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OIKOS

AUSTRALIA

HOLY BIBLE
New International Version

RED DIRT CHURCH

Warren Crank

The MIRACLE OF MANMOYI...

Carl Musch & Anderson George



When Can We Be a CHURCH? Guy Muse

FAREWELL BRUCE. Well Done!

Disciple Making | Multiplication | Kingdom | Simple Church | Missional Movements



The POWER of SPOKEN BLESSING

A very busy work week had just ended and our family joined for the evening meal. There was the usual murmur and buzz of conversation, laughter and sharing about the week. Our family was joined at the table by a young lady who is staying with us as she finishes her uni study. After eating and talking I suggested that we have our traditional family blessing time.

Over 20 years ago we were introduced to the biblical practice of spoken blessing and have since followed it usually on a weekly basis, although sometimes we don't get to do it.... I usually choose someone to bless and they then choose someone else to bless until everyone has been blessed and has the opportunity to bless someone else. Our visitor expressed how special this occasion was. Over the years we have had many backpackers and others - Christian and non-Christian - join us at our meal table and participate in this. Most are deeply impacted. In case you are less familiar with Blessing, let me briefly explain.

Spoken Blessing usually touches on identity - who the person is and the attributes that you value and appreciate him or her for - in everyday language what you value, like and affirm about who the person is and what they do.



Blessings also has a second aspect - destiny. At times it has a prophetic edge as when Jacob blessed his 12 sons and give a picture that related to their future destiny (Gen 49). Of course, this should only be offered if God provides it - we are not fortune tellers!

Blessing means to speak well of, to empower to succeed and prosper. From the root word for blessing, we get the word Eulogy which is usually given at a funeral for the deceased person. However, blessing is much more powerful when spoken to people while they are living!

Blessing also applies to established churches. While recognising God's call on Oikos to multiply disciple makers and simple churches and see movements take place, our call is not to denigrate the established church but to pray for and bless it! Despite the limitations of the institutional form of church, my heart is to see all churches or "assemblies" who are committed to following Christ and his Word, grow in numbers, effectiveness and their impact on their local communities and beyond.

God demonstrated the process and practice of blessings when in creation he blessed his creation when He "saw the it was good" (Gen 1:9,12). "God blessed Adam and Eve and said to them "be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen 1:28)

Isaac blessed his son Jacob thinking he was Esau. When Esau the eldest son found he had been cheated from his birthright and blessing he "bust out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father "Bless me too my father! (Gen 27:34). This is (Continued on page 18)

OIKOS Australia

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

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When can we be a CHURCH?

Guy Muse

When Mónica called saying she and her husband needed an urgent meeting, my heart sank. Usually when someone calls for a private meeting, there is some problem that has arisen and we are the ones they come to for help. Both are new believers who have grown tremendously in the Lord. I dreaded hearing whatever it was that had happened.

Geovanny (our team leader) and I met with Mónica and Medardo. Both of us were expecting the worse. After the initial small talk, they got down to why they had called the meeting.

Mónica voiced their concern, "When can we be a church?"

As hard as it was for me to think *this* was the real issue at hand, and not something else, I went along and began a series of questions...

"How many believers gather together with you?"

Medardo answered, "Usually between 10 and 15, but only seven have been baptized so far this year (2009). The rest are waiting until we can coordinate a time when we can all get down to the river."

"How often do you gather together. Once, twice a week?"

"We meet every evening Tuesday-Sunday from about 7:00pm till people

get tired and go home," answered Mónica. "They are just so excited and eager to learn and share. We tried suggesting getting together only 3-4 times a week, but that didn't go over very well with the group."

"You're telling me that six evenings a week you meet there in your home?"

"Oh no, we rotate between three different houses. Ours and in the homes of two other families who recently gave their hearts to the Lord and are being disciplined."

Out of curiosity, I couldn't help but ask, "if you are meeting Tuesday to Sunday, why don't you go ahead and meet on Monday evenings as well?"

"Oh no, brother Guido, that's the day we have our team meeting. We told everyone they were welcome to meet on Mondays, but that we wouldn't be there."

"Oh."

I continued, "How many of those days are spent praying?"

"Tuesday evenings are dedicated entirely to prayer. We pray for all our lost family members, we pray for our country, we pray for each others problems, we pray..."

They went on to tell me all the things they are praying for and fully expecting God to answer.

I then asked the first question that caused them to lower their heads and break eye contact, "have you been able yet to start any other new groups?"

Mónica seemed embarrassed, but answered, "only two. What with my husband's working, and my own family responsibilities, we just haven't had any more time."

"Where are these groups meeting?" I asked.

"On Wednesday afternoons we go to Sergio Toral where we are discipling some new believers, and Sunday afternoons we have a group meeting in Bastion. We know that's not a lot, but we are praying the Lord for a third new group."

"What has been the greatest joy for you?"

"Seeing lives transformed, and people hungry to learn more about God."

"What has been the hardest part for you?" (thinking surely it must be the nightly gatherings and the impact upon their family life)

"The hardest part is our feeling of inadequacy in that all the new believers are coming to us with their questions and problems and we don't know what to do except pray for them. Their lives are so messed up. (Continued on page 5)

The Journey of Discovery

Struggling with the Blind Adventure of Organic Church Life

Katie Driver

I have a lot of conversations with people who are struggling with the blind adventure of the simple, organic and missional church life.

I hear things like: "I don't really know what to do!"; "I wish someone could show me how this works!"; "I tried that/that, and it didn't work so what's wrong?"; "What is this supposed to look like?"; "Is there a manual or something I can follow?"; "Can you give me a blueprint to work from so I know what I'm supposed to do?"

I empathize with these questions. These are real struggles from hearts that want to "do it right" and have been trained to follow models, leaders, organizations, and manuals so that what they do is "successful" and "correct". I resist the tendency, which is so easy for me, to tell them what to do. Instead, we start talking about what they are learning in the process, what their goals are for living this organic simple life in Christ, what the Scriptures say we should esteem, and that it is okay to try different things and even fail a few times in the process.

God is certainly capable to get us where we need to be, when we need to be there, with all that we need in the process. The bottom line is; He is faithful. Have you ever heard that saying of someone being on "a need to know basis"? I think that fits well with His leading of us. He takes us one step at a time. He gives us what we need to know

and understand when we need it to lead us forward in faith. He also lets us struggle.

Most of us don't want to hear that we learn best by what we struggle with and figure out on our own. We also don't like to hear that failure is a better teacher than our successes. In fact, I recently read a medical study that concluded that we actually grow more brain cells when we fail! How's that for "organically" rewarding our failures? What incredible Grace!

I believe, God is taking us each on our own wonderful, unique and unmapped "Journey's of Discovery". That is what the journey of the explorers Lewis and Clark's into the then unknown west, was called.

For those of us who admit to being "a Trekkie", you'll be familiar with the saying-- "boldly going where no man has gone before". I like to use the Star Trek motto to illustrate what the journey in the lifestyle of simple, organic, missional church is like. No manuals, no maps to follow, no clear guidelines and directions (yet,... just give it a few more years and the experts will have the '5 steps to simple church success' available soon at your local bookstore....sorry, my cynicism again).

We do have some great folks out there who are sharing their own journeys of what they are learning and experiencing. Giving us some understanding of what this whole simple lifestyle is all about. Lewis and Clark

types who, are on the "Journey of Discovery", just like the rest of us, but are a little further along on their expedition and keeping great journals. Tom and I have been doing something different this summer. We have been taking short three or four day "mini" vacations on the motorcycle, but we've been doing it in a totally new way from how we have done it before.

In past years we have had a general plan to our vacations. Not completely, but we would have an idea of where we were going, where the scenic spots were, where the camping areas and the places available to us for lodging, eating, getting gas, etc would be. We would, once in a while, drive off the planned course and see what we could discover, but that was the exception. Most of the time we just followed the mapped course we'd laid out together in the kitchen over a couple of nights.

In these vacation expeditions we'd also have a definite goal and agenda of what we wanted to see, experience and accomplish. We don't have the name "driver" for nothing, and some days the only goal seemed to be how many miles we could push through in a day!

