



Global Connections National Conference 4-6 November 2009

Church as Transformed and Transforming Community Summary Report

The objective of the group was to explore and challenge our understanding of church, the mission of churches and issues surrounding churches in mission. Drawing on an appreciation of current examples of churches in mission and historical renewal movements, the group explored the relationships between the mission community and churches, asking how we as a mission community can be a force for renewal in mission among churches.

The context in which the discussions took place is the growing realisation that the evangelical consensus to avoid ecclesiology may not have served either the churches or the mission agency community well. Ever since the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 there has been a growing realisation that church is not merely an instrument for proclaiming the good news of the gospel but the embodiment of the good news. It does not just exist to fulfil some task or other but its existence is the fulfilment of God's purpose for humanity.

The local church – a transformed community

If church is the end of mission it is vital for mission agencies to be clear on what the church as a transformed community looks like. There was unanimity that the church is a local community of those that have believed in Jesus for their salvation who live out their faith in self sacrificial love for their fellow members and those outside the fellowship.

Hindrances

It was also recognized that churches have to contend with many hindrances to becoming what they are such as materialism, worldly leadership, busyness etc

The local church – a transforming community

The church is transforming by being a:

- ❖ beacon of hope for a lost world
- ❖ community that does not exist for itself but for the sake of others
- ❖ community that welcomes all with an offer of grace rather than judgment
- ❖ compassionate community towards those that are rejected and marginalized by the world
- ❖ generous community with its resources to those who do not belong

- ❖ community that speaks to God on behalf of those in the world and to those in the world on behalf of God.

Historical context

In Protestantism the vitality of the church is dependent on constant renewal through the power of the Holy Spirit. The most relevant question in this context was whether the missions community has something unique to contribute to church renewal at the moment. For example, in the 1990s the work done on contextualization by missiologists had a profound impact upon youth evangelism in the UK and contributed to the renewal of youth work. Is the intense interest in the ecclesiological dimension of missiology evidence of a renewal movement today?

Mission agencies and church as transformed and transforming community

With church moving into centre stage major questions that need further airing were: What, then, should be the role of the mission agencies?

Is there a need of a radical review?

How can the enormous assets of the mission agencies be shared most effectively with the churches?

How can the agencies be accountable to the churches?

The group meetings concluded with a request for Global Connections to facilitate a meeting to continue the conversation.

Compiled by Dewi Hughes, 'Church as Transformed and Transforming Community' Group Coordinator.