenings. Street signs announce that Pomona is a neighborhood-watch zone and tell would-be intruders that “we report any suspicious persons or activities to our police department.” But on downtown Second Street, something's up! Some years ago Second Street was transformed into an Arts Colony (an imposing sign over the street announces it as such), and now there are a number of dance venues, nightclubs, art studios, and hip clothing stores. There is a college of the arts in town, and Second Street is crawling with bohemians, punks, hip-hoppers, taggers, and performance artists. Posters in windows advertise everything from acting classes to stained glass making, poetry readings, and mosaic table workshops. When we were visiting Pomona,

there was a “Beginning Wicca” workshop and a panel discussion on “Woman in the Arts” happening that night. Music styles available in the various venues include blues, hip-hop, rock, house, punk, rockabilly, and Latino.

Right in the middle of this carnivalesque atmosphere of art and music, new age religion, and commercialism we discovered the Millennia Co-op at 181 Second Street. Although it no longer exists, we found that its cohesion in the community offered several wonderful elements of a faith collective existing as servant to the host community. It was the brainchild of the radical missionaries John Jensen and the late Brian Ollman, and was a mission experiment that combined proximity spaces, shared projects, business enterprises, and indigenous faith communities. Their mission statement read, “The Millennia Co-op advances cultural renewal and personal transformation through the integration of the arts, community, spirituality, business and public service. The Millennia Co-op consists of several inter-connected projects, all centered in the Pomona Arts Colony. Each Millennia Co-op project provides opportunities for creative expression, employment and connecting in a healing community centered around Jesus.”

Each Millennia Co-op project was designed to incorporate one or more of the four features we mention above.

Millennia art lounge: The Lounge was the Millennia Co-op's storefront project (literally)—a street-level store right on Second Street, converted into a performance space/dance venue hosting a weekly poetry night, live bands, hip-hop music, and house music events. All these regular events offered free or low cost and provided an alcohol- and drug-free space for a diverse group of young people to hang out and create community. The Millennia Lounge also hosted occasional art exhibitions as local artists, including the homeless, could gain exposure to their work and expression (note: proximity space, with an element of shared project).

Millennia art studio: This space offered beginning and experienced artists a place to create together in a community environment. Free studio space was available, as were art workshops and vocational training courses. The artists who used the studio (Christians and not-yet-Christians) occasionally took their work to the streets by producing murals and art installations to beautify the city. It's from the studio that much of the work for the exhibitions in the Lounge came (note: shared project and proximity space).

Millennia design group: Established in an open-plan office in a loft above the Lounge, the lab specialized in creative graphic designs that attracted customers

from an assortment of businesses in Pomona and beyond. It produced business cards, websites, letterheads, and other business collateral (note: business enterprise).

Innerworld: Millennia's electronic dance culture collective, hosting a weekly house music event in the Lounge and also making a positive impact on the host community through projects like picking up trash and serving the homeless (note: shared project).

Millennia JiuJitsu: In the front of the basement under the Lounge, there were weekly jiu-jitsu wrestling classes promoting community relationships and personal fitness (note: business enterprise and proximity space).

Ichthus: At the core of the Millennia Co-op, an indigenous faith community called Ichthus. Originally one small group meeting in Brian Ollman's home, grew to three cell churches and continued to burgeon. Members of the church shared responsibility for several of the Millennia projects, and the leadership network (not elected, merely recognized) met regularly to consider the future direction of the mission. Those members of Ichthus that we met saw their involvement as that of missionaries. The people who came to Ichthus and then made a commitment to Christ were first accessed through the Lounge or jiu-jitsu or the Studio. In fact, some of those who came to Christ had been about as far from the church as Western kids could be.

We don't present the Pomona experiment as *the* way forward nor as the only expression of the missional church. It is *one* of the forms the missional church takes, and there will be as many forms as there are subcultures or people groups or neighborhoods to reach. And we applaud the courage, tenacity, and creativity shown by Brian and his team in getting something as effective as the Millennia Co-op launched. It was genuinely green space.

Incarnational, Messianic, Apostolic

What we propose is a reversing of the three mistakes made by the Christendom-mode church. The missional church, by its very nature, will be an anticline of the existing traditional model. Rather than being primarily attractional, it will be incarnational. It will be willing to leave its own comfortable religious zones and live in direct contact with non-churchgoers, seeping into the host culture like salt and light. It will be an infiltrating, transformational community. Second, rather than being dualistic, it will embrace a messianic spirituality.

That is, a spirituality of engagement with culture and the world in the same mode as the Messiah himself. And third, the missional church will develop an apostolic form of leadership rather than the traditional hierarchical model.

We will explore each of these modes of being missional in the following three sections of this book. In fact, we prefer the term mode to that of model. We are not commending a new model at all. The church is surely tiring of the latest model being offered by church-growth theorists. As we just pointed out, the missional church will value diversity and should look significantly different depending on which subculture it has felt called to serve.