This summer however, has been different. Instead of loading up the car and luggage carrier with all our necessities for camping, our suitcases full of "stuff" that we'd maybe use, coolers packed with food and drink, we packed small bags that fit into the limited spaces on the motorcycle. Usually not more

than a change of clothes, our rain gear, a couple bottles of water, basic toiletries, a bible and extra jacket. We'd take along a map, but only for the sake of getting us back on track if we got disoriented and lost out on the back roads of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

We load up and take off in a matter of minutes (verses hours), heading out of the city, in the general direction we wanted to go. We would find some road unknown to us and take it, just to see where it would lead. Often times it would lead to some great and awesome place that we would never of found on our own. Sometimes we would find ourselves at a dead end, where we would have to turn around and go back a bit until we found another road and take that for a while. We found some incredible places and experiences that made us look forward to what new things we'd discover tomorrow!

We felt alive and revived. Resulting in thankfulness for all that we saw God bless our journey with each day. A beautiful road, a person to encourage or pray for, finding new friends in towns we'd never of known, creating memories and special times of enjoying life together in the goodness of God. It was simple (unencumbered and portable), organic (let's see what unfolds naturally

in the process) and missional (what other lives can we bring some aspect of the nature of Christ to today in our encounters).

When Lewis and Clark made their journey into the western wilderness some two hundred years ago, they went not knowing what they would encounter with each day and decision of direction. Sometimes, the river they travelled just took them along it's natural path and when that was no longer possible, they found their way through mountain passes and vast prairies with sometimes the help of those native to the area. They recorded information, observations and drew pictures of what they were discovering and wrote it in journals for those who would be following in the future. Even though this would be the beginning of the westward movement of settlement, each of the pioneers soon to head west on that journey still had to discover, on their own with just a few journal notes of information and helps, the path to where they would eventually settle.

Tom and I driving along this summer on the unknown back roads of MN and WI, not knowing where we would eventually end up that night was exciting, rewarding, adventurous, fun, a bit unnerving, tiring and stressful at

times. All of the above and more! I wouldn't give up one moment of it.

The simple organic and missional church life gives us no GPS, maps and instructional directions. Instead, we have the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us in the direction we are to go. We get to learn how to follow Him in a dependent and intimate way. When He says; this is the way, we go that way. We learn to have ears that hear. We learn to discover, on our own with Him, the unique adventure that Jesus has planned for us to experience more of Him and what He has in store of us while we walk this side of heaven. To know Him, and walk daily in an intimacy that is fresh, alive, exciting and dependent. We have the ultimate "journal", the Word, that has all that we need pertaining to life and godliness. We have the journals of others on similar journey's that can encourage and aid us, but in the end, we find our own Journey of Discovery with the Author of it all! In the vernacular of motorcycle trekking..."enjoy the ride"!

KATIE DRIVER and her husband Tom co-founded Outreach to the Nations to make disciples, plant churches and come alongside indigenous ministries in many different countries.
thoughtsfromabackseatdriver.blogspot.com

WHEN CAN WE BE A CHURCH?

(Continued from page 3)

They look to us for answers since we are the ones who know the most about the Bible. We wish we knew God's Word better than we do so that we could help them more."

At that point we stopped and Geovanny and I talked with them for several minutes about allowing the Holy Spirit to be the One to guide them and that loving their new brothers and sisters in Christ by just being there with them was something the Lord would use for his glory.

After a few minutes, Mónica interrupted and asked again, "so when can we be a church?"

"Medardo and Mónica", we said, "YOU ARE ALREADY A CHURCH! AND HAVE BEEN ONE NOW FOR QUITE SOME TIME!"

At that, they smiled and we talked about putting together a celebration where several of the other house churches would be invited for a time of praise and thanksgiving. They liked that idea, and Mónica began talking about what food might be good to prepare for this special occasion.

As I drove home after the meeting, I couldn't help but reflect on the DNA that had been injected into them from the beginning by another team member, Marlene, who led them to the Lord a little over a year ago. Marlene modeled and lived the message she preached to them, sacrificing herself for them as she disciplined them faithfully for nearly a year. She taught and modeled for them the very life in Christ they were now modeling for those they were leading!

No one has ever told them Christians only

gather on Sunday mornings for church.

No one ever told them churches less than a year old cannot start 2-3 new churches themselves.

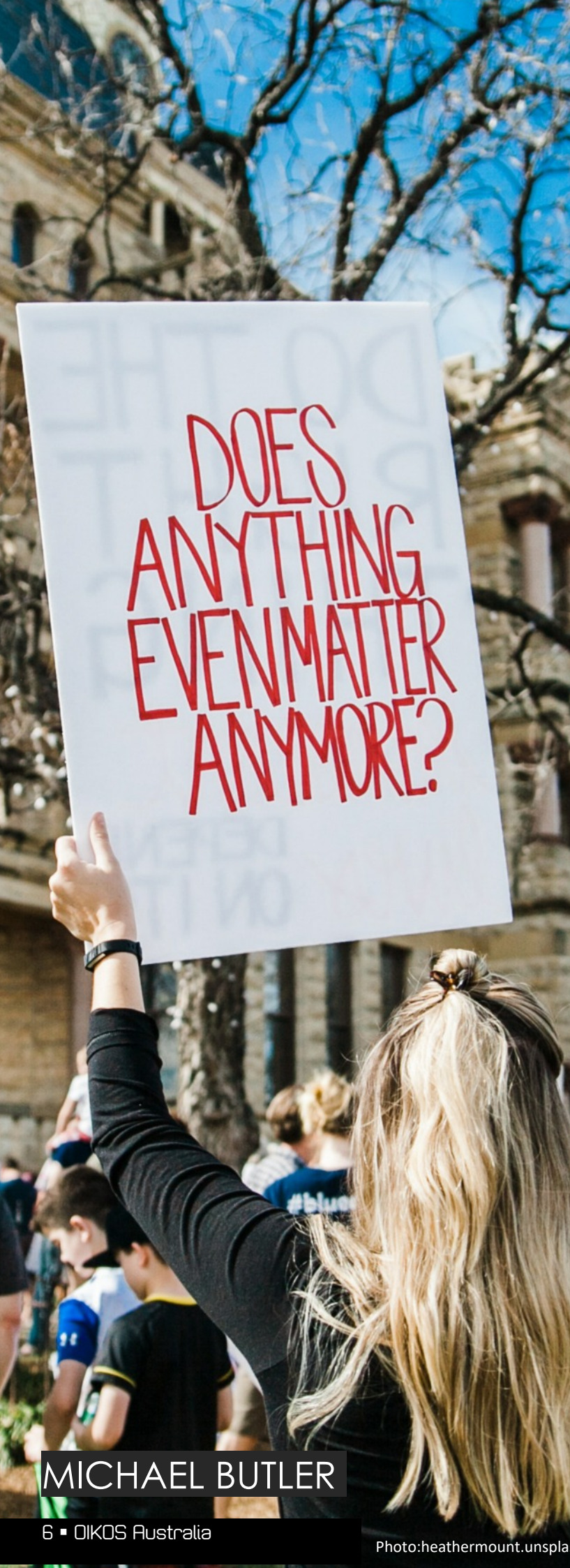
No one ever told them they needed more than the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in order to lead three different house churches--all of which came to the Lord through their personal witness.

No one told them that to be church you have to have all this "stuff."

They are just doing it, trusting the Lord as they go along. And the Lord is blessing!

GUY MUSE (*Guayaquil, Ecuador*) grew up as an MK (missionaries' kid) in Ecuador. For the past 30 years he and his wife Linda have served as missionaries in Ecuador. Their vision is to see every believer making disciples, every house a potential church, and every church fully engaged in the Great Commission.
guymuse.blogspot.com





Change the World

Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. – Matthew 24

I've always been interested in modern Christendom's approach to changing the world. It doesn't seem to line up with what to me at least, seems the obvious 'New Testament' way. Further, we seem unable to grapple with the rapid decline of church influence on our society, such that the outside world won't listen to us or take us seriously anymore. "They" are even curtailing where we can speak and what we can believe. The indignity of it all. Our approach has been an Old Testament one of cudgels and cutlasses.

