

OIKOS

australia

Where Can I Find a
TRUE CHURCH?

BRIDGING THE AUSSIE DIVIDE Bruce Bennie
The Jesus Aussies would recognise...

Hearing God for Ourselves Roger Thoman

Catching a New Wave 2016 OIKOS NATIONAL GATHERING



Steps forward.....

Following the experience and impact of the Oikos National Conference in August, the National team and regional coordinators and others have all been challenged and inspired to seek the Lord and to ask what the next steps are. Some practical steps and directions are becoming clearer and resonating in our hearts.

1. Hearing from God and prayer walking. The starting point is to prayerfully seek the Holy Spirit's leading. Jesus himself said that he only did what saw his Father doing (John 5:19). He further stated that He didn't speak his own words but "the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it" John 12:49. Following Jesus then is a daily seeking for God's direction and instruction and promptings. This can be to speak to, or pray with someone, or do whatever the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do.



As a step of faith we are challenging ourselves to prayer walk in our region and look for persons of peace. This could involve prayer walking in each village or suburb that we find ourselves in, or in areas within our regions

As an encouragement we will plot on a map on the new website where this activity is taking place.

2. We are challenged in faith to develop at least one new second generation Missional Community (simple church) in our area/region in the next 12 months.

The strategy of Jesus following his ascension for extending his Kingdom involved his followers going into all the world and making and multiplying disciples and groups of believers. We see this growth unfolding in the book of Acts. Today we are entrusted with completing this mission in our regions in Australia.

3. The Regional leaders plan to run at least one regional meeting in their area. We are finding that more and more people are looking for something: sometimes they are unsure of what it might look like but are sensing there is something more. They are also seeking encouragement, connecting with others, and to journey together with

OIKOS Australia

Oikos exists to build the Kingdom of God by multiplying disciple-makers and simple church

DIRECTOR: Phil Brown

EDITOR: Phillip Walters

SUB EDITOR: Phil Brown

MAIL:

OIKOS Australia
25 Oak Street
Bentleigh VIC 3204

EMAIL:

philbrown@oikos.org.au
editor@oikos.org.au

WEBSITE:

www.oikos.org.au

MOBILE:

0409 137 988 (Phil Brown)

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

To subscribe to OIKOS Magazine please go to the Website or contact us.

COPYRIGHT: The articles and graphics, except where noted, are copyright to OIKOS Australia Inc. If you wish to reprint articles please contact us. Permission is not generally refused, except where it is not ours to grant.

DISCLAIMER: OIKOS Magazine is not affiliated with or connected to any other magazine of the same name

NEXT EDITION: The Summer edition of OIKOS Magazine will appear in December. Suggestions and news are welcome. Please send them in by November 30th.



As 'Church' Happened Tonight...

photo/Newtowngraffiti.flickr

The apostle Paul in referring to the gifts he had received from the Philippian church to support him in his gospel work describes them as “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”
Philippians 4:18

I meditated on this “fragrance” pleasing in the nostrils of God when ‘church’ happened tonight. It was a week day evening at the local pub, and the ‘regulars’ had gathered, usually about 6 or 7 of us. That is not including the hard-to-count ‘irregulars’ or the intermittent, transitory and occasional members. We encounter them, or more accurately them us, each week. The ‘them’ were there tonight, being the many non-Christians, those for whom Jesus died, who walk by and take notice of ‘church’ as it happens.

As we learned from the Bible some could be seen to be listening and also heads were raised when we had our prayer time. One guy, Charlie, a fringe ‘regular’, stopped for a chat and to ask some questions which provided the opportunity to share the gospel of the Jesus who loves him - when ‘church’ happened tonight. At other times there are those who will not just stay but will return at another meeting. As ‘church’ happened tonight we promised to pray for Ethel who asked

for prayer, and sometimes the ‘church’ provides material or practical help.

As I was at ‘church’ tonight I reflected that all this happens because our ‘church’ has no walls, for it meets, often uncomfortably, in the outside eating and smoking area of a pub, always engaging actively or passively with the lost, those for whom Jesus died. Our ‘church’ is one expression of an ‘Unbounded Church’ i.e. with no ‘bounds’ (that is walls) to separate the ‘congregation’ from the non-church community around it. It is also a church set free, unbound from standard forms. When ‘church’ happens it is in its very essence a ‘kingdom outbreak’ in the darkness of the lost, where the ‘pagans’ can see a functioning Christian community at least once a week, one which is culturally accessible to them.

There are many other examples of an Unbounded Church - they can and do meet in clubs, cafes, playgroups that are ‘church for those who come’, in workplaces, skate parks etc. The options are limitless.

This is a church where there is indeed a “fragrance”; one of stale beer, passive smoking, a lot of often raucous noise, extreme foul language and obscene jokes, and sometimes awkward behaviour by people who

have had a few too many. But it is a ‘Kingdom-Nearness’ because it is the presence of Jesus and a real and regular engaging with those who need him, but who would never ever darken the doors of a ‘proper’ church. This is the essential and uncomfortable shape of mission to our 21st century society.

As ‘church’ happened tonight I reflected on the essence of Christian discipleship - that our gifts - our time, money, energy and talents - should be used as ‘fragrant’ offerings. Tonight we did indeed offer our variety of gifts - strangely wrapped in the ‘fragrance’ of stale beer and tobacco smoke, yes - but I suspect that to God this just might be the sweetest smell in His nostrils, indeed “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”

Editor’s note: The pub pictured is not the pub where Martin meets - but it is a pub where someone who needs Jesus meets.



Martin Bragger lives with his wife Sandie in Thirroul, on the south coast of NSW. He is the founder of Unbounded Church. A former atheist, painfully dragged kicking and

screaming into the kingdom of God, he is working with others in trying to write a map for the missional journey down the road we have not yet travelled.

THE JESUS AUSSIES

WOULD

Mission in the Sun Burnt Land

RECOGNISE

Bruce Bennie

The Christian church has had an intriguing history in Australia. Even the smallest country town, with its one pub, dusty petrol station, and silo standing next to a deserted train line, can often boast an Anglican or Catholic church somewhere on its main street. In some cases, its only street.

But while church buildings are a common sight in Australian suburbs and rural areas, many Aussies in today's market-place often find the church irrelevant, dull, and boring. For many, the church has carried contradictory messages. While endeavouring to declare the love of God, many have perceived the church as being judgemental, authoritarian, and talking a language every day folks struggle to understand. Indeed, Jesus has appeared as something of an embarrassment to red-blooded Aussies blokes who enjoy the wide open spaces, the beaches and the sports fields. Oh, they may admit, Jesus is okay when it comes to giving kids a sense of right and wrong in Sunday School, but once the kids have hit a certain age, they feel it is time to teach the kids how the 'real world' works. After all, they

muscle, one can't let a dose of 'religion' interrupt 'real' life.

Aussies have historically been a down to earth practical lot. It has taken a pragmatic nature to survive and thrive in this sunburnt land. Mal Garvin covers well the early history of this nation in his book *Us Aussies*. Garvin describes the 'currency lads and lasses', the first white native born children who grew up never knowing any other home than Australia. They didn't take authority too seriously, were never valued by the political or military power elite, yet felt at home in the bush, learning many skills of the land from the Aborigines. These first born white Australians of the settlements didn't compare the gum trees and the scrub to the 'ordered woods and gardens' of Mother England. For them, there was no comparison: Australia was home. And so they grew up with a love of this land, and would happily take the mickey out of the snobs – those 'sons of nobility' – who kept looking back to England as the true home of civilisation. And so there was something unique in the home-grown Aussie character that didn't take posh airs and graces too seriously. Indeed, this kind of character is embodied in

Crocodile Dundee and brings a grin of recognition from many Australians.

Underlying Australian culture is the expression of 'mateship'. From the early days in the bush, and on the gold fields, and with the famous Aussie diggers on the battlefield, mateship was an enduring Aussie value of those who faced adversity side by side and had each other's backs. It is often referred to as the ANZAC spirit, and is remembered every April 25th. The Kokoda Track memorial captures this spirit well on four granite pillars – Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice.

ANZAC Day has been called Australia's only national 'religious' ceremony, where the nation pauses to remember those who gave their lives for this country. There is something about that spirit that touches the Aussie heart; where Jesus' words of laying down one's life for a friend comes home with a fresh relevance. And in many country towns, in older churches, community halls, and clubs, there is always the Roll of Honour remembering those from the wars who have made that sacrifice. This



Photo: danieldimarco.flickr

attitude of mateship permeated has much of our culture, and has helped give a 'fair go' to anyone, from whatever culture, who respected this sun-burnt land.

Unfortunately, the Christian church has not always been perceived as sharing this sense of mateship with their fellow Australians. It has been felt by many as standing on the high moral ground, removed and aloof from many aspects of Australian life. This could partly be the result of the nation's earliest memories of the church, when preachers on Sunday served as magistrates during the week, dishing out punishment to those who broken the law in the days of the First Settlement. They came to be thought of as the 'whipping parsons', presiding at floggings and hangings during the week, and preaching to convicts marched under guard to services on Sundays. Such memories persisted in the minds of early Australians for the first one hundred years of the country. As many convicts completed their sentences and were released, they often moved further into the bush

and many never interacted with the church again.

Running like an undercurrent in the Aussie soul is also a sense of alienation. A persistent impression of loneliness from those trying to cope with a harsh new frontier, to those living in the vast expanse of the bush, and even to the Church, trying to relate spiritual truths to a pragmatic, secular culture. And the church in Australia was itself transported from other cultures, bringing English, Scottish, European, (and much later) American, forms of worship that hardly connected with home-grown Aussies. As John Smith writes in *Advance Australia Where?*, to "take the average person on the street into a typical church service is like taking him or her to the moon without oxygen." More than one pastor has seen the look of anxiety cross everyday Aussie faces at the mention of the word 'theology'. Religious studies that are fascinating to the believing heart can draw blank stares when it comes to communicating them to a secular, pragmatic outlook. It is more likely to earn an exasperated: "Look mate, it either works or it doesn't. And no amount of talking is going to change it."

And so the Christian church has struggled to effectively penetrate this culture. There is a sense of 'them and us'. John Hannaford in *Under a Southern Cross*, conveyed that it is as if Australians need to be delivered from their 'Aussie-ness' before they can fit into the church culture. Yet many have not found a real sense of mateship simply sitting in a pew week after week. This was reflected in the response of one young Aussie who, after attending a local church service, blurted out, "I have mates who would take a bullet for me", and went on to express great disappointment that he did not find that same quality of loyalty with Christians he knew.

This is not to deny that many Australians have through the years found a sense of home and belonging within the historic denominations, or that church agencies (and others) have worked tirelessly to help meet the needs of the poor in many ways. The Salvation Army, Anglicare, Centacare and others have been notable in this regard. And certainly many Christians have reached out in

Many are turning to a 'do-it-yourself spirituality', drawing from various elements of different religions to create a 'spirituality' with which they feel comfortable.

mission within Australia, as the stories told in 'Everyday Faith – Effective Mission in Australia' for example, endeavour to demonstrate.

Yet still the great divide exists between the church and the culture. Where the church looks to serve others in pragmatic ways, it finds a welcome place within the community. When it comes to proclaiming its 'spiritual' message, however, it is as if it does just not register. John Hannaford observes that the church dwells in a sub culture that talks at the culture, not within it. He writes "to be bureaucratically involved within a Christian sub-culture doesn't engage the broader Australian culture at all."

Clifford and Johnson, in their book *Jesus and the gods of the new age*, state that the "21st century opened with a widespread resurgence of interest in spirituality", yet they add that "today's seekers do not normally include the church on their "shopping list" of places to investigate because they regard the church as being devoid of true spirituality". Many are turning to a 'do-it-yourself spirituality', drawing from various elements of different religions to create a 'spirituality' with which they feel comfortable. Hugh MacKay, in his *Beyond Belief: How we find meaning with or without religion*, observes that interest and discussions about religion "appears to be returning to the public conversation in ways unimaginable even twenty years ago". Yet, while fewer than one in ten Australians still go to church each week, MacKay affirms that people are nevertheless hungry to discover meaning in their lives. There is a large number of people who are wanting to explore "religious ideas, including the idea of Christian faith, without relying on traditional notions of a supreme being, and without surrendering themselves to a conventional framework of doctrines and beliefs." Such people regard themselves "as spiritual but not religious" – SBNR –

and find it difficult to accept what they feel are simple religious explanations to complex issues.

Times and culture has certainly changed, and to engage with Australians now is to enter into the rich tapestry which is multiculturalism. Many feel Aussie culture has gone from 'mateship' to the 'I am entitled' generation. Differing worldviews and religions no longer birthed by historic expressions of Christianity are as common in the market place as church buildings are on street corners. The postmodern legacy of constructing your own social reality and creating sub-cultures with which to define your identity have made their mark across the Western world. For many, their view of 'truth' is found in the particular sub-culture they have identified with. What may be 'true' for one is not necessarily held to be 'true' for another, and so the wide calls for tolerance in society, tolerance that allows for one person's truth to be regarded as valid as someone else's 'truth'.

Into this setting, the contemporary church now finds its mission field.

Trying to communicate the gospel in a primarily secular but diverse culture, can be demanding and discouraging. As one pastor, when confronted in an apologetics class with the variety of world views, home-grown approaches to spirituality, and differing religions, sighed and said: "I think I will just stay at home and put my shingle up." There are many who would identify with this remark. And this struggle, in fact, has existed even from the days of the First Fleet. Rev. Samuel Marsden, though remembered as the most severe of the

'whipping parsons', penned journal entries that captured the alienation felt by those of a religious persuasion. He wrote: "that it is a matter of doubt with me that His Power will ever be seen in this place... Religion is seldom a subject of conversation excepting to ridicule its doctrines or professions, never to edify one another."

Yet if the time-honoured methods of Christian communication (for example, theology, carefully crafted sermons, or religious church events), do not easily connect with the Aussie mind-set, how then will the Spirit of Christ permeate the heart of this nation? How will everyday Aussies feel the 'tug of the relevance' of the gospel? And how will that relevance be spotted in the midst of today's spiritual smorgasbord where Jesus is often no longer seen as the way to the truth, but as simply one other way among many to find 'what is true for you'?

Committing to continue to reach this nation in the 21st century, with its labyrinth of challenges and opportunities, can open a door not only to the 'unchurched', but for the believers themselves. It is where all can discover a deeper experiential knowledge of the God who both calls us to mission and to reconciliation, who empowers and leads, and saves and heals. It is to enter into the missional heart of the living God for all people fashioned in the divine image.

The challenge, then, is to ask ourselves do we value our fellow Aussies enough to allow that 'missional heart' to become our own?

Michael Frost, in *Exiles Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*, writes: "It is the Spirit of Christ within each of us that gives rise to the missional lifestyle." Andrew Murray echoes such a view in his *The Spirit of*

**Kingdom hubs,
missional
communities,
fellowships given
to a spirit of
hospitality and
support, can all
help chart a
pathway for the
gospel in this sun-
burnt land.**

Christ. He affirms that the work of mission depends on the 'presence, guidance and power' of the Spirit. He writes that mission work "must find its initiative and its power in the distinct and direct acknowledgment of the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Here is hope for the 'Great Southland of the Holy Spirit'. It is the 'presence, guidance and power' of the Spirit that can bring the gospel to life with living testimonies that ministers the compassion and goodness of a God whose very existence secular voices have disparaged.

This would call believers into new depths of service and obedience as they choose to participate in the *Missio Dei*, that is, to participate in the mission of God and serve as those whom God sends. Kingdom hubs, missional communities, fellowships given to a spirit of hospitality and support, can all help chart a pathway for the gospel in this sun-burnt land. A pathway not drawn from the shackles of a disapproving moral legalism, but one that shares the journey with others in humility, while making room to hear every person's story as they explore God's story.

It is this process that creates new stories of grace and wholeness. While the journey may not always be smooth, it is a journey all can share in if they choose to. It is on this path that the gospel has 'its boots on' and its 'sleeves rolled up'. It shares the journey in the midst of human struggles and rising aspirations, through the longing for spiritual realities and the search for meaning that can discover a faith that is genuinely transforming. Jesus called it the abundant life, yet a life he declared was impossible to know without being joined with him (see John 15 1-17). For countless Aussies this 'life' has been blurred through our early turbulent history, our imported religious forms, and the 'us and them' separation between those of the church and those outside it.

Who might be the Jesus Aussies would recognise in all this? It is the Christ who cared for the outcast, who touched the

leper, and did not shun the powerless and marginalised in his society. It is the Christ who left the ninety-nine to search for the one that was lost and trapped in thorns. Who did not look at the woman caught in adultery with a self-righteous moral indignation, but spoke of forgiveness and an opportunity for a new beginning. The Christ who introduced us to the Good Samaritan who did what the 'religious' refused to do, and though from the 'wrong side of the tracks' himself, nevertheless carried the cost of caring for one left despised and bleeding by the roadside – a true mate.

Jesus stands as the ultimate 'mate', who was willing to lay down his life for his friends. Who rose again that his friendship would be open to anyone who was willing to come to the open arms of the Good Shepherd and discover that by his wounds we have been healed. This is the good news that this nation can discover as believers water the soil through prayer, till the soil with both Word and Spirit, and produce a harvest from the soil, where rivers of living water begin to break the spiritual drought over a secular yet searching land.

Christianity still has much to offer in the 21st century, even in the diversity of opinions, viewpoints, and various agendas. Yet it is a faith that must be lived by those who claim to believe it with an authenticity that draws the gaze to the integrity of its Founder. It is not only in the discussion of revered knowledge but in a worshipping obedience that the testimony will be spread that Christ is indeed alive and moves among his people. And if he be lifted up, lo, he will draw all people to him.



BRUCE BENNIE is the OIKOS regional leader for South Australia and is busy networking with Simple Church fellowships around Adelaide. He is interested in market place discipleship and communicating the gospel within the Australian soil. Bruce is married to Sally, who supports him completely in encouraging missional communities and building authenticity within the Body of Christ.

STEPS FORWARD (cont. from page 2)

people who have a similar passion. This is not a solo journey. It is important to see that we are part of something bigger. All across the World, God is raising up Movements of disciples who gather in simple churches or missional communities. They are relational, involve everyone, and seek to multiply by making new disciples.

We hear of exciting growth in China, India, Asia, and Africa and even Muslim countries and wonder if it can happen in Australia. Let's have the faith to believe that it can and is growing here as well. We need an army of everyday disciples going about their lives full of the Holy Spirit and seeking to take up the opportunities that God brings.

We believe this is the exciting challenge and opportunities lying ahead of us for the next 12 months and beyond. As more and more everyday people are excited by following this vision and taking practical steps guided by the Lord we will see some amazing new developments. We are seeing more of the miraculous work of God – people are being touched, and healed, and lives are being transformed.

May this truly become the great Southland of the Holy Spirit

bless you, Phil Brown
OIKOS DIRECTOR



2016 OIKOS NATIONAL GATHERING

Catching a New Wave

Photo:PetraBensted2.flickr

While it is true that we were just up the beach from Surfers Paradise, those who gathered for the 2016 Oikos National Gathering at Burley Heads, Queensland, were not really looking for an ordinary wave, nor indeed an ordinary city. They knew that there is a Paradise of a different kind coming down out of Heaven onto the earth and a wave that is mounting in the earth to bring in a lasting Kingdom, God dwelling among men.

And for that reason we gathered, to explore ways of working with Heaven to see simple, missional communities multiply in our land, filled with disciples who make disciples.

Our setting was the CYC Camp at Burleigh Heads and we were blessed to have up to 90 participants, either living in or day-visiting over the 3 days, including around 15 kids exploring how to hear God for themselves.

PHIL BROWN led us into the opening evening with the challenge to explore 2 things over the next 12 months - Passionate Spirituality and Generational Growth. Kate Brown followed this up with stories of how their family are exploring these goals in their own community, with stories of their local involvement in the environmental scene in Eagle Point and their interaction with the backpackers who work on their property.

8 ■ OIKOS Australia

Then the Matesic family gave us an insight into their activities in Albion Park, NSW, with high-schooler Destiny sharing her passion to share Christ at school, inviting her friends home for dinner and making connection with the lonelier students, an activity commented on by some of her teachers.

Ailsa and Chris talked about prayer walking and food rescue initiatives and about being spiritual mom & dad beyond their immediate family.

STUART GRAMENZ rounded off our first evening with an insight into his own spiritual journey, abandoning mega-church to give himself to only doing what the Father showed him to do. We need to be more Spirit-led, going to the ones He leads us to; like the apostle Paul, who prayed for “opportunities”.

For Stuart this was at one stage a journey into Prison Chaplaincy, going only to those God showed him. His story of the “Bad Boyz” club and of 1 month old prisoners learning to be Spirit-led were inspiring.

This was followed by an account of the amazing spread of Stuart's Spirit-Led discipling ministry in Zambia, with a 2800 home-churches multiplication happening from an initial group of 20 trainees. Stuart encouraged us to expect such an awakening here in Australia.

PETER RHOENNFELDT

The next morning was Peter Rhoennfeldt's turn to take us on a tour of “Movements in Early Christianity and Opportunities for Today”.

We looked at the rise of Christianity - a counter cultural, counter intuitive movement - from a place of obscurity to a movement that toppled an empire. We noted that Jesus first act of ministry was to make disciples. But ministry does not grow merely with a multiplication of people; there must be a multiplication of the word of God.

But faith is best shared through relational streams, beginning with a person of influence, a person of peace. Peter mused on Paul leaving Cyprus so early after the conversion of Sergius Paulas, the king of Cyprus. Did Paul then follow a trail of Sergius Paulas' relatives up through the king's home territory of Asia Minor?

Some of the Factors for the Vitality of the Early Church were: Prayer / Holy Spirit baptism / knowing what their message was / every believer a minister / ministering on the paths of life / speaking the “language” of the people / sharing in relational streams / no static church buildings.

Moving through to today's challenges, we find a scene where:

1. Most Australians have no biblical or Christian memory 2. Most don't give Christianity a thought 3. Most reject the concept of absolute truth 4. Decision are made differently by a postmodern generation.

However, Australia has not been a *secular* society for a long time. Many people see themselves as *spiritual*, whether it be new-age, Hindu, Buddhist or some ala carte basket of spirituality. We must not forget, however, that Christianity is not a philosophy or set of teachings; it is a relationship with a Person.

RUDI BAM

After morning tea we were privileged to hear from Rudi Bami, from Melbourne, a part of PIPES (Partners In Prayer and Evangelism), who shared on the subject of coming into the presence of God. He took his text from Moses, to whom God promised, "My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest." Using a light bulb as a prop Rudi reminded us that it is only when the bulb is connected to the source that it shines. The role of the Holy Spirit is primarily to bring us into the Presence. We only minister effectually and with power from the Presence.

JULIE SEOW

Julie followed with a load of sound advice on how to Keep the Flames Burning. *Ministry must be founded on rest.* And to that end we need to be mindful in times of harvest to set boundaries. Jesus had a singular focus - this place, this time, this people. He said no to baiting questions, cynicism, manipulation and pride. We need to follow his example in these things.

THE WORKSHOPS

The Saturday afternoon was set aside for workshops with Peter Rhoennfeldt sharing on Making Disciples on the Everyday Path of Life, Julie Seow - Nurturing Your Inner Life, Rudi Bam - Hosting the Presence and Stuart Gramenz teaching and demonstrating on the subject of Healing (see Jakki's story - page 10).

MORE AUSTRALIAN STORIES

Saturday evening was given to more stories. Such as the ministry of **SALLY & MICHAEL BUTLER** in Manly, NSW - walking the beach seeking opportunities. Michael shared of some of the drama

that developed from an impromptu prayer with a stressed surf instructor and Sally's ministry to the man's equally stressed wife.

Also **JAKKI & ANDREW KING** from Yeppoon who, following their own tragic loss of a new born son and a number of miscarriages, have developed Yellow Roses, a ministry to other parents, walking with them through the grief of their own similar loss. To help counter the heaviness of that ministry Jakki has also found a local Gospel Choir, a deliberate mix of Christians and non-Christians with a common love for singing and fun. They all recently returned from a North Keppel Island getaway that helped bond their friendship as a group.

SUE shared on the ministry of PIPES (Partners In Prayer and Evangelism). She spoke of the supernatural realm breaking out through neighbourliness and spoke a powerful blessing over us all.

AMANDA from Robinson, NSW, shared her involvement with a local kids club where God has opened up opportunities to come alongside other mothers in their parenting and relationship struggles.

Then **CARL MUSCH**, taking a break from his ministry among the indigenous communities up north, gave a humorous but challenging glimpse into outback ministry. Carl has spent the last 29 years ministering in aboriginal communities with around 30 simple churches established across the north.

There is a multiplication of interest among aboriginal elders with MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) being recently asked to try to gather leaders together. Survival in such communities, however, requires uncomplicated churches and a need for the Body of Christ to embrace aboriginal

communities. There is a real need right now for people who are willing to commit their lives to people in the north, to help birth well-grounded disciples among them. Carl also put out a call for the financial support of current workers.

THE KIDS

Next morning, with our bags backed ready to go home, we gathered together for a final feast, starting with the sweetest of entrees, a report from the kids. I'll leave it for Destiny and Jordan to give us an overview of their time together. Suffice it to say that we were left with a confidence that there is a generation coming forth who are already hearing from God and riding that wave that we spoke of earlier.

BUT THERE'S MORE...

More ministry followed the kids, with Peter Rhoennfeldt sharing on the Spirituality of Jesus and Stuart Gramenz giving us an oversight of his popular book *The Right Word at the Right Time for the Right Person* (obtained from spiritled.com). Both of these sessions were videoed and are available on our newly re-vamped website at oikos.org.au.

GOING HOME

It was then time to go home. Kate Brown gave us an overview of the new, much more versatile Oikos website; Phil Walters (me) encouraged everyone to grab as many copies as they could use of the free "How To ..." edition of Oikos Magazine; Phil Brown summed up the challenges that lay ahead of us and thanked all those that helped pull the Gathering together. And then it was time to say goodbye to newly formed friends and longer established acquaintances.

We hadn't quite been to Paradise but we had a better vision of a more substantial one, coming down out of heaven, than the one we caught glimpses of across the bay.





KIDS OF DESTINY

My name is Destiny and I am 16, I love Jesus and am passionate about kids! For the Oikos gathering, I was asked to hang out with the kids and share whatever Jesus wanted me to with them.

Leading up to the weekend, my mum, Amanda and I asked Holy Spirit what to share, and He said to "learn to listen to his voice." He also asked me to wait on him and write an encouragement and verse for each kid!

Throughout the weekend I absolutely loved building relationships with the kids. We played A LOT of games, talked about how to hear God speak, shared personal stories of experiences, learnt a bible verse song, built friendships...

My favourite time was when I gave each kid paper and pens, and asked them to wait on God and ask him to speak to them. Thanks to Kieran, Jamison and Amanda (wonderful helpers on the weekend) who sat and helped the children.

It was truly amazing to see that Holy Spirit spoke so clearly to each one of them. Children are so open to hearing God and I learnt that you can never underestimate the faith of a child. They all shared what God spoke in front of the adults and sung a song too! It was a privilege to know these kids and to be able to speak into their lives, they are the next generation!!!

JAKKI'S STORY

At this year's National Oikos Conference I had the pleasure of sitting in on a workshop by Stuart Gramenz about praying for physical healing. I was very keen to attend his workshop because physical healing is not something I have had much personal experience with since becoming a Christian. While I have always known that God is a healing God and have seen Him heal many emotional

and spiritual wounds, I had never personally witnessed physical healing for myself. It was a profoundly humbling experience to witness the Power of the Holy Spirit displayed before my very eyes as Stuart prayed over a number of people. But even more profound was to experience it for myself.

I was born with congenital hip dysplasia – both hips have been dislocated since birth. This is not an uncommon condition and has a fairly simple fix when babies are diagnosed early. However, in my case I was not diagnosed until I was almost four years old, which made it too late for me to have the simple fix. There was surgery on my left hip at that time. Unfortunately it did not work but it did leave me with lovely scar, a plate and four pins in my left thigh. As I have grown older, the pain has increased as the cushioning cartilage in the joint has worn away leaving the bones of the joint to rub and grind on each other with every step. I have lived with chronic pain my whole life, and I have managed it quite well, but when I was 27 was told I would need a full hip replacement within the next five years. That was six years ago...

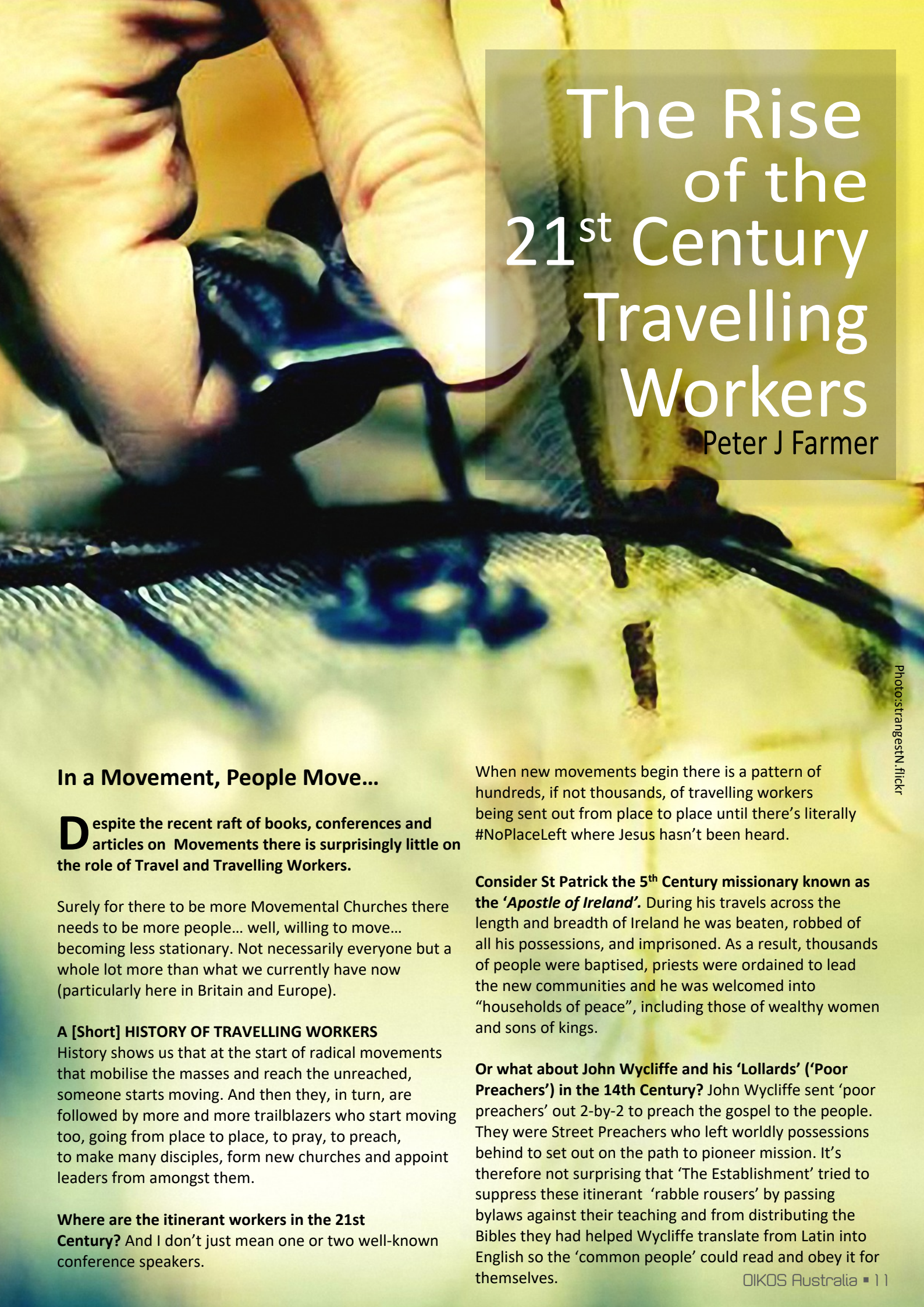
In the workshop, Stuart asked if anyone had one leg that was shorter than the other. My left leg has always been 1.5 inches shorter than my right leg. So I sheepishly put up my hand. As Stuart prayed, he held my legs out with my feet together for everyone to see what the Lord would do. The instant he prayed I felt the muscles in my hip joint relax, muscles that I didn't even realise were tense. There was an instant release of muscle tension and I felt my leg pull out of the joint, realign and then move back into position. I was nervous and so had closed my eyes but I'm told that

everyone saw my leg extend out 1.5 inches past my right leg and then move back to being even. It is absolutely the most bizarre thing I have ever felt in my life. Bizarre, but awesome!

As with anything, the healing I experienced at the conference is a continuing process. Now that my legs are the same length there are new challenges and the rest of my body is still adjusting to the change. I walk differently, to the point that other people are noticing. My back is straighter and I think I'm slightly taller as a result. But the deepest level of change is not physical.

When you have lived your entire life with chronic pain, having never known differently, to then have it suddenly disappear can be very confronting. For the first time I am able to see just how much of my life has been dictated by this injury. To suddenly be without this injury is changing my whole identity. Identity is a deeply spiritual issue. There is no longer a nagging pain to remind me that I am broken because of the negligence of others. Instead, I am mended because my Heavenly Father sees me and has been attentive to my pain. To explain the breadth and depth of this particular kindness of God toward me would easily fill a book. In short, where I was once restricted by pain, I now feel liberated to embrace a more holistic joy.





The Rise of the 21st Century Travelling Workers

Peter J Farmer

Photo: strangestN flickr

In a Movement, People Move...

Despite the recent raft of books, conferences and articles on Movements there is surprisingly little on the role of Travel and Travelling Workers.

Surely for there to be more Movemental Churches there needs to be more people... well, willing to move... becoming less stationary. Not necessarily everyone but a whole lot more than what we currently have now (particularly here in Britain and Europe).

A [Short] HISTORY OF TRAVELLING WORKERS

History shows us that at the start of radical movements that mobilise the masses and reach the unreached, someone starts moving. And then they, in turn, are followed by more and more trailblazers who start moving too, going from place to place, to pray, to preach, to make many disciples, form new churches and appoint leaders from amongst them.

Where are the itinerant workers in the 21st Century? And I don't just mean one or two well-known conference speakers.

When new movements begin there is a pattern of hundreds, if not thousands, of travelling workers being sent out from place to place until there's literally #NoPlaceLeft where Jesus hasn't been heard.

Consider St Patrick the 5th Century missionary known as the 'Apostle of Ireland'. During his travels across the length and breadth of Ireland he was beaten, robbed of all his possessions, and imprisoned. As a result, thousands of people were baptised, priests were ordained to lead the new communities and he was welcomed into "households of peace", including those of wealthy women and sons of kings.

Or what about John Wycliffe and his 'Lollards' ('Poor Preachers') in the 14th Century? John Wycliffe sent 'poor preachers' out 2-by-2 to preach the gospel to the people. They were Street Preachers who left worldly possessions behind to set out on the path to pioneer mission. It's therefore not surprising that 'The Establishment' tried to suppress these itinerant 'rabble rousers' by passing bylaws against their teaching and from distributing the Bibles they had helped Wycliffe translate from Latin into English so the 'common people' could read and obey it for themselves.

George Fox and the Early Quakers also faced strong opposition and persecution in the 17th Century.

Fox preached publicly in marketplaces and fields. By 1651, he had gathered other preachers around him and continued to travel the length and depth of the country.

From 1660's-1670's Fox stepped up his travels; setting up an infrastructure of monthly (local) and quarterly (regional) meetings to pull together the scattered groups of Seekers. He married Margaret Fell who was also very active in the movement and campaigned for equality and the acceptance of women as preachers. Fox, and many of his followers, were thrown into prison constantly for 'causing a disturbance', so that by 1657 there were approximately 1000 'Friends' in prison.

The Quakers maintained that God could speak to ordinary people without them having to pay tithes or come under 'churchmen'. This, of course, didn't go down well with established churches and their leaders who held power locally at the time! But whilst in prison Fox continued to write and preach, as his fellow prisoners also needed to hear the gospel!!

John Wesley and the Early Methodist 'Circuit Riders' of the 18th Century had over 300 itinerant preachers.

Many of them came to faith through Wesley's preaching and he appointed them because of their passion for evangelism and willingness to follow Wesley's instructions. John Wesley called these men his 'sons in the gospel'. Their main task was to travel and preach outdoors and to instruct the emerging groups of people. Most of them were unordained ordinary people and were given 'unofficial' authority to preach outside parish lines. This, of course, was perceived as a threat to the status quo and these 'lay preachers' were attacked by

clergy in sermons and attacked on the streets by riotous mobs.

The genius of Wesley (and Jesus before him) of sending out ordinary people to preach and lead was one of the key factors in the growth of Methodism so that by the time of his death there were 135,000 'methodists' and 541 itinerant workers, but by 1957 there were 40 million Methodists worldwide. Wesley had ridden over 250,000 miles on horseback, preached over 40,000 sermons and written 5000 pieces of literature, including sermons, tracts and pamphlets of every kind.

One of Wesley's most well-known 'sons' was Methodist Circuit Rider Francis Asbury, who moved to America to repeat the pattern there and by doing so increased Methodism in America to 214,000 by the time he died in 1816.

We now travel to the 19th Century to join **William and Catherine Booth and the early Salvation Army**, who were real fire-starters. William started open-air preaching in the East End of London, preaching to crowds of people in the streets and outside of notorious pubs. This was one of the first movements to appoint an army of women preachers. In 1867, Booth had only 10 full-time workers but by 1874 the number had grown to 1,000 volunteers and 42 evangelists, and between 1881-1885, 250,000 people were 'converted' through the Army's work!

In 1906 Booth innovated again by hopping into a motor car and stopping off in cities, towns and villages to preach to the assembled crowds from inside his

open-top car. William travelled extensively during his lifetime and at the time of his death had established Army work in 58 countries and colonies.

How about the Jeffreys brothers and the Early Pentecostal Movement in Britain in the 20th Century. George and Stephen Jeffreys came to Christ during the 1904-1905 Welsh Revival and later began travelling and preaching with reports of miraculous healings and other wonders following. George travelled throughout Belfast and all over Northern Ireland with a group of travelling workers known as the Elim Evangelistic Band and founded his first church in Belfast and another in Monaghan, birthing the Elim Pentecostal Church Movement. Throughout the 1920's, as a result of their evangelistic and healing campaigns, public halls were filled, thousands converted, many healed and dozens of Elim churches were planted all across the UK

I HAVE A QUESTION...

When are we going to do this sort of thing again?

SOME OF OUR OWN JOURNEY

15 years ago a few of us began Pioneer Mission in one small area of around 10-15,000 people called Meadows, in Nottingham, UK. We preached on the streets, ran creative workshops in schools and community centres and hosted urban gospel/hip-hop type events called DREAM. The emerging church met from house to house throughout the area and also through church-on-the-street. The church did not meet in one place but was

scattered all across the area. It wasn't long before I was 'called into meetings' by established churches for my unorthodox methods and being questioned on who had given me the authority to do such things.

Not long after that I married Marsha Farmer, a prophetic warrior who had planted a church in Hyson Green/Forest Fields, and we began



travelling across the city and county. We formed a small team who moved from place to place up to 3-4 times a week to pray and to preach through a variety of different methods in a variety of people groups. We referred to this as Mission Nottingham. We then began praying through the 12 Regions of Britain and Ireland going to one region per month for 12 days at a time... this became known as MissionBritain and MissionIreland, our immediate joint goal being to plant 1000 churches.

And in recent years we've started travelling to the 50 countries of Europe to connect with Movement Planters looking to catalyse Disciple and Church Multiplication Movements amongst the 700+ million inhabitants of the continent.

21st CENTURY TRAVELLING WORKERS... LET'S GO!

The concept of church for many is that it is 'local' and that is certainly true, but it is also extra-local.

The pattern is that when churches become more established and particularly institutional, circuit riding tends to diminish as local leaders are appointed. However, at the start of a new movement a type of 'circuit riding' is essential. Jesus modelled a travelling ministry with at least 12 men constantly 'on the road', then extended it to a further 72 (see Matt 10, Luke 10)

In one episode with Jesus, his new disciples had just witnessed the whole of a town gather at the door to see what was going on and to be healed and released from demonic oppression. Afterwards Jesus withdrew to pray. When some of his disciples later caught up with him, instead of them planning the next stage of growth for the amazing work that had just begun in that town, Jesus announced, 'We MUST go to preach in the other towns also, that's why I've come'.

I've got a feeling Jesus is announcing that same message right now to disciples who are also getting up early in the morning to find him.

MOBILE MISSION

Surely there's never been a better time to take up the baton of the Travelling Workers. The direction of technology is heading in a direction that is very sympathetic towards mobile mission. Smart Phone technology allows you to do almost anything whilst on the move, including writing journals using Evernote, communicating live on the road using Social Media and hosting multiplication based coaching for practitioners scattered across continents using Skype and Google Hangouts whilst staying in AirBnB.

RECEIVING AND SENDING TRAVELLING WORKERS

The Apostle John gives us very brief but powerful examples of how to handle the whole movement of travelling workers.

He writes to one church where there is a leader who refuses to welcome travelling workers and their message into what he saw as 'his church'. John wryly notes that this man 'wants to be first in that church' and warns them not to follow this example (3 John).

Sadly this is still a present reality. Leaders see the church as 'theirs' so refuse to receive 'outsiders' who are 'passing through'. What's worse, this is no longer about individual leaders. This has become a culture and an institution. Most churches and Christians would see this as the 'right way to behave'.

We now see church as static and only local ... with local leaders that are fully independent bedding down into their local communities with the arrival of an outsider, a travelling worker, often feeling like an intrusion. After all, 'what do they know of our local context?' We even make jokes and snide remarks about those who are 'here today, gone tomorrow' or those who 'hit and run' or 'fly by night'.

I know that there are and have been charlatans, snake oil salesmen, prosperity preachers and charismatic prophets who can be categorised under the broad heading of 'travelling worker' and so the bad gets lumped

with the good and ALL Travelling Workers are then seen as suspect. But this is a disadvantage to the church local and global.

Thankfully the Apostle John has an answer for this too. In another letter (2 John) he addresses a church that actually readily receives outside travelling workers, but he encourages them to 'test the message' that these workers bring. If it doesn't line up with the truth, they are not to welcome them into their house (notice the church was in the house— but that is a different subject).

CALLING ALL TRAVELLING WORKERS

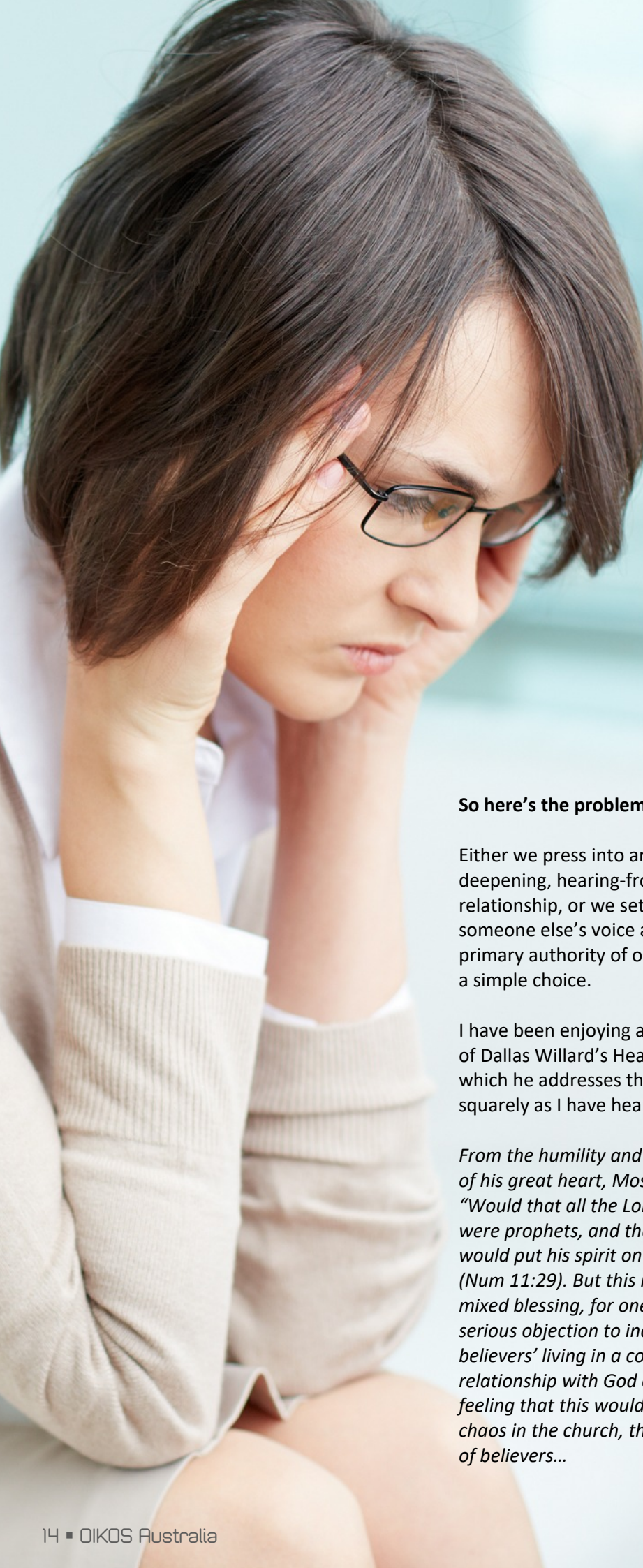
- Are you a travelling worker?
- Do you sense a call to become a travelling worker?
- Are you a house of peace that welcomes travelling workers?
- Can you help support and resource travelling workers?
- Can you become a base for training, receiving and sending travelling workers?
- Do you want to be trained in movements?

God is calling for the start of a new wave of 1000's of travelling workers across Britain and Europe... (Ed: and Australia?)

WILL YOU GO??



PETER FARMER and his wife Marcia live in Nottingham, UK with their three children. Follow Peter at www.peterjfarmer.com



Hearing God For Ourselves

or depending on others

So here's the problem...

Either we press into an ever-deepening, hearing-from-God relationship, or we settle for someone else's voice as the primary authority of our lives. It is a simple choice.

I have been enjoying a fresh read of Dallas Willard's *Hearing God* in which he addresses this issue as squarely as I have heard it:

From the humility and generosity of his great heart, Moses said, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!" (Num 11:29). But this might be a mixed blessing, for one further serious objection to individual believers' living in a conversational relationship with God comes from a feeling that this would lead to chaos in the church, the community of believers...

Such logic drives toward a hierarchy of authority and subordination and naturally results in one person's speaking for God and thus enforcing conformity. Willard goes on to say that the 'redeemed community' is meant to be made up of 'living stones' who live 'in conversation with God.' But, due to the hierarchy of religious structures, we too often find leadership is focused on 'getting others to do as they are told.'

They [such leaders] will invariably turn to controlling the flock through their own abilities to organize and drive, all suitably clothed in a spiritual terminology and manner.

And, let us be honest, this happens because so many followers prefer giving this authority to someone else rather than take responsibility for the supreme task (and joy) of learning the ways and voice of God through our deepening relationship with Him.

As Willard says, “God has created us for intimate friendship with himself—both now and forever.”

When we grasp this, it becomes the central focus of our lives as we take on both the challenges and joys of developing such a friendship.

Today there is a desperate need for large numbers of people throughout various arenas of life to be competent and confident in their practice of life in Christ and in hearing his voice. Such people would have the effect of concretely redefining Christian spirituality for our times. They would show us an individual and corporate human existence lived freely and intelligently from a hand-in-hand, conversational walk with God. That is the biblical ideal for human life.

Isn't this the very heart of the spiritual revolution that God is after for his people, the church, in this day?

Roger Thoman

simplechurchjournal.com

LISTEN AND WAIT

Listen to ... and wait for ... God's Spirit to point you toward the right persons. Let Him stop, start, redirect, and guide you.

Read: Acts 16:6-15

... if these thoughts are true, may His Spirit alone affirm them in your own heart, mind, and life.

Notice how Paul let the Spirit STOP him from two different directions he wanted to pursue in his own human wisdom. He was strong enough not to rush ahead with his own great ideas.

He took time to just pray, listen, and wait ... longer than he probably wanted to ... on the Spirit to guide him.

Soon enough God's spirit led him to a seller of purple on a riverbank who was already hungering for spiritual truth. God could see her while Paul was looking toward other cities with his limited human perception of the right direction to go.

Before Acts 16 is finished God has used Paul to saturate two unlikely groups with both Christ and embryonic churches. Paul would not likely have picked Lydia and her household, nor a jailer and his household. But the Holy Spirit was the “relationship connector,” not Paul, and certainly not an advertisement or an event!

Kenny Moore says to use a “prayer plan” rather than an “activity plan” in birthing a church among overlooked groups. This “puts flesh out of power” and depends on God's Spirit to guide us into relationships with persons He has already been drawing to Himself.

How does the Spirit speak to you?

When can you make time to listen?

Are you sensitive enough to His leading that you stop what you have in mind and let him redirect you?

Are you willing to wait on His timing? To go to persons that you would not likely have picked?

To trust that HE is working in some hearts that you can't see, making them hungry for Himself?

Let it be HIS vision, timing, plans, and connection to the persons He has in mind.

Living Example from Felicity Dale

“Around eighteen months ago, the Lord showed us prophetically that we were to start a church in one of the low-income housing projects, Springfield, about 20 minutes from our home. So we gathered together a team to pray for the area, and for several months, it was a prayer project. From time to time we would actually go and walk the area claiming it for the Kingdom, but most of our praying was done on an individual basis.

One day, Tony and I happened to be driving by, and on impulse decided to

stop and prayer walk again. Tony was specifically asking the Lord that we would meet our ‘person of peace.’ A torrential downpour surprised us and we ran to take shelter under a balcony with two Hispanic ladies who turned out to be sisters. Conversations started, and they inquired what we were doing there. (We obviously did not fit the local profile.) We explained to them that we were praying for their neighborhood, and as the conversations went one, asked if we could come by occasionally to pray about the needs in their family. They

immediately agreed, and so for the next few weeks, once twice a week we would drop in and pray for them, staying just fifteen minutes or so. It was not long before we were seeing very specific answers to prayer.

One of the sisters, “Rosa,” turned out to be our person of peace. (She has a heart as big as Texas – everyone is welcomed and loved by her.) Our next step was to ask if we could bring some of her friends and family members together, and so weekly meeting time was set up at her home. She very quickly became a Christian and this led to many of her family members doing the same. We have touched several others homes in the complex, too. Now a year later, the apartment is crowded out every week with 30 to 40 people jammed in, sitting on stairs, on the floor, kids everywhere. Neighbors are telling us that the project has begun to change; there is less violence and some of the drug dealers are moving out.” (Excerpt from *Getting Started*, by Felicity Dale, simplychurch.com)

Note the strong emphasis on prayer for God's guidance, timing, and relationship connections ... He sent that downpour at precisely the right time and used it to connect precisely the right persons!

Article found at everywherechurch.com

Use a “prayer plan” rather than an “activity plan” in birthing a church among overlooked groups. This “puts flesh out of power” and depends on God's Spirit to guide us into relationships with persons He has already been drawing to Himself.

Where can I find a true church?

Advanced Search
Language Tools

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

Curious about today's homepage? Add your own background image now

Advertising Programs

Business Solutions

About Google

© 2010 - Privacy

TOBIE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

Where Can I Find a True Church?

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (Paul, writing to Timothy)

Have you ever heard a fellow believer say that he or she is interested in the “deep things” of God?

Perhaps the words were stated differently, but with the same basic meaning: “I believe the Lord has called me to a higher Christian life.” Or something similar.

Have you ever witnessed the excitement when such a person discovers a group of believers with similar noble intentions, especially if the group appears to have already made some progress into these “deeper” or “higher” things of God?

Have you ever noticed how often such liaisons fall apart? And how often somebody (or a few bodies) ends up disappointed, offended or hurt? Or, if they manage to stick it out, how often the group tends to become so insular and elitist that you end up feeling more comfortable around the shallow folks from the little traditional church around the corner?

Paul's words to the Romans come to mind: *The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.*

Why?

1. Romans 7: The Efforts of the Flesh

Firstly, Paul's apt words above come from Romans 7 – the chapter that is famous for teaching us that any religious intentions are doomed if they depend on the abilities of the flesh. Whilst the law does a great job of formulating the spiritual “ideal”, it does not impart the life necessary to live up to that ideal.

Of course we regularly forget this, and so we take God's “thou shalt” to mean “thou can”. But we are mistaken. As Paul concludes in Romans 7, the desire to do good does not imply any ability to do so.

Similarly, a group's desire to be the “true church” says absolutely nothing about their ecclesiastical aptitude. Passion is not necessarily an indicator of talent, as television music reality shows regularly reveal. Spiritual passion is even less so, according to Paul. When acted upon, it will only succeed in revealing spiritual incapacity, the aim being to force us to look away from ourselves and to God who is the builder of his own church, thank you.

2. John 4: The Religious Wish Dream

Secondly, human liaisons that aim to fulfill personal needs are doomed to fail. The alarming divorce rate testifies quite clearly to this. When we are attracted to people because they make us happy, we will end up feeling contempt for them when they make us unhappy. That is, unfortunately, the tail end of the deal.

Of course the same goes for people who make us feel spiritual...

No chapter in the Bible illustrates this quite like John 4. Jesus uses the water at the bottom of the well as a metaphor for the serial marriages of the Samaritan woman. “Drink of this, and you will thirst again”, he says. In essence: “You keep on drawing from a well, but it does not satisfy. You are looking for me, but you are looking in the wrong places. No husband can fill the emptiness within you or make you whole. You are, in fact, attributing God-like characteristics to fallen human beings when you expect them to do so.”

The answer? “Come and drink from me. That is the only place where you will find life and satisfaction.”

The same goes for church life. When our personal needs manifest as an ecclesiastical “wish dream”, as Bonhoeffer called it, we are heading for disaster.

3. 1 Timothy 3: Conceit

Finally, and most importantly, the single thing that is most deadening to a group of believers is the sincere conviction that they have discovered something that others are still looking for. The problem with this type of thinking is more than the sheer arrogance that underlies it. It is the insinuation that God reserves his fullness, and the glory thereof, for a select group (Continued on page 19)



Neil Cole

A New Trend in the Kingdom of God

I have the privilege of traveling around the world equipping people to release Jesus movements. I see first hand what God is doing globally.

One trend I am seeing everywhere is the planting of new works that may be church (in a broader definition) but are so much more than a local church according to our common understanding. For lack of a better language I refer to them as *kingdom outposts*. These outposts share a few common characteristics:

- They create micro businesses that employ people that are becoming kingdom agents in the world and provide a needed product for the neighborhood.
- They involve providing a localized spiritual family in sustainable community (often living in close proximity, together under a single roof or on a shared property). For these people, church has become so much more than a once a week event.
- They often practice sustainable farming (even in urban settings) to provide for the spiritual family and often the neighborhood as well.
- They often do volunteer work to

clean up neighborhoods and serve the community in tangible and often thankless ways. Painting buildings, building or fixing homes, planting trees, picking up trash, feeding the homeless are things that are a part of the regular rhythm in these outposts.

- They often work closely with very marginalized people in their neighborhood and provide a path toward self-sufficient living and kingdom fruitfulness.
- They are able to change rapidly and start new things whenever the opportunity presents itself.
- They are beginning to find each other and network on a global scale... which is exciting.

There are multiple reasons for these shifts. Here are a few:

- Reliance on tax-free donations is tenuous in a future that is rapidly becoming hostile to Christianity and many well-established ministries will discover this in an abrupt and sobering moment.
- The artificial separations of secular and sacred as well as clergy and laity are being dissolved. The result will be a global impact of God's

people that are no longer segregated from the world.

- Sustainable, local and green enterprise is not just a fad; this is a strong movement that provides a kingdom opportunity to serve our world and its inhabitants in a responsible way.
- Disciple-making on the job and on the streets is far more effective than two one hour meetings a week at a church building.
- Providing jobs, raising entrepreneurs and equipping people to prosper in this rapidly changing world is a necessity.

There are no sermons, Sunday schools or "services," in these kingdom



Review

4 CHAIR DISCIPLING by Dann Spader

Picture it. Four chairs. Side by side. Empty. Waiting. Which one are you?

Chair one is for the Lost. You sit here if you are still wandering, if you haven't yet come home, if you've not made your profession of faith and acknowledged Christ as Lord and accepted him as Savior.

Chair two is for the Believer. You sit here once you've made that profession of faith. Despite being next to the first chair, the distance between them is actually limitless and it is only by God's grace that you made the jump. You've undergone an extraordinary transformation. But the process is not over.

Chair three is for the Worker. You sit here once you've begun to grow in your faith. Once a baby Christian, you are now maturing and begin to take your place of responsibility within the church and within the kingdom of God.

Chair four is for the Disciple-Maker. You sit here once you've reached maturity in

the faith and can begin to teach others. That doesn't mean you stop growing, but it does mean that, in the words of Jesus, "everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."

On this illustration, Dann Spader builds his discipleship strategy. **4 Chair Discipling** breaks the process of sanctification into four steps and, as the book unfolds, talks about the unique challenges and opportunities of each step. Among his profound insights is that those in chair 4, the Disciple-Makers, may actually look like a threat to "traditional church structure." Instead of hanging around and helping out in the church, they may be more involved in their own ministries. Spader notes that churches often discourage this instead of encouraging it and reminds the church that we are to build disciples who can make disciples, not disciples we can control.

Disciple-making has always a passion of mine. I will unabashedly state that I sit in the fourth chair and it is my passion to see Christians grow up and radically affect



Dann Spader

4 Chair Discipling

Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers

their communities for Christ. Building on this simple analogy, Spader has created one of the easiest-to-understand methods of discipleship that I've seen in a long time. Of course, his book isn't exhaustive. No book on the topic can be. But it can be used as a wonderful instructional tool. I know that I'll soon be pulling out the chairs and taking my youth group through this very process.

Review by Josh Olds

outposts, yet the Scriptures are the foundation to all they do. People live and work in community, not just sing songs and pass the plate. There are no offerings taken, but there is tremendous generosity. The people of these works share their lives together. They are giving so much more than their time and ten percent of their treasure to the kingdom work. These people are giving up their whole being—their sweat, provision, vocation and sense of purpose and identity—all to Jesus.

I would measure the disciples coming out of these outposts against any coming from traditional church

forms. I'm not being boastful, just honest. I have spent time with some followers of Christ from this movement and they are not like the typical churchgoer. As my friend and associate Dezi Baker says, "they are different enough to make a difference."

I realized a while ago that you can't produce a world changing disciple with a one hour service on Sundays and a midweek hour of bible study. The deluded idea that this is how we do our spiritual work is both vast and void. Disciples are made in the hard work of real life—in the marketplace, not a meeting place. Our impact should be felt in the populace not just in the

pews. We should measure our influence out on the streets not in the seats.



NEIL COLE travels around the world sowing the seeds of God's kingdom, catalyzing the development of organic church networks and coaching leaders. Catch his blog at cole-slaw.blogspot.com

Follow us on Facebook

18 • OIKOS Australia



Keep up to date with great articles, events and comments. And also checkout our new website

www.oikos.org.au

for video and teaching resources

WHERE CAN I FIND A TRUE CHURCH?

(Continued from page 16)

of believers who have discovered the secrets to access it.

Here too, Bonhoeffer is worth quoting (keep in mind that monasticism is a mindset rather than a movement).

Monasticism was represented as an individual achievement which the mass of the laity could not be expected to emulate. By thus limiting the application of the commandments of Jesus to a restricted group of specialists, the Church evolved the fatal conception of the double standard—a maximum and a minimum standard of Christian obedience. Whenever the Church was accused of being too secularized, it could always point to monasticism as an opportunity of living a higher life within the fold, and thus justify the other possibility of a lower standard of life for others. ...By and large, the fatal error of monasticism lay not so much in its rigorism as in the extent to which it departed from genuine Christianity by setting up itself as the individual achievement of a select few, and so claiming a special merit of its own.

And then, of course, there are the wise words of T. Austin Sparks:

We must beware of thinking in terms of advanced or special doctrines. Scriptural teaching is not departmental or sectional. We may hear of 'higher truth' or 'advanced teaching', as though there were something special reserved for the few. So there arises the idea of 'higher life' with 'higher teaching', as opposed to being a simple

believer, content with 'the simple gospel'. I want very emphatically to contradict any such notion. Wherever you look in the New Testament you will never find any support for this idea... Nobody should make a special kind of 'Overcomer' teaching, for this is what God intended Calvary to mean for every believer. God had spiritual victory as His thought when He first forgave us our sins, and in His mind this is to be the normal development of every Christian's life.

The Way of Deliverance

There is a remarkably simple way out of this trap, and it is to be found in the realization that less is always more in God's kingdom.

Paul solves the riddle of Romans 7 by stating that the Spirit does what the law cannot do. Similarly, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that there are no longer earthly pockets of God's presence, and that worship will now be in "spirit and truth".

True worship is now accessible without a pilgrimage, without ever having to ask "where"? We no longer need to look for the house of God. The house of God has come to us. Jacob's ladder has replaced Babel's tower. Knowledge is no longer the enlightenment of an elite inner circle, but an awakening to love which is accessible to all. The Holy of Holies is no longer an elusive and mystical destiny, but a continuous reality in the heart of the believer. The fire is no longer on the mountain. It has come down to rest on each one of us.

Where can I find a true church? The question is fundamentally flawed. You

cannot find what you already are. To leave a group of regenerate believers to find the true church is like leaving your wife and kids to find true humanity. Unless the situation has become so dysfunctional that your personal spiritual health depends on it, or unless you have a sense that the Lord is sending you to become part of a group of believers for the sake of fulfilling your call to service amongst them, you should think twice before packing up.

"I, the one speaking to you — I am he", said Jesus to the woman at the well. What we are yearning for has been under our noses all along.

The Lord has designed his body to function optimally in its simplest form. Two or three are needed, and there He is. Surely we do not believe that we need more than Him? So then what is all the fuss about? In Him is the fullness of the Godhead, and through Him that fullness dwells in us. His presence is continuously there, and it will not leave or forsake us. When two or three gather, his indwelling presence manifests as an objective bodily presence, and church happens in its most optimal form.

This, and this alone, is what matters.



TOBIE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN is married to Revien and lives in Bloemfontein, South Africa, with their nine kids and a Staffie called Mazzy. Follow his blog at naturalchurch.wordpress.com

Surfing Simple Church

Sites worth checking out on the Web

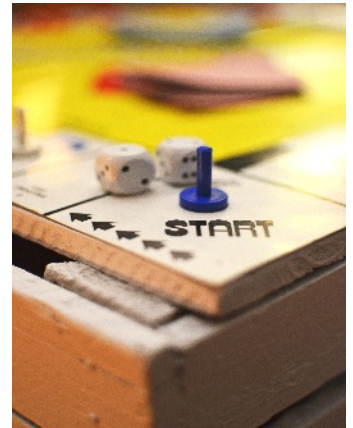
www.naturalchurch.wordpress.com is the blogsite of Tobie van der Westhuizen (above article), a simplechurch advocate who "left formal pastoral ministry in 2007 to pursue an inkling that I have had for a long time, namely that the Christianity of today is not the same as the primitive Christianity of the early church, and that we can never rediscover the early Christians' understanding of salvation as long as we remain clustered in tribe-like denominations shaped around the personas of extraordinary individuals, historic or contemporary, whom

we have elected to interpret God and the Bible on our behalf." He is a reader and a teacher and his site has a great set of links to the writings of classic church authors of note, plus some fairly deep, searching articles.

www.100movements.com This is a site set up by Alan Hirsch, Neil Cole and others, dedicated to the raising of "100 churches and organisations to shift the tracks of history". You will find plenty of challenging articles to inspire you and wet your appetite for mission.

8 Ways To Start A Simple Church Posted by gavin on Aug 15, 2015 in Blog, Teachings | simplechurchalliance.faclex.com/blog

There are no formulas for how to start a simple church. The Holy Spirit must be the Initiator and Leader if a real church community is to be birthed. Even still, I can imagine some ways God could use you to birth simple churches:



1. LTG – As you and a friend or two begin a [Life Transformation Group \(LTG\)*](#) and you see that LTG multiply into two LTGs, a simple church can be formed. It's logical and natural that you say, "why don't we all share a meal together?" If married, the husband's and wife's LTGs can come together weekly for simple church! There are many advantages to this because the multiplication of disciples is the building block of the new simple church!

2. Just Start Gathering – Sometimes it seems that the first logical step is to just start meeting as a larger group (large as in more than two or three). If so, then people can get together and simply start a "simple church" gathering! When starting this way, we encourage groups to begin LTGs as soon as possible so that personal discipleship is at the core of the community.

3. Luke 10 Principles – As you go the places God is leading you, look for a "person of peace." This is a person who is open to the Gospel and welcomes you into his/her life and even home. A simple church family can be born as you go into a home to meet and eat with his/her family and friends. When this happens, the missional Christian life is modelled beautifully!
[Download the "Luke 10 Manual" for free at www.harvest-now.org/luke-10/](http://www.harvest-now.org/luke-10/)

4. Split – When a simple church grows in size cutting the group in half can be an option.

5. Sending out in pairs – Rather than "splitting" an existing simple church, we suggest sending out a couple or two to begin a new community that is comprised mostly of new friends who do not go to church or are not yet believers. Sometimes it's even possible for one simple church to become three or four simple churches quickly when this approach is embraced and people are willing to "go." In addition, sometimes simple churches can send people out for a season to start a new work and once that work is established then they may primarily return to their original simple church.

6. "Small Group" to Simple Church – Perhaps you are a part of a group right now that functions much like a simple church, but still are tied to traditional trappings that are preventing you from fully functioning as a local church. It can be hard, but if everyone (or at least the majority) of the group is on board to becoming a simple church, then committing to the idea and to each other can make it possible.

7. Interest Group to Church – Sometimes having a non-Jesus centered gathering can become a church! Book clubs, gardening groups, coffee and doughnuts with neighbors, and other types of groups can be transformed into a church. When this happens, often times many people experience "church" before they even know to call it that.

8. Traditional Church to Simple Church – If the leadership of a traditional church is truly willing to release folks from their congregation to plant new autonomous churches, then a pastor can help initiate and encourage one of the ideas listed here. This is in part how the Simple Church Alliance was birthed!

What potential blessings and challenges could arise out of starting simple churches in each of these ways? Have you seen simple church formed in another way? We'd love to hear from you!

**For further information on [Life Transformation Group \(LTG\)](#) go to www.cmaresources.org/videos*

***GET FURTHER COPIES OF THE "HOW TO" EDITION FREE!** (Just help us with postage) Drop us an email or go to our website (below) and place an order online. Order as many as you like - the postage rates are all there. Why not become a regular subscriber at the same time?

SUBSCRIBE TO OIKOS MAGAZINE

If you've been encouraged by the Magazine then help us GET IT OUT! Introduce the rest of your friends to it by passing it around. They can subscribe by going to the OIKOS website

www.oikos.org.au

OIKOS Australia Magazine,
25 Oak Street
Bentleigh VIC 3204
07 49394117
editor@oikos.org.au