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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

MISSIONAL CHANGE IN THE CHRISTIAN AND  
MISSIONARY ALLIANCE OF AUSTRALIA

Written by

Rod Russell-Brown

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



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Alan Roxburgh



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Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: August 6, 2012

MISSIONAL CHANGE IN THE CHRISTIAN AND  
MISSIONARY ALLIANCE OF AUSTRALIA

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

ROD RUSSELL-BROWN  
JULY 2012



## ABSTRACT

### **Missional Change in the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia**

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Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2012

The goal of this study was to understand how missional renewal could take place in the Christian and Missionary Alliance (herein C&MA). It was proposed that by employing the Missional Change Model, the vision of A. B. Simpson, the founder of the C&MA, could be re-engaged to produce missional transformation. The thesis was tested by drawing together a group of nine pastors who engaged in a ten-month process of learning, reflection, and ministry experimentation.

The group of nine, entitled "Team Oz," was exposed to the writings of A. B. Simpson and his boundary-crossing legacy. Also, they were introduced to key theological frameworks central to a missional understanding, including an exploration of the Trinity, the *missio Dei*, and hospitality. Important social frameworks were presented, including systems thinking, the Missional Change Model, and technical versus adaptive change.

Team Oz attempted to define what a missional church and denomination would look like. This led to an evaluation of the current practices of the C&MA and, specifically, the identification of key adaptive challenges that are standing in the way of missional renewal. These challenges were presented to the National Board of the C&MA. Concurrent with the Team Oz meetings, some participants were involved in missional experiments. All participants were interviewed at the beginning and end of the process to assess change in missional understanding and behaviour.

The study showed that there has been growth in the missional imagination of some participants. Importantly, it was noted that no single approach can be used to bring missional renewal. Multiple approaches that take into account the ethnicities and generations of all members will be needed. Further, additional research is required to see ways that the missional paradigm and practice can be applied specifically in a first-generation ethnic church.

Content Reader: Alan Roxburgh, DMin

Words 295

To my dear and very supportive wife, Philippa, who has walked her own difficult pilgrimage during these studies

Also, to Margaret, whose generosity made these studies possible

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of Team Oz and the National Board of the C&MA who worked with me on this project. Their ideas, challenges, and support enabled me to better grasp how we, together, can walk the missional road.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2009 the anniversary of the first Billy Graham Crusade in Australia was celebrated. Fifty years earlier the North American evangelist had taken Australia by storm with his Southern Cross Crusade. Some three million Australians attended his meetings. Hundreds of thousands flocked to hear him speak in Sydney and Melbourne. He was greeted like a hero, a superstar. Many people went forward to give their lives to Christ. At one meeting, 143,000 crammed into the Melbourne Cricket Ground and another 4,000 stood outside listening to hastily rigged-up speakers. Billy Graham's crusade was said to be responsible for a nationwide drop in crime rates, alcohol consumption, and, for three years afterward, a falling number of illegitimate births.<sup>1</sup>

The decade of the 1950s was probably the high-water mark for Christianity in Australia. It is very sobering to look at some facts about the decline of Christianity in this country. According to the National Church Life Survey, Christian affiliation has declined from 88 percent in 1947 to 64 percent in 2006. Further, frequent church attendance in Australia has dropped from 44 percent of the population in 1950 to 17 percent in 2007. People in their twenties are least represented in churches in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian and Missionary Alliance (hereafter, C&MA) arrived in Australia in 1969 and initially grew significantly, attendees generally being Caucasian. However, growth slowed to the point where the Caucasian work has essentially plateaued from 1989 to the present at 891 regular attendees. While the Caucasian work slowed during

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Broadcasting Commission, "Billy Graham Down Under," 2009, <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s2484481.htm> (accessed 4th April 2011).

<sup>2</sup>National Church Life Survey, 2010, "Why Innovation Is Needed in Church Life," <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=6420> (accessed 4th April 2011).

the 1980s, the C&MA commenced an irreversible process of becoming a multi-ethnic denomination. Since then the ethnic work has outgrown the Caucasian work which, as mentioned, has plateaued and probably shows early signs of decline. The overall work of the C&MA has grown with over five thousand people attending fifty-two churches around the country. The statistics indicate that the ethnic work, particularly among the Chinese, is responsible for this growth trend.

The plateaued Caucasian work and the growth of the ethnic work is a reflection of the broader changes in Australian society. Not only has church attendance in Australia dropped precipitously, so also has the commitment to a Christian worldview. In fact, there are indicators of a strongly anti-Christian sentiment in certain sectors. For example, the Victorian State Government established the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. Under this legislation Pastor Danny Nalliah, Pastor Daniel Scott, and Catch the Fire Ministries were found to have breached the law in December 2004 for supposedly vilifying Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Although the judgement was eventually set aside, it demonstrates how far Australia has moved from its Christian roots. Similarly, there has been a strong movement recently to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples.<sup>4</sup> These examples picture the shift in sentiment in the community. Along with these changes, there has been an increasing popularity in other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

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<sup>3</sup> Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, "Islamic Council of Victoria V Catch the Fire Ministries Inc (Final) [2004] Vcat 2510 (22 December 2004)", 2004, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/vic/VCAT/2004/2510.html> (accessed 10th April 2011).

<sup>4</sup> ABC, "Victoria's Labor Leader Joins Push for Gay Marriage", 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/09/3186761.htm?site=melbourne> (accessed 10 April 2011).

The growth of these groups in Australia appears to be substantially due to immigration growth.

It is clear that the C&MA of Australia needs renewal particularly, although not exclusively, in the Caucasian work. Although change and renewal have been attempted in various ways in the past, results have been limited. The future of the C&MA requires a recovery of innovative boundary-crossing into the community, moving from reliance upon attractional models of ministry towards greater community engagement. Although this need is most easily seen in the Caucasian work, where aging and shrinking churches need to take innovative new directions, the Caucasian challenges are just the early-warning signs for the whole denomination. As the Caucasian work grows or declines, so the rest will follow. Immigration growth among Cantonese-speaking Chinese and Vietnamese, the two major ethnic groups in the Australian C&MA, has come to a virtual standstill and the rapid growth of these congregations has slowed. Further, second and third generation people in ethnic churches increasingly desire to worship in an English-speaking context if not a Caucasian church. Younger people naturally adopt an Australian worldview which, unfortunately, often includes the abandonment of God and church as important dimensions of life. All of these factors demonstrate that denominational missional renewal is an imperative.

This project aims to bring missional renewal to the C&MA of Australia. In particular, it asks how the vision of Dr. A. B. Simpson, the founder of the C&MA, can be re-engaged to bring missional transformation to the denomination. Although A. B. Simpson was born at a time when Christianity dominated the religious landscape, he showed a profound and unwavering commitment to cross cultural and linguistic

boundaries to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who had no access to it. This was evident not only in his ministries in Kentucky and New York City but also in his commitment to overseas missionary activity. Recapturing this vision will be very important for the development of the C&MA of Australia.

The Missional Change Model developed by Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk will shape the project design.<sup>5</sup> A group of pastors, local church leaders, and the National Board of the C&MA will be led through a process of innovation. The methodology will involve five stages. First, a beta group of key leaders will be identified. This group will be tested as to their awareness of the need for missional change. Second, greater understanding of the need for change will be established by engaging them in the work of A. B. Simpson to become aware of his core vision and methodologies as they relate to missional change. Third, an evaluation of current practice will be conducted by inviting the group to name key adaptive challenges that A. B. Simpson's vision addresses in the C&MA at this moment. Fourth, a maximum of three action-learning experiments will be developed in Sydney and Canberra based upon the work of stages two and three. Fifth, by analysing the learning from stage four, recommendations for the adoption of new practices and frameworks will be presented to the National Board of the C&MA.

I have chosen to undertake this project so that I can learn how to more effectively lead the C&MA of Australia into missional innovation. Although moderately successful in leading a local church, I have found it very difficult to bring missional change to this denomination in my role as President. Various attempts have been made but there

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 79-108.

appears to have been little major change. Part of my ineffectiveness has been my own unrealistic expectations and the approaches I have utilised. The intention is that this project will assist me in personal learning and also serve the denomination in innovating new missional behaviours. This project will not attempt to bring large-scale structural change in the first instance but simply provide missional experiments that will provide seeds for missional change in the C&MA.

The project work will have three parts. Part One will outline the history of the C&MA commencing with an overview of A. B. Simpson's life and legacy. Simpson's boundary-crossing will be featured, including his innovative social agenda. Changes in the C&MA and the wider religious climate of Australia will then be considered, including the ethnic population explosion. The drop in church attendance in Australia and attempts at church renewal in the C&MA will be examined. Finally, consideration will be given to the identity of the C&MA — both its self-perception and that of other Christians.

Part Two will cover two key theological frameworks which will inform missional change. These relate to the Triune God and his Church. This section will also look at some key social frameworks in understanding the church and how to innovate missional change. The Missional Change Model will be featured.<sup>6</sup>

Part Three will describe the development of a listening-experimentation-learning process with the selected group of leaders. A nine-month journey will take some eight leaders through about six learning meetings. The final chapter will reflect on the learning process, the degree of change in missional imagination and practice of the participants,

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<sup>6</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*.

and some possible next steps for the C&MA. Following the conclusion of this paper, various appendices will provide extra detailed information.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Participants in Team Oz have all agreed to a summary of their personal interviews, their missional experiments, and a record of the Team Oz meetings becoming a part of this academic paper. No confidential or sensitive conversations have been included below.

PART ONE – THE MINISTRY CONTEXT OF THE C&MA

## CHAPTER 1

### THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DOCTOR A. B. SIMPSON

Albert Benjamin Simpson was born on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1843 on Prince Edward Island, Canada. It was clear from birth that God had something special in mind for Albert Simpson. Rev. John Geddie, himself a remarkable apostle to the South Seas, baptised Albert and also dedicated him to Christian ministry in what was apparently an impassioned prayer.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Albert's mother Jane had prayed that her son would be a minister or a missionary. Albert's father was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and so, with all these influences, it was little wonder that young Albert found himself desiring to be a minister before he was even converted.

Albert's family tended towards a rather severe form of Calvinism. Discipline was strict for young Albert and his siblings, with Sunday afternoons taken up with memorising the Shorter Catechism. His father was an industrious and capable man but short on imagination, so the accounts go.<sup>2</sup> His mother, on the other hand, had a more sensitive and romantic nature. Albert inherited his mother's disposition including her appreciation of poetry. In his late teens, after a near fatal emotional breakdown, Albert

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Wingspread* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1943), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

finally discovered the truth about the grace of God that enabled him to receive God's forgiveness for the first time.

Having graduated from Knox College in Toronto at the age of twenty-one, he commenced ministry at Knox Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ontario. Up to this point, the young Simpson had been thinking and operating as a regular churchman and then minister of his generation. Yet he had a spiritual passion and giftedness that was very rare, particularly in one so young. He did not believe in special evangelistic events or occasions, but nonetheless 750 people were added to the church during his ministry in Hamilton. He was a cultured and well-educated Presbyterian who "had [even] been abroad."<sup>3</sup>

In January 1874 Simpson and his family moved to the Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The American Civil War had been finished for nearly a decade, yet the churches of Louisville, which lay on the border line between the north and the south, were still "fighting the war." There was bitterness between churches, even of the same denomination, over the question of slavery. Churches were identified with the pugnacious counter sign, "North" or "South." A. W. Tozer, in his biography of Simpson, *Wingspread*, remarks that this was "chilling the religious life of those cities lying near the line of Mason and Dixon, and freezing every sporadic attempt at revival put forth by any of them."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tozer, *Wingspread*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 45. Also A. E. Thompson, *A. B. Simpson His Life and Work* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1960), 54.

As a Canadian, Simpson was viewed as neutral and was able to organise a city-wide evangelistic campaign with Major Whittle, a great evangelist of the day, and P. P. Bliss, a gospel singer. The meetings not only resulted in many people coming to faith and joining churches, they also had a profound impact upon Simpson himself. First, Simpson saw the vital place of popular evangelism. Second, he began a process where he came to realise his need for a deep work of sanctification and, as a result, he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In 1879 Simpson moved to New York City to take up ministry at the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church. The move was largely motivated by his desire to be at the centre of international movements. After only two years, Simpson resigned from the church and struck out alone to set up an independent ministry called the Gospel Tabernacle. It was only eight years later, in 1887, that the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance were established. These would later combine to form the Christian and Missionary Alliance.<sup>5</sup>

### **Simpson as an Exemplar of Missional Behaviour**

The above biographical sketch laid out some key events in Simpson's life that will now be expanded upon in the following sections, specifically as they relate to missional behaviour. Simpson's missional behaviour and boundary-crossing can be demonstrated in two ways. The first relates to evangelism in the local church. Simpson's missional behaviour and boundary-crossing can also be demonstrated by his passion to reach those overseas with the Gospel.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Niklaus, John S. Sawin, and Samuel J. Stoesz, *All for Jesus: God at Work in the Christian and Missionary Alliance over One Hundred Years* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1986), 74.

## Boundary-Crossing Evangelism

Simpson's evangelistic behaviour was particularly ignited during the Whittle-Bliss campaign as noted above. To even suggest an evangelistic campaign was certainly on the edge of what was considered acceptable amongst upper-middle class Presbyterians of the day. Yet the Louisville church was captured, not only by Simpson's leadership, but by his communication of the love of God to those who were not followers of Jesus Christ. After the completion of the Whittle-Bliss campaign, Simpson led the church to continue evangelistic meetings on Sunday evenings. They cancelled their normal evening services and met in the Public Library Hall and later a theatre. The latter venue and the use of popular music brought regular criticism from the established church of the city, although the popular press was most appreciative. Simpson's view on what was appropriate had changed significantly. People's eternal destiny was of far more importance than what was culturally acceptable within churches. Simpson worked toward a presentation of Christ that met people where they were. He unashamedly used a popular approach to reach as many people as possible from whatever race or strata of society he could.

Beyond Simpson's evangelistic pulpit ministry, his personal evangelistic ministry was striking. He personally led many people to faith in Christ. One example, during his time in Louisville, demonstrates his desire to cross boundaries. He tells the story of a poor woman who had been abused by men and did not understand the concept of love. He visited this woman and shared the Gospel with her. Due to her difficult life experiences she did not respond, so Simpson returned to his church and challenged them to reach out to her despite the fact that she was poor, they were rich, and that she lived in

a different part of the city. Eventually, after the people had visited and loved her she said, “Now I think I understand what love means and can accept the love of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Simpson spent only two years in the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City. He found that the prestigious pew-rented church was not as responsive as the Louisville church. As long as church ministry remained within the accepted “regular work of ministry” all went well, but Simpson yearned to be involved in aggressive evangelism. He had originally accepted the call to the church on the understanding, writes Tozer, that “on the part of the new church officers . . . they would unite with him in a popular religious movement to reach the unchurched masses.”<sup>7</sup> This had not happened. In fact, when some one hundred Italian immigrants, whom Simpson had led to faith through street preaching, were not warmly accepted into the church, this spelled the end of his time at Thirteenth Street Presbyterian. The elders were happy that these people had been won to faith as long as they did not attend their prestigious church. Simpson was forced to find another church to care for them.<sup>8</sup>

Grace was always Simpson’s approach even in the midst of conflict. He commented that he had had two happy years in serving this church, “but found, after a thorough and honest trial, that it would be difficult for them to adjust themselves to the radical and aggressive measures to which God was leading [him]. What they wanted was

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<sup>6</sup> Thompson, A. E., *A. B. Simpson His Life and Work*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Tozer, A. W., *Wingspread*, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Niklaus, Robert L., John S. Sawin, and Samuel J. Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 36.

a conventional parish for respectable Christians. What their young pastor wanted was a multitude of publicans and sinners.”<sup>9</sup>

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1881 Simpson launched a new work in New York City which would become the Gospel Tabernacle. The new church was not to be a reproduction of the fashionable churches of the day nor purely a city-mission outreach. Robert Niklaus, in his book, *All for Jesus*, notes that the church should be “a self-supporting work among the middle classes, who have no church home.”<sup>10</sup> There was a clear need for a popular church in the city which was not available at that time.

Simpson considered that the church and all its functions should primarily be evangelistic whatever else the benefit of such functions may be. In his biography, *A. B. Simpson His Life and Work*, A. E. Thompson commented that Simpson “never attempted any work that had not for its object the salvation of souls, and all of his institutions at home and abroad have been a light brigade in the great movement for world evangelization.”<sup>11</sup> Niklaus notes that the new church’s “specific mission was to evangelize unreached peoples both locally and afar.”<sup>12</sup> For Simpson, the church was a vehicle for evangelism.

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<sup>9</sup> Niklaus, Robert L., John S. Sawin, and Samuel J. Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, A. B. *Simpson His Life and Work*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Niklaus, Sawin, and Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 53.

## Overseas Missionary Outreach

Simpson's missional behaviour and boundary-crossing can also be demonstrated by his passion to reach those overseas with the Gospel. The period of Simpson's life which was just considered will be re-examined from the point of view of his overseas concerns. From the beginning, Simpson's ministry had a missionary emphasis. In his first pastorate in Hamilton, the church increased its interest in missions work due to his ministry. Yet it was not until 1878, when Simpson had a profound dream, that his heart was broken for those overseas who were without the Gospel. In this dream he saw many Asians wringing their hands in mute anguish. He sensed a call to go and serve overseas and he said, "Yes, Lord, I will go."<sup>13</sup>

Yet, as God would have it, Simpson never went to serve on the mission field. His wife's reluctance was a major factor, but it seems clear that God had a bigger picture for this visionary than simply living his life out in South East Asia. Thompson observes that "the Lord of the Harvest had larger designs, a mightier ministry for this man whose life He had been moulding from his birth. First of all, however, his heart must go to the ends of the earth to be chained there in endless bondage to the cry of the unevangelized millions."<sup>14</sup>

It was with this new burden for those in the "heathen lands" that the Simpson family moved to New York City to the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church. Although, as mentioned, Simpson served every person in the city whatever their race or background; it was clear that the cry of the unevangelized overseas was the real attraction

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<sup>13</sup> Thompson, A. B. *Simpson His Life and Work*, 120.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

to New York City. This metropolis was an international centre from which missionaries sailed and to which they returned. Simpson's desire to reach those overseas involved the production of a high-quality missionary magazine that was designed to reach across denominational lines. The journal would excite and challenge Christians of all sorts with the need of those who had never heard the Gospel. Living in New York enabled close contact with missionaries who could supply, as Tozer notes, "fresh information to make his magazine live."<sup>15</sup>

During 1882 this revolutionary missionary magazine commenced. The next year the new congregation formed its own interdenominational missionary society. That same year the Missionary Training College was established with the first graduating class being sent to the Congo. By the time of Simpson's death in 1919, three hundred missionaries had been sent to various parts of the world. In 2011, the C&MA had ministries in eighty-one countries with a combined membership of some five million people.<sup>16</sup> Both Simpson's evangelistic passion and his overseas missionary zeal point to a man who is an exemplar of missional activity.

### **The Social Agenda of the Early C&MA**

There is no doubt that the primary interest of A.B. Simpson was to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ through personal conversion, followed closely by his emphasis on the deeper life in Christ. However, it is evident that he also thought it appropriate and right that Christians be involved in philanthropic and social activities.

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<sup>15</sup> Tozer, *Wingspread*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Christian and Missionary Alliance, "About Us", page, <http://www.cmalliance.org/about/> (accessed 23 March 2011).

John Dahms, in his consideration of Simpson's social concern in *The Birth of a Vision*, quotes him as saying,

He (Christ) wants His church to be complete in every department of work; He wants us to have not only the mere preaching of the Gospel, but work for the poor and lowly; work for the destitute and the sick; work for the rich and worldly. He wants us to be a people who will combine every department of Christian beneficence which it is right for the church of God to sustain.<sup>17</sup>

In another context, Dahms quotes Simpson writing that "there is room not only for the worship of God, the teaching of sacred truth and the evangelization of the lost, but also for every phase of practical philanthropy and usefulness."<sup>18</sup> He went on identify specific areas including charitable relief, industrial training, and refuges. Dahms again quotes Simpson who writes that there is "no work that will be more glorifying to God than a church that will embrace just such features and completeness."<sup>19</sup>

The early C&MA was involved with various practical ministries. Norris Magnuson, in his work, *Salvation in the Slums*, observes that

an aggressive program of social work paralleled the evangelistic and spiritual activity of the Gospel Tabernacle and the Alliance during these early decades. The network of departments and agencies included a rescue home for women (1882), a home for "rest and healing" (1883), a Training College for missionaries, evangelists, and rescue workers (1883), an orphanage (1886), work with immigrants from Germany (1887) and several rescue missions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John V. Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson," in *The Birth of a Vision*, ed. David F Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen(Regina, Canada: His Dominion, 1986), 50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Norris A. Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1856-1920* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 17.

In addition to these areas Simpson encouraged other social contributions to society such as general education and encouraged educational missions overseas.<sup>21</sup> Simpson supported the Temperance movement, promoted and valued African-American people in a day of widespread racial prejudice, critiqued the oppression of the poor, and had his own opinions on war which he expressed.<sup>22</sup> In short, Simpson and the early C&MA had a strong social welfare component to their ministry. This social concern flowed directly from the “deeper spiritual life” emphasis that the C&MA promoted.

In the first decade of the twentieth century there appears to have been a decline in the concern for social needs and physical concerns. There were far fewer references to social ministries in the official organ of the C&MA. The first clear move to reduce social involvement came in connection with the work in India. In the Annual Report of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1910 there was a recommendation to phase out the orphanage work in that country.<sup>23</sup> Such a minimising of social concerns is quite understandable when viewed against the backdrop of the Social Gospel. Increasingly, theological liberalism, fuelled by the Darwinian theory of evolution and a particular form of postmillennialism, was gaining in popularity. David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*, remarks that “the Social Gospel’s romantic, evolutionary conception of God’s kingdom involved ‘no discontinuities, no crises, no tragedies or sacrifices, no loss of all

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<sup>21</sup> Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson," 59.

<sup>22</sup> Alliance people provided various ministries focussing upon African-American people including schools, homes and rescue missions.

<sup>23</sup> Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson," 65.

things, no cross and resurrection’ . . . An indulgent God admitted ‘souls’ to his ‘heaven’ on the recommendation his kindly son.”<sup>24</sup>

It is little wonder that the C&MA, with its strong emphasis on evangelism and a premillennial expectation, not only rejected the Social Gospel but also tended to de-emphasise social ministry in favour of the proclamation of the Gospel. The fear of minimising the Gospel and its proclamation by involvement in social welfare and betterment still exists in the C&MA to this day.<sup>25</sup> Although there is a strong element of social ministry in the C&MA in this current century, as evidenced, for example, by Compassion and Mercy Associates (CAMA services), who provide various relief and development ministries, nonetheless there is, both in Australia and the USA, an ambivalence toward social ministry.

### **The Missional and Christendom Connection**

A functional Christendom – the church-state relationship where politics, culture, and religion are mixed – had significant sway in the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> One manifestation of this functional Christendom was the way the press paid attention to A. B. Simpson’s ministry. Whole sermons were quoted, at times verbatim, and reporters were often very complimentary.<sup>27</sup> However, although Simpson ministered in the context of a functional Christendom, his ministry went far beyond the

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<sup>24</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 321.

<sup>25</sup> Although undocumented, the author has heard from various C&MA leaders from time to time comments about fear of losing a Gospel emphasis if there is inclusion of a social agenda.

<sup>26</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 274, 275.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *A. B. Simpson His Life and Work*, 55,56.

norms of the day. Tozer notes Simpson's shift during his Louisville ministry from being a "church man" in the "regular work of the ministry" to appealing to the masses.<sup>28</sup> Simpson deliberately altered the style of his public meetings so that they would relate to the general population. This can be seen in the style and brevity of sermons, his use of music and even the choice of venues for meetings. While it is true this was an "attractational" approach – asking people to come to central meetings – it broke the regular church mould in a number of ways. In particular, the meetings were not designed for the regular, well-to-do believers of the day but focussed on those outside the church. Beyond this, Simpson personally demonstrated a huge commitment to boundary-crossing despite his conservative background. His evangelising of the Italian immigrants in New York and his personal evangelistic ministry in Louisville strongly testify to a man who wanted to cross barriers. He was critical of the Presbyterian churches that he led because they were not as committed to crossing boundaries as he would have hoped. It is reasonable then to conclude that although Simpson ministered at a highpoint of Christendom, he nonetheless is an exemplar of missional behaviour that the twenty-first century C&MA of Australia would do well to follow.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tozer, *Wingspread*, 47.

<sup>29</sup> The key resources used in this chapter's overview of C&MA history were, Tozer, *Wingspread*, Thompson, *A. B. Simpson His Life and Work*, Niklaus, Sawin, and Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, and Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson".

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EXPERIENCE OF THE C&MA IN AUSTRALIA

This chapter will trace the history of the C&MA in Australia. Specifically it will consider the early years of aggressive expansion followed by the unexpected rise and rapid growth of ethnic churches. The chapter will note the increasing secularisation of Australian society, the need for renewal and recent missional experiments. Finally, the battle for the C&MA to define itself within its Australian context will be considered.

#### **The Early Years – 1969 to 1983**

In 1967 the North American C&MA sent a probe team to determine the feasibility of commencing a C&MA work in Australia. Prior to that point, the North American C&MA had had various connections with Australia and some Australians had served as missionaries with them.<sup>1</sup> The probe team concluded that there was a need in Australia that justified the entry of the C&MA. Robert Henry, in his first Director's report to the Australian Annual General Council in 1970, recounted the reasons for entry into Australia. He commented that

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Will Fletcher served for some 32 years from 1904. Rev. Edgar Carne served in China from 1903. Others Australians served including Rev. D. W. Cartmel, Rev. Leon Gold, Dr. Marjorie Bromley, and Ms. Joan Waller.

. . . with the passing of time there was a growing intensity of interest on the part of certain individuals in the commencing of an Australian C&MA. This was due to several factors: (1) the decreasing influence of North America in South-East Asia; (2) the increasing involvement of Australia in this region of earth where the C&MA bears one of the heaviest missionary commitments; (3) the need in Australia itself for the Alliance message, emphasis, and the wherewithal to channel young, dedicated Australian lives into regions of earth heretofore neglected or unnoticed by the evangelical church in this land.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the C&MA believed it could better serve South-East Asia with the Gospel by establishing a base in Australia. Further, it was believed that Australia would benefit from the Alliance's particular message. Rev. Henry and his family arrived in Australia in December 1968 and an inaugural church service was held in the home of Tony and Margaret Hall in Naremburn on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1969 with just 25 people in attendance.

The denomination was viewed as a cult by some evangelicals or at least as a threat. There had been other American-based groups who had attempted to start a ministry in Australia and had failed. Robert Henry recalls a conversation with Dr. Nathan Bailey, one of the senior denominational officials:

When Dr. Nathan Bailey and I parted company at the airport, I believe he had tears in his eyes as he knew what an impossible and antagonistic situation they were thrusting us into. The movers and shakers of the evangelical world in Australia in general, and certainly of Melbourne and Adelaide, were dead opposed to the C&MA starting work in Australia. They not only expected us to fail, they apparently wanted us to fail.<sup>3</sup>

It is particularly significant that the reasons for entering Australia were not because the country was unreached with the Gospel. On the contrary, there was a strong evangelical presence in Australia in 1969 as noted above. The C&MA mission to Australia would

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Henry, *Report of the Chairman to the First General Council of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia* (Sydney: C&MA, 1970), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Henry, *Alone on an Island Continent* (Unpublished Manuscript, C&MA National Office, Canberra, 2007), 8.

certainly benefit the Christians and the wider church, and evangelism would take place; however, Australia was simply not a raw mission field in the same way as say Indonesia, Thailand, or Cambodia. Australia, as a “reached” country, could greatly contribute to world evangelization and, in particular, to the evangelization of South-East Asia. Along the way the C&MA’s Four-Fold Gospel message of Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King would benefit the Australian Church. It was a case of the saved West reaching to the unsaved East.

With this in mind, it seemed that there was not a great deal of thought given to a uniquely Australian expression of the C&MA. To be fair, the North American C&MA were anxious to establish a self-governing and self-supporting work in Australia.<sup>4</sup> However, the idea of seeing Australia itself as a mission field was not suggested. In fact, the use of the term “missionary” for anyone other than a licensed overseas-worker was frowned upon. Rather, it was felt that using this term, for example, to refer to a person working in Australia would greatly detract from the desperate need of those overseas who had never had an opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Whereas the C&MA’s emphasis on the profound need of unreached peoples has been a wonderful gift to the world-wide Church, a mission focus appears rarely to have been applied to Australia or to the lost West. Again, it should be pointed out that there was, in these early days, a deep passion to see Australians won to Christ. There was also a deep respect for the way God could develop Australians to lead the fledgling

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<sup>4</sup> Reference to local leadership was made as early as Robert Henry’s first report to Council. Henry, *Report of the Chairman*, 5.

movement. Yet Australia was simply not viewed as a mission field but rather as a mission-sending base.

### **An Aggressive Start with Promising Results**

Rev Robert Henry directed the work in Australia until he left in 1978. When he arrived in Australia there were no C&MA churches. When he left there were twenty-one churches and fellowship groups. In 1969 there was no C&MA of Australia. In 1978 there was an Australian C&MA led by Australians. By 1978 six missionaries had been sent out to South-East Asia, South America, Africa, and Europe.<sup>5</sup> The table below shows the growth of the number of churches:<sup>6</sup>

1969	3
1970	7
1971	7
1972	10
1973	11
1974	12
1975	14
1976	19
1977	Not available
1978	21

The average attendance at Sunday services in 1977 was 921. Although challenged by problems of lack of trained workers, identity, and financial constraints, the work grew remarkably well over these years. From the beginning there was a concern that the work would not fare so well under Australian leadership. There certainly was a

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<sup>5</sup> R. Warnken and R. Russell-Brown, "The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia Forty Years on 1969-2009" (paper presented for National Office of C&MA, Canberra, State).

<sup>6</sup> Statistics are taken from the Director's reports of those years.

difficult period from 1978 to 1981 when no full-time person served as the leader of the C&MA.

By the early 1980s the movement had plateaued. In 1982 Mr John Pocock took over the leadership of the Australian C&MA. Up to this point there had been an emphasis on aggressive church planting often using lay pastoral leadership. Under John Pocock's leadership the focus shifted to the consolidation of the work and an emphasis on larger regional churches that would provide a base for evangelism and church planting.

### **The Rapidly Changing C&MA**

Up to 1984, with the exception of a small indigenous ministry, the work of the C&MA had been among people of Anglo-Saxon descent. In 1984 this all began to change when the first ethnic church, the Spanish Evangelical Biblical Church of Melbourne, joined the movement. A year later the Canberra Vietnamese church joined the C&MA. In 1986 the first Chinese (Cantonese) Alliance Church was planted in Perth. It is doubtful, during this period, whether anyone realised the extent of the change that was ahead. The admission of these churches to the denomination was the beginning of a radical reshaping of the C&MA from an Anglo-Saxon movement to a multi-ethnic one. The graph below notes the progress of the three major ethnicities by charting worship service attendance.

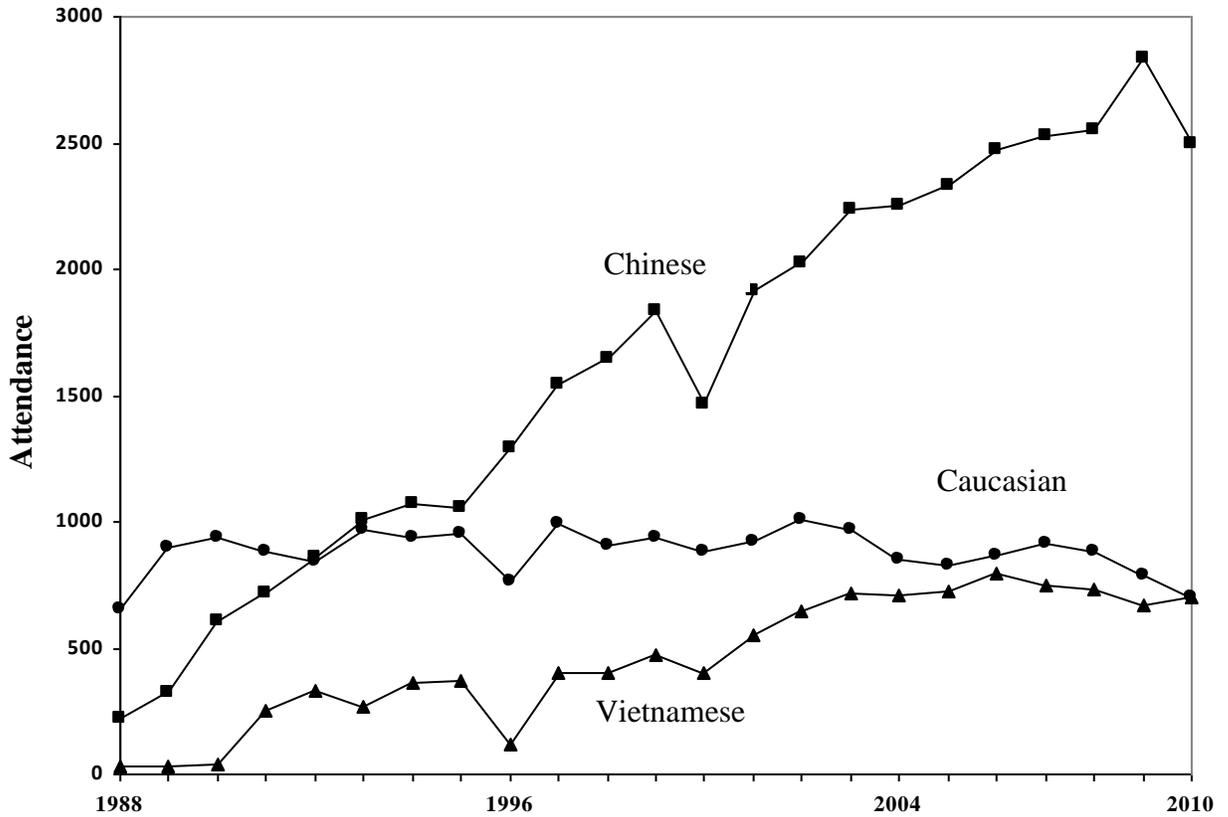


Figure 1. Church attendance by Ethnicity 1988-2010

There are now far more Chinese believers in the C&MA of Australia than Caucasian. As at 2010, the Anglo and Vietnamese churches have about the same attendance. Due to immigration, these changes, although not as great, can also be seen in the wider Australian society where in 2006 3.25 percent of the population declared themselves to be of Chinese ancestry and .84 percent of Vietnamese ancestry.<sup>7</sup> The large growth in the ethnic church population speaks of the growing popularity of Christianity

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, "20680-Ancestry (Full Classification List) by Sex - Australia", 2006, [http://www.cma.org.au/index.php/download\\_file/-/view/336/](http://www.cma.org.au/index.php/download_file/-/view/336/) (accessed 22nd June 2012).

among those of Asian descent. The statistics also speak of the declining influence of the church in Australia among the Caucasian majority people.

### **The Changing Context of Religion in Australia**

There can be no doubt that Christianity in Australia has waned in popularity and is having far less influence than it did formerly. In 1950 those who regularly attended church (once a month or more) were about 44 percent of the population. When the C&MA arrived in 1969 that figure had dropped to about 35 percent.<sup>8</sup> In 2007 it had plummeted to just 17 percent of the population with weekly attendance under 8 percent.<sup>9</sup> Census responses indicated that those claiming the “no religion” category had increased from under 2 percent in 1966 to 19 percent in 2006. Further, the mean age of Christians had increased from mid forties in 2001 to around sixty years in 2006. Although Australia has an aging population, the mean age in 2006 was only in the thirties.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the church is aging at a much faster rate than the general population or it would be more accurate to say that the church is not reaching the younger generations. These are staggering statistics.

The decline of interest in Christianity is better understood in the light of history. The beginnings of white colonisation in Australia were not driven by lofty spiritual or social ideals but rather by Great Britain’s practical need to house criminals. Australia and its various colonies were ideal penal settlements. The colonies also provided a strategic

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<sup>8</sup> National Church Life Survey, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Rob Chalmers, "Gillard’s Not Our First Atheist", 2010, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/06/30/of-12-prime-ministers-before-this-atheist-only-rudd-got-on-his-knees/> (accessed 17th June 2011).

<sup>10</sup>National Church Life Survey, 2010.

military presence for the Royal Navy.<sup>11</sup> Religion was simply not a high priority in the establishment of Australia and it was only the lobbying of the evangelicals, William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, which resulted in a chaplain, Rev Richard Johnson, being appointed to the new colony. The reality that faced the evangelical minister was discouraging. Small congregations gathered for worship and most people were not interested in religion. As Tom Frame, in his book *Losing My Religion*, comments “It seems that religion was largely irrelevant to public interactions as men and women, whether convict or free, and whatever the strength of their personal convictions, struggled to survive in a land they found inhospitable and unrelenting.”<sup>12</sup>

Although the popularity of Christianity went through high and low points, this basic ambivalence toward Christianity has appeared consistent throughout Australia’s history. If Christianity was ever appreciated it was as a civic religion valuable in its ability to promote positive moral values and to combat crime. Thus the Christian faith was never a deeply rooted matter in the Australian psyche. Religion was the moral police force. As a result it was not surprising when Barry Jones, one-time politician and a leading intellectual, recently admitted that “like most people (other than fundamentalists) I feel shifty and inconclusive on the subject (of religion) because of a deep uncertainty about what I believe.”<sup>13</sup>

The long-time social observer Hugh Mackay concluded that Australians were not anti-religious but simply disinterested. Mackay writes, “To put it mildly, Australians are

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<sup>11</sup> T. Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2009), 40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

easygoing about religion. Among non-churchgoers, the prevailing attitude is closer to indifference than scepticism.”<sup>14</sup> As Australia has never been a vigorously religious country, in the light of late Modernity and the general decline of Christianity in the West, there was little possibility that Christianity in this country could do anything other than decline. This decline and, at times, the more militant reactions to Christianity noted above, form the context in which the C&MA finds itself.

### **Renewal**

John Pocock recognised the problem of the denomination plateauing in the early 1980s. Pocock had travelled to Lima, Peru where he was introduced to the Encounter with God Program. The program was producing remarkable growth in various Latin American countries – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and El Salvador. However the experience of the church in Lima was the standout example of church growth through aggressive evangelism. Dr Fred Smith, a C&MA missionary who was involved in the project, said that “since its inception, the program in Lima has grown from one church and 120 members to twenty-five churches and over 10,000 members.”<sup>15</sup>

The program of church growth through urban evangelism was based on four factors.<sup>16</sup> They can be summarised by saying that the model first focussed on an “Impact Church”, a large and an evangelistically effective church in a strategic location. Second, the church had to be committed to aggressive evangelism. Third, resources consisting of

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<sup>14</sup> Frame, “Losing My Religion,” 103.

<sup>15</sup> Fred Smith, “Encounter with God-the Guayaquil Model,” 1992, <http://strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=15764&fto=322&> (accessed 17th June 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

finances and personnel from the sending agency were concentrated on one strategic church. Fourth, an Encounter Fund that focussed on providing buildings required the participating church to return five percent of its income initially, increasing eventually to twenty percent.

The Encounter with God program was re-badged as the Strategic City Outreach Plan for Evangelisation (hereafter, SCOPE) for use in the Australian C&MA. This became the key strategy for renewal during the middle 1980s. Two SCOPE churches were developed, one in Sydney and the other in Perth. Buildings were erected in their respective cities and for a time the churches appeared to experience some moderate growth. Both churches peaked at around 200 and then began a slow decline despite the original injection of finance for buildings and pastoral staff. In 2010 both churches had attendances of well below 100 and, today, are far from the original vision of large strategic churches. A key element that appears never to have been adequately addressed was how these churches could effectively impact their immediate communities. Although some evangelistic help was provided from the denomination in the form of ministry from a national evangelist, it is apparent that neither church had really grasped or adjusted to the changing nature of the Australian religious landscape.

Under the leadership of a new President, Rev Roger Lang, a new program for growth and renewal was launched in 1990 called 200 by 2000. This was a bold initiative to establish 200 new churches by the year 2000.<sup>17</sup> Although the plan was enthusiastically pursued, it became clear that the goal needed refining. It was set aside for what was to

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<sup>17</sup> Roger Lang, *Report of the President to 21st Annual General Council of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (C&MA, 1990).

become known as the Decade of Harvest. This featured greater development of goals for church planting from the “bottom-up” rather than via nationally established goals. Some new churches were planted as a result of the church planting emphasis however the hoped-for spurt of growth never eventuated.

The late 1990s highlighted both the growth of the ethnic work and the plateaued Caucasian work. As a result a Church Health Working Group was established. Their major project in 1999 was to trial the Refocussing Your Church program for local churches that was developed and led by Church Resource Ministries Australia.<sup>18</sup> Although the leaders that took part in the program were enthusiastic, it was clear at the end of that year that the program had not brought the desired results. The pastors involved had found that the program, whilst valuable particularly owing to its coaching component, was challenging to apply. The program included a strategic planning model which the majority of the leaders were not able to translate into action in their local churches. The program was not actively pursued as a growth-renewal strategy.

Perhaps the longest term benefit has come from the Refocussing Your Church’s emphasis on personal coaching. I became president in 2000 and promoted coaching and, with others, led seminars on coaching with the hope that this would help develop key church pastors who themselves would lead their churches into growth. At about the same time the Natural Church Development (hereafter, NCD) paradigm gained in popularity in the Australian churches. This was enthusiastically adopted by a number of C&MA churches and appeared to have some benefit. Significantly, eight Caucasian Churches

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<sup>18</sup> Church Resource Ministries Australia, *Re Focussing Your Church* (Berwick, Victoria: CRMA, 1995).

and some three Chinese churches undertook a single NCD survey. Of those, only five had one or more repeat surveys. According to the NCD paradigm, repeat surveys are essential for the survey system to be of value. Once again, what started with great enthusiasm drifted out of vogue after only about six years.

Strategic planning has been a methodology often used by the C&MA. Yet significantly, little of the growth of the denomination can be attributed to strategic planning. Rev Roger Lang, in his last report as President to Annual Council remarked that “Since 1988 I have had the inestimable privilege of presiding over the dramatic, cultural diversification of the Alliance. Very little of this change came about by strategic planning at the National Office or by the National Board. In fact, most of the time, we had to scramble just to keep pace.”<sup>19</sup> Having served as President since 2000 and having attempted my own modest strategic plans, I am forced to concur with Rev Lang’s remarks.

### **Recent Missional Experiments**

Over the last four years or so certain churches have attempted some ministry experiments that one might describe as missional. These experiments have been grass-roots attempts to engage the community in which C&MA churches are located. The Hebron Chinese Alliance and the Baulkham Hills Chinese Alliance churches have been involved in a ministry called CanCare. It aims to provide care and support to cancer patients and their families. Many people have been helped by the ministry which has built bridges with the non-churched Chinese community. Although statistics are not

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<sup>19</sup> Roger Lang, *Report of the President to 31st Annual General Council of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (C&MA, 2000).

available, anecdotal evidence tends to indicate that the church is being a blessing particularly to the Chinese community.

The Western Sydney Alliance Church has been involved in the Doonside Technology High School for some five years. The ministry has focussed around a chaplain who has pastorally served the school. So significant has the ministry been that the school has been warmly encouraging the church to move their Sunday worship services into the school meeting hall, which the church has recently agreed to do. The church has gained an excellent reputation with the school and some students have found faith in Christ.

A small church in Canberra has established a ministry to overseas students through a conversational English group called Table Talk. Between ten to twenty students of varying ages, backgrounds and religions have met to improve their spoken English. This free-of-charge service has connected this church with a whole new group of people seeking to improve not only their English but to connect with Australians.

The Sydney Chinese Alliance church has been involved in various missional experiments including the Bright Sparks community group focussing on fun activities for children. These have been significant in that they have brought funding from the local government. Of importance is that these events have been attracting people from the multi-ethnic community. This has not only been blessing the community but also converting the imagination of this church.

In addition to these specific examples, other churches have been involving themselves in their communities through providing an opportunity for community musical expression, connecting with a long-term caravan park, Adopt a Kid for a Day,

Vacation Bible School and various other means. These are encouraging green shoots that are emerging from local C&MA churches.

### **The Identity of the C&MA in Australia**

Historically the C&MA has often had difficulty defining itself. Owing to its conservative theological roots, it has been rightly acknowledged as a part of evangelicalism and often identified as conservative evangelical. However, its positions on healing and the work of the Holy Spirit have also placed it firmly within the Charismatic-Pentecostal stream. This dual identification has regularly led to pressures to push it to one extreme or the other. The fact is that the C&MA has never been comfortable situated exclusively in either of these streams but belongs somewhere in between. This has understandably led to confusion on exactly where the C&MA stands theologically. If the truth be told, the C&MA has never been characterised by its theology although it does have theological distinctives in the “Fourfold Gospel”.<sup>20</sup> Rather, it has been characterised by its commitment to world missions and the so-called deeper life which drives this mission imperative. Dr. L. L. King, President of the American C&MA from 1978 to 1987 commented that “the Alliance is a unique missionary denomination – a maverick movement into whose soul the Head of the Church breathed ‘Go!’ from the very start.”<sup>21</sup> This missionary heart has been the driving force in the denomination down to this very day.

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<sup>20</sup> That is Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. Albert B. Simpson, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1890).

<sup>21</sup> Niklaus, Sawin, and Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 252.

It is vital for the C&MA of Australia to be able to articulate its own heart passion, its reason for existence. While this calling is certainly related to the C&MA's North American history, the Australian C&MA requires its own sense of call and mission. It is this passion and God-given calling that can ensure it remains on target and stop the C&MA from becoming an organisation that is simply attempting stay alive. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson was right when he remarked in his book *Leadership from Inside Out*, that "in today's information-saturated environment, an organisation needs to articulate its reason for being and its primary aspirations. Clarity on what makes it distinctive as an entity empowers movement, driving the mission and the vision in the life of the organisation."<sup>22</sup>

Ralph Winter, in his article *The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission*, provides helpful language to describe part of the journey of the C&MA when he speaks of Sodalities and Modalities. Winter describes a modality as

a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age, while a sodality is a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership, and is limited by either age or sex or marital status. In this use of these terms, both the denomination and the local congregation are modalities, while a mission agency or a local men's club are sodalities.<sup>23</sup>

The C&MA clearly began as a sodality with a lean organisation that facilitated overseas missionary activity. Over time it has morphed, at times reluctantly, into a modality in the form of a denomination. A.B. Simpson never proposed the establishment of a new

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<sup>22</sup> Wes Granberg-Michaelson, *Leadership from Inside Out: The Spirituality of Leadership and Organizational Change* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), 97.

<sup>23</sup> Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 183.

denomination. Niklaus quotes Simpson as saying that there was “no desire on the part of anyone connected with our work to build up a new sect or separate people from the churches where the Lord has called them to work and worship.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, a missionary-denomination is what the C&MA has become. This North American missionary-denomination was the seedbed from which the Australian C&MA sprang bringing with it certain inbuilt tensions between the overseas missionary work and the work in the home field. The original vision of raising and supporting a dedicated band of people to take the Gospel overseas or to send others overseas has become increasingly mixed with concerns of how the work in the home country can be maintained and advanced. Despite these home-overseas tensions, the life, ministry, and vision of A.B. Simpson can nonetheless function as a signpost to enable the Australian C&MA to retain and strengthen its God-given calling and mission.

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<sup>24</sup> Niklaus, Sawin, and Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 247.

## PART TWO – FOUNDATIONAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

## CHAPTER 3

### KEY THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MISSIONAL RENEWAL

The second part of this paper will highlight key theological and social frameworks that inform missional renewal. Without such framing and particularly theological framing, missional action will be pursued along purely pragmatic lines. The C&MA has, to its detriment, been rather unreflective on how theology impacts the way mission is accomplished.

#### **The Doctrine of God in Mission**

The way in which people understand God will profoundly impact their understanding of his nature, character, and actions. Therefore, any consideration of God's mission must begin with an understanding of who God is. The following section will consider God's Trinitarian nature and his mission.

#### A Trinitarian Understanding of God

God's actions necessarily flow from His being. In Christian theology understanding God's identity will inevitably lead to the doctrine of the Trinity. The term "God" is, in Christian theology, a short-form for the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit – one God who eternally exists in three persons. This understanding is reflected in the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and is detailed in the Athanasian Creed.

Outlining a history of Trinitarian thought, John Frank, in his work *The Character of Theology*, notes that in the East the Church tended to focus on the individual members of the Godhead. However, in the West, and notably in Augustine’s psychological analogy of the Trinity in man’s being, knowing, and willing, there resulted an emphasis on God’s oneness.<sup>1</sup> Consideration of the Trinity reached a crescendo during the medieval period and dwindled during the reformation and emergence of the modern world until it was re-emphasized during twentieth century. Frank notes the key place of Karl Barth in the fresh consideration of the Trinity in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Various theologians followed Barth’s lead in restoring the Trinity as a central doctrine. Their work has emphasised the relational nature of the Trinity. Frank sums this up by saying that “the category of relationality enjoys a considerable degree of consensus among recent interpreters of Trinitarian theology who see it as providing an alternative to the metaphysics of substance that dominated theological reflection on the Trinity throughout much of church history.”<sup>3</sup>

Colin Gunton is an example of this thinking and in his book *The One, the Three and the Many*, he provides both a probing critique of modernity with its emphasis on the

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<sup>1</sup> John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 53,54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

individual and also a critique of the historically dominant monistic conception of God.<sup>4</sup> He describes God in Trinitarian terms where “the persons (of the Trinity) do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations . . . . God is not a blank unity, but a being in communion.”<sup>5</sup> John Zizioulas, in his book *Being as Communion*, amplifies this idea by saying that “the Holy Trinity is a *primordial* ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it, as is the case in the dogmatic manuals of the West and, alas, in those of the East in modern times. The substance of “God” has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion.”<sup>6</sup> However Lesslie Newbigin brings these lofty Trinitarian ideas crashing down by wryly commenting that

. . . the ordinary Christian in the Western world who hears or reads the word ‘God’ does not immediately and inevitably think of the Triune Being – Father, Son, and Spirit. He thinks of a supreme monad. . . The working concept of God for most ordinary Christians is – if one may venture a bold guess – shaped more by the combination of Greek philosophy and Islamic theology that was powerfully injected into the thought of Christendom at the beginning of the High Middle Ages than by the thought of the fathers of the first four centuries.<sup>7</sup>

#### Implications of a Trinitarian Theology for the C&MA

There are multiple implications flowing from God’s Triune being. First, the Triune God is by very nature a communion. His being is a communion of persons. Humanity is welcomed into that communion through the redemptive work of Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>6</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Longman and Todd, 1985), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 27.