Neil Cole, one of the pre-eminent Disciple makers around today, said recently that a great part of what he does, involves warning churches about what is surely coming. The question is, will we listen? There it is, in black and white, if they hated me, they will hate you. Can it be any clearer?

Is it any surprise then, when a State government attempts to ban the name of Jesus across every playground in every primary school in the State (what about Allah, Mohammed or Buddha?). Should it surprise us when everything in our society tilts against Christendom, when Christmas is slowly dismantled, when proselytising is banned, when the Bible is removed. Why do we respond with shock? Perhaps a better question is, how should we respond?

I have become indifferent to the endless requests to join marches, gatherings, sign petitions and goodness knows what else, to change politician's minds about the future of the country. Has it done the cause of Christ any good at all for us to wave placards and raise our voices in the face of those whom we expect to live up to our beliefs (I nearly said standard) while in the same breath, tell them of the love of Christ. What good does it do when we tear down and isolate ourselves from the very ones we should be winning to Christ?

Jesus asks us simply to read the signs, and the signs tell us he is on the way, maybe even quite soon. Have we forgotten his message to us, his believers? Let us recap and listen.

That salvation is found in nothing in this world, but only in him, that we are to put our entire faith in him bringing us through trial, judgement and on into eternity with him. Because of this, because he loved us first, so we are to live an obedient life to him, preferably one that

MICHAEL BUTLER

radiates out into the world the pure beauty of his presence. Then, when we live a life that will not bring disgrace to his name, to go out into the world wherever he calls us, and tell others the same, even if 'out into the world' means across the street to your neighbour. If we just did that at presumably great cost, you wonder if our world would be very different.

Some while back, the leaders of the China church began the 'Back to Jerusalem' project, taking up a vision they felt the Lord gave them to evangelise the entire Silk Route, all the way back to Jerusalem. Every since Paul's day, the Gospel has moved West and they wondered whether this might usher

in the return of the Lord. Millions have signed up, at great cost.

Evangelising the 'Stans' and Arabia might be one of the most challenging activities ever undertaken by a believer. Of the first 40 groups to go out, 37 were arrested inside a month – but don't worry, millions more, literally, are queuing to take their place.

All of this tells me that Christ is indeed on the way, that the purposes of God never cease and nothing will hinder them. They will be fulfilled in the fullness of time and no government pettiness will stop it for a moment. Isn't that great!

The only question is then, what will I do with my brief time? Will I accept that all

this is going to come to pass, that as a believer my message will be unpopular, but needs to be heard anyway as it will be heeded by some. Further, will I live in the faith and knowledge that God has given me a simple task to do right where I am.

If I do that, then I can leave the running of the world, the fate of politicians and governments in the hands of one to whom 'all authority has been given' and focus on my much simpler task.

One it would seem Jesus was confident would change the world.

Michael and Sally Butler lead a gathering in Sydney, Manly Disciple Makers. You can read of some of the adventures on nobrokenreed.org or get in touch at justbutlers@gmail.com



Farewell Bruce Well Done!

In May Oikos lost a true friend when Bruce

Kerr, the previous editor of this Magazine and member of our National Team, went home to be with the Lord he loved.

A man who for most of his life seemed to be constantly on the move, following the voice of God – which he first heard in Katoomba as a youth – Bruce's passion for Jesus led him from Dubbo to Cambelltown, across the Nullabor – then a dirt road – and back to Bible College in Adelaide, then off to Broken Hill. Then through Taree, Melbourne and Emu Plains, serving in the AOG and various Pentecostal churches.

His wife Rose remembers a time at Emu Plains when "he felt the call of God to "Go" and after much prayer and direction, we bought a double-decker bus that was fitted out as a mobile home. He painted the bus mustard-yellow, adjusted a few things inside, packed up the family and off we went, not really knowing what was ahead but endeavouring to obey the voice of God. We first drove to Victor Harbour at the invitation of some friends.

From there we kept meeting God's appointments, different people who invited Bruce to come to their town and minister. We ended up going from Victor Harbour to Murray Bridge, Naracoorte, Mt Gambier, Morphett Vale, Windsor and ended up in Goulburn. Each place we went we spent time with people, sharing their lives, praying for them and encouraging people in their walk with God. It was an amazing time of God's provision where food was given to us, signwriting work would open up or money would arrive in the post just at the right time. The family never had to buy eggs through that whole time. The children did schoolwork by correspondence during our travels."

From Goulbourn to Blaxland in the Blue Mountains, then another 10 years in Dubbo and finally to the Sunshine Coast, Bruce and Rose's home became another home for many young people and Bruce's ukulele the backing band for many home fellowships. Somewhere along the way he met up

with Bessie Pereira, the founder of Oikos, and he and Rose were off travelling again – up and down the coast of Queensland. Bruce always felt that there was something more that God had for him before his life was over. In this last year, Bruce began recording short messages on his mobile phone. These have been loaded to a website as podcasts and have been spreading internationally. Bruce has left behind not only his own family, but many 'sons and daughters' and many, many people whose lives he has touched and blessed. Farewell Bruce. Well done!



AUSTRAL

RED DIRT CHURCH

Warren Crank - Bracken Ridge, Queensland

RED DIRT CHURCH is a network of simple churches started up by Warren and Ellie Crank from Bracken Ridge in Queensland. Warren writes:

Around two years ago, we started a Red Dirt Church in our home. Today, there are six other Red Dirt Churches with at least a few more on the way. We are believing for twenty by the end of 2018. From Alpha in Central-Western Queensland to Singleton in New South Wales, God is raising up simple churches that are reaching unchurched Aussies. In five years' time, we believe there will be more than two hundred Red Dirt Churches around the country. Many of these churches will be in rural and remote communities where traditional churches have been withdrawing. Each church will be reaching unchurched Aussies within its natural networks and discipling new followers of Jesus. Imagine that!

So, why 'Red Dirt'?

It's an Aussie thing

Australia's red soil is remarkable from a global perspective. Black and grey soils are typical in the Northern Hemisphere. But the generally hot and dry Australian climate has created an almost perfect oxidizing environment. The chemical weathering of rock has produced the red dirt that typifies many Australian landscapes.

When Dorothea Mackellar wrote of "a sunburnt country" ('My Country' poem), surely she had this in mind. Red Dirt is a descriptor of Australian soil. Red Dirt Church is simple church for a sunburnt country.

Of course, you don't need to live where red dirt is, to do what Red Dirt does.

It's a spiritual thing

The red at the base of the Australian Aboriginal Flag represents the red earth; the red ochre used in ceremonies. For some indigenous Australians, the red dirt also signifies the 'spirits past'. So, the colour red is spiritually significant for indigenous people.

Red Dirt Church also uses the colour 'red' in spiritually symbolic ways. Drawing directly for the Bible, red was used to

symbolize sin – i.e. people's rebellion against the Creator God. The Bible says: "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool..." (Isaiah

1:18). Sin has stained us. Yet, the Lord reconciles us as he washes the stain away.

Red also represents the blood of Jesus which flowed from his body on the Cross. He died in our place. His blood sealed our pardon.

His blood is the means of the spiritual, reconciling cleansing from God (Ephesians 1:7). So, red stands for God's ultimate sacrifice. In love, Jesus gave everything.

What's simple church?

'Simple' church is a type of church that requires minimal infrastructure with no major capital projects, has a basic, collaborative governance culture and is led by a voluntary or bi-vocational leader (or small leadership team).

Each Red Dirt Church largely cares for itself, is guided by the Bible and Holy Spirit, celebrates the ordinances of baptism and 'The Lord's Supper', is salt and light in its community and intentionally reaches unchurched people. The goal is to be generous in support of the personal needs of others, Bible distribution, the transformation of people and communities, as well as the mission of sharing the good news about Jesus.

To help keep things as simple and as personal as possible, we anticipate that, normally, a Red Dirt Church will embrace up to 50 people before multiplying.

Warren and Ellen understand that Church Planting is proving to be the most effective kingdom strategy for the purpose of reaching non-Christian people. As Tim Keller wrote: "Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting".

For this reason, they share a kind of apostolic ambition. The Apostle Paul wrote: "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (Romans 15:20; NIV 2011). William Carey (1761 – 1834) wrote (from a sermon based on Isaiah 54:2-3): "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." Across this sunburnt country, we are aiming to reach people who don't know Christ. Our ambition is to continue to take the gospel to people at all points of the Compass.

You can read more about Red Dirt Church at reddirtchurch.org and on their Facebook page.



THE MIRACLE AT MARMOYI

Carl Musch & Anderson George

Carl: Hello my name is Carl Musch and this is my brother Anderson.

Anderson: Together with our wives we started Indigenous Ministry Links Australia 20 years ago. This is the story of a revival and community transformation in Manmoyi, West Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory – a 10-year journey to date.

We were about an hour from Maningrida in West Arnhem Land when we saw a sign that said “Manmoyi”. My wife started to cry out “I haven’t been there since I was 3 years old but they are all my family there. Can we please go in and see them?”

Carl: The sign said 27 kilometres to Manmoyi. It was 2pm and I thought we should be able to scoot in and out and still be in Maningrida by dark little did I know.

Anderson: We got bogged 5 times on the track to Manmoyi. The road was so bad that we even lost the road altogether at one point. We finally got to the last river and it was about 50 meters wide and steep sandy banks. The water was over the bonnet in places.

When we got to the community we met some of my wife's family. There was nearly no food in the community. The police had just taken away all the guns so hunting was hard. Every car was broken down. The road was so bad that no one who knew what it was like would drive it. The shop had gone broke and closed because more food was stolen or given away than sold so we shared what food

we had brought. People had to pool their welfare money to charter a plane to go shopping. That did not leave much to pay for food. There was only one paying job on the whole community - a part time teacher's aide, 2 half days per week - which is all the schooling they had.

We realized that we were not going to get to Maningrida that night so we decided to have a Gospel meeting if God had brought us this far.

We invited everyone but only 2 local old ladies came and they spoke very little English. The 2 old ladies were already believers. They wanted us to send them a missionary or for one of us to stay and be their pastor. But God had given us a more apostolic approach that we had seen work before.

Carl: Anderson and His wife shared their own personal stories of life and community transformation. I didn't know if or how we would ever get back but I told them that there was Someone who is always available to come. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus said, “if 2 or 3 gather in my name I will be in the middle among them”. I shared how when Jesus comes it makes all the difference and shared about the transformed life and relationships that happened when He came to Zacchaeus’ house, the healing at Peter’s House, and how Jesus wrecked a funeral when He came by, raising a bloke from the dead...

I gave this challenge: “So who do you want? A missionary or Jesus?”

Anderson: They chose Jesus. That day 2 old women chose to gather to pray together for themselves their family and their community every day.

And Jesus turned up.

The old ladies started to ask children to read them the Bible. Soon children were lining up to read and old people gathered to listen to their grandchildren read the Bible.

A young lady started to do children's ministry. This was funny. A group of young men from Manmoyi had earlier formed a touring rock band - but the rock and roll lifestyle messed them up until they could no longer perform. So, their producers dumped them back in the bush. When the young lady tried to lead the children, singing Christian songs, the musicians heard her trying to sing without instruments and they volunteered to play and sing for the Sunday school.

Carl: I didn't hear from them for another 18 months but Someone was reading our newsletters to them. They were inspired by what God was doing mostly through their relatives in Beswick, 250 km away. Beswick believers had recently led almost every resident of Emu Springs to Christ.





Anderson: Things in this little community began to change very quickly. The children became so well behaved that the teacher refused to teach anywhere else so the school started to operate full time. The local teacher's aide position became full time and she taught Bible to the children for the whole of Wednesday afternoons. A Christian couple, Leon and Noeline from Manmoyi but now living in Oenpelli, volunteered to come out and teach them God's Word.

Believers started collecting the rubbish around the town, unsupervised. The spear grass had been 8-10-foot-high. Now people were mowing the grass. A village of 54 people grew to 126 as visitors got saved and stayed and others came hearing of God's blessing. A huge breakthrough for them came as Landcare Australia was looking for a group to do Ranger work. With a little help Manmoyi residents formed their own company, with government contracts.

Now Manmoyi has 100% employment. Food is flown in weekly at town prices. Some people are growing their own fruit and vegetables and people are still hunting and collecting bush tucker. Many people have bought cars. You can even drive a falcon there in the dry season.

Carl: The temperamental generator that I once fixed for them was replaced with a solar fan. And the road is much better - it is still rough but at least you can find it! Crime is not an issue and courts will often send mentally ill and criminals from the larger communities out there to get back on track. "The Project" on Channel 10 even did a report on the transformed model community - though no glory was given to God.

Carl: For me one of the greatest thing is that God has raised powerful preachers in their own language from there who have led many to Christ, planted churches and trained others across the region. They have led almost every person in the surrounding 4 small communities to Christ and these have their own stories.



Please don't come looking for Christian Utopia - you won't find it. But where God has taken people from and what God has done with desperate people is nothing short of amazing.

I believe that God has chosen to do these things first among Aboriginal Australians and that He wants to show something of Himself and His ways to the rest of us through what He is doing and will yet do among them. It has been our privilege to be part of it and you can be too.

We have now come to understand some principles that allow us to have the privilege of leading whole communities to Christ and have those Churches led on a local level by indigenous believers and we are almost bursting to share them. The challenge is that the ministry of walking alongside in the journey takes people who are willing to learn as much as to teach. It takes long term commitment to relationship. What God intends to do will not be achieved by short term mission teams alone.

If I had not walked with Anderson and his wife for the previous 10 years I could not have been part of what God was doing in Manmoyi in this way. If I had not walked with Beswick for the 10 years before that I would not even have met Anderson and his family or learned the principles from our experience in Beswick.

I believe that the only reason that we don't have many more transformation stories and greater ones is that we have not been able to visit the places that are open to God and us regularly enough. Jesus saves those who believe the Gospel but He has given the job of making disciples to His disciples...to the Church...to us.

Anderson: Maybe you would be able to help us - get in touch with us. Get our info and keep in touch.

Carl: Maybe you want to train for this field - Come and talk to us and get some information. Do you want to restore a passion for effective holistic mission to your church - maybe we could be a part of that as well?

Catch up with Carl Musch at imla.org.au



This is where things get interesting. The next time I visited I came in with help from Mission Aviation Fellowship, at their request and because I had heard what God was doing. The community leader who had pretended he didn't speak English on our first visit literally ran out to meet me on the airstrip and welcomed me in perfect English.

Great things were happening in the Spirit but in the natural some things had gotten even worse. He proceeded to tell me that since our last visit the government had decided this community was deemed not financially viable and that they were withdrawing all funding. The community was falling apart. The day before a power pole had fallen over and hit the single men's quarters and the sparks had caught that building on fire. Then he asked me this. "If the government won't look after us anymore will God maybe look after us?"

That day was one of the most amazing days of my life. The whole community gathered. I began to explain the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to them - which included that recognizing Jesus as the Traditional Owner of all creation and living by His Perfect Law of Freedom would give them power to live in God's blessing and to provide for their families. Their leader translated for us. They all discussed this message among themselves in their language and every person chose to receive Christ as Lord and to learn and live His ways.



The Indigenous Rangers program delivering a service to Australia
The Project | 6.30 Sunday to Friday on TEN



Reflections on the 2018 OIKOS NATIONAL GATHERING

Lilydale, on the outskirts of Melbourne, was the setting this April for the Oikos bi-annual National Gathering with approximately 80 people attending, including families, youth and children. People travelled from near and far including Queensland, SA, Vic and NSW. Some had only heard of Oikos in the week prior to the conference.

Before the Conference started, the Oikos Regional Coordinators and National Team members gathered, looking at the strategic directions of Oikos and doing a SWOT analysis – looking at strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the future.

The Conference itself provided significant times of prayer, challenge, teaching and training, stories, inspiration and interaction. One again the “Kingdom stories” were a real inspiration - God is working in some amazing ways in Australia as people faithfully reach out to make disciples. There were also some amazing stories shared about disciple making and God’s supernatural power.

Connecting with people who have been long connected with Oikos along with meeting new people and forming relationships and contacts was as usual, a special part of the gathering, sharing

experiences and stories and connecting over meals and coffees. The family is growing and broadening with a whole new diversity among the attendees.

Phil Brown shared the spiritual challenge of starting with Holy Spirit directed prayer and intimacy with the Father, followed by Jesus’ call to Connection - “Come and see” and to “Come follow me” along with the potency of Simple Church. Sessions also included training by David Milne (Sydney) and Michael and Sally Butler (Manly, NSW) on practical tools and ways to share one’s faith, including an excursion to Lilydale for sharing Jesus on the street. David Milne also shared his research findings on multiplying disciple making and Missional Communities in Australia. David Lawton (Praxeis) taught on the core values and principles of Discovery Bible Study (DBS). Other workshops included a “sisterhood” women’s focus (thanks Von), The Jesus School introduction for youth (David Nott, Youth for Christ), and Principles of Simple Church/Missional Community (Phil Brown).

Most workshops were repeated which gave a greater opportunity for participants to attend a wider section. I feel that most people were inspired and challenged and involved in the process of the Conference.

For myself the challenge is how to build on the momentum gained so that we move forward and see multiplication of disciple makers and Missional Communities.

PHIL BROWN





Growing Together

PHIL BROWN

Recently while reading through the Oikos Manual – a guide to our values and mission here at Oikos – I was reminded of some of the core vision that excited us when we started, and that still motivates us. It's good for us to have a brush up. Here they are.

We encourage Missional Communities and Home Churches to grow along the following lines...

To focus firstly on making disciples and multiplying disciple makers.

To multiply missional communities who multiply other missional communities.

To see Movements breaking out in each community across Australia and beyond.

To be highly relational.

To be non-hierarchical — 'round' not 'pyramid' shaped.

To encourage every person to contribute and participate when we gather. The gifts of all are recognised and encouraged, each person bringing their gift for the building up of one another.

To read and apply scripture to their daily lives.

To have a 'Kingdom' focus, not a 'church' focus in order to break down conditioned thinking.

To get out of the 'consumer' mentality of 'going to church' in order to 'get'.

To think about the priority of their gatherings as 'building one another for the Kingdom' and not 'going to church to worship'

or 'to get teaching'. Worship and teaching will come out of their shared life together and not the other way around. Imposed 'worship times' and 'teaching times' are a poor substitute for the dynamic of a true response in the sharing about the amazing things God does in our lives.

To practise 'hilarious giving' as being much more 'Kingdom creative' in the building of one another and the witness outside the group, rather than just 'tithing'.

To recognise that they will have conflict situations because their relationships will go deep, but that these times can be the most valuable opportunities for growth for individuals and for the group.

To pursue the 'one-anothers' of New Testament church life. This list is shown below, and is always to be encouraged in our assemblies as much as possible.

To see the whole of life experience as God working in us according to His purpose and to His glory. And when we come together we share these experiences to encourage and bless one another and to inspire one another to press on. Then we will LEARN rather than get teaching and we will truly overflow with praise and gratitude to the God who is working in and amongst us rather than just sing a few choruses to a CD or guitar.

The 'One Anothers' of New Testament Church Life

Sort out grievances with one another. *Matthew 18:15-17*

Forgive one another. *Luke 11:4*

Wash one another's feet. *John 13:14*

Love one another. *John 13:34*

Be of one heart and mind with one another. *Acts 4:32*

Share possessions with one another. *Acts 4:32*

Make decisions with one another. *Acts 15:25*
 Realise you belong with one another. *Romans 8:16*
 Honour one another above yourselves. *Romans 12:10*
 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. *Romans 12:10*
 Live in harmony one with another. *Romans 12:16*
 Do not pass judgment on one another *Romans 14:13*
 Be at peace one with another. *Romans 14:19*
 Edify one another. *Romans 14:19*
 Build one another. *Romans 15:2*
 Be at one with each other. *Romans 15:5*
 Accept one another as Christ accepted you. *Romans 15:7*
 Instruct one another. *Romans 15:14*
 Greet one another with a holy kiss. *Romans 16:16*
 Care for one another. *1 Cor 12:25*
 Serve one another in love. *Galatians 5:13*
 Restore one another gently. *Galatians 6:1*
 Bear one another's burdens. *Galatians 6:2*
 Be humble, gentle and patient one with another. *Ephesians 4:2*
 Make every effort to be at one with one another. *Ephesians 4:3*
 Speak truthfully one to another. *Ephesians 4:25*
 Be kind and compassionate to one another. *Ephesians 4:32*
 Forgive one another as Christ forgave you. *Ephesians 4:32*
 Submit to one another. *Ephesians 5:21*
 Bear with one another. *Colossians 3:13*
 Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another.
Colossians 3:13
 Forgive as the Lord forgave you. *Colossians 3:13*
 Love one another. *Colossians 3:14*
 Be at one with one another. *Colossians 3:14*
 Be at peace with one another. *Colossians 3:15*
 Be thankful one with another. *Colossians 3:15*
 Teach one another. *Colossians 3:16*
 Admonish one another with wisdom. *Colossians 3:16*
 Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your
 hearts to God one with another. *Colossians 3:16*
 Let love overflow one to another. *1 Thessalonians 3:12*
 Love one another as God has taught you. *1 Thessalonians 4:9*
 Encourage one another. *1 Thessalonians 4:18*
 Encourage and build one another up. *1 Thessalonians 5:11*
 Encourage one another daily. *Hebrews 3:13*
 Meet with one another. *Hebrews 10:25*
 Keep one another up to the mark as we see the Day
 approaching. *Hebrews 10:25*
 Don't grumble against one another. *James 5:9*
 Confess your sins one to another. *James 5:16*
 Pray for one another. *James 5:16*
 Love one another deeply from the heart. *1 Peter 1:22*
 Live in harmony with one another. *1 Peter 3:8*
 Be sympathetic towards one another. *1 Peter 3:8*
 Be compassionate towards one another. *1 Peter 3:8*
 Be humble towards one another. *1 Peter 3:8*
 Bless one another. *1 Peter 3:9*
 Offer hospitality to one another. *1 Peter 4:9*
 Minister giftedness to one another. *1 Peter 4:10*
 Submit one to another. *1 Peter 5:5*
 Greet one another with a kiss of love. *1 Peter 5:14*
 Have fellowship one with another. *1 John 1:7*
 Love one another
 Love one another
 Love one another
 Love one another. (Many times in 1 John)

HELP! IT'S A BIG COUNTRY!

At our recent Oikos National Gathering we were reminded again of the opportunities and challenges facing the Simplechurch/Disciple Making movement in Australia and of the need to send out workers and teams to come alongside fledgling works, bring teaching and encouragement and promote the vision around the country.

The trouble is IT'S A BIG COUNTRY! And getting around it takes finances, finances that we don't have a lot of.

PARTNERS TOGETHER IN THE KINGDOM

This is where YOU can help. We are looking for people who would be prepared to help Oikos members serve and equip one another for alternative ministry across Australia? You will bless many by giving funds or by joining in prayer. The need is great to fund the expenses of travelling ministries who

1. Can minister to local groups, to encourage one another through pastoral care, teaching and personal mentoring. We need to cover expenses for 'going' ministries to be there for one another.
2. Develop new groups and connect groups together, to in turn start new groups or raise ministries up within local areas.
3. Facilitate training in discipleship and mission.

Serving one another in diverse ways is a natural expression of being the people of God. Ministry is dependent upon the generosity of those with a like heart and mind, sharing what we have with those who have not. There are many opportunities available for people to serve and to bless one another. Your offering is received as a gift to the Father's work. Here are some ways you may be able to help:

1. **Partner in Prayer (Please contact Ailsa Matesic 0431 599 089)**
2. **Sponsor an amount Monthly (\$20, \$50, \$100 or as you decide)**
3. **Sponsor an individual Ministry (travelling costs, accommodation, etc.)**
4. **General operational funds (e.g. Oikos Australia Magazine)**
5. **One-off donations for a designated purpose or project (e.g. Sponsor resource development for discipleship, leadership and ministry material for local groups.)**

All donations/offerings received are overseen by the National executive who are elected by members ensuring funds go where designated. The National Team and regional leaders are not salaried staff. All are volunteers, investing their own time and resources. We are connected through a common passion to see His people become all He intends. Oikos Australia is a not-for-profit ministry. Our heart is to serve, to support and to connect those in alternative ministry.

How about asking the Lord for His direction on how you are able to participate? For further information on partnering with us in this vital ministry visit our website oikos.org.au or give Phil Brown (Oikos Director) a ring on 0409 137 988

Give as the Spirit leads, to see Jesus lifted up in our midst

*Everything we are about is
focused on helping people
take their next step
towards Jesus*

Alex Absalom

Communion In Missional Communities

If communion is an important part of our worshipping life (it is, after all, one of the two sacraments recognized across most of the Protestant church, as well as obviously being part of Catholic practice), how do we offer communion in missional communities?

In particular, how does it work when our groups have people at all sorts of stages of their faith journey?

I realize that there are all sorts of answers to this, but I thought I'd share with you the answer I gave to a church planter who recently emailed me about this. They wrote:

I am trying to plant a church as a missional community. We meet twice monthly for a worship service in our home. Until now, I was reasonably certain that all in our group had trusted Christ and were endeavoring to follow him. However, God is starting to bring people into our gathering that probably do not know Christ at this time. We are thrilled to be a part of their journey with Jesus!

My problem... I believe communion to be a response of a believer's faith. To be clear, in the past I would have merely explained that communion was reserved for those who had trusted/followed Christ.

I want to be sensitive to those who have not yet trusted Jesus.

Would you share some ideas as to how our community can celebrate communion while maintaining the integrity of communion in faith without unduly "dividing" the group into the "haves" and "have nots".

Thank you for taking the time to consider my question.

Communion In Missional Communities

A great question! Here's my stab at a response:

Thanks so much for your message. Congratulations on your church planting, that is a tremendous thing to be involved with for the Kingdom. Well done!

So, here are a couple of filters that I'd use to process these sorts of issues:

1. Disciple-Making

Our great call and commission from Jesus is to go and make disciples. This means that everything we are about is focused on helping people take their next step towards Jesus. With this in mind, I operate with a centered rather than bounded set mentality (i.e. we are all centering on Jesus, moving towards Him – albeit not always in a straight line! – and none of us is fully there in this life. A bounded set view divides the world into two: those are part of our group (in this case, the church), and those who are not. This latter view has been the predominant one in Christendom, but for me feels far less Biblical and certainly not effective in a post-Christian culture.)

Thus with a disciple-making mindset, which calls people to imitate us as we imitate Christ, we build a community that is effectively on mission amongst the specific people group to whom the Lord has called us.

2. Missional

We are joining God in His great mission to the world, and following where He leads us. With missional communities, this means that these are gatherings that are always open-edged, where all sorts of people can come as they are to a Jesus-centered gathering.

However, this also means that we have to be willing to live with far more messiness around the edges. Bounded set church, with the clear distinctions it enforces, has far less of this – but consequently is generally weaker at reaching the genuinely unchurched.

Putting This Together

My own view on communion has evolved over time, to a place where I see it as an invitational, centered-set, disciple-making occasion. Specifically, I see the warnings of Paul as being about coming with integrity

of spirit to the table, and partaking with as much faith as an individual has at that time, hoping to encounter God's grace in that act of faith. Thus for me the issue is heart one more than it is a mind one – if someone approaches communion reverently, as a way of deepening their walk with Jesus, then I think that accords with Scripture.

As I look at the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, where there is all sorts of messed-up theology in the hearts of the disciples, I see there an invitational grace that is not pre-eminently about doctrinal correctness before participation is allowed. We must be careful not to allow one passage from Paul to overrule three accounts from the life of Jesus.

So the invitation I'd give would center on a brief explanation about how this is something Christians have done for 2,000 years, as part of their way of encountering Jesus and demonstrating their desire to know Him better and to follow Him more fully. So if that is where you are today, then you are very welcome to participate. And if for you today it shows more integrity to simply pass the plate on, then that's totally fine as well. Obviously to this sort of explanation you would add appropriate prayers/ scriptures etc.

*With
missional
communities
we have to
be willing to
live with far
more
messiness
around the
edges*



ALEX ABSALOM

Originally from England, Alex and Hannah Absalom grew up in a culture that was becoming rapidly post-Christian. As church planters in London they learned many significant

lessons about how to make disciples and extend the Kingdom in a thoroughly post-Christian society. Recognizing a call to use their gifts and experience to help leaders, churches and denominations make this missional and disciple-making focused shift they moved to America, along with their three sons, where they are part of the leadership of Grace Church and have overseen the planting of over 110 mid-sized missional communities.

dandelionresourcing.com

Finding a person of Peace (in NZ and elsewhere)

Andrew Stirling



Andrew Stirling and his wife Irene are New Zealanders who blog at simplechurch.nz. If the following works for Kiwis it may very well work elsewhere.

I blogged recently that to find people to start a home church we just need to talk to people. Are all people open to our message about Jesus?

In short, no.

Some are completely against what we have to say and may even get aggressive if we try to press the matter.

Can we know before we talk to people whether they will be interested in spiritual matters?

Again, no.

I know there are people who 'treasure hunt', where they spend time praying and asking God to reveal to them which is the specific person they should talk to. They have some amazing testimonies about what happens and I praise God for those. My issue with that, is that God wants to reach everyone. While you're taking the time to pray and search for a specific person, hundreds of other people may walk right by you who are hurting and wanting to experience God's love.

So who do we approach?

How do we know if a person is interested in talking about God?

When Jesus sends out his seventy-two disciples in Luke 10, he gives them specific instructions on who to look for. Here is one of those instructions found in verses 5 & 6:

"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a *son of peace* is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you."

Compare this to the popular teaching that you just need to walk alongside non-

believers and invest enough time, energy and prayers into them until they decide to follow Jesus for themselves. The theory is that this may take years but if you keep persisting, eventually they will give in.

This doesn't match up with what Jesus told his disciples to do. He told them to find a son (or person) of peace.

What is a person of peace?

It is simply a peaceful person who takes the time to listen to what you are saying and wants to know more.

Jesus said "ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find."

The only way to find a person of peace is to ask God to lead you to one, then seek one out. This might mean talking to 20 people in a day or it might be just one. If we are diligent in doing this, we will find a person of peace.

So what does a person of peace look like and what do they do?

I'll answer that by giving you some comparisons of how people may respond when you start talking to them about Jesus:

- Folded arms, looking away from you while you talk.
- Continually trying to steer the conversation to worldly matters like the weather, food or problems with their car.
- Deflecting the conversation to another person.
- Asking difficult questions from the Bible such as, "can God create a stone so big that even he can't lift it?" or, "who did the first sons of Adam and Eve marry?"

Now compare that to these types of people.

- They take their sunglasses or hat off when you talk to them and look you in the eye.
- A person offers you a hot drink or something to eat and asks you to explain more.
- Someone who would rather listen to what you have to say, than focus on their child who is getting into trouble or phone constantly ringing.

Obviously, the people in the second group are the types of people you are looking for. They are incredibly rare, and you may meet a lot of people in the first group before you find one, but once you find a person of peace, the experience will make all the rejections worthwhile.

Once you've found a person of peace, Jesus says what to do next in Luke 10:7. "Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages."

Do not move around from house to house."

Stay with that person for as long as they allow. With the initial conversation, never be the one to leave if they want to keep talking. If you have something else to get to, forget it! If you haven't eaten yet but they have and you are getting hungry, just skip that meal or ask them to join you. If they decide to leave, make sure you trade contact details and go and visit them as often as possible.

A person of peace is like gold so treasure them.

Nurture them for as long as you can and then teach them to go find a person of peace also. Then you will make a disciple who will make more disciples and God's kingdom will expand on the earth.

The Value of Sermons

Dan
Hereford

Meetings of the church have typically placed the consumption of carefully prepared and rehearsed sermons at the center of the time together. The preacher is the central figure in the time, and the sermon is presented and received as “the main meal” for the “feeding of the sheep”. In many gatherings, the words that the speaker says from the podium are treated as “the word of the Lord” – unquestionable and authoritative.

Is that God’s thinking, that a preacher would stand as the unique mouthpiece of God? For that matter, do sermons have any part in the Christian experience?

Those are two distinct questions. To the first I would answer “No!”. It is not God’s intention that there be a one-way filter between God and his people. If everything we understand is what our favorite preacher or author has taught us, something is probably very broken. But, to the second question I would answer “Yes”. Sermons can be a great help to believers, if they have the right attitude.

I enjoy sermons, presentations, messages, and the like. I enjoy when someone carefully expresses what they see in the scriptures, or shares information,

encouragement or insight in an area. In fact, I see what I write on this blog in the same way that I see sermons. Shorter, generally, but the same kind of thing.

Sermons and the like are very good for communicating information to a large group at once, and for stirring the hearts and minds of a crowd. But, the communication is usually one-way and therefore very limited.

There is typically little opportunity for interaction with the presenter, and there is often little encouragement for listeners to discuss what they hear, especially if they disagree or have critical questions. In some venues, this approach might make sense and be effective, but in the church it is not just ineffective, it can be destructive.

First, sermons are ineffective because we don’t typically learn by sitting passively and listening.

We are not called to be imbibers of information or appreciators of speeches. We are called to be apprentices – learner-doers. What have you ever learned – apart from facts – by just reading or listening? We learn by hearing, then doing, then hearing again as necessary, and doing again, and so on. The once-a-week sermon is not the best way to accomplish the task of teaching us how to obey all that Jesus commanded.

Second, sermons can end up being destructive because they train the listeners to be passive and undiscerning.

If the congregants are not encouraged to question and challenge; if the congregants are trained to listen to information but not apply it with further interaction; and if the congregants are made to be intellectually dependent on a paid mouthpiece, then the church is stunted and weak and open to being led astray.

Again, sermons are not inherently bad, but for the sermon (or blog post, etc) to have maximum value, both the presenter and the receiver need the right attitude. To the preacher, the blogger, and the podcaster, I encourage you to be as interactive as possible. As possible! Not necessarily with every person who wants to challenge or chat or whatever. There are limits to what you can do. But, cultivate a willingness to be questioned and challenged – to refine your knowledge in the process – and truth will be a more likely fruit.

To the listener, the reader, and the watcher, I encourage you to think, to question, to discuss. The person you are listening to does not know it all. They are not infallible. You do them a disservice when you take everything they say unquestioningly.

Ultimately, recognize the limits of even the best sermon and look outside of the producer-consumer model altogether. Look for smaller gatherings, where there is not a speaker and an audience, but a circle; where there is dialogue and discussion in relationship. In that kind of environment truth can be distilled and applied, and can move more quickly from thought to action.

Thanks for listening to my sermon. Let me know if you have any questions or comments!

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.” – Jesus



DAN HEREFORD is a husband, and father of six. He and his wife Jennifer live in Corvallis, Oregon for nearly 20 years. I believe that in a real sense, the church is where you are, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ. I alone am not the church, but I am the manifestation of the church – in my shop or in my neighborhood or wherever – we together manifest the church. danherford.com



Useful Phrases for facilitators

Kathleen and Kevin-Neil Ward

Kathleen and Kevin-Neil Ward lead a church in Perth, WA called *Church in a Circle* - From monologue to dialogue. From audience to participants. From performance to empowerment. Here they share some advice on how to facilitate a discovery group.

Firstly, get comfortable with silence. Wait long enough, and someone will speak. NEVER answer your own question. Get used to the awkward feeling of long pauses, especially when people are just warming up.

Affirm everyone when they contribute. NEVER criticise somebody's ideas or conclusions. Create a safe, accepting "no-fail zone" for people to contribute.

"Brilliant!"

"Wow!"

"Great point"

"I like what you're saying"

"I've never seen that before. Thank you for that insight."

"Nice one"

"So true"

"Awesome!"

Ask questions. Lots of open-ended questions, that nobody can get wrong. Like I said before, NEVER answer your own questions. It's not about you.

"What just happened here?"

"How did you feel?"

"What did you learn?"

"What stands out to you?"

Give other people credit for their ideas. Lift them up publicly. Make a big deal of them. Use the vocabulary they give you.

"That relates to what Phil said earlier about X..."

"I love what Rachel just said"

"Can anyone else feed back to Pete about how his story has impacted them?"

"Wow! I have incredible respect for how you've coped with that situation"

"Liz, I know you might have some ideas about that point."

Follow other people's idea trails. Abandon your own prepared point if the group head down a different path.

"What do other people think about that?"

"Can someone pray for John right now?"

"I really don't have the answer to that question. Does anyone else have an insight to share?"

Finally, NEVER have the final word – unless it is an encouragement of how well they all did and how much you got out of it. Leave people in a position to carry on conversations with one another. DON'T follow discussion time with a "mini-sermon" – this just positions you as the "expert" and undoes the effort you have gone to in empowering them. Remember that facilitation is about giving others a **voice**, a **value** and an **impact**.



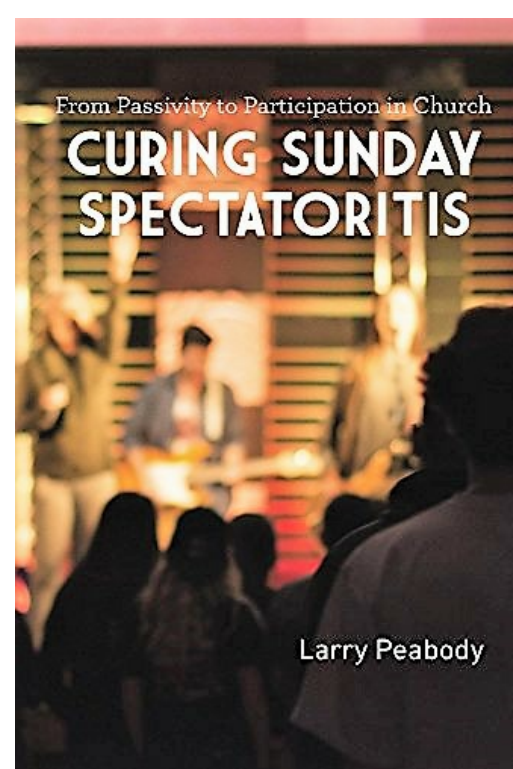
Read more of Kevin-Neil and Kathleen's story and articles at
www.churchinacircle.com



CURING SUNDAY SPECTATORITIS: *From Passivity to Participation in Church*
by Larry Peabody (Amazon)

The sit-watch-and-listen format for church meetings isn't cutting it. "Jesus seldom, if ever, monologued. He interacted," says Charles H. Kraft, Fuller Seminary professor. This book calls for making church services participatory. It also offers stories in which 25 church leaders explain how they are doing so. Because most church services spotlight performance by professionals, they encourage passivity rather than participation among the people. The typical meeting format treats the church as an audience rather than as the body of Christ and family of God. As a result what has

been called the "discipleship deficit" continues. The term "spectatoritis" in the title speaks for itself. No dictionary needed. Like arthritis, bronchitis, and appendicitis, spectatoritis brings on a measure of disability. But unlike those and other inflammatory "-itis" conditions that ache and throb, Sunday spectatoritis typically leaves its victims quite pain-free, even comfortable. And who among us, including church people, will seek a cure if unaware of any disabling symptoms? But as this book explains, spectatoritis can be cured. This book is for all who love the Body of Christ and work for its well-being. It is for pastors, church leaders, and church planters in all kinds of communities—in urban, suburban, exurban, and rural



congregations. It is for Christians who seek to encourage increased congregational participation and to support leaders as they pursue that objective.

THE POWER OF BLESSING
(Continued from page 2)

the cry of so many people, especially of sons seeking a blessing from their fathers.

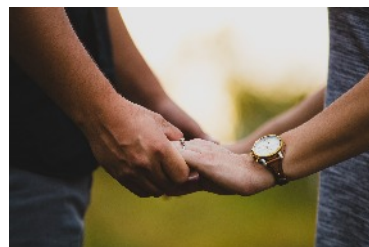
Throughout the Bible, God blesses and the enemy brings curses. Jesus himself blessed the children and taught the Beatitudes or blessings. Luke records Jesus as blessing his disciples as he ascended to heaven." When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted p his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24;50-52). Even the last book of the Bible, Revelation, ends with a blessing for the one "who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" and for those who wash their robes (Rev 22:7, 14). The Bible from beginning to end is about Blessing! God is the God of blessing and we also can become people who bless.

Why mention blessing in the context of Oikos which is dedicated to disciple

making, missional community, home churches and movements? The reason is that it is a powerful tool when used properly with authenticity and has the potential to touch lives and open people's hearts.

I have seen this on a number of occasions. I have heard people who were touched deeply express their appreciation. Shop owners and wealthy professionals, youth and children alike, have been touched by a simple and genuine blessing. Frequently I have observed that when a person is blessed they seem to be like a plant that is dry and thirsty for water- welcoming water and opening up to receive it.

It seems that in life we all receive too much criticism and lack of appreciation. Many people are hungry for it, and I have never seen anyone who rejects being blessed when it is genuinely given. Much to my surprise one person told me that she writes down in a note book everything I have said in blessing her!



As I reflect on this, I believe that it shows the heart of God as a loving Father who is so eager to pour love and blessing on his sons and daughters. Despite our failures, God sees our uniqueness and potential,

and wants us to reflect His image and to become everything that he created us to be.

It is easy to slip into criticism and to point out people's shortcomings,

but blessing that is genuine and from the heart is like water to a parched and thirsty plant.

As followers of Christ we are to be the "salt of the earth" and people who bring true life and goodness from our Father to other broken and hurting people - which includes all of us at times!

As a follower of Jesus and "the Way" my heart is to be a blessing to as many people as possible each day. Let us become known as people who enrich and bless at every opportunity.

bless you, Phil Brown
OIKOS DIRECTOR

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Maurice Smith

HOUSECHURCH AND FASTING

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I have often described house church as the pursuit of God in the company of friends, and so it is. At the end of the day, house church isn't about evangelism or any other activity. House church is the pursuit of God in the company of other "children of the burning heart" whose greatest desire is intimacy and fellowship with God and with one another. Like the house church at Antioch in Acts 13:1-3, house church is about "ministering to the Lord and fasting" in the firm belief and expectation that as we do so the Holy Spirit will speak and tell us what to do next. Paul's first missionary journey began, not with a missions conference, but with a worshiping church which was "ministering to the Lord and fasting."

Just as house church isn't about structure, but about values and community, so too, fasting isn't about power with God, but about intimacy and relationship. We don't really fast and pray to transform a church or a community. We fast and pray to allow God to transform us into the kind of people whom He can use to transform a church or a community. Fasting isn't really about asking God to send spiritual awakening or revival (although I've certainly spent time fasting and praying for that). Fasting is about allowing God to make us the kind of people to whom He can send revival without having to compete with us for the glory that is rightfully His.

And over the years I've also learned that fasting really isn't about spiritual warfare. Every time I have entered into a prolonged season of fasting I have encountered markedly increased spiritual warfare. But fasting really isn't about spiritual warfare. It's about intimacy with God. And greater intimacy with God almost inevitably results in increased spiritual warfare because we are now more of a threat to what it is the enemy wants to do in this world. Graham Cooke expressed this well in a talk (primarily) about the nature of the spiritual battle. But his observations are applicable to fasting as well. Here's what he said

"I'm not a seeker of the enemy. I don't go looking for Him. I don't need to. I'm a seeker of God. And when God and I connect the enemy comes looking for me, and at that point when he comes looking for me I have authority to deal with him. But I've got better things to do than go looking for him. And I've certainly got better things to do than pull down strongholds of the enemy. There's only one stronghold I'm wanting to pull

down and that's the stronghold of God into our midst. I want to see God come down, and when God comes down He will fight for us. Our whole deal in this thing is to be a worshiping community that brings down the Presence of God into our midst, that through our friendships, through our relationships and how we are together and who we are for each other God cannot stay away from us. And as God's Presence comes down, worship begins to rise up and the stronghold of God comes down in our midst and you see what God will do for you."

We may have many plans for ministry and outreach over the days ahead, but I am prayerfully hopeful that some of those plans are God's plans and not just our "best ideas." The only way we'll know is by fasting, praying and seeking intimacy with God in the sure and certain belief that we, too, will hear the Holy Spirit say, "Set aside for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

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MAURICE SMITH is the author of several books on organic house church and spiritual awakening. He and his wife, Gale, reside in Spokane, Washington. Maurice is a keen radio presenter and the instigator of Feed Spokane, a coalition of meal providers and community partners in the Spokane area. See his website at safehousesofhopeandprayer.org

No Superstars in the Kingdom

Roger Thorman Posted at 05:26 AM | [Permalink](#) |

There are two truths championed by simple/organic church paradigms that are vital to the health of the whole church:

1. There are no superstars in the Kingdom of God. Rather, spiritually speaking, we are all superstars equally filled with the Spirit, equipped with gifts of the Spirit, and called to a vocation of serving others.
2. When ministry is recognized by worldly standards (size, scope, media recognition) this has no bearing and is often counter to actual Kingdom impact.

This is on my mind because it seems the news is filled with the misbehavior of political and Hollywood 'stars.' And more significantly, the church as we know it, in regards to those who are publicly recognized, is not far behind. Without making comment or judgement on anyone in particular, it is enough to note that super-stardom is a difficult role to handle. It is rare for humans to handle worldly honor well. But, for the church, the point is a simple one: worldly acclaim is not a Kingdom marker.

Now, to be fair, almost all of us are guilty. Either we have allowed worldly acclaim to get to us in some measure personally, or we have looked to certain other people with a measure of veneration because of worldly markers. Or both. Thus it might be a good idea to re-look at the most influential individual in all of church history who described his ministry this way:

I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my

own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

He concludes this self-examination with this statement: *If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am.* (1 Corinthians 11)

Now, Paul has given us markers to aspire to and to measure others by. Further, I am reminded that the power of the church is found in everyday believers (the only kind there are) stepping by faith into their gifts, their calling, their spiritual vocation and serving others with no expectation of being recognized for anything other than their utter weakness apart from God.

Let us each aspire to be all that we can be in the Kingdom by faith (embracing whatever challenges and persecutions God has for us) while avoiding all trappings of veneration in this world. The church will shine more brightly and the world will be impacted more powerfully.

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North East Victoria Oikos Regional Gathering August 24 - 26 Tallangatta

Growing Together to Reach Out to a Lost World

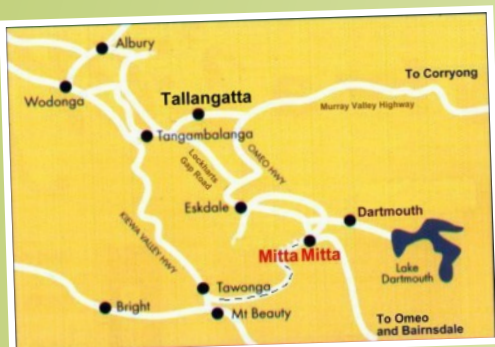
A great opportunity to get together to hear each other's stories and encourage each other in the adventure

The Gathering will be at the Reynolds Homestead, Tallangatta East.

First bookings can choose bedrooms – plenty of mattresses, floor and camping spaces

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