

Vol. 22 No.2
WINTER 2013

OIKOS

AUSTRALIA

MAGAZINE

Are we
preaching
another gospel?

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Re-Doing Organic Church
Coming Alongside
Helping Fred Find Life
Faith Future Restaurant
Top Ten Resources for Newcomers



Fanning the Flames!

OIKOS 2013 Brisbane National Gathering Report

OUR VISION - To network and encourage the new ways of 'being church' that God is bringing about in Australia today.

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Next Edition:

The Spring edition of OIKOS Magazine will appear in mid October. Suggestions and news are welcome. Please send them in by September 15.

OIKOS Australia is a friendship ministry to home churches, simple churches and similar missional gatherings that are happening across our nation and around the world today.



As I reflect back on the OIKOS 2013 National Gathering in Brisbane last May I feel excited.

About 70 people gathered for a fantastic weekend of inspiration, sharing and learning together. The time focused on building on God's past leading of Oikos, and moving to the next stage of God's vision for this nation. This vision involves seeing a transformational group multiplying in every Australian community until the land is "covered like a net."

Some of the many highlights were the stories of how the Kingdom of God is growing. Key principles often surfaced in these stories:

- Carl Musch shared about the multiplication of faith communities in remote indigenous communities. He learned to equip people and release them to take the story of Jesus to others and that they are more than capable to do this when led by the Holy Spirit. This has seen a multiplication of indigenous Faith Communities all across the remote communities of the Cape York Peninsula and Arnhem Land.
- "Love the one in front of you", a powerful message from Heidi Baker's DVD, and seen in many stories such as Graham and Judy Wheat's ministry in a caravan park on the Gold Coast. Their maxim: "do lots of things in love over long periods of time."
- Ministry starts in the family as Ailsa and Criss Matesic showed when Ailsa meets to disciple their children who then seek to share with their friends. Kingdom ministry is very broad and diverse. Criss has also joined a local biker club that draws a number of people together.
- One team involving Paul Land in Brisbane runs a feeding program that buses people from the city to people's homes to provide food for them.

Some ministries are called to primarily offer compassion, support and presence to support the poor and broken of our society.

The role of Oikos is to "fan the flames" of those who are involved in extending the Kingdom, coming alongside to help, encourage, give language to and identify their unique contribution to the kingdom.

Some of the key points from the presentations included the following:

- The need to sow lots of Gospel seed
- Love the one in front of you
- Listen to God for instructions – only do what the Father is doing (John 5:19)
- Be intentional and multiply leaders
- Relationships and Community are a priority
- Grow many harvesters
- Focus on children and youth, not only middle aged adults.
- Learn to bless

The diversity of the Faith Communities and the depth of commitment and experience were encouraging. Relationships were strengthened and new ones developed. I feel there is energy to grow and to move forward in supporting movements. I felt a new confidence and excitement about the future.

Blessings ... Phil Brown 2



If I had organic church to do over again

Maurice Smith (Spokane, USA) reflects on the journey through organic house church and wonders what Jesus would have done differently.

Let me begin with a little background. My wife and I have been involved in organic house church since 2000, after several fruitful years in a Presbyterian church. My first organic church conference was with 75 people in Denver, Colorado organized by John White and a relatively new group called House2House. There I met Wolfgang Simson, Tony and Felicity Dale and others who have become known leaders in the organic house church movement over the years and people I have been privileged to call friends and mentors. Over the years we've done radio programs, websites, newsletters, weekly gatherings, area-wide gatherings and more. Then, roughly two years ago, just as we were exploring the possibility of establishing an organic house church association, the Lord spoke to us very clearly and said, "Lay it all down and walk away." Yep, didn't really see that one coming. The past two years have been a profound journey of laying down well-intentioned ideas. It has been a season of care-taking two elderly parents on the one hand, while reflecting and writing on what we have learned over the past decade of organic church experience on the other hand. And that's what this (article) is about. More or less.

Let me make it clear at the outset that we are committed organic church people. We've been "ruined" for life by organic church. Organic church is a "value" as opposed to a "structure". At the heart of that "value" is an understanding that we don't "go to

church," rather, we "are" the church wherever we happen to be. For this reason alone, organic house church is immensely flexible. Theoretically speaking, there is no building to sell, no staff to fire, no programs to cancel, no overhead to cut. Simply put, the flexibility of organic church means that you and I always have the opportunity to do organic church over again. So, let's get started.

If Jesus Led Your House Church

Let's pretend for just a moment that Jesus showed up and announced that He was going to lead your house church. What do you think He would do? How much time do you think He would spend talking politics or end-time events, arguing over spiritual gifts or the role of women, or which praise CD we should use for worship? The late Michael Spencer once observed that Evangelical Christians want "Jesus on the cover but not in the book". In other words, Jesus sells well, but no one actually wants to take Him seriously. After all, let's face reality. If you turn Jesus loose in your church the probability is high that He will make a royal mess of things. He might just tell you (and me) to drop your nets, drop what you're currently doing, and "Follow Me". And who knows where that kind of invitation might lead. Like Bilbo Baggins, you might just find yourself on "an unexpected journey" into discipleship and the Kingdom of God.

At the end of the day, I believe Jesus would do the same thing today that He did two-thousand years ago. He would

focus His time, attention and energy on making disciples. I believe Jesus would challenge our religion-shaped spirituality, just as He challenged the religion shaped spirituality of His first disciples. For the sake of world redemption, Jesus needed to free His disciples from the narrow religion-shaped spirituality given to them by 1st Century Judaism. In turn, He would replace it with a spirituality modelled upon Himself. What religion-shaped spirituality would He want to replace in your organic house church? If you don't think you have one, I'll be glad to lend you a mirror. Really.

Discipleship as Jesus practiced it is about accepting the "yoke" of obedience to the call of the Kingdom and following that yoke wherever He and it leads us. Jesus "yoked" His disciples to Himself, and refused to release them until their religion-shaped spirituality had given way and been replaced with a Jesus-shaped spirituality. Jesus challenged their understanding of religion until He embodied their understanding of religion. He challenged their understanding of spirituality until He embodied their understanding of spirituality. And He challenged their understanding of the Kingdom of God until He, and He alone, embodied their understanding of the Kingdom. And that is how He wants to challenge and transform each of us today. He wants to challenge our understanding of discipleship until He embodies our understanding of discipleship. That, I

believe, is what Jesus would do if He were here to lead our house churches today. If we respond by saying, "Well, we believe Jesus IS here among us today to lead our house churches," then we are confronted with a profoundly disturbing question: "Why aren't we doing what we know Jesus would do? Why aren't we making disciples the way He did?"

Doing Organic House Church Over Again

So, let's return to what all of this means for doing organic house church differently. If I had organic house church to do over again (and I do!), here is my "short list" of what I would do.

The first thing I would do is to stop doing nearly everything we have been doing. Yes, even if it means being accused (falsely) of "forsaking assembling together". Some things need to be forsaken. If that means cancelling meetings and telling people "we're done" for a season, that's what I would do. Why? Because, we need to take the time to re-evaluate and re-boot what we are doing.

Those of us who have been involved in organic house church for a while like to say that "Jesus wants His Church back". It's a catchy turn-of-phrase and I've used it more times than I can remember. So have you. The problem is that, in spite of all our talk, Jesus hasn't gotten his Church back. Far too often what Jesus has "gotten back" is a group of well-intentioned believers practicing the same religious habits they learned in traditional church, but now they're doing it in someone's living room. Soon, old agendas, left over from the last thing we were involved with, re-emerge and organic church has become "re-agendized". Organic church is now all about (check your favorite): missions, spiritual gifts, worship, teaching, church planting, etc.). Welcome to "agendized" organic church.

I have slowly come to the conclusion that Jesus, too, has an agenda for organic church. Jesus wants to make disciples of the Kingdom willing to walk in radical

faith and radical obedience, to walk with Him, to worship Him and to obey Him. That's Jesus' agenda for His Church, regardless of where it meets. For this reason alone, if I had organic church to do over again (and, thankfully, I do) I would make discipleship the heart and soul of everything we do. I would focus on a relatively small group of 8-to-12 people. Together we would examine and embrace the same discipleship lessons and

Kingdom values which Jesus taught His disciples. Today we have too many professing believers who demonstrate little or no interest in being disciples of Jesus and the Kingdom, at least not on Jesus' terms. They are "free range" believers who want Jesus on the cover of what they do, but not in the book. Nor do they have any interest in making disciples on Jesus' terms. If people aren't interested in

discovering what it means to be a disciple of the Kingdom and to make disciples of the Kingdom, then it's time to let them go on their way. There's probably a fine ministry meeting, conference center or church somewhere in town where the worship music is snappy, the message is short, they have child-care and a bistro and they can do their own thing as "free range" believers with minimal commitment. While that may seem harsh, it isn't. It's what Jesus did. He disciplined twelve, trained another seventy, and sent thousands of "believers" and would-be followers home. Why? Because Jesus wasn't looking for followers, or "believers," or even "laborers" (I believe Jesus used "laborers" as a metaphor for "disciples," just as He used "wheat" and "harvest" as a metaphor for the unsaved masses). He was looking for disciples. What are we looking for?

Let's reflect for a moment. Jesus' challenge and task on earth was profoundly simple. In a span of three years He must impart to a handful of individuals sufficient eternal truth to transform their lives and to carry the message of the Kingdom and a growing Church forward until His return at the end of the Age. The method He chose to

accomplish this task was elegantly simple. He would pick twelve unlikely individuals and spend the next three years pouring Himself into them. They would be His "disciples," his "padawan learners," if you will. In their company He would preach, teach and model everything they would need to know about the Kingdom of God in order to carry His Church forward after He was gone. Discipleship was Jesus' plan and method for the Kingdom from now until His return. But is it our plan? Is that what we're doing?

This of course raises a question: What did Jesus teach those twelve disciples that so transformed their lives? What lessons did Jesus teach His disciples regarding the message, the ministry and the mission of the Kingdom of God. What did He teach them about the cost of discipleship and what it means to be a disciple of that Kingdom? How exactly did Jesus challenge the religion-shaped spirituality of twelve 1st Century Jews in order to transform them into disciples of the Kingdom? Why did He repeat certain lessons, but not others? What did Jesus teach them about how the Kingdom of God challenges and changes our spiritual priorities? How many times did Jesus actually "call" the disciples (it's more than once, trust me!), and why the lapse of time between calls? What did Jesus teach the twelve about ministry to the marginalized, and how many times did He repeat the lesson? What did Jesus teach His disciples about the call, the lifestyle and the task of the Kingdom? And why have we not understood and taught those same lessons to those we seek to disciple? These are just a few of the discipleship questions and lessons I've personally been challenged by over the past year as I've studied the gospels and reflected on discipleship and the Kingdom of God. I've identified over seventy lessons Jesus intentionally taught His disciples. I am hopeful that these lessons will come together in two books (still in progress): *"And They Dreamt of A Kingdom: Biblical Studies in Discipleship And The Kingdom of God"* (2 Volumes).

I have been encouraged lately as I have seen others re-examining the issue of discipleship. Discipleship is becoming a popular discussion topic among writers, bloggers and conference speakers. Hopefully, genuine discipleship will become more than another fad for conference goers, or another mega >>

If you turn Jesus loose in your church the probability is high that He will make a royal mess of things. He might just tell you (and me) to drop your nets, drop what you're currently doing, and "Follow Me".

COMING ALONGSIDE

Being Around Not-Yet Christians

John Fischer

This is an excellent article that should help us relax and be more confident in our quest to share Jesus.

I am normally not a fan of ten steps to this or five ways to do that. But for one of my recent talks I came up with these six things to remember about being around those who may not yet be Christians, and thought some of you might find it useful.

1) Assume everyone is searching for God.

Why? Because everyone is. We were created this way. God has purposely frustrated humanity by creating us with eternity in our hearts, yet with an inability to fathom what that is or what it means (Ecclesiastes 3:10-11). He has done this so that we might reach out for him and find him though He is not far from any of us for in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:27-28).

2) Come alongside. This is really the crux of it all. Just walk alongside people and enter into their lives. Listen. Talk. Laugh. Cry. Find out where you can contribute and what you can learn. There's something to give and something to receive in every relationship.

3) Point. You don't tell someone what the truth is; you point to it. "There it is over there," or "Here it is in my life." This is why we need to learn to identify truth in the context of the world around us. Truth isn't religious. You don't have to get into a certain posture to see it. It's not something that hasn't been there all along.

4) Find out what people already know before you set out to tell them anything.

Don't ever think you have to clear the table and start over. This is why it's so important to listen first. Find out what's already on the table that you can use.

5) You don't have to tell everything you know. Just the next thing.

6) You don't have to correct everything someone says that is wrong. You are not the protector and defender of truth. You don't have to decide where to draw the line. You don't even have to be concerned if someone may be walking away with the wrong idea. You are not that smart anyway because you don't know what's in someone's head. As long as they have something to think about, that's a good thing.

And now here's the one final thing that makes all this possible. It is the most important of all. (This is the one thing that makes all six of these make sense.) We don't save anybody, convince anybody, "win" anybody to Christ or close the deal. All that is God's business. The Holy Spirit is doing this all on His own terms and timetable. We are not salesmen, marketing reps, counsellors or prosecutors. We are just friends who come alongside.



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and ministry is simple, yet personally profound. I don't have time to waste playing church anymore. Not even organic house church. And neither do you. It is time to re-evaluate and re-boot. It's time to give Jesus His Church back, and in the process, to take on His yoke of discipleship and to pursue organic church and the Kingdom of God the way He originally taught His disciples to pursue it.



MAURICE SMITH is the author of several books on organic house church and spiritual awakening which you

can view on his Amazon Author's Page at www.amazon.com/-/e/B006M68MNI.

Maurice resides in Spokane, Washington with Gale, the love of his life for 35 years. Together they have practiced organic house church for the past 13 years. They coordinate Rising River Media, a non-profit Christian media and publishing company, which you can access via their website at safehousesofhopeandprayer.org.

Apart from writing Maurice is a keen radio presenter and the instigator of Feed Spokane, a coalition of meal providers and community partners in the greater Spokane area who work together to serve free meals to those in need.

You can contact Maurice (and subscribe to his semi-regular e-letter) by dropping him a note to risingrivermedia@gmail.com



If I Had Organic Church to Do Again (continued)
church book/CD/Sermon/Curriculum program ("40 Days To Discipleship"). Time will tell.

At the age of 58, and having spent the last 18 months helping my wife caretaker her elderly parents, I have been reminded of just how short our pilgrimage in this life really is. It is a sobering moment when you realize just how quickly eternity is approaching, and how true it is for each of us that "night is coming when no man can work". My take-away lesson for this experience with respect to organic church

"Fanning the Flames"

Reflections on the OIKOS 2013 National Gathering, Brisbane

"Love the one in front of you." That's the one-liner, from a Heidi Baker video clip, that has stuck with me since the recent **OIKOS National Gathering in Brisbane**, and given me something to work on on my return.

The Gathering was of course a lot more than one-liners. In fact, for the 70 or so that gathered it turned out to be a practical and visionary feast that will give us all some work to do over the next year. Starting on the Friday evening, when we sorted ourselves out around a string map of Australia on the meeting room floor and began to get a feel for the reach of OIKOS across the nation, there was a sense that we were stepping up to new challenges and a task unfinished.

There were in fact a few 'new's at the conference. New faces, new stories and of course, new leadership. With Bessie Pereira stepping back it was time for Phil and Kate Brown to step up and steer us through a weekend of clarifying and renewing the calling that God has given to OIKOS for the Nation.

STORIES

But we didn't kick off with the nitty-gritty of the vision. Rather we kicked off with some stories – some tastes of what God is doing around the country. Starting with Carl Musch's fascinating work among the top-end indigenous communities. Contrasted against this was Graham Wheat's follow-up story of the Gold Coast caravan park ministry that he and his group are involved in.

Nothing spectacular in either story. Just loving the ones in front of them.

It was Saturday

morning, after a great breakfast and a time of prayer-walking around the grounds of the serene outer-Brisbane facilities in which we were staying, that we gathered again in our oversized living room downstairs. Following a warm-up story from Paul and Annette Land (our wonderful on-the-ground Brisbane based organisers), about their suburban feeding program, and we were ready to try and thrash out the meat and bones of what OIKOS is all about - and in the process get to know Phil and Kate Brown and grow in appreciation of the way God has effected a smooth and fitting transition and an infusion of new vision into OIKOS.

MOVEMENTS

We began by looking at a few of the previous Movements of history – Zinzendorf, Patrick of Ireland, The Celtic communities – and some contemporary movings of the Spirit, such as those happening in the Moslem world. Some of the distinguishing features of these movements included white hot faith, commitment to a cause, contagious relationships and rapid mobility (no hierarchical permission needed to move).

We looked at what 'discipleship' looks like in the everyday. It involves the whole process of a person encountering Jesus and growing as his passionate follower. It's intentional, relational – little things with lots of love over a long time – and involves listening prayer – "I only do what I see the Father doing" (Jesus).

We looked at the Attraction of the Kingdom. People need to experience 'tastes' of the Kingdom. The power of speaking blessing over people. Learning to listen to their stories and tell our own in a brief compelling way, with Jesus woven in. Getting out of the sacred place and into the market place, sowing lots and lots and lots of Gospel seeds.

Stuart Gramenz challenged us to emulate Paul, whose goal was to 'gain Christ and be one with Him'. This involves death to self, the missing ingredient in the Australian church. And results in us being true followers of Jesus, who only did 'what the Father was doing'.

THE AUSTRALIAN CHALLENGE

Saturday Afternoon we looked at the 'Australian Worldview', dominated as it is with relativism and subjectivism, what works rather than what is truth, 'tolerance' as the absolute value, focusing on experience rather than belief and a growing suspicion of religion and institutions. Into such a society God, the God of Mission, calls us to be an incarnational people, with an attitude of 'we go' rather than 'you come' – following Jesus' example of 'God WITH us'.



Esther Walters - Carolyn Mosling - Rose Kerr



We then unpacked the purpose and vision of OIKOS Australia. Which is basically to ‘fan the flames’ of those who are involved in extending the Kingdom, coming alongside to help, encourage, give language to and identify their unique contribution to the kingdom. The vision is to see a transformational movement in every community in Australia, to equip and support those making disciples who in turn make disciples, the principles of ‘simple church’ being a given in the working out of that vision.

Some practical tools and projects to further the vision were discussed and no doubt these will be unpacked over the coming year. Their fruition, as Bessie Pereira points out in her letter on the next page, will involve much prayer, practical thinking and provision. For those attending the Gathering, however, there was a real sense that God has given OIKOS a clear mandate and a vital role to play in seeing the church in Australia move more fully into His purposes.

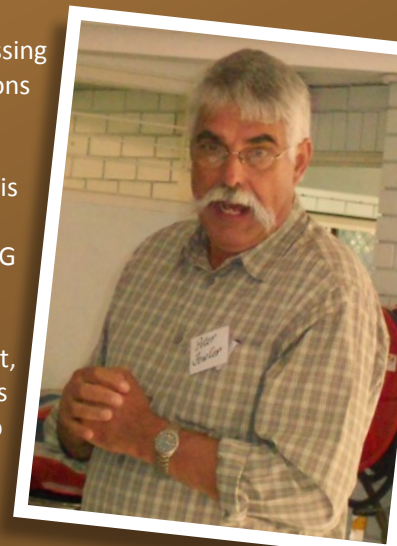
MORE STORIES AND A BLESSING

Saturday evening it was back to stories. Criss and Ailsa Matesic and their encouraging stories of reaching out into a small NSW community. Kevin Waugh, after 36 years of drug addiction now working with street kids in Ballarat. And Helen, also of Ballarat, reaching out from her own painful past to bring healing to the brokenness and chaos around her. And finally John, in Melbourne, finding relevant and meaningful ways to communicate the Gospel. All of them creating environments in which they can tell their story, the story of Jesus.

SUNDAY

Sunday morning it was time to explore more deeply the process of making disciples, following Jesus pattern of

1. Making CONNECTIONS with people of peace, through blessing and healing and demonstrations (tastes) of the Kingdom
2. Bringing them to a COMMITMENT to Jesus and his ways
3. CALLING and COMMISSIONING them to go and be part of Heaven’s mission
4. And to gather, as a by-product, into COMMUNITY – foretastes on earth of the Community to come.



Peter Fowler

TIME TO GO

And then it was time to go. But not before a final word of encouragement and appreciation from Bessie, for whom the Gathering was a great answer to prayer and a confirmation of God’s leading and provision. Fittingly we gathered around her, blessed her (and each other), and sought the direction and presence of the Lord as we prepared to return home, back to all the various places around the nation where he has planted us; refreshed, envisioned, and ready to go make disciples – by loving the one in front of us.

Phillip Walters - Editor

Criss Matesic - NSW wrote: *Great times of sharing with one another; good to put real faces and persons to many of the names; thrilled to meet up with several I haven’t seen for a long time; appreciated Phil and Kate very much; loved Carl’s stories; admired Annette and Paul’s contribution; inspiring stories of God at work around the world; the Father was speaking to me about how much or rather, how little, I have sought his direction and resources; about discipleship, it’s following Jesus and no other. We make so many assumptions about how to follow him and serve God—often we are informed by our experiences from the past, mentors, teachers, wonderful people who have blessed us much and the practices we adopt without consulting Him, just assuming that the “good” is good enough.*

Rebekah Prince - Perth wrote: *What a rich blessing the national gathering was. As one of the youngest attendees the first thing I noticed was the number of grey hairs in the room. I have attended many meetings where the younger generations predominated and there was a desperate cry for spiritual mothers and fathers. In keeping with the spirit of blessing Phil and Kate Brown brought to the gathering, I say to the older generation that it was inspiring and humbling to meet so many elders with living and active faith. Your wealth of experience and love are needed, and on behalf of my generation I value you and bless you.*

God brought three themes to my attention during the weekend. **1) Sight/Vision.** This came up in numerous ways and I believe it is a word God is speaking to His body in this season. He wants to remove our blindness and give us His vision (see 2 Kings 17 and Matthew 13:15-16). **2) God wants us to know who we are.** Kate shared in her session that we are presence carriers of Jesus (Deuteronomy 10:8, 1 Peter 2:9), and Ian Thomson reminded me that we act “in His name.” We carry the authority of Jesus, like a signet ring. **3) The strategy for moving forward is to hear God’s voice and obey,** then listen for the next thing He speaks and obey. Everything flows out of intimacy, and we can only do what we see our Father doing (John 5:19).



Ian Thomson - Brisbane wrote: *So many highlights for me which I’m still unpacking and processing!! Some things that I keep thanking God for are the quality of people I met.. people who genuinely love Jesus, who genuinely want to see their community redeemed and see Jesus lifted high! Also the short word Stuart (Gramenz) gave when he mentioned how when we get baptised that means we have committed to die to self... not just get to heaven! And the word Robert Brown gave at the last session...the importance not to just come home and continue to do our own thing but to keep building our relationships with each other... keep strengthening the net... I feel very strongly about that one!*

What a joy!

(OIKOS Founder Bessie Pereira reflects on the National Gathering)

What a joy! What an overwhelming sense of gratitude and praise to God! I came away from the Gathering knowing that OIKOS Australia was not only in the best place to move forward with the leadership of Phil and Kate Brown, but also that the 70 OIKOS friends who were present including the OIKOS Team and most Regional Team members, loved and appreciated their humble, gentle, open and affirming leadership they experienced in the presentations Phil led. I look back over the beginnings and continuing journey of OIKOS and at the point when I knew I could not be at the helm any longer. I was thinking that maybe OIKOS was past its use-by date and needed to close but God set the scene for a conversation between Phil Brown and myself that led to the change of direction that has not only enabled OIKOS to continue but to move onwards and upwards.

It would have grieved me to see OIKOS close, not because of personal loss of ministry which I knew must happen, but I was acutely aware that the unique ministry of OIKOS is needed now more than ever. New movements are emerging both within and independently of traditional church, and the networking friendship links, resources and broad understanding of global trends coupled with the proven track record we have of being a voluntary open ministry that doesn't bring any group or people 'under' us could have a vital role for many.

I know we shouldn't ever be surprised, but as you can imagine, I have come away with a fresh appreciation of our awesome God, His guidance and the timing of His ways. I have a real 'skip in my spirit' as I saw you all affirm all this by your obviously positive response during and since the event.

The theme for the Gathering 2013 was "Focus on the Vision". I appreciated the way Phil honoured and affirmed the values and ethos of OIKOS, the vision and mission statement that have been our path in the past and quoting from the Operational Manual which is the book Teams have as reference for the way OIKOS works! Phil led us gently forward into the possibilities for the future including his personal hopes. This all made such good sense and picked up where things are moving in simple church multiplication, incarnational grassroots movements amongst not-yet-Christians. There was no driving from behind or leading from way out front, but rather with the reality that we can walk together in the hands of Lord Jesus who will lead us and show us the way. All I could feel deep down was 'amen, amen, amen'. This is the way.

At the end of the Gathering weekend, I was given the opportunity to share a few thoughts which I did in a rambling sort of way. I shared my deep satisfaction and fulfilment as I phase further into the background of OIKOS. I said that the future focus and development for OIKOS is not all about Phil and Kate and their excellent leadership, but that all of us together with Phil and Kate need to move forward under the guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ. I emphasised three areas of crucial need as we do so and labelled them under '3 Ps'!

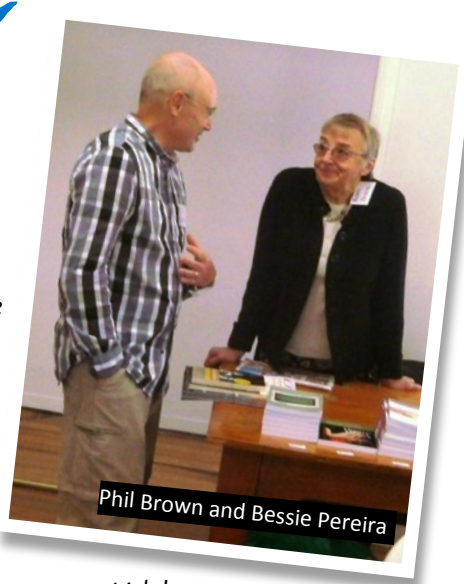
1. **Prayer.** This is the only way we will stay on track and move forward together. Phil is encouraging us to pray together – individuals coming together, teams and Regions using whatever means available. Local group prayer gatherings, Skype, phone.
2. **Practical.** There will be all sorts of ways in which OIKOS will need some of us to step up to the plate and be involved. Whether it is in relation to the bigger picture of OIKOS ministry, Regional, or personal towards OIKOS leadership. There is a need for all of us to be listening to the Lord and the fresh initiatives of the Holy Spirit into which He may lead us.
3. **Provision.** This is a faith ministry. Regarding finance, we have always started each year with little and usually ended each year the same but have been enabled to achieve all that God has called us to be and to do. We give most of our resources away freely via the website. We charge for a subscription for the newsletter, but the basic subscription does not cover the cost of producing and sending it out but we have been keen that no-one is unable to afford the subscription if they want the magazine. If there are difficulties financially, then Partner subscriptions and generous donations have enabled us to produce the magazine, cover office and other sundry expenses, and enabled me to travel overseas for three major learning experiences and to many parts of Australia visiting groups and individuals. The underlying reality in all this is that everyone who is involved with the work of this ministry is a volunteer. Everyone gets paid the same as the Director and that is nothing! We have always sought to work in ways that are a demonstration of Kingdom of God values and not those of the world. I have no doubt this will be the way we will work in the future.

Therefore it is necessary for us to consider all this in light of our 'Focus on the Future'. It is very important that we all, home churches, Regions, and individuals, make godly decisions based on our listening to the Lord, about our level of provision for this onward and upward journey of OIKOS with Phil and Kate's leadership in place. This ministry will grow in depth and scope so we need to be very sensitive about this. I have often spoken about Kingdom of God people have a 'hilarious generosity'. That is what it will take!

I am incredibly grateful for all I have learnt and experienced during the OIKOS years. It has often been a steep learning curve but I have not travelled the journey alone. So many of you have become deeply loved, wise and valued friends and I am so grateful to God for each of you. You have provided so much hospitality and generous giving in all sorts of ways that have enabled me and OIKOS to move along in God's purposes. Thank you all so much. I hope that many of you who wish will stay in touch will do so.

I will be very keen to see how God unfolds His will and His ways in the future He has for each of you and for the OIKOS Australia ministry.

I love you all so much, Love and Blessings, *Bessie*



Annett



Annette Land wrote:
When asked to help out with the organising of a camp for a handful of people I immediately said yes.
Why, you ask?

1. Bessie asked and who wants to disappoint her?
 2. The Carey's have been doing it for years and I'd be learning from some pro's.
 3. It has always been a little desire I had kept hidden... now completed.
- Well, time went by and not much was happening then it all hit. The Carey's were unable to help due to things God was asking them to do elsewhere. I am SO glad they found and booked the venue... that would've been the absolute 'mission impossible' for me.
Great news: Mrs Carey had her first best camp sleep ever! Thank you for all your well wishes and co-operation – God is an excellent conductor of all things Conference.
I think the absolute highlight was meeting Kevin from Exodus and hearing his story. Tears of joy because of the continued sobriety and his finding peace. Isn't it good when brethren dwell together in unity.

Paul Land wrote: I had a great time enjoying the fellowship, listening to peoples stories and the great work that is being done around the country... Carl in Arnhem Land; The Matesics community; John Boland getting the word out; Exodus work; etc.

Mary Dight wrote: What a great time we had at conference. I will have many wonderful memories of the saints I met.



Ian Thomson & Carl Musch



A workshop with Graham Wheat



The worship band - aka Ukelele Bruce



Phil & Kate Brown

Are we preaching an

STUART GRAMENZ (Brisbane) asks the question in this brief excerpt from his latest book, entitled *Are We Preaching Another Gospel?*

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM?

The inadequate interpretation of John 3:16 has been the foundation of many gospel messages, resulting in further Scriptural misinterpretation. We are told to preach “the gospel of the kingdom”, nevertheless, we find some Christians are unsure of what it totally encompasses.

If I were to ask you, “What exactly is the gospel of the kingdom”, what would you say? The ‘heavenly’ domino or roll on effect can again come into play and we can immediately think it basically means “receive Jesus, have your sins forgiven and you will go to heaven”. While the statement contains truth, it falls far short of all the Good News the King has for us.

“Kingdom” is made up of two words; “king” & “domain”. It means the king’s domain or territory over which a king rules. In Biblical terms, it refers to the areas over which the Lord has authority and sovereignty. For many people to-day, who’ve never lived under a genuine sovereign ruler, the term ‘kingdom of God’ can sound a little mystical or abstract. To help us grasp this, God has provided a word more familiar to us. Referring to Jesus He said: *“Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder...of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end....”* Isa. 9:6-7. We simply translate the Kingdom of God as “God’s Government”.

Let’s now look at some aspects of His rule or government.

PRESENT KINGDOM RULE

First of all many of us are already aware that, as we repent and voluntarily commit ourselves to obeying our king, we can presently inherit the many benefits that His government can provide.

Our sins are forgiven and there is the potential to be healed, spirit soul and body. Luke 4:18-19. We are also told that we can imitate the works of Jesus

and do even greater things.

Nevertheless, as we have already indicated, entering in to the fullness of these promises has been elusive.

FUTURE KINGDOM RULE

Secondly, we are also aware that, in the not too distant future, He is returning to the earth, only this time He will have total authority over the entire planet. “The kingdom of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

We could now translate this, “The governments of this world have become the government of our Lord and He shall govern forever and ever.”

In the Lord’s prayer we pray, “Thy kingdom come.” We can translate that, “Your government come”.

THE MYSTERY

Nevertheless, we have one vital aspect of the kingdom of God, which is not totally understood in many believers’ lives. It’s described as mysterious. “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.” It is relatively easy to understand that His kingdom or “God’s Government” provides benefits to us, spirit, soul and body and that He will have a future reign.....so what’s the mystery?

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col. 1:27. The mystery of the kingdom of God was Christ living within or inside believers.

“We already know that!” some of you might be thinking. However, this has a far greater implication than just the simplistically coined phrase of “having Jesus living in our hearts”.

First of all, is “having Jesus in our hearts” exclusively about getting a free voucher that gets us into heaven? Is Saint Peter the ticket inspector standing at the gates waiting for you to show your proof of entry? Secondly, do you really think the Lord wants simply to live

in your heart, twiddling His thumbs or hibernating? No! There is a greater purpose.

LED FROM WITHIN

What is God’s intention? It’s the Spirit of God, totally leading and ruling us from within.

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20-21

Thinking in terms of an earthly kingdom, this statement is mystifying. You can’t see it! It’s not visible! We have also just realized “the kingdom of God” means “God’s Government”. Therefore it is actually saying “God’s Government” is within you. Luke 17:21. Young’s Literal Translation says; *‘the reign of God is within you.’*

It’s the potential of having the Lord personally lead us and guide us from within. This new form of government is an internal guidance not an external guidance. This is the job description of the Spirit of God, who is to be our teacher and guide. *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26*

The Old Testament gives confirmation to this mysterious form of Godly guidance. *“I’ll give you a new heart; put a new spirit in you. I’ll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that’s God-willed, not self-willed, I’ll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands.” Ezek 36:26-27 MSG*

This part of the mystery provides the foundation for the other parts of the mystery yet to be fulfilled. Eph.1:9-10; 3:2-11. We will deal further with this at the last chapter.

another gospel?

A BETTER SYSTEM

While on earth, Jesus verbally instructed His disciples on what to do and where to go (external guidance). Many of us today would be envious of this level of communication. However, Jesus told them He was going to upgrade the system. *"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."* John 16:7

Why is it an advantage? No longer was Jesus going to require them to continually come back and forth to Him to receive their next order (external guidance). This is the major disadvantage of verbal or external guidance. The Holy Spirit was going to help by leading them from within (internal guidance). What a monumental step forward.

THE MYSTERY REMAINS

Obviously, you can see how this internal rule, *"the kingdom of God is within you"* is mystifying to the non-believers. Unfortunately, it also remains a mystery to many believers because the majority of modern Bibles mistranslate the original Greek word 'entos' which literally means *"within"* or *"inside."* They interpret *"the kingdom of God is 'within you'*, as *"the kingdom of God is 'among you'* or *"in your midst"* (referring to Jesus being among them). We believe this one-sided attempt at interpretation conceals the major truth of the mystery that Jesus was trying to reveal.

FUTURE - NOT PRESENT

This Scripture is obviously not limited to Jesus being present with them. He was answering their question about the future. They asked.....*"when the kingdom of God would come"*. He answered in the future tense *"nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'"* He was primarily talking about the impending, soon to come kingdom and was revealing to them the potential of

His invisible government being inside of future believers.

This vital aspect of the Kingdom of God wasn't available at that stage because Jesus had to die to appropriate it. The Holy Spirit (the Kingdom 'within') only came after His death. He had already told them that the time for it to be revealed was upon them.

"Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'. Mark 1:14-15

This 'within you' component of the kingdom of God wasn't two thousand years away, it was "at hand" or just around the corner. Believers were going to see and experience it; being filled, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit - the kingdom of God within their hearts.

KINGDOM HARMONY

We can surely see how "eternal life"

and the "kingdom of God" interlock and harmonize with one another. If you are still unconvinced you may want to hold on to the interpretation that the kingdom of God is "among" you rather than being "within" you. Nevertheless, let's not allow disagreement over one Scripture to hinder you from the greater truth. Surely, we can't disregard the *many other* Scriptures, which reveal the internal government of the Holy Spirit.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. John 14:26

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority. But whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. John 16: 13-14

But it was to us that God revealed these things by His Spirit. For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit.' And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. 1 Cor. 2:10-12

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God. Rom: 8:14

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. 1 John 2: 26-27

We can plainly see that the Holy Spirit's governmental attributes include teaching us all things, guiding us into all truth, informing us of future events as well as revealing God's thoughts and His deep secrets.

.....the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. Col. 1:26

STUART GRAMENZ is no stranger to the Body of Christ both here and abroad, having preached the gospel, with signs and wonders following, to hundreds of thousands, he has been equipping believers to release the power and gifts of the Spirit for over twenty-five years and is the founder of *Spirit Led Academy*, an online ministry school, currently being widely used in Africa and Asia.

His many books include - *How to Heal the Sick, Weapons of Mass Distraction, Communion - Event or Lifestyle, The right Words For the Right Person at the Right Time, Partners in His Power*, and more. The feature book *Are We Preaching Another Gospel* is available as a free ebook at www.spiritedacademy.org

Stuart's radio program 'Destined to Win' airs over Vision FM around the nation. Stuart lives in Brisbane with his wife Mary and two sons.

Do you really think the Lord wants simply to live in your heart, twiddling His thumbs or hibernating?

Snapshots of Community

Faith Future Restaurant - Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria

Faith Future is a unique initiative launched by a new believer listening to and obeying God – to connect with his community, change lives and share faith.

Following tragedy in his family Peter Kenny, owner and director of Bellarine Estate on the Victorian Bellarine Peninsula, was talking with Salvation Army church planter Peter Hobbs. He wasn't interested in church but had been brought up a Catholic, and Hobbs asked him, 'What has God been saying to you through this experience?' A few weeks later he answered that question, 'God is telling me I need to help you guys'. Peter Hobbs could have responded, 'Excellent. I have 100 things you can do, let's pick one and let's go'. But he didn't. He asked, 'What is God telling you to do?' Peter Kenny wasn't sure, but a short time later, at a community development meeting organised by Peter Hobbs, he said, 'God is telling me to open my restaurant on Wednesdays to train students in the area how to run a restaurant'.

His vision was to give young people hope for the future, get them working in the local hospitality industry, lower the levels of unemployment in the area, and boost the regional economy. Peter Hobbs says his mouth dropped open as he responded, "OK. Awesome!" He hadn't had this on his 'to do' list! As a joke, Peter Kenny first suggested the restaurant be named Hell's Kitchen – but the name he wanted was Faith Future. He said, 'People can come to Faith, where they will be showing faith in the kids' abilities to prepare good food (and not poison them). And, the kids will need faith in themselves.'

Within a few weeks Kenny had enlisted the support of all his restaurant staff, met with the local Bellarine Secondary College principal and staff (who loved the idea), and interviewed students, selecting those who most needed the opportunity. Salvos Connect, in the nearby city of Geelong, lent a bus to take students to and from the school and restaurant for training.

Just before Christmas over 150 people ate at Faith Future – and church planter Peter Hobbs had the opportunity to share the story with over 100 unchurched people, saying, 'It was faith that started this project, faith that will sustain it, and faith that will complete it.' He went on to share the Christmas story and how Jesus came to our world to give hope, second chances and new life – and how as followers of Jesus 'we seek to do the same and that's why this project commenced!'

At the end of the evening restaurant owner Peter Kenny presented achievement awards to each of the six secondary school students who had run the restaurant and prepared the meals for the evening. Bellarine Secondary College principal Alison Murphy praised the owners, the Salvation Army and church planter Peter Hobbs for their commitment to 'giving these students a hope and a future'. She said, 'We are indebted to you for the sacrifice and investment you have made into these students and the school community's lives'.

Over the previous eight weeks the students had been equipped and empowered to run the restaurant – including promotions, the website, as well as running the 'front and back' of the house. They had been transformed from timid and insecure young people to confident, potential future restaurant owners. One girl has been given an apprenticeship at Bellarine Estate and two are looking to get apprenticeships in other area restaurants. Others are doing casual work and will be working over the summer in the hospitality industry. Beginning with Peter Kenny's 'small mustard seed of faith' – and obedience to God, a team of potential chefs is emerging.

Their lives are not only improving but they are also experiencing the kingdom of God through Jesus' intentional followers. One student has started reading the Seven Signs of John, and after completing the first said, 'I didn't really understand why Jesus turned water into wine, but after reading the story I felt the weight of the world lifted off my shoulders'.

'Is our aim to get them to church?' asks planter Peter Hobbs. 'No, ten thousand times, no,' he responds. 'Our aim is for the disciples to be the church – and, as they take the great commission seriously they will make disciples also. A messianic community is developing at the Bellarine Estate'. Faith Future also received a community service award from the Bellarine Secondary College.



Used with permission from www.newchurchlife.com Check out pictures and follow the story at www.salvos.org.au/bellarinepeninsula

DATE CLAIMER FOR 2014 more details next edition



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Want more help or information on doing simple church? How about a seminar in your area? Or a contact with someone from one of our Regional Teams? Or maybe you'd like to support the vision of Oikos.

Ring us on 0409 137 988 or email us at editor@oikos.org.au

Oikos AUSTRALIA www.oikos.org.au

HELPING FRED TO DISCOVER NEW LIFE

... life that is only found in Jesus



Fred (not his real name) attended a house church but just didn't 'get it'. He showed absolutely no response to stories of answered prayer, Bible DVDs, prayers or Bible studies. Over recent months I have been sensing that for me, my focus must become missional and Fred is in my sights. No, I'm not thinking of getting him to an evangelistic meeting so he can put up his hand and pray the sinner's prayer. Nor am I looking for an opportunity to 'ambush' him in order to exert guilt-pressure so that I can push him into making a 'decision for Christ' or, 'asking Jesus to come into his heart'. I have little faith in this un-Biblical carry-on that can do more harm than good.

John Wesley knew what true conversion involved. Writing about the gifted founder of Methodism, Wyn Fountain says, "...John Wesley did not preach to the thousands expecting immediate decisions. Instead he preached to get their attention. Once he had it, he enlisted people into small groups which he organised all over the country where they were instructed properly as to what the gospel was all about. Only when they had a sound understanding were they asked to make their decision."

So, what am I supposed to do to bring light to Fred's life? Any suggestions? (Yes, I mean it!)

What I am doing is the following....

- Praying specifically for Fred knowing that only God can switch on the light.
- Getting the help of others. The last thing I want is for Fred to be my convert. Two or three friends have been having a Sunday breakfast with Fred at the local pub. (He doesn't know it's church!)
- Sharing with him testimony-type books.
- Being committed to a no-strings-attached friendship - whether or not Fred becomes a follower of Jesus.
- Being a genuine listener and an encourager in response to Fred's painful stories.

Many prophets/leaders in the world of simple/organic churches have warned this movement of the paralyzing and deadly disease of 'koinonitus'. Among the symptoms we need to be look out for are ...enjoying fellowship with our special group with little or no thought for the lost people all around us.

But how do we know if we are already infected? Simply checking the amount of time we think about and pray for the lost people we regularly relate to. And, how about our neighbours? Are we doing anything to 'connect' with them. Baking? Painting? Baby-sitting? Coffee-ing? Hospitality-ing? It's not only children who spell love t.i.m.e. And, money? What do your cheque book/bank card statements tell you about the amount of money you invest in reaching lost people?

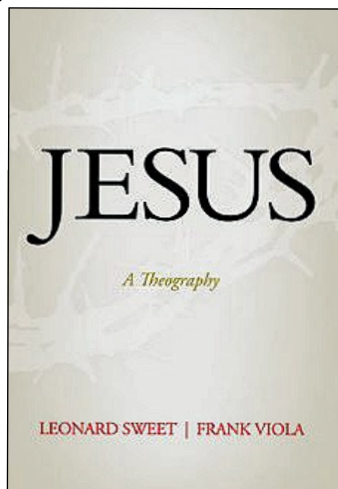
JackG



Used with permission from www.simplechurchletters.com. Author, Jack Guerin (Waikanae Cafe Church, New Zealand), describes his blogsite as "a collection of stories and teachings relating to a difficult, exciting and freeing journey ... written by a former traditional pastor describing his and his congregation's transformed understanding of New Testament church life." His fascinating story is worth reading.

Reviews

There is an ever-increasing library of resources related to simple church and missional movements on the market. For a broader selection go to www.oikos.org.au or www.house2house.com



JESUS - A Theography by Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola www.amazon.com

Frank Viola and Leonard Sweet's words are just as poetically powerful as they are prophetic.

In their new book, *Jesus A Theography* (2012) the authors articulate how the

entire Biblical narrative is the story of Jesus Christ. Just as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jesus for that matter, called people back to the heart of God, Viola and Sweet have written a sequel to their first *Jesus Manifesto*, once again calling people to fix their attention on the heart of God, the person of Jesus.

Not striving to write a biography, they have instead chosen to convey Christ through the story of God's interactions with humanity from the First Covenant all the way through the Second. From Genesis and the Garden of Eden, to Golgotha, and into the New Jerusalem of eternity to come, every written word we have in Scripture points to the Living Word, the Logos, God Incarnate.

As Augustine said, "In the Old Testament, the New is concealed, in the New, the Old is revealed." Separating the two Testaments is like cutting Jesus in half. As our Lord confidently, and scandalously, declared, "All Scripture points to me" (John 5:39). Jesus is the fulfilment of the law and prophets. The law has been completed in a life laid down with love on the cross. Viola

and Sweet beautifully illustrate the majesty of Christ' prophetic and divine, self-actualization of the Bible's first 39 books, including His reenactments of the creation account, Israel's desert trial, and the Davidic lineage proving his Messianic title.

The authors also review Jesus' "mission statement", his question based and parable style teaching, and healing ministry. Though every chapter portrays the biblical and living King of Kings, perhaps my favorites are the last four on Jesus's crucifixion, atonement, resurrection, ascension and future return. I also really appreciated the appendix on Post-Apostolic Witness, including pronouncements by Aquinas, Wesley, Bonhoeffer, and Wright among many others.

I highly recommend *Jesus a Theography*. It is a testimony of Truth. This revealing of Jesus will benefit new and old Christians alike.

Joshua Lee Henry (Amazon)



CHURCH 3.0 by Neil Cole www.amazon.com

When I read Cole's second book, *Organic Church*, I found myself thinking along two veins. First, I remember the fundamental logic that ran

through the book; from a biblical and missiological perspective, Cole's assertions made perfect sense. Second, I clearly remember thinking, "While these thoughts are all good, what about...?" Church 3.0 is dedicated to answering the attentive reader's "What about..." questions.

Questions answered that are, in my opinion, of particular importance are: How do organic church expressions keep from becoming ingrown? How does the organic church address missional living in a way conventional expressions do not? While there's no doubt many New Testament churches met in homes, what about the overtly-centralized Jerusalem church? What about heresy?

Having read my fair share of books, I am well aware of fluff. Cole's *Church 3.0* isn't that. While the book is certainly assessable to the average reader, Cole artfully addresses important issues at a seminary level. His treatment of the varying expressions of the New Testament church, for example, is superb. Not only does Cole

outline each model's characteristics (Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, Roman, and Ephesian), he explains the pluses and minuses of each, allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusions regarding the missional effectiveness of each expression.

As a former pastor, church staffer, missionary, and professor, let me assure you *Church 3.0* is worth your time. Although many have watched the rise of the megachurch, an equal number are concerned with the McDonaldization of the church (for a thorough discussion, read John Drane's *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry, and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty*). Cole's *Church 3.0* not only gives voice to such concerns, he articulates a biblical ecclesiology grounded in a now-proven track record of multiplying churches that are both self-perpetuating and self-propagating.

Traver Dougherty (Amazon)

Stay up to date with news, events and challenging articles on the **OIKOS Blog** - www.blog.oikos.org.au

Top Ten Resources If You Are Newer to Simple/Organic Church

Robert Thoman simplechurchjournal.com asked some friends to help him compile the resources that were most helpful to them when they were first learning about simple/organic church life. Some of them were kind enough to mention his own blog as well as his book ("Simple/House Church Revolution"). But this list represents ten other key resources mentioned in no particular order.

BOOKS

1. Pagan Christianity by George Barna and Frank Viola

An in-depth look at many of our current church practices and traditions with a prophetic call to move from the business organizational model back to the living organism that church was meant to be.

2. Organic Church by Neil Cole

A groundbreaking description of the living, reproductive church that motivates readers to go and be the church in the smoking sections of life instead of being satisfied with Sunday morning church attendance.

3. Houses that Change the World by Wolfgang Simson

I have seen this book open people's eyes time and time again as Wolfgang challenges readers to break free from the church structures of the past in order to bring the church to the people. You will find it difficult to go back to 'church as usual' after reading this.

4. The Naked Church by Wayne Jacobsen

From the cover: "This compelling book will challenge you to look beyond the externals of contemporary church life with its glittering buildings, extensive programs, beloved celebrities and political muscle and find a relationship with God that will bring

his powerful, life-changing presence into everyday circumstances."

5. The Rabbit and the Elephant (and other titles) by Tony and Felicity Dale

How evangelism along with micro-church planting can change our world... literally. This book is simple, to the point, and filled with a refreshing look at how the world can be reached through the power of the small.

ONLINE RESOURCES

6. House2House

A plethora of resources, articles, videos, and links to other materials that you don't want to miss.

7. The Verge Network

Everything missional, including lots of good video, all in one place.

8. What Is Simple Church - a video

A great overview and insight into the world of simple church.

9. Tidal Wave - a video

An excellent foundation on the why and how of organic/house church.

10. Simple Church on a Napkin - a video

Short and to the point. It can be drawn on a napkin!

OTHER KEY MENTIONS

- Reimagining Church by Frank Viola
- An Army of Ordinary People by Felicity Dale
- Organic Leadership by Neil Cole
- So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore by Wayne Jacobsen
- Lk10.com - Connecting and equipping house church leaders around the world.

And there's a lot more. Drop us a line with your favourites to editor@oikos.org.au



How do I find (or start) a house church?

OIKOS Australia observes a strict privacy policy, and because of that we do not publish a directory of home churches. However you may find assistance by going to our website, clicking on to your State on the map on the OIKOS Home Page. The Regional Team members will be happy to assist you where they can.

If you don't know of a group in your area, starting a simple-church is ... well, probably simpler than you think.

- Start with two or three friends - have a meal together, and share your vision. Plan to encourage one another, share your lives, pray together to seek God's way forward to be and to do what He wants for you as a gathering and for the community around you. It's as simple as that!
- Scan through all the sections of the OIKOS website which provide background and resources about home church
- Contact us about a Seminar in your part of the world. Go to the Events Section on the website to find out details.
- Use the map at the front to talk with someone in your region about particular needs or questions you may have.
- Access 'Resources' to find lots to help you, including Children and Teens, Disability Matters, Legal Issues that affect home churches, The 'Ten Series Booklets' and lots more.
- Become a Subscriber to the quarterly OIKOS Magazine. (oikos.org.au)

Does a house church need a leader or pastor?

Although all house churches are different, and they decide individually how they want to do things, in general there are no "pastors." At least there doesn't need to be. We believe that

the Holy Spirit can use any believer to teach or encourage the group. In a house church, everyone is expected to participate and be looking for ways to use the gifts the Holy Spirit provides (see 1 Cor. 14:26).

Certainly there is usually a facilitator of the group (although it doesn't need to be the same person that facilitates from meeting to meeting). We believe that even a new believer could start a church in their home without feeling like they need a trained professional to come and lead it, or needing money to support such a person. We find that the lack of a specified pastor encourages every person in the group to look for answers by searching the Scriptures and looking to the Holy Spirit, rather than depending on the pastor to interpret. (House2House.com)

What do you do when you get together?

This will vary from church to church . . . but here are some of the basic elements that tend to be present in every house church:

- **FOOD** - When you get together, eat! It provides a great atmosphere for people to have honest open communication with each other.
- **OPEN PARTICIPATION** - 1 Corinthians 14:26 is the basis for what we do when we get together. The key is "Each one has..." Everybody should be able to take part.
- **BIBLE STUDY** - Keep it simple and interactive. A great technique is to look over a few verses together and then share with each other what each person gets out of the verses.
- **PRAYER** - Find out what is happening in each other's lives and take the time to pray for each other. Expect God to move powerfully and to speak to the group as you pray.
- **SIMPLICITY** - Make sure that whatever you do can be duplicated. If the church is going to multiply rapidly it must be kept simple.

For an idea of what this looks like, see the "When You Come Together" DVD at www.house2house.com

If you have a question regarding Simple Church we'd love to have it. Drop us a line at editor@oikos.org.au

Surfing Simple Church Sites worth checking out on the Web

It has been said that the current worldwide interest in Simple / Organic Church owes a great deal to the invention of the internet. Certainly a quick google of 'home church' can open a Pandora's box of fascinating and challenging simple-church sites. Here's a couple worth checking out.

Sowers Seed is a blog magazine edited by a Canadian named Rob Ross. It is published on the paper.li platform and he describes it as a collection of the 'latest news, events and resources for contextual ministry'. He updates daily with regular blog posts and contributions from church thinkers like Alan Knox, Alan Hirsch, Felicity Dale plus fascinating articles, videos and photos from across a broad secular spectrum on topics from politics to

technology. Go to www.paper.li/oikosministries/church (no connection with OIKOS Australia)

House2House is the premier US site for all things housechurch - simplechurch. It's a great site with a ton of resources. You can register your group on it (for visiting Americans?) or find a church (when visiting the US?) Not many Aussie churches on it though. Go to www.site.house2house.com

And if you come across an interesting site or blog worth featuring in future editions, please let us know, complete with a bit of a review.

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