

# 'Emergency Church'

## An exploration on the emerging church, and the implications of it on the mission of the UK church

### Acts 15 and its significance for the early church

#### Theology Matters

- Theology is a word about God; *theos* is Greek for God; *logos* is Greek for word; this is where we get the word theology.
- True theology finds its place in worship of the living God.
- Only two theological questions; 'What kind of God?' and 'So what?'
- Theology and ethics; what I believe about God determines how I live my life.

#### What is Emerging?

- Something fluid, diverse and uncoordinated
- Within and outside traditional church structures
- Mainly evangelical and charismatic

#### A Movement?

- No central structure, person or reference point
- Seen as a 'conversation' between Christians
- 'Inherited church'; Sunday centric, having a main building for activities, cooperate worship and meetings etc

#### Theology

- Theological questions and reflection in light of modern culture
- A belief God is speaking in new ways through the chaos of society
- Theological issues being raised are:
- **God's divine activity:** recognizing God at work in contemporary culture beyond the church; affirming whole life Christianity and discovering God in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary; recognizing God speaking and acting through people of other faiths or no faith at all.
- **Mission:** re-evaluating evangelical models and approaches to mission and evangelism; shifting from 'Come to us' to 'Go to them' approaches to mission; engaging more fully in social, economical and ecological initiatives.
- **The Bible:** emphasizing mystery and paradox in Scripture rather than certainty; questioning traditional interpretations of the atonement and why Jesus died; moving from the Bible as a 'blueprint' for life to seeing it as a narrative or on a trajectory.
- **Church:** seeking church to not be centred in one unique place; associating church with community life as well as worship; seeing church in more organic or liquid ways; replacing Sunday centric monologue style meetings with sharing lives, hospitality and food throughout the week.
- **Church membership:** centred set community with 'open edges'; belonging before believing; welcoming difference and operating inclusivity; shared values rather than creedal assent.
- **Leadership:** abandoning hierarchical and professional models; recognizing woman in leadership; relational accountability; empowering young leaders.

- **Participation:** replacing front-led with multi voiced congregations; exploring alternatives to monologue talks; affirming whole group preparation and participation; affirming artists, poets etc; valuing the contributions of those on the margins; welcoming lament, anger and doubt alongside celebration.

## What is Church?

- What would you say needs to happen for a group to call themselves 'church'?
- Is there absolute beliefs that they must hold?
- Are there things that they must do to be called church? If so, what would you say they are?

## What about Culture?

- The challenge of being 'in the world' but 'not of the world' (John 17).
- Seeking to fully identify with people.
- The incarnation seen as fundamental; dwelling among whilst bringing about a new reality.
- Can you be too immersed in a culture?
- Can you be isolated and private and confuse this with being set apart?

## Post-Christendom?

- Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity official religion of the Empire in 313AD.
- Christianity went from being illegal, oppressed, suffering and on the margins, to one of power, voice, wealth and dominance.
- Some say worst thing that happened.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century now sees post-Christendom.
- Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as a society that has been shaped by the Christian story loses Christian faith and Christian convictions decline in influence.
- Church increasingly on the margins, people apathetic, little voice or power into society.
- Emerging church see this as a great opportunity for the gospel.

## Post Modernity?

- Modernism; absolute truth, linear thinking, rationality and certainty.
- Post-modernism; what we know shaped by culture; emotions, mystery, relationships.

## The Gospel

- What is the gospel?
- The life, death and resurrection seen to be equally significant.
- The atonement debate
- Heaven on earth; community; justice.

## Emerging and Inherited Church

- Emerging church still a small movement in UK. Most Christians a part of inherited church.
- Inherited church is seeing growth.
- Emerging church growing but is it sustainable?
- Is the emerging church causing right questions to be asked?
- Can inherited church sponsor, support and help emerging churches?

## The Critics

- Some deeply opposed to emerging church
- Donald Carson's *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* is more balanced but still full of errors and misconceptions.

## Conclusion

- My own situation in Newton Abbot
- Back to Acts 15
- 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us...'

## Questions?

If you would like to talk further to me about anything I have raised here or the work I am involved in Newton Abbot then please do not hesitate to get in touch. I also have a blog that I regularly update with details of what I am doing.

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## Further Reading:

### Emerging Church

Carson, Donald: *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005)

Croft, Steven (et al): *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* Ward, (London: Church House Publishing, 2005)

Frost, Michael & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004)

Frost, Rob: *Essence* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2002)

Gibbs, Eddie and Bolger, Roger, *Emerging Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005)

Taylor, Steve: *The Out of Bounds Church?* (El Cajon/Grand Rapids: emergent YS/Zondervan, 2005)

Kimball, Dan: *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005)

Moynagh, Michael, *emergingchurch.intro* (Oxford: Monarch, 2004)

Murray, Stuart, *Changing Mission: Learning from the Newer Churches* (London: CTBI, 2006)

Murray, Stuart: *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005)

Murray, Stuart & Anne Wilkinson-Hayes: *Hope from the Margins* (Cambridge: Grove, 1999)

Ward, Pete: *Liquid Church* (Peabody: Hendricksen, 2002)

### **Atonement Debate**

Chalke, S., Mann, A., *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003)

Colwell, J., *Why Have You Forsaken Me? A Personal Reflection on the Experience of Desolation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2010)

Goldingay, John (ed.), *Atonement Today: A Symposium at St John's College, Nottingham* (London: SPCK, 1995)

Green, J., Baker, M., *Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003)

Gunton, C.E., *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988)

Holmes, S.R., *The Wondrous Cross* (London: Paternoster Press, 2007)

Jeffery, S., Ovey, M., Sach, A., *Pierced For Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007)

### **Mission**

Bosch, D.J., *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991)

Escobar, Samuel, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Leicester: IVP, 2003)

Hirsch, A., *The Forgotten Ways* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006)

Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Ross, Kathy (ed), Walls, Andrew (ed), *Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008)

### **Websites**

[www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/mission\\_shaped\\_church.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/mission_shaped_church.pdf)

[www.emergingchurch.info](http://www.emergingchurch.info)

[www.encountersontheedge.org.uk](http://www.encountersontheedge.org.uk)

[www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

[www.moot.uk.net](http://www.moot.uk.net)

[www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk)