

From Missio Dei To Missional Church

Rediscovering the Missionary Church In A Post-Christian World



Our Experience In Southern CT

- What is your personal experience of being a devoted, gospel centered and Biblically defined Christian in S. CT?
- What do you see as the greatest challenge to our witness and evangelism in S. CT?
- What are your neighbors/colleagues perceptions about
 - Christianity?
 - Church?
- What do you see as the greatest threat to
 - Christianity?
 - Church?

What Social Science Tells us about US (residents of S. CT/New England?)

- Church attendance in New England States is the lowest in the country. For instance,
 - 31% of people in New England have never attended a religious service,
 - 14% attend Religious services once a week,
 - Less than 4% can be classified in terms of gospel believing.
- 18% of Millennials find Christianity relevant to their lives.
- Out of the top 10 most post-Christian cities in America, New Haven is number 7
- 52% of the population of Connecticut is unchurched

Christendom *Then...*

- In Christendom, the institutions of society "Christianized" people and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior.
- A "Christian" enjoyed cultural relevancy – it was socially, politically and economically advantageous to be a Christian, if in name only (Nominalism).
- Though people were "Christianized" by the culture, they were not necessarily regenerated or converted with the Gospel.
- In 'Christendom' there is little difference between the language inside and outside of the church. Common discourse is riddled with allusions to and references from the Bible.
- Values and morals were generally Christian, if not always adhered to. In "Christendom" it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to "do what they know they should."
- There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. It is more a matter of exhortation (and often, heavy reliance on guilt.)
- A gospel centered message in Christendom assumes guilt and thus the focus "law... gospel."

What Mission Was (In Christendom)

- Mission" was that activity done by agents of western Christendom when they planted churches in non-western cultures.
 - By way of comparison, "evangelism" was, at best, that activity within Christendom which strives to make people who are culturally Christian into active and practicing Christians. Otherwise, it was converting one denomination of Christian to another.
- "Mission" is listed next to things like "worship" and "service" in contemporary discussions of the church's purpose and practice.
- "Mission" is one of many important callings/ministries of the church, and specifically, those select individuals that the church "sends."
- The relation to "mission" was ss a sending agency (financial support, training, etc).
- The church was living in a missionary context with a missionary encounter with neighbors per se. (Think the difference between a church in India vs. a church in deep Christendom)

Post-Christendom Now...

- Public institutions and popular culture no longer 'Christianize' people and in fact it is mainstream to normalize what Christianity historically anathematized-condemned.
- No longer rely on Christian “memory” as point of appeal, no “moral guilt” that needs relief-- must appeal to the “restless soul” of post-modernism and the search for freedom from.... (institutional authority, spiritual oppression, lack of moral consensus, etc.).
- ‘Tolerance for all faiths and none is now much more than mere good manners for the sake of robust civil discourse, but cultural dogma and the new morality informed by ethical and epistemological relativism. (however self-aware).
- With globalism came religious pluralism wherein people of other faiths are now our colleagues and friends. The simplistic “straw-man” depictions of other faiths during Christendom are exposed and different beliefs esp. Christian are forgotten or trivialized by populism.
- The church has become a disenfranchised minority in an increasingly post-Christian, post-denominational context within a morally relativistic and sexually polymorphous society. In some ways, Christian morality is turned upside down– e.g. “Slow Love”

Post Christendom Now...

- The social significance of Christianity is, however you want to measure it, undergoing a steady decline . Religion and Christianity is increasingly irrelevant.
- No “farm league” in H.S.’s or College’s toward raising up future Christian leadership.
- “The emergence of pluralism and secularism has resulted in the breakdown of any clear Christian consensus under girding the standard assumptions. We can no longer assume that Christian ethics simply endorses what everyone recognizes to be good for human being.
- A gospel centered message in Post-Christendom can’t assume religious moralism and guilt. The gospel is more about freedom/liberation/justice. (note:What does “for freedom Christ has set you free mean today? Is it the same as in the Bible?)
- Post-Christendom no longer assumes the ethical superiority of Christian tradition. Without moral authority, the church is passe.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

2 Tim 3:1-5

What Mission Is *NOW*...

(Post-Christendom)

- The post-Christendom Church is now a missionary church in a foreign land. Now “resident-aliens” it feels and functions more like the church of Christendom that was situation in a place like India or It’s the place Christendom sends missionaries (c.f. Africa, South America, Korea to Urban centers especially in Northern Hemisphere).
- The missional church adapts and reformulates everything it does in worship, discipleship, community, and service so as to be engaged with the non-Christian society around it. It avoids ever talking as if non-believing people are not present.
- It develops a 'missiology of western culture' the way it does for other non-believing cultures.”
- Christian community must embody a 'counter-cultural' identity showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, power, gender, race, etc.
- ‘The missional church avoids 'tribal' language, stylized prayer language, unnecessary evangelical pious 'jargon', and archaic language.
- The missional church avoids 'we-them' language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs, and dismissive, disrespectful comments about those who differ.
- And perhaps most importantly the missional church rediscovers itself as the embodiment of Christ in the world, quite literally-- as mediating his ministry as prophet, priest and king with dependency upon a power and wisdom quite literally not of this world.

The Post-Christendom Rediscovery of the “Missional Church” vs. “Church that does Missions”

Predicated upon “Missio Dei” theology, the term "missional" is an attempt to move the discussion beyond the narrow definitions of mission as merely one among the various programs of the church to Mission as the fundamental, the essential, the centering understanding of the church's purpose and action as predicated upon the very nature of the church itself as related to being in union with Christ within the Triunity of the “sentness” of God .The church that Jesus intended, is missionary by her very nature.

- The term “missional” church wants not to consider the church in relation to the world, but by what she is in relation to God... as to what the church is by her very nature, and how she is by her nature missionary.
- Missio Dei will observe the inherent “sentness” of God as applied then to the church. The church is *defined within the framework of the doctrine of the triune God. The fundamental assumption here has to do with the revealed nature and purpose of God: "...mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God and the church is God's mediated presence in Christ.*



The Issue of “CHURCH” In Mission

- *How is the Church perceived coming out of Christendom?*
- *How might we see the church as an asset in mission?*
- *What IS the church really and therefore is it essential to mission or not?*



The Issue of “CHURCH” In Mission

- *How is the Church perceived coming out of Christendom?*
- *How might we see the church as an asset in mission?*
- *What IS the church really and therefore is it essential to mission or not?*

Missio Dei Informed Missional Church

“Just as the father has sent me, so also I am sending you [plural]”

John 20:21

*Therefore, beginning with a theology of the missio Dei— God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son send the Spirit—even as this then is expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world" (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390).*

The Missionary Church: Heaven To Earth (Ascended Christ to Descended Christ-- Mediated through Church)

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Mt. 16:18-19

- Keys? Power to open and close the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth
 - **binding and loosing** = The power to bring someone under into the protection/order of God's kingdom...
- Associated with the Mission of the Temple in OT
 - **I Chron. 9:17-27, Neh 7.1ff, etc** describes the “gatekeepers” (puvlai) of the Temple have the duty of employing keys
- Associated with the Mission of Christ
 - **Is 22:22** I will place on his shoulder *the key of the house of David*; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.

The Missionary Church: In The Singular Name of A Triune God

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mt 28:18-20

The Missionary Church: Christology Applied

- Matthew's Great Commission framed in Christ's Presence
 - *And Behold, I am with You...*
- The three defining 'marks' of the Church correspond to the three offices of Christ
 - *Christ as Prophet* → Preaching of the Word (**teaching them**)
 - *Christ as Priest* → Sacraments (**baptizing them**)
 - *Christ as King* → Pastoral care/church discipline/govt (**to obey**)

The Missionary Church: *Great Things??*

*“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and **prepare a place for you**, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

Jn 14:1-3

- What place?

And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” John 2:16

At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God’s sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father’s house, Acts 7:20

- Who’s there?

*In that day you will know that **I am in my Father**, and **you** in me, and **I** in you. Jn 14:20 (c.f. 11)*

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper**, to be with you forever, I 7 even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you.** Jn 14:16-18*

- Where?

- Christ in Heaven?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.” Jn 14:12

- Christ on Earth?