This communion is not the relating of an individual with a unitary god, but rather a communion of humanity with the communion of the Triune God. This is not to remove the place of the individual's decision in responding to God's call, but it does place individuality in the larger context of community. Unfortunately, modernity's emphasis on the individual has flowed across into the Church where the Church is seen simply as a collection of people who all individually relate to God.

In his work *Jesus and Community*, Gerhard Lohfink quotes Adolf von Harnack's understanding of the Kingdom of God. Harnack comments that "the kingdom of God comes by coming to individuals, making entrance into their souls, and being grasped by them. . . it is the individual who is redeemed not the people or the state."<sup>8</sup> This emphasis on individualism is very evident not only within liberal theology at the end of the nineteenth century, but also in twenty-first century evangelicalism. Such individualism can be contrasted by Jesus' call to community. Lohfink argues convincingly that Jesus came to establish the community of God on earth. God chose, out of the people of the earth, a single people, Israel, to be a visible sign of salvation. They rejected God and Jesus was eventually sent. God "did not abandon the idea of community, the idea that the reign of God must have a *people*; instead he concentrated on his circle of disciples. Without losing from sight the whole of Israel, he bound the reign of God to his community of disciples."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1,2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Along the same lines, Barry Harvey, in his work *Another City*, suggests that the church is best understood as “another city,” a peculiar people.<sup>10</sup> Again John Yoder, in his book *Body Politics*, reflects that the church is “a *polis* . . . namely a structured social body” and one with certain practices.<sup>11</sup> All of these reflections and aspirations toward community are reflections of and have their source in God’s Triune being. The One Triune God is the source of community. Newbigin rightly remarks, “God is no solitary monad. The unreal picture of human beings as isolated spiritual monads belongs to the same world of thought as the picture of God as an isolated spiritual monad.”<sup>12</sup>

A second important implication flowing from God’s Triune nature is that one should expect difference and diversity within the Church. There is diversity, as it were, within the Godhead. The Father is not identical to the Son nor the Holy Spirit. Further, there is no point where Scripture hints at a future conflation of the members of the Trinity into a spiritual monad. Thus it could be said that the diverse God creates and enjoys diversity not only within the creation, but also within the community we call the Church.

In a world that is intent upon homogeneity, the differences within the Godhead give us wonderful permission to value and expect difference. As Gunton remarks, making application between the one and the many, “both cosmologically and socially, we may say, there is need to give priority neither to the one nor to the many. Being is

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<sup>10</sup> Barry Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Yoder identifies these practices as binding and loosing, breaking bread, baptism, Spirit-gifted believers all serving, and community decision-making led by the Spirit. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 70.

diversity within unity.”<sup>13</sup> This diversity within unity implies a diversity of expressions by local churches. Applying this to church planting, Rowan Williams, in the *Mission Shaped Church*, comments that church planting “does not mean ‘more of the same’. It involves the imaginative ability to take on a diversity of appropriate forms in different cultures. Once again, the Trinity provides the living example of unity in diversity.”<sup>14</sup>

God’s Triune being not only features plurality but also unity. This implies and directs us towards Church and ministry that are based in relationships. These relationships will reflect wonderful diversity. In terms of evangelism and life within the Church, such a relational emphasis will have a profound impact. Where ministry is conducted out of such a framework, the Church will indeed be a contrast society that proclaims and lives a counter-cultural message. The reductionist view of the Church as a provider of spiritual goods and services can be contested by a return to the value of the individual and the community.

#### The *Missio Dei*

Bosch notes that, for many years, mission had been understood in different ways.<sup>15</sup> Mission has been understood in soteriological terms: the need to save individuals from eternal damnation. Mission has also been defined culturally as introducing those of the East and South to Western culture. Further, it has been defined in ecclesiological terms: the expansion of the Church or denomination. The C&MA has largely emphasised

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<sup>13</sup> Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 213

<sup>14</sup> Rowan Williams, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, Mission and Public Affairs (London: Church House, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389.

mission in soteriological terms although there do seem to have been ecclesiological overtones. Simpson's hymn, *A Missionary Cry*, emotionally states the soteriological imperative:

They're passing, passing fast away,  
A hundred thousand souls a day  
In Christless guilt and gloom.  
O Church of Christ, what wilt thou say  
When, in the awful judgment day,  
They charge thee with their doom,  
They charge thee with their doom?<sup>16</sup>

In 1932, at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference, Karl Barth presented a seminal paper which moved the discussion of mission away from soteriological and ecclesiological categories. He articulated mission as an activity of God Himself.<sup>17</sup> In 1952, at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council, the idea of the *missio Dei* (mission of God) surfaced clearly. Bosch comments that mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classic doctrine of the *missio Dei* where God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son send the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit send the church into the world.<sup>18</sup> Jesus' words in John's Gospel make this sending clear – "as the Father sent Me, I also send you" (Jn 20:21 NASB). Mission then is not

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<sup>16</sup>A. B. Simpson, "A Missionary Cry," in *Hymns of the Christian Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1962).

<sup>17</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

primarily the activity of the Church; rather it is God's work and one could even say that mission is an attribute of God.

This understanding of mission as *missio Dei* has been adopted by virtually all Christian persuasions – Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, evangelical, and Catholic. The term has continued to undergo change and be nuanced in different ways. In fact, the widespread acceptance of the term by those of vastly different and mutually exclusive theological persuasions has led some to challenge the usefulness of the term.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, *missio Dei* helps to articulate the notion that mission uniquely belongs to God and that neither the Church nor any other human agent can be considered the author or bearer of mission.

The implications of the *missio Dei* are substantial. In Moltmann's words, "it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."<sup>20</sup> Darrell Guder in the *Missional Church* adds that the "mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation."<sup>21</sup> Thus there is a move from the church with a mission to the missional church.

It is no secret that evangelicals and certainly the C&MA have been driven by the soteriological imperative. Even the US C&MA's current slogan "Getting It Done" speaks of a task that the Church must fulfil. Rather like Nike's "Just Do It," such slogans

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<sup>19</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

<sup>21</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Gospel and Our Culture Ser. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 4.

put the onus of responsibility squarely on the Church's shoulders. Whilst at one level this is reasonable in that the Church must own its place in God's mission, such thinking can easily drive the Church in triumphalism or despair at the huge job to be completed. The *missio Dei*, rightly applied and constructed, has the potential to both produce a strong sense of responsibility in the Church and yet a "light burden" (Matt. 11:30) for ultimately the mission belongs to God. The Church cannot and will not make the mission happen but rather is to follow the Triune God's lead. Craig Van Gelder, in *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, perceptively remarks that

when one starts by focussing on the purpose of the church, the church tends to become the primary location of God, which makes the church itself responsible to carry out activities in the world on behalf of God. A Trinitarian understanding shifts the focus such that the Spirit-led, missional church participates in God's mission in the world.<sup>22</sup>

### **Ecclesiology in Mission**

A missional approach to ministry includes not only a specific approach to God's nature, but also a specific understanding of the Church. This section considers five major ideas. These include hospitality and the Gospel; the importance of the local; the great commission and the second great commandment; evangelism and the mission of God; and spirituality in mission and the other.

#### **Hospitality and the Gospel**

The Apostle Paul in Romans 1:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, makes it clear that the Gospel is all about Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:12 describes humanity as separate from Christ and "strangers to the covenants of promise." The redemptive work of Christ

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<sup>22</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 19.

results in believers being “brought near” (Eph. 2:13). This involves not only reconciliation of man to God, but also of Jew to Gentile. Returning to the above Trinitarian theme, the Triune God welcomes the stranger and the outcast into His divine community. This is an act of hospitality. Hospitality then, is at the core of the Gospel.

Hospitality themes can be traced back to the creation accounts. The newly created earth is initially “formless and void” (Gen 1:2). In other words, it is a place that is unliveable and inhospitable. On creation days one, two, and three a space is formed. On days four, five, and six this space is made habitable for humanity. The climax is the creation of the “vice-regents” – male and female human beings.<sup>23</sup> In Genesis 2:18 the man’s aloneness is described as not being good and so God provides the woman. Thus marriage and eventually the family are part of living in the hospitable space that God created in Genesis 1. Therefore it can be said that creation is, itself, an act of divine hospitality.

The more one looks, the more hospitality themes become evident in both Old and New Testaments. They are somewhat foreign to the average Westerner for the reason that individuality and independence are highly valued. The Old Testament is full of examples of hospitality such as Genesis 18:1-10. There is even punishment for not offering hospitality such as Deuteronomy 23:3-4. Luke 10 details the sending of the seventy ahead of Jesus. This important text describes their giving and receiving of hospitality. This was the context in which they proclaimed the Kingdom of God – a revolutionary, counter-cultural message which stood in stark contrast to the peace and

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<sup>23</sup> Mary Fisher, "Hospitality" (paper presented for Christian and Missionary Alliance, Sydney, NSW, State, 8th April 2011).

prosperity proffered by the Roman Empire. At the end of Luke 10, after telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus exhorted his listeners to “go and do the same,” in other words, to be hospitable like the Samaritan in the parable.<sup>24</sup>

The use of the metaphor of hospitality is exceedingly helpful in today’s world where not only individuals and families are alienated from one another but also whole countries. This alienation results in fearing the differences that are seen in others. Richard Sennett, in his work *The Conscience of the Eye*, argues that people have a deep-rooted fear of exposure that makes them avoid difference in others.<sup>25</sup> Sennett uses the built environment, and specifically linear and narrative spaces, to contrast this fear of exposure and to suggest an alternative. Linear spaces are controlled, minimise difference, and encourage conformity. Narrative spaces, on the other hand, are where different people collide and where difference is maximised.<sup>26</sup> Applying this to the Church generally, it seems that while a fear of exposure and difference exists, hospitality will never be embraced as a way of life and the stranger will forever remain the stranger.

This valuing of difference needs to be distinguished from mere tolerance. Luke Bretherton, in his book *Hospitality as Holiness*, discusses the relationship of Christians to their neighbours.<sup>27</sup> He notes that when disagreements arise in a pluralistic society, the stock response is that one should demonstrate tolerance. In contrast to this, Bretherton

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<sup>24</sup> Luke Bretherton gives a helpful Biblical and Theological summary of issues relating to hospitality in Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Ashgate: Farnham, Surrey, 2006), 128-151.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Random House, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 166.

<sup>27</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 122,123.

suggests that it is hospitality that should characterise the way one deals with difference and disagreements. Such a way of behaving is likely to be a powerful apologetic for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As demonstrated above, in Australia there is at least indifference to the Christian message if not outright antagonism towards it. Christians and churches that demonstrate radical hospitality not only reflect God's nature, but they are pragmatically likely to be more successful in sharing their faith. Tragically, the Gospel, for many Australians, is just one more product offered on the religious market.

In his book *Missional*, Alan Roxburgh suggests that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 is no longer the best text to encapsulate the work of the Church in this present age.<sup>28</sup> This is due to the power paradigm of Western evangelicalism. Matthew 28 has been overlaid with imperialism, authority, and control. In place of this text and framework, Roxburgh further suggests that Luke 10 is a more appropriate and relevant text for today. In particular, the giving and receiving of hospitality can become the way that believers, as strangers in this present world, can not only be hospitable to the other, but also discern what God's Spirit is up to in the local community.<sup>29</sup>

Bretherton summarises his view of hospitality and concludes this section in saying that

hospitality is central to shaping relations between the church and its neighbours and takes many forms in the Christian tradition. Care for the sick and the poor, hospitality to strangers, educational initiatives, and peace-making endeavours are all examples of ways in which the church hosts the life together of its neighbours and enables that life to bear witness to its eschatological possibilities.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Alan Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 139.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>30</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 150.

## The Importance of the Local

Stephen Toulmin, in his book *Cosmopolis*, suggests that the seventeenth-century's chaotic political, social, and theological events, seen particularly in the Thirty Years' War, led philosophers, including the thinker Rene Descartes, to greatly value and seek after certainty.<sup>31</sup> Toulmin notes that in this quest for certainty there was a "devaluation of the oral, the particular, the local, the timely and the concrete" in favour of "rational theory grounded on abstract, universal, timeless concepts."<sup>32</sup> Clemens Sedmak, in the work *Doing Local Theology*, notes the same type of shift in theology where general theories of theology have taken control so that local theologies have not had a chance to develop.<sup>33</sup> Robert Schreiter, in his work *Constructing Local Theologies*, suggests that tradition is, in fact, a series of local theologies.<sup>34</sup> The local situation then answers the questions of what shall we theologise about, and how might local theologies be constructed? Culture, history, tradition, and theology become mixed together to form a local expression. Both Sedmak and Schreiter give helpful insights into the ways local theologies and traditions interact. The above consideration of hospitality is a type of local theology that has a unique application to the Church in Australia and probably the Western world. In other places where hospitality is assumed, such a theological construction would probably not have the same impact or value.

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen E. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>33</sup> Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), ix.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 75ff.

Beyond local theologies, it is also important to consider the local in terms of the local community. In fact, the consideration of hospitality and the local community belong together. Yet today, generally speaking, the local community has been de-emphasised due to our modern, highly mobile and transitory lifestyles. Today it is commonplace for people to think in terms of the community where their home is located as simply a place to sleep. Indeed, many suburbs are referred to as “bedroom communities,” places where people sleep but do not work or even recreate. Typically people live in one location, work in another, and enjoy recreation in a third place. Such division of life makes the development of a sense of local community difficult.

Simon Carey Holt, in his challenging little book entitled *God Next Door*, speaks of the biblical importance of neighbourliness.<sup>35</sup> Drawing from Old and New Testament texts, he notes how important it was to be a good neighbour. By definition, a good neighbour was a local person dealing with local situations. Extending this to mission and evangelism, Holt quotes the missiologist Clinton Stockwell, who defines mission “as a process of creatively applying the whole gospel to a particular setting.” It is “bringing the Gospel to individual neighbourhoods so that the name of the city from that day will be *Yahweh Shamah* (the Lord is there).”<sup>36</sup> Today, however, judging by people’s behaviour, the local neighbourhood and neighbours are largely irrelevant. The tendency toward large regional churches is a cultural reflection of this mindset. It is not suggested that the Church return to a Parish mindset of years past as that is simply not possible. We

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Carey Holt, *God Next Door: Towards a Spirituality of Neighborhood* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

live in a highly interconnected, internet-driven world where both the person next door and one's Facebook friends are both communities of sorts. The point is that part of the Good News that the Church can bring to a suburb is a restored sense of the local community. By reinvesting in and becoming once again emotionally connected to the community, hospitality becomes easier and more relevant. One's home address becomes far more than merely a place to sleep but rather a place to watch where "Aslan might be on the move," to borrow C.S. Lewis's picture.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Great Commission and the Second Great Commandment

It was noted above that in the C&MA there has been a certain ambivalence towards social ministry. The preference has clearly been upon the preaching of the Gospel. Part of charting a missional journey for the C&MA will be to reemphasise and to rediscover the importance of the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mk 12:30, 31) and its outworking in various social ministries and concerns. This should not be understood to be a backing away from "salvation being available in no one else" (Acts 4:12 NASB) or the espousal of some type of universalism. This is certainly not the case.

There are two reasons for the rediscovery of loving one's neighbour. The first and primary reason is theological. The Enlightenment had the effect of driving the physical and spiritual realms apart. Bryant Myers, in his book *Walking with the Poor*, remarks that "as the foundational paradigm shift of the Enlightenment has worked itself out in Western culture, one of its most enduring features has been the assumption that we can

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<sup>37</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 1950).

consider the physical and spiritual realms as separate and distinct from one another.”<sup>38</sup> Tragically, in the Church, this has contributed to a dualism of word and deed – Gospel proclamation and social action. Bryant suggests “that the gospel message is an organic whole. Life, deed, word, and sign must all find expression for us to encounter and comprehend the whole of the good news of Jesus Christ.”<sup>39</sup> Lesslie Newbigin picks up the same key ideas in speaking of mission in both word and deed.<sup>40</sup> Similarly Holt speaks of the Great Commission and the Second Great Commandment as “needing each other.”<sup>41</sup>

The concept of “Jesus is Lord” helps to integrate the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and all political and social ministry of the local church. As René Padilla comments in his work *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation*, Christ’s “dominion extends over the economic and the political spheres, over the social and the cultural, over the aesthetic and the ecological, over the personal and the communal. Nothing and no one is excluded from his authority.”<sup>42</sup> Padilla’s conclusion is that the Church is not the agent of individual salvation but rather “the community of faith called

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<sup>38</sup> Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>40</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 128.

<sup>41</sup> Holt, *God Next Door*, 142.

<sup>42</sup> C. René Padilla and Tetsunao Yamamori, *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission* (Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2004), 27.

to incarnate the testimony to his lordship over the whole of life.”<sup>43</sup> Such a framework holds great promise for the proclamation of a far more rounded Gospel.

The second reason for reemphasising loving one’s neighbour is pragmatic, namely, Australians are not generally predisposed to the Christian message. In fact they are often indifferent to spiritual matters and, as noted above, increasingly antagonistic. There needs to be a way of creating interest. When the Church behaves as the Church and lives the Gospel then Australians will be more likely to take notice of the Christian faith. As long as Christians are seen simply as religious salespersons, the Gospel will have little long-term impact in Australia.

Myers quotes Newbiggin’s observation that the Gospel is proclaimed, “not by intent or plan, but in response to a question provoked by the activity of God in the community.”<sup>44</sup> Social service and development can become a way of posing the question. Myers also writes, “When water is found in the desert, when children no longer die, when water no longer makes people sick, something has happened that needs an explanation. When trained professionals live in poor villages and everyone there knows they could be making more money and their children could go to better schools in the city, this odd behaviour provokes questions. The explanation is the gospel.”<sup>45</sup> It is worth adding that a valuable handbook which describes a means to bring community transformation, has

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<sup>43</sup> Padilla and Yamamori, *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation*.

<sup>44</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 210.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

been written by John Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*.<sup>46</sup>

### Evangelism and the Mission of God

The above discussion of the Great Commission and loving one's neighbour naturally leads to a brief consideration of the relationship between evangelism and the mission of God. Newbigin, commenting on the grand scale of God's mission, remarks that "the Bible . . . is covered with God's purpose of blessing for all the nations. It is concerned with the completion of God's purpose in the creation of the world. It is – not to put it crudely – concerned with offering a way of escape for the redeemed soul out of history, but with the action of God to bring history to its true end."<sup>47</sup>

The Gospel that the believer is called to proclaim is far more than an individualised message of forgiveness and hope. The Gospel is nothing less than the proclamation of the universal kingdom of God (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15). As Michael Frost, in his book *Road to Missional* puts it, "the essence of the mission of Israel, taken up by the followers of Jesus in his new covenant: [is] the alerting of people to the fact that our God reigns."<sup>48</sup> If we are to proclaim the kingdom of God and His global and history-encompassing purposes, where does evangelism, as commonly understood, fit?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> John Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (Chicago, IL: ACTA, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 33, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Frost, *Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011). Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 310 of 2816.

<sup>49</sup> There are many definitions of evangelism as David Bosch notes in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 409ff. I speak here of the typical evangelical view of evangelism including the ideas of humanity's sinful nature, God's justice and love, the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the need for a response in repentance and faith.

Evangelism seems best understood as a subset of the broader category of God's mission. Evangelism is not the sum of mission but one of the ways that people are alerted to the presence of the kingdom of God. David Bosch has suggested twelve common historical positions that the Church has taken to explain the relationship between mission and evangelism.<sup>50</sup> His conclusion and suggested definition of evangelism is worth noting. He suggests that evangelism is "that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives."<sup>51</sup> This tightly-packed definition recognises that evangelism is not the total mission of God but a subset of it; that evangelism involves both words and deeds, is contextually defined, and requires a life-reorientation.

### Spirituality in Mission and the Other

The C&MA's emphasis on spirituality, sanctification and the "deeper life" should serve as a solid base for mission. Sanctification means to be set apart from sin and wholly dedicated to God, reflecting righteous attitudes and behaviours.<sup>52</sup> Righteous attitudes and behaviours are personified in Jesus Christ. Thus, when the question is asked, what does a sanctified person ideally look like, one can reference the life of Jesus and be well informed. The believer is to be conformed to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29).

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<sup>50</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 409-420.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>52</sup> Bradford A. Mullen, "Sanctification," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997).

Unfortunately an emphasis on holiness in some circles has led to various extremes of legalism and withdrawal from non-Christian people.<sup>53</sup> Such behaviour is a distortion of biblical holiness. Jesus, for example, was holy and without sin (Heb. 4:15) yet was very involved in everyday life in Palestine with a wide range of people. At times this was, in fact, much to the chagrin of the religious authorities of the day.

Simpson has a helpful construction of holiness. On the one hand he emphasises the need for a radical and ongoing transformation, an intimate relationship with God, and a passion to be filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, as was demonstrated by Simpson's life and passion for reaching people, he also demonstrated that this must not be reduced to isolated spirituality which ignores "the other". A story from his life helps capture this balance. Simpson speaks of a time when he was particularly seeking "a baptism" at the start of a year. He put aside weeks in this endeavour. While he felt that God had met him, he was nonetheless dissatisfied. At the end of the period Simpson testified that in his personal desire after God he had neglected ministry to people.

Thompson quotes Simpson in saying that

I hurried up the street to the first home (a parishioner whom he had neglected), where lay a suffering one whom I had not visited for some time. I had not prayed two sentences until the heavens opened, and I had a wonderful baptism of the Holy Ghost. I found Him when I took Him by faith and went forward to use Him and turn my blessing into a blessing for someone else.

Such an attitude of blessing "the other" is reflected historically in the C&MA. Simpson's purpose in forming the C&MA was twofold. He desired to take the believer into all the heights and depths of Christ yet he also was deeply concerned about developing an

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<sup>53</sup> The Exclusive Brethren are an extreme example of this.

<sup>54</sup> Simpson, *The Fourfold Gospel*, 27-46.

aggressive evangelistic missionary work which served a wide range of people.<sup>55</sup> In the epilogue of Niklaus's work *All for Jesus*, Dr. L.L. King, one time president of the US C&MA, commented about the relationship between this "deeper life" and the overseas mission emphasis. He said that

the record makes clear that Dr. Simpson and his associates first organized the Evangelical Christian Alliance. This fellowship of Christians united in their devotion to Jesus Christ and to the truths of Scripture that pointed to Him as the all-sufficient Lord. Afterward, they formed the Evangelical Missionary Alliance as the missions arm of that fellowship in faith. They followed this sequence not because the Great Commission was of secondary importance, but because its fulfilment depended upon Holy Spirit-filled individuals who supremely loved Jesus.<sup>56</sup>

Holiness then, historically, did not result in a self-indulgent spirituality but rather in other-centred spirituality. Such spirituality should form the basis of mission activity. In this way, as people are more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, they will become a winsome testimony to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

#### Summary of Theological Frameworks

The above sections on theology and ecclesiology provide key frameworks that inform missional renewal. Each of these frameworks will need to be applied to the C&MA and become the "engine room" for renewal. The Trinity presents God as a fellowship of being; a communion of persons. Where Modernity in the West has glorified the individual there has been a corresponding loss of the sense of biblical community. Late Modernity has produced an insatiable consumerism which has infected the Church in general and certainly the C&MA. In facing this challenge it will be

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<sup>55</sup> Niklaus, Sawin, and Stoesz, *All for Jesus*, 251.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

essential for the denomination to view itself not in competition with other evangelical and charismatic churches, but rather as a diverse communion of believers who are unified in Christ to be witnesses of the Kingdom to come. This witness will come as the world sees C&MA churches as genuine contrast communities, where personhood is valued rather than sacrificed to pragmatic ends.

There is little doubt that the denomination has tended towards doing mission for God, as reflected in the US slogan “Getting it Done.” The Australian C&MA will need an alternative mindset to move beyond this. Such a mindset will require the C&MA to ask how it might see what God is doing and follow his mission plan. It would certainly favour a bottom-up approach that recognizes God and his mission have their heart at the local church level, rather than a centralised corporate strategy from the National Office or National Board. The challenge will be how the national leadership can champion a bottom-up approach.

In terms of ecclesiology, the proclamation of the Gospel needs to be placed into a wineskin of hospitality. The Church is not mandated to tolerate the stranger but to welcome the stranger. Where such radical hospitality and love are demonstrated there will be opportunities to speak the words of the Gospel. Such renewal would freshly define Gospel proclamation in terms of word and deed, a seamless whole which gives favour to neither one nor the other. This will be a challenging framework to establish for there is strong preference for proclamation of a rather truncated and individualised Gospel. There needs to be a fresh appreciation in the C&MA that the Gospel is nothing less than the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

C&MA churches need an increased commitment and emotional connection to the local. This runs contrary to the DNA of many churches which are more regional in flavour. A number of times churches have been asked what impact they are making in their locality. Too often their answers have been that they have negligible impact. The SCOPE program, quoted above in Chapter Two, was a good example of where preference was given to large regional churches over a locally focussed church, configured to bless its immediate community. Hospitality naturally works hand in hand with an emphasis on the local. It should be added that the trend towards so-called “third places” where people recreate, needs to be an important part of any local strategy. Thus an emphasis on the local will not simply be a return to a parish way of life.

In summary, a renewed understanding of God’s Triune nature and call to be his community must form the basis of any missional change in the C&MA of Australia. The individuality and consumerism of Modernity will need to be challenged and an alternative imagination proposed. This alternative would involve local hospitality and would reflect care for the communities in which churches find themselves. Churches would preach the Gospel by loving their communities in practical ways such as serving schools, hospitals, the needy, and so on. Furthermore, as a part of these expressions of love, believers would explain how a person can come into relationship with God and His community through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 4

### KEY SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MISSIONAL RENEWAL

This chapter will identify important social frameworks that will assist in missional renewal. The first framework of systems thinking provides a helpful way to understand an organisation. It gives a holistic view of the organisation rather than a fragmented view. The second set of frameworks relates to change. There is no dispute that many organizations, including local churches, have been irrevocably damaged on the rocky shoals of change. Thus any attempt at missional renewal, no matter how well it is theologically informed, must be able to manage change effectively.

#### **Systems Thinking and the Church**

Until relatively recently, science has emphasised the accumulation of rigorous and detailed knowledge to the general exclusion of other considerations. This has led to specialisations and, as Ervin Laszlo notes in his helpful little volume *The Systems View of the World*, the “consequence of such speciality barriers is that knowledge, instead of being pursued in depth and integrated in breadth, is pursued in depth in isolation.”<sup>1</sup> Such isolation has meant that vital relationships between the physical sciences for example,

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<sup>1</sup> Ervin Laszlo, *The Systems View of the World* (New York: Hampton Press, 1996), 2.

have tended to be minimised due to specialisation siloing. The middle years of the twentieth century, however, saw various system sciences develop which seek to explain broader relationships rather than just individual things.<sup>2</sup> Self-organising systems and emergence have shown a new way to think that emphasises the whole beyond just the apparently simple parts.<sup>3</sup>

Systems thinking had its foundation in the work of Jay Forrester and system dynamics.<sup>4</sup> Peter Senge, in his now classic work *The Fifth Discipline*, explains that “systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots.”<sup>5</sup> The Enlightenment bequeathed a way of looking at life that emphasised component parts. In understanding the parts it was contended one could understand the whole. The term “analysis” embodies this compartmentalisation and has the idea of reducing a substance or idea into its constituent parts. Yet Margaret Wheatley, in her intriguing book *Leadership and New Science*, suggests, along with Senge, precisely the opposite namely, that unlike say a pushbike, organisations cannot be taken apart for the reason that organisations are a system of relationships not parts.<sup>6</sup> People have difficulty seeing the whole pattern. Systems thinking is a conceptual framework and body of

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<sup>2</sup> Laszlo, *The Systems View of the World*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Note for example Steven Johnson, *Emergence* (New York: Scribner, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Aronson, "Overview of Systems Thinking", 1996, [http://www.thinking.net/Systems\\_Thinking/OverviewSTarticle.pdf](http://www.thinking.net/Systems_Thinking/OverviewSTarticle.pdf) (accessed 16th August 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 68.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science* (San Francisco: Merrett-Koehler, 1999), 138.

knowledge that helps to make the full pattern or system clearer. It is particularly valuable in understanding the nature and causes of organisational change.

A number of very important points of learning flow from systems thinking. Traditional thinking views an organisation largely as a machine. This thinking flows from the scientific renaissance. Richard Pascale, in his work *Surfing the Edge of Chaos*, notes that "scientific discovery shapes managerial thinking. Principles identified more than two hundred years ago, during an earlier scientific renaissance, have had wide influence on how managers think today."<sup>7</sup> With the change of science over the last century there has been a commensurate change in the way organisations are viewed. Today, as exemplified by Wheatley cited above, organisations are increasingly being viewed as organic wholes or systems. An organisation then is better viewed as a whole and not merely as a collection of parts or to use Laszlo's language, viewing organisations as a "whole" rather than merely a "heap."<sup>8</sup>

A very important observation from systems thinking is that people, even if they are very different, when placed in the same system, tend to produce similar results.<sup>9</sup> Senge demonstrates this using a simulation entitled the Beer Game where players take on the role of a retailer of beer, a wholesaler, and a brewery. When a onetime spike in demand occurs early in the game, the demand-supply system causes a short-term under supply and finally a massive over-supply of beer. What is highly significant is that

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Tanner Pascale, *Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Laszlo, *The Systems View of the World*, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 42.

thousands of people from diverse backgrounds have played the game and achieved largely the same results – short-term beer shortage and then gross over supply. The point is that the causes for this behaviour apparently lie not in the individuals playing the game, but in the structure of the game itself. Put another way, the system causes its own behaviour.

It is all too easy to blame individuals within a system, which oversimplifies problem diagnosis. Often this takes the form of scapegoating where a person, often a key leader, bears the brunt of responsibility for an organisation's poor performance when, in fact, the system itself is generating the poor performance.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Beer Game, the retailer blames the wholesaler for inadequate supply and the wholesaler blames the brewery for slow production.

### **Application to the C&MA in terms of this Project's Work**

The history of the Alliance College of Australia, the C&MA's training institution, is a good example of this type of scapegoating. For some years, during the time I was Chairman of the College's Governing Committee, the college was criticised for not producing enough pastors and missionaries for the denomination. There were fewer students enrolled at the college as people seemed increasingly unwilling to move to Canberra to study. It had been assumed by some, including me, that a major cause, and perhaps the major cause of the poor attendance was a purportedly too-theoretical approach to training. A survey was undertaken asking why the pastors of C&MA churches thought people were not attending the college. The results of the survey did not reveal a simple, easily fixed problem but rather a complex set of systemic issues.

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<sup>10</sup> Senge calls this "the enemy is out there" syndrome. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 19.

The college had been birthed when the C&MA was an Anglo organisation without a single ethnic church. Over time the denomination had become increasingly multi-ethnic. Younger people from ethnic churches did not want to move away from their families but wanted to study in their home cities. Further, it was very difficult to compete with large interdenominational colleges offering quality high education. Tendencies toward part-time study further exacerbated an already difficult situation.

Avoiding scapegoating and viewing an organisation as a whole system can enable change. Dramatic interventions by a courageous, individualistic leader do not appear to be the best ways to initiate lasting and deep-seated change. Rather, systems thinking suggests that a slower, more deliberate nudging of the system will bring better and longer-term results. Senge notes, quoting Jay Forrester, that this has not been the classic way of dealing with change. In discussing major public issues that were not being changed, Forrester comments that “these problems were actually systems that lured policymakers into interventions that focused on obvious symptoms not underlying causes, which produced short-term benefit but long-term malaise, and fostered the need for still more symptomatic interventions.”<sup>11</sup> Systems thinking suggests that small, but well-focussed actions are far more likely to bring significant and lasting change. Furthermore, these leverage points for well-focussed actions are not always the most obvious and are generally not obvious to the participants in the system.

All of the above have major implications for the way leaders in organisations operate. Organisations, churches included, have often expected leaders to operate a little

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<sup>11</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 15.

like Moses who, in the book of Exodus, ascends Mount Sinai, receives revelation, and descends with the tablets and a brilliant plan. However, in today's world, no single leader will ever have all the answers. Certainly the challenges that the Church faces are beyond the brilliance of isolated leaders. What is needed is to create a context where a leader can work with a team so that together they can come up with ways forward. To use Ronald Heifetz's language, the work of change and adaptation needs to be "given back to the people."<sup>12</sup> The system itself and people within the system need to be involved in dealing with the adaptive challenges that the system faces. Senge maintains that four disciplines – personal mastery, understanding mental models, building shared vision, and team learning – are central to building successful organisations. However, a fifth discipline is needed to tie all of these elements together. He suggests that the fifth discipline is systems thinking. Leaders, far from operating as the answer men, need to operate as system diagnosticians and team builders, helping the system to learn.

Theologically, there is an important element that the New Testament adds to this mix. The Holy Spirit dwells amongst and in the people of God. This is emphasised in such texts as 1 Corinthians 3:16 where the Apostle Paul states that the Corinthians, and by derivation Christians generally, are collectively the temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> As mentioned above, the mission of God belongs to God himself and he calls the church into his mission. God then, by his Spirit, will lead his Church generally and local churches in particular, in the accomplishment of His mission. Leaders then are not required to come up with a plan to accomplish God's mission but rather link into God's already operating

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 123.

<sup>13</sup> See also Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5.

mission. Group discernment of God's direction and methods, when connected with an understanding of organisational systems, will enable churches to find a way forward in mission.

A further very important reflection concerns the nature of subsystems within any major system. Within the C&MA, there are three major subsystems – Anglo, Chinese and Vietnamese. Although they have common elements, each needs to be considered separately and needs a contextual approach. For example, it would be important to consider how a missional Vietnamese church might compare to a missional Chinese church. It is not being suggested that there will be three particular missional models, but rather that change towards missional behaviour will involve nudging the overall system as well as strategic places within the three key subsystems.

### **Introducing Change in Organisations**

There is no one accepted method to introduce and manage organisational change. Rune Todnem, in his article *Organisational Change Management: A Critical Review*, claims that there is great diversity in organisational change theory and practice, much of it contradictory.<sup>14</sup> Todnem overviews some of the main theories and approaches to organisational change management in an attempt to create a new framework for change. Diversity of theories abound. Gervase Bushe, for example, notes five embedded theories within the discipline of Appreciative Enquiry alone.<sup>15</sup> While there are various theories

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<sup>14</sup> Rune Todnem, "Organisational Change Management: A Critical Review," *Journal of Change Management* 5, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Gervase Bushe, "Five Theories of Change Embedded in AI," in *Appreciative Inquiry: An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*, ed. David L. Cooperrider et al. (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 2001), 117.

and practices, the strategic planning model has been a fundamental approach for introducing change. Churches and denominations, in their desire to be effective in their ministries, have adopted strategic planning along with various other business practices.

Strategic planning suggests that one needs to establish measurable goals related to the overall purpose and objectives of an organisation; analyse the current context and success of the organisation; and establish steps to move the organisation from where it is to where it desires to be. Measuring intermediate progress enables the organisation to make mid-course corrections in achievement of their goals and objectives. Carter McNamara, in his primer *Strategic Planning*, defines strategic planning: “Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organisation is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it'll know if it got there or not. The focus of a strategic plan is usually on the entire organisation, while the focus of a business plan is usually on a particular product, service or program.”<sup>16</sup>

Strategic planning has been extensively used by both the US C&MA and the Australian C&MA. The US C&MA currently uses Bob Biehl's approach of “masterplanning” in planning their international work.<sup>17</sup> In the Australian C&MA, the 200 by 2000 plan mentioned above was an example of a strategic plan conceived by the National Board, ratified by Annual General Council, the highest authority in the C&MA, and overlaid on local churches and ministries. A similar planning model was implicit in the Refocussing Your Church model also mentioned above.

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<sup>16</sup> Carter McNamara, "All About Strategic Planning," 2011, [http://www.managementhelp.org/plan\\_dec/str\\_plan/str\\_plan.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm) (accessed 2nd September 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Bobb Biehl, *Masterplanning: A Complete Guide for Building a Strategic Plan for Your Business, Church, or Organization* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997).

During the period 1980 to 2000, a significant trend can be observed. Various goals were agreed to including doubling the membership by 1988, doubling the membership by 1993, and 200 new churches being planted by 2000.<sup>18</sup> None of these goals were met. Some of the reasons for this were that the goals were unrealistic, they were driven from the “top down”, and previous failures were never actually analysed to consider why goals had not been met. Yet, beyond poor implementation, there appears to be a more fundamental problem with strategic planning, which Wheatley identifies. She comments that

to repair the organisation, all we need to do is replace the faulty part and gear back up to operate at predetermined performance levels. This is the standard approach to organisational change. It is derived from the best engineering thinking. I believe this approach explains why the majority of organisational change efforts fail. Senior corporate leaders report that up to 75% of their change projects do not yield the promised results.<sup>19</sup>

An approach that is more organic and that recognises organisations as systems, promises a better outcome than strategic planning. The fact that strategic planning has been widely accepted in the C&MA can be accounted for, in significant part, by the movement’s pragmatism. This pragmatism appears to have been inherent in Simpson himself. His overriding passion was to rescue the perishing and whatever that required he and his followers would do. Strategic planning has been considered a value-neutral tool towards that end.

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<sup>18</sup> Rod Russell-Brown, "Two Decades of Goal Setting: 1980 to 2000 in the Christian and Missionary Alliance," (Canberra: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 138.

## Diffusion of Innovations

Without doubt the missional church framework and approach to both theology and practice is a major innovation. While the movement bears certain surface similarities to the church growth movement in that it desires the extension of the Kingdom of God, the missional church framework or set of frameworks involves a far deeper innovation. It touches the very foundation of theology – all its theology having mission as its centre, which flows out of God’s Triune nature.<sup>20</sup> It touches practice in that it views the church as a mission station as opposed to what might be called a “chaplaincy style ministry” that cares for a limited faithful few.<sup>21</sup> It even redefines success in terms of Kingdom concerns as opposed to merely growing an individual church or group of churches by meeting individual’s needs.<sup>22</sup> Diffusion theory and practice can aid in the promotion of an innovation, in this case the missional church frameworks and practice.

Everett Rogers, in his classic work *Diffusion of Innovations*, based on decades of research, identifies four main elements in the diffusion of an innovation.<sup>23</sup> These are the innovation itself; the communication channels for the diffusion; time taken for the innovation to be adopted or otherwise; and the social system within which this all takes place. The innovation is an idea, a practice, or an object that is seen as new by an individual or unit of adoption. The communication channel is the way the messages are

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<sup>20</sup> Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Roxburgh notes that a central conversation should be about the West now being a mission field. Alan Roxburgh and M Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 68.

<sup>22</sup> Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press Imprint Simon & Schuster, 1995), 10.

shared from one individual to another. The innovation-decision period is the time taken to transverse the innovation-decision process. The rate of adoption is the speed at which the innovation is adopted by the social system. These elements are important to understand as they form the framework in which an innovation is diffused through a social system.

According to Rogers there are four characteristics that make an innovation spread. How they are perceived by members of the social system determines how rapidly the innovation spreads.<sup>24</sup> These are “relative advantage,” “compatibility with existing values and practices,” “simplicity and ease of use,” and “trialability”. These characteristics give understanding as to why certain excellent innovations are not adopted. They also need to be kept in mind in the process of innovating change in the C&MA.

Two important principles Rogers introduces expand the understanding of how innovations are diffused. The first is what he calls “reinvention”. This principle is a departure from other theories of change which have tended to focus on persuading individuals. Reinvention focuses not on the potential adopter, but on the innovation itself so that the innovation is changed and evolves to better fit the needs of individuals and groups. An example of this is the way the horse culture was adopted and then changed by the Plains Indians of the grasslands west of the Mississippi River.<sup>25</sup> Modern-day computer gamers similarly adopt a new game and then work with the designers of the game to improve it.

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<sup>24</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

A second important principle of Rogers was the importance of peer-to-peer conversations and networks. In contradistinction to the hypodermic needle model, which suggested that mass media had a direct and immediate power upon the masses, Rogers suggests, on the basis of research, a two-step process. This involves the initial dissemination of information through mass media to opinion leaders and finally to the broader population. Media sources transfer information whereas the actual influencing occurs via opinion leaders in peer-to-peer networks. This has important implications for how a change process should be shaped. The evaluation of an innovation is made not on the basis of expert analysis and promotion but through the influence of peers who have adopted, modified, or rejected the innovation. Adoption depends on the social system and its network. Early mass publicity is important but quickly shifts to reference from opinion leaders.

Steve Clarke, a member of the C&MA Board of Managers in 1992, in a paper to the board at that time, expressed major concerns about the way change had been introduced into the C&MA. Reflecting on attempted Church Planting and Evangelism Strategies from 1983 to 1992 and citing Everett Rogers' work, Clarke suggested that innovation, namely an ideal of church planting and evangelism, was poorly diffused through the C&MA system at that time.<sup>26</sup>

First, he noted that of the five above-mentioned qualities, namely relative advantage, compatibility with existing values and practices, simplicity and ease of use, and trialability, only relative advantage had been taken seriously. The other qualities had

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<sup>26</sup> Steve Clarke, *Cause for Concern* (Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1992).

been overlooked. Second, whereas the relationship between the innovator and the opinion leader is vital and the innovator must listen to the judgements of the opinion leader and adjust to them, it was suggested that this had not been done in the C&MA. Third, it was further suggested that the Alliance had worked on the hypodermic needle model which assumed a mass infusion of information would bring change. Such change had not occurred. Fourth, adjustment by the innovators to the feedback of opinion leaders from the social system was missing in the attempted innovation. As opinion leaders only become change-agents when they serve as effective communication links between the innovator and the social system, or would-be adopters, the innovator must be willing to adjust his schema on the basis of their feedback. Fifth, whereas time is a vital factor in the diffusion process for the change to be stabilised, Clarke suggests that, particularly in the case of the SCOPE program, such stabilisation did not occur.

In short, Clarke suggested that from 1983 to 1992 the C&MA had not adequately understood the process of diffusion of innovation. While the constituency wholeheartedly agreed with the need for church planting and evangelism, it did not adopt the various plans advocated by the Board of Managers. This, he claimed, was due to poor management of the change process. These lessons need to be born in mind as a new innovation, the missional church paradigm, is sought to be diffused throughout the C&MA.

### The Missional Change Model

Having briefly introduced diffusion theory through the work of Everett Rogers, a model of change will now be considered that is based on Rogers's work. Diffusion scholars recognise that change does not happen in an instantaneous act but rather through

a process. Based on very extensive research, Rogers builds a model that reflects the innovation process. He suggests that people first receive knowledge. This involves initial exposure to the innovation and a basic understanding of its function. Second, they are persuaded. This is when attitudes toward the innovation are formed. They may be positively or negatively disposed. Third, they decide. Here the activities of the individual or social system lead to choices that show they have accepted, modified or rejected the innovation. Fourth, they implement. Definite action occurs and the innovation is put in place. Fifth, they confirm their decision. The social system seeks reinforcement of their decision to apply the innovation.<sup>27</sup>

Roxburgh and Romanuk, in their work *the Missional Leader*, have taken Rogers's work as a base and applied it to the Church as a tool for missional change. Their Missional Change Model involves five steps.<sup>28</sup> Unlike a mechanical-linear model these steps would be better described as phases of a process. The phases of the Missional Change Model involve, first, the development of awareness of the need for missional change that is created in the church through intensive corporate and one-to-one communication events. Second, understanding is created as both emotions and thinking are brought into a coherent whole. Third, current practice is then evaluated in the light of missional awareness and understanding. Fourth, missional experiments are initiated based on the above evaluation. Fifth, missional culture is embedded in the congregation.

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<sup>27</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 162.

<sup>28</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 84.

Roxburgh and Romanuk use the metaphor of sailing to capture the flavour of the Missional Change Model. Unlike a strategic planning model, the Missional Change Model does not assume a destination before getting there. Further, since the reality of a congregation's context is shifting, the direction and nature of engagements will keep shifting. Last, leaders require a new set of skills and capacities to navigate these waters.

All of this shows that both the congregation and the leader will function in a different way to the traditional CEO approach. Where a CEO may boldly establish goals and objectives to be achieved and then align the organisation to achieve those goals and objectives, the Missional Change Model will require a different skill-set. The leader acts as a facilitator allowing the mission of God, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to bubble to the surface through God's people. The congregation is not a tool to be used to achieve an end but rather the very engine-room through whom God operates. Peter Senge's concept of the learning organisation is very helpful at this point. As change is required that is beyond the scope of any individual, both the leader and the congregation will need to learn new ways of thinking, being, and acting. The learning organisation is one "that is constantly expanding its capacity to create its future."<sup>29</sup>

#### Technical and Adaptive Change

Bringing long-lasting change to an organisation is a difficult and complex task. Wheatley, in her book *Leadership and the New Science*, remarks that "senior corporate leaders report that up to seventy five percent of their change projects do not yield the

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<sup>29</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 14.

promised results.”<sup>30</sup> John Kotter, in his book *Leading Change*, comments that while there have been some very successful change efforts, in “too many situations the improvements have been disappointing and the carnage has been appalling, with wasted resources and burned-out, scared, or frustrated employees.”<sup>31</sup> It is important to consider why so many large change efforts end in failure and why people resist change even when it is so obviously needed. Reasons vary but Heifetz and Linsky, in their significant work *Leadership on the Line*, make an important point in saying, “people do not resist change, per se. People resist loss.”<sup>32</sup> Deep-seated change will inevitably bring questioning and challenging of some fundamental values, beliefs, and practices and such questioning will be perceived as loss. When these are challenged and change is suggested people can become defensive and leadership can become a very risky endeavour.

Heifetz and Linsky provide a very helpful framework for understanding the nature of the challenges that deep change requires. They distinguish between what they call “technical challenges” and “adaptive challenges.”<sup>33</sup> Technical challenges are those which people already know how to meet. These may not necessarily be simple challenges but a defined approach to solving them already exists. People with technical expertise are the ones who undertake the work in these cases. However, there are a whole host of challenges that are not amenable to an authoritative decree or solution. In such cases there may seem to be no answer to the pressing challenge. The way forward is murky,

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<sup>30</sup> Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 138.

<sup>31</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

the future unknown, resources are not identified, and both the leader and the people must embark on new learning if the challenge is to be met. Significantly, the problem must be dealt with by those who have it and not just by the leader in isolation.

Leaders are often, probably usually, chosen for their perceived expertise and ability to provide answers in difficult circumstances. However, adaptive problems, by their very nature, defy easy answers. They require a whole different approach which the leader is often ill-equipped to deal with. Technical challenges are solved by people in authority who apply current know-how. Adaptive challenges require the people with the problem to learn new ways of operating and to experiment, with no guaranteed results.

Heifetz and Linsky state that “the single most common source of leadership failure we’ve been able to identify – in politics, community life, business, or the non-profit sector- is that people, especially those in positions of authority, treat adaptive challenges like technical problems.”<sup>34</sup> Upon reflection, this appears to have been part of the problem with the above-mentioned attempted C&MA innovations in church planting and evangelism. While there were technical elements in these innovations, there were fundamental adaptive challenges that were never faced and perhaps not even recognised at the time. These adaptive challenges included the changing multi-cultural face of Australia and evangelism and training in this context; the antagonism of Australians to the Gospel; and the divide between the Gospel as word and deed, just to name a few.

Leading an organisation which is dealing with adaptive challenges, requires a different set of skills and practices than when dealing with technical challenges. Heifetz,

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<sup>34</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 14.

in his book *Leadership without Easy Answers*, cites the case of a copper plant owned by the American Smelting and Refining Company (hereafter, ASARC) near Tacoma, Washington.<sup>35</sup> Their mine was found to be emitting arsenic, a carcinogen, into the air. The Environmental Protection Authority (hereafter, EPA) was required to deal with the problem. Yet it was far from a straightforward issue. The science was straightforward but the social impacts were not. The problem had been reduced to a no-win situation where the job security of the community of Tacoma was doing battle with the health of the same community. William Ruchelshaus, head of the EPA, took some extraordinary approaches to bring a resolution to the problem. Instead of deciding the issue alone, he took the unusual step of engaging the community-at-large on the problem. He did not abdicate his responsibility as a leader but rather changed his role from technical answer provider to a leader in a process of adaptive dialogue. An important answer was discovered through this process. The communities affected began to consider economic diversification and moving from dependence on the copper plant.

Such work of creating a space for dialogue can seem like a passive approach. The leader, one reasons, not the people, is expected to have the answers. Many leaders are passionate and as Dean Williams quips in his book *Real Leadership*, “passionate people sometimes forget the group. Their commitment turns into a crusade, and they cease to provide real leadership.” Williams contends that “real leadership orchestrates a process of adaptive work, while crusading forces a solution on the group.”<sup>36</sup> This is a profound

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<sup>35</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 88.

<sup>36</sup> Dean Williams, *Real Leadership: Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Incorporated, 2005), 253.

observation and at the heart of what will be required to lead the C&MA into missional effectiveness. The challenges are too great and complex for any individual to provide off-the-shelf answers. What is required is for teams of people, at both the national and local church level, to identify and engage the adaptive challenges that are before them.

## PART THREE – THE PROCESS OF INNOVATION

## CHAPTER 5

### A DENOMINATIONAL LISTENING-LEARNING PROCESS

The first part of this work looked at the context of the C&MA both as an international movement and an Australian expression. Part two considered key theological and social frameworks that are considered central to missional renewal. Part three will outline the development and implementation of a process of missional innovation in the C&MA.

#### **The Development of a Listening-Learning Community**

The above-mentioned attempts at innovation in church planting and evangelism essentially utilised strategic planning as the central means to bring change. Plans were developed by the Board of Managers, the executive leadership of the C&MA at that time, and presented to Annual General Council for adoption. The approach was top-down with churches being expected to commit to and align themselves with the goals presented.

The amount of consultation with local pastors and churches was minimal.

To be fair, particularly through the early to mid 1990s, various meetings of stakeholders in the C&MA were held for the shaping of plans and specific objectives. There was benefit in this process as it brought stakeholders together to enlist them in planning the innovations suggested and to shape some of the process. My personal

observations from having been in those meetings, are that while they were valuable, they had certain inherent limitations. First, the essence of the plan had already been decided and established by the Board of Managers, namely, the establishment of 200 churches by the year 2000. The plan was taken to Annual General Council and adopted by vote, but there was a sense that to speak against it or to vote against it was to, as it were, vote against motherhood. Therefore, people were put into the invidious position that to speak against such a plan was tantamount to being at variance with church planting or evangelism. The people who voted at that Council would most probably have all agreed with the need for aggressive church planting and evangelism, yet the solution offered was not to many people's liking. Second, the key issues that were stopping church planting and evangelism were not adequately addressed in these meetings. As mentioned above, this was a case of the National Board treating adaptive challenges like technical problems. The reality was that the establishment of a goal or goals was in itself not going to redress the failure of the C&MA to plant churches and to be more effective in evangelism.

With this background in mind, it was very important that any plan for missional innovation involve stakeholders in both the diagnosis of and the suggested solutions to the perceived problems. Heifetz and Linsky use the phrase that "the work needs to be given back to the people."<sup>1</sup> The people need to own the problems and be the ones who provide solutions. The people with the problem have to go through a process to become the people who discover the solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 127.

One particular case, quoted by Sharon Parks in her book *Leadership can be Taught*, captured the essence of this process. It's the case of Hugh O'Doherty born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. He went to Harvard Business School with a desire to learn principles that would help deal with the religious conflict in Northern Ireland. O'Doherty gathered people from opposing parties and established the Northern Ireland Inter-Group Relations Project. He drew together seven people from the Nationalist background and seven from the Unionist background. At the beginning of the project he approached each of these people individually and framed the adaptive work around the compelling question, "Can we learn our way out?"<sup>2</sup>

This question has become very important for me. Can we learn our way out of our situation under the leadership of the Holy Spirit? This approach requires a change of role from a president who produces answers via new programs to a facilitator of a process. Heifetz and Linsky, on the assumption that all adaptive change will involve conflict, speak of the need to orchestrate the conflict. This involves creating a "holding pattern" for the conflict so that real work can be accomplished in addressing adaptive challenges.<sup>3</sup> Further, Senge speaks of the need to develop learning organisations.<sup>4</sup> For the C&MA to move ahead the leaders themselves must grow and develop, and not expect the CEO to do all the hard work for them.

I had hoped that the National Board might become a team, a guiding coalition for change. However, due to the geographical spread of the board members and, in

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon D Parkes, *Leadership Can Be Taught* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 185.

<sup>3</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 14.

particular, the limited number of times we meet, not to mention the work load required at those meetings, the board cannot function as a change agent. The board essentially provides broad policy decisions and keeps the various office-holders accountable for their ministries. Such a board cannot, therefore, serve in the way a board of elders in a C&MA church operates in caring for the day-to-day running of the movement. This will always fall back on the president and the national office. Due to the small size of the denomination, the president has not had staff other than an administrator and a personal assistant. This has meant that generally the president has been required to operate in isolation in the development and execution of policy and planning. Approval for new plans has been sought from the National Board but the president has been the clear driver.

To “give the work back to the people” in the C&MA has required the development of a learning community among key leaders. This learning community needed to be a safe place where people could speak honestly about their hopes, dreams, and frustrations and, in particular, be a place where new approaches could be considered. Community learning was a key part of this team. Team Oz was created to be such a learning community where the missional conversation could be considered over a period of time. Nine members, representing key groups within the C&MA who were either actively involved in missional innovation or who were at least open to the conversation, were invited to be a part of this team.

### **Previous Attempts at Developing a Learning Community**

As mentioned above, during the 1990s it was increasingly apparent that although the C&MA was growing, the majority of that growth was within the blossoming ethnic work. Denominational growth masked the plateauing of some churches and, in

particular, the plateaued Caucasian work.<sup>5</sup> During 1999 a group of seven leaders were chosen, all but one from Caucasian churches, to be involved with the Refocussing Your Church program. A Church Resource Ministry Australia consultant-facilitator led the group through a series of five meetings. I was responsible for managing the process and working with the pastors. The facilitator's philosophy was that there needed to be a C&MA learning community developed that included personal development and church development. Coaching and strategic planning were central features of the plan.

My memory of those meetings was that people appreciated coming together to support one another. They particularly appreciated the coaching they received and some skills they developed. Further, they valued the learning which covered various areas. However, in terms of results in church growth and evangelism, if that is to be the measure of the value of the Refocussing program, the results were virtually nil. This is borne out in the statistics of the period. Individually, there appeared to be some growth in pastors, however there did not seem to be a substantial change in the way they operated in their ministries. I realise this is a subjective assessment, yet it appears to be borne out in the fact that the ministries of the churches involved did not appear to change.

The majority of those involved found it difficult to apply the principles to their churches. The pastors were to run Summits with key leaders to establish the church's historical timeline, values, purpose, and goals. It would be unfair to say this was purely the fault of the material and the approach used, as those involved, for the most part, were not naturally strong leaders. This is borne out by the fact that, of the seven involved with

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<sup>5</sup> Warnken and Russell-Brown, "The Christian and Missionary Alliance", 9.

the project, only three, of whom I am one, remain in pastoral ministry today. As a tool for church growth, the Refocussing Your Church program did not achieve any visible growth in the churches. However, it did, at the time, encourage and strengthen the pastors themselves.

Two other attempts at developing some sort of learning community are worth noting. The first was through our pastors' networks in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory. These gatherings, particularly earlier in this decade, were designed to be places of mutual prayer and support. The dream was that pastors would gather to pray for one another, learn, support and hold one another accountable for their ministries. In Western Australia and Australian Capital Territory there has been some limited success along these lines. The rest have battled just to get people to meet, let alone have meaningful and committed interaction. Our Area Coordinators – pastors who are responsible to provide some limited support for workers in their state – have been frustrated at the apathy towards the area meetings.

A second attempt to develop a learning community has been via an e-journal entitled LeadThink. LeadThink was designed to encourage and challenge licensed C&MA workers. It focussed on theological reflection, skills training and testimonies. There was some interest in it initially but the feedback and interaction on the blog site was always very limited and never included ethnic leaders.

A few points are worth noting for the current Team Oz project and any others that may flow from this project. First, it is vital to have the right people committed to any program from the start. Despite the limitations of the Refocussing Your Church program,

the major one being its very intensive nature, the program could have been more successful had different people been involved.<sup>6</sup> For example, there was some benefit seen with one particular participant. The fact that most of the other participants aren't in ministry today speaks to the fact that they were probably not the right people to do this program.

Second, in both the Refocussing Your Church program and in the area pastors' meetings there has been a distinct lack of urgency demonstrated. John Kotter identifies this as the first and foremost reason why change efforts fail, so much so that he wrote the book *A Sense of Urgency* to address this one issue alone in his eight step change process.<sup>7</sup> Our experience certainly supports Kotter's thesis.

Third, in the case of the area pastors' meetings, the ethnicity of the leaders has probably not been adequately catered for. Certainly among the Vietnamese pastors, a number of leaders have significant problems in working in English, particularly when it comes to complex issues. Related to this is the fact that in previous learning communities there has not been a conscious effort to target opinion leaders within the various ethnic systems. For future change efforts to be successful in the C&MA this issue cannot be ignored.

### **Using the Missional Change Model in this Context**

The above discussion has established that a process of missional innovation needs to avoid laying predetermined programs and plans onto pastors of local churches without

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<sup>6</sup> The other major concern was that the program strongly reflected a strategic planning model which, for the reasons stated above, would not be the best approach for instituting change.

<sup>7</sup> John Kotter, *A Sense of Urgency* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2008).

genuine dialogue. Also, given that there is residual scepticism from previous failed plans, promising too much needs to be avoided. In addition, the ethnic subsystems in the C&MA need to be taken seriously; the right people need to be involved in the process; and a way needs to be found to ramp up a sense of urgency.

In reviewing the Missional Change Model discussed above, it was evident that this model could be used to good effect at a denominational level in the C&MA. By way of review, the phases of the model are: First, the development of awareness of the need for missional change is created in the church through both corporate and one-to-one intensive communication events. Second, understanding is created as both emotions and thinking are brought into a coherent whole. Third, current practice is then evaluated in the light of missional awareness and understanding. Fourth, missional experiments are initiated based on the above evaluation. Fifth, missional culture is embedded in the congregation.

The process that Roxburgh and Romanuk developed was designed particularly for use in a local church although the principles have broader application.<sup>8</sup> In Roxburgh's *Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide*, the first three stages of gaining awareness, understanding, and evaluating current practice are developed into the following five-stage program suitable for use in a local church. First the church becomes aware of adaptive needs. This often happens through running a Mission-Shaped Church Workshop. Second, the church takes the Mission-Shaped Church Survey to determine how the

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<sup>8</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 82. Also note Alan Roxburgh, *Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide* (Roxburgh Missional Network, 2009).

church sees itself relative to readiness for mission. Third, leaders conduct a feedback seminar to inform the church of the survey results. Fourth, the results are discussed and analysed over three to four months in small listening groups to identify what has been observed relative to the church and mission. Fifth, the governing board of the church identify one or two missional challenges that they believe the church needs to address.<sup>9</sup> These steps would take about twelve months to complete with the overall seven-step process taking about eighteen months.

To facilitate the denominational listening-learning process it was decided to work through the first three of the five-step process of Missional Change Model. The outcome that was hoped for was that greater awareness and understanding of the need for missional change would occur, along with some informed evaluation of the C&MA's current practice relative to mission. It would have been beneficial to run a denomination-wide survey akin to the Mission-Shaped Church Survey, however this was deemed to be both premature and certainly beyond the scope of this project.

Six Team Oz meetings involving nine participants were run from February to October 2011. The meetings themselves and the results will be explained in the next chapter.

### **A Triad of Heritage, Context and Theology**

In developing a listening-learning process, it is very important to hold together three elements – the heritage of the C&MA both in Australia and as a whole; the immediate context in which we serve within Australia; and missional theology. All three elements need to be carefully considered in the diffusion of missional innovation.

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<sup>9</sup> Roxburgh, *Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide*, 3.

The heritage element provides a strong sense of identity from which missional action can be launched. We do not start with a blank page. The heritage of those who have gone before us in the C&MA will have a major influence on the way in which we operate as a movement. Simpson had a profound influence on the C&MA and that influence remains. His passion for those outside of Christ, his pragmatism, his work ethic, and his spirituality all influence the C&MA today. This heritage can be leveraged to help in missional innovation.

The context element provides a critical connection to Australia. Practice needs to be connected to a place. There are no off-the-shelf answers that can just have water added to make them blossom irrespective of the context. Australia is a secular country that is by-and-large antagonistic to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Simply importing a program from elsewhere can have, and has had, negative or at least limited results.<sup>10</sup>

The theological element provides key frameworks for missional engagement. Theology informs practice and so it is vital to develop and understand missional theology. Some key theologies have been outlined above. These three elements will impact each other which explains the reason why, for example, four different groups in four diverse locations will approach mission in four different ways. A way of conceptualising this is seen in the diagram below.

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<sup>10</sup> The adoption of the US C&MA's program, Vision 94:1000 more by 94 in the Australian program 200 by 2000 with only cosmetic changes, did not bring the desired results. A more considered contextual approach would have been preferable. See Clarke, 23.

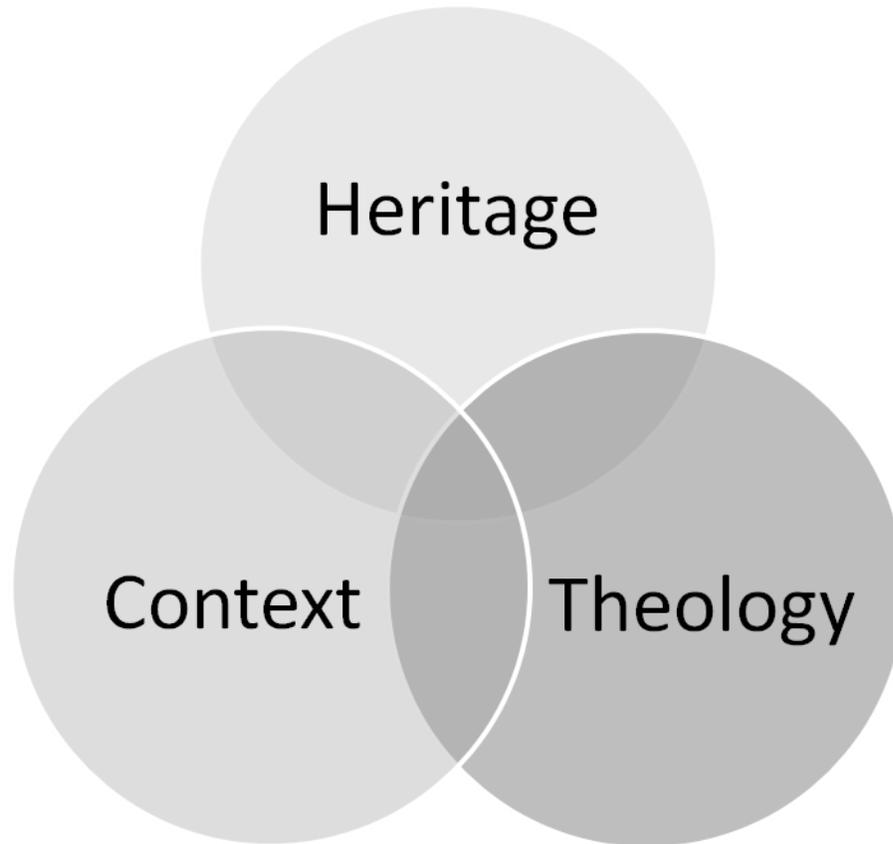


Figure 2. A Triad of Heritage Context and Theology

What is important here is that it is only the centre portion of the Venn diagram, where the three circles overlap, that can adequately sustain missional activity. All three elements are required. If heritage is missing, an understanding and appreciation of God's movement in the C&MA's history would be sadly lacking. Aside from the obvious political mileage that can be gained from emphasising heritage, it is appropriate because it recognises the prior work of the Holy Spirit in the life of this movement. If context is missing, which unfortunately it has been at times, the C&MA will simply be seen as a

North American import. If theology is missing, the C&MA will become a totally pragmatic movement held captive to the latest whim of sociology and business practice.

### **Interviewing Participants**

It was important to establish an objective measurement, as far as was possible, of the growth or otherwise of missional imagination and practice of the participants. In this way, the effectiveness of the Team Oz process could be assessed. This was done by interviewing the nine participants involved. Due to the nature of the area being researched, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Uwe Flick's comprehensive text, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, provided a framework for designing the research.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Flick describes the Longitudinal Study where one analyses and collects data about a particular process or state on multiple occasions.<sup>12</sup>

The research was therefore designed around two sets of interviews with all the participants, the first being conducted in February 2011. These interviews established the base-line attitudes of the participants and also informed the shape of the six Team Oz meetings and the work that would be required in those meetings. A second set of interviews was conducted during January 2012 once the formal Team Oz meetings had concluded. The information gathered was used to assess the progress of the participants.

There were limitations concerning this process and certainly no claim is made that the research was a rigorous Longitudinal Study. The first limitation was the collection of information, namely, just two interviews in a relatively short period of time of just eleven

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<sup>11</sup> Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 143.

months. A longer research period over, say, two years with perhaps one more interview, would have given a better result. This is particularly so, given the time it appears people need to enter the missional paradigm. The second limitation was the lack of objectivity, given that I was both the interviewer and the facilitator. As Flick comments, the great strength of the Longitudinal Study, namely the documentation of change over repeated collection cycles where the initial state of a process of change can be recorded without any influence from its final state, cannot be fully realised due to the involvement of the researcher. Despite these limitations, the information gathered through the interviews did provide valuable insights into the change or otherwise of the participants.

Robert Weiss, in his helpful volume on qualitative interviewing, *Learning from Strangers*, gives some good advice and guidelines including preparing interviewees for an interview, undertaking an interview, analysing the data and finally writing a report.<sup>13</sup> His various interview accounts provided helpful insight into what is involved in interviewing. He suggests including a quantitative element in interviewing which can help to anchor a qualitative discussion.<sup>14</sup> As can be seen in the questions below, some quantitative questions were included although, as will be reported, participants did not answer these directly. Due to distance factors, interstate participants were interviewed by telephone. Although there are limitations to this, as Weiss notes, discussion did not seem overly limited probably due to the fact of my friendship with the participants.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Stuart Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, 59.

questions that were asked are listed in the appendix. Some questions were omitted at the time of the interview if they were not appropriate for the interviewee.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE JOURNEY OF TEAM OZ

This chapter will outline the specifics of the Team Oz meetings that were conducted. A summary of the key points of each meeting will be presented. The interviews with participants will be discussed and the theological themes and metaphors that were uncovered in the interviews and the meetings will be presented.

#### **A Summary of the Meetings Conducted**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Missional Change Model was used as the framework to give shape to the Team Oz meetings. The plan was to move the participants, both individually and as a group, through the stages of developing awareness of the need for missional change; to gain greater understanding as emotions and thinking were brought into a coherent whole; and to evaluate current practice in light of missional awareness and understanding. The aims were to first engage in personal learning and reflection, then apply missional principles to the local churches that the participants represented. Second, it involved the identification of adaptive challenges that are preventing the forward missional movement of the C&MA.

## Meeting One

The first meeting shaped the future meetings. A key element that was used at all meetings was “dwelling in the Word”. This dwelling took the form of meditation and prayer on a set portion of Scripture. Participants were then given the opportunity to discuss it. The two Scriptures chosen were Acts 10 and Luke 10. Acts 10 was initially used because it was easily accessible to the missionary-mindset that C&MA leaders generally exhibit. This text was very provocative as it led people into a journey of crossing boundaries. Time was given for reading the Scripture and meditating on it. Some appeared not to have used this approach previously but nonetheless appreciated it. There did seem to be an unspoken question as to why we were spending time in this Scripture over multiple meetings. Explanation was given that described the difference between exegeting the passage for the purpose of understanding the text and applying its timeless principles as opposed to living in the text for the purpose of the narrative itself bringing change to life.

Stanley Hauwerwas, in his work *A Community of Character*, makes the point that narrative is central to social ethics.<sup>1</sup> He uses the story in Richard Adams’s novel, *Watership Down*, to illustrate the power of the story-formed community.<sup>2</sup> *Watership Down* describes an adventure of a group of apparently threatened rabbits which leaves the safety of its warren to venture to a new home. The stories the rabbits tell are central to their journey. Hauwerwas notes that the various communities of rabbits that were encountered are to be judged primarily by their ability to sustain the narratives that define

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Hauwerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Adams, *Watership Down* (New York: Avon, 1972).

them.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that the rabbits leave as a group of individuals, not as a community. “All they share in common is the stories of the prince of rabbits, El-ahrairah. They become a people only as they acquire a history through the adventures they share as interpreted through the traditions of El-ahrairah.”<sup>4</sup> So it was that Team Oz started its journey with an aim to not only learn as individuals, but to more importantly, grow as a community formed by the narrative of Scripture.

An important feature of the Team Oz journey was its reflection, not only upon the narrative of Scripture but also upon the narrative of the founding and founder of the movement. It was very important to weave Simpson’s missional attitudes into the considerations of the group from the beginning. In Simpson we have a modern hero of our own to whom we can point and say, he crossed boundaries, so can we. This gave not only the challenge to cross boundaries but, more importantly, permission to consider crossing boundaries and to be innovative. Probably, for most of our churches, there is a strong centripetal tendency which makes consideration of the stranger almost a foreign concept. Readings from Simpson’s missional example were designated to Team Oz members prior to our meetings, where we discussed and considered what had been read and observed. A brief questionnaire was also distributed and completed by most of the participants. The questions are in the appendices. A summary of key responses from those questionnaires follows.

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<sup>3</sup> Hauwerwas, *A Community of Character*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

First, Simpson's zeal, love, and passion for those outside of Christ moved all participants. They were inspired by his great energy and work to reach people both where he lived and overseas. He saw Christ as central to mission and his relationship to Christ flowed into his relationships with other people. Second, Simpson was a man of innovation, a maverick who was willing to take risks to get the job done. He had a far greater concern for reaching the people of his day than he did for ecclesiastical niceties or accepted appropriate behaviour. Third, Simpson was a man of deep spirituality who we need to emulate. He had a "holy dissatisfaction". He wanted a deep relationship with God where Christ would be formed in him. However, Simpson's spirituality was anything but an individualised piety. It connected to ministry. Simpson identified the fact that believers have been saved to serve. Some participants of Team Oz expressed a desire for a greater sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit and his leading in both their lives and ministries. Fourth, participants valued Simpson's willingness to sacrifice to be involved in God's mission. However, there was criticism of Simpson in that he seemed to sacrifice his children, in particular, in the pursuit of reaching out with the Gospel.

The consideration of Simpson's life and work was helpful in that it gave permission to innovate and experiment and helped to focus on the least-reached, not only overseas but importantly, in one's own community. There was a recognition that "being missionary" was in our DNA and therefore was a foundation upon which to build missional dialogue. This approach avoided the possible criticism that "we have never done it this way before". On the contrary, participants felt the brooding presence of our innovative and missional heritage goading us into action.

Various members of the group testified that they were challenged both by the Scriptures we meditated on but also the retelling of Simpson's story. Some openly mused that crossing boundaries was a difficult way to live asking, "how on earth was this going to work?" Both Scripture and Simpson's example became challenges and an encouragement to consider a different way of living. Dwelling in these stories, particularly Scripture, became an exercise in personal transformation, not just a growth in understanding.

Particularly through the early sessions, it was important to give some concrete understanding of missional theology and practice. Various articles were circulated as pre-reading. The following areas were covered in the first meeting. First, that the Western world and specifically Australia is a mission field. Second, that there is a substantial difference between attractional and a missional approaches. Third, the mission is God's in the world and the Church needs to join Him in it. Fourth, the Church needs to operate as a contrast society.

When the distinction between attractional versus missional/incarnational was presented the ethnic church leaders suggested that it would not be helpful to place attractional and missional in opposition to one another. The attractional model is still working well for a number of the ethnic churches. It was important not to minimise the value of this style of ministry. This was an important piece of learning in terms how a missional paradigm should be communicated to the ethnic churches.

## Meeting Two

Having realised the importance of the giving and receiving of hospitality within a missional framework, it was featured as a teaching slot in the second meeting. This time one of the other members led. It was an important reflection, for the reason that it helped to give alternate language to mission. One member noted that he had realised that some success they had experienced in using an evangelistic program was not connected to superiority of the program, but rather to the hospitable context in which the program was being used.

In this meeting an issue came up that substantially flavoured the meeting. Specifically, there was particular concern expressed that there was not enough emphasis being placed on the direct sharing of the Gospel. This effectively changed the agenda for the April meeting, but the question needed to be thoroughly discussed before we could move on. The conclusion of the discussion was that, in the missional approach, the Gospel was being shared not out of guilt, or because of a program, or out of a drive to grow a local church but rather out of a context of accepting the other and being hospitable. Gospel-sharing flowed out of relationships as God provided opportunities. Hospitality, which led to Gospel-sharing opportunities, was an important discussion point.

One member shared his experience of attempting to bring missional change in his church. This was very helpful for some who, although committed to a missional paradigm, had not successfully charted a course with the leaders of their church. The group learning both affirmed the person who shared and gave some practical how-to's to other participants.

Given that the Missional Change Model was being used in at least one local church and was the basis for Team Oz in 2011, the model was shared and discussed. This gave opportunity to explain why so much lengthy discussion was taking place. Interestingly, one member recognised how he had already been through this cycle although he had only recently discovered the Missional Change Model.

### Meeting Three

There was enough general agreement that in the third meeting in June an attempt was made to develop Team Oz's own description of what it meant to be a missional church. The nine participants were divided into groups of three and were asked the question "As we understand the spirituality and boundary-crossing of A. B. Simpson, and given our learning about the missional church, what do we think being missional means?" They were given time to develop their own statements. The three groups developed the following three paragraphs.

Group One wrote, "A.B. Simpson, moved by God, crossed boundaries with the Gospel, taking the churches he led into a new place of serving the world. The church had to 'go' to understand its own identity and being. 'Going' for Simpson, was the church's identity."

Group Two wrote, "A missional church is one which is directed by God and His mission and by what He is already doing in the world. This mission work is focussed on both the spiritual and physical well-being of humanity, humanity's total wholeness, toward new creation. The local church's task is to discern God's local work and join in that."

Group Three wrote, “To be missional means the local church taking risks and not focussing on self protection and safety but rather on being a mission-driven movement. This will take the church beyond defining success by numerical growth alone and mere institutional survival into defining success in terms of missional engagements and the deep discipleship that leads to such engagements. The community will need to be shaped by the narrative of Scripture.” These paragraphs became an important common language and description of what missional meant, something that the group owned.

In the midst of the above discussion of what Team Oz believed it meant to be missional, it became clear that the participants were viewing the local church from various perspectives. As a result, I took an impromptu departure and asked people what metaphor or picture best captured the essence of their church. A key background to asking the question was the work of Avery Dulles in his book *Models of the Church*, where he identifies some primary models that he observed – namely the church as an institution, a mystical communion, a sacrament, a herald, and a servant.<sup>5</sup> The following seven metaphors were identified as pictures of their churches. First, the church is like going to the movies. There is allocated seating, everyone knows who will be there and what to expect. Second, the church is a family. This was from a first-generation ethnic church. Third, the church was once essentially a club however it had now shifted to become an elite military unit. Fourth, the church is a sanctuary, a safe place. Fifth, the church is a family. For the second generation, in this ethnic church, it was a training ground for ministry with increasing interest in community involvement. Sixth, the

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<sup>5</sup> Avery Robert Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

church five years ago was a warm nest. Today it is in transition and sees itself as extending itself into the community. Seventh, the church is a refugee camp for immigrants from Hong Kong. The community of families are travelling this road together. The English congregation of this church is in a liminal place yet attempting to go out into the community. This naming procedure was important to help expand the understanding of exactly what it will mean to move each church from its current self-perception to a more missional footing. It was also very helpful for me to know learn each participant's understanding of the missional paradigm.

#### Meeting Four

Having defined what Team Oz believed it meant to be missional, the participants were broken up again into triads and discussed the following question. "Given the understanding of being missional that we concluded in our last meeting (noted above), what do you think are some of the implications of this for the C&MA? What opportunities, challenges and issues does the C&MA need to consider and what might it mean for our identity as the C&MA?"

Having discussed this in the two triads that met, a long list of observations was made. A presentation was then made on the nature of Technical and Adaptive challenges based on the work of Heifetz.<sup>6</sup> All the participants worked through the observations that the triads had made and began to identify technical and adaptive challenges. Due to absences, only two of the three possible triads met, and due to the fact that some people needed to leave this meeting early, the discussion was curtailed. The triads were given homework – to complete the task of naming technical and adaptive challenges – to bring

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<sup>6</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*.

to the next meeting. Despite the time restriction and absences, this meeting demonstrated that people were better understanding both the missional paradigm and particularly some key adaptive challenges that needed to surface.

#### Meeting Five

After a review of the nature of adaptive and technical challenges, meeting five continued the work of defining the adaptive challenges that the C&MA faces. There was full attendance and some excellent discussion. The result of the day's work was to produce a composite list from the three triads that summarised the key challenges the C&MA faces. Extra refining of the challenges was held-over to the final meeting.

#### Meeting Six

The final meeting of Team Oz for the year completed the work of identifying and articulating the key adaptive challenges which the C&MA faces. It is critical to address these challenges if there is to be missional engagement and renewal. In a combination of small and large group work, Team Oz produced the following set of adaptive challenges.

#### **On Mission Together – Naming the Adaptive Challenges**

The adaptive challenge is to find ways our churches can be engaged in local mission whilst maintaining a discipleship culture. There is need to freshly release C&MA churches to be missionaries in their own local contexts. There has been a tendency for the Church to maintain a dichotomy between the Church gathered and the Church on mission. This dichotomy needs to be avoided. To accomplish this it will be important to focus on preaching and teaching that results in transformation rather than just the transfer of knowledge.

An associated challenge is the relationship between the local church and the national organisation. Specifically, the national organisation needs to seek ways to encourage local churches to move towards a missional paradigm and practice that reflects our heritage. The denomination cannot force change in local churches but it can create contexts for missional dialogue which can become hospitable hotbeds for boundary-crossing conversations and learning. Local churches are at different places and need to be accepted and supported where they are while, at the same time, maintaining overall denominational forward movement along missional lines.

A further associated challenge related to training. Ways need to be found to form and train local church pastors, leaders, and members to be on local mission. This will involve providing training for local pastors and training materials and other resources to help them serve their churches. The C&MA will need to provide opportunities for ongoing leadership development, support, and encouragement toward missional engagement.

### **Passing the Baton – the Challenge to an Ageing Denomination**

The C&MA has an ageing pastoral population and thus an important challenge is the establishment of ongoing succession planning. To be a healthy organisation, it will be important to establish a plan enabling new generations of leaders to take up both local church pastoral responsibilities and also denominational leadership. This will involve identifying, training, mentoring, releasing, and supporting such leaders. It will be important to provide support in advance for local churches who will lose their pastors in addition to support for the retiring pastors themselves.

## **The Challenge of Discerning Together God's Work in the Church and the Community**

There was some difference of opinion on how Team Oz understood this question of discerning God's work. This related not so much to the validity of the challenges identified but rather their priority. Although no final conclusion was reached, the following two challenges were suggested. The first challenge was the need for the National Office to find ways to enable churches to share what God is doing in the local church itself and the community in missional engagement. Some suggested some specific that the National Office establish a forum to share what God is doing in C&MA churches around the country. This might be through the publication Alliance Connect and through other means. In so doing it is expected there will be an interest in the missional conversation. Although this appears to be a technical challenge, it is nonetheless important to consider.

## **The Challenge of Communication and Moving the Change Model onto the National Stage**

A second challenge is, given that the missional conversation includes certain important theological ideas, ways need to be found to promote national discussion. The missional church conversation is not simply a series of methodologies, techniques, or models. Rather it involves foundational theological understandings that express themselves in practice. These understandings include the nature of God's mission, the Gospel, the Church, and the biblical narrative. There needs to be opportunity to discuss these theological issues.

## **The Challenge of Identity**

The challenge identified under this category was how local churches in today's multi-cultural society can be better defined and the need to redefine the C&MA as a missionary movement not only internationally, but also locally. It was suggested that churches be encouraged to rename themselves by removing their ethnic identifier. The CMA is a mission organisation that needs to recapture its mission at home as a matter of first importance. However, this must not minimise our overseas responsibilities.

## **Other Challenges**

Although other challenges were raised, the above challenges are the priority items from the Team Oz viewpoint. I, personally, would have ordered and expressed these challenges differently and some challenges do include some technical elements, but they do represent the conclusions of Team Oz. The technical elements within the challenges were recognised by the group but the consensus was to include these items and suggestions.

Although significant time was spent in attempting to summarise and clarify the adaptive challenges, there were some differing emphases by group members which were, the group felt, all valid. Rather than trying to produce a neat list of challenges, it was decided to simply present the work thus far to the National Board and allow the board to feel some of the pressure of refining the challenges. The process is as important as the end product and this group can claim ownership of the above list.

## **Planning the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 National Board Meeting**

Having concluded the list of adaptive challenges, we considered some broad aims for the National Board meeting. Our desire was to receive honest reactions to the adaptive challenges Team Oz had identified and to determine if the National Board agreed with these challenges or not. Using the Missional Change Model, it was important for the National Board to gain greater awareness and understanding of the missional paradigm. Understanding prior to this point was sketchy. Ideally the board could then begin to evaluate current practice. However, realising that some of these aims might be a little lofty, Team Oz at least wanted the board to give permission to continue the missional conversation. From this there would be some action steps produced for 2012. In preparation for the board meeting, certain priming materials were distributed. These included an introduction to the Missional Church discussion including the definition of “missional” that Team Oz developed; an article by Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky on Adaptive-Technical challenges; and a video on Adaptive-Technical challenges.<sup>7</sup>

After significant discussion, Team Oz agreed on the following agenda for the board meeting along with those who would directly lead sections of the meeting. I would give an explanation of Team Oz including some background on the missional conversation. Nam would then share his experience about the significance of his missional journey. I would give further explanation concerning Adaptive and Technical challenges. Realising the value of telling stories, Ken and Terry would then give their

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, "When Leadership Spells Danger," *Educational Leadership* 61, no. 7, April (2004).

testimonies regarding introducing missional change in their churches. It was hoped that all these elements would prepare the board for the all-important presentation by Peter of the adaptive challenges that Team Oz had identified. The adaptive challenges would then be discussed. Ming finally would lead the whole group in a discussion of what might be the next steps. At the conclusion of the Team Oz presentation the board would meet in executive session to discuss the presentation.

## CHAPTER 7

### MISSIONAL EXPERIMENTS

Originally this research project called for a maximum of three action-learning experiments that flowed from the work of Team Oz described in the previous chapter. These experiments were expected to be the result of the team's developing awareness and understanding, and evaluation of current ministry as per the Missional Change Model. However, due to the time constraints of the project, the various understandings of the missional church paradigm, and the different levels of commitment to it, the team did not initiate missional experiments. Nonetheless, the missional experiments detailed below were conducted by some of the people who participated in Team Oz and who were influenced and fuelled by its discussion. Therefore, the experiments are stand-alone parallel trials.

I was involved in all three churches seeding ideas concerning the missional church paradigm. This had been particularly through ongoing encouragement of the pastors and, in two cases, via direct involvement with the churches. The three churches were chosen due to their pre-existing commitment to the missional paradigm. The three pastors of these churches were participants in Team Oz.

## Woden Valley Alliance Church

The Woden Valley Alliance Church (hereafter, WVAC) is a Caucasian church and one of the oldest C&MA churches, having being planted in 1970. It has been through its ups and downs particularly in connection with pastoral changes. The church has never grown beyond two hundred in morning attendance although there has been a desire on the part of the pastors for it to grow. The current pastor, Rev. Ken Graham, has been concerned about the lack of evangelism and outreach to the surrounding community. To address this lack, the church commenced an experiment with a group called the Make a Difference Team (hereafter, MAD) around 2005. Despite the good intentions of the pastor and the team, their work did not achieve the desired results and it only operated for about one year. Once the MAD team concluded meeting there was no direct attempt at outreach ministry for another year. Interestingly, the previous senior pastor had been very successful in personal evangelism. However, his evangelistic ministry had not translated into mobilising the whole church towards evangelism. Rev. Graham was initially exposed to missional ideas in 2008, through mutual conversations and through viewing *the Present Future* DVD series by Reggie McNeal.<sup>1</sup>

In 2009 Rev. Graham and the church elders agreed to undertake the Mission-Shaped Church Survey and engage in a process of missional change.<sup>2</sup> The survey was completed by April 2009 and the Feedback Seminar conducted in May 2009. There was good interest in the survey with 71 from a possible 120 completing it.

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<sup>1</sup> The DVDs are based on McNeal's book - Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Fred Romanuk and Alan Roxburgh, *Mission-Shaped Church Survey: Prepared Exclusively for Woden Valley Alliance Church* (2009).

The *Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide* prepared by Allelon describes four types of churches namely Reactive, Developmental, Transitional and Transformational.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the survey and church discussion in the Feedback Seminar, the church identified itself as a Developmental church. At that time they saw themselves as a church which acknowledged that change is occurring in the society around them and that they need to change, but that the change in the church will be small and incremental. There was certainly a desire to become transitional and transformational.

During July to November 2009 five Listening Groups examined the results of the survey and discussed its implications. The conclusions were taken to an elders' retreat held in April 2010. The elders identified the following missional challenges that needed to be addressed. First, the church must recognise the needs and opportunities in the surrounding community. This will include needs and opportunities among school students, the poor, the aged, the sick, single mothers, broken families, and the unemployed. They concluded that, in order to share in and serve those needs, it will be critical for WVAC to better understand their community. Second, the church needs to be energised to take action. The people need to be motivated and to see themselves as missionaries to the surrounding community. Third, the church must identify the current and future leaders needed to spearhead these new missional ministry opportunities.

The elders selected a Missional Action Team (hereafter, MAT) and tasked them with developing some specific missional experiments. There was delay with commencing the work of the MAT due to the work commitments of its leader. The team eventually did meet and identified the following opportunities: Community events could

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<sup>3</sup> Allelon, "Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide," (Eagle, Idaho: Allelon Publishing, 2008).

be hosted within the church building; existing outreach programs could be equipped to be more missional in flavour; the embassy community could be approached and ways found to serve them; a neighbourhood food bank could commence for the socioeconomically disadvantaged families in the area; a Gospel presentation card could be developed to enable the sharing of the way of salvation; to aid in communication, handouts could be prepared to advise the community that the church meets in their area and inviting people to attend; the Mainly Music program, which targets children and their parents, could commence; a Men's Shed could be developed so local men can come and work on small projects in a common-tools-shared area; an effective online presence and community could be developed.

The MAT presented a report to the WVAC Board of Elders containing these opportunities. The elders examined them and selected the Mainly Music program as the best option to pursue. Unfortunately as at the time of writing, the program has not commenced due to a lack of volunteers to run it. Significantly this was the third adaptive challenge identified by the board of elders.

During 2010 and 2011, as a direct result of the consciousness-raising work of the Mission-Shaped Survey, the Listening Groups and general discussion of the need for missional involvement, a number of other projects have spontaneously developed. These include the following: First, there has been a ministry to Adria Village, a residential care facility for elderly people in the suburb of Stirling. Rev. Graham and a small team have been holding a monthly church service with about twenty-five to thirty residents attending. Recently they also started Christmas and Easter services. The residents of the village have greatly appreciated the opportunity to come together and good conversations

have ensued. This is an important ministry, not only for the Adria Village residents, but also for the church given the significant number of seniors in WVAC.

Second, since November 2010, Rev. Graham has been featured in a weekly radio broadcast on a local Christian radio station. In this broadcast he has preached a sermon. The station allows a brief promotional segment for the church as payment. This has been very successful, with a number of people enquiring about the church. Although there is a strong following of the station among existing Christians in the area, there have been people who have visited the church who are enquiring about spirituality.

Third, for about two years, a mentoring program has been running in Stromlo High School, which is located very close to the church. Ten mentors spend time with students to encourage them and help where possible. The school and parents apparently have been very happy with the contribution from the church. In addition, WVAC members have provided a weekly breakfast for the students. Fourth, as a regular part of its ministry, WVAC operates small groups. Two of these have served in a local Salvation Army food kitchen. This has been a boundary-crossing experience for those involved.

Although, to date, the church has not adopted one of the MAT's missional projects, nonetheless the general discussion involving the need for missional innovation has produced some very worthwhile experiments and results. It seems that the church has had a significant change in culture towards missional awareness. There does appear to be a general adoption of the missional paradigm although the church is still conservative in style and tied to an attractional framework. There were two reasons that the work of the MAT has not produced fruit sooner. First, the leader of the MAT became time-poor due to some major work commitments that precluded him from leading the

MAT. This same phenomenon occurred during the time immediately prior to the commencement of the MAT. Second, Rev. Graham took on extra pastoral responsibility as consulting pastor to another church. This was a significant distraction. This consultancy has now concluded and it is hoped that Rev. Graham will be able to provide clarity for WVAC in the days ahead.

### **Hills Alliance Church**

The Hills Alliance Church (hereafter, HAC) was originally planted in 1972 in Parramatta but moved to its current location in Baulkham Hills in 1975. From its inception, the church has had a missionary heart as demonstrated by the aid it has given in the planting of some ten churches or congregations.<sup>4</sup> Fifty-eight HAC members have been involved in these various church or congregation planting projects.

Although the church has been involved in these projects, the majority of the people have had a program-oriented mindset. The church has historically offered multiple ministries such as ministry to youth, singles, and an over-sixties group with the primary focus being on the Sunday morning celebration. These programs, and the mindset of the people, produced a church culture that had a dualistic internal/external approach. The majority of the church's time and energy, despite its work in helping other churches commence, was nonetheless inward focussed and institutionally driven. Despite its espoused value of outreach into the community, in reality, only the pastor and certain key leaders performed outreach. In fact, Rev. Terry Davidson, the current pastor was at

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<sup>4</sup> In the C&MA a church is classified as an autonomous group of believers having their own pastor and board of elders. A congregation is defined as a sub-unit of a church. Typically Chinese congregations, for example, have a Cantonese congregation, an English congregation, and often a Mandarin congregation.

one point told by a church member that he expected the pastor to do all the work because that was why the pastor was paid.

To a certain degree the rhetoric of outreach, the growth of the church (largely via transfers), and the church's heritage of supporting church planting effectively dulled the missional vision and missional behaviour of the church. This could be seen by the little hospitality being demonstrated in or out of church services particularly between the various ethnicities. At times there were complaints about the requirement of interpretation of sermons during combined services; ethnic signage; and even irritation at the smell of ethnic foods. These were obvious prejudices and the non-missional frameworks appeared to be intractable.

In early 2003 HAC undertook the Natural Church Development survey (hereafter, NCD).<sup>5</sup> This gave the picture of a rather unhealthy church, the average score being forty-five. The maximum factor was Functional Structures at fifty-five which attested to the programmed nature of the church. The minimum factors were Holistic Small Groups at thirty-six and Loving Relationships at forty. There were three other surveys conducted up until 2006. The church's health, according to the NCD, was increasing although Rev. Davidson was concerned about the lack of evangelism in the church.

The church finished its journey with NCD in 2006 after four surveys. The church attendance had dropped from around 180 in the early 2002 to under 100 by 2006. The church size was declining yet, according to the scores, it was far healthier than it had ever been. There is no doubt that although numerically smaller in attendance, the church was

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<sup>5</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development : A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

healthier in terms of relationships and evangelism. However, the promise of NCD that those churches that scored consistently above sixty percent in all eight factors would grow in attendance did not occur even though, in the final survey undertaken, the church averaged a score of eighty percent.

In 2006, while trying to make sense of what was not happening in the church – namely numerical growth – Rev. Davidson and the leaders began to consider the missional paradigm. The church attendance was dropping partly from discontented worshippers and partly from “natural attrition” due to people moving from the area. This added pressure to the pastor and the church leaders who had no answers for the situation. The church had invested heavily in an attractional model and had managed to attract good crowds for their events, however, the people did not return to the church after the events. Through reading and viewing Reggie McNeal’s book *The Present Future*, the church was alerted to an alternative narrative.<sup>6</sup> Alan Roxburgh’s book *The Sky is Falling*, provided very helpful language to explain the liminal space they found themselves occupying.<sup>7</sup>

An important book that shaped the conversation was Michael Frost’s work *Exiles* where he speaks of the importance of “third places” that are distinct from where one lives and works.<sup>8</sup> In these third places there are opportunities for meeting and influencing people. The church realised that while it was getting increased contact with the community, it was still locked into an “attractional” approach through such activities as

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<sup>6</sup> McNeal, *The Present Future*.

<sup>7</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Sky Is Falling!?!: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Saint Paul: Allelon Publishing, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006).

Car-Boot Sales, special café events and other meetings. It was not meeting in third places. This began a conversation around the possibility of using live music as a means of meeting people. A small group began to have “jam sessions” on Tuesday evenings and welcomed people into the church to play secular music purely for enjoyment’s sake. Gradually, through 2010 and 2011, this evolved into a regular commitment where the church provided a meal and various musicians would come and play. A key person by the name of Stan joined the group. He is an accomplished musician, owner of a guitar shop and well connected in the Sydney music scene, Stan has connected the church with other people in the music industry.

Over time, the casual jam sessions evolved into a regular rehearsal with a standing Blues band which was called Miss Murphy and the Bombers. The band was invited to play at a Sydney Golf Club. In July 2011, Miss Murphy and the Bombers played their debut performance. This was a radically different experience for the church. Church members attended the golf club to support the band and to meet people. Musically the event was a great success, however the bigger success was that, although small in number, virtually the whole church attended the event and there were many “God conversations”. Having a C&MA pastor and a church band playing quality Blues music in a golf club has given plenty of opportunities to speak of issues of faith. The band has played again since then and has been invited to be a regular band at this venue.

Interest in what the church is doing in music has spread to other musicians and technicians in the music industry. Although the music is a significant attractor, Rev. Davidson’s testimony is that hospitality is at the heart of the Tuesday evening rehearsals. People are bringing their families along to listen to the band rehearse, to enjoy the food

and particularly to enjoy a family atmosphere. Far from having to excuse itself for being Christian, the church is attracting people to the performances and the rehearsals because of their hospitable attitude. Rev. Davidson remarked that it is the life-style of the believers that is very attractive to people.

Another missional experiment that has developed has been with a small group of Amway salespersons. Over the last couple of years Rev. Davidson has led an evangelistic Bible study with these people in his home. He deliberately quarantined those attending the study from the existing church culture due to concerns that they would be adversely influenced by the challenges the church was going through. This four-year journey has seen two couples come to faith. Although Rev. Davidson has used some traditional evangelistic material, he remarked that it was the hospitality and informal discussion that influenced these inquirers more than the evangelistic program.

A third missional experiment is in its embryonic stage. A church member named Karen has connected with people of her own Tongan background. This has resulted in some opportunities to serve these people. This project, although just beginning, appears promising and is significant in that Rev. Davidson is not directly involved in it.

When Rev. Davidson was asked what metaphors characterised the church five years ago, he said that HAC was a Caucasian, self-satisfied, self-interested group that was blind to what was happening in the community. Today he reflected that the church was athletic and more like a gorilla-warfare unit penetrating enemy territory. Another important metaphor he used is a table of food around which people gather to enjoy each other and, more importantly, the stranger. This is opposed to a row of chairs facing a central performer.

Rev. Davidson said that they have learned a great deal, including the need for strong ethics particularly in the sexually and generally intemperate music scene; the need for strong teaching to support a missional paradigm; integrity in relationships; and the pastor changing from being a vision-caster to a facilitator of what God is already doing among his people.

### **Sydney Chinese Alliance Church**

The Sydney Chinese Alliance Church (hereafter, SCAC) was planted in 1987. The church consists of two congregations – one Cantonese speaking, the other English speaking. The theology and practice of Anglican churches in Sydney has had a major impact in a number of Chinese churches in Sydney, including those of the C&MA, through their work in the Universities. Their ministry has been very positive in many respects. However, it has brought a view of both the Gospel and an approach to evangelism that has not always been helpful in terms of the missional paradigm. According to Ms. Mary Fisher, the pastoral worker of the English congregation of SCAC, it has included a propositional view of the Gospel. By propositional it is meant that great emphasis is placed on getting the facts of the Gospel correct with the almost implicit assumption that if you know the facts you will experience God. These “facts” are tightly defined and tend towards a particular reformed view of the Gospel and a minimisation of what has been described as the Gospel in deed referred to above. There has been a particularly large emphasis on acquiring correct doctrine and, in Ms. Fisher’s experience, far less emphasis on taking this Gospel message to those outside the church. At one point for example, Ms. Fisher was asked if she was ashamed of the Gospel because she did not

advocate a confrontational approach in evangelism, preferring a hospitality framework to inform her engagements.

In 2008 I led a seminar on the missional church that some of the English congregation from SCAC attended, in a neighbouring church in Sydney. Apparently this seminar brought about a significant shift in the imagination of the congregation. As part of other leadership training done subsequently at SCAC, there was further opportunity to promote a missional framework. As a result, the English congregation in particular, has begun to dialogue about the missional church paradigm.

Ms. Fisher is herself very committed to the missional paradigm and has done considerable theological reflection in the area. Her own experience, however, up to the mid 2000s, has largely been in seminary teaching in USA. As a result, she has had no experience in leading change in a local church or congregation. It was expected that Ms. Fisher and the SCAC English congregation would engage in some missional experiments in 2011. Unfortunately, due to a major pastoral upheaval at the end of 2010 which was not resolved until 2011, no innovation was entered into. Although SCAC now has a new pastor for the Cantonese congregation, missional experiments have largely been on hold.

However, two experiments had been conducted in the year or two previously. The first experiment had been to provide some assistance in the local Rockdale Primary School. This had involved different church members, and particularly Ms. Fisher, entering the school and providing help with reading. In one case, Ms. Fisher taught an Ancient History course to a select group of students from years four to six. A new principal has recently commenced work at the school and this has led to a renegotiation

of the church's involvement. The school appears willing for the church to continue serving it. Certainly the church has a good relationship with the school.

A second set of experiments involved a Kids' Summer Adventure Camp. This was a non-religious day program aimed at caring for the primary-age children in the area. Some fifty children attended these camps. Another children's program called Learn 2 Play was run. This was designed to teach children how to play various sports. It was run for four consecutive weeks with children learning the rudiments of six sports. Although the church is currently repositioning itself in terms of involvement in the community, it has a good reputation with the local school and the Rockdale City Council. Therefore, further experimentation could be taken up without major disruption.

### **Learning Concerning Missional Experiments**

A number of things have been learned from the experience at WVAC, HAC and SCAC. First, one can have missional plans for a church or congregation however things do not always go according to plan. Returning to Roxburgh's Missional Change Model, change is best conceived of as a series of sailing manoeuvres like a boat tacking into the wind. Constant corrections and adjustments are required. All three churches cited have been through some very troubled waters in the midst of their missional journey.

Second, it takes significant time to bring change. In the case of SCAC and WVAC, it initially appeared that these churches were ready to move into new missional experiments. Due to uncontrollable circumstances this did not occur. In the case of HAC, it has been a seven-year journey. This is a very significant point in that churches will need stable leaders who are willing to weather considerable criticism, misunderstanding and, at times, ridicule to walk a missional path.

Third, there is only so much control and direction that national leadership can give to a local situation. As much as denominational leaders may desire to move missional experimentation at a certain speed, it is always up to the local church to work at its own pace. It is significant that HAC had been a part of the SCOPE project yet the membership had never really understood or adopted the SCOPE philosophy, which had been introduced by a top-down management approach.

Fourth, just because a church is talking the missional talk does not mean it has actually started on concrete experiments. I observed that in these and other churches there is a tendency towards missional rhetoric which is not necessarily matched by missional behaviour.

Fifth, missional change can be very expensive in terms of membership losses. This was particularly evident at HAC where a significant number left the church due to the new missional direction. In the case of WVAC, a group had the potential to leave due to the changes being implemented. There is still the possibility that this could happen with some long-time members.

Sixth, transitioning a church to adopt a missional mindset and framework is tough work and involves substantial perseverance. The reality appears to be that even if some leaders are gifted, called by God, and can effectively serve in a traditional church context, they will not be able to lead a church into change. The demands are simply too high and the task too complex.

Seventh, and related to six, given the difficulty in actioning missional plans particularly in the medium term where fatigue and distraction are ever-present dangers, it

would be very helpful to have a learning community who can support pastors moving into missional projects.

## CHAPTER 8

### REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY AND NEXT STEPS

This final chapter will report on the results of the interviews with Team Oz participants noting their growth in missional imagination, learning and practice. The chapter continues with a description of the all-important National Board meeting where Team Oz presented the adaptive challenges it had discovered. The board's reactions to these proposals are noted. Next, steps are presented that will help move the C&MA towards missional renewal. The chapter concludes with my personal learning from the entire project.

#### **Growth in Leaders' Missional Imagination, Learning and Practice**

All the participants in Team Oz were interviewed at the beginning of the Team Oz meetings in February 2011 to determine their missional understanding and practice. At the conclusion of the process, in January 2012, they were also interviewed to determine any changes that had taken place in their understanding and practice. A summary of each person's journey is recorded below and details are contained in the appendices. People will be identified only by their first names. There will be some repetition in this material given that three of the nine interviewed were also part of the three missional experiments discussed in chapter seven.

Chanh had not had a large shift in his thinking. However, he did appear to place greater importance on social ministries that were not directly preaching the Gospel message. Nonetheless, he could see, particularly for the second generation, that this discussion was very important. The attractional model is still working amongst Vietnamese people and therefore a missional framework was less appealing.

Ken had been exposed to the missional conversation over a period of time. It was not surprising that his view had not greatly shifted during Team Oz. It seemed rather to confirm his viewpoint. There was benefit for him to keep the missional conversation alive given some of the distractions he had had.

Mary's whole theological perspective has been missional. As a result, she has a sophisticated missional understanding. Team Oz was helpful in giving her some practical and political implementation strategies. Also it has helped to provide a language to discuss missional issues with her people. Ming had previously been exposed to the missional discussion. As a result, Team Oz did not provide new frameworks for him. He probably contributed more to the discussion than he personally gained.

Peter, through Team Oz and other related reading, has had a substantial shift in understanding about the nature of the church. He has come to appreciate the *missio Dei* and some key implications of this doctrine. Given his strategic place in our theological college, this bodes well for the future.

Patrick, although coming from a traditional Chinese perspective which has tended to emphasise evangelism purely in proclamation terms, has shifted his viewpoint somewhat. This became clear both in the Team Oz meetings and also in the exit

interview. He now sees that holistic ministry has benefit and legitimacy even if Gospel proclamation does not happen immediately.

Vinh was able to articulate a missional understanding. However, due to the fact that an “attractional” model of ministry is working in his church, it is doubtful whether his missional understanding is making much difference in his or his church’s practice. It appears that he’s largely operating from a traditional yet effective model of evangelism. This is to be commended but future pastors and young people in his church may not be able to continue this model.

Terry had a substantial understanding of the missional paradigm prior to Team Oz. His church was already involved in some significant experiments and these had continued throughout the year that Team Oz met. He learned more of what not to do and the folly of re-badging evangelism as the missional church. He is becoming increasingly disenchanted with the institutional church.

Nam had a basic understanding of the missional church but it was superficial. He clearly recognised the need to move his church beyond its current comfortable place and into the community yet felt that this was being forced. Since travelling with Team Oz he has a much deeper nuanced understanding of the missional church and is finding ways to dialogue with his people in a journey.

Overall there have been some encouraging results from the work of Team Oz in the lives of the participants. In particular Peter and Nam showed some very large changes in their understanding of the church and its mission and a willingness to put this into practice. The older ethnic pastors, who had not regularly engaged around missional themes, namely Chanh and Patrick, showed a willingness to discuss missional themes. In

particular they saw the importance of this thinking and practice particularly for the second generation of ethnic people although they themselves will probably continue to operate along traditional church lines. Those who were already committed to a missional framework such as Ken, Mary, Terry and Ming confirmed their understanding and, I suspect, deepened it somewhat, particularly in terms of application to the local church and the C&MA. There has been little change in missional practice in the churches the participants represented. This was to be expected given that this was only a one-year study.

### **Interaction with the C&MA National Board**

The meeting with the National Board proceeded according to the plan determined by Team Oz noted in chapter six. The board members who were not on Team Oz listened carefully to what the various team members had to say and seemed to appreciate the material. Having shared the adaptive challenges that Team Oz had identified, Ming led the whole group in a discussion on what the board thought about the observations of Team Oz. The idea was to consider what the National Board's next steps might be. At this point the meeting tended to get bogged down and only one or two who were not on Team Oz shared their thoughts.

At this point the facilitator pushed the group to share and finally one board member said that she was not sure exactly what the facilitator was looking for. This led to the observation that the board members who were not on Team Oz were feeling a little overwhelmed by all that had been presented. Board members said that Team Oz had had the advantage of a whole year's worth of meetings and the distilled conclusions were being delivered to the board with the expectation of an immediate response. The non-

Team Oz participants said that this was too much to ask for. The facilitator was able, despite this setback, to direct the whole group in some productive conversation.

Non Team Oz board members were asked to prioritise, on a scale of one to five, the four adaptive challenges and rate them in terms of importance and urgency. The results are listed in the table below.

	Importance 1-5 1 = low importance 5= high importance	Urgency 1-5 1 = low urgency 5 = high urgency
1. On Mission Together	4.85	4.43
2. Passing on the Leadership Baton	4.85	4.71
3. Discerning God’s Work	4.71	4.28
4. Identity	4.51	4.28

Table 1. Importance and Urgency of the Challenges Presented.

From these results it is clear that non Team Oz members were aware of both the importance and urgency of dealing with the problem of passing on the baton. This was to be expected particularly given that the previous day’s board meeting had featured significant discussion concerning various churches with pastors nearing or at retirement. All the other answers were in substantial agreement with Team Oz’s choice of adaptive challenges. They agreed that these were very important and urgent issues although their prioritising was slightly different to that of Team Oz.

While it was encouraging that the other members rated Team Oz's adaptive challenges as both important and urgent, it was clear that there was a disconnect between the passion of the Team Oz members and the other board members. This finally came to a head when the observation was made that, particularly among the Chinese board members – both Team Oz members and non Team Oz – there was not the same urgency to adopt the missional church paradigm as there was among the Caucasian members. The reason was that the attractional model is still largely working among the first generation of the Chinese and Vietnamese Churches.

At about this point, the son of a senior Vietnamese leader plainly stated to his father that he could not and would not 'do church' the way his father did and they openly discussed this. In fact, the second-generation son clearly had far more affinity with the Anglo members who had been sharing their struggles and saw the value and importance of the missional paradigm. This became an important point in the meeting as I was able to state that we were not attempting to turn every C&MA church into some sort of standardised, franchised "Missional Church". Together we acknowledged that the attractional model is, for the most part, still working among Chinese and Vietnamese congregations. However, I did ask that there might be permission and blessing given by the senior ethnic leaders to the second-generation pastors to explore a more incarnational-missional approach.

All of this healthy dialogue made it clear that there will be no one-size-fits-all approach for the C&MA. In fact, one Chinese member who had been on Team Oz, flatly stated that Chinese evangelistic methods are different to Anglo methods and a missional approach. This remark clarified the way in which the next steps must be taken. First, the

National Board must endorse and support the current effective attractional models that are being used among our ethnic churches. Second, ethnic leaders, in particular, need to give their blessing and strong support to their second-generation leaders, congregations, and churches to continue to dialogue and experiment along missional lines. This observation was one of the highlights of the day.

Further discussion ensued. The following practical ways forward were suggested. First, well thought-through theology needs to be presented. Theology can be a common language and a way everyone can enter into the missional conversation. Second, practical plans of how to execute missional behaviour could be introduced into the local church alongside the presentation of theology. Third, the National Board could regularly schedule an extra day to continue the discussion of the missional church paradigm and how this might be implemented in the C&MA. In this way the National Board might avoid the current feeling of being left behind. Fourth, to increase the sense of urgency, it would be good to more clearly summarise the statistics of the denomination over the last decade. This would naturally highlight the decline in the Caucasian work. Fifth, a reading list on the missional paradigm could be provided. Sixth, success stories could be told to the denomination. Seventh, training on change management could be provided. Eighth, second-generation key leaders could be targeted in the missional conversation and ninth, the C&MA's boundary-crossing heritage could be highlighted.

No firm conclusion was reached at the end of the meeting. People were very tired after two long days of intense business and discussion. Another board member and I were tasked with developing some next steps. This will involve presenting some suggested ways forward to the board at its February meeting.

One of the key aims of the Team Oz presentation was to solicit a willingness to continue dialogue on the missional paradigm from the National Board. It was obvious that everyone was in agreement with this, notwithstanding the older ethnic leaders' ongoing commitment to an attractional model. A key issue will be to include the National Board more closely in the next steps.

The phenomenon where non-Team Oz board members contributed little was of concern. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it was to be expected given that they had not had the benefit of the meetings of Team Oz. Also, most of them are not leaders who would naturally be called "driving" leaders. Team Oz members from the National Board were chosen for the very reason that they were senior denominational leaders who would contribute to the discussions.

The November National Board meeting particularly highlighted the clear delineation between the Anglo and ethnic approach to ministry. There was a significant lack of urgency concerning the missional conversation among the ethnic leaders. This is not to say that there was indifference towards evangelism, but simply that a missional framework was not seen to be critical. Some of the second-generation and all of the Anglo churches, on the other hand, considered the missional conversation and behaviour to be vitally important. Although the two adaptive challenges relating to the missional conversation – being on mission together and discerning God's work in the community – were rated highly, the outstanding issue of concern to both Anglo and ethnic leaders was how the C&MA can pass on the baton of leadership to the next generation. The adaptive challenge of identity, while mentioned, appeared to be of far less importance in people's

minds. The meeting highlighted the fact that it will be impossible to adopt a unified approach in discussing the adaptive challenges identified by Team Oz.

### **Next Steps**

The National Board meeting was a reality check which highlighted the difficulty of attempting to use a unified plan or even a unified set of adaptive challenges to direct the denomination towards to missional change. The ethnic leaders on Team Oz and the National Board, while very warm in many ways to the missional framework, ultimately are not committed to it and are not likely to be. Evangelistic events and personal evangelism programs along the lines of Evangelism Explosion continue to hold their imagination. Given the significant number of Chinese people coming to faith in Australia and the growth of Chinese churches, it is entirely understandable why the missional conversation seems superfluous to C&MA ethnic churches. Although the growth of C&MA Vietnamese churches has been slower and has somewhat stalled, the same mindset as that of the Chinese churches prevails, namely, significant attractional events connected with personal evangelism are effective and desirable.

With this amount of ambivalence toward missional questions, the earlier idea of drawing together a larger group of denominational leaders into a listening-learning conversation has needed to be substantially altered. It would appear to be ineffective and counterproductive to draw together leaders to discuss the two adaptive challenges related to missional action – namely being on mission together and discerning God’s work in the community – when ethnic leaders do not consider these issues to be of central importance. Already one of the ethnic participants of Team Oz has said that they don’t want to be involved in further meetings.

## Passing on the Baton

The one challenge that ethnic and Anglo leaders are jointly concerned about is finding leaders to replace the aging pastoral population. Accordingly, there would be benefit in developing a process of dialogue concerning how the denomination can pass on the baton of leadership. As was noted in the history section above, the college had been criticised on occasion for not producing pastors and missionaries. The reality, however, is that the identification and development of new leaders and specifically pastors and missionaries is a work, not just of the training institution, but of the whole denomination and pre-eminently the local church. It is the local church that needs to be encouraged and equipped to identify and work with the college and denomination to train and send out leaders.

The Missional Change Model suggests that, prior to any organisational change, it is critical to develop awareness and understanding of the need for change and to evaluate current practice. After following these steps, experiments can be conducted. Using this approach, opportunities need to be provided for leaders from the three systems of the C&MA – Anglo, Chinese and Vietnamese – to gather separately to discuss training. The purpose of these meetings would be to develop awareness and to gain understanding of the need for change in the way both local churches and the C&MA approach leadership development. Some dimensions of Appreciate Inquiry will be used to positively frame the adaptive challenge of developing leaders. Accordingly, three meetings with leaders from these ethnic groups have been arranged in June and August 2012. Following the meetings, a smaller group of interested people will take the information gleaned and determine the next steps. Depending on the progress made at the meetings, further work

on gaining understanding and evaluation may be required. The end result will be that leadership development experiments can be established.

### Missional Change

There remains the fundamental question of how to bring missional change to the C&MA of Australia. The Team Oz / National Board experience showed that while ethnic churches were somewhat ambivalent to the missional discussion, some Anglo churches do see a need for change and greater community engagement. Further, a number of second-generation congregations of ethnic churches recognise the need for change towards more missional practice. Logically then, it seems wisest to target the Anglo and second-generation churches in developing missional local C&MA churches.

Realistically, ethnic churches are unlikely to have a deep interest in or willingness to commit to a missional-incarnational approach. They are, on the whole however, committed to evangelism and are willing to consider social ministries in the community. It is expected that the attractional approach to evangelism will hold sway in the future. An opportunity exists to provide some theology and tools that will encourage ethnic churches in evangelism and community engagement. Both the theology and tools would have a missional flavour having the added benefit of providing a base for the second-generation ministry. By introducing missional themes, albeit in a traditional setting, ethnic leaders will have opportunity to give permission to the second generation to adopt a more fully orbbed missional approach. In dealing with the ethnic churches, it will be vital not to be seen to be criticising their traditional approaches and important to provide service to support their ministries.

Given the apparent switching from various programs during the 2000 to 2005 noted above, it will be important for the C&MA to be seen to be deliberately continuing the missional discussion in the denomination. This will give a sense of continuity and credibility to the leadership of the president and the National Board. One of the ethnic leaders in Team Oz remarked on the need to be on this journey for a long time, for years in fact.

The Missional Change Model cited above has been used as a framework for introducing change. Team Oz has been helpful in raising awareness, understanding, and in evaluating current practice in the C&MA. Although certain individual churches are using a missional approach, for the most part the C&MA has not been “disturbed” as a system. Conversations now need to be encouraged in the various subsystems of the C&MA to raise awareness, understanding, and evaluation by individual churches of their current practice. Therefore, thinking in terms of the C&MA system, the following approaches could be adopted. The specific ideas below are a compilation of ideas and suggestions from the Team Oz exit interviews, ongoing discussions with National Board members and my own musings.

There would be value in bringing the Anglo, second-generation ethnic, and possibly international churches together to discuss missional themes. This might be done in Perth and Sydney. Church leaders from Melbourne and Brisbane would travel to Sydney. Due to its far-reaching implications, the missional paradigm needs to be imbibed over a significant period of time unlike, for example, an off-the-shelf church growth tool. Any approach will therefore require a substantial investment of time.

Key areas to meet around would be spiritual reflection, theology, leadership and implementation considerations. A mixture of all of these elements would hopefully engage participants at various levels. It is a given that all participants would be at different places in their own and their church's journey. Ideally, leaders who gather would commit to a longer process that would involve training, sharing, and accountability as well as theological, practical, and mutual support.

Despite the ambivalence among the Vietnamese towards what might be called a fully orbed missional approach, there was interest in providing training in some central locations (Sydney and Melbourne). The Vietnamese could gather from time to time where there was opportunity for sharing, praying for one another and learning. I have been told that the Vietnamese would gather if there was some practical teaching and where inspiring stories were told of how community engagement has taken place. Having personally provided some leadership training in the past, it was noted that given the right event, Vietnamese leaders would gather particularly where the president was centrally involved.

The Chinese leaders are not likely to gather together for central meetings. However, a number of key churches have been receptive when our college director and I have provided training in their own churches. In particular, Chinese churches desire training on how to move from a Board of Deacons leadership model to an Eldership model. As a part of this training, some missional thinking and practice have already been introduced. In addition, at least one leader has indicated a willingness to have a seminar on the missional church presented in his church. Thus a church-by-church approach will

be needed with the Chinese. As with the Vietnamese, any approach used would need to allow for attractional methodology which is still effective within the Chinese context.

It will be important to identify and influence the influencers among the younger generation with missional thinking. It is planned to hold some workshops and seminars this year in Brisbane and Melbourne to promote the idea of the missional church among young people. Engaging speakers, inspiring stories, and challenging theology would help to raise the awareness, dialogue, and need for missional engagement in the community. This approach follows the Missional Change Model. As the young people begin to see another way of being church the Strategic Youth Leadership Team (herein SYLT) can support and coach the youth and young adults in designing their ministries. Concrete missional experiments can then be developed with those churches that are willing to be involved.

The National Board will need to be involved in ongoing dialogue around missional church theory and practice. It will be very important for them to understand the issues involved so they can provide overall leadership. Given the nature of the board, it will be difficult to have them operate as a guiding coalition to drive the process, however, they must be both kept informed and involved in the planning process. There have already been extra days scheduled for board meetings for this purpose. I will need to continue to work with a loose group of people who contribute advice and support on the C&MA missional project. A key person in this is the director of the college, who was a part of Team Oz.

A further way to disturb the C&MA system is to reconsider the reporting of statistics. Currently statistical returns from local churches are required quarterly plus a

separate annual report. These statistics emphasise numbers in the areas of attendance, finances, professions of faith, baptisms, and membership. The addition of some missional-type questions, which focus on community engagement, could help to raise missional awareness.

### **Overall Learning**

This final section will present a summary of key things learned through the Team Oz experience. There will be some repetition of the learning presented in chapter seven surrounding the three missional experiments. This section will summarise overall learning. There is no priority intended in the list.

First, the project has been very helpful in that it has given me an opportunity to integrate and more clearly articulate both central theological and sociological frameworks. The various key theological themes such as God's triune nature; the *missio Dei*; hospitality; the importance of the local; and the Gospel in word and deed, integrated well into practical application. Regarding the sociological frameworks, while I had read Heifetz's various books, I found that the year-long experience of leading Team Oz enabled me to better appreciate the leadership issues involved. There was a strong connection between the works of Heifetz, Senge and Rogers.

Second, there needs to be great care taken when programs are adopted at the national C&MA level. In the early years of my time as president I tried a few ideas that I did not continue. Some people have seen the missional church emphasis as perhaps just another of the passing parade of ideas.

Third, the project has demonstrated the length of time required for real change to occur. I have noted the need for substantial time for change in myself. In 2005 I started

reading and watching Reggie McNeal's works yet it has taken a long time to identify the core issues that drive me. These include issues of defining success and Modernity's influences particularly relating to control and prediction. This same lengthy period of time was noted in the progress of Rev. Ken Graham. Originally he said only a little nudge was needed in the church. Subsequently he recognised the need for more fundamental change. It should be added that it has become clear that there will be some who never adopt a missional framework.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, it is not easy to transition an existing church into missional effectiveness. It is very easy to become derailed by a small minority who challenge the process and/or by the challenges of church life. Particularly in the case of Rev. Graham, distractions of both his MAT leader and in his own life and ministry tended to have a negative impact on leading the missional change process. Some pastors who are effective in the regular work of traditional ministry would simply not have the ability to lead a church into substantial missional change.<sup>1</sup>

Fifth, it is vitally important to enlist opinion leaders in a change process. Previously I had not given sufficient emphasis to this point and had paid the price of slow or no innovation. In particular, this requires that I spend time not only with opinion leaders who are willing to change, but also with those who disagree with my direction.

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<sup>1</sup> This view has been supported by the experience of the Churches of Christ. In a phone conversation with the author on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011, Andrew Ball, executive leader of the Church of Christ in NSW, observed that perhaps five percent of his NSW pastors would be able to effectively lead radical transformation in a local church.

Six, I have had to learn a new leadership style. By nature I am a person of action and do not like delays or indecision. A significant revelation has been the articulation of church members' expectations of leaders, namely, that leaders are there to fix the problems.<sup>2</sup> When I came to the admission that my attempts at fixing things in the C&MA were not working, I found myself in a quandary and this was profoundly unsettling. I recognised I had treated a series of adaptive problems as technical. "Giving the work back to the people" has been a major shift for me. It has required honesty – that I cannot fix the problem alone. While there has been acknowledgement that I need a team to do the job, this has taken the shape of me establishing the plans and the team doing the work. No serious thought had been given to the team itself or others in the denomination having a substantial role in defining what the adaptive problems were, let alone establishing a means to address those problems.

Seventh, in the multicultural denomination that is the C&MA, there is no one-size-fits-all program or even process that can be required of churches or even suggested to them. First-generation ethnic churches that I have worked with so far have shown no particular interest in pressing deeply into the missional paradigm. Rather, they have indicated a desire to continue with traditional attractational events and evangelistic approaches, many of which are still effective. However, the missional discussion, if anything, has encouraged them to be more involved with evangelism although with a stronger community emphasis. Second-generation ethnic and Anglo churches more readily see the need for a missional approach. It will be important to bless and encourage

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<sup>2</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 127.

what is valuable in the first-generation work seeking the blessing of the first-generation leader upon the second-generation's missional approach.

Eighth, a practical piece of learning or at least an observation is that it was hard to get people to attend all the Team Oz meetings. At the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011 meeting only five of the nine members attended. Despite the importance of the work, it was difficult to get everyone to all meetings even when the calendar was set almost a year in advance. This reflects the busyness of ministry.

Ninth, focussing on Simpson's boundary-crossing was valuable as it gave a solid base for innovation. By recognising Simpson's willingness to innovate and do all that was necessary to spread Christ's message, permission was given to experiment with missional concepts. I suspect this was important particularly for our ethnic leaders who are by nature more conservative.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Australia is moving further and further away from its Christian heritage and has become increasingly antagonistic and sceptical of the Church and its message. The C&MA has not been immune to these trends. Although the Chinese and Vietnamese works continue to grow modestly, the Anglo work has already begun to decline. If other denominations are any indication, this decline is set to accelerate. Therefore, the purpose of this project has been to bring missional renewal to the C&MA of Australia. Specifically, the project asked how the vision of Simpson, the founder of the C&MA, could be re-engaged to bring missional transformation to the denomination. This paper has three parts:

Part One outlined the historical context of the C&MA in both the USA and Australia. The changes in the C&MA and the wider religious climate of Australia were then considered, including the ethnic population explosion and the decline in church attendance. Part Two dealt with two key theological frameworks which inform missional change. These relate to the Triune God and His Church. This section also looked at some key social frameworks in understanding the church and how to innovate missional change. The Missional Change Model was featured.<sup>1</sup> Part Three, which comprised the bulk of the paper, described the development of a listening-experimentation-learning process with a group of leaders. The final chapter reflected on the learning process; the degree of change in missional imagination; the practice of the participants; and some possible next steps for the C&MA.

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<sup>1</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*.

The Missional Change Model developed by Roxburgh and Romanuk shaped the project design.<sup>2</sup> In the past, strategic planning had been used as a means of bringing change with rather limited, if any, results. The Missional Change Model was applied for use with a group of nine licensed workers being led through a process of innovation. The National Board of the C&MA was also involved, receiving quarterly updates and particularly a final report in November 2011.

The methodology involved five stages. First, a group of nine leaders in the movement were identified. This group was led by me and entitled Team Oz. Team Oz had senior representatives from the three major ethnic groups – Caucasian, Chinese, and Vietnamese. In addition, second-generation Chinese and Vietnamese ministries were represented. Team Oz participants were interviewed at the beginning of the process to determine their awareness of the need for missional change. Second, greater understanding of the need for change was established by engaging team members in the work of Simpson, to make them aware of his core vision and methodologies as they relate to missional change. This took place particularly during the early meetings of Team Oz. Third, an evaluation of current practice was conducted inviting Team Oz members to name adaptive challenges that Simpson’s vision addresses in the C&MA at this moment.

Fourth, and concurrent with the Team Oz meetings, action-learning experiments in Sydney and Canberra operated and were influenced by the work of stages two and three. Although the original intention of the project was that these experiments would flow out of the work of increasing awareness, understanding, and an evaluation of current practice, the reality was somewhat different. Missional experiments had already

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<sup>2</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 79-108.

commenced by the time Team Oz meetings began so rather than sequential stages one to three leading to stage four, it became a parallel program where the Team Oz meetings helped to feed the various experiments and the experiments became live examples at the meetings. Given where the Team Oz members were and their disparate viewpoints, it would have been impossible to develop experiments particularly given the one-year time frame of the Team Oz project. Although the whole project became a two-pronged approach instead of a neat sequential program, nonetheless the experiments were influenced by the work of Team Oz and certainly fuelled discussion.

Fifth, learning of the need to cross boundaries from the missional heart of Simpson plus the learning from the church experiments, and a refined understanding of missional engagement enabled evaluation of current C&MA practice. Four adaptive challenges were identified and presented to the National Board for their consideration. Finally, participants in Team Oz were interviewed to determine the change in their missional imagination and practice, and that of their churches.

There were some valuable results that came from the Team Oz project. First, there had been significant growth in the understanding of the participants. This was demonstrated in the definition of what it means to be missional in chapter six, The Journey of Team Oz. Further it was demonstrated by the exit interviews that participants demonstrated a greater depth of understanding. There was no major difference in missional behaviour as a result of the Team Oz meetings. This was to be expected given the small time frame involved. There was, however, an increased intention to operate missionally both as individuals and in leading the churches they represented.

Second, the adaptive challenges identified by Team Oz do engage the key issues that the C&MA faces at the present time. In particular, the passing on of the leadership baton must be faced by the National Board and the denomination. There are no easy answers for this issue, but the work of Team Oz has given a basis for discussion both inside and beyond the board. Further, the challenges relating to missional change – namely, being on mission together and discerning God’s work in the church and the community – were important challenges to identify. Unless C&MA churches adequately learn to discern where God is already at work and become missionaries in their own local contexts, the denomination will surely decline.

Third, although the non-Team Oz members of the National Board were seemingly ambivalent to the adaptive challenges presented to them in November and were somewhat nonplussed as to what to do with them, as a whole the board is very ready to continue the discussion. The director of the college and I have been tasked with developing some next-steps recommendations. The board will need time to discuss missional themes in order to better enter into the conversation.

Fourth, the discussion and project has suggested some specific steps in continuing to bring missional transformation to the denomination. A multi-track approach will need to be used where first-generation ethnic churches are encouraged in their largely attractional approach to ministry. The second-generation leaders will need to be specifically targeted and given exposure to the missional paradigm. Leaders from Anglo, second-generation and possibly international churches could gather together to become learning communities like Team Oz has been.

In terms of further research, the missional discussion that I have observed has largely been in the context of Caucasian churches. Such churches realise that the tide of culture has changed and become hostile to traditional church and evangelistic methods. As a result they realise they must change. This often leads to a consideration of the missional church paradigm. The missional discussion, at least in application, does not seem to have taken the context of ethnic churches seriously. They have a unique set of opportunities and challenges. For such churches the attractional model is still working. One Vietnamese leader told me that Vietnamese people are glad to come to church on special occasions and to other meetings. This particular leader has involvement with key community leaders and is regularly asked to write a column in the Vietnamese newspaper. Such a world is far from what the average Caucasian leader experiences. There appear to be two key questions that ethnic churches need to address. First, how they can make meaningful contact with people of their culture so they can share and demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ. There need to be ways found to encourage and train ethnic church leaders to engage in evangelism and blessing their communities. Second, ethnic churches, from their inception, must give thought to the nature of ministry to their second generation and specifically what a missional ministry looks like in that context. It appears that some ethnic churches are more intent on maintaining their ethnicity than genuinely prepared for their eventual integration into the majority society.<sup>3</sup> Tragically, some young people are lost forever to the church. Such research would be of

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<sup>3</sup> Having worked with Ethnic churches in the C&MA for twelve years, I have personally made this observation.

significant benefit to the C&MA and to the wider Chinese and Vietnamese communities particularly in Sydney and Melbourne.

The work to be done in the C&MA is rather daunting yet our Triune God has demonstrated His power and ability to break through in profoundly difficult circumstances. My trust is that He will do this again in Australia.

APPENDIX ONE – MODULES OF THE REFOCUSSING YOUR CHURCH  
PROGRAM

**Module One** introduces the process of refocussing by sending leaders back into God's Word to rediscover the biblical reason for the Church's existence.

**Module Two** develops a time-line of the church's history, revealing issues for prayer and pointers for the future.

**Module Three** identifies those in the community who will be the target of outreach and direct ministry focus.

**Module Four** identifies God's unique shaping of a church, assisting in the selection of core values that will guide future ministry.

**Module Five** envisions God's dream for the next five years of a church's ministry, consolidating all work from the prior steps.

**Module Six** selects the model of ministry that clarifies how the church will minister and how various ministries work together.

**Module Seven** establishes benchmark goals that will provide accountability for the accomplishment of vision.

**Module Eight** resources the creation of a Ministry Plan, identifies key issues related to implementation, and provides helps for launching change.

## APPENDIX TWO – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### ENTRY INTERVIEW

#### **His/her understanding of the Missional Church:**

1. Have you heard the term ‘missional church’ used?
2. What is your understanding of the term ‘missional church’?
3. Do you find the concept helpful in any way? Why? Why not?
4. Sometimes a distinction is made between an “Attractional Model” and an “Incarnational or Missional Model”. How do you understand these?
5. Where did you come across information about the Missional Church?

#### **The church’s understanding of the Missional Church:**

1. How well does your church understand the term the ‘missional church’?
2. What about your key leaders? How many of them would understand the idea, if not the missional language?
3. Do you think they find it helpful? Why? Why not?
4. If your church people are familiar with the Missional Church, where do you think they came across the concepts?

#### **The church’s missional practice:**

1. How well do you think your church is connecting with the community?
2. Of the church’s regular ministry week, how much time or percentage is given to church services, small group meetings and fellowships, administration, other activities, and missional activities?
3. Of the church’s budget about what percentage goes to missional activities? Can you give some examples of this?
4. How do you feel about all of this? Pleased, sad, hopeful, discouraged?

**His missional practice:**

1. How well do you think your church is connecting with the community?
2. Can you give me some specific examples of what your church is involved in?
3. Of your regular ministry week, how much time is given to the following?
4. How do you feel about your church's involvement that? Pleased, sad, hopeful, discouraged?

**His challenges and opportunities:**

1. What road-blocks do you see in your own life that will likely get in the way of missional engagement?
2. What significant issue(s) or challenges in your personal situation, if dealt with, would make a big difference to your ability to be more missionally engaged with your community?

**Church's challenges and opportunities:**

1. What road-blocks do you see in your church that will likely get in the way of missional engagement?
2. What significant issue(s) or challenges, if dealt with, would make a big difference to your church's ability to be more missionally engaged with their community?

**Theology and Theological Metaphors:**

1. What theologies or theological metaphors drive your understanding of the nature of the church?
2. What theologies or theological metaphors drive your understanding of the church's mission?
3. Can you give some examples of the how these theological ideas or metaphors have impacted your practice?

### **The C&MA:**

1. How well do you think the C&MA understands the missional conversation? Do you think this conversation is helpful for the C&MA to be engaged in? Is it relevant (NB various ethnicities)
2. What do you think are the biggest challenges that need to be overcome to enable the C&MA to be able to be more missional (or engaged in their local communities)
3. What opportunities are there in the C&MA for missional engagement?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **EXIT INTERVIEW**

The exit interview did not ask all the same questions but rather focussed on key areas that had changed in the participant's thinking. The following questions were asked:

1. Having been a participant in Team Oz, how would you now describe the missional church?
2. Has your understanding changed over the year?
3. Has there been any change in the understanding of your church?
4. Has there been any shift in the behaviour of your church?
5. What do you see are the current adaptive challenges your church faces?
6. What theological metaphors and frameworks would you now use to describe the church?
7. What do you think is the way forward for the C&MA?

## APPENDIX THREE – QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING A. B. SIMPSON

### **Simpson's spirituality**

1. What do you see in the spirituality of A.B. Simpson that fuelled the early C&MA and what excites you about this?
2. What do you see about our current spirituality that is similar to our heritage in today's C&MA? How is it the same or different in your particular ethnic group and in the wider C&MA?
3. What two wishes do you have for the spirituality of leaders in the C&MA?

### **Simpson's passion for the lost**

1. What do you see in Simpson's passion for the lost that motivated the early C&MA and what excites you about this?
2. What do you see about our current passion for the lost that is similar to Simpson's passion? How is it the same or different in your particular ethnic group and in the wider C&MA?
3. What two wishes do you have for the passion of leaders in the C&MA?

## APPENDIX FOUR – INTERVIEWS

Following are the details of the entry and exit interviews of Team Oz members.

### **Chanh**

Chanh understood that a missional church as one that contacts non-Christians in the surrounding community. This is the first step to sharing the Gospel. This is a good thing and a helpful reminder to be involved with the social events in the community, however, there is a danger of it just only being a social time or becoming merely social work. Chanh, a Vietnamese leader, described largely an attractional understanding of church. Vietnamese non-Christians are often willing to come to church particularly for special days like Christmas and Easter.

Chanh felt that the two congregations he oversees need to be more evangelistically-oriented. Perhaps thirty to forty percent of them are intentional in befriending non-Christians. One of the key challenges is that people and the church are both very busy.

In terms of metaphors, Chanh described the church like a mushroom that gets larger and larger. A mushroom also multiplies itself. Another interesting metaphor that he shared through the meetings was that Vietnamese people generally view the church as a preaching house, a place to listen to the sermon. He suggested that this view had been inherited from the original missionaries to Vietnam.

He noted that, during a period of revival in Vietnam in 1938, witnessing teams were developed. These teams were responsible for doing the evangelism in a church. The negative side of this was that evangelism became the responsibility of a small group. This, coupled with the preaching house understanding of the church, has produced some

passivity and inactivity in terms of community involvement. There is a strong desire within his congregations to see the church grow in size so that people can enjoy the larger crowd and the services a larger church offers.

In Chanh's exit interview he said that the missional church discussion had been helpful for him but felt it was probably more applicable to the Anglo churches which are having difficulty interacting with the local community. Chanh said he had learned some things through the Team Oz experience particularly about the need to be more involved in the community. He clearly wondered about the emphasis on theology and whether this was a bit too academic. Nonetheless he felt, particularly for the Anglo churches, that it will be important to promote the missional church paradigm over a period of years. In terms of adaptive challenges his congregations face, he was particularly concerned about the second generation and trying to help Vietnamese parents to loosen their grip on their children so the children can learn to serve in the local church.

### **Ken**

Ken had heard of the missional church. A key feature in defining a missional church is whether it is outward or inward focussed. There needs to be an emphasis on being missionaries to our own society without losing the overseas mission edge of the C&MA. He suggested that the church needs to be internally healthy but that there also there needs to be an outward focus. He found the missional church ideas valuable, particularly in helping his church to become more outward focussed.

His church is slowly getting a hold of the ideas although there are those who still want church simply to be a safe place. Others want a strategic plan which emphasises decisive action steps. The church is involved in various outreach activities such as a

Kid's Club, mentoring of local high school students and a related breakfast club, and a church service in a local retirement home. Up to \$5,000 per year is spent directly on outreach activities and half of the part-time youth pastor's time is spent on mission ministries.

Personally speaking, Ken is involved in a number of activities. They include general Christian witness to non-Christian people, involvement in leading the church service in a local retirement home, and preaching on a local Christian radio station that includes a non-Christian audience.

In terms of key theologies, he is finding what he terms a holy-dissatisfaction growing in him to see God move both in terms of mission but also in Holy Spirit ministry. Yet in terms of his local congregation, a strong motif is still that church is a place where the saints are cared for and trained to care for others.

Ken's exit interview did not reveal a major change in his understanding of the missional church as he had been considering this in some detail prior to the Team Oz meetings. Similarly, his church did not demonstrate any major change in understanding or behaviour. They have started certain activities that they are continuing with.

The adaptive challenges that his church faces are to do with implementation of ideas that the Missional Action Team have proposed and that the elders have agreed to in principle.

### **Mary**

Mary thinks that the missional church paradigm is a helpful concept enlarging the idea of evangelism. Individually and corporately there needs to be involvement in the local community, for example, in local schools and clubs where God's people can be

servants to the community. This action needs to be rooted in appropriate theology. Although Mary has demonstrated a missional understanding and practice over decades, she has found that the recent missional church dialogue has been valuable in helping her understand how the people in her church are thinking.

She thinks that perhaps ten percent of the church understands the missional church paradigm and perhaps half the leaders. Although the church is connecting with the community in various ways, members don't seem to really have a deep understanding. The majority of the energy and finances are still directed inwards but this is gradually shifting.

There are some significant adaptive challenges for the church in terms of missional understanding and practice including a lack of a missional ecclesiology, the current emotional energy focussed on internal church issues, and a lack of understanding concerning God's mission in the world and the nature of the Gospel.

There are some key metaphors and theologies that inform her understanding of the church being missional. These include the importance of the local community and being servants there, and mutual hospitality.

Mary's exit interview showed there had not been a real change of her understanding of the missional church. Given her missiological reflection and theological sophistication, this was to be expected. In her congregation there is an increasing shift away from traditional frameworks of evangelism towards more of a Kingdom approach to the Gospel. This will challenge her church in that there will be a slower response than the traditional evangelistic approaches have expected. These have tended to focus on

immediate conversions. Her congregation is probably going to focus on their local school and nursing home.

She hasn't changed her own metaphors for describing the church, however, she has discovered a metaphor that explains her church more fully. She sees her church metaphorically as a group of boat people who are very concerned to maintain their cultural distinction and identity particularly among the first generation.

### **Ming**

Ming had heard of the missional church discussion. His understanding is that a missional church brings the Good News of Jesus to the wider community. This church's presence will bring the Gospel in both word and deed. He distinguishes between an evangelistic approach and a missional approach. He thinks the evangelistic approach tends to focus on the Gospel as set of theological propositions to be understood with a strong future orientation to escape coming judgement. The missional approach tends to emphasis the place of Gospel deeds in addition to the words spoken. He appreciated and agrees with the emphasis of the Gospel in deeds as this had been part of his early Christian upbringing. His view is that Chinese Christians in Australia tend to have a propositional view of the Gospel. This has come partly from Hong Kong Christians who have emphasised the word over the deed partly in fear of theological liberalism.

Personally speaking, when he was serving as a pastor, he had plenty of opportunities to share his faith in word and deed. Now he is teaching in a Bible college opportunities are less frequent. He travels a great deal so is not as connected to a local community. Nonetheless he does find opportunities to share from time to time.

In his exit interview, Ming said that his views have not changed through the Team Oz experience. There was nothing new but his views were affirmed with the missional church emphasis being a paradigm shift from a church focus to a Kingdom focus. He believes the attractional model is still working well for the Chinese churches however it is the next generation who will experience the real challenge when the attractional model fails to produce. Ming feels it is vital for the first-generation Chinese leaders to give permission to the second-generation leaders to adopt a missional approach. He foresees that the C&MA will need to operate with multiple models and paradigms. For him, the *Missio Dei* is a key theological framework in understanding the mission and nature of the Church.

### **Nam**

Nam understood a missional church as one that seeks to impact and be relevant to its community influencing schools, politics and bringing social justice. The traditional church of which he's been a part has had no real involvement with social issues only spiritual matters. Being missional is to not live in the "Christian bubble" but to connect with people wherever they are. The church has tended to work on an attractional framework rather than an incarnational approach where they are Jesus to people wherever they live.

Nam's church has some openness to the missional church conversation but members have little understanding of this framework. Members want to know more. In terms of practice, the church is almost entirely inward-focussed. Perhaps five percent of his church's resources are directed outward. Personally speaking, he expressed frustration over his own lack of missional behaviour.

He described his church as “Forced Church”. By this he means that he feels like he has been attempting to force the church to bear fruit in terms of evangelism. He pictured himself in front of a withered tree squeezing a branch demanding that it produce fruit.

Nam’s exit interview revealed that a very deep change has taken place in his thinking. He understands that there is no ideal missional model. Rather the missional paradigm is about asking what God is up to and how we can join Him in ministry. He sees that typically questions have revolved around what the church should be doing. Also, the church has begun a process of change. Members have been meeting regularly watching and discussing the video series by Reggie McNeal based on his book *The Present Future*.<sup>4</sup> There is change but it is slow-moving. The church’s behaviour and Nam’s have not as yet included missional interaction. Nonetheless, it is encouraging for him to see the church’s change.

There are a number of key challenges before the church not least of which is the need to raise up committed leaders. Too often people are happy to come to church so long as nothing is demanded of them. Another challenge is to identify who their target audience should be. Is it where we live, work or recreate?

As Nam has considered John 20:21, he has recognised the importance of God being a sending God. He sees that God has been sent in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ but also has sent the church. This framework is changing the way he views both God and the church.

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<sup>4</sup> McNeal, *The Present Future*.

## Patrick

Patrick initially understood that the missional church conversation to be about the fact that the local church needs to be involved in missions ministry. There will be a local and global missions expressions. Locally this expresses itself in terms of traditional evangelism such as the distribution of Gospel tracts and Evangelism Explosion type outreach programs.<sup>5</sup> When asked if there is a difference between a missional church and an evangelistic church, he made no distinction between them. He and his church were unfamiliar with the language of an “attractional” or “missional-incarnational” church.

He personally is not particularly involved in his surrounding community although he has been involved in CanCare, a ministry to cancer sufferers. His church is not particularly well connected with the community and this is of concern to him. There are places the church is involved in such as a ladies’ craft group and exercise group, and a Mandarin English class however, involvement in the community had not been a major emphasis of the church. Patrick characterises the church by the metaphor of family. This is the overriding metaphor. The family is a place where not only Christians can be involved but also non-Christians. There is a strong social cohesion in the church particularly via the home cell-group system that operates.

In his exit interview, Patrick describes a missional church now as one that is not just concerned about itself but also about outsiders, concerned about the community. Specifically, it is concerned about serving people beyond the immediate church family. He now thinks that the missional church is different from an exclusively evangelistic

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<sup>5</sup> Evangelism Explosion is an evangelistic approach developed by James Kennedy which features a carefully scripted presentation of the Gospel and a training program for the local church. D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970).

church. Whereas an evangelistic church is concerned primarily with sharing the Gospel, he now believes that it is important to serve the needs of the community. Although there has been no widespread change in his church, some leaders are beginning to ask what can be done to serve the community. He believes his biggest challenge is to help change the church members' minds so that they see the need to serve the community and not to be so focussed on caring for themselves as a family.

### **Peter**

The missional conversation for Peter was all about God's current activity in the world. God, in his mission, is already actively touching people so it is not a matter of having wind God up to do something but rather to look for what God is already doing. A missional church is one that is outward-looking. He found the framework helpful in that it removes the burden of having to do mission from the Church to seeing where God is already on mission and joining Him in that mission.

Peter thinks that it has been a difficult thing to convince his church about the legitimacy of being a church on mission given that it is a comfortable church. There is a small group of older people who have been negative about the missional conversation. However, this group is not influential and for those under fifty-five there is no problem. Nonetheless implementation is a challenge.

Within the church there is an increasing place being given to community activity. This includes such things as the mentoring program, the Kid's Club and various other activities. Nevertheless, the majority of the energy of the church is still focussed on Sunday morning which is the highlight of the week. There is a mental acceptance of the need for outward focus but they have not acted on this as yet.

Personally, Peter is challenged about his own missional behaviour. Given his profession in a theological college he has limited natural connections to the community. However, he does have some involvement and wants to expand this.

For Peter, the overriding theological metaphors and themes are the *missio Dei* and Christ being sent by God to the “far country”. Yet for the church there is different metaphor operating entirely. The church is a refuge from the world - a place of safety and healing. Relationships are built and people grow in the church.

The exit interview showed how Peter’s ideas have matured and changed. He has a better understanding of what the missional conversation is trying to achieve. Initially he thought the missional church was just about more evangelism and getting into the community. He now thinks that being missional is a paradigm shift of life and not primarily a program. Part of this includes a broader concept of the Gospel, including reconciliation not only to God but one’s self, the other and the earth. He now views the church through Kingdom eyes rather than the other way around.

He doesn’t see a large change in his church’s understanding and behaviour. He thinks his church’s adaptive challenges still lie in re-awakening WVAC to the surrounding community. Also their physical building is too small. In terms of significant theological constructs, he increasingly speaks of the local church being the evidence of God’s reign and rule on planet earth.

### **Terry**

Terry understood the missional church not as an appendage or additional program but rather as the prime work of the church. We are called to be missionaries to our culture and to be a part of God’s mission. Initially sceptical, he’s found the missional

language very helpful. Speaking of Lesslie Newbigin, he noted that God, rather than the Church, needs to be place where we start. So the order of theological consideration needs to be theology, missiology, and finally ecclesiology.

Over the last few years, the church has been moving from an “attractional” church to understanding mission and being involved in it. The C&MA’s emphasis on overseas mission has helped the missional understanding. His church has been involved in networking, particularly with some professional musicians in Sydney. Also there’s been involvement with a Tongan group and even some Mormon people.

Terry himself has become more like a father in the church instead of being a primary vision-caster. It’s been a shift to help people see what God is doing in their lives. He’s become a facilitator of mission involving a good deal of experimentation. His primary move recently has been from a purely forensic view of the atonement to expand this to include a much greater emphasis on a relational framework. This is heavily informed by Trinitarian theology.

Terry’s exit interview demonstrated that his views concerning the missional church have been confirmed and deepened. As he listened to some members of Team Oz he noted that some were simply re-badging evangelism using missional language which, to him, is to miss the point. He views the missional discussion as a fundamental paradigm shift rather than a program shift.

His church continues to develop along missional lines. Experiments started earlier, such as their band Miss Murphy and the Bombers, continue to mature. The church itself is much more welcoming and willing to dialogue with people in their doubts

and in difficult issues of life. A key challenge now is for the church to disciple those who are journeying towards faith while avoiding some of the traps of the institutional church.

Theology has been a key factor in driving the change and will continue to be. Specifically, a Trinitarian understanding of God has been a vital part of the mix. Terry again emphasised that, for him, theology and the Trinity is first, then mission and the reconciliation of all things to Christ, and finally ecclesiology flowing from the other two.

### **Vinh**

Vinh thinks that a missional church is one where the fellowship of believers are actively looking and searching for ways of connecting with the community and having a voice there. There is an understanding that this will be a slower process than a direct evangelistic approach. In Vinh's mind, an evangelistic church "goes out to bring back" whereas the missional church "goes out to stay out". The Missional Church paradigm has been somewhat helpful but also frustrating. It is a good philosophy but frustrating as to how it can be applied. For him and his church the attractional model is still working among second-generation Chinese.

The church hasn't historically connected with the community particularly well. There are some things happening at the local university and high school and some sporting activities with the community. The congregation has shifted and is investing more energy in evangelistic events which have proven to be successful. Personally speaking, Vinh is involved in High School Chaplaincy but finds this challenging because he does not live in the area. He is involved in soccer which connects him to people.

Vinh described the church with the metaphor of being sheep among wolves. There is a significant fear factor for both parents and children of protecting the sheep

from the wolves of Australian society. This is understandable given the nature of immigrant churches. A second significant metaphor was instant everything, that is, the younger generation expects immediate results therefore a more measured spirituality and or missional approach is a challenge.

Vinh's exit interview and other conversations indicated that his understanding of the missional church has not changed due to Team Oz. However, he really valued the experience because it gave him opportunity to listen to more experienced leaders and how they have dealt with the process of implementing missional ministry in the local church. He was largely quiet through the meetings, simply soaking in what was being said. Further, there hasn't been a major change in the church during the year although some are becoming more willing to get involved with projects that will be undertaken in 2012 and beyond.

A major adaptive challenge for the church is the strong commitment that the Chinese have to education and career. This can be a significant distraction to missional activity. Another challenge is that the first generation has, at times, tended to make it too financially easy in the church for their children and, as a result, the children have not learned to worship by giving to God. Overall, Vinh feels like a mother with his congregation being children in the pram. This is a challenge in terms of all that needs to be done but a great advantage because he can mould them to grow along missional lines.

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