



“Excarnation”: Mike Frost

What does it mean for a church to be ‘mission-shaped’, ‘missionary’, or ‘missional’? Each of these terms tries to express something important about the nature of the church as a community of believers defined by its engagement with God’s missionary purposes in the world.

Mike Frost founded *Small Boat, Big Sea* in the Manly suburb of Sydney, Australia, as a missional congregation in 2001. Already a well-known conference speaker and Morling College Lecturer, he has been instrumental in establishing a number of missional initiatives, including the *Forge* training initiative, and contributing in significant ways to the ongoing conversation about what is meant when we use the term ‘missional’ as an adjective. A key element of this has been his insistence on retaining the central use of ‘incarnational’ as a way of nuancing the way he defines ‘missional’. Mike is currently working on a new book for IVP that will explore his introduction of a new term; ‘Excarnation’.

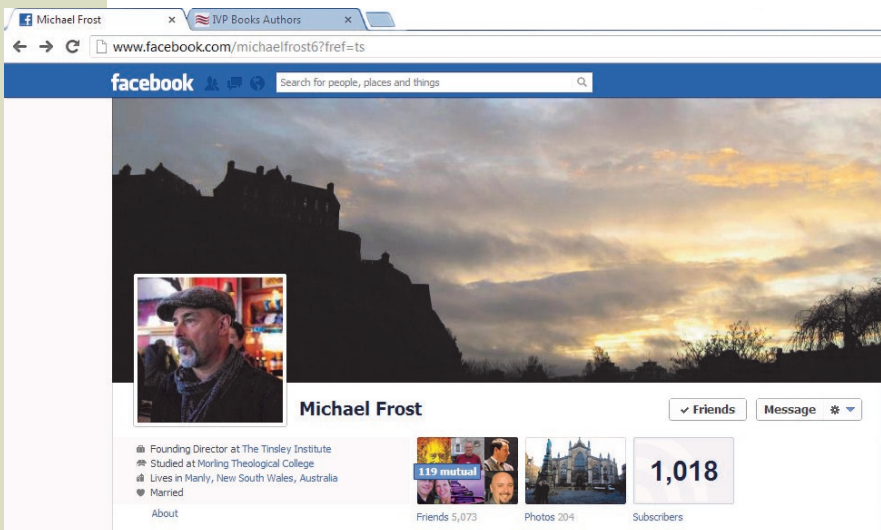
In this short interview, Mike speaks exclusively to VISTA about what this more recent development indicates and how it can move the missional conversation forward.

Q: Mike, you’ve recently introduced the neologisms ‘excarnate’ and ‘excarnational’ to the missional vocabulary. What are you adding to the missional conversation and what deficiencies in that conversation might you be attempting to highlight?

“Worship has lost its physical, liturgical and communal dimension and is a highly privatised experience where I close my eyes and experience God in my imagination.”

You know, that’s a good question. Someone recently said to me, ‘Oh, you just want to talk about incarnation but you’re coming at it from the opposite direction!’ But it’s not just a trick to inject freshness into an old conversation. I think that the idea of ‘excarnation’ highlights the degree to which a secular age has drawn churches into a de-fleshed, or a disembodied experience of relationships and community, disconnection to place, the recognition that the secular age’s impact

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Facebook: An example of the *excarnation* of relationships

EDITORIAL Neologisms: Necessary but Dangerous

In a rapidly changing world one of the ways we make sense of the changes around us is by inventing new words (neologisms) to describe the new in terms of our existing worldview. 2012 has given us new words for widespread political disorder (*omnishambles*), impending economic disaster in Europe (*Eurogeddon*) and the youth have reinvented the Latin phrase *carpe diem* as *yolo*, “you only live once”.

In this edition of *Vista* we take a close look at two neologisms. Our headline article, by Darrell Jackson, is an exclusive interview with Mike Frost, whose upcoming book will introduce the concept of “*excarnation*”. Frost argues that Christian relationships and community are being disembodied by secularism and this poses real challenges for Christian mission today.

That is followed by three articles looking at another neologism which despite appearing less than fifteen years ago has already become part of our common Christian language – the word *missional*. Jo Appleton presents the results of her research into the understanding of missional among 18-30 year-olds. I then try to tackle the difficult challenge of considering how missional might be measured. And Jo presents a case study where she allows the voices of leaders of missional communities in the city of Berlin to define what missional looks like in their context. *Vista* concludes with a review of three non-English titles engaging in the missional conversation in Europe.

Neologisms are necessary but dangerous. All too easily they can become jargon which is only intelligible to those who are “in the know”. Good neologisms require little definition since their meanings are intuitive. Others are open to such a wide range of definitions and interpretations that, rather than facilitating communication they quickly end up in the *neolograveyard*. Sorry, I couldn’t resist it! Let’s hope *missional* doesn’t turn out to be one of these.

Jim Memory

on society has deepened and become even more profound, despite conversations about postmodernity some years ago. I think it needs to be addressed that if Christians think their biggest issue is “How do we attract people back to church?” they’re not seeing the depth and breadth of the secularisation of western society. So, I think that understanding what we’re up against only reinforces the need for us to embrace an embodied spirituality in our age.

Q: What are the dangers in coining a new term like ‘excarnate’? How do you avoid it being hijacked by all and sundry as a way to then authenticate everything they’re doing simply by their using the term?

Well, whereas ‘incarnational’ is a term to describe something we’re calling people to, ‘excarnational’ is a term which more describes the way life is and I don’t think it will be so easily misused because it’s not an affront to us, it’s more a way of describing our current reality. It highlights the way in which we’ve happily embraced a bifurcation of the world and church, of body and soul, of heaven and earth, so that, in a sense, our spirituality is lived in our imaginations, in our so-called ‘souls’. We place our hope in a distant and future heavenly realm, remain anxious about this world and, in fact, our secular framework only reinforces this behaviour.

Now, with the emergence of screen culture, we live lives that simply skate over the surface of life without entering deeply into the neighbourhood or relationships.

I’m not a Luddite claiming that these things, for example, the presence of social media, are evil. I’m simply saying that we need to think about the way that these things are shaping the way that we think, the way that we act, and the way that we respond to each other. Stuff that we acknowledge that we once carried bodily, in a relationship, in

a particular context, is now almost entirely maintained for us in our minds or in our imaginations, in our computers.

I’m not saying the internet or that computers are evil, I’m saying that I once knew things because I sat at my father’s knee and he taught them to me, demonstrating them with his hands and fingers. We once knew how to cook because our mother’s showed us how to pick up a pinch of salt and stir it into the dish. Now, a Nigella Lawson podcast can tell us how many grams it’s going to need.

We don’t learn things from people we know or have relationship with. A favourite way of learning now is listening to podcasts or reading blogs. Worship has almost lost its physical, liturgical and communal dimension and is now a highly privatised experience where I close my eyes and experience God in my imagination. So, my use of the term ‘excarnation’ is asking, “Look! Have a look again at what society’s becoming. Have a look at what the church has become and the way in which we’re reinforcing excarnational forms of worship and ask yourself whether you’re happy about that.”

Most Christians I talk to say “Well, no I’m not!” and so the alternative is to embrace an embodied, en-fleshed spirituality, which of course leads us towards ‘incarnational’.

Q: What will be the biggest surprise to followers of Jesus in Europe and elsewhere as they come across this next Frost offering of a new term in the missional conversation?

I think that they will be surprised to see the degree to which secularisation has become so entrenched. Secularisation isn’t just a drift towards non-Christian morals and the like. It’s a complete change of the way that we understand knowledge and our place in the world. I think they’ll be surprised with the degree to which the church has not only



Mike Frost, a key missional thinker of the 21st Century

been swept along by that but has actually contributed to maintaining it by its over-developed sense of dualism. I’ve spoken about that in other books that I’ve written. It’s not just about us getting out more into the neighbourhood but it’s about us asking ourselves, “What habits, or liturgies, should we be building into the lives of believers to help countermand all the secular rituals and habits that are present and which lull us into a sense of the bifurcation of life into a de-fleshed, excarnational, non-contextual or hyper-contextual understanding of community, neighbourhood, and knowledge?” It’ll be a diagnostic kind of book as much as it is a prognostic kind of book.

Mike’s next book is due for publication by IVP in early 2014.

Darrell Jackson conducted this interview with Mike Frost in Sydney on the 12th December 2012.

LIVING A MISSIONAL LIFESTYLE: PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPEAN GENERATION Y

Christian mission by its very nature looks outwards, and ideally takes place beyond the walls of the church building. The missional conversation has placed this outward focus at the centre of what it means to be ‘church’, and any missional authors focus on how the structures of the church can facilitate mission. But the Church of Christ is the body of believers, and they are the incarnated ones sent to engage with the world. As Van Gelder and Zcheile (2011) explain, ‘the internal life of the

missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission.’

The missionally-minded are encouraged to live a ‘missional lifestyle’. However living missionally means engaging with a particular culture and context, and there has been resistance to creating a definitive set of practices that make up such a way of life. This gives great freedom to adapt your activities to your individual mission context. However when trying to influence others to live missionally, it helps if you both mean similar things when using the

phrase “missional lifestyle”.

Between January and March 2012, I carried out some small-scale research amongst 18-30 year-old Christian Europeans, in order to discover their perceptions of a missional lifestyle. The young people surveyed were attending a Christian conference that aimed to inspire them to ‘transform our world’ through living missionally (www.mission-net.org). Their home countries included Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, UK, Finland, Portugal and Austria. So what do they think a missional lifestyle includes?

LIVING A MISSIONAL LIFESTYLE (CONT)

A missional lifestyle happens anywhere

The incarnational aspect of a missional lifestyle means there is an emphasis on it happening in everyday life, as a Swiss respondent commented:

It's not a profession (like missionary) but it's a lifestyle; you 'do' it everyday, with all you are, wherever you are, with whomever you spend your time.

This emphasis did not preclude the respondents being prepared to go elsewhere as missionaries if that was what God called them to – but they saw no difference to what a missional lifestyle included whether it was “right here”, or “over there”.

Living missionally involves loving and serving others

More 18-30 year olds saw loving and serving others as part of a missional lifestyle than an authentic Christian lifestyle. For example, a 22-year old from the UK, currently working in Hungary, considered a missional lifestyle to be *trusting God; putting others first; honouring God's word; embracing others; loving those you are called to.*

When asked how they put this into practice, their answers included specific ministries such as refugee counselling, as well as *spending time with people who have few friends or helping my parents and siblings with the dishes or banal things like that...not a big deal, but a little service and possibly an example.*

However the individualistic emphasis of this generation gets in the way – as a 19 year old from Finland admits, *it's easy to forget that this life isn't all about me.*

Living missionally requires a deep relationship with God

For these respondents the source of their ability to love and serve others is through

spending time with God. For example, one respondent admires her sister because

At first she spends a lot of time with God. He is like a friend, just next to her... And then it's just so natural for her to be among people, asking and listening to them and telling them how she experiences God.

Jesus is the example of a missional lifestyle

The respondents aspired to ‘live what Jesus did on earth’ or ‘walk in Jesus’ footsteps’ as an essential part of a missional lifestyle. This reflects the incarnational emphasis in missional thinking, however for the young people, self centeredness and pride make living like Jesus more of an aspiration than a perceived reality in their lives.

It is still tough to be meek and humble as Jesus is, says one, while another admits distraction by prioritising other things in this world, gets in the way.

Living missionally means sharing the Gospel

Alongside the emphasis on incarnationally loving and serving those around you, a missional lifestyle for 18-30 year-olds still includes sharing the Gospel. For some this means being involved in church related activities, such as a regular children's outreach or inviting classmates to a special event in their youth group.

For others it happens in the context of everyday life through *sharing my testimony, listening to people and learning what they think or answering the questions my classmates have patiently and kindly.* Fear of what others think is a deterrent to sharing the Gospel – perhaps reflecting their preference for consensus and teamwork, as is the fact that *when people just accept that I'm a Christian it is tough to actually stir them.*

Social action and justice issues are not a high priority

Perhaps those surveyed went to churches that emphasised Gospel proclamation over social action, but very few mentioned this or justice issues as part of a missional lifestyle. Even the majority of their examples of loving and serving people focused on their immediate everyday context rather than being involved in social action or volunteering projects.

A missional lifestyle is different from an authentic Christian lifestyle

Only about a third of respondents considered a missional lifestyle to be the same as an authentic Christian lifestyle. For the others, living missionally involved “more obedience and trust”, self-sacrifice and at times courage. As a 21 year old German comments, *I think an authentic Christian lifestyle SHOULD BE a missional lifestyle. But we forget too often and separate both. So only the radical Christians live the missional lifestyle while the 'normal Christians' live the 'normal' lifestyle.*

Other questions in the survey focused on what helped these young people live missionally. The overwhelming answer is the example of other people – usually those they know personally, including family, friends and other Christians. While attending church did not rank highly as an influence, relationships with other Christians within the church were important, as a 27 year old from Finland states, *it offers a community of brothers and sisters that can help each other living the same way.*

A missional lifestyle is hard. It involves sacrifice and effort to see people won for Christ. But it is rewarding too. Many young people have caught the vision and are living missionally in creative and counter-cultural ways. For many more it is an aspiration rather than a reality. Are we (older Christians) prepared to invest the time with those around us to not only be an example, but to listen, mentor and encourage them? Only then will we – all generations – be able to touch a broken world with God's love and bring the transformation it so badly needs.

Joanne Appleton

Reference: Van Gelder, C. and Zscheile, D. J. (2011) *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Joanne completed this research as part of an MA in European Mission and Intercultural Christianity at Redcliffe College. Further information about the MA programme available from study@redcliffe.org or www.redcliffe.org/europe-ma



Photo: Cristina Chiriac

MEASURING MISSIONAL

Jim Memory tackles the difficult question ‘How do you know when missional is there?’

Then I looked up, and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand. I asked, “Where are you going?” He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is.” Zechariah 2:1,2

In 1998 I returned to the UK from Spain where I had been church planting for the best part of fifteen years. During that time I had tried to keep up-to-date with new titles on evangelism and church planting and had become vaguely aware of some new thinking which had birthed the adjective “missional”. But nothing could have prepared me for the reality which awaited me – “missional” was everywhere. A neologism that did not exist fifteen years ago (and which still prompts an error message from my spellchecker) generates nearly two million hits on Google. Furthermore, “missional” has been given such varied definitions, and was attached to such a wide range of activities, that even some leading “missional” thinkers were suggesting “a moratorium on the use of the M-word until we have stepped back, taken a deep breath, and reconsidered what we really mean by it”.

Defining “missional” with any precision is no easy task. Perhaps the most helpful simple definition of “missional” church is that of “...a community of God’s people that defines itself and organises its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world”. However, when asked to elucidate further on what that looks like in practice, authors often revert to listing “missional” characteristics or key values. Ostensibly, the more details that are provided in the definition, the less ambiguous it is, but in practice this is not the case. In fact, the more details are given the more ambiguous the definition becomes and this is certainly the case with “missional”. To paraphrase Ecclesiastes, of the making of books defining missional there is no end.

Rather than engage in a meta-analysis of the definitions of “missional” I want to approach the issue from a different direction by considering how “missional” might be measured.

People

The oldest and perhaps most enduring “missional” measure is the counting of heads. An in-depth study of the Book of Acts reveals that Luke was very concerned about measuring the precise number of people who were adopting The Way. Centuries later, William Carey’s “Enquiry” set forth his estimates of the growth of Christianity around the world and the challenge of the



millions of heathens yet to hear the Christian gospel. And in the 20th Century Donald McGavran challenged mission thinking to make use of sociological tools arguing that “the numerical approach is essential to understanding church growth. The Church is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them. Men use the numerical approach in all worthwhile human endeavour”.

Yet the counting of heads implies a certain criteria being established which permits us to distinguish between those who belong to the Christian community and those who do not. Until recently attendance at a regular act of worship served this purpose but increasingly there is a realisation that this simply will not do. Not all those who attend are necessarily disciples of Jesus nor do all those who are disciples “attend” in the way they used to. Following Paul Hiebert, Hirsch and Frost have suggested a move away from the concept of church as a Bounded Set to that of a Centred Set which focuses on discipleship rather than conversion or membership. However, counting these people is not straightforward since they often fall outside the “bounds” of what we might call empirical Christian spirituality.

Congregations

The second measure is analogous to the first in that it also involves counting people but no longer as individuals but rather as Christian communities. Once again we might turn to the New Testament or Church History to trace the growth of Christianity through the birthing of new Christian communities. However, it is sufficient to recall how often the planting (or the closing) of new congregations is used to measure the vitality or not of a given denomination or the breadth of Christian churches in any given country. Take for example, David Goodhew’s book which we reviewed in the last edition of Vista which states that “it is likely that over 5,000 new churches have been started in Britain in the 30 years since 1980”.

Counting “missional” communities is perhaps even more difficult than counting people. Many of the defining characteristics of these communities (that they are, for example, incarnational, locally focussed, open to all, with only minimal structure, an adaptive leadership, and a movement mentality) operate against their measurement by normal metrics. Some communities are all but invisible except to those who form part of them. Others exist within other congregations, either completely or partly, further complicating their categorization. Still others are philosophically opposed to “identification” as a congregation at all seeing themselves as a Jesus-centred organic movement rather than what we might again call an empirical Christian church.

Values

The third broad measure we might wish to consider is that of qualities or values. In a sense these are the very things which distinguish individual Christian disciples and communities of Jesus followers as being different from any other gathering of men and women. God’s purpose for Israel and for the Church has always been to “choose a people for his name from the Gentiles” (Acts 15:14) that their lives should embody values which glorify God: “You are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-15).

With the formulation of the Nicene Creed, the four “marks” of the church (“one, holy, catholic and apostolic”) established four measures by which churches could be judged. Unfortunately all too often through Church history, rather than serving as measures of intrinsic quality they were used to impose uniformity in doctrine, liturgy and practice. Van Engen has suggested reframing these values of the church as *unifying, sanctifying, reconciling and witnessing* which is a step in the right direction but still some way from practical “missional” measures for a local congregation. Even before the emergence of

“missional”, fresh attempts were being made to measure the *qualitative* growth of churches. Christian Schwartz suggested eight quality characteristics in his book *Natural Church Development* and the National Church Life Survey, developed in Australia but used also in the UK and the Netherlands, sought to measure not only attendance but also the vitality of existing congregations. However, few of these traditional metrics translate easily to “missional” realities.

To illustrate this problem it is perhaps helpful to contrast Schwartz’s eight quality characteristics with Hirsch’s six elements of mDNA (missionalDNA) which he says are the “central guiding mechanisms (which are) necessary for the reproduction and sustainability of genuine missional movements”.

Space will not permit me to engage in a detailed comparison but what is immediately clear is that despite both authors arguing that church growth takes place according to biotic mechanisms (Schwartz’ term) the two sets are fundamentally different. In some ways these lists illustrate powerfully just how different the evangelistic-attractional and missional-incarnational models of church are. However, the issue at focus in this article is the measurability of “missional” and to this I wish to return in conclusion.

Can we measure “missional”?

To date there are few books which have dealt with the challenge of recalibrating our metrics for “missional”. Reggie McNeal’s *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* is one such book. Whilst oriented perhaps to traditional churches which are seeking to become more missional rather than already extant missional communities, the book contains many “scorecards” covering areas like people, prayer, facilities, finances, leadership, technology,

suggesting ways in which missional values might be measured. Here is one example:

- Number of people reporting improved marriages over time
- Number of people reporting improved friendships over time
- Number of people being mentored
- Number of people serving as mentors
- Number of people able to articulate life mission
- Number of people serving other people in some venue
- Number of people practicing intentional blessing strategy for those around them
- Number of people growing in financial giving to kingdom causes

What is immediately clear is that despite the supposed shift of focus from the internal to the external, the measures are still in essence a headcount of self-declared “missional” activities. Much more helpful are the three groups of “missional indicators” found in Michael Frost’s recent book *The Road to Missional*. The indicators were developed in partnership with a major denomination under three categories – *announcement, demonstration and the way of Jesus* and are reproduced in Table 1 (see page six).

These indicators are a challenging list of requirements for any missional community but I would suggest that much of the benefit was in the process of selecting these indicators not just applying some external measure. As Frost himself says “mission... must be lived out incarnationally, in close proximity to those to whom we’ve been sent; a mission that is cross-shaped and calls its followers to the disciplines of sacrifice, service, love, and grace; and a mission that delights in beauty, flavour, joy and friendship, that lifts us up and fills us with the same fullness of life we see in Jesus.”



Whether our starting place is the four marks of the Creed or Hirsch’s six elements of missionalDNA, if we genuinely want to measure “missional” it will require new measures, perhaps even unique measures for each local situation. Clearly this will involve each “missional” initiative engaging in a deep reflection both on the eternal values of Christian community revealed in God’s word and on the local qualities that must be embodied for effective incarnational witness. Only then will our metrics correspond to our contextual realities. Only then we will get beyond counting heads, congregations or arbitrary values. Only then can we truly measure Jerusalem, as Zechariah was invited to do, with anything like the dimensions of the Spirit.

Jim Memory

References

- Mike Frost, *The Road to Missional*, Baker Books, 2011
- David Goodhew, *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present*, Ashgate, 2012
- Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, Brazos, 2006.
- Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, Eerdmans, 1970.
- Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development*, Moggerhanger, 1996.
- Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, Baker Books, 1991.

Schwartz

Empowering leadership
Gift-oriented lay ministry
Passionate spirituality
Functional structures
Inspiring worship service
Holistic small groups
Need-oriented evangelism
Loving relationships

Hirsch

The Heart of it All: Jesus is Lord
Disciple making
Missional-incarnational impulse
Apostolic environment
Communitas, not community
Organic systems

Figure 1: Comparison of the approaches of Schwartz and Hirsch to ‘measuring missional’

MISSIONAL IN BERLIN

What does missional church look like in Berlin? .



Think ‘Berlin’ and impressions come quickly to mind: colourful, experimental, edgy, history, alternative. Berlin rarely disappoints. Following reunification, Berlin has been reinventing itself and the restoration of civic, political, architectural and historical landmarks is evidence of a pulsing city-wide vibe. Its ethnic diversity adds to the mixture.

It’s probably not surprising, therefore, that Berlin is at the centre of efforts in Germany to rediscover the missional nature of the congregation.

According to *Together in Berlin*, more than eighty missional initiatives have started in the last 10 years. Four of these exciting projects are highlighted below and the websites of these and others given at the end of the article. When you next visit Berlin, you might like to add one or two of them to your tour itinerary.

Tell us a little about what you are doing

FEG Pankow We are a ‘young church for the heart of Pankow’, our East-Berlin district and neighbourhood. We started the church seven years ago, with an emphasis on

interacting and working together with atheists and community leaders, discipleship and leadership development.

Matthews Table Ours is a relational ministry of evangelism centered on hospitality, which has been developing since 2007.

Vineyard Köpenick My wife and I (Matthias) lead a Vineyard church-plant in Eastern Berlin (Köpenick) together with a two more couples. In total, our group counts 16 adults and 11 children at the moment. We moved to Köpenick back in 2008 and got to know the local people here.

Table 1 MEASURES OF MISSIONAL IN THREE DIMENSIONS—From Mike Frost’s ‘The Road to Missional’ (2011)

1. A mission-shaped church announces the reign of God through Christ, locally and globally. This could be evidenced by

- Regular opportunities for response to the gospel within the life and mission of the church;
- Regular opportunities for members to hear of evangelistic projects and needs they might commit to;
- A regular assessment of the needs of our immediate neighbourhood/locality to determine whether certain ethnic, demographic, or subcultural groups are not hearing the announcement of the reign of God through Christ;
- A corporate commitment to at least one local and one global evangelistic focus;
- Active and prayerful consideration as to how we can be involved with planting a new congregation;
- A commitment to regularly pray as a whole church for non-Christians to turn to Jesus, whether they be found locally or globally.

2. A mission-shaped church demonstrates the reign of God through Christ, locally and globally. This could be evidenced by

- The fostering of a community life that models compassion, generosity, hospitality, and justice as expressions of the love of Jesus;
- Regular opportunities for members to hear of effective community development projects and needs they might commit to;
- A regular assessment of the needs of our immediate neighbourhood/locality to determine whether certain ethnic, demographic, or subcultural groups are not benefiting from the demonstration of the lordship of Jesus;
- A corporate commitment to at least one local and one global initiative aimed at addressing injustice, alleviating suffering, or showing practical love in Jesus’ name;
- An annual review of our budget and the degree to which our missional priorities are reflected in our financial commitments;
- A commitment to regularly pray as a whole church for the needs of our world, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

3. A mission-shaped church embodies mission in the way of Jesus. This could be evidenced by

- Regular teaching from the Gospels about the missional priorities, lifestyle, and message of Jesus, and the fostering of a faith community that reflects this;
- Regular opportunities for members to discern their own missional vocation;
- Regular training and resourcing for members to be able to incarnationally develop friendships and share their faith in culturally and relationally effective ways;
- Active reliance on the empowering Spirit in the announcement and demonstration of Jesus’ lordship;
- Regular assessment of the time commitments of pastoral staff and lay leaders to determine that too much of their time is not spent on “in-house” church activities and that they are freed to engage regularly with unchurched people;
- Regular teaching on the needs of our world and ways members can become actively involved.

MISSIONAL IN BERLIN (CONT)

After our sabbatical in early 2012, we received a confirmation to plant a church in Köpenick and now we are most grateful to have a team to work together during the next years, to share life and to change our local community.

Jakob Gemeinde I (Paul Clarkson) have been here 20 years. We started a church on the edge of eastern Berlin, then moved to inner city east Berlin. The first church was started by an O.M. Team, the 2nd (where I am now) by two families and myself.

What does missional church look like in your context?

FEG Pankow We emphasize relationships and “gospel conversations” as a lifestyle, for informal missional impact. Our motto for events is: *Not ministry for people but ministry with people*, so in most cases we co-organise events with secular organisations or individuals. We rent a store which serves as a community office and the pastor is a pastor primarily for the community rather than the church.



Matthew's Table We choose to use the word 'intentional' because of the many variations of meaning currently being given to 'missional.' For us it means living our lives with the intended purpose of affecting others for the kingdom of God, which requires being on-call for others 24-7.

Vineyard Köpenick For me personally, being missional is related to two areas:

a) We want to let people come close to us and have insight in our lives. When this happens, they start to wonder why we do things the way we do, e.g. how we raise our children, live our marriage, manage our finances, talk about other people or forgive and ask for forgiveness.

b) We try to imitate a lifestyle where the Kingdom of God can be present any moment. This means, we want to assist God in touching people with His presence

whenever there are possibilities for it - by giving the waiter a generous tip in order to value his work, by offering prayer to the handicapped man on the street, by encouraging the depressed colleague. The possibilities are many.

Jakob Gemeinde Building relationships with non-believers outside of "church context" i.e NOT trying to get them to come to meetings (they won't come anyway!); doing good in the community, meeting them where they are. Some stuff we do: Using Christmas to explain what Christmas is about, film evenings for men with a good theme and lots of beer and time until the early hours. Running a cafe, running a children's club, doing as much as we can with non-believers.

Biggest challenges?

FEG Pankow We don't try to create a dichotomy between traditional and missional, but rather work with what we have and move towards missional. The traditional attitudes, practices and expectations of Christians sometimes seem to be a challenge, but for us that is simply part of the process.

Matthew's Table Penetrating the post-Christian understanding (or lack thereof) that most Europeans currently embrace.

Vineyard Köpenick a) Not to get discouraged by negative or disturbing situations and circumstances.

b) Not to get too comfortable in one's own comfort zone (the church)

c) Not to lose focus on Jesus either by ascribing too much importance and attention to oneself or by losing faith that Jesus can do miracles.

Jakob Gemeinde Getting out of the box of "christendom thinking" - i.e. that they "should come to us". Running church on a low level so as to free people up to build relationships outside the church. Being church in an atheistic environment where belief and church are seen as something very negative.

Any encouragements over the last year?

FEG Pankow Lots. Former atheists leading their atheists friends to Christ. The good reputation our church has reached

for being involved in our community. Events where we can work hand in hand with non-Christians and are expected to share our message through word and deed. Practical examples are a "Living Advent Calendar" and a platform "Holyday in Pankow".



Matthew's Table As our relationships have continued to develop, we have attempted to earn the privilege of sharing faith without being accused of ulterior motives or being cast into the prevailing stereotypes of Evangelical Christians.

Vineyard Köpenick A few weeks ago, the wife and the children of our neighbour left him and went into hiding. The police could not help him either. When I talked to him, he was completely desperate. After I listened to him for quite some time, I offered to pray for him. He answered "I respect it, but I don't believe in it." Two days later, he called me in the middle of the night "Matthias, your prayers have helped and were answered." By now, his wife and children live at home again and they want to start a marriage and family counselling.

Jakob Gemeinde Thirteen children becoming Christians, some of from very non - believing homes

Web links to some missional churches in Berlin:

www.servethecity-berlin.de

www.klausabendbrot.de

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Joanne Appleton

Darrell Jackson reviews three non-English titles relating to the missional conversation as it unfolds across Europe, written in Dutch, Norwegian, and German respectively. Taken together they give a flavour of how mission-minded church leaders are trying to engage in the missional conversation across the continent.



René Erwich **VEELKLEURIG
VERLANGEN**
Wegen van missionair
gemeente-zijn
CHE REEKS

Erwich, R. (2008) *Veelkleurig Verlangen: wegen van missionair gemeente-zijn* (Multicoloured dreams: ways of being a missional church), Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum.

René Erwich is a Dutch Baptist pastor and a practical theologian who provides leadership within the theological faculty at Ede Christian University and serves as an Associate Professor of Practical Theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium.

He surveys six ways that Dutch churches have attempted to develop a more missional identity and nature, reviewing Christian Schwarz's NCD model; Christian Möller's Word-based Congregational Development; Jan Hendrik's open church (an 'inn' or 'hospitable city') model; Rick Warren's purpose-driven church; Bill Hybel's seeker-sensitive model; and the 'church-life' model of Peter Kaldor. He welcomes the experimental attitude that drives these innovative attempts at intentional missional renewal but honestly acknowledges that they have achieved varying levels of success.

He concludes with a discussion of congregational planting and development in the Low Countries, critiquing these in light of the missional church conversation as initiated by van Gelder and others from the US Gospel and Culture group and then offering a brief discussion of other voices in the discussion, including those of Maclaren, Kimball, Frost, and Hirsch. Erwich then introduces several examples of congregations that model a more missional approach rooted in this conversation, including *Via Nova* and *Hope voor Noord* (Hope for the North) in Amsterdam, and *In de Praktijk* ('In Practice') from Den Haag.

Erwich finally offers a typology of these six models, locating the three Dutch examples on a continuum of classical conservative to progressive ecclesiologies.

Norwegian pastor, Rune Rasmussen offers a more personal approach in his 2004 ***Misjonerende Menighet: lokal menighetsutvikling i en global kirke* (Missional Congregation: local congregational development in a global church), Stavanger: Verbum Forlag.** As a Lutheran pastor, Rasmussen faced the challenge of establishing a new missional congregation within an existing Stavanger parish of the Church of Norway. Encouraged and supported by the Norwegian Mission Society and inspired by stories from the Anglican *Fresh Expressions* initiative, Rasmussen established a vibrant and mission-shaped congregation built around Christian discipleship and witness in small congregational 'cells'.



His book contains a sustained theological reflection on the new paradigms that underpinned his vision for the new parish, drawn in contrast with traditional folk-church, prayer-house, and programme-driven alternatives. A familiar list of missional church authors completes his references although the fact that most of them are not Norwegian underlines the relative lack of missional reflection from within the Norwegian context (with only a few honourable exceptions).

The mainline EKD, or German Evangelical Church's, **2008 *Wachsen gegen den Trend* ('Growth against the trend'), Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt** is a little different to the other books reviewed here. It contains a series of case studies describing parishes experiencing growth within the

state Church of Germany. These parishes have greater theological diversity than the other two titles reviewed here but there are several examples of what can be clearly identified as having a more obviously missional character, including those at Nierenhof and the



Andreasgemeinde at Niederhöhnstadt. This book represents an important contribution to the broader missional conversation from within the challenging context of a mainline denomination in Germany. As such, it attempts to do what a number of Anglicans have been able to achieve within the Church of England by highlighting examples of growth and vitality (including but not limited to the *Fresh Expressions* network) as a means of encouraging other Anglican parishes to move into more missional ways of being the Church.



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