*“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come **to you**. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Jn 14:19*

- Both And! What? How so???

for he dwells with you and will be in you. Jn 14:18

The Missionary Church: *Just as... So!*

I Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

John 20:21-23

- *Who alone can forgive Sins?*
- *How Does He Do this Today?*
- *How so?? Just As... So*

And the Word became flesh and dwelled (temped) among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

The Church As Missional by Her Nature

Eph 1:

3-14:Trinitarian Doxology

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

jEph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us,.. 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Eph 1:33 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

19-20:Ascension Christology

and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

21-23:Missional Ecclessiology-

22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Eph 2:

18-22: Efficacy of Divine Present

18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The Church As Missional by Her Purpose

Just... so

John 20:21

“Just as we insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a Church, so must we also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church.”

Lesslie Newbigin

Missio Dei Implications

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, after a particularly evocative exposition of the gospel and its calling:

All this is for your sake – and Christendom would like to stop there, would like to leave us as Christians enjoying the benefits of our salvation and working away at the threats to our blessedness that arise both out of the world and our own rebellions. But the text has no period. It says,

All this is for your sake so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:15).

Thus, every classical theme of ecclesiology, the doctrine and practice of the sacraments, of ordered ministry, of membership, of stewardship, of spiritual disciplines, will be drawn into and redefined by the foundational vocation of the church to be Christ's witness, to lead its life worthy of its calling, to be Christ's letter to the world, to be, as Peter summarized it,

"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness in his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Characteristics of a Missionary Church Acting Severally

- A purposeful preparedness: In a 'missional' church, the laity needs theological education to 'think Christianly' about everything and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know:
 - a) what cultural practices are common grace and to be embraced,
 - b) what practices are antithetical to the gospel and must be rejected,
 - c) what practices can be adapted/revised.
 - d) What practices relative to the use of the Bible are toxic to Biblical credibility, authority, credibility, sufficiency and perspicuity in a manner that goes beyond Christendom's simplistic "proof-texting."
 - e) To rediscover the ancient "liberty of conscience" The careful use of self-regulation in the manner in which we apply the Bible as a rule of faith and life such as only by "good and necessary" inference.
- The counter-cultural witness exhibiting the goodness of moral clarity, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.
 - In sex we avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different.
 - In money. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.
 - In power. We are committed to power-sharing and relationship-building between races and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.
- Christians will have to use the gospel to demonstrate true, Biblical love and 'tolerance' in "the public square" toward those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which opposing views show toward Christians yet without compromise
- Re-Neighboring our world *with missionary purpose.*
- *Trusting again in the church as an essential element of the gospel—e.g. trust God's presence in/with/through the ordinary means of grace (word, sacraments, community, prayer, etc)*

Characteristics of a Missionary Church Acting Jointly

- The church must rediscover in our post-Christian world the apostolic orthodoxy as it was articulated and applied in a pre-Christian world. For instance:
 - The re-framing the gospel to satisfying justice against the growing perception of "grace" as an offense against "justice." (e.g Penal Substitution)

WCF Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.
 - The re-framing the gospel as liberation against the growing perception that the gospel is manipulation and oppressive. (E.g. The "regulative Principle")
 - WCF 20.1. [In relation to God) *The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation*
 - WCF 20.2 (In relation to Church and People]. *God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.*

Characteristics of a Missionary Church Acting Jointly Continued

- The church must rediscover in our post-Christian world the apostolic practice of mission as it was articulated and applied in a pre-Christian world. For instance:
 - Re-tooling the cultural narratives for the sake of the gospel: 2 examples:
 - Moses re-telling the story of creation in language and categories common in that day (E.g the Babylonian creation myth "Enuma Elish") and yet to subvert and correct it.
 - Paul's re-affirming and subverting the 1st century myth of the "Unknown God" (Agnostos Theos) in his Areopagus speech in Acts 17:23ff.
 - Affirming the presence of justifiable skepticism such as to both acknowledge their reticence to embrace "old religion" while also defending the true religion. E.g. Against hypocrisy— "You have heard it said.. But I tell you...)
 - Re-Tooling ancient elements of Christian worship albeit in forms common to post-modern practices.

...and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Characteristics of a Missionary Church Acting Jointly Continued

- The church must rediscover in our post-Christian world the apostolic practice of mission as it was articulated and applied in a pre-Christian world. For instance:
 - Evangelistic Worship IS Discipleship Worship under the Ancient/Biblical Pattern and Practice—
 - God commanded Israel to invite the nations to join in declaring his glory. Zion is to be the center of world-winning worship (Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-8.)
 - Peter tells a Gentile church, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9.)
 - Non-believers are expected to be present in Christian worship. In Acts 2 it happens by word-of-mouth excitement. In 1 Cor 14 it is probably the result of personal invitation by Christian friends. But Paul in 14:23 expects both "unbelievers" and "the unlearned" (literally "a seeker"-- "one who does not understand") to be present in worship.
 - 2. Non-believers must find the praise of Christians to be comprehensible. In Acts 2 it happens by miraculous divine intervention. In 1 Cor 14 it happens by human design and effort.
 - Non-believers can fall under conviction and be converted through comprehensible worship. In 1 Cor 14 it happens during the service, but in Acts 2 it is supplemented by "after meetings" and follow-up evangelism.

The Missionary Church

Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved. Acts 2

The Missionary Church

- The Witness of Unity:

that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John. 17:21)

I believe that the true ecumenism is not something which is evading the question of truth. It is something which is facing at a deeper level the question "What is the truth?" Is the truth ultimately in the Name of Jesus and there alone, or is the truth only to be known by adding something else in the Name of Jesus? The real issue which this missionary encounter raises is the question, "What is the true confession?" What does it mean to confess Jesus today?

Lesslie Newbigin

The Missionary Church: Unity

- The Witness of Unity: For instance, when asked to state the essential basis of a true ecumenical ecclesiology for the sake of mission, Newbigin once responded:

For me it always lies in the actual experience of the missionary encounter, the encounter with the man, for instance, in the streets of an Indian city who challenges, you the foreigner, to say what right you have to bring the name of a foreign God, of a foreign religion into the land of India.

One replies to such a challenge by trying to show him how the name of Jesus is not the name of the leader of one religion, is not the name that we in the west give to God but is the name of the One decisive and final revelation of God the man, the One who alone has brought reconciliation between man and God and thereby created the possibility of reconciliation between man and man. But when one replies that way, the answer always comes back:

You do not believe that the Name of Jesus is the all sufficient Name because all of you have to add something else to that Name before you are satisfied. We have to conclude that what you are bringing to us is not the one Name of which you speak; it is in... a whole series of names – the fragments of western European culture which have been projected into our world by the colonial expansion of the 19th century.

The Witness of Unity: Discussion

- What issues/convictions had to be made second in order for such unity to exist between the Euro-centric West and the Indio-centric east?
- What cultural-political sympathies had to be made second in order for such unity to exist?
- How then would this look in say?(Hint: Regulative Principle— Rom 14)
 1. Between different classes based values in America?
 2. Between different political based values in America?
 3. Between different demographic based values in America (rural, suburban, urban)?

The unity which we must seek is thus a unity which arises from Christ from their being in him. It is not simply a unity of organization, nor is it simply an agreement about doctrine. It is a total mutual interchange of being-Christ wholly given to us, we wholly given to him. This is a unity involving the whole being of all concerned in it. Lesslie Newbigin

Ecclesial Conversion through Catechism (Instruction)?

Pagan converts to the [Christian] mainstream did not, for the most part, first understand the faith and then decide to become Christians; rather, the process was reversed: they first decided and then they understood. More precisely, they were first attracted by the Christian community and form of life... they submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction in which they practiced new modes of behavior and learned the stories of Israel and their fulfillment in Christ. Only after they had acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able intelligently and responsibly to profess the faith, to be baptized.

George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 132

Ecclesial Conversion through Baptism (Engrafting)?

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet. 3:21 And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
(c.f. 1 Cor. 12:13 , Mark 16:10 , Acts 22:16 , Rom. 6:3)

- What are the implications for Baptism today? (Read WCF 28.6)
The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.
- Why Baptize Children? To save them by engrafting them into the live giving body of Christ!
- Why Baptize Adults seeking Conversion—To save them by engrafting them into the life giving body of Christ!



YOU Are Christ!

(Truly, if not perfectly!)

“The spirit operates by creating out of the word a body which St. Paul calls the Body of Christ....As such this body becomes matched to Christ as His vis-à-vis in history and as the instrument of His saving purpose in the Gospel. It is the sphere where through the presence of the Spirit the salvation-events of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension are operative here and now in history, the sphere wherever within the old creation the new creation has broken in with power.”

T. F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood